

Monday 14 June 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: The change of category of Samuel Ward Arts and Technology College to an Academy

The governing body of Samuel Ward Arts and Technology College is considering a change of category to become an Academy in line with the Government's plans for a reformed system of strong, autonomous schools and a modernised role for local authorities. The decision to change category resides entirely with the governing body. However, we are committed to considering the views of all interested parties and we explain below how you may make your views known.

Academies are publicly funded independent schools, free from local authority control.

Our school and governing body are committed to exercising the increased autonomy which Academy Status brings is intended to promote innovation and educational entrepreneurship by giving school leaders more freedom to decide how best to meet the needs of their pupils, parents and wider communities. Also Academies have the flexibility to maximise the use of their assets. A vital part of the Government's vision is to create a more diverse school system offering excellence and choice, where each school has a strong ethos and sense of mission and acts as a centre of excellence or specialist provision. We believe Academy Status will help us to achieve this vision.

As the admission authority we are committed to serving the local community and we would have to "act in accordance with" the Code of Practice for admissions. If we decide to become an Academy we will consult on our proposed admission policy within the timescales of the Code. Until this process is completed admissions into the school will be under the same oversubscription criteria as are operating now.

Our relationship and collaborative working with our feeder primary schools and other partnerships will continue in the same way as now.

We believe that we have the experience and expertise to use the additional autonomies of Academy Status to continue the development of the school and raise standards. It is very clear that the Government sees greater autonomy for schools as the next stage in the development of the education service and wants schools to be more proactive in developing their individual strengths in response to the needs of the local community.

Our most recent Ofsted report stated that Samuel Ward is an outstanding school. We see Academy Status as being a key component in our future development as we intend to use this as a platform from which to “re-energise” the whole school community and focus on the best ways to raise standards for our pupils. By becoming an Academy we will be able to share experiences with other schools across the country and learn from each other as we develop strategies and processes for improvement. Our commitment to local partnerships will remain and we will be actively seeking to maximise the impact on standards that these bring to our school.

Some important things would not change if we were to become an Academy:

- The governing body would still have to elect parent and staff governors
- We would not become a selective school and would continue to accept SEN children as we do now. We have explained that we would consult about any admissions policy.

This letter is part of our informal consultation. The next step will be a meeting of the governing body on Tuesday 13 July 2010 to consider any responses to this letter and make a decision about continuing with the process. The consultation process ends on Monday 12 July 2010 and all responses must be received by that date.

We welcome any comments you might wish to make in writing or by email using the address at the top of this letter.

We will tell you about the formal process when we have considered the responses to this letter and made the decision about whether to continue.

This information is also published on the school website www.samuelward.co.uk.

Yours sincerely



Howard Lay
Headteacher