

23rd June 2021

### **Corinium Education Trust**

Over the past year, the governors and I have been discussing the possibility of St. Mary's joining a Multi Academy Trust or MAT. A MAT is a group of schools who have joined together to form a trust. The schools work together to improve the learning and life chances of children within the trust.

We have been in discussion with the Corinium Education Trust, a growing MAT comprised of Cirencester Deer Park School, Kemble Primary School, Siddington C of E Primary School and Chesterton Primary School. The values and ethos of the CET align closely with ours and we are keen to progress our relationship with the trust further with the aim of becoming part of CET next year.

This letter is the first step in the consultation process with the community. I hope it will answer some of your initial questions and open a discussion. There will be a further opportunity for discussion at a meeting for the members of the community over the coming weeks.

### **What are the benefits of joining a MAT?**

- A MAT enables school leaders to work collaboratively and share responsibility to meet rising expectations and improve the education offered to pupils within the community.
- Staff can share good practice, spread expertise across the schools and tackle challenges together.
- The trust can offer new opportunities and invest in the continued development of staff.
- The trust can provide new economies of scale and collective purchasing within larger groups.

### **Why join CET?**

We want to join a small, local MAT. The Corinium Education Trust is made up of schools who are already within our South Cotswolds Schools Partnership and with whom we already have a relationship. The members of the trust are committed to improving the life chances and learning outcomes for all children through collaborative work. In a smaller MAT, St. Mary's will be in a position to contribute fully to the work of the trust and CET equally are committed to ensuring each of its schools retain their own identity. CET understands that primary schools first and foremost serve their communities and our responsibility is to serve the families of Tetbury. CET aims to inspire, challenge and transform – values that sit alongside our aim to develop caring, curious and courageous young people.

### **Why don't we just stay as we are?**

The Government's vision is 'for every school to be part of a family of schools in strong academy trusts' and is driving for more schools to join successful multi academy trusts. Over the last ten years, as more and more schools nationally and across Gloucestershire have become part of MATs, the support and challenge provided by local authorities has reduced. Staying as we are could leave the school isolated and vulnerable as our locality schools join together and become stronger. We are committed to ensuring the children of Tetbury get the best education available and I believe that will come from working in partnership with other schools rather than in isolation.

### **Why don't St. Mary's join the same MAT as SWR and Malmesbury secondary schools or the Diocesan MAT?**

The Governors of St. Mary's are keen to join a local, smaller MAT which will enable us to work in a family of both primary and secondary schools with whom we already have an established relationship.

SWR and Malmesbury Schools are in the Athelstan Trust. This MAT is made up of secondary schools from around Gloucestershire and Wiltshire and currently has no primary schools.

The Diocese of Gloucester has its own MAT called DGAT (Diocese of Gloucester Academies Trust). There are almost 20 schools in DGAT from all across Gloucestershire.

### **What will it mean for the families of St. Mary's School?**

On a day to day basis, very little will change for pupils and parents. There will be no immediate changes to the staff or the leadership team and the uniform, admissions arrangements and opportunities we provide will stay the same. As we continue to work with the MAT, parents may notice tweaks to our curriculum and the way we teach but any changes will be based on what evidence tells us works best in schools to improve outcomes for children. Parents are free to continue to choose any local secondary school whether it is part of the MAT or not.

### **Will the school still have the same governors and PTFA?**

Yes. The Governors will continue to work on a local level to provide an education of the highest standard and the PTFA will continue to fund raise for our pupils. Our local governing body will continue to bring the Christian perspective to our school decision making process. Any grants received by St. Mary's School from local charities and organisations will still be used to enhance the education and opportunities for the children of Tetbury.

### **Will the school events still be for the children of Tetbury?**

Yes. We already work closely with a network of Cirencester Primary Schools and attend many of the events organised for this cluster of schools. We will continue to do this as well as holding our own St. Mary's events such as school fayres, sports days and performances.

### **Will we keep our identity as a church school?**

As a voluntary aided school, we need to have the permission of the Diocese in order to join CET. The Diocese will expect the MAT to ensure the religious character of the school is safeguarded. CET do not expect their schools to change their uniform, school day or admission arrangements.

We will continue to work closely with our local clergy and church communities.

### **What will the process look like?**

Becoming an academy and joining a MAT is quite rightly, not a quick process. There are many stakeholders we will be consulting with over the next few weeks. Approval needs to be granted from the Diocese and the Department for Education and there are many legal procedures to complete. If all proceeds smoothly we will hope to become part of CET early in 2022.

This is an exciting time for St. Mary's School. Today, over 50% of children in state funded schools, study in academies. Being part of a strong academy trust will enable us to work within a family of



schools, working together to focus on what really matters - teaching and learning and developing an outstanding curriculum.

**There will be an opportunity for members of the school community to discuss this further at a TEAMS meeting on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm. The link to join this meeting is included in the email.**

If you have any questions please feel free to raise them at the meeting, or alternatively please email any questions to [consultation@st-marys-tetbury.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@st-marys-tetbury.gloucs.sch.uk) or complete the attached form and send it into the school office. We will answer any concerns and questions raised anonymously at the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Woolley

Headteacher

**Multi Academy Trust Consultation**

Name: (optional)

My question/concern:

Please indicate how you would like your question to be addressed:

Personally by phone/email: (please provide email address) .....Yes/No

A meeting with a Governor or Headteacher ..... Yes/No

At the meeting anonymously ..... Yes/No