

9<sup>th</sup> February 2011

Dear Parents

**Re: A Change of Status of Mount Grace School to Academy Status**

As the school has been rated as good with outstanding features by Ofsted we are among the second wave of schools to have been invited to convert to Academy status. The governing body of Mount Grace School is therefore, currently considering whether the school should become an Academy. This conversion would be 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 status resides entirely with the governing body. However, the governing body is committed to consider the views of all interested parties and we explain below how you may make your views known.

Mount Grace School is currently a Foundation School. There would be three key differences if we convert to Academy status:

- The school will cease to be maintained by the Local Authority but will instead be funded and maintained directly by the Department for Education. In addition this will mean that the school can retain the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant portion of its budget. The running of the school will be through an Academy Agreement with the Department for Education rather than ordinary education law
- A charitable Academy Trust will be set up to hold ownership of the school's site, be the conduit for funding and appoint the governing body of the school. It is anticipated that all existing governors will have the right to complete their term of office as Trustees, members of the Trust and governors on the Academy's governing body if they so wish. This will give continuity of governance. In making decisions on the composition of the Academy Trust and governing body the governors are determined to give parents maximum representation alongside the existing categories of governance. The Trust will be an "exempt" charity and will not be required to register with the Charity Commission
- The school staff will become employed by the Trust. The governing body of Mount Grace School prides itself on having excellent relationships with all the staff of the school. The employment rights of all members of staff will be protected by TUPE, Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations which came into force in 2006. This means that these employment rights will transfer to the Trust under the same terms and conditions of employment. Pension rights and continuity of service record will be preserved.

Mount Grace School and its governing body is committed to exercising the increased autonomy which Academy status brings, within the framework of fair funding and fair admissions. Academy status is intended to promote innovation and flair by giving school leaders more freedom to decide how best to meet the needs of their pupils, parents and wider communities. A vital part of the Government's stated 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.

Our most recent Ofsted report (December 2007) stated that Mount Grace School was good with outstanding features and was said to have an outstanding capacity for improvement. The governing body is determined to maintain this ethos and believes that Academy status will enable the school to build upon its strengths. We see Academy status as being a key component in our future development as we intend to use it as a platform from which to develop the school further and focus on the best ways to raise standards for all our pupils.

We believe Mount Grace School is held in high regard by parents and the local community and we remain committed to serving the local community. If we decide to become an Academy we will carry on being our own admissions authority and we will retain our published admissions criteria. We will act in accordance with the Government's Code of Practice for admissions and continue to consult on our admissions policy in accordance with the Code.

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 to further 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. There is an expectation from government that schools will take a lead in raising attainment and removing barriers to learning. The additional freedoms open to us as an Academy and our commitment to co-operation with other agencies will, we believe, be an important component in our school's development of these initiatives.

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

- We will continue to be named Mount Grace School and our uniform and logos will not change
- The curriculum, extra-curricular programme, school day, pastoral support and guidance and general organisation of the school will not be affected
- Collaborative working, the teaching and the resources currently provided to our partner primary schools will all continue

This letter is part of our consultation process which ends on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 3.00 p.m. and responses must be received by that date. The next step will be a meeting of governors on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2011 to consider all responses and make a decision about continuing with the process.

We welcome any comments you may wish to make in writing, or by email, to Mrs S Lee, acting clerk to the governing body, using the address at the top of this letter or by email to [Academy@mountgrace.herts.sch.uk](mailto:Academy@mountgrace.herts.sch.uk). If you would like to make representations in person, governors will be available on **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011 at 7.00 p.m. in the hall**. It would assist our organisation if you could inform the school, by telephone or email, if you wish to attend so that we can give you an appointment time.

This letter is also published on the school website: [www.mountgrace.herts.sch.uk](http://www.mountgrace.herts.sch.uk). The schools we have included in this consultation process will receive three copies of this letter for the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors and the Chair of the Parents' Association. Headteachers may also, if they wish, inform parents and staff at the school of the contents of this letter or direct them to our website.

Yours sincerely

Mr Colin Daniel  
Chair of Governors

Peter Baker  
Headteacher