

Academisation consultation – Statement from the Chair of Governors

As most of you know, Hurst Green and Northiam Church of England Primary Schools joined together under the umbrella of Quercus Federation back in 2016 to ensure stability and provide strength to two small rural schools in a context of increasing pressure on this type of school both financially and in terms of pupil numbers. Both schools have kept their independence, their own school uniforms, their own individual approaches to the curriculum and each focuses on serving their own local community. However, they have benefitted from being able to employ members of staff across both schools, such as the site manager and the SEN co-ordinator. This way, we get access to a wider selection of applicants for vacancies. Economies of scale also mean we are able to access better deals and keener prices which grows more important as budgets continue to tighten. This is not however the most important benefit that federating has brought. It has meant that the head teachers and the staff from both schools have been able to share expertise in order to provide the best possible education for the children in both schools. This is particularly important in small schools, where not all areas of expertise can be covered by a small teaching team. Yet we believe it is very important to keep our small community schools to provide a focus, support and cohesion for the local community. The governors believe that academising within DCAT (Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust) will provide all the things the Federation gives us but on a bigger scale.

Not all academies work in the same way, but as a board, we are now unanimously satisfied that DCAT will encourage our schools to keep their independent nature whilst providing support through their central team and their wealth of expertise. Their work is overseen by a Board of Trustees with an enviable amount of knowledge and skills within the education sector. Our staff will be able to work with other teachers across the Trust to build their skills and we will be able to keep good staff because we will be able to offer them opportunities to support other schools.

We feel it is important too that we are proposing to join a Church of England Trust because we want to ensure that the nature of the schools, their ethos and values remain the same.

As a board, we have undertaken detailed due diligence. We have talked to Headteachers and Chairs of Governors in other DCAT schools in order to triangulate DCATs claims. We have spoken to the Director of the Diocese Board of Education and we have looked at how well the Trust performs compared to other trusts. We have also looked at the financial standing of the trust and how it spends its money.

Not all governors were convinced this was the right move at the beginning of our journey, but we are putting a unanimous proposal to you now.

The board of governors believe that it will be in the interest of all current and future pupils of both schools to academise within the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust but we want to hear your views and opinions. Along with the views of staff, we will consider all opinions before making our final decision.