



# Ashton Gate Primary School

'Rising High Together'

Executive Headteacher: Mr. G Jones

Head of School Ashton: Mrs. L Dowlman Head of School Upton: Mr. A Donaldson

Tel: 0117 9030236

[ashtongatep@bristol-schools.uk](mailto:ashtongatep@bristol-schools.uk)



## Consultation on the question of whether or not Ashton Gate Primary School (AGPS) should convert to academy status within Cathedral Schools Trust.

### Key information

- **How long is the consultation open for?**

The consultation will close on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

- **How do I make my views known?**

There are a number of options available to you which are set out at the end of this document.

- **How do I find out more?**

Please come along to our consultation evening on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February at 3.30pm or Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 6.00pm.

### Current position

The governing body of Ashton Gate Primary School is considering whether or not the school should convert to an academy within the Cathedral Schools Trust (CST). The governing body has applied to the DfE for an academy order, which is an 'in principle' decision of the DfE as to whether the proposal would be acceptable to the DfE. An academy order is not a final decision of either the governing body or the DfE.

Before making a decision as to whether or not to proceed, the governing body is keen to hear all of your views on the question. This document provides further information on the pros and cons of conversion to help you respond to the consultation.

### How will the consultation impact on the governing body's decision?

The governing body will not take a final decision on the question until the consultation process has been completed. You have the option of providing your comments in writing (in whatever format you would prefer) or by coming to one of our consultation sessions. You also have the option of making an appointment to meet with Sue Waller, Chair of Governors or Gareth Jones, Executive Headteacher if you would like to discuss the proposal further. The governors will then consider any comments and representations received before making a final decision.

### What is the proposal?

The governors are exploring whether to convert the school to academy status within the Cathedral Schools Trust. If the governors decide to proceed, this would be effective by the end of this calendar year. The date will be confirmed prior to the conversion.



## What is Cathedral Schools Trust?

Cathedral Schools Trust (CST) is a multi-academy trust in the wider Bristol area. The trust currently comprises 9 schools - 6 primary schools and 3 secondary schools.

The CST 'family' of schools currently includes around 5000 children and 600 staff, and the Trust is set to grow with a number of additional schools in the Bristol area. CST's mission is to break barriers and achieve excellence and to ensure all children have a rich and balanced curriculum with a particular focus on music and the performing arts. The core values of the Trust are reflective (valuing the unique qualities of our schools and encouraging staff to be reflective), collaborative (sharing what we do well and providing high levels of challenge and support) and creative (valuing creativity and providing opportunities for staff and children to be ambitious and fulfil their creative potential).

As a mixed MAT, CST welcomes children of all faiths and of none.

You can find more information on CST, its schools and its values on the Trust's website at this address: <https://www.cathedralschoolstrust.org/about-us/vision-and-values/>.

## What are the benefits of becoming an academy?

The governors are exploring this option as they consider that:

- as a school we have positively benefited from partnering with other schools and believe that schools working together get better results for their children, and help us to attract and retain great staff;
- academy status would ensure that the school has more freedom to choose how it spends its money in the best interests of the pupils;
- working together as a group of schools within the Cathedral Schools Trust allows us to collaborate with other schools to create efficiencies in how we buy supplies and in the opportunities that we make available to our students and staff; and
- the experience and expertise of Cathedral Schools Trust would ensure that we can continue to sustain and improve the performance of our school and that pupils will benefit from better access to resources and facilities, for example through access to specialist music expertise.

## What are the negative aspects of becoming an academy?

There are some additional finance requirements of being an academy on account of it being a charitable company. One of the benefits of being within a group arrangement such as Cathedral Schools Trust is that this burden would be shared and we would have their experience of operating within the academy sector since 2008.

If we agree to join CST, the trustees will have the ultimate say on how the school is structured and operates, so there could, in theory, be a transfer of decision making away from the Local Governing Body and Headteacher. However, CST's Scheme of Governance make it clear that the day to day running and decision making will remain in the hands of the Headteacher and Governors. The trust would only intervene to support the school should concerns arise about education standards or the effective management of the school.

## What about the status quo?

It is true to say that the performance of the school has been sustained through the hard work of our staff and with the support of our parents. However, the governors are concerned about:

- the continuing ability of the local authority to support the school into the future; and



- the ability of the school to respond to the continued drop in funding (in real terms) as a stand-alone school.

The government's preferred direction of travel for education in England continues to be that schools should become academies within multi-academy trusts. The governors have explored the various options available and consider that Cathedral Schools Trust is the best option available to the school.

### How do I respond to this consultation?

There are a number of options open to you:

- to send any comments by email to [chairashtongatep@bristol-schools.uk](mailto:chairashtongatep@bristol-schools.uk) with the heading "Academy Consultation"
- deliver any hand written comments to the school reception marked "Academy Consultation"
- attend one of our consultation meetings – Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February at 3.30pm or Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February at 6.00pm. All consultation meetings will be at the Upton Road site.
- attend our parent drop-in meeting with Ashton Gate Primary staff and governors on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February at 9.15am at the Upton Road site.
- arrange a meeting with Gareth Jones, the Executive Headteacher via the school office or Sue Waller, Chair of Governors by emailing [chairashtongatep@bristol-schools.uk](mailto:chairashtongatep@bristol-schools.uk)

Please respond by 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 in order that the governors will have the opportunity to take your response into account when making a decision.



## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

### What does this mean for staff?

Were the school to convert, the staff would transfer to Cathedral Schools Trust under the 'TUPE Regulations'. These Regulations ensure that staff transfer on their existing terms and conditions. Pensions for staff would also remain unaffected.

Within a multi-academy trust structure such as Cathedral Schools Trust there might also be the opportunity for staff to work in another school within the group, should they wish to. There are also opportunities for joint CPD and staff development.

### Will the trust take over decision making on staff structures and appointments?

Decisions regarding staffing structures and appointments will remain with the Executive Headteacher and Governors of Ashton Gate Primary School. However, any major appointments, such as a Headteacher or a comprehensive restructuring, will need to be ratified by the Trust. As the trust develops there may be opportunities to create joint appointments if required.

### Will Mr Jones still be our Executive Headteacher? What about the other staff? Will our children be taught by people we don't know?

Mr Jones will remain as Executive Headteacher and all of our staff pay and conditions will be protected and they will continue to work at AGPS. Over time we do expect our children to benefit from and participate in additional enrichment activities which may be delivered by staff members from wider CST schools, for example in music. There will also be some shared back office support staff.

### How would the school be funded and will AGPS have more money?

As an academy, the school would be funded centrally by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), but the level of funding would be as determined by returns provided by the local authority. In terms of capital funding, the school would also be able to bid for additional funds through the ESFA's School Condition Allocation (SCA).

We are aware that pressure on school funding is increasing year on year. While converting to an academy will not mean that we will receive more money, we will have more control over how our funding is spent. We also envisage that the sharing of resources across the trust will generate savings and better value for money, which will free up funding that will be spent within our school.

### Would the school still have a governing body?



Yes - Cathedral Schools Trust has a board of trustees which would oversee the school as well as the other schools for which it is responsible. In addition, there would continue to be a local governing body which would have elected parent and staff representatives, as well as individuals drawn from the local community.

### **How would the admissions arrangements work?**

There is no proposal that the admissions arrangements for the school would change were the school to convert. As an academy, Cathedral Schools Trust would be responsible for our admissions and we would make the decisions in accordance with our published admission arrangements. We would however continue to be part of the local authority's co-ordinated admission arrangements and we would continue to comply with:

- the School Admission Code and the School Admissions Appeal Codes; and
- the local authority's Fair Access Protocol

### **Will our children get priority admission to CST's secondary schools (e.g. St Katherine's or BCCS)?**

No, the admissions criteria for CST's secondary schools will not change. Parents will be able to continue to apply in the same way as they do now.

### **How would the school change?**

On a day to day basis, the pupils, parents and teaching staff would probably see little change should we decide to become an academy and join the Cathedral Schools Trust. Some new systems would need to be put in place (e.g. for finance) but we would ensure that all staff are fully supported to meet this change.

Over the longer term, we consider that the move to collaborate within the Cathedral Schools Trust group of schools will provide more opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through additional enrichment activities and to work with children from different schools.

### **Would the uniforms or term dates change?**

No there is no proposal for the uniform or term dates to change.

### **Why join a trust and not be an academy on our own?**

Guidance from the Department for Education is clear that most schools will form or join multi-academy trusts, rather than become stand-alone academies. Guidance from December 2016 states that 'where academies choose to work together in MATs they can become more efficient organisations, provide better opportunities to develop and retain their staff, both in teaching and in leadership, and develop innovative approaches to support learning.' (*Multi-academy trusts; December 2016*).

### **Would the school have the same name?**

Yes

### **Is the school being forced down the academy route?**

Not at the moment but the governors are alive to this being a potential possibility in the future.



### **Will we still be a community school?**

We will no longer be classed as a 'Community School' because we will be converting to an academy. However, Governors are determined that Ashton Gate Primary School will remain at the centre of our community and that all of our community activities will continue and hopefully be expanded.

### **Will Ashton Gate Primary School become a church school? How will this influence what my children experience/are taught?**

Ashton Gate Primary School will not become a faith school and there will be no change to the designation of AGPS. Cathedral Schools Trust is establishing a trust where children of all faiths and none are welcome and there will be no change to the way religious education is taught.

### **Which are the other schools in the Trust? Will it grow bigger? Will Ashton Gate be an equal in the trust?**

CST currently includes 6 Primary Schools in Bristol: St Werburgh's, Headley Park, Stoke Park, Victoria Park, Hotwells Primary and Cathedral Primary. The trust also includes 3 secondary schools: Trinity Academy, Bristol Cathedral Choir School and St Katherine's School. CST has communicated their intention to grow modestly over the next couple of years and they want to create a multi-academy trust where all schools play an equal role in shaping their approach and bringing their expertise to benefit the wider community.

### **What do we have in common with Cathedral Schools Trust? Do we really share the same values?**

Through our meetings with representatives from CST and visits by our Senior Leadership Team, Governors are convinced that the values and ethos of the schools are well aligned. All schools, while ambitious for children to succeed, believe enrichment and nurturing are paramount to a child's development and education. In addition, we support the emphasis that CST places on celebrating diversity and protecting the unique nature of individual schools.

### **Bristol Cathedral Choir School, one of the schools in the Trust, is quite academic or so I've heard. I want my children to have a rounded education. How can you guarantee they will get this?**

Governors had considered other trusts and like many of you, were concerned about there being too much emphasis on results. Cathedral Schools Trust shares our views around nurturing a broad based curriculum and believes that learning through the arts and sports is just as important as core curriculum subjects. If we join CST, Ashton Gate will retain control of its curriculum and maintain its emphasis on giving children a well-rounded and enlightened education.

### **What about the governing body's obligations under the Equality Act?**

The governors are mindful of their duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.



The relevant protected characteristics are:-

- (a) age;
- (b) disability;
- (c) gender re-assignment;
- (d) pregnancy and maternity;
- (e) race;
- (f) religion or belief;
- (g) sex; and
- (h) sexual orientation.

The governing body will be carrying out its own assessment of any such impact on the protected characteristics of a decision to move forward with academy status, but if there is anything related to this which you would like to draw to the governors' attention, please get in touch.

#### **Who are the governors?**

The Governors' details can be found on the school's website. If you would like to talk to any of the governors please contact them via the chair's email address, or talk to them at any of the parent information meetings.

