

# The Proposed Academy in Taunton Newsletter

November 2009

## Sponsors' Message

Welcome to the November issue of the newsletter which keeps you up to date with the latest news about the proposed Academy for Taunton. These are exciting times for all of us, as we start thinking about a new name for the Academy and then a logo and a uniform.

First of all, we're delighted to be able to introduce the Academy's Principal Designate, Mark Trusson, who will start work in his new job in January 2010. Mark's priorities will be planning a new and innovative curriculum, devising a new staffing structure with the sponsors, and thinking about how the Academy will work with its Partners. Mark is interviewed in this issue by students from Ladymead and St. Augustine's schools.

The Taunton Academy will be a Church of England School which welcomes young people from all faiths and none. Maureen Bollard, the Diocese's Director of Education explains what this will mean in practice overleaf.

Because the Academy won't need to follow all of the same rules and regulations as other schools, we're free to be much more creative about how we deliver a first-class education for your children. In this issue we've explained more about what will make this Academy different – from a House system to dramatically increasing the number of mentors – adults who guide and advise young people through their time at the Academy.

The next milestone for the Academy will be SCC's decision on whether to close the two predecessor schools on 9 December. If the closure is agreed, the next step will be the signing of the Funding Agreement by the Secretary of State. Check the website for details.

We're always keen to hear what you think so please share your views with us using the contact details in the panel overleaf.

## Students interview Principal Designate



### How will you bring together the two existing schools together into one whole school?

After lots of discussions and meetings we have a plan that the senior leaders of both schools have agreed on, based on what is best for the pupils, staff and other adults. For example, we now have joint sports teams. One of the joint football teams thrashed another local school in the cup! St. Augustine's Year 9 pupils have all visited Ladymead for a taster day to experience the BTEC vocational courses. Both sets of pupils will follow these courses together over Year 9. We are considering a similar approach with Year 7 and the competency curriculum both schools run. Over the next few months I intend to talk to pupils in both schools about their worries, things they'd like to see happen and ensure that by September 2010 we are all raring to go! It is a really exciting opportunity.

### How will you work with the Student Voice?

We are bringing together both schools' Student Voices so as to get a co-ordinated approach to what pupils want and how they can contribute to the design of the Academy. Both schools really value this forum and I want the Academy's Student Voice to be a really strong driver for improvement. The biggest change will be the chance for the Student Voice to talk directly to the governing body. We need to ensure that students' voices are heard.

### What additional courses are you planning for the sixth form?

The curriculum has yet to be designed and the Sponsors will want to have a strong say in this. However, we do not want to replicate the courses on offer at other FE/Post 16 providers, as these are very strong and successful in Taunton. So our courses will fill a niche market! They will have a strong health dimension, so as to fit in with the Academy specialism. We also want courses that there is clear progression to the next level. The Academy will be part of the 14-19 Taunton Deane and West Somerset consortium and we will contribute to delivering Diplomas as well as more established academic and vocational courses. I am really excited that we can link our 14-16 work to Post 16 and beyond. Thanks for asking, by the way – some very good questions!

## What's so different about learning in this Academy?

As an Academy we will be able to do things differently and we plan on making some changes that we believe will make a big difference to our young people. Young people will each have their own mentor who they will be able to see at least once a week.

We're also planning to introduce a 'House' system. Every young person will join a House at the beginning of their time at the Academy and stay in that House throughout their entire school time. Years 7 and 8 will take many of their lessons in their Houses. The House system and mentoring will work together to make moving from primary school much easier by helping young people to settle in to the Academy with their House team and mentor as their first points of contact as soon as they get to the Academy. It will also ensure that all students are well known and well supported.

We'll look at the way that the school day is organised including the length and number of lessons each day. This is aimed at boosting learning and giving young people time to explore areas in depth.

## News in Brief



### Academy building – everyone's involved

One of the questions that is most commonly asked about the plans for an Academy is how the Sponsors will manage the process of refurbishment and building. With this in mind a Design User Group has been set up which will feed in to the process. We will ensure that the views of staff and students are considered.

### New look for Academy on its way!

As plans for the Academy gather speed, one of the exciting changes will be the development of a new brand identity for the proposed Academy. The Sponsors are keen for young people at both schools to take part in the process right from the start. We plan to hold a 'branding' workshop soon, where young people will have the chance to share with the Sponsors and designers what they would like to see in a new logo. There will be a report on the workshop in the next edition of this newsletter.

### Thanks for successful evening

The end of September saw open evenings run by Ladymead and St. Augustine's schools which the Sponsors of the proposed Academy attended. There were some fantastic displays and contributions from the young people and the evenings gave the Sponsors a chance to get to know more parents and members of the community. The Sponsors would like to thank the staff and young people who clearly worked extremely hard to put on both evenings.

If you have any questions about or suggestions for the proposed Academy in Taunton, please contact us by emailing [info@churchacademies.org.uk](mailto:info@churchacademies.org.uk)  
[www.proposedacademyfortaunton.org.uk](http://www.proposedacademyfortaunton.org.uk)

## Question and Answers

### When will designs for the uniform be ready to look at?

The first step is to decide the name and what the branding will look like. Then we will look at the uniform. The designs for the uniform will be ready by the end of the Spring term.

### When will I start to see any difference?

There will be some things that change straightaway: the House system which will be in place as soon as the school opens and the mentoring system which will also start immediately. You can read all about these new ideas overleaf. Some things, like the building works, will take longer! While the building work is expected to be completed by September 2013 we'll be taking extra care to make sure that all young people, and especially those who are taking exams, suffer as little disruption as possible.

### My child has SEN – if the proposals go ahead what will it mean for them?

Every child, whatever their needs, will have the opportunity to benefit from the positive changes that Academy status will bring. The Academy, like all other Academies, will be fully inclusive and will follow the admission arrangements for children of all abilities. While there will be changes, we are committed to continuity of care and support.

### When will I know which of the sites my child will be attending?

We're still in the planning stages and we want to make sure that we make the best use of both sites and that the students face least disruption. The students will use both of the existing school sites for the first three years whilst the refurbishments and building works are completed on the Ladymead site. We will update you when we have more detail. We hope to be able to let you know in the spring term. Check the website (see contact information below) for news on this and other developments.



### What will the proposed Academy's Christian foundation mean in practice?

We will value each young person as a unique individual and recognise their potential for both growth and contribution. As a representative of the lead Sponsor for the proposed Academy I would like to take this opportunity to share our thoughts on how the Academy's Christian ethos will support the life of the school.

Firstly, this Academy will be a school for local children. The proposed Academy will be fully inclusive and open to young people of all faiths and none; students currently on the roll of both schools will have an automatic entitlement to a place.

The foundations of the Academy will be core Christian principles and values of love, respect, justice, truth, forgiveness and celebration for all. We expect these to be reflected in the policies of the academy – and of course in the way that all members of the academy relate to one another.

Religious education will be based upon the Somerset agreed syllabus. We believe that it is important for all young people to have an understanding of the major world religions and that faith is an important part of life in the 21st century. The Academy will benefit from links with a range of different local, national and international churches and voluntary groups.

Collective worship and celebration will also be a central part of Academy life. We will offer flexibility to help staff and students find quiet space during the busy day and we expect a chaplaincy team to be a part of the high quality support for young people and staff.

As lead sponsor, the Diocese is also committed to developing a unique endowment fund which over time will bring additional benefit and opportunities for Academy students. We look forward to building together a high quality learning environment within which young people will excel beyond their expectations and encounter a richness of life experience.

**Maureen Bollard**, Diocesan Director of Education