

7th April 2011

Dear Parent or Carer

CASTLE PARTNERSHIP ACADEMY STATUS

We are writing to consult you about an exciting new development affecting the Castle Partnership.

The Partnership has comprised Castle Manor Business and Enterprise College, Castle Hill Middle School and Place Farm Primary School. These schools have a common system of leadership and governance. Burton End Primary School has also decided to join the Partnership during the summer.

As you may know, Castle Manor was judged 'outstanding' at its Ofsted inspection last October. This means that the College is able if it so wishes to apply for Academy Status. To be accepted, the College would need to sponsor improvement in one or more other schools. Since September 2008, Castle Manor, as part of the Castle Partnership, has been working closely with the other schools in the Partnership and, therefore, meets the necessary criteria. Both Burton End and Place Farm Primary Schools are also able to apply separately as schools sponsored by Castle Manor.

The Governing Bodies of our three schools have submitted initial applications to the Secretary of State for Academy status as part of a single Academy Trust and are now awaiting preliminary consent before the applications proceed to the next stage where detailed proposals are considered.

Although the final decision rests with the Governing Bodies and the Secretary of State, we wish to give parents, carers and other interested parties a full opportunity to submit their views about the possible change in status. The Governing Bodies will consider the views submitted before deciding whether the applications should be completed.

Academies are independent, state funded schools established under the Academies Act 2010 by agreement with the Secretary of State. They are:

- subject to an individual funding agreement with the Secretary of State designed to provide at least the same resources as those otherwise available through the local authority.
- no longer maintained or funded by the local authority.
- managed by an Academy Trust - a charitable company with control over land and other assets; the Trust has a strategic role in running the Academy and appoints the governors who manage the Academy on the Trust's behalf.
- free – within certain constraints – from following the national curriculum.
- the employer of their staff and able to set their own pay and conditions.
- their own admissions authority (although they must follow the National Admissions Code).

The Castle Partnership

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Our three schools have agreed together the principles and values which govern our Partnership and the way in which the Academy Trust (if it is set up) would function. Each school would retain its identifiable characteristics and there would be Local Governing Bodies in addition to a co-ordinating committee or Board. Continuity of Leadership and Governance would be maintained, with the new arrangements guaranteeing proper representation from parents and staff.

Teachers and other staff would be transferred to the Academy Trust under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations and their employment rights, including terms and conditions, pensions and continuity of service would be fully preserved.

The day-to-day working of the schools would not be affected.

Her Majesty's Inspectors have recognised during successive visits that membership of the Castle Partnership has already brought great benefits. The Governing Bodies believe that securing Academy status will ensure that these benefits become further embedded and will enable the schools and the Partnership to take full advantage of the independence which Academy status would bring. In particular:

- We would use the additional freedoms to develop further our collaboration and to improve achievement and attainment. It will be our ambition within the Partnership to ensure that every school becomes outstanding so that we can meet our fundamental aim - to improve the life chances of all our children.
- We would be able to implement the Partnership vision of a family of schools, each with defined identities but all under common leadership, where our children would be able to progress from reception to sixth form with co-ordinated teaching and learning, linked curriculum and similar systems and policies.
- We would enhance our links with our Community, ensuring that it is fully reflected in the governance of the Academies.

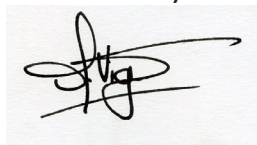
The Partnership would wish to continue and build on existing collaborations, including those with other Primary Schools in the Haverhill Cluster and with Samuel Ward Academy. We believe that all schools must work effectively together for the common good.

Each school would retain the admissions criteria at present applied by the local authority. If any changes became desirable in the future, we would, of course, be subject to the national Admissions Code of Practice and would consult in accordance with it.

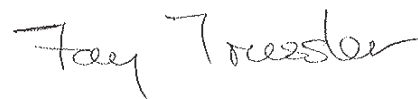
If you wish to submit any views, please write to us at the addresses set out at the beginning of this letter or email Rebecca Abbott on rabbott@castlepartnership.org.uk. The closing date for replies is 31st May 2011.

We are adding a facility to the Castle Partnership Website (www.castlepartnership.org.uk) which will allow questions to be asked and answered electronically. We will also be available if you wish to contact us personally. We would be very happy to help.

Yours sincerely



Madeleine Vigar
Principal,
Castle Partnership



Fay Trussler
Headteacher,
Burton End Primary School