

# URSULA TAYLOR C of E SCHOOL

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The Governing Bodies of Ursula Taylor C of E School, C of E Bromham Lower School, Oakley Lower School and Pinchmill Lower School have been working together in consultation with Bedford Borough to review options in local educational provision. The sole objective being to support a sustainable school route within the Lincroft catchment. We believe that through this collaboration we can offer families the ability to choose the pathway most suited to the needs of their own child. Each of the above schools will be communicating the preferred route specific to the school situation this week.

## **Ursula Taylor C of E School's vision for the future**

The Governing Body of Ursula Taylor School (UTS) have been discussing and looking into the two tier/three tier debate for some time. Through these discussions and meetings with other local schools, the Diocese and the Local Authority, the Governing Body have made the decision to look towards consultation, with the intention of converting Ursula Taylor C of E School from a Lower school, into a Primary school.

The Governing Body believes that converting UTS to a Primary school offers an exciting opportunity to continue providing a high quality of education for our children beyond Year 4, but also to ensure continuity in the way we nurture and care for our children's social and emotional needs.

We believe that by converting from a lower school to a primary school, through the method of extending the age range we can support the well-being and academic progress of our children in the following ways:

- Offering a rich, engaging curriculum to all children from the start of Foundation Stage to the end of Year 6, supporting children's individual needs, be it Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), more able, medical, emotional or social needs.
- Allowing our children to mature and become more resilient before the transfer into a secondary style education
- Providing an extended opportunity to support children and their families and to build strong and productive relationships during the formative years of education
- Giving children the opportunity to complete all of Key Stage 2 in the same environment, ensuring consistency of approach and teaching methods, especially in the run up to National Testing in Year 6. (This will bring the education in our cluster in line with the majority of schools across the country.)

- Providing the opportunity for us to track all our children's academic and personal development from Foundation Stage to the end of the primary age range, making it less likely that there will be a dip in standards as children transfer between schools

We are proposing that a formal consultation will commence in November 2015, consulting stakeholders on the proposal to become a Primary school in September 2017. If successful, we would then begin by extending our age range to include Year 5 provision from September 2017, and then Year 6 from September 2018. We believe that this will enable us to offer freedom of choice to parents, both in the proposed transition phase, and into the future, as they will still be able to take up a place for their child at Lincroft at the beginning of Year 5 should they so wish. Nonetheless, our hope is to retain as many children at the end of Year 4 as possible. To that end we would be committed to offering 60 places in both Year 5 and Year 6, should we become a Primary School, allowing all children to stay on with us should they wish to do so.

This letter is to open up a discussion about the possible changes and ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to engage in an open discussion prior to a formal period of consultation.

**The proposal will give parents the options of:**

- Applying for a place for their child at Lincroft, or another middle school, for Years 5 and 6.

Or:

- Their child remaining at UTS for Years 5 and 6 before transferring to Lincroft at the start of Year 7, to begin Secondary Education there.

**How will this work in line with other local schools?**

You will have seen from the opening paragraph that we are working closely with our colleagues in the schools that also transfer to Lincroft. We are consulting directly with Bromham C of E Lower School and Oakley Lower School, which will be the Lincroft feeder schools under the SAF (Sharnbrook Academy Federation) proposals. We have also consulted with Pinchmill Lower School and the St Alban's Diocese and will also be liaising with Bedford Borough and SAF in the future. Although Lincroft Middle School will be affected the most by the changes we are proposing, the preferred structure proposed by SAF is to have Primary and Secondary education in North Bedfordshire.

Many of the local lower schools were in favour of the two tier system, however, the lack of funding has been the main factor preventing any progress to be made. At Ursula Taylor, we would need to secure four new classrooms and also make significant alterations to the existing buildings in order to accommodate Years 5 and 6 and provide the best experiences and standards of education.

Ursula Taylor C of E School is an Academy, which means we are not able to make a bid to the Local Authority for funding, but have to bid directly to the EFA (Education Funding Agency) within the Department for Education. Despite this different approach to securing funding, should the consultation result in a push towards Primary status, we would commit to working closely with our local schools and also Bedford Borough Council to achieve this. We believe that this is very important as it means a consistent approach across our cluster of schools, and will provide children, parents, staff and local stakeholders as seamless an approach as is possible.

Please be assured, there will be an opportunity for parents to meet us informally in September to discuss our proposals, but also further opportunities once the formal consultation has been launched in November.

Governing Body of Ursula Taylor C of E School