

Proposal to become a 16-19 academy



This consultation document is published by Woodhouse College Corporation (“the College”) and on behalf of a proposed new academy trust (“the Trust”).

This consultation is to seek views on the following:

- The College’s proposal to convert to a new 16-19 academy to be called Woodhouse College to carry on the College’s sixth form provision;
- The College’s proposal to dissolve and transfer all of its property, rights, assets and liabilities to the Trust; and
- The Trust’s proposal to enter into academy arrangements with the Secretary of State for Education in relation to the new 16-19 academy.

The consultation closes on Monday 30th March 2020. Please share your views before then.

All current students, and those joining in September 2020, will be able to study the same courses in 2020/21 irrespective of whether Woodhouse is a college or an academy.

Rationale for the proposal

The College has established a track record for outstanding sixth form provision, and is determined to continue to improve its performance to benefit our students and the community. Converting to being a 16-19 academy:

1. Enables Woodhouse to reclaim VAT (schools can while colleges cannot) – in 2019/20 this would have provided an additional £175k of funding;
2. Makes us eligible for other ‘school only’ grants – for example reclaiming the cost of our business rates, and teacher pay grants – in 2019/20 these would have resulted in approximately £115k additional funding. Schools (including academies) generally receive more favourable financial treatment from Government than further education and sixth form colleges; and
3. Reflects the A-level provision of Woodhouse which aligns us with the school sector from which we draw our pupils.

Woodhouse would continue to offer the same curriculum and student experience, and continue to employ the same staff on the same terms and conditions of employment, if it becomes an academy – but with the advantage of a better financial position.

In addition, the College has been in discussions with Imperial College London to jointly establish a specialist Maths School on the Woodhouse campus. This would provide a specialist, Maths-based sixth form experience for up to 200 exceptionally talented mathematicians. The DfE has prioritised establishing a network of Maths Schools across England, and we hope to provide the Maths School for north London and the surrounding areas. Our application has been submitted to the DfE, and we anticipate opening the Maths School by September 2023 if it is approved. A Maths School can only be established within an academy trust – so Woodhouse converting to become a 16-19

academy would establish the Trust that would in time contain both Woodhouse College and the new Maths School. There is no current intention to grow the Trust beyond these two schools.

Implications of the proposal

If Woodhouse does become an academy rather than a sixth form college it would:

- Retain the name 'Woodhouse College';
- Retain the same curriculum approach focusing upon A levels;
- Retain the timings of the college day (the college year would continue to be set within the context of local schools);
- Retain the admissions criteria used to determine who is offered places; and
- Retain the existing staff, who would transfer their employment to the Trust on their current terms and conditions.

There would be no change to the ethos and values of Woodhouse, nor to our expectations of students and staff. Our policies and approach would continue. Our curriculum would continue.

If the proposal is implemented, our governance structure would evolve to be suitable for an academy trust consisting of two 16 – 19 academies – this would include the involvement of Imperial College and establishing both a Board of Trustees (for the Trust) and a Local Governing Body (for Woodhouse, with another for the Maths School as it moves towards opening).

Context

Since 2010, government policy has allowed and encouraged the conversion of schools to academy status. Of the approximately 3,300 secondary phase schools in England, just over 2,500 are academies (77%). Within Barnet, of the 28 secondary or all-through schools, 21 are academies or free schools, 6 are voluntary-aided faith schools, and 1 is a community school.

Sixth Form Colleges have not had the same opportunity to become academies. It was possible during 2015-2017 as part of government led 'Area Reviews' of post 16 education, and in July 2019 the Government established a process for other Sixth Form Colleges to apply to convert. Of the approximately 100 sixth form colleges, 23 became academies through the original process. A number, including Woodhouse, have already expressed interest in converting through the new process – attracted by the financial benefits and the fact that many sixth form colleges are organised and run in a very similar manner to schools already.

What is an academy?

An academy is an independent state school, funded directly from central government. When a Council maintained schools become academies they gain some additional freedoms and responsibilities (such as regarding employment terms and conditions). For Woodhouse, as a sixth form college we already have all of the freedoms that an academy has, and indeed have more freedom in some areas (such as having the ability to borrow money commercially). The more detailed Question and Answer document (available on the Woodhouse website,

www.woodhouse.ac.uk) includes a table outlining differences and similarities between being a 16-19 academy and a sixth form college.

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

More detailed Questions and Answers are available on the Woodhouse website (www.woodhouse.ac.uk) or from the college office. Further information about academies is also available on the DfE website (www.education.gov.uk/academies).

You can have your say by:

- Completing the online questionnaire available on the Woodhouse website (www.woodhouse.ac.uk) (paper copies are available from the college office);
- Writing to the Principal at the College address;
- Attending the drop in session for students between 1pm and 2pm on Wednesday 4th March 2020;
- Attending the meeting for parents at 6pm on Wednesday 4th March 2020.

Staff at Woodhouse and other local stakeholders are also being consulted.

The consultation closes on Monday 30th March 2020. Please share your views before then.

What happens next?

The College will consider all responses to the consultation before it makes a decision about whether to become an academy. If the proposal proceeds, it is anticipated that Woodhouse would become an academy on or after 1 August 2020. If the proposal does not proceed, Woodhouse would remain a sixth form college.

A summary of the consultation will be published within two months of the end of the consultation period and will be available free of charge to anyone who requests it.