



# Chorleywood Primary School

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Headteacher: Mrs Rebecca Roberts

8<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Dear Community Stakeholder,

The governing board at Chorleywood Primary School wanted to write to each of you as a key local stakeholder in our community to inform you of some developments that are currently being considered.

Chorleywood Primary School is currently a state maintained local community school and we were approached by the Danes Educational Trust, during the last academic year about potentially becoming an academy and one of the first primary schools (along with The Russell School) to help shape a new Primary phase of the Danes Educational Trust (the Trust).

Putting this in the national context, many primary schools have been taking decisions to work more closely with other schools in order to help sustain the levels of support for both pupils and staff through alliances, consortiums of schools and joining multi academy trusts.

We have always enjoyed a very positive working relationship with local schools and this is definitely something we are committed to continuing, even if we do join the Trust.

As a governing board we have spent a lot of time over the past two academic years looking at the various options open to us as a single form entry primary school. We have considered the merits of all of the options available to us and what is core to our ethos, so we are very clear on what we feel is right for our school and as part of this, we have discounted a number of options that were not suitable.

During the spring term of this academic year, in order to make a fully informed decision on whether to become part of the Danes Educational Trust multi academy trust (MAT), Chorleywood Primary School entered into a rigorous and extensive period of two-way due diligence process. This process identified advantages and any possible disadvantages of joining the DET and the Danes Educational Trust decided they would like Chorleywood Primary School to apply to join their expanding organisation.

The Governing Board have concluded that there are many benefits to becoming part of the Danes Education Trust, for not only pupils, but also school staff. The benefits include but are not limited to; access to additional and specialist resources and specialist support (e.g. Educational Psychologists), improved KS2 to KS3 transitional arrangements, additional staff CPD and additional career development opportunities.



Key priorities at the heart of the Chorleywood Primary School decision-making process are:

- Maintaining ethos, culture and nurturing approach to supporting all pupils in our care
- Continued outstanding educational provision for all pupils in our care
- Ensuring minimal changes to the day to day running of the school
- An ability to help shape any organisation we choose to be part of
- Continued close working relationships with schools not moving into the Trust

We want to reassure you that we see this as an opportunity for our pupils and staff and the community and we will not compromise on our core values at any stage in this decision-making process, as our staff, our ethos and core values are a fundamental reason for the success of our school.

As part of this process, the next phase is to consult with our staff, parents and other key local stakeholders. From 8th May to 12th June there will be a period of consultation. During this period any communication regarding Chorleywood Primary School joining The Danes Educational Trust should be put in writing to the Board of Governors at Chorleywood Primary School. This can be done by:

- Giving written feedback via the school office FAO: Trust Consultation, Chorleywood Primary School, Stag Lane, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, WD3 5HR
- [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CWPDETConsult](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CWPDETConsult)
- Giving written feedback using the email address [consultation@chorleywood.herts.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@chorleywood.herts.sch.uk)

Please see the appendix below for further information regarding academies and the process of becoming one.

Yours sincerely,

Simone Tyson

Chair of Governors

Rebecca Roberts

Headteacher

### **Will Chorleywood Primary definitely become an Academy?**

The governing board is considering submitting an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a conversion in November 2018. However, the school is not obligated to become an academy until the contract between the academy trust and the Department for Education (known as the Funding Agreement) is signed.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement on behalf of Chorleywood Primary School until parents and carers of pupils at the school, staff at the school, pupils themselves and community stakeholders have had the opportunity to provide feedback on whether the school's academy conversion should take place. We have written to all parents and carers about this proposal and have also invited them to a meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018, to learn more about the proposals to become an academy, or to comment on the proposals. We have also held a meeting with staff and will be keeping pupils informed via the school council throughout the process.

Any comments or representations which are made about the proposals will be considered by the governing board and academy trust before a decision is taken to sign the Funding Agreement. Details of how to provide comments and representations are set out below.

The academy trust will not sign the Funding Agreement unless the governing board of Chorleywood Primary School are content that conversion would be in the best interests of the school, taking account of all of the legal and practical ramifications.

### **What is an academy?**

An academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the local authority and receives its funding direct from central government.

It is proposed that Chorleywood Primary School will become an academy as part of the Danes Educational Trust. This means that the school will be part of a multi academy trust group of schools comprising St Clement Danes School, Croxley Danes School, ourselves and The Russell School who are going through a similar consultation process within the same time frame.

Academies receive their funding direct from central government which means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services (these are then undertaken by the trust).

The Danes Educational Trust will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety and property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs, and in any event, the Danes Educational Trust already deals with these matters for St Clement Danes and Croxley Danes.

The governing board will no longer be legally responsible for Chorleywood Primary School, meaning this legal responsibility will now fall to the Danes Educational Trust Board. The Danes Educational Trust Board then delegate responsibility for the running of Chorleywood Primary school back to the “local” governing board of Chorleywood Primary School under a schedule of delegation.

### **What are the benefits of becoming an academy as part of the Danes Educational Trust?**

In the school’s opinion the benefits are numerous:

- **Best practice through closer collaboration** - sharing ideas and best practice / formal partnership work with other local primary schools but also secondary schools in the Trust
- **Staff development & Retention** - professional development of staff and possible additional career opportunities
- **Benefits to support staff recruitment** - attract staff and students through association with this highly respected family of schools
- **Access to additional grants / resources** - Academy groups can access additional financial resources through grants and the Educational and Skills Funding Agency
- **Economies of scale** -working together within the same organisation allows sharing of additional specialist resources
- **Access to additional expertise** - sharing of expertise primary to secondary and/or secondary to primary
- **Transitional arrangements** - improved KS2 to KS3 transition within a trust that has pupils age 3 to 18
- **Academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects** - academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects than maintained schools.

### **Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?**

The governing board will no longer be legally responsible for Chorleywood Primary School, meaning this legal responsibility will now fall to the Danes Educational Trust Board. Some may see this removal of responsibility from the local governing board as a disadvantage, although where school governance and educational outcomes are strong, the majority of these powers will be delegated back to the local governing board of the school.

### **Will the admissions arrangements change?**

As a community school, Chorleywood Primary School’s admissions arrangements are currently set by the local authority for reception to year 6, and the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the school. For nursery the school sets the admissions criteria and administers the admissions procedure.

As an academy, the Danes Educational Trust will determine admission arrangements and undertake the admissions process in accordance with those arrangements. The academy will still be bound by the National Admissions Code, and Admissions Appeals Code. The current admission arrangements will remain in place and if the academy wanted to change the admission arrangements a consultation would be required.

The Danes Educational Trust currently has no plans to alter its admissions arrangements at its two secondary schools – St Clement Danes and Croxley Danes School. Parents will, as now, be free to choose any secondary school for their child to attend at the end of Year 6.

### **Will there be any impact on staff?**

If the school converts to an academy, all staff currently employed by the local authority will automatically transfer to the new academy. Any change to pay and conditions would need to be consulted upon with staff representatives.

### **Will Chorleywood Primary School change?**

Chorleywood Primary School does not intend to change except in ways which our senior leadership feel will continue to improve the school. For pupils, it is unlikely that they will see much, if any, change in their day to day school lives. Academies do have the power to vary their curriculums and vary the length of the school day, however, it is not intended that any changes be made. The school would engage with parents/carers, staff and students if in the future we did ever intend to make any changes.

### **How can I find out more?**

There is also more information about academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

More information specifically about the Danes Educational Trust is on their website:

<https://www.daneseducationaltrust.org.uk/>

### **How can I make representations?**

To respond to this consultation on whether the school's academy conversion should take place, this can be done by:

- Giving written feedback via the office FAO: Trust Consultation, Chorleywood Primary School, Stag Lane, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, WD3 5HR
- [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CWPDETConsult](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CWPDETConsult)
- Giving written feedback using the email address [consultation@chorleywood.herts.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@chorleywood.herts.sch.uk)

The closing date for representations to be made is 3.15pm on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

**What will happen to my representations?**

Governors will consider the results of all consultation feedback from stakeholders at the next Full Governing Board meeting in June 2018; we will inform all stakeholders of the collective results of the feedback.