



St. Nicholas C of E Primary School
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Friday 29th January

Dear Parents and Carers,

Public consultation on St Nicholas C of E Primary School's conversion to an Academy

As many of you will know from previous correspondence, the Governing Body made the decision in September 2020 to apply to convert to an academy within the Bath & Wells Multi-Academy Trust. The intention is that the school will convert on the 1st April 2021.

Building on these previous discussions, we are now formally seeking the opinion of stakeholders - this is a 6 week statutory consultation period, starting today Friday 29th January 2021. We would like to invite you to a virtual public consultation meeting on Wednesday 24th February at 1.45pm via meet.google.com/nwq-nhbf-hgs or 6pm via meet.google.com/gyk-wbax-vfg.

A brief summary of the reasons the governing body has made this decision can be found at the end of this letter.

We have also prepared a detailed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document which you will find on the school website:

This FAQ document will be updated as and when additional questions arise during the consultation period. More information about the Bath & Wells MAT is available at www.bwmat.org.

Please do look at the information available on our website, and feel free to contact us with any questions or comments prior to then, either directly or via email to the school office.

If you require a printed version of any of these documents, please contact Mrs Hooke in the school office on 01761 432101 or by email: stnicholas_pri@BATHNES.GOV.UK

We look forward to seeing you on the 24th February.

Thank you for all you do to support our school community,

Kindest regards,

Andrew Smith (Chair of Governors)

Nicola Smith (Head)

Why did the St Nicholas Governing Body decide to convert to an Academy?

- To ensure we continue to receive strong challenge and support and maximise our financial income: • The local school landscape has changed rapidly over the last few years and, there are now less than 10 primary schools which remain as maintained schools within BANES.
- As a result the support that the local authority can offer maintained schools has decreased rapidly, with significant cuts across the education department.
- This also has the impact of making centrally procured services more expensive, and where BANES has withdrawn from service provision, St Nicholas must procure some services directly, again missing out on the discounts available for bulk purchasing.
- To remain in charge of our own destiny
- There is provision in the academy legislation, for forced conversion of maintained schools where it is deemed that a local authority no longer has capacity to support a small number of remaining schools. BANES has less than 10 schools remaining in the Local Authority so it seems increasingly likely this will happen. The Governing Body feels it is prudent to act whilst we retain autonomy over the decision.
- To avoid isolation, and the risk this would bring of becoming an inward-looking school:
- For staff, being part of a larger, formalised and Primary-focussed organisation means more career opportunities within that organisation and more home-grown opportunities for professional development. Both of which are good for staff, and, in turn, means that they are good for pupils.

Why did St Nicholas Governing Body choose the BWMAT specifically?

In choosing a MAT to join, our key criteria were:

- that we would be supported in safeguarding St Nicholas's distinctive character- i.e. that the ethos of the MAT would enable us to continue to offer a creative curriculum enhanced by a caring community environment in which every child is known,
- that the MAT would have capacity and experience to enable St Nicholas to continue to flourish as a good semi-rural, church school.

As a Governing Body, we are always asking what is in the best interests of the St Nicholas children. But in considering academy conversion we had to ask a slightly different question - what is in the best interests of the children currently at our school, and also of those children who will join our school in the future. Within BANES there are a number of established and emerging MATs, however the Governing Body feel that the BWMAT is the most appropriate home for St Nicholas due to the following reasons:

- Maintaining the strong church ethos of the school, where the children sit firmly of the centre of all we do
- Maintaining the strong sense of community
- Maintaining our strong belief that every child has the right to an education whatever their need

The Ethos and Vision of the BWMAT aligns with St Nicholas's vision and culture. A particular focus for St Nicholas, is the ability to safeguard our distinctive community culture as a CofE primary. Of specific note is the stated aim that "each school within the MAT is unique and distinctive and we [BWMAT] are committed to celebrating the local context and purpose of each school."

What does academy conversion mean for my child's experience at St Nicholas?

The change from a maintained school to a MAT should not change your child's experience at St Nicholas, the majority of the change will be in the systems that the school uses, and in who provides support to the school - this will become the BWMAT instead of the Local Authority. It is our expectation that being part of the BWMAT will bring many benefits to the school - for particularly in terms of working with church schools with a similar catchment (sharing of best practice and resources) and strong central support for the school - academically and in terms of shared services (e.g. HR/ Procurement/Finance etc).

When will St Nicholas convert to an academy?

The intention is that the school will convert on the 1st April 2021- It is possible that complexities in the legal or due-diligence processes result in this date being moved slightly.

Whose decision is it whether or not St Nicholas becomes an academy?

The St Nicholas Governing Body which includes both parent and staff governors is responsible for making the decision to convert to an Academy.

The Regional Schools Commissioner for the South-West has given approval for us to convert, and the Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Education has also provided consent (this is required as we are a Church of England School).

The Bath & Wells MAT Board of Trustees have also formally approved for St Nicholas to join them.