



Ashton Community Science College

A SCHOOL TO BE PROUD OF

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2nd March 2023

Dear Parents, Stakeholders and Interested Parties,

Re: Proposed Academy conversion of Ashton Community Science College

We would like to start this letter by thanking you for your continued support with our efforts to improve Ashton Community Science College and make it worthy of its strapline "a school to be proud of".

One of the major keys to school improvement is close collaboration with other schools who have a similar ethos. As such, we continue to work closely and enjoy strong partnerships with feeder primary schools and other high schools within the district and beyond.

The recent shelving of the White Paper in December 2022 could be seen as an indication that joining an academy trust is no longer necessary for schools, but with over 80% of all high schools now academies, the momentum the government hoped for as outlined in the White Paper is well underway. You may be aware that many Lancashire schools are forming partnerships under the umbrella of multi-academy trusts and Ashton is no exception. Back in 2019, we explored a range of opportunities to work with Multi Academy Trusts in Lancashire before choosing to work with The Bay. More of our ongoing relationship can be found within this letter and more about The Bay can be found by following this link: www.baylearningtrust.com

Ashton's relationship with Ripley St Thomas, which is the founder school of The Bay Learning Trust, dates to 2007, with our involvement in the then Ripley Teaching School Alliance. Since then, Ripley has developed from being a stand-alone academy to an academy trust that currently has 4 secondary schools. Our relationship with the teaching school has developed and strengthened over the last 16 years. In 2019/20, we consulted to join The Bay Learning Trust, but that consultation was delayed by the need for further due diligence and with the onset of covid, the process was halted.

However, we continued with our school improvement and support arrangement with The Bay Learning Trust and for over the last 2 plus years, have utilised excellent school support and challenge in terms of developing our curriculum to ensure it offers the very best for all our students. I am delighted to say that the 2022 GCSE results are among the best the school has ever achieved, with our published Progress 8 figure sitting at 0, and current progress across the school is very positive.



After a lot of research and lengthy discussions, Ashton Community Science College School Governors voted unanimously to go to consultation to convert the school to an academy and join the Bay Learning Trust. This request was then taken to the Department for Education in December and they have given us the go ahead to look at joining the Bay Learning Trust. As such, we are writing to advise you of the Governing Body's intention to proceed with the conversion of Ashton Community Science College. This letter aims to give you the information you need to understand our decision and the direction of travel as we move to join a family of schools within an academy trust.

What is an academy?

For well over a decade now, education in England has been delivered through a new form of establishment which takes the best of an existing school and enables it to move forward with greater legal freedoms to create the best working environment for the needs of its students and staff. The school has traditionally been maintained by the local authority but changing times and greater opportunities have demonstrated that outcomes for all are much improved when education is managed and delivered by educationalists and those with the expertise to support teachers to deliver education, sharing best practice, and tailored to their students.

Why is conversion happening?

The Government made its commitment to transforming the remaining school's estate to academies by 2030 in the now shelved White Paper, and consequently, over 80% secondary schools in the country are academies. The Education Secretary has stated the government remains committed to the aims of the school's bill, despite shelving plans to legislate for now.

Governors have taken the opportunity to identify an academy trust which it believes can partner with the school to take it forward as the education landscape evolves. We want to ensure we determine the path forward for our students and staff and believe we have done so through discussions and work with our chosen Academy Trust. The Headteacher has been engaged in these discussions and formed part of our decision-making process. As a school, we have chosen The Bay Learning Trust because its ethos and values align with our own, putting the child at the centre of all we do.

There are inevitably concerns that a school will have to change once it joins a trust and in some cases that is true. Schools taken over by trusts sometimes have to adopt a "trust way", which may be very different to their own. This is not the case here. We are not being taken over by The Bay, we are asking to join. Our school itself would not change in terms of staff, values, mission, and vision. Our school's name, uniform, branding, school day, term dates, staff pay and conditions, the everyday experience for students, parents and staff would stay the same. However, we know the partnership would mean enhanced collaboration between the schools in the trust, with staff having wider opportunities to share good practice, which in turn will lead to more rapid and sustained school improvement. As a school, we want the best possible results for all our young people; working within this family of schools would help further ensure all our young people reach their full potential.

How will conversion take place?

The Advisory Board has approved our application for academy status, subject to the statutory consultation required under the Academies Act 2010, and for us to join The Bay Learning Trust. The process to convert to an academy will sit seamlessly alongside the normal day-to-day operation of the school. It will be a collective project with the school, Academy Trust and Department for Education, ensuring that the transition is as smooth as possible, with students and staff being at the forefront of our minds. The activities needed to affect the legal conversion will be done in the background so that teachers continue to focus on student's learning and development. During this time, we will continue to work with Academy Trust professionals to share best practice and develop our curriculum and our systems and structures with their support. The school will remain within the same school buildings and on the same site that our students and community are familiar with, and the Local Authority will continue with proposed repair works to our estate.

When will conversion take place?

The Governors, Senior Leaders and the Academy Trust will work alongside the Department for Education to achieve a conversion by October 2023. There may be matters which arise that require this date to be revised; however, we will continue to monitor matters to keep them on track and continue to communicate with parents and interested parties as we approach the target date if we need to make any change. Miss Asquith (Headteacher), Mr Swindells (Chair of Governors), Governors and our senior team feel very strongly that this is an excellent opportunity for our school. The benefits for all our young people are really clear to us, and, since our children are at the heart of everything we do at school, I am seeking your support with this.

Consultation feedback

Governors are now formally consulting on the decision to convert to an academy. Parents and interested parties are invited to share their views with Governors to enable us to consider relevant matters before we proceed further with the conversion process. You can submit your views to consultation@ashtoncsc.com or by sending them in writing to the school office for the attention of Miss Harrison, Clerk to Governors. The consultation period will run from Thursday 2nd March 2023 to 12.00 noon on Thursday 30th March 2023.

Additionally, there will be a consultation meeting for parents on Monday 6th March at 5pm. There will be a presentation and an opportunity for you to ask further questions for clarification. Should you wish to attend this meeting, please telephone the main reception to confirm your attendance.

An Academy consultation page has been set up on our website, where you will find copies of this letter, some frequently asked questions which I hope prove useful at this stage and a timeline for consultation.

Many thanks as always for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Asquith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Miss S Asquith
Headteacher

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Swindells". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mr John Swindells
Chair of Governors