



ACADEMIES

I am letting you know that I have registered an interest in the possibility of Haydon changing status from a Foundation School to an Academy. As an Outstanding School we can be in the first wave of the new Academies.

I think it is important for Haydon's future that we consider this option very seriously. I have prepared this short paper to hopefully inform all involved of what the advantages and disadvantages might be.

As a note of caution this is the situation as I understand it at the moment. I will update this as and when I receive new information.

Advantages

1. There could be financial advantages to the school. This could be as much as 10% increase in our annual budget (approximately £1 million) or as little as 2½% (£250,000). This is one of the most important pieces of information I need clarified.
2. Academy status allows us greater curriculum freedom. We would no longer have to follow the National Curriculum but would still have to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.
3. We would also take back the administration of admissions as we did when we were a Grant Maintained School. The school would welcome this. It is important to note that we would still have to work to the guidelines that apply nationally to admissions.
4. A one off £25K grant to pay for any legal services we use to change status. The school has to set up an Academy Charitable Trust which will be a smaller group taken from the Governing Body. This takes the place of a company or companies that have responsibility for running the old style academies.

Disadvantages

1. Lose the support of Local Authority Services. However, as a Foundation School we do not receive much direct benefit from the Local Authority. Those services we use we buy in from the Local Authority at present and would continue to do so. These services may become more expensive although we would be able to shop around to buy in the best quality services rather than stick with Hillingdon services for everything. I would add that most of the services (e.g. Behaviour Support, HGFL etc) we would probably stay with as we have had good support.
2. More responsibility transfers to the Head and the Governing Body.

3. We do not have to abide by the National Pay Deals and conditions of service. I have put this as a disadvantage as although we will have the right to change these for new staff, I see no reason why we should do this. The staff are Haydon's great strength. I see no purpose in moving away from the STPCD (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document). I would also be looking for a long term agreement from the Academy Charitable Trust that the pay and conditions of service would remain the same as the STPCD. This is exactly what happened when Haydon became Grant Maintained and those of us that were here through that period saw no change in our conditions of service or pay when compared to those schools that stayed with the local authority.
4. There seems to be some uncertainty whether or not the New Academies will lose the VAT exempt status on some items. This is another area where greater clarification is needed.

In Conclusion

I have been very open with staff about the financial constraints that we are facing and what the implications are for the next three years as far as we can tell. It seems highly unlikely that the relatively pessimistic view of funding in the future will be made any better by the coming budgets. Indeed, I heard last week that it is likely that the funding for schools that have a second specialism will be removed after their second year. This is a further £120,000 p.a. that we have to find in cuts if this goes ahead.

Academy status could ease these funding problems and also allow us to be more creative with our curriculum and therefore I feel that we must give it very serious consideration.

Steve Robson
Headteacher

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