



19th July 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

On behalf of the Board of Governors, I am writing to update you following the meeting yesterday evening when we reviewed responses to our consultation on the proposal to convert to academy status within the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (DCAT).

The Governors are grateful to all parents, carers, staff and members of the community who responded to our consultation. A total of 164 responses was received, including 113 from parents and carers. Overall, 52% of respondents agreed with the proposal to join and 26% disagreed. The remaining 22% were unsure about the proposal. We received many comments and questions across the spectrum of respondents.

At the Board meeting, governors considered carefully and discussed in detail all the responses and the comments made. Those respondents who agreed with the proposal recognise the benefits in joining DCAT to secure support for the school. They comment that the Trust has a strong and proven track record of improving outcomes for all pupils and helping every child to make progress. Respondents also welcome the fact that DCAT shares the school's ethos and values and they place their trust in the governors and in the headteacher, who has given her strong endorsement for joining the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust.

From feedback received through the consultation, it is clear that parents want greater engagement from the school and governors generally; this is something we will look to improve. Governors recognised that many of those who disagreed with the proposal or who were unsure, still had questions about the change and the reasons for making it now. Some of these questions related directly to DCAT and its relationship to the school and how academy status would impact on our school community. Other comments reflected a negative view of academies in general or were citing negative experiences of other schools within different academy chains.

Governors are delighted that the end of Key Stage 2 SATs results for the Y6 pupils have improved this year to be in line with the National expected standards. Staff at the school have worked exceptionally hard to achieve this and there has been support from the local authority. This year's results are in contrast to the previous three years when results were very significantly below the National average. Although there has been improvement in this year's outcomes, the key issue remains that our school and staff need support to continue to improve and ensure that all children make good progress from the end of KS1.

Governors are totally committed to improving standards and helping the school move forward in the best possible way. As Mrs Weeks has already shared, that, *there is no escaping the fact that we MUST improve outcomes in reading, writing and maths for children leaving Key Stage 2 who are not achieving their full potential. Of course, we currently are doing everything we can to address this, but we still need to make improvements. Collaboration is a proven method of professional development at all levels - from class teachers having the opportunity to view each other's lessons and give feedback, to subject leaders working to implement whole school projects, to Headteachers supporting self-evaluation and holding each other to account for performance.*



DCAT can provide the structure in which we could do this, as well as the additional capacity of 'lead teachers' within their school improvement team. There is a ready-made network of schools for us to access. We simply cannot achieve that level of professional development opportunity and support as a 'stand-alone' school, or as a federation or partnership.

A number of respondents asked why other avenues of securing partnership and support for the school had not been explored. Governors have already explored extensively a number of other options and long-term partnerships. These are limited because St John's Meads is a Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School. Then recently, the Local Authority informed governors that it will no longer have the capacity to provide that support in the long-term, meaning we cannot continue as we are.

At the Governing Board meeting yesterday, taking in to account all the responses to the consultation, the importance of securing long-term support for the headteacher and the staff and for school improvement, governors decided to continue with an application to the DfE for an Academy Order.

I want to be absolutely clear that this is part of a process that follows the required permission, already given by Diocese, because we are a Church of England School. An Academy Order from the DfE is the next stage of consent that is required in this process. It is *permission* to convert to academy status within DCAT not an *obligation* to convert.

Governors believe that, as Church of England Primary School, joining the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust would secure the best future for our school. Moving forward, we recognise how important it is for us to continue to respond to the questions and concerns that parents and carers have raised through the consultation.

Early in the new academic year, we will continue discussions and will aim to engage proactively with parents and carers to provide answers to the questions submitted towards the end of the consultation period. We will also seek to provide further explanation as to why our proposal is not the change some fear but a positive way forward for our school, our staff and all our pupils.

With kind regards



Linda Caroe,
Chair of Governors