

15<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Dear Parents,

### **Formal consultation**

#### **Proposal for St. Mary's Primary School to become an Academy and join a Multi Academy Trust.**

As parents will know for a while now the governors have been pursuing the proposal for St. Mary's to convert to an academy and join a Multi Academy Trust or MAT.

Over the last year the Governors consulted with parents, staff, the local community and the Diocese on the proposal to join the Corinium Education Trust. As a voluntary aided school, we are required to obtain legal consent to proceed with the conversion from the Diocesan Board of Education. The DBE considered St. Mary's request to join CET and concluded that in this instance consent could not be granted due to the rules around voluntary aided schools. The governors have therefore reviewed their decision.

The governors are still in agreement that St. Mary's would benefit from being part of a larger collaboration of schools and we have continued over the past months to discuss the options available to us with the Diocese. After much consideration, it has been agreed that the **Diocese of Gloucester Academy Trust** would be the best home for St. Mary's.

The governing board of St. Mary's Primary School are therefore formally seeking views on plans to become an academy as part of the Diocese of Gloucester Academy Trust (DGAT). The proposed change means that St. Mary's Church of England Primary School will formally join a larger family of schools and will be under the direct legal governance of DGAT.

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

- By joining a family of schools we will be able to ensure the children of Tetbury continue to get the best education available.
- 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 DGAT?**

As a Christian organisation, DGAT shares our Christian vision. DGAT understands what it means to be a church school and will support and nurture our Christian distinctiveness.

Although DGAT is a larger MAT than CET and geographically it is made up of schools across the county, the governors have concluded that it will provide an excellent level of school support for St. Mary's as well as providing opportunities for our staff to work collaboratively with school staff across the trust.

#### **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.' 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. I am 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.

**Who will make decisions about the school?**

Day to day decisions will still be made by the Headteacher, supported by the DGAT central team as and when needed. The DGAT Board of Trustees makes strategic decisions about all schools within the Trust but also delegates some local decisions to the school's local governing board.

**Will the school get more or less money by joining DGAT?**

No. The school will receive the same amount of funding but will be able to benefit from greater financial efficiencies gained from being part of a larger group of school. The school will contribute a proportion of its budget to DGAT for central services eg. finance administration support, buildings and operations and school improvement. Currently the school already pays this to Gloucestershire County Council and other external providers.

**What will it mean for the children?**

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 vision, 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.

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

Yes. The Governors will continue to work with me on a local level to ensure the highest quality education for your children and the PTFA will continue to fund raise for our pupils.

**Will the teachers be moved to different schools across the Trust?**

No, not generally. Teaching staff remain contracted to the school but will be able to access joint training with other DGAT staff to benefit from shared practice- and also share the good practice from our school to help other schools.

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

Yes. We already work closely with the Diocese and attend many of their events. We will continue to do this as well as holding our own St. Mary's events such as school fayres, sports days and performances. We will also continue with all our events and activities and close partnership with Sir William Romney School.

**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.

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.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback about the governors' decision to join DGAT, please email them to [consultation@st-marys-tetbury.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@st-marys-tetbury.gloucs.sch.uk) by Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Woolley

Headteacher

