

28th February 2008

Dear Parent / Guardian

RE: RECENT CHANGES

I am sure that your son / daughter will have told you of Lynn Ibeji's decision to take up a professional opportunity elsewhere. She discussed this with me shortly before the end of last half term, and Trustees and I decided to support her request.

As a Head Teacher of ten years experience, four of them with the Academies programme, I was concerned that Spires had not achieved the expected transformation during its first half term. Consequently I worked with colleagues to make changes for January. These included the introduction of Year Leaders, the recruitment of three new colleagues to work within a developing Support & Guidance Team (they join us next week), and an adjustment of some Leadership Team roles:

- Andy Henstridge became Academy Manager, responsible for the day to day running of the school;
- Robert Palmer, himself an outstanding teacher, began to work with other colleagues to share the best of practice across the school;
- and Gail Pluckrose picked up responsibility for assessment and target setting, identifying student potential in examination years and working with colleagues across the school to ensure this potential is realised.

These changes have already begun to pay off: we have a settled, positive working environment; students and staff seem happier; most importantly, we have a real sense of 'community' again. Our Premises Team have been busy with their paint brushes over the holiday - we now have a much lighter and brighter back-drop to work with.

There are no immediate plans to recruit another Head of School. To be honest, I do not believe that we need one. I successfully ran two schools back in Oxford a few years ago and am comfortable developing two different Academies. Spires also has a very experienced and capable group of senior and middle managers for me to work with. We will explore links, such as the shared Sixth Form set to begin in September, but the two schools will remain very much 'two schools' with their own ethos and way of working.

I want you to feel able to come in and see how things are going first hand. Consequently, starting next week, every Thursday morning will be an 'Open Morning'. Come along for tea / coffee at 8.30am, be part of one of our school assemblies from 8.45am, and go into lessons and see how things are from 9.00am through to 10.00am. I will be available with other colleagues to meet you and answer any questions. You will find I am very easy to get hold of. My email address is ian.johnson@spiresacademy.com. Alternatively Marlowe parents are used to calling me on my mobile - 07801 651910. Please feel able to call me directly should you need to - it often saves time and worry.

Two other things:

1. We are getting more and more media interest in our work. Channel 4, for example, have approached me about a possible documentary about the two academies for next Spring. Do let us know if you do not want photographic images of your son / daughter to appear in the educational media or the local press.
2. Year 10 continue to prepare for final assessments this Summer in Science, BTEC courses and optional GCSEs. In the interest of A*-B grades, however, Maths and English staff are now planning to enter the majority of Year 10 students for their GCSE at the end of Year 11.

My apologies for a slightly confused couple of weeks. Please do feel able to contact me directly with issues or drop into one of our 'Open Mornings'. I am looking forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Ian Johnson
Principal