

Parent consultation Talk 7th November 2017

Welcome to Churchfield.
Thank you for coming.

My name's Louise Ray and I am the Chair of governors here at Churchfield.

The Governing Board have put on this event, to answer your questions and hear what you have to say, about the idea of Churchfield becoming an academy and joining Ivy Learning Trust.

Plan:

The way we're going to do that, is I'm going to talk to you briefly about why we're considering this and then we'll have discussion time at the tables, where you can ask further questions of governors, staff and representatives of Ivy. Then if you have questions that aren't answered, or comments you want the governors to be aware of, please write them down. They will be collected and the governors will consider them at our next meeting.

If at a later date, something comes to mind, you can email the office, or hand in a letter for the attention of the Chair of governors. The consultation is open until the 12th December.

The aim of this exercise is to understand eachothers points of view.

Why are we looking at becoming an academy? Why now?

Context

In September 2015, we started the year with a whole new leadership team, new head teacher (HT), deputies and assistant heads. In February the head teacher left. We then had a consultant head for a few months and in September an Acting Head was appointed. It was far too much change. We as parents knew it was awful and the school was suffering. I remember saying to another mum, we just have to survive this year. My older daughters class had about ten teachers that year. I was elected during the autumn term, to be a parent governor. In the Spring term I attended my first meeting and started to get involved. Governance was not as it should have been.

Last October, I was part of a small group of governors, who (on the advice of the local authority) decided to bring in Matthew Kleiner-Mann and his team, to strengthen the school. Matthew is a National Leader of Education and Lavender where he was originally Head Teacher is a National Support School – part of what they do, is send staff out to support other schools.

We made that decision because:

- Churchfield did not have strong enough leadership,
- systems weren't working,
- results had been very poor in 2016 (yr 6 SATs were in the bottom 10% nationally).

The school was really in trouble.

Matthew Kleiner Mann and his team: Nicki Jaeggi and Natalie Lorkins, have now been here a year. Nicki and Natalie were both on secondment to start with, but have successfully applied for full time posts, Nicki being appointed in Feb as our Associate HT. We have also had school to school support from both Lavender and Brimsdown schools.

So for example if the leadership identified that year 3 teachers need some further training in teaching maths, we would have a member of staff from one of those schools come and spend a few hours with them. The impact of this new leadership and support for all levels of staff, from both Lavender and Brimsdown schools, has been fantastic. The school has really been lifted.

Impact: External validation

Ofsted did an inspection in June last year – our overall judgement was requires improvement (RI), but within that schools are judged on individual elements. By the way, Ofsted was a really positive experience, governors and leadership are now a team at Churchfield and all pulling in the right direction, which definitely was not the case in the Federation.

- Leadership was judged to be good. A year before the Department of Education had required leadership change, so you can imagine how bad it must have been. We now have external validation that the leadership here is meeting the standard it should be. The lead inspector was very positive about the direction the school is going in and confident that when we are next inspected we will definitely be good.
- Early Years Foundation Stage (nursery & reception) Ofsted judged as good. What our children are getting is fantastic. That's especially important for children who don't speak English at home, who need a rich language environment. We want those children to be fluently bilingual or tri-lingual! A year ago, our early years was a poor provision. When Nicki joined us she turned that around very quickly.
 - My daughter went through nursery when it wasn't good and she still learned a lot, made progress and had fun. It still had value, but it wasn't the high professional standard that we want to offer. I believe we have future world leaders in our classes and we need to serve them well. We also have children whose strengths are not academic and some who have special needs, and they matter just as much. It will continue to be a priority, if we become an academy, that those children get the support and challenge they need. We may actually be in a stronger position regarding special needs, able to draw on expertise across the group of schools (and you need to know that Ivy Learning Trust is currently 2 schools, if we join it will be 3, but the trust plans to grow, although it will remain local).
- Behaviour, personal development and well being – Ofsted judged as good. That means our children are safe at school. Behaviour has often been good here, that isn't new, and is a credit to the families. The behaviour policy is new and you as a parent group had input into the values which it is based on. Positive values are being actively taught, modelled and rewarded now, which wasn't happening before. Education isn't just about academic achievement. We want our children to be fun to live with and easy to work with and know how to form healthy relationships.
- Ofsted have commented on how good morale is and that impacts on retention and the stability of the school. Churchfield is now a very positive and exciting place to be.

In July last year we had SATs results for our yr 6. They did brilliantly, so congratulations go to those kids. A lot of work went on to enable that, so well done to the year 6 team and especially to Natalie who oversaw it. Our results were almost equal to the national average, which is an excellent improvement.

The staff have worked incredibly hard to make a lot of changes and improvements and they deserve our respect for what they've done and the commitment they've shown to our

children. Thank your child's class teacher. Smile at them. Teaching is a very demanding job.

In addition to our own staff working really hard, we owe a lot to the very good working relationships that have been built up with both Lavender and Brimsdown. Mrs Jaeggi our Ass. HT came from Brimsdown. Natalie Lorkins one of our DHs was from Lavender.

The link

So the schools and staff who have helped us in our journey of improving Churchfield, have now both become academies and jointly formed, the Ivy Learning Trust. It's like we have been an unofficial member of this club already. So in order to continue and formalise our links with them, to further benefit the school, the board is considering becoming an academy as a member of their trust.

This proposal is all about securing the schools future, building stability and continuing our journey towards providing the best education possible for our children.

Wider context

Many of you will know the government has been encouraging schools to convert to academies for several years now. At one point it was going to be compulsory, but that has changed and schools are free to stay maintained by their local authorities – which is what we currently are - provided they are doing well. If a school is considered by Ofsted to be failing, they can be forced to academise and put into a multi academy trust (MAT), who are then responsible for their improvement. As no school can 100% guarantee their future results, this is a threat that hangs over schools, especially with the recruitment and retention problems we face in outer London. If we loose a good teacher and are unable to replace them with someone of the same standard, the level of education we offer will drop and its easy for results to slide. So, pro actively joining a MAT and one where we are happy with the values of the leadership, and we are confident they'll be good communication with the Trust, takes away that uncertainty.

Another factor is local authority funding

In the 10 years from 2010 to 2020, the core funding to Enfield council will have been cut by 60%. We have already seen the support Enfield can give to schools be scaled back, as they have less staff.

One of the big advantages of joining Ivy Learning Trust is their level of commitment to us as a school. They would then have an invested interest in our continued improvement and so would do everything possible to make sure we have the staff and resources we need. Its a higher level of commitment than we have from Enfield.

Other primary schools in Enfield

A variety of other Enfield primaries, or All-Through Schools, like Edmonton County, that include a primary age group, have become academies in recent years. This isn't an unusual decision anymore.

Finance and Governance

The structural changes involved in becoming an academy and part of a MAT, affect finance and governance.

- One real positive about MATs is increased scrutiny of governance. Governance is there to hold the school leaders to account for keeping children safe, good teaching and learning, and sound financial management. Its a safety net, to ensure schools stay on track. When governance fails, that's when schools get in trouble. That's what happened in the Federation. So I welcome that additional input. Joining the MAT means the legal responsibility for the school shifts from the governing board, to the Trust, who then delegate responsibilities back to us.
- Some finance work would be centralised in a MAT. School finance is under a huge amount of pressure, having been at a stand still for two years while other costs have increased. As you may know we are in the process of re-structuring some types of support staff and reducing the number of posts, in order to balance our budget. We have to find ways to save money. As part of a bigger group of schools there would be efficiency savings and they will be very welcome.

Some points from the briefing paper about Ivy Learning Trust

- Ivy wants local schools to keep their individuality and make their own decisions about teaching and learning. This is not a MAT that will impose a one size fits all approach.
- Ivy wants schools to have strong local governing boards and with parent representatives.
- Being part of a bigger group of schools, is good for retention of our strongest teachers.
 - In the future when Churchfield is a strong stable school, offering excellent education, being an academy will mean we can be part of supporting other schools in need of help. Local authority maintained schools are not asked to do that. That opportunity is an attractive challenge for talented teachers and will help keep good staff.

In summary, I view becoming an academy within Ivy, as an opportunity to continue to improve the level of education we offer our children. I see it as a very positive prospect.