

WH/RNM

31st January 2018

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State for Education
Parliamentary
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Email: damian.hinds.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP

I am writing to raise a serious concern that we have about the manner in which our application to convert to join the high achieving GORSE Academies Trust (TGAT) is being handled.

In March 2017, after months of detailed due diligence and careful consideration, governors unanimously determined that following successive 'Good' Judgements from Ofsted, and a proud record of creating social mobility, that an 'Outstanding' judgement would best be achieved by becoming part of TGAT. We consulted on this during May 2017, and received the overwhelming backing of our community, making all the necessary strategic plans ready for conversion on 1st September 2017.

This has not happened and there has been nine months of delay, because the Leeds local authority have been challenging our conversion with Vicky Beer, the Regional Schools' Commissioner. It is the local authority's proposition that we should partner, under their leadership, with Wetherby High School, who have three successive 'Requires Improvement' judgements, despite being (for the last four years), part of a local authority brokered school improvement partnership with Carr Manor High School.

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For years our school has been held back by the diminished capacity of the local authority and their inadequate school improvement resource; it is not fit for purpose and lacks leadership that holds the confidence of headteachers. A consequence of the continued weakness within Leeds has been an increase in political influence through a few local councillors. This has led to ill-conceived, unrealistic and impractical approaches to school improvement which are hindering the capacity of schools to impact positively upon the lives of children. It is our belief that the failure of the local authority to control the local politicians has, over the last ten years, destabilised local secondary schools resulting in reduced capacity, damaged reputation and the undermining of the drive for achievement.

The sole focus for Boston Spa governors has been standards and achievement; this is in stark contrast to priorities of the local authority and local councillors for whom the priority in their planning has been new buildings at the expense of any strategic plan to raise standards. In dialogue with the RSC it has taken the local authority over nine months to come forward with any alternative plan, and they are being asked to submit additional information at this late stage. The RSC fully accepts that had Boston Spa not sought to convert to academy status, there would have been no plan whatsoever from them for our locality.

Our Governors believe that the future education of our children is too important to be entrusted to this local authority. It is a binary choice of Boston Spa staying within an underperforming local authority or joining TGAT, where six out of seven institutions inspected have been judged by Ofsted to be 'Outstanding'. This is a track record of school improvement that is unmatched, and of which we are ambitious to be a part.

The purpose of this letter is to ask that you might intervene to bring swift resolution and allow Boston Spa to leave the local authority control, convert into TGAT and become an outstanding provider for its communities.

If further dialogue would be helpful Sir John Townsley, the CEO of TGAT and I would be pleased to speak with you either by telephone or to travel to London at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CWALSH', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

CHRISTOPHER WALSH
Principal