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Principal: Kathryn Podmore
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Dear Parents and Carers

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

As you may already be aware, the Governing Body (corporation) of Birkenhead Sixth Form College is applying for the College to become an Academy under the Academies Act 2010. The Governing Body is now consulting on the proposed conversion to academy status. Our proposal is attached. Simply this will mean that the legal status of the College will be different, however the College will continue to operate in the same way that it does now.

Will Birkenhead Sixth Form College change?

Becoming an academy will have no impact on the College or its students. It will still retain its unique characteristics of a Sixth Form College and its ethos and values will remain unchanged. We are a provider of high quality academic provision and there will be no change to the students' day to day experience whilst studying at the College. We will continue to offer the same provision, be inspected by Ofsted under the same framework and the same senior managers will lead the College. As a Sixth Form College, Birkenhead Sixth Form College already deals with its own admission arrangements. There will be no change in the way in which the admission arrangements are dealt with.

The College will continue to be known as the The Sixth Form College, Birkenhead and we believe that working closely alongside other educational institutions as an academy, in the trust that we have established, will help us to become even stronger and enable us to support the enhancement of education in the local area.

What is an Academy?

An Academy, like a Sixth Form College, is essentially an independent organisation which is funded by the state. Also, like a Sixth Form College it is independent of the Local Authority and receives its funding direct from central government.

Under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are able to become Academies. More recently, the government extended the opportunity to convert Sixth Form Colleges to the same legal status.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

If Birkenhead Sixth Form College converts to academy status, it would form part of Wirral Academy Trust which it established. This is the legal organisation in which the Academy would sit with certain powers delegated to the College's governing body. The College is the sponsor of Wirral Academy Trust, which currently runs Birkenhead Park School. It is possible



that other schools in Birkenhead and the surrounding area may also join at a later date.

What are the benefits of being an Academy?

In the College's opinion, the benefits are numerous:

- The highly effective characteristics of the Sixth Form College model can be retained enabling the College to remain a centre of excellence for both academic and pastoral provision Post 16, continuing its track record of serving an inclusive range of students, enabling strong quality systems and robust financial procedures to be maintained.
- The development of outstanding teaching and learning will still remain a key priority along with the further development of a rich curriculum portfolio to meet the needs of the students.
- The new structure will support collaboration and the sharing of best practice between educational institutions, which ensures consistency in quality and standards.
- The organisational structure, along with greater flexibility for staff will create opportunities to improve the recruitment, development and retention of talented staff.
- The sharing of key office functions resources, such as finance, Human Resources and management information would ensure value for money across the trust, allowing the College to increase the proportion of our budgets allocated to teaching and learning and student welfare.
- Unlike Sixth Form Colleges, academies are exempt from VAT, bringing financial savings that can be invested in teaching and learning and student support providing improved student access to resources.
- An alignment of Birkenhead Sixth Form College with government policies leading to greater opportunities to engage with the wider educational system.
- Belonging to a Multi Academy Trust will support the development of effective partnerships with other educational institutions to improve transition arrangements, outcomes and progression opportunities for students.

How would the proposals affect current staff?

If the College converts to Academy status, all staff currently employed by Birkenhead Sixth Form College will automatically transfer to Wirral Academy Trust on their current pay and conditions.

Will Birkenhead Sixth Form College definitely become an Academy?

The Governing Body is to submit an application to convert to Academy status and is working towards a conversion in March 2017. However, the College is not obligated to become an Academy until the contract between the Academy Trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed.

The Governing Body will not agree to sign the Funding Agreement until parents and carers of students at the College, students themselves, staff at the College, and other stakeholders have had the opportunity to comment on the conversion. We have written to all students, parents and carers and have also invited them to a meeting on Monday 14th November 2016 at Birkenhead Sixth Form College, to learn more about the proposals to become an Academy, or to comment on the proposals.

We have also held meetings with staff, and will be keeping students informed throughout the

process.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the Governing Body before a decision is taken so that it can ensure that conversion is in the best interests of the College. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

How can I make find out more and give my views?

A meeting will be held at Birkenhead Sixth Form College on Monday 14th November 2016 at 6pm. We would encourage you to attend if you would like to express your views, have any questions, or simply want to learn more.

There is also more information about Academies on the DfE website. We are in the first wave of those Sixth Form Colleges who are looking to convert to Academy Status. <http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

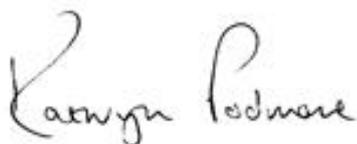
You can find our formal proposal and response form at www.bsfc.ac.uk

You can also share your views in writing by emailing consultation@bsfc.ac.uk or by sending written submissions to The Clerk to The Corporation Birkenhead Sixth Form College, Park Road West, Claughton, Wirral CH43 8SQ.

The closing date for representations to be made is 30 November 2016 at 4pm. We will publish a full written response to the consultation at no later than 31 January 2017.

Thank you very much for supporting this consultation process.

Yours faithfully,



Kathryn Podmore
Principal