

Progress report on the development of the Milton Keynes Academy for the Learning and Development Policy Development Committee

The DfES has approved the Expression of Interest form Milton Keynes and the sponsor (Edge) and the project has now moved into the feasibility stage.

A planning meeting has been held with the DfES and the sponsor to outline the feasibility stage. This stage is used to develop the blue print for the academy and determine the viability of the project. For an opening date of September 2009, building will need to start in early 2008.

This report focuses on four areas:

- Links with other academies and other local authorities developing academies.
- The working relationships with Edge.
- The Building Project.
- Current priorities.

1) Links with other academies and other local authorities developing academies.

In order to learn from 'best practice' elsewhere contacts have been made with a number of academies and Northamptonshire LA. Progress can be summarised as follows:

- ♦ Meetings with Northamptonshire LA where one academy is already open in Northampton town and another in the development stage in Corby.
- ♦ Visits are scheduled to Bristol Academy and the City of London Academy.
- ♦ Lesley King, Director of the academy arm of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust has visited Milton Keynes and offered her support for the project.

2) The working relationship with Edge

Good working relationships have been established with Edge. Regular meetings have been held and the structure of the committees to take the project forward during the feasibility stage has been agreed as follows:

- ♦ The project steering group will consist of representatives from Edge, the local authority, the existing school and the project manager (funded by the DfES). Other representatives will be asked to attend as appropriate.
- ♦ Other stakeholder groups will be established and these will inform the work of the steering group. A stakeholder planning document is currently being finalised but is likely to include:

- ♦ The **Education Community stakeholder group** which will probably have representatives from Edge, the LA, the existing school, Primary feeder schools, FE and HE. This group will develop the aims and vision for the school focussing on the curriculum and the staffing structures needed to implement it. This group will develop the policies needed by the school to support the curriculum and staffing structures.
- ♦ The **Community stakeholder group** will have representatives from Edge, the LA, parents, parish councils, other community groups and the existing school. This group will develop the community dimension for the school.
- ♦ The **Business stakeholder group**. Links have already been established with the Chamber of Commerce and the representative from Edge has met with Sean Hickey and Phil Nicholls. This group may have representatives from Edge, the LA, the Chamber of Commerce, Countec and local business. The school plans to adopt Business and Enterprise Specialist Status so this group will develop innovative proposals for developing work related / vocational learning in the school.
- ♦ The **User stakeholder group** will ensure that the views of pupils, parents and existing school staff are heard.

It is envisaged that each of these groups will meet at appropriate and regular intervals and there will be fortnightly meetings between Carlos Rodriguez (Edge) and Hilary Spurrier (LA).

Edge have appointed a project manager from a list approved by the DfES. The role of this individual is to oversee the progress of the project during the feasibility stage and to provide the necessary administrative support.

3) The Building Project

The construction project will be led by Milton Keynes Council officers, working closely with Partnerships For Schools (PFS), the DfES and the sponsor.

The development of the design brief for the academy buildings will be led by the sponsor and their appointed Project Manager.

The construction contract will be 'design and build' using a contractor (and design partner) from the PFS National Framework.

PFS will set the budget for the project following a site visit to Sir Frank Markham on 15 September 2006. This will be formula driven. Architecture MK will then be commissioned to undertake some initial feasibility work to RIBA stage B and oversee a range of technical site surveys. This work will provide re-assurance that the project is viable from within the agreed budget. Input will also be required from Planning (Development Control) at this stage. This information will then be submitted to PFS/DfES as part of the overall Outline Business Case by March 2007.

A procurement and project development timetable will be established with a view of delivering the completed project in July 2009, ready for a September opening.

This approach is very much a first for all parties. The Milton Keynes Academy will be the first in the country delivered using the PFS framework and project approval processes. As a consequence Milton Keynes has an opportunity to work very closely with national partners, not only ensuring that the Milton Keynes Academy project is a success but also informing the future roll out of the national programme.

Further meetings with PFS colleagues are planned for the coming weeks, during which time a detailed project timetable and roles and responsibilities template will be defined.

4) Current Priorities

The main priorities are as follows:

- ◆ Determine the vision, aims and curriculum priorities for the academy so that these can inform the design of the building and the staffing/admin structures.
- ◆ Establish the potential risks to the project and develop the necessary contingency plans.
- ◆ Initiate the development of the building in terms of the necessary planning permissions and the legal issues.
- ◆ Support the continued development of the existing school in order to raise standards and ensure that current students receive a good education.

The examination results for Sir Frank Markham Community School for 2006 showed encouraging improvement at Key Stage 3 but the headline figure for 5 or more higher grade passes at GCSE showed a decline from 20% in 2005 to 18% in 2006.