



Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

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'Excellence for All'

29th April 2014

Sixth Form and Teaching School Update

Dear Parent/Carer

We have just received the wonderful news that our bid for capital funding for our Sixth Form expansion plans has been successful! We will now receive the funding from the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund to allow us to open a Sixth Form in September 2015. I know from speaking with many of you that this will allow us to meet a long held ambition for the majority of parents and carers. It will also allow us to fulfil the aspiration of my predecessor, the remarkable Miss Paula Williams.

There is much work to be done in the lead up to September 2015, not only in terms of building logistics, but also in terms of planning the outstanding teaching provision that our pupils deserve. I have long believed that every school which can sustain a viable Sixth Form provision should be allowed to have one. The raising of the participation age to 18 further strengthens the argument that pupils should be allowed to continue their post-16 learning in the school where they enjoy such success in their GCSE exams. However, we do not expect our pupils to stay on at Whitburn simply because it is their local school; we want pupils to attend a Whitburn Sixth Form because we are confident that we can replicate our outstanding GCSE progress and attainment at A level.

This is not a challenge we have undertaken lightly or in haste. Over the last three years, we have been working to build capacity for Sixth Form provision once the opportunity arose. All recent appointments for teaching posts have been made with this in mind and we now have a substantial number of our staff with recent successful A level teaching experience. Our staff training has included a strong focus on post-16 teaching and a significant number of staff have re-taken their A level exams to ensure they are fully aware of current specifications. Our focus will now be on recruiting additional staff with strong track records in post-16 teaching and ensuring that all teaching staff are fully aware of what it takes to deliver outstanding A level provision.

Yesterday we also received confirmation that we can now publicise the fact that we have been designated as a Teaching School. We have known about the success of our application for some weeks but frustratingly the Department for Education had placed an embargo on successful applicants releasing the information. However we can now celebrate another fantastic accolade for the remarkable school I have the privilege of leading.

Teaching Schools were introduced in 2011 for schools rated as "outstanding". They take a leading role in recruiting and training new entrants to the profession, identifying leadership potential and providing support for other schools. They work with partner schools in an alliance, which also includes at least one university, to ensure high quality school-led initial teacher training and

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professional development opportunities for teachers at all stages of their career. Teaching School status brings us substantial funding over the next four years to allow us to deliver this high calibre training and professional development, which ultimately ensures that pupils benefit from our culture of continuous improvements in teaching and learning.

The school has also gained the accolade of being designated as a National Support School, in recognition of the support which we have given to other local schools, particularly within Durham Diocese. This is testimony to the outstanding work of our teaching staff, middle leaders and senior leaders in working with colleagues from other schools to help them improve the quality of their teaching and learning. It also brings many new ideas back into Whitburn, again directly benefiting our pupils.

I did write in the last edition of 'Whitburn World' that I hoped April would be a landmark month in the history of Whitburn Church of England Academy. Coupled with the outstanding judgment in our SIAMS inspection, the fantastic news we have received in the last 24 hours has certainly made it a month to remember. I would like to thank all parents and carers for their continued patience and support, especially those of you who took the time to write to Mr Gove in support of our funding bid. I believe that these letters and the Teaching School designation were key factors in ensuring that the decision makers were fully aware of exactly who we were and why we had an undeniable case!

The hard work starts now, but I hope that you will be as delighted as we are with the news of the Sixth Form expansion and the next exciting phase for our unique school. Rest assured there will be regular progress updates and opportunities for you to contribute your views as we create the outstanding Sixth Form our pupils deserve.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Hardie". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

A Hardie
Principal