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Outgoing head praises new academy plans

Choice of subjects

By Patsy Duffy

TEACHERS at a school earmarked for academy status have expressed fears for their jobs under a private firm, it emerged this week.

Outgoing Whitton School head teacher Jonathan Gillard, this week admitted there was a lot of speculation about the possible takeover by Swedish firm Kunskapsskolan.

Mr Gillard said: "There are concerns among staff about their jobs, but we've had a huge amount of meetings at the school about the company and nothing is finalised yet."

Mr Gillard spoke to the *Informer* days before bidding farewell to the Percy

'There will be more personalised learning for pupils'

Road school to become the principal of a new academy near Chelmsford.

He insisted he was not jumping ship, but leaving the school in the capable hands of current deputy Phil Davies, who is to become acting head teacher from September.

Mr Gillard said: "There has been a lot of negative press about Kunskapsskolan, and I can tell you there will be no open-necked shirts and jeans, as said by one particular individual, but a proper uniform."

He was referring to claims by Richmond's deputy Tory leader Geoffrey Samuel, who claimed the scheme would be a return to the 'failed left-wing ideas of the 60s and 70s'.

Mr Gillard said: "The academy is not being imposed on the school and there will be more personalised learning for the pupils, where small groups choose the curriculum, so they will be able to do more subjects



NEW MAN: From left, Phil Davies who will take over in September from outgoing head teacher Jonathan Gillard, at Whitton School

which motivate them.

"They will still have to do English, maths, science and IT though. I've seen this academy programme working at Hackney Downs School, which was a failing school. In the five years since it became an academy it has one of the highest attainment levels in London".

In March the *Informer*

reported how more than £80million is to be pumped into Whitton School, Shene School and Hampton Community College after they were earmarked as potential academies.

Under the plans, Swedish schools' firm Kunskapsskolan will be responsible for the Whitton and Hampton academies, while education foundation

Edutrust has been nominated to run Shene.

The proposals will go through a full consultation before any decisions are reached.

Mr Gillard, who has run Whitton for the last three years, said it would be an exciting and beneficial development and would lead to a much-needed rebuilding programme.