



# Hertswood Academy

## LOWER SCHOOL YEARS 7-9

Cowley Hill  
Borehamwood  
Hertfordshire  
WD6 5LG

## UPPER SCHOOL YEARS 10-13

Thrift Farm Lane  
Borehamwood  
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Headteacher:  
Peter Gillett  
BSc (Hons), PGCE, NPQH, MBA

03 May 2016

Dear Colleague,

## THE ARK THEATRE

As you know the final subsidy for the Ark Theatre from Hertsmere Borough Council comes to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> May. We have very much appreciated the council's support in this respect as it has enabled us to deliver a mix of community group shows as well as shows from commercial touring companies.

**To ensure that any hired use of the current theatre site after 31<sup>st</sup> May is financially viable, it will regrettably be necessary to increase hire fees for community groups to a level that reflects the total cost of doing so. We will also need to close the theatre to professional hirings.**

Under financial regulations for Academies, we are unable to use the per-pupil funding we receive from central government to subsidise those activities at the Ark that are not Hertswood related. Until now, we have been able to access some remaining unrestricted funds to support the Ark but those are no longer available.

We had hoped that the final subsidy from Hertsmere Borough Council would coincide with the move by Hertswood to a single site and, thus, the temporary closure of the Ark in its current form. Regrettably, agreement on some of planning conditions has yet to be reached between various parties and the EFA has yet to provide unconditional agreement to the project; the impact of which has been to cause slippage in the timeline for the move to the single site.

The contracts of employment for both Theatre Manager and Technician are inextricably linked to the existence of those subsidies and, unfortunately, without those two pots of funding from Hertsmere Borough Council and Hertswood, the continued operation of the Ark in its current format is not financially viable; thus their contracts expire on 31<sup>st</sup> May and will not be renewed.

We have looked at various options to enable the continuation of the Ark as a performance space under licensed regulated entertainment whilst the theatre is still on its site in Thrift Farm Lane. Under licensing requirements, this includes the need to employ a Designated Premises Supervisor to oversee the regulated entertainment; a position currently held by the Theatre Manager.

Some savings can be made by not offering a box office and on-line booking service but, instead, for community groups to manage their own ticket sales. This does also mean that the hire fees will have to be paid in advanced rather than in arrears from box office income. There will also be some reduction of front of house services (licensed bar and kiosk) on show nights but without compromising health and safety.

We have already had discussions with some local community groups and they would prefer to continue to use the Ark on that basis.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to accommodate commercial touring company shows in the same way. I know this will come as a disappointment to all concerned but the protracted discussions about planning conditions aligned to the cessation of the Hertsmere Borough Council subsidy leave us with no other option.

We will, of course, update you on the development of the new Academy, Ark and Sports Centre as soon as there is further news, but in the meantime wish to thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Doe  
Chairman  
Hertswood Academy Trust

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