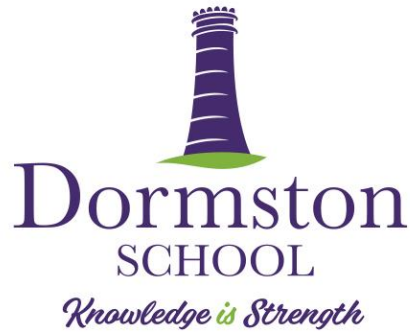


Our Ref: CSN/KON

7 June 2024

**ALL PARENTS/CARERS**



Dear Parent/Carer

### **Consultation to Convert to Academy Status and Join Heart of Mercia Multi Academy Trust**

I hope that you are well and have had a restful half term break. As a governing board, we have been considering what the future looks like for Dormston School for a considerable period of time. We are mindful of the diminishing capacity of the local authority to provide continuing support for maintained schools such as Dormston, and the growth of school-led approaches, such as multi-academy trusts, which puts school improvement in the hands of the strongest schools and school leaders. As you will be aware, for several years now the Government has been encouraging all schools to consider converting to academy status within a family of schools.

We already work closely with King Edwards VI College in Stourbridge, and recently have been approached with the offer to join them in the Heart of Mercia Multi Academy Trust.

Many Dormston students move on to King Edwards and we have been discussing how our schools might work even closer in partnership to provide mutual support, challenge, and benefits for each other within the Heart of Mercia Trust. Our governing boards have a shared vision, ethos and ambition for our schools. Within a more formal partnership, we could work closer together to continue to provide an excellent education for our pupils while protecting each school's role at the heart of its community and retaining its unique qualities and strengths. After much discussion and careful consideration, we have decided to be proactive and explore the potential to convert to academy status and join King Edwards VI College in establishing a local trust hub within the Heart of Mercia MAT.

### **Key points of converting to academy status within the Heart of Mercia Trust**

- Dormston will not change its character, ethos and values and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now;
- Mrs Sutton and a Local Governing Board will continue to lead the school on a daily basis as they do now, and parents will continue to be represented on the Local Governing Board;
- the name of the school will not change and the uniform will stay the same;
- school holidays will be the same as Dudley schools, as it is now;
- children with special needs will continue to receive additional support in the way they do now;
- we will continue to work closely with our local schools in Dudley, including our local primary schools in areas such as Year 6/Year 7 transition and events;
- the MAT arrangements will share some central services across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children.

Nationally, over 80% of secondary schools are already academies. The local authority is currently in difficulty. As their budget deficit increases, the local authority is reducing the services that it has available to schools such as Dormston. Making this change now means that we can future proof the school for the long-term and choose how we want Dormston to grow and flourish going forward.



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Head Teacher: Mrs C Sutton

**Converting to academy status within the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust would increase our capacity and ability to:**

- develop the highest quality of teaching and learning;
- develop the highest quality of leadership and management;
- retain our autonomy in developing the school curriculum to make sure that it is personalised to the needs of our pupils, ensuring high expectation and total conviction that all pupils can succeed whatever their circumstances, background or previous level of attainment;
- access economic benefits such as centralised services;
- enable us to support each other as the support from local authority reduces;
- increase the flexibility of the school budget and funds which gives us more freedom to spend it to best meet the priorities of the school and pupils;
- provide the opportunity to establish succession planning programmes and in doing so, retain good staff who might otherwise move on – including senior leaders.

Whilst we will see real benefits in working closely together, any changes are likely to be behind the scenes. You and your children will see little visible difference if we become an academy within the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust. Having carried out extensive research into the benefits of academisation, the governing board believes that exploring this proposal is the best way to support the school in continuing to develop and improve, and that working together with King Edwards VI within the MAT will bring benefits to teaching and learning and future outcomes.

**How to take part in the consultation process**

**At this stage we are not committing the school to conversion to academy status.** We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision. We would ask that you let us have your views by emailing [questions@dormston.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:questions@dormston.dudley.sch.uk) by **midday on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

Governors will meet after this date to consider how to proceed.

We do not intend to make any changes on conversion. Please be assured that the character, ethos, and values of the school would remain completely unchanged should academy conversion take place. In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children.

Yours sincerely



**Mr Craig**  
**Chair of Governors**



**Mrs Sutton**  
**Headteacher**