



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

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Dear parents / carers,

Re: Houghton Regis Academy

I hope you and your family are keeping well and staying healthy during this challenging time.

On 24 September 2019, we announced that Greenwood Academies Trust was in discussions with the Department for Education (DfE) and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to assess the impact and practicalities of potentially closing Houghton Regis Academy.

We are writing to inform you that after considering the outcome of the listening period, the Secretary of State for Education has now, in mutual agreement with the Trust, given final approval for the closure transition plan of Houghton Regis Academy. This follows the substantive and final decision taken in February to proceed to closure of the Academy.

As previously shared, in order to minimise the impact of the closure, we have agreed a closure transition plan which means the Academy will remain open for some year groups until 31 August 2022.

I am aware of the concern the decision to close the Academy may cause pupils, parents and the wider community at Houghton Regis, particularly during this unprecedented time. I want to assure you that we are committed to ensuring our pupils, parents and staff are supported throughout this transition.

Please find further details about the approved closure and closure transition plan included in this letter.

Background to the closure

Houghton Regis Academy joined Greenwood Academies Trust (GAT) on 01 September 2012 as a middle school. There was an agreed plan and identified funding, at that point, to change the intake of the Academy from a middle school of four forms of entry (years 5 to 8) to become a nine form entry secondary academy with a post-16 provision. This plan was developed to serve the needs of the current community and the planned development of 7,500 new houses in the locality, in a new fit-for-purpose building.

However, for many reasons, over a protracted period of time, the significant development of housing, which was to facilitate the expansion and rebuild of the Academy, has not been delivered. This has led to the school being unviable, with too few pupils and too few teachers to be able to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum. Additionally, the condition of the buildings are not appropriate for the delivery of a high-quality secondary education.

The Trust has been in discussions with the DfE and CBC regarding possible solutions to these challenges however, after assessing and considering the matter, it has been determined by the Trust and the DfE that the school is not viable.

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Closure transition plan

A closure transition plan has been developed in order to minimise the impact of the closure on pupils, parents, staff and the community, and to ensure that any pupils at the Academy, up to closure, have access to a good quality education.

There are a number of key aspects to this plan which will be implemented from September 2020.

Provision of Key Stage 3

From September 2020, the Academy will become a Key Stage 3 only provision (years 7, 8 and 9). This is to ensure the Academy has the best chance of providing a good quality education for those pupils remaining at the Academy and to ensure pupils in Key Stage 4, who will be working for and sitting their exams, can do so without any potential disruption to their education.

More information about how and when the Academy will be able to reopen, in line with government advice and guidance regarding social distancing and hygiene measures, will be shared with parents and carers as soon as possible.

Provision of Key Stage 4

Current year 11 pupils will continue to be supported with their education as they move onto their next steps.

The Trust has been working with CBC to identify appropriate high-quality school places in the locality and ensure all current year 9 and year 10 pupils will receive the best possible education in a fully and appropriately staffed school.

CBC has confirmed that the offers for these places will be made over the coming weeks. Once received, it is important that pupils and parents accept these offers to guarantee their places from September 2020 and support a smooth transition. For more information and support regarding these places, please contact the CBC admissions team by telephoning 0300 300 8037 or emailing admissions@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk.

Current year 8 pupils, who will be in year 9 in 2020/21 will receive further information about transferring to another school for their Key Stage 4 provision nearer this time.

Longer term, the Local Authority has a plan for a new secondary school on the Kingsland site, which is expected to be open by September 2022. This would ensure the local community has full secondary school provision in their local area in the future.

We will continue to regularly update parents and carers throughout the closure transition. Updates will also be shared on the Academy's website www.houghtonregisacademy.org and the Trust's website www.greenwoodacademies.org.

We understand this is a sensitive issue for all involved, particularly for pupils, parents, carers and staff, and we are committed to working with you to deliver a smooth transition that supports the education of our pupils at Houghton Regis Academy. We will also continue to work closely with CBC and the DfE to minimise any disruption to pupils, families and staff as much as possible.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our pupils, parents, carers and staff for their ongoing support and look forward to continuing to work closely together over the coming months.

Yours sincerely



Wayne Norrie
Chief Executive

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