

12 May 2016

Dear Parents, Carers and Pupils

### **A major development for our All-Through Trust**

I am delighted to inform you that the Department for Education (DfE) has reached a decision about the expansion of our Trust. You will know that last September, the DfE approved our application to open a Technical Academy for 13-18 year olds in September 2017 subject to entering into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State. Supported by a number of national and local companies and the University of East Anglia, this will offer a visionary approach to GCSE and sixth form education that will complement the traditional method of study at County Upper. During their time in the middle phase of our All-Through School, pupils and parents will be given guidance to choose their curricular route through the upper phase of the Trust based on our thorough knowledge of them and independent advice from the companies working with us. There will also be opportunities at ages 14 and 16 to review the choices made.

Our plans are that by September 2017, there will be 330 places across our upper phase. The Trust is already heavily oversubscribed for the middle phase and demand is rising. The DfE has looked carefully at all the issues and has approved an increase in the number of places by providing a third campus for 9-13 year olds mirroring the current offering at our Horringer Court and Westley campuses, subject to planning. In addition to meeting parental demand, this expansion of our middle phase will enable 310 pupils to receive considered, personalised advice for the 13-18 years upper phase. This will, however, also leave some places for pupils who currently transfer into the Trust at thirteen.

In deciding where to site our Technical Academy and additional middle phase places, the DfE has given very careful consideration to all of the following factors:

- making best use of our existing campuses
- cementing our all-through vision
- very strong community support
- future housing developments to the west of the town
- strong advice to open the technical academy on the current County Upper site
- Suffolk's original plan to relocate County Upper.



It is now confirmed that the DfE is supportive of developing the Trust as both free school projects have entered the pre- opening stage. Although there are several processes to go through before our schools are able to open, including planning approval and the design and construction of our sites, the plans are to deliver the following:

### **A Technical Academy and additional middle phase campus.**

The Baker Dearing Educational Trust develops and promotes the concept of university technical colleges and has taken a strong interest in our proposals for a visionary Technical Academy. They have strongly advised that the Academy should be sited on the existing County Upper site. This has also been the clear view of the companies with whom we are working, given the need for easy access to Cambridge, Ipswich and Norwich as well as Bury.

The intention is that our new technical academy will therefore open in the existing main building which will be completely refurbished to provide facilities fit for a Technical Academy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The outer buildings at County Upper contain specialist facilities for Art & Design; Computing; the Performing Arts and Science as well as a library and ordinary classrooms. All the buildings have been completely refurbished, including a new Art extension, since 2007. We plan for these to be used as our new middle phase campus.

This use of the current County site is very important to us as it will also enhance all-through schooling by providing education for the 9-13 and 13-18 phases on one site and sharing, for example, the all-weather and sports hall facilities.

### **County Upper**

In order to free up the existing site, it is proposed that a new County Upper will be built on the Westley site. This will provide the Trust with a second site offering both 9-13 and 13-18 campuses in line with our all-through vision. Furthermore, this site is within walking distance of our Horringer Court campus so that the current sharing of activities and facilities can be expanded considerably. Although the total number of pupils on the Westley site will be markedly lower than envisaged by the local authority when it planned to move County Upper here, the places available across both the existing Westley and County sites will enable more pupils overall to access the Trust's provision.

There is obviously much work to do before these plans are in place but the DfE is committed to working with us to realise them and we are committed to achieving the milestones we need to in order to open the schools. The potential to trail blaze a new way of schooling is truly exciting. It is the result of huge community support and demand and we are grateful to all those who are making this possible. I will, of course, update you on a regular basis.

Yours sincerely



Dr Richard Fletcher  
**Chairman of the Trust Board**