



European Schools
Office of the Secretary-General

Ref.: 2010-D-313-en-1

Orig.: EN

Planned transformation of the Culham European School into an Academy – a report by the UK delegation

Board of Governors

Meeting on 14, 15 and 16 April 2010 in Brussels

department for
children, schools and families

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Date 25.3.2010
N° enregistrement 576
A traier par [signature]
cc à :

25 March 2010

Planned transformation of the Culham European School into an Academy – a report by the UK delegation

I am pleased to be able to offer another, albeit short, progress report on the transformation of Culham European School from its Type I status to that of an Academy in the national education system, with possible Type II status.

At the Board of Governors meeting in December 2009, while expressing their overall support for the general progress of this initiative, the Board of Governors raised a number of issues, which they felt should be addressed in the next stages of the work. The Board of Governors felt that these were important issues which needed satisfactory outcomes before Type II status could be agreed.

The most pressing of these was the target date for transformation to Type II status and the start of the Academy. The proposed date of September 2010 was thought to be too ambitious given the number of detailed and difficult issues that would need to be resolved before a successful transition could be achieved. I am pleased to be able to report that Ministers in the Department for Children, Schools and Families in the UK have now agreed to the target date for the transition moving from September 2010 to September 2011.

The Board of Governors also expressed some concern that adequate measures should be taken for the transfer or redeployment of staff. The consultants responsible for moving the project forwards in the UK have employed specialist employment lawyers to consider the contractual issues and the options available to all staff employed to work at Culham. A wide range of employment contracts are in place at Culham and these have needed careful consideration. A series of meetings are planned, at first with staff representatives, trades union representatives, legal advisers, Academy sponsors and representatives from the Office of the Secretary General to ensure that the implications and options for all staff are thoroughly researched and understood. The next steps will be to make sure the members of the Academy Trust are aware of their legal obligations and options and then to advise all staff of their legal position and options. The Secretary General and her staff will be participating fully in all of these discussions.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Questions from seconded staff are also under consideration as part of this process and answers will be provided to those questions by the Academy Trust and the Secretary General, where it is appropriate for them to do so. Many of the issues raised by these members of staff can only be resolved by their own seconding authorities and we have advised the seconded staff to contact and discuss their situation with their heads of delegation or national inspectors. The UK delegation plans to conduct a further series of discussions with seconding authorities once the financial picture is clearer. These discussions are likely to take place early in the Autumn and will involve a member of the Academy Trust, where possible.

At the time of writing this letter, discussions are ongoing with the Commission on the amount of money that might be available to assist Culham with its transition in 2011-2012.

Papers have been prepared for the Academy Trust on the options for an admissions policy for the school in the national system. A key factor in this work is the desire to keep the school available for the children of new EFDA-JET staff while complying with the national admissions code. Existing pupils of the school will automatically have a place at the school in September 2011.

A strategic education brief is almost ready. This is based on the existing European Schools' curriculum leading to the European Baccalaureate. This curriculum is being mapped against the national curriculum for England. Once this brief has the approval of the Trust and Ministers, detailed work can begin on how that curriculum can be delivered within the national system. Existing staff will be invited to contribute to detailed document. This detailed work will inform the Dossier of Conformity for Type II status.

The UK now intends to bring forward a Dossier of Conformity for Type II status for the December 2010 Board of Governors meeting. Subject to the Board of Governors decision the formal Funding Agreement to legally establish the Academy from September 2011, will then be submitted by the Academy sponsors for approval by the Secretary of State at the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

I also wish to report that the UK delegation and the consultants employed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families very much appreciate the engagement of the school, the staff and the parents in this process. This is a very unsettling time for the Culham community and we know that progress has not been at the pace that they would have liked. I would like to thank them for their continuing patience and trust. I hope they understand that some of the issues are very complex and therefore need to be thought through very carefully before decisions are made, options made available and information published. We are trying to create the successful marriage of two very different systems and it is important that we get it right. We intend to offer some answers very soon.

I hope this letter is acceptable as a progress report on this important initiative.

Pauline Charles
Head of Delegation
European Schools

