



3 July 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

Thank you for all your responses. We recognise that a number of stakeholders have requested a longer consultation period and, therefore, we have extended it until 1st October 2018. It was never the intention to push the academy order through behind closed doors and we acted on the advice from the Department for Education which was that, schools can carry out their consultation at any point before, during or after an application. We are aware that several other schools, including some in Waltham Forest, have had their applications rejected and we were concerned about going out to consultation before we knew that academisation was a viable option. Our application has still not been approved.

A number of the consultation responses have mentioned a figure of £250,000 reserves and we would like to clarify our current financial position. The figure mentioned was the balance of our reserves as at 31st March 2017. During the last financial year, ending 31st March 2018, Handsworth had an income of just under £2.2 million and spent just over £2.3 million running the school. In order to maintain the school's high standards under the current national budgetary pressures on schools, we had to use over £135,000 of these reserves and that left us with revenue reserves of £117,000. At the end of the current financial year, 31st March 2019, we forecast that our reserves will have reduced to approximately £70,000. This equates to less than two weeks' running costs for the school.

As governors, we are committed to managing the school's finances responsibly and, as such, we recognise that running a deficit budget year on year is not sustainable. The governors would prefer not to make significant cuts to spending; rather we believe that increased income generation and smarter procurement are the best options for the long-term financial viability of the school. We believe that being part of a larger academy trust will provide these opportunities.

We have previously generated extra income by supporting other schools within the local authority and, since 2016, we have generated in excess of £135,000 in this way. The opportunities to do this are diminishing because schools in special measures now have to academise and new schools now only open as part of academy trusts. 41% of schools in Waltham Forest are already academies with three more schools, including Handsworth, going through the consultation process. The governors have explored a range of options in addition to academising with REAch2 and we can discuss this more fully at the upcoming parents' meetings.

The forthcoming timeline for the consultation is as follows:

- Extended consultation period until 1st October 2018
- First consultation meeting with parents/carers – Thursday 5th July at 10am. For parents/carers who cannot attend, there will be a further evening meeting to which you will be invited – we are in the process of confirming the date of this meeting. Questions raised with responses from the 5th July meeting, will be uploaded to the website at the earliest opportunity.
- Application scheduled to be discussed at the Head Teachers' Board on 19th July 2018.
- If the application is approved, the conversion process will take a minimum of five months from the approval date.
- Full Governing Body Meeting on 19th July 2018 at 5pm
- Further stakeholder meetings – September 2018.
- End of consultation – 1st October 2018.
- Earliest possible conversion date – 1st January 2018
- Funding Agreement signed in the month leading up to conversion date.
There is no commitment to convert until the funding agreement is signed.

Governors will continue to carry out our due diligence over the coming months. The intention has always been to have meaningful consultation and there is a full dialogue with staff with a staff ballot to be arranged. We are also engaging with the unions. Staff will be given the opportunity to meet with REAch2 and raise questions. They will also be given the opportunity to visit local REAch2 schools so they can make informed decisions. There is a system in place for staff to raise anonymous questions or concerns.

We will continue to have meetings with parents and would like to use the extended consultation period to look at how we can best work with parents, teachers and other stakeholders to get the best outcome for the school. Please continue to use governors@handsworth.waltham.sch.uk and, whilst we are unable to respond individually, we are capturing your questions and will continue to update the FAQs in response to your emails.

The Governing Body act in a voluntary capacity to support the strategic leadership of the school. Like you, we are committed to and passionate about Handsworth and always aim to act in the best interests of the school.

The Governing Body