

The Gielgud Academy free school update

In February of this year the Gielgud Academy Trust had a conference feedback meeting with the Department for Education (DfE) to discuss our application. The DfE was impressed with our vision for an all-through free school with a specialism in the arts to be based at the Hub in Haywards Heath. However, they felt certain elements of our application, in particular the education plan, needed revision before we would be admitted through to the pre-opening phase.

Following the announcement last year of the closure of Central Sussex College's Haywards Heath Campus in 2017, we were only left with a little under five months to complete an application process that usually takes two years. Although we believe that our professional bid-writer did an excellent job, we now have the opportunity to incorporate the considerable expertise of our Education Team including Chris Thomson, the former Principal of BHASVIC (Outstanding Sixth Form College in Brighton), two Primary Head Teachers and a Secondary Deputy Head. They are currently revising the educational element of our application, which we intend to re-submit for the next wave (13) of free school applications. Discussions between DfE and our educational experts are ongoing and we are now also enrolled onto the New Schools Network (NSN) Development Program.

One significant change of plan is that following careful consultation with our educational experts, DfE, and the NSN, the proposed opening date of the all-through free school will now be September **2019**. DfE originally indicated that the wave 13 application deadline would be late Spring but we have been advised that because of the impending General Election it is now more likely to be late September. The election result could also mean significant changes and we will keep you updated on our progress.

The Gielgud Academy Trust is delighted to announce that David Russell, CEO of the Education and Training Foundation, formerly a Director at the DfE and Deputy Director of the Academies programme, has joined our team.