



LONGDENDALE HIGH SCHOOL

We endeavour to achieve and aspire to be successful

16th December 2016

Dear Families,

Re. Outcome of consultation regarding conversion to academy status

Following the consultation period regarding the proposal to convert to academy status and join the ASPIRE+ Multi Academy Trust (MAT) the full Governing Body met on Thursday 1st December to consider the responses received during the consultation period.

On behalf of the governing body I would like to thank everybody who contributed to the consultation. We understand that for some academisation can be a very emotive issue. Governors were encouraged that the proposal put before our community did not generate a highly negative response which has been seen at other schools. We believe this is due to the confidence our community shares in our leaders and governors, who in recent years have led the school so successfully.

Overview of consultation responses

Each governor received a copy of all of the responses to consider in advance of the meeting. A presentation was also delivered to Governors which gave an overview of the consultation. Below is a summary of the responses received:

- There were 21 questionnaires returned from families, this equates to 2.69 % (assuming potential of one response per 780 students currently on roll)
 - 15 emails were sent to the consultation inbox
 - A total of 17 letters were received via email and post
- Of the letters, questionnaires and emails received:
 - 32 were from staff, giving an overall response rate of 27% of all staff (110 staff)
 - 21 were from families, giving an overall response rate of 2.67% of all families (780 students)
- Taken as a percentage of all who were invited to respond:
 - 73% of staff gave no response, 11% of staff responses were positive and 16% were negative.
 - 97.3% of families gave no response, 0.5% of family responses received were positive, 1.15% were negative and 1.02% were undecided.

Outcome

During the meeting held on 1st December 2016, the governing body voted in favour of the proposal to convert Longdendale High School to academy status and to join the ASPIRE+ MAT. This proposal is the end result of five years of discussion and debate within the governing body regarding academisation.

Executive Headteacher: Mr Bowler BA (Hons) NPQH Headteacher: Mrs A Jones BA (Hons) NPQH
Spring Street, Hollingworth, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 8LW
T:01457 764006 F:01457 766483 E:admin@longdendale.tameside.sch.uk W:www.longdendale.tameside.sch.uk

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Previously the school has been approached by external academy chains and at times we have been vulnerable to being taken over. Senior leaders and the governing body have worked hard to resist the significant pressures that were building, both locally and nationally, for the school to academise. At no point have leaders and governors felt that any of the previous options presented were the right choice for Longdendale High School. We are rightfully proud of the improvements we have collectively made to our school and the unique values and ethos we have created. Longdendale is proud to serve its local community and this is the first proposal which has given us the opportunity to preserve our identity.

Whilst it is not possible to write in response to all of the points raised in the process, I do feel that it is necessary to assure you that governors carefully considered all the points raised. We are confident that as we will be responsible for the vision and strategic direction of the MAT, Longdendale will continue strongly on its journey of improvement.

In response to the common concerns that were raised during the process there were some misconceptions that I would like to address directly:

1. The new MAT is not a merger between Longdendale and Astley - both will retain their distinct and individual identities with their own leaders and governing bodies – they will continue to be separately inspected by Ofsted;
2. There will be no changes to the daily operation or name of the school on conversion;
3. Longdendale will be a different type of academy to Astley – Longdendale will be a ‘converter’ academy and Astley will be a ‘sponsored’ academy;
4. Staff will not be moved from Longdendale to Astley as part of the conversion process;
5. Longdendale’s unique identity will not be lost, in fact governors are confident that the MAT will ensure this is further protected;
6. This MAT has emerged out of the partnership collaboration within the A+ Trust and another Trust school was part of the initial application although at this stage has had to withdraw – it, and indeed other Trust schools may decide to join in the future. Longdendale will remain a committed member of the A+ Trust and this will continue to be an important part of the school’s work;
7. Moving away from the local authority does not pose a risk to funding as we will now be in receipt of 100% of our funding from the government. The government have to be satisfied that Longdendale is in a good financial position to permit the conversion to take place.
8. The proposal to establish the ASPIRE+ MAT has been approved by the Department for Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner with Longdendale as the lead school, which confirms the existing strength of our school and future direction.

We will continue to keep you updated on the progress of the conversion. Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,



Carol Thomas
Chair of Governors

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