



Dear Parent/Carer and friends of the school,

10<sup>th</sup> June 2016

**Consideration of the setting up of a Multi Academy Trust**

The Governing Body has been reviewing the best strategy for the future of our school along with its close partners. Our priority is to enable our school to continue to provide an excellent education for all our children while protecting the school's role at the heart of our community, along with our unique qualities and strengths.

For the past 12 months we have been working with other schools in the Sherborne area to explore the potential of strengthening and building upon the collaborative work that we already do well together in the Sherborne Schools' Partnership. The traditional model of education provision is changing and we want to take a lead locally. Academies and multi academy trusts are in place across the country. The role of local authorities in supporting schools and Pupil Referral Units is diminishing, budgets are reducing and the Government is actively encouraging schools to work more closely together and explore becoming academies and multi academy trusts.

Following careful consideration, the Governing Body believes that there are a number of key benefits for our School to become part of a new local primary/secondary multi academy trust. The schools that have chosen to be involved are Buckland Newton CEVC Primary, St Andrews CEVC Primary (Yetminster), Sherborne Primary, Sherborne Abbey CEVC Primary, Sherborne Learning Centre (Pupil Referral Unit), St Mary's CEVC Primary (Bradford Abbas) and The Gryphon School.

We are writing to inform you, that following agreement by the Governing Body our School is actively working with the schools named above to design and shape a transfer to multi academy trust status, having reached the considered view that this would be a beneficial and positive move for us and our children.

Being part of a new multi academy trust will allow us to further strengthen the links between our schools in order to support continuity of education from 0-19 within our community. The Sherborne Schools' Partnership has worked closely together for many years to provide an excellent education for our young people, and so to collaborate more closely is an exciting prospect, particularly as academies also have greater flexibility in delivering the curriculum. The opportunities include developing our provision, sharing best practice, being more creative in our curriculum, enabling further development of our teachers/staff and taking collective responsibility for all of the children's development and progress. There is also more freedom on how we spend our funding and we would be able to explore opportunities for financial efficiency, determining for ourselves which services and providers we will buy into to provide outstanding provision for our children.

To become part of a multi academy trust, each school would seek the approval of the Department for Education to convert, or in the case of the Gryphon which is already an academy, transfer, to become an academy within a new multi academy trust (MAT). The partnership would be known as the Sherborne Area Schools' Trust (SAST) and in setting out the proposals for the MAT it is important to note that each school would keep its name, identity and ethos.

There is of course much more to do in developing our ideas for the new partnership and the schools have formed a joint Steering Board to undertake the necessary and important due diligence and planning. If successful in our plans, we would aim to become an academy by Spring 2017.

As part of this process we want to hear your views and as our ideas take shape we will provide you with more information on our proposals. We will be consulting with all of our stakeholders, hopefully sometime in Autumn 2016. We appreciate that you may have many questions at this early stage, and so to help, we have included below an outline of what academies and multi academy trusts are. If you have further questions for consideration by the Steering Board please submit these via email to [info@sast.org.uk](mailto:info@sast.org.uk).

This is an exciting and important opportunity for all the schools involved and we would welcome your engagement as we progress on our journey.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Chair of Governors/Chair of Board





## Proposed conversion to Academy status and the setting up of a Multi Academy Trust

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### ***What is an Academy?***

Academies are classed as independent state-funded schools, which have the freedom to determine their own policies on such things as the curriculum, school hours, term dates and staff pay. They aim to provide a free, first-class education for pupils of all abilities through a fresh approach to school leadership, teaching and learning. They offer a full, broad and balanced curriculum. This is enabled by the Academies Act 2010. Primary, infant, junior, secondary and special schools as well as Pupil Referral Units are all able to apply to convert into an academy and are accountable to the Secretary of State rather than the Local Authority.

Academies are managed by their own academy trust and are not the responsibility of the Local Authority. Academy trusts are given directly the money which would have been given to the Local Authority, so academies can choose how best to spend that money on the provision of education.

This greater independence brings increased responsibilities and opportunities to build upon our current success and ensure that we continue to improve our service to families in the local community. You can view further detail on academies at the Department for Education website at: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>

#### ***What is a Multi Academy Trust?***

A multi academy trust, builds on the principles above.

All Academies are run by an Academy Trust. A Multi Academy trust is a single Trust which runs more than one academy. The Multi Academy Trust is the statutory Governing Body of each of its academies. It is a charitable company limited by guarantee, which means it may not make any profit, and because it is publically funded it is subject to judicial review and to the Freedom of Information Act like any other public body. The trust has a formal agreement, or contract with the Department for Education (DfE) which sets out the parameters in which it must operate as well as being subject to charity law, public law (being publically funded) as well as general company law.

A multi academy trust can include all phases and types of education - primary and secondary schools, special schools, sixth form colleges and Pupil Referral Units. A single academy trust board is formed to provide the strategic leadership and oversight of each school in the trust.

Each school / academy will have a local board of governors which will operate in much the same way as the Governing Body / Management Committee does at present, with delegated responsibilities from the new trust board.

#### ***What is an Alternative Provision Academy?***

Pupil referral units (PRUs) teach children who aren't able to attend school and may not otherwise receive suitable education. This could be because they have a short or long-term illness, have been excluded or is a new starter waiting for a mainstream school place.

PRUs that convert to academy status become alternative provision (AP) academies. PRUs can convert on their own, as part of a chain of academies within a multi academy trust, or with the support of a sponsor.

#### ***Can a faith school i.e. a Voluntary Aided/Controlled school be part of a Multi Academy Trust?***

Yes, but this is subject to the prior agreement with the Church of England Diocese. This agreement will be with conditions designed to protect the distinctive religious characteristics of such schools. The Diocese of Salisbury is supportive of Church of England schools in exploring academy partnerships –

<http://www.salisbury.anglican.org/schools/academy-status>.

