

Follow-up to Multi Academy Trust Conversion Parent Consultation Meeting

St Andrew's CEVC Primary School 26.02.2019

Attendees: John Crane, CEO of Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust; Emma Flin, Headteacher; Cathy Shergold, Chair of Governors; Jane Lushington, Vice-chair of Governors

A big thank you to all those parents & carers who attended the above-captioned meeting regarding the Governing Body's decision for our school to join the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Multi Academy Trust. For those who were unable to attend, there follows a summary of the main questions addressed at the meeting.

Please note that all children currently at St Andrew's and those with older siblings who have gone on to secondary education will by default join an academy on leaving Year 6. All secondary schools within our local catchment area are already members of Multi Academy Trusts.

Full information on the Vine Schools Trust can be found by visiting their website:

[Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust](#)

Briefly, there are 19 schools in the Vine Schools Trust at present, scattered widely across Essex, and accounting for approximately 4,500 children. The Vine is responsible for the financial, legal and broader administrative needs of its academies. Its stated policy is that anything and everything related to the teaching of children is delegated to the individual school's Headteacher and its Governing Body.

Essex is a large county, covering many rural, coastal and urban communities. Schools within the Vine Trust are not necessarily geographically close together, so they have started working in clusters. Local to us, Ridgewell and Belchamp St Paul are already part of the Vine Trust and we will become part of this local cluster.

In addition to working together to develop and share best practice, there are many positive financial gains to be made by joining the Vine Schools Trust: most notably, economies of scale and collective purchasing power to drive down prices for essential goods and services.

The current funding crisis in education means that our Government and Local Authority funding has been drastically scaled back. However, the cost of providing children with a well-equipped, appropriately staffed and safe environment in which to deliver their educational needs increases almost daily. Under The Vine Schools Trust, St Andrew's will be financially slightly better off than under the old Essex funding model. Additionally, The Vine Schools Trust provides central services, such as payroll, HR, H&S, etc., that previously were part of the LA offering but now – despite our much smaller budget – have to be paid for by individual schools.

The expected date of conversion is 01.04.19.

Q: why were parents not told we were thinking of becoming an Academy?

A: Governors have made the ultimate decision, with the preservation of our village school with its values, identity and excellent academic and pastoral qualities the driving force in its conversations and negotiations over the past two years. The school is at the heart of our community and the protection of its future viability and very existence is of the utmost importance. As such, we are obliged by law and the DfE to follow specific guidelines on timing for staff and parent consultation.

Q: Will our teachers have to go and work in other Vine schools?

A: All staff currently at St Andrew's have been transferred to the Vine Schools Trust under TUPE regulations, so that all their existing contractual rights are protected. Any new members of staff joining after the conversion date would officially work for the trust. Headteachers across the Vine Schools Trust can make suggestions and recommendations regarding cross-school staff resource management but nothing would be imposed; all parties must be in agreement before any such changes could be implemented.

Q: what if the trust runs out of money?

A: This is unlikely. However, the diocese continues to own the land on which the school buildings stand, so hopefully the school would be protected.

Q: Going into the trust, will there be more expectation to study more RE?

A: Although academies are not required to follow the National Curriculum, we see no requirement to alter our current educational delivery and will continue exactly as we are. We will not lose our identity.

Q: Will unqualified teachers teach our children as an Academy?

A: There are instances of unqualified teachers teaching in Vine schools, just as there are currently in St Andrew's. Sometimes, they are stronger than actual qualified teachers. Miss Smith is a fine example of the enormously positive impact a highly skilled and experienced non-qualified teacher can have on children, fellow-teaching staff and parents alike. However, this would not be the norm. If this were to be considered, the Vine Schools Trust would consult with Mrs Flin about how such a staff member's future qualification can be expedited and ensured.

Q: Can a summary of what had been discussed be made available to parents unable to make this meeting?

A: Yes, we are pleased to provide parents with as much information as they require. Please feel free speak to Mrs Flin or to email questions to governors at: admin@greatyeldhamschool.co.uk