



'Enabling every child to fulfil his/her potential in a nurturing Christian environment.'

Friday 17th April 2020

Dear Parents / Carers,

As previously confirmed in my letter of 20th March 2020, the North West Academies Trust (NWAT) Board have made the decision not to move forward with the process for Utkinton St Paul's to join their Trust at this time. During consultation, we made it clear that there were two MATs, which the Interim Executive Board (IEB) could approach, NWAT & Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT). The values and ethos at both trusts were good matches for Utkinton and therefore the membership of either would benefit the school. The IEB's position was that in the event that we were unable to proceed with joining NWAT, we would seek to join CDAT. We have since had further discussions with CDAT, and we are happy to report that their trust board agreed they would welcome the school to their trust.

CDAT

As a Church school, we embrace any opportunity to strengthen our links with the Diocese of Chester, which we would do as an academy within the Trust. The Diocese already work closely with Utkinton St Paul's and have supported us as a Voluntary Controlled school. Becoming an academy would give us increased access to wider-ranging support from a partner that we know and for whom we share a common Christian ethos. CDAT have received significant interest from other schools across the Diocese who would like to join the Trust, demand has been high especially from those schools that are judged to be Good or Outstanding. Strengthening our partnerships with these schools would have clear benefits for Utkinton St Paul's and the additional support available through a Trust model would be an advantage of becoming an academy.

Advantages of Academy Status

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, as IEB and Headteacher of Utkinton St Paul's we believe that the opportunity to work with new partners and schools, working together to ensure standards across the Trust are consistently high, is an exciting new proposition. However, we will continue to actively work with all local schools and current partners, ensuring the best of both worlds. CDAT has made it clear that academy status will not change all the things that work so well for our school.

Disadvantages of Academy Status

As an academy, there are a number of additional responsibilities placed on the school in terms of financial management and reporting. It is expected that on a day-to-day basis the pupils



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and their parents and carers, teachers and staff will not notice the difference when we become an academy. There will however be additional workloads for members of staff in the school office. CDAT recognise the additional pressures and will provide the school with a significant amount of support from specialists who will be able to pick up the majority of this additional work.

Questions and Feedback

We would like to make sure that the entire school community has had an opportunity to ask questions about what academy status means for Utkinton St Paul's as part of CDAT. This will be an extension to the consultation previously completed and is an opportunity for all stakeholders to ask any further questions about academy status and/or about CDAT.

Due to the current circumstances, we are unable to offer a meeting, however we would encourage you to utilise the online feedback form available here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/VDDV3D8>

Please forward your questions and comments to us by noon on Monday 4th May. We will then work quickly to collate all questions and circulate responses via the school website as soon as possible and in any case no later than 15th May.

Additional Information

We have included some additional information with this letter:

- An outline of the CDAT Vision (information also available at www.cdat.co.uk)
- A Frequently Asked Questions Document

Finally, we would like to thank you for your continued support of Utkinton St Paul's CofE Primary School. We believe that we have a good school here and we are committed to ensuring we provide the very best for our community.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Lorna Pleavin
Headteacher

Mr. Andy Kent
Chair of Governors



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The CDAT Vision and Ethos



CDAT academies will have a distinctive ethos that is clearly rooted in the Gospel. Christian values will impact on every area of their work and be communicated and shared in such a way that all members of the school community can clearly articulate them. These are more than general moral values which people of different faith backgrounds or no faith might share. Rather they are distinctively Christian values, based on the Bible and centred on the example of Jesus Christ.

It is important that all those engaging with CDAT have a clear appreciation of its distinctively Christian vision.

CDAT will seek to be a successful family of church schools providing distinctive and loving environments founded on Christian beliefs which ensure effective education for all children, through excellent teaching, innovation and the sharing of good practice as schools work together across the Trust. We will:

- Build a thriving community of schools with common moral purpose rooted in Christian values and ambition for children, but encouraging each academy to develop in the best way to serve its community;
- Provide a culture of healthy dialogue and listening between CDAT and its academies;
- Provide mutual support and improvement to develop the practice of all our professional staff so that all can improve;
- Empower effective school leaders and local governing bodies to take courageous decisions in the best interest of young people;
- Provide systems and services that aim to reduce the administrative burden and support school leaders with the professional management of their academies;
- Provide purposeful and supportive early intervention for academies that would benefit from accelerated school improvement.

CDAT will seek to provide the very best education for every child in its schools so that they succeed and are well prepared to move onto their next phase of education. Our strong Christian ethos will be the foundation of all we do and by guiding and informing the actions of children, staff and governors we will:

- Ensure that all children achieve their full potential – making at least the expected level of progress and with many exceeding;
- Value and respect children from all faiths and beliefs – and taking into account their beliefs when planning for their learning and the learning of others;
- Provide a curriculum that is broad, rich and balanced; focused on developing knowledge and skills; and meeting the needs of each child;
- Provide learning opportunities that are inclusive, engaging and challenging for every child;
- Create a learning environment within which children are happy and motivated learner;
- Support our leaders to be highly effective in leading school improvements;
- Support our teachers and support staff to be outstanding practitioners – providing high quality teaching so that every child learns;
- Listen to the children and taking their views into account;
- Work with parents to enable them to contribute to their children's learning;
- Work with other schools and the wider community to ensure that we maximise on the learning opportunities that they can provide for our children and staff.



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CDAT Converting to an Academy Q&A Document

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT BECOMING AN ACADEMY?

1. What is an academy? Academy schools are state funded schools in England, which are directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct funding and control by the Local Authority.

2. Are all academies the same? No. There are many different types of academy. For example, some schools have become academies independently; others have joined together with other schools to form a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) whilst others have joined larger groups and organisations, often known as academy chains. Different academies have a variety of school improvement and governance arrangements.

3. Why are we considering converting to an academy now? Utkinton St Paul's is a Church of England voluntary controlled primary school. This means that we are currently state funded via our Local Authority, Cheshire West and Chester Council, but operate within the Church school system. The Church school system is managed and developed through individual Dioceses, and each Diocese has a Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) which is a statutory body. There are currently 117 church schools in the Chester Diocese, some of which are already academies. The Diocese of Chester has established a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) called the Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) to provide an academy option for its schools.

4. Are any other schools in our local area academies? Yes, there are a number of academies in our local area and region. However, all academies are different in the same way that every school is different.

CDAT currently has seven member schools: St Matthew's (Edgeley, Stockport), St Paul's (Stalybridge), Wybunbury Delves (Nantwich), Brereton (Nr. Holmes Chapel), Christ Church Moreton (Wirral), Astbury St Mary's (Nr. Congleton) and Little Bollington (Nr. Lymm). There are also further schools currently completing the academy conversion process and will join the Trust later in the academic year.

WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?

5. Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the school? No. The school will continue to be called Utkinton St Paul's CE Primary School. Other schools that have chosen to become academies with CDAT have also chosen to retain their existing names.



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6. Will a proposed new academy have a new uniform? No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

7. Will a proposed new academy still be open to the community? Yes. There will be no change to the current provision and use of the school by different groups to hold events.

8. What will be the impact on our children with special needs? There will be no change to the level of support provided. Utkinton St Paul's will continue to recognise that every child is different and has the right to be included as a valued, respected and equal member of the school community.

9. Will the school hours be any different as an academy? Although it is highly unlikely that the school day will be changed, it is the decision of the CDAT Board to decide this as they have the power to do so. This decision is usually delegated to the local governing body of an academy, so there is no real change from our authority in this regard. As is the case now, parents would be consulted prior to any change in school hours, although no change is envisaged.

10. Will pupils' education be disrupted by a transition to academy status? No. When an academy is approved to go ahead, it will do so with minimal disruption to the staff and students. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes with support from a dedicated team from the Diocese, who have gone through this process before with other schools.

11. If we move to being an academy will this change what is taught? We would be expected to continue to offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects. OFSTED continue to inspect academies and their handbook for inspection is the same one as used in any other school. The academy would be expected to strive to be outstanding in both the statutory OFSTED (section 5) and the Church School (section 48) inspections. In other words, there may be no change in what or how pupils are taught.

12. Would there be an increased emphasis on religion and Christianity in CDAT academy? We would maintain our status as a Church School and the existing emphasis on our Christian values and ethos would not change. Church schools are also subject to the statutory (section 48) Church School Inspection and this also would not change.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?

13. How is an academy funded? In maintained schools, including church schools, all revenue funding (building funding is slightly different) goes directly to the Local Authority. The Local



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Authority (LA) takes a proportion of the money from the school budget to provide essential services to the school and the rest is delegated under the Local Management of Schools. Schools can, and do, buy additional services from the LA and other providers. As a result, schools currently depend upon the local authority for many services such as school improvement, HR, finance, etc. This has led to a dual system where the LA has taken the lead on school effectiveness whilst the Diocese has focused on the distinctive and inclusive characteristics of the school.

Academies will receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools, plus funding to meet additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the Local Authority (LA). With CDAT, the money that would have been provided to the LA to run the school is provided directly to CDAT. CDAT does retain some of the budget in order to provide services to the academy. Local authorities fund their core services in a similar way.

14. Does this improve on current funding arrangements?

Converting to an academy will not be to our detriment financially, although there may be the potential for some financial gain (see below). However, any decision is not motivated by money. Funding is available to cover the costs of the conversion process itself, which is provided by central government once the decision to convert has been approved. We will also have opportunities to support other schools and to benefit financially from doing so. In addition, the MAT Board has access to capacity funding from the Department for Education as well as opportunities to bid for capital funding on an annual basis.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?

15. What are the Terms and Conditions for staff? On conversion to academy status teachers and staff employed by the Local Authority will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) process. In addition, conversion will not affect any union memberships.

16. Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion?

Following conversion, teachers and staff will be employed directly by CDAT.

17. Will CDAT employ non-qualified teachers? All class groups of pupils will be registered to a qualified teacher, as is the case in schools currently.



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WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR STANDARDS?

18. Does CDAT have the capacity to support our educational standards? CDAT has established its own school improvement capacity for those schools choosing to become an academy which includes an Education Officer and team of consultants.

Collectively, the team is experienced and qualified to support and challenge schools in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, Christian distinctiveness, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management. The school improvement package will include support and challenge for governance and the team are able to draw on further support from the Diocese and National Leaders in Governance as appropriate.

In addition, the Chief Executive Officer of CDAT has a background as a successful Headteacher and Ofsted Inspector.

19. How will an academy raise achievement? The whole structure of CDAT's Multi Academy Trust has been designed to challenge and support schools in equal measure. We would receive a number of days of school improvement support from a school improvement professional, irrespective of whether the school is outstanding or inadequate.

These visits are not inspections but an opportunity for senior leaders to benchmark their judgments through shared lesson observation, work scrutiny, analysis of data, supported self-evaluation and school improvement planning. Indeed, the outcome of these visits will confirm the development state of the school.

CDAT will intervene rapidly in schools that are underperforming or on a downward trajectory based on OFSTED criteria.