



17 May 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

Garden Fields Governing Body decision to join the Alban Academies Trust

As you may remember, we wrote to you in June of last year that the governors of Garden Fields, together with the governors of Wheatfields Infants and Nursery and Wheatfields Junior School, had voted to begin the process of joining the Alban Academies Trust. Three secondary schools: Sandringham School, Verulam School and also the Ridgeway Academy in Welwyn Garden City, had already joined the Trust.

At a meeting of our Governing Body this week, and after much consideration over the last 2 terms during a process of due diligence with the trustees, a final decision was made by our governors to join the Alban Academies Trust.

We had already, during the preceding year, looked at the potential benefits of joining a multi-academy trust (MAT) and looked at some different local MATs and decided that the Alban Academies Trust had the most potential in terms of continuing and further improving the high quality of education that we offer at Garden Fields. At all times, at the forefront of our minds, has been and will continue to be what is best for the children in our school.

We also invited your thoughts and comments and those of our staff body and we met with the other primaries to work together over our due diligence of the Trust. We had many of the same questions and expectations over what we wanted to achieve in joining the Trust and when we met with the trustees we were reassured that by joining:

- *Schools within the AAT would retain their ethos, identity and traditions, rather than become a group of schools that have exactly the same procedures, routines, branding and logos;*
- *The Trust would not be so large so that it would not have the capacity to meet its members' needs and also remain geographically local;*
- *The Trust's ambition to be 'World Class' will be achieved by all the schools working together;*
- *The 3 primary schools would be represented on the Trust board and much of the existing decision making will be at local governing board level, and also decision making would be streamlined and not over bureaucratic;*
- *Decisions around budget, curriculum, SEND and behaviour policy and procedures would remain at local governing body level. However there would be the opportunity to work collaboratively and learn from one another and develop best practice across the Trust schools;*
- *Opportunities for collaboration between primary and secondary phases would be based upon the notion of dual benefit and would work both ways rather than being dominated by the secondary schools;*
- *The current prospectus and schedule of delegation of the Trust is very much a 'live document' which would change and develop as the primary schools join the Trust;*
- *The current terms and conditions of staff would transfer and that there would be no requirement for teachers to move to other schools in the Trust unless opportunities (e.g. for promotion) arose and were mutually agreed;*
- *The cost of the contribution that we would pay into the Trust would not compare unfavourably with what we currently pay to the local authority.*

As stated previously, governors can see a number of other benefits to joining the Alban Academies Trust.

These include:

- *The ability to share resources and so broaden the curricular, extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities that exist for students;*
- *Improving economies of scale in purchasing, enabling us to target more funds towards students;*
- *Having teams of experts in fields such as resources, finance and HR which would support school leaders and teachers to focus more time on teaching and learning and also give greater collaborative support to our school administrators and premises teams.*

Recently, the governors of Wheatfields Junior and Wheatfields Infants' Schools have also taken the decision to join the Alban Academies Trust. By joining at this early part of the development of the Trust we will have the opportunity with them to help shape the Trust at this early stage in its development.

Further information about the Alban Academies Trust (AAT) can be found at:

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

The process of joining the Trust will take some time and we are keen to ensure that we have completed any financial obligations that we have with the local authority at Hertfordshire before we have concluded the process, so that we are not duplicating costs by paying into both the local authority and the Trust for the same services. Therefore the likely date for full conversion to membership of the Trust will be April 2020.

There will be opportunities between now and then for information meetings with parents regarding the Alban Academies Trust and what it means for Garden Fields School. We look forward to telling you more about it as we embark on an exciting new chapter in the development of our school!

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Farrugia and Peter Jones

Headteacher

Chair of Governors