



Easthampstead Park Community School

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19 April 2022

Dear Parents and Carers

The Governing Body of **Easthampstead Park Community School** have been carefully considering the best future strategy for the school, so that we can build on our achievement of being an outstanding learning community. We want to continue the improvement in the school's and pupils' performance, to protect the unique ethos, values and character of our school and to keep the freedom to run our school in ways best for our community of pupils, staff, parents and carers.

We are writing to you to let you know that we have applied to the Regional Schools Commissioner seeking agreement for a proposal for Easthampstead Park Community School, to convert to an academy within the [King's Group Academies Trust](#). We hope to be granted an academy order which means that the RSC is content for us to proceed with plans to convert.

The Governing Body is interested in understanding your views on this as we look to shape the future of our school. Our next step is seeking the views of staff, parents, and the communities around the school. Our school is a community school and we are committed to working with parents and carers and the wider community. We think it is important that everyone can ask questions, explore the proposal in more detail with us and be involved in the consultation.

Please do take the time to read this letter and respond to the consultation. Joining the **King's Group Academies** is a positive way forward for the school to develop in the future and we hope that you will agree. The school and the King's Group Academies vision for what we want to achieve are very closely aligned which is why we have chosen to partner with King's Group Academies.

The benefits that we see are:

- Closer collaborative working between strong schools so that staff can build upon sharing their expertise in order to raise standards for our children even further.
- Securing best value for money on products and services, therefore, achieving greater economies of scale, so that we can spend as much as possible in classrooms and support our curriculum.
- Opportunities for the trust to apply and benefit from grants and bids that schools do not have access to, under local authority control.
- Greater collaborative working with a wide range of schools across other trusts and opportunities for other schools to join, in order to build capacity to deliver a broad and balanced education even further.

We have for some time been testing out the relationship with collaboration between King's Group Academies and Easthampstead Park Community School to see if it is a good fit for us both. The feedback we have received is that the benefits outweigh any negatives and that opportunities for staff and students are likely to be greater if we convert.

If we proceed with conversion you and your child are unlikely to see any change in your day-to-day experience of school. Leaders, teachers, and support staff will remain and have their terms and conditions protected as part of the conversion process; the school will continue to have a governing body; all children on roll at the school will continue to attend; times of the school day, term dates and the school's admissions policy will stay the same.



Headteacher: Mrs Liz Cook MA, BA (Hons)

You should be aware King's Academy Binfield is part of the same group and operates within Bracknell Forest currently.

Consultation for conversion to academy status will be conducted virtually. We have worked to find a solution that will enable consultation to go ahead and the process will be as follows:

1. A letter to all parents opening the consultation period (this letter).
2. You can find the information about the academy consultation on the website in the Parents section <https://www.epschool.org/parents/academy-consultation>.
3. Please use this form online at: <https://forms.gle/QUrK2QdKDU6fqDzf7> to ask any questions not already included in the FAQ's section on the school website. We will update the website with the questions from this form regularly during the consultation process. This form also allows you to tell us whether you support the proposal.
4. If you would like to talk to someone about the proposal and how it affects your child, please give your name and phone number, your question and we will contact you; otherwise answers will be published regularly within FAQ documents on the school's website.

The formal consultation period opens today 19 April 2022 and will remain open until 3 May 2022. We have prepared a document below with Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to help answer some of the questions we anticipate you may have. This is also available on our website.

Following the consultation period, the Governing Body will consider all of the feedback and views received during the consultation and will then make the final decision on whether to complete the process.

We look forward to receiving your responses. We will write to you as parents to inform you of our decision.

Yours faithfully



Mrs R Rastall
Chair of Governors



Mr M Hooper
Vice Chair of Governors

(on behalf of the Governors, Easthampstead Park Community School)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE EPCS ACADEMY CONSULTATION

Why does the Governing body want to join King’s Group Academies?

The Governors of Easthampstead Park Community School see joining the King’s Group Academies as a positive way forward for the school to develop in the future and we hope that you will agree. The school and the King’s Academies’ vision for what we want to achieve are very closely aligned which is why we have chosen to partner with the King’s Group.

How does the EPCS Vision align with the KGA Vision?

	EPCS	KGA
Mission	<p>‘It takes a whole village to raise a child’.</p> <p>We seek to develop students who have a strong sense of community, both locally and globally, who are confident, able to lead others, and bring about positive change.</p> <p>We work hard to foster a strong three-way partnership between parents, students, and the school and believe that having these bonds is essential if our pupils are to achieve their full potential.</p>	<p>Our vision is to create a global community of pupils and staff; broadening horizons, fostering understanding, and raising aspirations by connecting our Academies with other schools across the world.</p> <p>Participation (with their families) – in shaping pupils’ education. To build a positive partnership with families and the community, expecting them to hold us to account while providing support and promoting our continuous improvement.</p>
Vision	<p>Providing an outstanding education for all students which fully prepares them for life beyond school.</p> <p>We aim to develop learners who are happy, healthy and equipped in every way to deal with the challenges and opportunities they will face in the future.</p> <p>The EPCS Character Values are central to the school.</p> <p>We have high academic aspirations for all of our students, but also believe that education is about far more than just achieving outstanding academic results in examinations. Our planned curriculum offers students the opportunity to make outstanding progress from their starting points and the curriculum offer removes any potential barriers to learning.</p>	<p>The King’s Group Academies’ mission is to equip all pupils with the confidence, knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to thrive in a global society.</p> <p>Full engagement with families – in shaping pupils’ education so that they can be their authentic happy self.</p> <p>Our Academies strive for academic excellence, enriched with opportunities for personal development and success</p> <p>Our Academies strive for excellence beyond the classroom, celebrating equality and diversity and providing opportunities for personal development and success.</p>

Strategy 3 year	1. School as Good with elements of Outstanding Ofsted Framework 2. Progress 8 at National Average (cohort dependent) 3. Student attainment aligned to FFT20 4. ALPS T Score (A-Level) at 3 or better 5. Curriculum delivery is broad and balanced and supports students' aspirations at all levels 6. Financially sustainable 7. No on roll = PAN 8. Attendance at National Average	1. Identical 2. Identical 3. Identical 4. Identical 5. Identical 6. Identical 7. Identical 8. Identical
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What are the benefits of EPCS joining KGA?

- Closer collaborative working between strong schools so that staff can build upon sharing their expertise in order to raise standards for children even further.
- Securing best value for money on products and services therefore achieving greater economies of scale, so that we can spend as much as possible in classrooms.
- Opportunities for the trust to apply and benefit from grants and bids that schools do not have access to under local authority control.
- Greater collaborative working with a wide range of schools across other trusts and opportunities for other schools to join in order to build capacity even further.

What will change for your child?

If we proceed, you and your child are unlikely to see any change in your day to day experience of school. The students will not notice any immediate difference. They will be in the same school in the same classrooms

Leaders, teachers and support staff will remain and have their terms and conditions protected as part of the conversion process; the school will continue to have a governing body; all children on roll at the school will continue; times of the school day, term dates and the school's admissions policy will stay the same.

We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupil experience.

Will the name change?

The suggested name if conversion goes ahead, is King's Academy, Easthampstead Park. This would take effect from September 2022 based on the completion of the academisation process (therefore it may be later).

Will the uniform change?

We will honour the individual characteristics of our school. With effect from September 2023, subject to consultation, the following changes are suggested:

- The blazer will remain the same with a new 'iron on' emblem for students who have an existing uniform provided for parents with children who currently attend the school. The new blazer will be phased in; the style will remain as now, only the name and emblem will change.
- The skirt, an optional item, will be tartan, with a navy accent; you can see similar skirts on King's Academy Binfield's website.

How will the money raised by the Friends Association / fundraising be used?

- Each school will continue to have its own autonomous mechanism for fundraising, although they will be free to collaborate if they wish. The money raised by each school's fundraising efforts will only be used for its own school and will continue to be independent of the school, raising money for agreed resources or projects that have been asked for by the school's leadership.

What are the implications of not joining King's Group Academies?

- There is a direction of travel within UK education which indicates a large growth in the number of Multi Academy Trusts. Currently schools have a free choice in the selection of working with a selected MAT or collaborating with other schools to form a new MAT. However, in the future, schools who have not joined a MAT on a voluntary basis could be directed to join another Trust, not of their own free choice. We thought it far better to join a MAT which aligned with our mission vision ethos and Strategic direction but also understands and meets the needs of our community.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ACADEMIES IN GENERAL

What is an academy?

Academies are state-funded schools but they are independent of local authorities meaning they are not run by councils. They can decide on their own curriculums, term dates, school hours, and much more.

They're still funded by the government but they get to decide how they spend their money, from how much they pay teachers to how much they spend on classroom equipment.

Over half of pupils in England are already educated in academies and there are three types:

Converters – formerly council-run schools that chose to become academies;

Sponsored – previously underperforming council-run schools in need of support, and/or judged 'Inadequate' by Ofsted, where the law requires them to become academies; or

Free schools – brand new schools established to meet a need for good school places in the area.

What are multi-academy trusts?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a group of academy schools overseen by a charitable trust, and governed by a board of trustees. Rather than being financed by the local authority, a MAT is directly funded by, and accountable to, the Department for Education. While the schools that make up the trust are still firmly part of their community, the trust is there to support the schools and help them work together for the benefit of all children

Multi-academy trusts are charities that have responsibility for running a number of academies. They cannot, as charities, be run for financial profit and any surplus monies must be reinvested in the trust. By working in partnership with each other, the schools within a trust can share staff, curriculum expertise, and effective teaching practices, and work together to deliver the best outcomes for pupils.

While other types of school partnerships can be effective, the key difference with academy trusts is that there is shared accountability for standards across the trust; all schools within the trust support each other and the trust is accountable for them all.

Why is the government's focus now on supporting schools to join strong trusts?

Joining a multi-academy trust remains a positive choice for schools. They enable the strongest leaders to take responsibility for supporting more schools, develop great teachers, and allow schools to focus on what really matters – teaching, learning, and a curriculum that is based on what works.

Multi-academy trusts have the capacity to provide high-quality training and evidence-based curriculum support for already great teachers, freeing them to focus on what they do best – teaching.

If they have all this freedom, how are they accountable?

This freedom does not mean academies are not regulated. The department's National and Regional Schools Commissioners and their teams, together with the Education and Skills Funding Agency, provide robust educational and financial oversight of all academy trusts.

Individual academies are still subject to Ofsted inspections and ratings in exactly the same way as council-run schools. In fact, academies are subject to greater accountability than council-run schools because of increased financial regulation.

Why are schools grouped in a Multi-Academy Trust?

Grouping schools within a multi-academy trust affects the quality of education we can provide for your child in a beneficial way. Improved learning outcomes are behind everything we do. The MAT provides collaboration opportunities for pupils and staff and an efficient Central Team and effective Executive Team to provide challenge and support.

What other benefits are there to a multi-academy trust?

A significant benefit of becoming a MAT is the ability to collaborate and share expertise across the Trust. Children can benefit from a wide range of specialist staff; a particular feature of the trust is that it employs many qualified and experienced teachers who share expertise across the Trust. This allows us to deliver both a broad curriculum and a range of enriched extra-curricular activities to children across all the schools. These benefits will develop further as the trust grows.

Will we get more funding as an academy?

The academy trust will receive a General Annual Grant from the Secretary of State calculated as the equivalent to that which would be received by a maintained school taking account of the number of pupils at the academy. Capital funding is also available, channelled through the Academy Trust. Every academy trust must abide by the requirements of and have regard to the guidance in the Academies Financial Handbook.

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. They also receive additional funding in the form of the Education Services Grant to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the County Council and to cover the costs of academy status.

Is there a hierarchy of funding within the MAT?

No. Trustees have an obligation to act in the best interest of the Trust as a whole and therefore in the best interests of all schools within the Trust. There must be due regard to the funding needs and allocations for each individual school.

Do the large schools have larger voting rights when it comes to decision making?

MATs do not operate on a one vote one school principle. The Trust has a board of Trustees which have the responsibility of running all the schools within the MAT, in relation to the financial position, operational management and the risk management of the organisation. The day to day running of the school is carried out by the relevant headteacher. The local governing body would have a focus on educational standards and outcomes.

How does the staffing model operate?

The regulations that place requirements on maintained schools do not directly apply to academies. General employment law applies to academies in the same way as to other organisations. Teachers must be suitably qualified. The Academy Trust has responsibility for setting pay and conditions. We will employ all staff on national terms and conditions so there is no change for staff. All teachers employed at an academy have access to the Teachers Pensions Scheme and all other employees at an academy have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme

Teaching staff would benefit from having greater opportunities for career developments and training. Members of staff could choose to work in different member schools to support school improvement or as career development opportunities.

What is the curriculum model in an academy?

Academies are required to have a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life. The curriculum must include English, Maths, and Science; Religious Education; and Relationships education and health education. Academies are required to take part in the same pupil assessment arrangements and to report on the achievement and attainment of pupils in the same way as all other state-funded schools.

What about SEND?

Academies should be fully inclusive local schools and in common with all other schools have a clear legal duty to do their best to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

What is the admissions policy for an academy?

Academies are required to provide education for pupils wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated. Academies must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. Academies are required to provide education for pupils of different abilities (i.e. they may not select pupils by ability).

Are the schools still inspected by Ofsted?

Yes, academies are still subject to Ofsted inspections.