

31st January 2017

Dear Parents/Carers

We write to inform you that the Governing Board of Gravel Hill Primary School have unanimously agreed to apply to the Department for Education (DfE) for permission to begin the process of applying for Academy status as a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

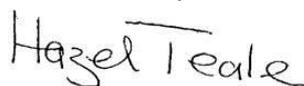
The Governors took this decision after lengthy deliberation, mindful of the current educational climate as the Government continues to encourage schools to become Academies. Converting to Academy status will enable us to choose how we want our school to develop. We believe that it will enable Gravel Hill to thrive and prosper and continue to provide a high quality learning and teaching environment for your children. It will also increase the flexibility of use of our school budget and funds to give us more freedom to spend it to best meet the priorities of the school and our children.

We are still in the consultation stage and once we have agreed our Scheme of Delegation we will formally begin the process. Once the DfE recognise our drive to achieve high standards in teaching and learning and given us the go ahead we will start a formal consultation with parents, staff and other interested parties on the process of Academisation.

The Governors took the decision to apply to become a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) within the Unity Academy Trust as this will enable the school to be part of a small Academy and not be part of a major chain. The only other school currently within the Unity Academy Trust is Upland Primary School in Bexleyheath with whom we share the same visions and passion for our children's learning. The vision of the Unity Academy Trust is to provide children with the skills to become learners for life. By enabling children to develop academically, physically, socially, mentally and creatively through an inspiring curriculum they may become well rounded individuals ready for the world beyond Primary School. As an Academy we would be funded directly by the government rather than by the local authority.

We will be doing preparatory work this term prior to beginning the formal consultation next term and anticipate that we will achieve Academy status during 2017. There will be an opportunity for you to come and hear more about the proposal and to ask questions on **Wednesday 8th February at 3.30pm and Thursday 9th February at 9.05am**. Please be assured that we will share information with you regularly as the process unfolds, but some preliminary information is provided overleaf. Governors and Staff at Gravel Hill Primary School remain committed to achieving the best possible learning environment for our pupils.

Yours sincerely



Mrs H Teale
Chair of Governors

Preliminary facts relating to Academy Status

If we become an Academy, what will change?

- The school will have a change in legal status, becoming a charitable company limited by guarantee
- The school will be funded directly from government and not the Local Authority
- The school will also be able to apply for and access other forms of additional funding
- The school will be directly accountable to government
- The school will have a board of trustees who, together with the Senior Leadership team, will make key decisions for the Academy
- The school would initially be the only school in the Multi Academy Trust (MAT), but this type of Academy structure would allow the school to lead and select additional schools to join the Academy in due course, if this was agreed to be beneficial

If we become an Academy, what will stay the same?

- The school will continue to be a non-selective, non-fee paying state school serving the Bexleyheath area
- The school will continue to teach the national curriculum and be part of national assessment tests. It will continue to be inspected by Ofsted.
- Academies are more free to choose their own applications/admissions policy, but we intend to continue our admission policy in line with that currently determined by the Local Authority
- Our vision for the school will not change.
- The emphasis of the school will continue to be on achievement and teaching and learning
- The school name, school uniform and the times of the school day.

What is the timescale?

- Preparatory work for the consultation process will begin this term, imminently
- The formal consultation with parents and staff will take place during the summer term.
- Formal consultation will take the form of public meetings with parents and other interested parties

Is this a final decision to become an Academy?

- In order to even begin the process of deciding to become an Academy, a school must first gain agreement from the Department for Education via an 'Academy Order'; this is the stage we are now at
- An Academy Order allows a school to begin the process of decision making and consultation regarding potential Academisation
- Therefore, this decision is not final and the process has only begun. It is crucial to consult and gather views before considering any final decision
- Parents wishing to access more detailed information in advance of the consultation process can see the following

link:

<https://www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools>