

Academisation

Despite last week's TUC article in the Bolton News, Turton's governing board actually only voted on whether to academise or not on Monday. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of academisation and there are very good reasons for this.

Turton's aim is to maintain its strong position as a community school that serves the local area, to remain a local and democratic concern for the families in North Bolton. With this in mind, when I first became Head my position on academisation was clear, I would be right behind Geoff Barton as one of the last head teacher's 'kicking and screaming to academisation in this country'. However things have changed for Turton over the last 2 years, such that holding fast to my personal values and beliefs will now be detrimental to the school.

Up until Monday, 27th February, we were the only secondary school in Bolton to have not voted, or put in place, plans to academise. This leaves us in a very vulnerable position, with Local Authority secondary provision shrinking, they are able to offer us less and less in terms of support and surrounding academies are gaining benefits from other sources that we can't access.

Sadly the wave of academisation in Bolton has taken hold, leaving LA secondary school provision defunct. If we were situated within a different LA, e.g. Bury/Blackburn or even Suffolk, where few schools have converted, there is no way that myself and governors would consider academisation.

However I now feel that I must put my own principles on academisation aside for the sake of the future of the school. I don't want to allow the school to become vulnerable to forced academisation as the LA provision shrinks, thus we must make a move now so that we can academise in a way that is right for the school – allowing us to be in control of the process.

In terms of what academisation will mean for Turton, I am very clear about our main aims:

1. The Multi-Academy Trust will be formed by educationalists, not businesses.
2. Turton will collaborate with local primary schools to offer a high quality 4 to 18 education within the local community.
3. Turton will be a flagship school within the MAT, influencing its growth and development.
4. The school name and all that is great about Turton will be preserved.

Our focus is on the education of our students, not business, and this will be the same after academisation. The school name will stay the same and all of the great things about Turton School will be preserved.

In terms of money, funding for the school will be as it is now, there is no financial benefit to converting to an academy, other than being able to search for the best price for services outside of the LA.

All in all, if we are true to our values, we can ensure that academisation is ethical, beneficial to the school and that it preserves all the best that Turton currently has to offer and for the majority of students and their parents and staff, you won't even notice it has happened.

For further information and/or queries please email me at gorses@turton.uk.com.

Kind regards

Sam Gorse