

**GREENWOOD TREE ACADEMY TRUST  
SCHOOL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PACK**

**CONTAINS**

- JOINT LETTER FROM CHAIRS OF GOVERNORS
- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS DOCUMENT
- JOINT CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

## PROPOSED GREENWOOD TREE ACADEMY TRUST

January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Dear member of our schools' communities,

### **Consultation on a proposal to establish a multi-academy trust and convert to academy status**

The Governing Bodies of six local First and Middle schools have been considering carefully future plans in a fast changing and increasingly challenging educational landscape. Our priority is to enable the schools to continue to provide an excellent education for our children while protecting each school's role at the heart of local communities and retaining each school's unique qualities and strengths.

For some time our schools have been part of a local 'pyramid' of First and Middle Schools and our pupils and staff have benefitted from the close collaboration and partnership between our schools. Over the last year our Governing Bodies have been working closely together to explore how partnership could provide even greater advantages for our schools. As part of this, we have also considered the current and future Government policy that all schools become academies.

The Governing Bodies believe the best way forward is to establish a local multi-academy trust and for our schools to convert to academy status. (Note: St Mary's is already an academy). The proposed Greenwood Tree Academy Trust would have six founding member schools, listed alphabetically below, with others from the 'pyramid' welcome to join in the future.

- Broadmayne First School
- Frome Valley Church of England VA First School
- Milborne St Andrew First School
- Piddle Valley Church of England VA First School
- Puddletown Church of England VC First School
- St Mary's Church of England Middle School

We believe pupils and staff will benefit from the greater opportunities that formal partnership through the Trust will bring, which include;

- protecting our individual ethos and values,
- providing a more effective educational pathway for pupils from Reception through to Year 8,
- enriching the curriculum through partnership working and shared resources,
- enabling the sharing of excellent practice in teaching and learning,
- enhancing the professional development of teaching and support staff,
- building mutual support and accountability between the Headteachers and between the Governors,
- securing cost and resource efficiencies through joint commissioning of services.

We shall continue to be active members of the DASP partnership and maintain all the current links with DASP members, including the Thomas Hardye School, recognising the value that this wider collaboration brings to all children in the Dorchester area.

We are now jointly consulting with pupils, parents, carers, staff and the community. The consultation period will run between Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup> and Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup> 2015. The Governing Body will then consider a report on the academy consultation before making a final decision on whether to proceed with the proposal.

If Governing Bodies agree to proceed, the plan is for the Trust to be established and for the schools to convert on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 at the earliest or possibly later in summer 2015. Broadmayne is planning to convert later during autumn 2015.

We would welcome your feedback on the proposals. We have attached a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document. If you do have any feedback that you would like to share with the Governing Bodies, then please do complete the attached questionnaire and return the Chair of the Steering Group c/o St Mary's Middle School by Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup> 2015. (Address: Coombe Road, Puddletown, Dorset DT2 8SA.

Yours faithfully,

Keith Campbell,	Chair of Governors, Frome Valley First School
Kevin Connolly	Chair of Governors, Milborne St Andrew First School
Tony Monds	Chair of Governors, Piddle Valley First School
Mary Miles	Chair of Governors, Puddletown First School
Wendy Holden	Chair of Governors, St Mary's Middle School

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH THE GREENWOOD TREE ACADEMY TRUST  
AND TO CONVERT THE SCHOOL TO ACADEMY STATUS  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. What is the proposal?**

The proposal is for the six First and Middle Schools in the St Mary's pyramid to establish a new multi-academy trust called the Greenwood Tree Academy Trust. Five of the schools will convert to academy status: St Mary's Middle School is already an academy.

The six founding members of the Trust will be;

- Broadmayne First School
- Frome Valley Church of England VA First School
- Milborne St Andrew First School
- Piddle Valley Church of England VA First School
- Puddletown Church of England VC First School
- St Mary's Church of England Middle School (already an academy)

The six schools have already been working together as part of the St Mary's 'pyramid' of First and Middle Schools, which is part of the wider Dorchester Area Schools Partnership. We have seen some of the benefits of close collaboration and partnership. Other schools in the 'pyramid' would be welcome to join in the future.

**2. How would this proposal benefit our school?**

We believe that working closely together with local First and Middle Schools that share a similar vision, ethos and values and the same commitment to raising standards, would help our school in a number of important ways, including;

- protecting our individual ethos and values,
- providing a more effective educational pathway for pupils from Reception through to Year 8,
- enriching the curriculum through partnership working and shared resources,
- enabling the sharing of excellent practice in teaching and learning,
- enhancing the professional development of teaching and support staff,
- building mutual support and accountability between the Headteachers and between the Governors,
- securing cost and resource efficiencies through joint commissioning of services.

Most of the pupils at the five First schools move on to and form the majority of pupils at St Mary's Middle School. So, sharing and developing good practice in teaching, learning, curriculum and pupil support can only strengthen the children's progress and achievement through different schools and key stages and prepare them better to succeed at upper school.

**3. How will the children benefit?**

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the children's education. In particular, they will benefit from the sharing of excellent practice in teaching and learning between the partner schools. They will also have wider opportunities to learn new skills and experience new activities.

#### 4. What information is there about the other schools in the proposed Trust?

Name of School	Broadmayne First School	Frome Valley First School	Milborne St Andrew
Type of School	Community	Church of England Voluntary Aided	Community
Address	Knighton Lane, Broadmayne, Dorchester. Dorset. DT2 8PH	School Drive, Crossways, Dorchester, Dorset. DT2 8WR	Hopsfield, Milborne St Andrew, Blandford, Dorset. DT11 0JE
Age Range	4-9	4-9	4-9
Pupil Numbers and classes	135 pupils with one class per Years R -4.	133 pupils with one class per Years R -4.	83 pupils with one class per Years R -4.
Headteacher	Melanie Austin	Julie Thorp	Sharon Hunt
Chair Of Governors	Ian Brown	Keith Campbell	Kevin Connolly
Most Recent Ofsted	Good, May 2012	Good, May 2013	Good, October 2013

Name of School	Piddle Valley First School	Puddletown First School	St Mary's Middle School
Type of School	Church of England Voluntary Aided	Church of England Voluntary Controlled	Church of England Academy
Address	Piddletrenthide, Dorchester, Dorset. DT2 7QL	Dorchester Rd Puddletown, Dorset. DT2 8FZ	Coombe Road, Puddletown, Dorset DT2 8SA
Age Range	4-9	4-9	9-13
Pupil Numbers and classes	90 pupils with classes for Years R and 1 and two classes across Years 2-4.	137 pupils with one class per Years R -4.	480 pupils with four classes per Years 5-8.
Headteacher	Jayne Browne	Dan Hunwick	Carl Winch
Chair Of Governors	Rev. Tony Monds	Mary Miles	Wendy Holden
Most Recent Ofsted	Outstanding, March 2012	Good, February 2012	Good, April 2013

#### 5. Why is the Academy Trust to be called Greenwood Tree?

The Governing Bodies wanted the name to reflect the schools' local heritage and have an educational link. Under the Greenwood Tree is Thomas Hardy's second novel and published in 1872. It is a gentle, pastoral novel based in the village of Mellstock, (Hardy's name for Stinsford). The village school is at the heart of the story. Hardy took the title from a line in a song in Shakespeare's As You Like It.

#### 6. What is an academy and what is a multi-academy trust?

An academy school is an independent state school that is run by an academy trust. The academy trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the academy. The academy is funded directly by the Government and is no longer run by the Local Authority. The academy trust is given charitable exemption, which means it must operate much like a charity. A multi-academy trust (MAT) has two or more academies as members.

Academies were first established in 2000 under the Labour Government and have gathered pace under the current Coalition Government. By the end of November 2014 there were over 4,000 academies and this number continues to grow.

**7. How will the Greenwood Tree Academy Trust and the schools be run?**

The Trust will have a Board of up to 13 Directors made up of a mixture of current Governors and Heads and people with particular skills and expertise to help the Trust run efficiently, effectively and compliantly. At least seven (7) of the Directors would need to be approved by the Diocese of Salisbury as Foundation Directors

Although the Board would have a number of legal and regulatory powers it would delegate many of its powers to Local Governing Bodies and Committees. Local Governing Bodies would continue to have a mixture of representatives from parent, staff and local communities as well as Foundation Governors where applicable.

The Head would still be responsible for running their school and the Heads together would form a leadership group to develop plans for partnership working and collaboration.

**8. Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?**

There is no obligation for a school to change its name, except that for legal reasons the Church of England Schools will no longer be called "VA" or "VC". They will retain their strong links to their parishes and the Diocese. The school will not be changing their logo or uniform.

**9. What will the mix of Church and non- Church schools in the Trust mean?**

Governors from all of the six schools considered this issue very carefully. In simple terms the four Church VA and VC schools will retain their Church of England ethos and values and remain connected to the Diocese through the Trust. Milborne St Andrew, Broadmayne and any other community school that joined the Trust will retain their particular community ethos and values and be free to determine how they teach religious education.

**10. What will be the impact on staff?**

Currently, there are four different employers of staff across the six schools; Dorset County Council or the Governing Bodies. After conversion, all staff will be employed by the Greenwood Tree Academy Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Being part of the Trust will also provide greater opportunities for career progression and development.

**11. Will we get more money as an academy?**

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. They also receive additional funding in the form of the Education Services Grant to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by the Dorset County Council and to cover the costs of academy status. The whole of the school budget would come direct to the school from central Government allowing the school to control the whole of their spending. As part of a multi-academy trust, we will also achieve greater efficiencies through increased buying power and joint commissioning of services; such as school equipment, catering and cleaning.

**12. How will admissions to the school be affected?**

The Trust will become the admitting authority for the six schools but each would have its own admissions policy as now. Any future policy changes would need to be clear and fair and in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient school places locally and it will coordinate the admissions process for all schools. The application process for parents and carers will remain the same.

**13. Does becoming an academy change the relationship with other schools, the community and the Church?**

No, we will ensure that we continue to be at the heart of our community; collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community. Church schools will still be connected to their local parishes as now.

**14. Will our responsibilities in relation to SEND and exclusions change?**

No. Responsibilities as an academy in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

**15. Can a child with an educational health and care plan nominate an academy as their school of choice?**

Yes. Schools converting to academy status can retain the admissions criteria they currently use. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code.

**16. Will academies be free from the Ofsted inspection regime?**

Other than *Outstanding* schools converting to academy status, academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way. The Secretary of State has announced that schools judged to be '*Outstanding*' will no longer be subject to routine school inspection. However, that does not necessarily mean that they will never be inspected. The performance of all schools will continue to be monitored and if there are signs of deterioration, or other factors are a cause for concern, these could trigger an inspection.

**17. What is the process to become an academy?**

The Governing Body must complete a consultation with parents, carers, pupils, staff and the wider community. We are holding parent consultation meetings on as per the schedule below. The Governing Bodies agreed to run joint consultation meetings in the spirit of genuine partnership, to bring parents and carers from all the schools together and to make the process more manageable for Governors and Headteachers.

Tuesday, January 20 <sup>th</sup>	2.00pm	Puddletown First School
Tuesday, January 20 <sup>th</sup>	6.30pm	Puddletown First School
Wednesday, January 21 <sup>st</sup>	9.30am	Puddletown First School
Wednesday, January 21 <sup>st</sup>	6.30pm	St Mary's Middle School

Our Governing Body will then consider a report on the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the proposal. Then, subject to completion of legal tasks such as completing the agreements with the Secretary of State, the Greenwood Tree Academy Trust would be established and the schools would convert on April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 at the earliest and possibly later in summer 2015. Broadmayne is planning to convert later during autumn 2015.

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH THE GREENWOOD TREE ACADEMY TRUST  
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**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**About you:** (Please tick which school applies to you)

- Frome Valley Church of England VA First School
- Millborne St Andrew Community First School
- Piddle Valley First School Church of England VA First School
- Puddletown Church of England VC First School
- St Mary's Church of England Middle School

**NB Broadmayne First School is not yet consulting on the academy proposals as it is planning to convert later in 2015.**

**About you:** (Please tick one that applies to you)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent / Carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Member of local community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher        | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support staff  |  |

**1. What do you like about your school?**

**2. Do you support the proposal of your school converting to academy status and establishing the Greenwood Tree Academy Trust?**

Please answer yes, no or maybe

**3. Is there anything else you would like to say about the proposal?**

On completion of this questionnaire, we would ask you to return by post to:  
Chair of the Steering Group c/o St Mary's Middle School, Coombe Road, Puddletown, Dorset DT2 8SA  
Or via email to [office@stmaryspudd.dorset.sch.uk](mailto:office@stmaryspudd.dorset.sch.uk)