SJT/caw

September 2021

Dear Colleague

We are delighted that you are considering applying for the position of Principal at John Smeaton Academy. This is obviously a key post for us and the successful candidate will work directly with the Trust’s Chief Executive Officer Sir John Townsley and our Executive Principal: 11-16 Education Leanne Griffiths and other key senior colleagues within The GORSE Academies Trust.

John Smeaton Academy was the subject of divestment order from the Secretary of State and became a part of The GORSE Academies Trust on 1 September 2021. Over the course of many years the school has underperformed; in 2019 it was classified as the lowest performing secondary school in the Leeds local authority for many measures including, very importantly, the progress that all children make including the disadvantaged. As a consequence of this performance the school has gradually lost the support and confidence of its immediate community. This year only 96 pupils joined us in Year 7 against a pupil admission number of 250. Increasing the popularity of John Smeaton Academy within its community is of pivotal importance not least because of the financial impact of undersubscription when set against an expensive PFI contract.

To this point there is little evidence of young people at John Smeaton Academy benefiting from exciting teaching within the curriculum or exciting opportunities outside the curriculum. Far too many lack aspiration and this is reflected in a high number of pupils going on to be classified as NEET.

Despite these obvious challenges there are many things to be excited about regarding the future of John Smeaton Academy and we hope that you will recognise those opportunities as you consider an application for this role. The school sits at the heart of a housing revolution in east Leeds so there should be no reason as we win back the confidence of our community for us to be undersubscribed. The GORSE Academies Trust has also secured approval for a new primary school which will be built, subject to final approval and Heads of Terms being agreed in December, immediately next to John Smeaton Academy at the junction of Smeaton Approach and Leeds Road. This development is also expected to contain a medical centre and other community facilities the vision for which is very exciting indeed.

The school premises have been exceptionally well looked after and we enjoy an excellent partnership with John Smeaton Leisure Centre which is at the centre of our PE and sports programmes. The pupils who are with us now are increasingly motivated, keen to do well and supportive of the changes already made.

Critically, the successful candidate will become a Principal within The GORSE Academies Trust which is recognised by government as the highest performing academy trust in the country regarding the progress of pupils in all key stages. The trust is renowned for the excellence of its work with less advantaged pupils from poor white backgrounds. John Smeaton Academy’s partner school, The Morley Academy was the successful named applicant school in our bid to become Leeds Teaching School Hub, a status which commenced in September 2021. This means that we are directly responsible for the training and development of all teachers in Leeds from the moment that they consider joining the profession through to training for headship and beyond.

We are entirely confident that John Smeaton Academy will become a great school over the coming years. All of the key ingredients are in place for that process to successfully take place other than the appointment of the Principal who will lead the process.

We hope that through this letter and the information available on our website we have been able to give you an insight into what an incredible opportunity this is. We seek a candidate who is passionate about ensuring that all students, regardless of background, make exceptional rates of progress and have the opportunity to attend their local school. The successful candidate will need to be an exceptionally good teacher, a pragmatist, a visionary and someone who sees through to full completion the initiatives that they lead.

Should you wish to apply you will be required to submit an application form and supporting statement. Your supporting statement should be no longer than 3 sides of A4 in standard font which addresses two areas:

* your experience and expertise which is relevant to the post;
* how you envisage John Smeaton Academy moving forward over the course of the next three years.

We very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**Sir John Townsley Leanne Griffiths**

Chief Executive Officer Executive Principal: 11-16 Education