

Maiden Beech Academy

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Headteacher: Carl Winch BA (Hons) PGCE NPQH



Tuesday 3rd November 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

IMPORTANT: Crewkerne and Ilminster School Structure Change Proposals

I hope this letter finds you safe and well in these difficult times. I also hope that you were able to enjoy some quality family over half-term, despite the weather!

You will be no doubt aware that on 21st October the County Council's cabinet voted to proceed with a formal consultation about the structure of schools in the Crewkerne and Ilminster area.

You need to be aware that prior to this meeting, I wrote to Councillor Faye Purbrick, Cabinet Member for Education and Transformation, raising concerns about proceeding with the consultation at a time of national crisis when myself and other school leaders should not be distracted on our main priority of keeping children and staff safe. Sadly, I received no acknowledgment of my letter and the decision has now been taken to proceed with an initial four-week consultation commencing Thursday 12th November and running until Thursday 10th December 2020 despite the announcement of a second national lockdown taking place at his time as well.

I have uploaded to the Parent Portal and school website a letter from Amelia Walker, Assistant Director of Education, detailing virtual consultation events via Microsoft Teams for parents. Today, I have requested that a specific event is organised to the parents and guardians of children attending Maiden Beech School, but have yet to receive a response for this reasonable request.

The letter from Somerset County Council also explains how you can respond to the consultation by completing an online questionnaire, which will be active between the dates detailed above, and explains how you can ask specific questions via a designated email address: crewkerneilminsterschools@somerset.gov.uk

I need to make you aware that myself, as headteacher, the governors of the school and the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust (BTCT) do not fully support the proposals being put forward as they currently stand and feel that if actioned, they have the potential to be detrimental to the education of children in the area. We are frustrated because there are alternative models, which are less disruptive and more cost effective than those being consulted upon that are not being considered – I am happy to share these alternatives with you in due course.

In 2019, Maiden Beech Academy was the top performing middle school in Somerset in terms of Key Stage 2 outcomes, with results improving year-on-year since 2016. Our three-year average, in terms of pupil outcomes, is above both the local authority and national averages and places us as one of the top performing middle schools in the country.

Over the past five years, circa. £2 million of capital funding has been invested in improving our site and buildings; as a 9 -13 middle school, we are in the unique position to offer specialist teaching to primary aged children in specialist facilities.

Our revised curriculum, introduced in September, has further broadened our offer with children

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as young as nine having the opportunity to study Design Technology in a workshop environment and drama to be reintroduced as a discrete subject.

With the support of the BTCT, the Academy is in a very strong position to develop further. We are now able to offer specialist SEND teaching to children in Key Stage 2 and have increased the number of teaching groups in the school, reducing class sizes considerably. However, this unwelcome distraction is preventing us from fully focussing on developing and improving our provision further.

In terms of next steps, I would like to invite parents and carers concerned about these proposals and the potential impact on Maiden Beech Academy, and other schools in the area, to respond to the Local Authority through the consultation process.

I am also happy to collate your comments and coordinate a school response; please email your thoughts and comments to the school office at office@maidenbeech.net or send a message via the Parent Portal.

Thank you in anticipation and your ongoing support. It is crucial that we challenge these proposals robustly, as we are not convinced that they are in the best interests of the children, young people and families in our area.

Kind regards,



Carl Winch
Head teacher