



Downe Primary School



The Pioneer Academy

20th June 2022

## **Consultation about whether Downe Primary School should become an Academy as part of The Pioneer Academy.**

Downe Primary School is consulting about the school and if it should become an Academy within The Pioneer Academy Trust.

The consultation runs from Monday 20<sup>th</sup> June to Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July – please have your say!

There is an opportunity to speak informally with Lee Mason-Ellis, the CEO of the Pioneer Academy Trust on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June between 8.30am-9am at Downe Primary School if you would like to know more about the Pioneer Academy.

You are also invited to the School Hall on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022 between 2.15pm-3.45pm to meet the Governors, Bromley's Director of Education and the Pioneer Academy leaders – if you wish to attend, this an informal meeting so please just come along.

### **The reasons for the proposal**

Downe Primary School Governors have researched the options available to us in response to significant changes in the educational landscape, ever tightening budgets and falling school numbers. After thorough research which considered the various models of collaboration and in response to the recent Education White paper which says “ *By 2030 all children will benefit from being taught in a school in, or in the process of joining, a strong multi-academy trust, which will help transform underperforming schools and deliver the best possible outcomes for children*”, the Governing Body has concluded that it is in the best interests of pupils, parents and other stakeholders to apply to convert to become an academy and join The Pioneer Academy Trust.

At a recent meeting, Downe Governing Body voted in favour of initiating the consultation with our key stakeholders and submitting an application for an academy order to convert the school to an academy and to join The Pioneer Academy. An academy order would confirm whether the Department for Education (DfE) was, in principle, supportive of this option. This is subject to due diligence being undertaken on both sides. Due diligence is a comprehensive and robust process to ensure both parties are fully prepared for joining together and working as one organization. Either party can withdraw from this process at any time until the Academy Funding Agreement is signed.

The Governors also voted to accept the generous offer from the Pioneer Academy to work alongside Downe Primary School for the remainder of this term at no cost to the school to ensure all Downe's policies and procedures are up to date even if we do not join the Pioneer Academy Trust. There is a Memorandum of Agreement being drawn up in relation to this work.

The ethos of both Downe Primary School and The Pioneer Academy is that children come first, with learning at the centre of everything. The Governing Board and Head Teacher believe that joining The Pioneer Academy provides a greater breadth of staff expertise and resilience for Downe Primary School and builds capacity, helping to make sure that all the schools have a secure future within their communities. This larger educational family provides opportunities for professional development and developing and sharing good practice for staff across the trust. The collaboration also means that children have more opportunities to work with those in other schools, improves classroom practice, and therefore benefits all our pupils.

The Pioneer Academy is well established and has a track record of success. It was established by Stewart Fleming Primary School in 2011, and Belvedere Junior School joined in April 2013. It has grown steadily and sensibly and now includes 14 schools. The Pioneer Academy only includes primary phase schools. All Ofsted inspections undertaken more than a year within The Pioneer Academy reported that the schools have improved, including those for schools that had previous weaknesses. This has been achieved through a relentless focus upon children, and their learning and development, through high quality and committed staff, and through the schools working in partnership to improve practice in every aspect of school life. The Pioneer Academy is already working with Halstead School which is a similar size to Downe Primary and Downe will benefit from working alongside a similar school within the Trust.

## **What would happen if Downe Primary School does join The Pioneer Academy?**

If Downe Primary School does convert to academy status and join The Pioneer Academy, Downe Primary School would:

- Keep the name "Downe Primary School".
- Keep the same school day and the same school uniform.
- Continue to have 15 available places in Reception each year.
- The Pioneer Academy would provide an interim Headteacher to lead the school from September 2022
- Benefit from increased opportunities for staff across The Pioneer Academy to work together to develop and share good practice, undertake staff development, build expertise to support groups of pupils with particular needs, and make it easier to manage staff changes.

One area that might change is:

- The school holidays at Downe Primary School potentially would not change until September 2023, when the school would then match the pattern of the other schools within the Pioneer Academy.

## What is an academy and how is it different?

An academy is an independent state school, funded directly from central government rather than through Bromley Council. An academy has several differences from a Local Authority state school, including:

- Being responsible for its own admissions policy;
- Being responsible for its land and buildings;
- Having freedom from the requirement to follow the National Curriculum; and
- Being the employer of its staff.

Downe Primary School is currently a Foundation School and has responsibilities for admissions, its land and buildings and its staff already. The Pioneer Academy will use its experience to ensure that Downe Primary School gains the most advantage from being an academy.

The Board of Trustees of The Pioneer Academy is responsible for all the schools within the Trust. School Boards provide local governance, and support and challenge to the Headteacher and leadership team, and include parents and staff. For Downe Primary School, the School Board would be formed from the current Governing Body.

## Where can I find further information? How can I have my say?

More detailed Questions and Answers are available on the Downe Primary website ([www.downeprimary.com](http://www.downeprimary.com)). Further information about academies is also available on the DfE website ([www.education.gov.uk/academies](http://www.education.gov.uk/academies)).

You can have your say by:

- Emailing your views to [admin@downe.bromley.sch.uk](mailto:admin@downe.bromley.sch.uk) – Governors would particularly welcome your views about what you think the advantages of joining The Pioneer Academy would be, any concerns that you might have, and any areas that you would welcome further information about.
- Attending the informal meeting: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at Downe Primary School between 2.15pm-3.45pm.
- Staff at Downe Primary School and other local stakeholders are also being consulted.

The consultation closes on Friday 15th July. Please have your say!

## What happens next?

The Governing Body will consider all responses to the consultation.

If the proposal proceeds, it is anticipated that Downe Primary School would become an academy and join The Pioneer Academy as soon as possible.

With regards

*Kim Brown*

Kim Brown  
Downe Primary Chair of Governors

*Jodene Panteli*

Jodene Panteli  
Head Teacher