

Your Recipe for Pursuing Foundation Status

Contact Details

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Meeting the Challenge

Why become a Foundation School? (Why did you decide to go for foundation status, what goal are you attempting to reach by doing so?)

We became a Foundation School when the school faced closure and Grant Maintained Status was ending. We had become accustomed to working without the Local Authority and wanted to continue to have as much independence as possible. We have benefited from our own admissions criteria and in the employment of our own staff.

As we are a cheque book school, we are able to use suppliers that we respect. There are advantages in using local tradesmen when small jobs are required and local firms to supply food for our lunches. We believe they provide a better service than that supplied by the Local Authority and it means we can support our local community.

We have opted into some Local Authority Services such as personnel advice but we have taken on most services ourselves including Payroll and Ground Maintenance and eliminated many of the previous issues.

Your Vision: (What is your vision in becoming a Foundation School, where do you see the school longer term & how does Foundation status fit?)

Our vision is to work towards personalisation, using David Hargreaves' definition of Personalising Learning, developing Deep Learning, Deep Experience and Deep Support using Deep Leadership as the mechanism to bring these together. Deep Learning is achieved through Co-operative Learning, Assessment for Learning and Pupil Voice. We provide "Deep Experience" through a broad and enriched cross-curricular approach and "Deep Support" through our work on Emotional Intelligence.

Our aim is to develop outstanding leaders at all levels within our school. We have a very distributed leadership structure which enables staff at all levels of the organisation to lead and to focus relentlessly on the improvement of learning. This creates opportunities for in-house staff development and succession planning. We already have national recognition as a "Deep Leadership" school from the National College of School Leadership and from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for our leadership structure and development systems.

We want to ensure we can meet the requirements of the Every Child Matters agenda and Extended Schools agenda. We intend to offer holiday and after school programmes in the future and employ our own staff to run them

We believe in the power of collaborating with other schools and agencies and are convinced that foundation status gives us the autonomy we need to do this effectively. In particular our membership of the Fallibroome Learning Community is key in terms of improving teaching and learning and in enriching the curriculum. The links with the local Nursery School are also very important so that we can provide a continuous education from ages 2 to 18.

We are also committed to creating a sustainable school in terms of green issues, our Bursar takes the lead on this, being confident enough to take calculated risks which in turn develops her leadership skills.

Head Teacher/Chair of Governor/Partner quote:

"I would not want to lead a school without Foundation Status – I like the independence too much"

Christine Bowen, Headteacher

Benefits

What difference will Foundation status make? (e.g. what differences will you expect in achievement, attainment, value added, anything else, etc? Share good news story that has already taken place)

We are a very successful primary school. The number of children on roll has increased over recent years. By September 2008, we anticipate that there will be 168 children, composed of 7 classes of 24 with children working in 6 groups of 4. Foundation Status has enabled us to decide on our own Admissions Policy resulting in smaller sizes. We plan to keep the school at this size as it enables all staff to know all the children and allows for the kind of village ethos that we wish to maintain, to grow and prosper.

Foundation status enables us to better develop Personalised Learning and ensures that our teachers and teaching assistants spend more time ensuring they are providing quality learning. There is an increased emphasis on Gifted & Talented and SEN support.

Our Governors are prepared to take risks and are used to working independently. We recently bought a strip of land from a farmer and have extended the school field. We may decide to extend the school building in the future to increase classroom sizes, our administration area and play space.

Autonomy has given us the confidence to run some services ourselves, generate income from school lunches and our "Out of School Club" for example that enable us to provide a quality education.

Staff stay at the school and have a very good sickness record, which we put down to smaller classes, our ability to create our own job descriptions and our fairness to individuals in providing opportunities for them to develop professionally.

Partners (Who have you identified, why and how have you gone about establishing partnerships? Share progress, news that may help others)

Foundation Status provides us with the opportunity to work closely with Fallibroome High School and benefit from collaborations in the performing arts and "learn to learn". This collaboration has contributed to an improvement in SATs results and an increase in the number of level 5s we achieve with year 6 students

We have also been able to work closely with a local Private Nursery School engaging in shared observations of phonic teaching, supporting with letter formation and we then use the same methodology with these children when they join our school. Our long term vision is for continuous provision from 2 to 19.

Challenges

What challenges have you had to face? (to date and in the future as well as thoughts on how to overcome the challenges)

We experienced some issues with the LA when we were selective about what we took from them on a buy back arrangement, which meant we did not require many of their services and our systems do not match with theirs. Payroll was an issue, as was the fact that our staffing profile did not fit theirs and changes to personnel at the LA. had an impact which we needed to manage.

The additional work created was distributed amongst the staff with the head acting as gatekeeper.

Next year will be a year of consolidation for us when systems will be embedded. We will be undertaking a review of our primary curriculum and our extended schools programme and these represent the next challenge we face.

Top Tips

What would be your top tips for becoming a Foundation School? (e.g. engaging Governing Body and Local Authority)

- Keep the Governing Body well informed. A good relationship between the head and the chair of governors is important
- Engage with other local schools that have Foundation Status or an interest in Foundation Status
- Employ an excellent Business Manager/Bursar. (Ours took on the responsibility of finance, health and safety and premises)
- Consider which services provided by the LA you need to buy back. Personnel? Legal? Do the rest yourself to both save money and generate additional funds.

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