



The academies programme: the proposed academy at Shene

A message from the Director of Children's Services and Culture

Richmond Council is determined to ensure that the improvements made recently in secondary education are embedded and built upon. We aim to ensure that local state schools are the best choice for all of our residents.

In April 2008, the Council circulated a leaflet to all parents of pupils at Shene School to explain what the academies programme entails.

In June 2008, we issued another update about progress. We sought the views of parents and other local people on draft 'Expression of Interest' documents, which set out the sponsors' vision for each academy. This helped to inform the next stage of the academies process, during which formal consultation will take place.

This third update explains what has happened since, most notably the selection of the Academies Enterprise Trust as the new sponsor, and provides answers to some of the questions you have asked so far in order for you to be part of a meaningful consultation. I hope that this will be helpful in ensuring that you are able to take part.

Nick Whitfield, Director of Children's Services and Culture

What has happened in the last year?



We have continued to work with the sponsors and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to plan how the academies would be run.

The Expression of Interest documents were considered by the Council's Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 September 2008 and agreed by Cabinet on 22 September. At both meetings, local people were able to give their views on the way forward.

However, development of the proposed Shene academy was halted in December 2008, pending the outcome of a DCSF investigation into claims of financial mismanagement on the part of the sponsor Edutrust. The DCSF found "significant concerns over the governance" of the Edutrust Academies Charitable Trust (EACT).

Although the DCSF felt that EACT had addressed these shortcomings, the Council no longer had the confidence that it can work in partnership with Edutrust. As a result, the Council

sought a new co-sponsor to take the Shene academy forward, with a view to it opening in September 2010.

Meetings were held in June with the parent-governors, headteachers and chairs of governors of Barnes, Darell, East Sheen, Holy Trinity Church of England, Kew Riverside, Lowther, Marshgate, Sheen Mount and The Vineyard primary schools, to ascertain parents' views of what they would want from an outstanding local secondary school. A survey with the same aim, designed by parent-governors at Sheen Mount, was also sent to parents at those schools.



The findings were that parents wanted Shene to be a local school at the heart of the community providing:

- outreach work into local schools and with facilities used by local people;
- good discipline and parental involvement;
- safety for pupils, inside school and on the way to school;



- a comprehensive offer meeting the needs of all children;
- a traditional, but daring and aspirational curriculum;
- consistent academic achievement;
- all-round opportunities for sport, drama, arts and other extracurricular activities;
- scheduled ways of working with local primary schools so that it becomes the natural progression for local children;
- rebuilt or refurbished buildings with high-quality 21st century design; and
- a re-named and re-branded school, with a uniform that gives an image that helps to change hearts and minds.

Those views, which the Council very much shares, were used to draw up the criteria for potential sponsors.

At the same time the Council was seeking sponsors able to deliver that specification. An initial long-list of potential sponsors provided by the Office of the Schools Commissioner was narrowed down and a short-list of

two particularly strong sponsors was tested against the specification.

Both potential sponsors showed real strengths, but the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) was able to demonstrate more clearly that it has the outstanding skills and experience to build quickly and efficiently upon the recent improvements at Shene, and meet the ambitions of local families for an outstanding school in the area. We therefore selected AET and are confident that it would make Shene into local parents' first choice school.

AET is the sponsor of three academies and has a proven track record of transforming standards in schools.

AET will begin to work very closely with local parents to shape a more detailed vision for the future of Shene, on what will be a rapid and exciting journey towards becoming an exceptional school.

The Council will co-sponsor the proposed academy with AET, and will work with it to consider how other partners or academic sponsors, who could provide additional educational expertise to the new academy, might be included.



What will happen next?

AET will meet and engage with local parents. Simultaneously, it would work with the Council, the school and other partners to develop the Expression of Interest document. This is a high-level statement of the sponsor's vision that would set out how AET intends to transform the existing school into an outstanding academy. If agreed by the Council's Cabinet, that document would need to be approved by the Minister for Schools so that the next phase – 'Feasibility' – could begin.

In Feasibility, AET will work closely with staff at the school and Council officers to consider how their vision could be implemented. Having already developed three academies, AET would bring a wealth of experience

in rapidly moving schools from 'satisfactory' to 'outstanding' and sustaining progress. Consultation with local people will be undertaken so that the proposed academy meets their requirements.

A decision as to whether the proposed academy should go ahead or not will be taken by the Council's Cabinet, after the statutory consultation process in which parents and other local people would have six weeks to give their views on the proposed closure, on 31 August 2010, of the existing school and its replacement by the proposed academy the following day.

AET website:

www.academiesenterprisetrust.org

Further information

For more information on the academies programme, including development of the proposed academies at Hampton and Whitton, please visit:

www.richmond.gov.uk/academies and www.richmondacademies.org

Or contact:

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