



Highfields School

Headteacher: Mr A Marsh



Highfields Upper School
Upper Lumsdale
Matlock
Derbyshire DE4 5NA
Telephone: 01629 581888
Fax: 01629 57572

Highfields Lower School
Starkholmes Road
Matlock
Derbyshire DE4 3DD
Telephone: 01629 584020
Fax: 01629 57349

info@highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk
www.highfields.derbyshire.sch.uk

Our ref: AE/JAW

16 July 2021

Dear Highfields Stakeholders

OUR RESPONSE TO FORMAL CONSULTATION

Governors met on Thursday 15 July to evaluate feedback from our recent formal consultation regarding joining the East Midlands Educational Trust.

Our due diligence process has revealed no new evidence that would undermine our proposal. From a financial standpoint we feel the evidence still strongly suggests that over time and on a net level, the school will be financially better off and will enjoy substantial investment in its facilities for students and staff.

Our TUPE meeting and other informal meetings have allowed staff and their local/area union representatives to ask questions and raise issues. Governors were pleased to note that all of EMET's policies have been reached through consultation with unions. We also undertook careful scrutiny of key policies and found that, in some regards, they are more stringent around areas such as staff leave, attendance and capability. Governors balanced staff interests in this regard against the needs of students as they recover from an extended period where the relationship with their teachers has been interrupted through lockdowns, illness and isolation. At all times we kept students' learning as our primary focus.

Five responses to formal consultation were submitted, all of which received a detailed response. One was anonymous and therefore difficult to contextualise or verify. Several were asking for clarification to which governors responded.

No student responses were received although they did ask some questions verbally after receiving the information pack which governors prepared for them.

Perhaps the most influential factor that governors considered was that, whilst counter responses cited generic issues regarding academisation, **not one single response we received evidenced how remaining with the local authority would provide a better future for our children than joining EMET.**

With this in mind, the governors have reviewed their processes and evidence base and have made a final assessment that **student achievement and staff progression will be better secured within the EMET Trust as a result of the curriculum support, training, and investment they offer.** We have indicated to the Department for Education that we agree to conversion. However, we will also require that the proposed conversion date of 1 September **is moved back**

This is a good school. Ofsted, May 2017
A good school with an outstanding Sixth Form. Ofsted, October 2012



to 1 October in order to give finance and HR staff some time to undertake all relevant training and to ensure that the return to school is as smooth and stress free as it can be for staff.

What happens now?

Most stakeholders will not notice any significant change at the point of conversion in October. Arrangements will be transitional and many changes will be gradual.

There will be no change to uniform, teaching, behaviour, ethos, line management, leadership, curriculum, signage or any other significant area. Email addresses will remain the same. Staff pay slips may look different in either October or November but TUPE has ensured that no one is paid less. EMET staff will not be at Highfields in any significant numbers although governors have requested that some areas, including staff and student toilets, are considered for immediate improvement and this may require some site meetings.

Key staff will now attend introductory meetings to understand how Highfields might offer and benefit from inter-school networking opportunities. HR and finance staff will require additional training which is currently being arranged. As previously mentioned, EMET prides itself on promoting autonomy so any further changes will be as a result of school-based decisions. As an example, any further attempts to reduce the impact of cover lessons on student learning are a school-based focus rather than something promoted by EMET. We remain a school led by its headteacher and governors.

Any change comes with an element of trepidation and we anticipate that benefits of this move will be most evident for students and staff in the medium to long term. We remain excited about this very positive move and feel certain that it will enhance the already wonderful work that students and staff do together at Highfields School.

On behalf of the full governing board I would like to thank the entire school community for putting children first over the course of this academic year and for working together to protect the current and future learning of our amazing students. We wish you a safe and happy summer break and look forward to seeing you in September.

Yours sincerely



Angeline Ellson
Chair of Governors
On behalf of the Full Governing Board