

May 3rd 2013

Dear Parent

Gosforth Schools Trust

You may have become aware that 11 Gosforth First and Middle schools have announced their intention to formally consider moving to Foundation status with a Trust. The Heads and Chairs of Governors have been discussing this for some time.

The schools involved are:

Archibald First

Brunton First

Broadway East First

Dinnington First

Gosforth Park First

Grange First

Regent Farm First

South Gosforth First

Archbishop Runcie First

Gosforth Central Middle

Gosforth East Middle

At a time when things are moving very quickly in the world of education and the environment in which we operate is both fluid and unpredictable it is important for our schools to keep up with developments. In light of this, the schools mentioned above have agreed that it is best to be proactive and to determine a course of action that we collectively feel is in the best interests of both our current and future students.

After much deliberation and information gathering, the unanimous view of Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors is that we should enter into formal conversations about establishing a local Trust. This would enable schools and their Governing Bodies to retain their local autonomy and to preserve the unique characteristics of our schools and their ethos, whilst at the same time forging more formal links within the pyramid of Gosforth schools. This will offer several advantages to help us improve the education of our children. This an exciting project and a development built upon many years of fruitful collaboration between our schools. We have consensus that if we are to preserve what we value and continue to improve the educational offer to families in Gosforth and the City, we need to grasp the initiative and develop a new way forward together. The Chairs of Governors and Head Teachers are now meeting as a Steering Group to take this project through the many stages required.

It is important, at this point, to point out that Archbishop Runcie CE First School, as a Church of England voluntary aided school, is already part of a Trust and therefore will not be changing status and will not be subject to the same legal processes and changes as the other schools in the group. However, Archbishop Runcie is already an active partner of the community schools in Gosforth and would be an active partner of any Trust established by the Gosforth schools.

The first part of the process required the Chair of Governors of each school to inform the Local Authority of our intention to start the process of consultation. This has been done. It

is now a case of sharing information to seek a wider consensus. Governing Bodies will be considering the proposal in the next few weeks with a view to moving to more formal consultation before the end of term. If all 11 Governing Bodies agree they will sign a document called a Memorandum of Understanding. This is not a legally binding document but it is a firm commitment to start formal consultation. Once this is done we will quickly move to informal consultation meetings with parents and staff. Later in the year there will be a statutory consultation period with a range of interested groups and outside bodies. The final decision on whether or not to set up a Trust will be taken once all comments have been considered, probably at Governing Body meetings in December 2013.

In the meantime the Steering Group members will endeavour to keep everyone informed and will work to produce a Consultation Document which will include Frequently Asked Questions. I am sure that this will be the first of numerous communications over the coming months.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Higgins Chair of Governors

Jini Sara Headteacher

What is a Trust School? Some Basic Information

- A Trust school is a state-funded foundation school supported by a charity, often called a Trust School
- A Trust school is a member of the Local Authority (LA) family of schools.
- Trust status is similar to Voluntary Aided A status for faith schools.
- Trust schools are still subject to Ofsted and LA monitoring of standards and potential intervention
- Any maintained school or group of schools can become Trust schools – primary, secondary or special schools
- The Trust normally involves external partners in the Trust
- The Governing Body decides on acquiring a Trust
- The Trust and Governing Bodies are separate entities with Trust established as company with charitable status
- The Governing Body (GB) is not accountable to the Trust, and neither is the Trust accountable to the GB. They have their own clear lines of accountability
- The Trust holds the school's land and assets but GB is responsible for day to day management of them.
- The GB is the admissions authority within Code of Practice for admissions
- The GB is the employer of the school's staff