



The Neale-Wade Community College

A Mathematics & Computing Specialist College

Wimblington Road March Cambs PE15 9PX

Principal: Tim Hitch

July 2011



Maths & Computing



Cambridgeshire
County Council



Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to let you know that the Governing Body of Neale-Wade Community College is considering the possibility of converting to academy status.

Academies are state funded schools, which receive all of their funding directly from central government rather than from local authorities.

I am sure you are aware that Neale-Wade Community College has been judged to be a Satisfactory School with Good features. That is the judgement of Ofsted but we know that we are an improving school because of the progress and achievements of our students.

Currently this judgement means we do not qualify to apply for Academy status unless we federate with another school judged to be Good or Outstanding. However, Neale-Wade has been working in partnership for several years with both Sir Harry Smith Community College in Whittlesey and Cromwell Community College in Chatteris. This means that each school operates independently but works together on a number of issues where collaboration makes sense.

Our view is that Fenland Partnership schools should seek Academy status because of the potential benefits it presents. Moreover, we believe that there could be considerable advantage in acting collaboratively on this issue.

Currently Sir Harry Smith Community College, with an Ofsted judgement of Good with Outstanding features, is the only school eligible to apply for Academy status within the Fenland Partnership. Sir Harry Smith Community College has agreed to take the lead for Cromwell Community College and Neale-Wade Community College to seek Academy status.

The Governing Body of the College sees important advantages in becoming an Academy and now wishes to consult with students, staff, parents and the wider community on the proposal that an application should be made to the Department for Education for Academy status.

The chief advantage of converting to academy status will be that Neale-Wade will benefit from a significant increase in funding. We think it is important that our students are able to benefit from the same levels of funding as the students in our neighbouring schools and the majority of other secondary schools in Cambridgeshire.

Telephone: 01354 653430 Fax: 01354 659429

Website: www.neale-wade.cambs.sch.uk

Email: office@neale-wade.cambs.sch.uk



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Specialist Schools Trust
EXCELLENCE AND DIVERSITY



In addition to this increase in funding, academies have a number of freedoms in comparison to schools maintained directly by local authorities, and I have outlined the most significant freedoms below.

- **The ability to set their own pay and conditions of staff**

The Governors are clear that they would not seek to use this freedom and would formally commit themselves to recognising all national agreements in relation to pay and conditions for staff.

- **Freedom from following the National Curriculum**

The Governors would only use this freedom to innovate and improve provision for students. Any changes of this type would be introduced only after full consultation with all concerned.

- **The ability to change the lengths of terms and school days**

The Governors are clear that they would not seek to use this freedom and would formally commit themselves to recognising national agreements and norms.

- **Freedom from local authority control**

Neale-Wade has benefitted greatly from working in partnership with the Local Authority and with other schools in the County. Neale-Wade would remain fully committed to working in partnership with both the Local Authority and other schools across the County, whether or not they are academies. However, Neale-Wade would be able to purchase certain services from alternate suppliers.

Apart from the significant freedoms outlined above, academy status would leave most other aspects of the College unaffected and I have outlined some significant examples below.

- **Governance**

The principles of governance are the same in academies as in maintained schools, but the governing body has greater autonomy.

- **Admissions, special educational needs and exclusions**

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were maintained schools.

- **Collaboration**

Academies have to ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

Selection

Schools which already select some or all of their pupils will be able to continue to do so if they become academies, but schools becoming academies cannot decide to become newly selective schools. Neale-Wade is non-selective and this will continue to be the case.

- **Freedom of information**

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act (2000) applies to academies as it does to maintained schools.

Further information about academies is widely available on the internet, but the websites listed below are particularly helpful. The first link is for the relevant webpage of the Department for Education and the second link is for the relevant webpage of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies

www.ssatrust.org.uk/Academies

The Governing Body is keen to consult with parents on the possibility of Neale-Wade converting to academy status.

Your views

It would be very helpful to have any written comments sent to the College before Friday 30 September 2011.

Please address letters and emails to:

The Clerk to the Governors
Academy Status
Neale-Wade Community College
Wimblington Road
March
Cambs
PE15 9PX

Or email:

academy@neale-wade.cambs.sch.uk

Meetings

For parents and wider community: Wednesday 28 September 2011 7pm in the College hall

For students: Via assemblies and the Student Council

The outcome of the consultation will be presented to the Full Governors Body before a final decision is made. A written summary will also be provided for staff, parents and the wider community.

I hope that parents will contribute their views to this consultation and the Governing Body look forward to receiving your comments.

Yours sincerely



Jenny Nickalls
Chair of Governors