

# ACADEMY STATUS

## What it would mean for Belleville



### 1. Why are the governors consulting parents, staff and others who are directly involved in Belleville School about whether to become an Academy?

The governors' primary responsibility is to ensure that Belleville Primary School provides the best possible education for the pupils at the school, both now and in the future. The governors also take very seriously their responsibilities to serve the local community.

There has been a period of long and careful consideration of the issues with much thought and discussion.

This has included:

- three full governors meetings,
- the formation of a working group who have researched the issues in more depth by, for example, visiting other schools (who are already academies or are in the process of becoming an academy) to talk with their headteachers and governors,
- a workshop for staff.

Following this research, the governors now believe that the best way they can support the commitment of all at the school in its **'relentless drive for excellence'** is to become an Academy.

Before a final decision is taken, however, we want to take into account the views of staff, parents, future parents and others who are involved in the school.

### 2. Which schools can become an Academy?

Academies under the previous government were schools that were sponsored by an outside business or charity and were often schools which had been struggling. The new Academies are schools like Belleville that have been judged by Ofsted as 'Outstanding'. These schools do not need a business sponsor but are able to lead and shape their own development. They are required to offer to support other schools that need to improve.

### 3. Belleville is a successful school – it is already judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted – why change things?

We face a very challenging future when we look at the cuts in funds to the school. To do nothing would be to see a reduction in the range of opportunities for the children at Belleville. We

believe the children would benefit from the additional money by being directly funded by the government.

It would also allow the governing body to make strategic decisions about the long term direction of the school rather than consulting on requests from the Local Authority, which has been the case on a number of occasions in recent years.

By becoming an Academy we would be able to further develop our own curriculum and not have to implement national changes until we are sure they are in the best interests of the children. It would also give us greater freedom to recruit, retain and develop our excellent staff. This has been key to our improvement and success so far and we believe it is the most important way to provide an excellent education for all children at the school.

### 4. What are the potential benefits of becoming an Academy?

#### a. Curriculum Freedoms

The current situation is that a new National Curriculum is being developed and we would have to adopt it once it is published with very little time to assess whether it is the most suitable model to be using to teach children at Belleville.

The children at Belleville have consistently achieved results that are significantly above national averages for many years. We will continue with our drive for further improvement, innovation and constant review of the curriculum taught at Belleville. Becoming an Academy would allow the school to be free from the National Curriculum and, in particular, be able to choose our own timescale for any improvements we wish to make to the curriculum.

#### b. Recruit, retain and develop excellent staff

Being able to recruit, retain and develop excellent staff is key to Belleville's success both as a school and for the children we teach. We believe the freedom gained by becoming an Academy will let us continue and be more able to do this by, for example, rewarding and recruiting excellent staff and through offering better pay and conditions than we are able to do at the moment.

We currently employ specialist teachers for art, music, games, PE, gymnastics and French. Being an Academy would help us to continue to invest in specialist teachers.



### **c. Financial Freedoms**

As an Academy, Belleville would receive all of the money given to it by Central Government, including money previously kept by Wandsworth Council. Although the school would still have to purchase a number of services that were provided by Wandsworth, we would have the freedom to shop around to achieve best value.

Under the Academy Act passed in July last year, the government has pledged that academy funding will be guaranteed for 7 years and an academy will have to be given 7 years notice if this arrangement changes (e.g. by a change in government). Although this does not guarantee exact budgets it does give the school a degree of financial security it would not otherwise have.

By applying for Academy Status the school will receive an additional grant directly from the government of £25,000 to pay for the process of converting to an academy e.g. for accountants and solicitors.

### **d. Freedom from Local Authority control**

When we looked at the finances, governors came to the conclusion that Belleville currently pays for services we do not have access to or use, such as the Schools' Music Service or the Resource Centre. In other areas the school has felt the council is able to provide less advice and support than it has done previously as many of the roles in the Local Authority have already been lost (as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011) due to financial cuts. By becoming an academy we would have freedom to choose who will provide additional services and to ensure they are of the best quality for our children.

Over recent years the majority of contact with Wandsworth Council has been in response to their requests to expand Belleville School, initially on the Webb's Road site and then at the Forthbridge Road site, and in this academic year, to change the school's admissions policy. This has been a mixed experience and we have had to take a great deal of time to make sure this does not distract us from our vision of providing the best education possible.

### **5. Will we be taking money away from other schools in the local area?**

We would only receive and be responsible for the funds allocated to Belleville by Central

Government. The Local Authority will continue to be funded by the government for all of the schools under their control. The Local Authority will also continue to be funded for statutory services, e.g. statements for children with special needs, that they must provide for all schools in Wandsworth, including Belleville.

### **6. What about the support for schools in Wandsworth if the Local Authority funds are reduced?**

Academy schools are required to offer support to other schools. This has already been part of what we do for many years. For example, we are a National Support School, we have helped a local school come out of special measures and we lead training for teachers and leaders from other schools in Wandsworth, in local boroughs and across London on an almost weekly basis.

We have provided significantly more support to other schools than the vast majority of others involved in this work and Governors are committed to ensuring this continues.

### **7. Will the admission policy of the school change?**

The admissions policy of the school will remain the same – Academy schools have to work in partnership with Local Authority admission arrangements. However, it does mean Governors will not have to accept any changes proposed by the Local Authority to our admissions policy in the future. If Governors wanted to change the admissions policy, they would need to undertake a full consultation process and apply to the Secretary of State for Education before being able to do so.

### **8. Will there be changes to staff contracts, pensions and employment rights?**

The governing body of the school take over from the Local Authority as the employers of staff working in the Academy. Under TUPE, (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) arrangements, the staff would automatically become employees of the Academy with the same pay, terms and conditions as they previously had. If the decision to convert to Academy status is made, Governors will ensure that all staff will be employed under the same, if not better, terms and conditions.



**9. How will the school be run and who will hold it to account if it is no longer under Local Authority control?**

The Governing Body would need to set up an Academy Trust Board. This will include parent governors, staff governors and co opted governors. Staff and parents will be able to address concerns through the school complaints procedure as they are currently. There will also be an Annual General Meeting of the Academy Trust Board. Part of our funding agreement with the Secretary of State is that we continue to serve the needs and interests of the local community. The Academy would still be subject to OfSTED and HMI inspections as it is currently.

**10. Does this mean Belleville will have a different name, uniform, logo etc?**

No. We are very proud of the Belleville name, logo and the reputation these represent. There is no reason to change these.

**11. Will the term dates and the school day timings change?**

The governors have no intention of changing either the term dates or timings of the schools day at Belleville. Under academy legislation Academies need to consult parents fully before they do this.

**12. How will parents, staff and other interested people be consulted?**

It is intended that a full consultation period will begin on Monday 9 May and close on Wednesday 22 June. Staff, parents and others involved in the school are invited to talk to governors and/or to submit a written response by letter or email. The headteacher, the staff governors and many of the parent governors are available in the playground every day. 'Governors in School' week is from 6 June to 10 June.

There will be consultation meetings at the school on Monday 23 May at 9.30am and 6.30pm for parents, staff and all involved in the school to come along and ask questions.

## GOVERNING BODY

**Chair of Governors**

Kate Amis

**Head Teacher**

John Grove

**Community Governors**

Martin Beaver

Sue Harries

Rebecca Hossain

Tessa Willy

**Local Education Authority Governors**

Kate Amis

Jennifer Browne

Paul McGill

Emma Waterfall

**Parent Governors**

Barbara Downie

Eileen Kiernan

Brian Ledbetter

Julia Oldham

Gemma Ronte

Fiona Wilkins

**Staff Governors**

Sarah Atherton

Geraldine Burke

Elen McFadyen

## CONTACT

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## CONSULTATION TIMESCALE

**Consultation opens**

Monday 9 May 2011

**Governors in School Week**

Monday 6 to Friday 10 June

**Parent meetings**

Monday 23 May  
9.30am & 6.30pm

**Consultation closes**

Wednesday 22 June 2011

Further information about the consideration of academy status can be found on the school website, [www.belleville-school.org.uk](http://www.belleville-school.org.uk) and information from the Department of Education about Academies in general can be found at <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/>