



Christ Church CE Primary School

 Preparing  Sowing  Growing

Sheinton Road, Cressage
Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 6DH
Tel: 01952 510383

Office: admin@christchurch.shropshire.sch.uk

Head: head@christchurch.shropshire.sch.uk

www.christchurchcressage.co.uk

Headteacher: Tracey Cansdale

30th June 2023

Parent Consultation about proposal to join "Two Cathedrals MAT"

Governors met last week on 22nd June and agreed that we should consult with parents and staff about a proposal for Christ Church to change from being a local authority maintained school to being an academy school which is part of a Multi-Academy Trust or MAT. Your first question might be what does a MAT mean and this is why alongside this letter we have put together a set of FAQs – Frequently Asked Questions, so please read this letter together with the FAQs.

Governors have been considering whether we should become an academy and join a MAT and if so what MAT we should join for many years now – in fact all the time I have been Head since 2016. Our governing board has 7 parents on it out of 12 members, so the parent body has been well represented during those many discussions. At the recent Governing Board we decided that it was right time to look at joining a new MAT, the **Two Cathedrals Trust** in Spring 2024 and so we are beginning a period of consultation with stakeholders such as staff and parents.

We all want to see the current children in school get the very best out of their years in education and we want future children in our communities to have a successful, caring village school too. Over the years due to central government policy - that strong MATs are a better vehicle for school improvement than Local Authorities or Councils - the support that Local Authorities can give us as a maintained school has diminished as their funding for this service has fallen dramatically. For example, when I first worked at Christ Church we had half termly visits from a Shropshire Council School Improvement Advisor who knew all the staff, including teaching assistants and knew the school well. Now we have one yearly visit. When I first began teaching in Shropshire, there were dozens of School Improvement Advisors and Subject Specialists to support teachers. Now there are 4.5 staff on the team across the county. This lack of support and accountability does bring some risks to the school which Governors have considered. They have taken the view that if we are to keep on improving, we need to look elsewhere for school improvement support whilst ensuring that our vision and values as a school are protected. So Governors feel that now is the right time to become an academy and join a MAT.

I have been involved for over a year, in a joint project between Hereford Diocese and Lichfield Diocese (we are a church school in Hereford Diocese) to set up a joint Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust which would support rural church schools in Shropshire like ours. Both dioceses have recognised that smaller church schools in rural areas may not fit within many existing MATs which may have a secondary focus, be more commercial/branded or may not value the way in which small schools like ours seek to produce a curriculum which fits our context.

Two Cathedrals Trust – as the MAT is provisionally named to reflect the two dioceses who are supporting it – will be set up by the start of 2024. We hope to join – subject to consultation - with five other schools in April 2024, as part of the first phase of schools. At the moment there are about 25 schools who are interested in the Trust and so there will be more schools joining in phases over a rolling period. This will ensure that there are enough pupils in the Trust to make it financially viable to support a small central team of a Chief Executive Officer and Chief Finance Officer who can help the Trust achieve its aims and vision.





Christ Church CE Primary School

 Preparing  Sowing  Growing

Sheinton Road, Cressage
Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY5 6DH
Tel: 01952 510383

Office: admin@christchurch.shropshire.sch.uk

Head: head@christchurch.shropshire.sch.uk

www.christchurchcressage.co.uk

Headteacher: Tracey Cansdale

I hope you will come and see a short presentation about the MAT as part of the open afternoon on 10th July. That presentation will include a lot more details about the MAT and what its governance and operation will look like. The open afternoon is from 3.30-5.00pm and I will be doing the presentation twice at 4pm and 5pm to enable parents to find out more, as well as see their children's work and chat to current/new teachers. You are also welcome to email me and submit any questions (not answered in the attached FAQs) you may have so that we can be as open and communicative as possible.

The opportunity to be part of a new MAT where all the schools share Christian values and a common vision for serving their community, allows us to shape some of the MAT culture from the start and is a great opportunity. Governors have looked at other local MATs. Some of them we could not join because they do not have the right Church Articles of Association (this is to do with our Trust Deed and other legalities) but some of them whilst being successful have different values which do not align so closely with our own, or have a large focus on secondary schools rather than primaries.

Governors believe that this MAT is the best home for our school but they want to find out what you and other stakeholders think too – so please have a read of the FAQs, discuss with other parents and let us know. Please feel free to talk to governors who are parents in particular. A reminder that you can find out who they are on our website: <https://christchurchcressage.co.uk/our-community/governors/> and you can also submit questions to our Chair of Governors, Louise Wagstaff directly rather than me, if you would prefer that route: wagstaff.l@christchurch.shropshire.sch.uk

Thank you for your consideration of this important topic.

Tracey Cansdale
Headteacher

