



LETTER TO PARENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS – ACADEMISATION

27 November 2017

Dear Parents and Stakeholders,

As you may be aware from the governor newsletters, over the past couple of years St Stephen's School has been reviewing its future status with regard to whether it should become an academy, and if so which multi-academy trust (MAT) it should join.

At a meeting of the Governing Body on 27 February 2017 it was agreed that we should become an academy and join the Bath and Wells Multi-Academy Trust (BWMAT). Following initial consultation with parents and stakeholders, we commenced the application process. Unfortunately this was held up during the general election in the Summer.

I am now pleased to advise you that our application to the DfE has been successful and we are progressing our transition to academy status. All being well, we are advised that this is likely to take effect on 1 March 2018. The Bath Hub of BWMAT will initially comprise twelve schools, many of which we have previously partnered with on curriculum development and moderation, as well as staff training. We are delighted with this outcome and are looking forwards to our future partnerships. In the meantime BWMAT is commencing the recruitment process for an Assistant Director of Learning and Achievement, who will work exclusively with the Bath Hub.

Prior to taking the decision in February 2017, the governing body reviewed the various academy models available in our geographic area to determine the benefits and risks of these and what they would mean for our school. The original set of FAQs is attached again to this letter. I hope these will provide greater clarity for you in terms of the kind of issues that were considered.

The first question the governing body considered was whether the time was right for us to make a decision on becoming an academy. The overwhelming conclusion was that we should apply to convert to academy as soon as possible, for the following reasons:

- We were already seeing a reduction in local authority services as other schools converted to academies and the local authority consequently received reduced funding. This situation was deemed to be unsustainable for us going forwards.
- By becoming part of a Multi-Academy Trust, which would be a requirement as an academy, we would be part of a larger organisation which potentially offered a range of benefits including shared services, economies of scale, more formal partnership opportunities with other schools for our children and for staff development. These were important considerations for us as revenues decline and costs continue to rise.





The second question was which Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) we should join and the decision taken was to join BWMAT for the following reasons:

- As a church school, this MAT is the one that we naturally align with.
- The MAT is already established, with a sound infrastructure and financial structure, and it is starting to build a solid track record of school improvement.
- In terms of value for money this MAT provides a greater range of services than we currently received from the local authority.

As you will appreciate, such huge decisions are a challenge for the governing body and we can assure you that we spent a tremendous amount of time attending meetings and presentations, and researching and analysing data, prior to deciding our proposals. We feel confident that these decisions will enable our school to retain its identity and distinctiveness and continue its traditions of providing a high quality of rounded education for our children in a family environment. However, in joining a Multi-Academy Trust we also anticipate the benefits of being part of a larger organisation.

Whilst we conducted an initial consultation with parents and stakeholders earlier this year, we want to keep you informed and offer you a further opportunity to raise any questions or concerns. Some of the other schools joining the Bath Hub will be consulting in the New Year and there may be the opportunity to attend an open meeting with BWMAT if there is sufficient interest. If you would like to attend such a meeting please would you send an email to: Kate_Seeley@st-stephens.bathnes.sch.uk by **1 December 2017**. Thank you. The consultation period for our school will end on Friday 19 January 2018.

With kind regards,

Kate Seeley

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