



## **PRESS RELEASE, Monday 29th November 2021**

### **Co-educational admissions consultation - Hayesbrook Academy, part of Leigh Academies Trust.**

#### **Proposal**

Hayesbrook Academy joined Leigh Academies Trust from Brook Learning Trust on 1st September 2021. LAT is now beginning a six-week admissions consultation with all relevant stakeholders about admitting both boys and girls into year 7 from September 2023. If the proposal is approved by the Department for Education, the academy will be renamed Leigh Academy Tonbridge (LATon) from the same date.

There is no intention to change the number of pupils admitted to the academy overall. This will remain at 151 per year group so that LATon continues to be a smaller than average-sized secondary school. The sixth form at Hayesbrook already contains boys and girls meaning that no change is envisaged to years 12 and 13.

If approved renovations will be made to the Hayesbrook estate to make it ready to admit girls from 2023. This will include modernised toilets and changing facilities. Furthermore, the curriculum and staffing structures will be adapted to make them fit for purpose for a new intake of pupils. Boys already admitted to the academy will continue to be taught in single gender classes. Whereas pupils admitted from 2023 will benefit from a co-educational education which more accurately reflects the reality of the wider world. These newly recruited pupils will also enjoy their own break and lunchtimes, plus separate social spaces within the academy.

#### **Background**

Hayesbrook is one of just two boys' non-selective schools in Kent. In 2021, just 52 parents gave Hayesbrook as their first choice secondary school which was the third lowest of any secondary school in Kent and the lowest in the district of Tonbridge and Malling in which it is located. This low enrollment pattern has been the case for several years meaning that Hayesbrook has just over 400 pupils on roll in years 7-11 and is running at under half capacity overall.

Unfortunately, a single sex non-selective option for boys has not been popular with parents for some years. Generally, parents have chosen to send their children to other schools, sometimes out

of Tonbridge, despite Hayesbrook's strong reputation for pastoral care and improving academic outcomes. A second co-educational non-selective secondary school in Tonbridge will provide parents with a more attractive range of secondary school options in the town.

Low enrollment at Hayesbrook in recent years means its budget is very tight. To avoid annual deficits, Hayesbrook has required additional funding from Kent County Council which is not given to other schools and is not guaranteed from year to year. In the academic year 2020-21, this stood at an extra £297,000. A tight budget also makes it much more difficult to provide the full range of curricular and co-curricular opportunities available to pupils in more average-sized schools.

Problems with attracting sufficient numbers of pupils have occurred despite Tonbridge providing enough pupils to ensure that all of its schools are largely full. A small surplus of places exists every year up to 2027, averaging 4.5% more places available than are expected to be required. However, this is not out of line with most other areas of Kent. If nothing changes, over half of those surplus places are currently forecast to sit within Hayesbrook, meaning the majority of the available capacity will be inaccessible to girls without alteration to Hayesbrook's admission arrangements.

[Further information about the proposal can be found here](#)

[Consultation feedback can be given here](#)

## **About us**

Leigh Academies Trust is a non-profit making charitable company, based in Strood, Medway. The Trust exists to support and assist schools to build upon their existing strengths and to help them achieve educational improvements in order to positively shape the lives of our students and the communities we serve. We now operate 31 academies along the South Thames Corridor, structured into 4 clusters. Our clusters contain all phases of education, from nursery to post-16. Each one has a passionate commitment to inclusion. The Trust was formed in 2008 with the linking of the Leigh Technology Academy and Longfield Academy under one governing body. It now encompasses 20,000 students between the ages of 2 and 19 and we employ over 2,500 staff across the South East. For more information go to <http://www.leighacademiestrust.org.uk/>