



Ditton C. of E. Junior School
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Dear Parents/Carers and members of the local community

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR WIDER COLLABORATION

As you know, since the beginning of Term 5 we have been working with Aletheia Academies Trust (“Aletheia”) and in particular with Ms Sue Tunnicliffe. The Interim Executive Board (IEB) are keen to strengthen support for our school by working more closely with Aletheia and for that reason propose that our school should become an Academy within the Aletheia, a multi academy trust in the North Kent and Medway area. We would be grateful for your views. More information about what this means for our school and for your children is attached to this letter. Please do let us know what you think about whether our school should become an Academy.

The Interim Executive Board are choosing to take this step as a positive way forward for our school. Having spoken to the Trust’s leaders and explored with them the opportunities that joining Aletheia will provide, we have concluded that working together within the Trust will bring benefits to leadership, to teaching and learning and thus to your child’s achievement. As our vision, ethos and aims align closely with those of Aletheia this will also support us in continuing to promote the Christian ethos of the school and enrich the learning for all pupils. The PCC of St Peter’s church have given approval for the school to become an academy within Aletheia. In addition, being a member of the Trust will enable a wider network of support and challenge as our school continues to develop, improve and celebrate success.

Whilst we see real benefits in working more closely with the Trust, any changes are likely to be behind the scenes. You and your children will see very little visible difference when we become an academy. The school ethos, name and uniform will not change and we will not change the school’s admissions policy. All children and staff will continue to be part of the school as they are now.

In joining Aletheia:

- We will keep our school name and it will not be changed to ‘academy’
- We will keep our school uniform
- The school’s Christian ethos will be strongly supported
- We will be part of a group of likeminded schools striving to continue to deliver excellent outcomes and opportunities for our children
- You will see continued good and improving outcomes for your children
- Staff will receive outstanding CPD opportunities

Before we make any further decisions, we want to share this proposal with you and what it will mean for our school. We invite you to read this letter and the information attached to it, to ask any questions that you have and when you feel you have sufficient information to tell us what you think about the school moving forward in this way.

Some more information about the Trust and about academy status is attached and we are holding two meetings: 19:30 on Thursday 19 May and 16.30 on Thursday 26 May where you will have the opportunity to find out more about the proposal and to ask questions. Please let the school office know if you intend coming along so we put out enough chairs.

If you have any comments or questions on the proposal, or to tell us whether you agree with it please respond online at <https://forms.office.com/r/cYx3eSsXmi> (there are 4 questions) before the consultation closes on Friday 24 June 2022.

We will inform parents of the outcome in the school newsletter.

Working towards a bright future for our school,

Dr Peter Gregory
Chair of Interim Executive Board



Respect • Responsibility • Perseverance • Empathy



Aletheia Academies Trust

The Aletheia Academies Trust (“Aletheia”) is a charitable company responsible for 10 academies: Cliffe Woods Primary School; Halling Primary School; Holy Trinity CE Primary School, Gravesend; Horton Kirby CE Primary School; Rosherville CE Academy; St Botolph’s CE Primary School; Saint George’s CE School; Shorne CE Primary School, Stone St Mary’s CE Primary School; and Sutton-At-Hone CE Primary School. Sedley’s CE Primary School will join the Trust on 1st June 2022 and the Trust will open the Alkerden CE Academy in Ebbsfleet in September 2024. Each school within the Trust retains its individual character.

The Trust has a Board of Trustees which is accountable to the Secretary of State for the performance of each of those academies and works closely with governors and senior leaders to support improvement at those schools. Trustees have been appointed based on the skills they bring and to ensure that the Board has a range of skills available. Each academy continues to have its own Local Governing Body which will work with the Headteacher and other senior leaders in each school to drive improvements for all our pupils.

Aletheia schools welcome those of all faiths and none and are proud of the inclusive nature and diversity of each cohort. Aletheia schools are motivated by Christian values to serve our communities by improving the life chances of local children. Our schools seek to embody the experience of community, where gifts are shared, where the emphasis is on what can be contributed and where each is given according to need. At the heart of the Aletheia vision are the belief in educational excellence and the belief that Aletheia is called to serve pupils, staff, parents and the local community by providing places where children and young people develop and thrive intellectually, socially, culturally and spiritually.

Aletheia will deliver its vision by:

- Developing a Trust for all ages /phases of education, with member schools working in partnership and learning from each other
- Promoting an ethos based on a belief in the value and potential of every student to achieve excellence academically and in their wider studies and become fully the best person they can be
- Pursuing educational excellence, so that outcomes for all learners are as good as they can be
- Creating strong leadership at all levels that impacts effectively on academy performance
- Providing a sustainable model to support a self-improving school system

All schools joining the Trust will have already established their support for and belief in these core principles.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is an Academy?

Academies are charitable companies funded by the Government to provide state education free of charge. Multi academy trusts bring together several academies under a single board of trustees, who are accountable for the academies within the Trust. They are funded at the same level as schools maintained by local authorities; and have the same responsibilities for children with special educational needs, pupils receiving pupil premium and for admissions.

So why make the change?

All schools need support to improve and as a result of reduction in resources available to local authorities, we are unable to secure the support we need from the Local Authority. Working within the Aletheia we will be able to develop good practice within our school and across the Trust. Joining an Academy Trust which shares our vision and values will provide greater security for our school and working in a wider network will support us to grow and develop. In addition, there would be access to support for leadership, high quality support for school improvement and the opportunity to share good practice.

Who will be the members of the local governing body?

The existing Interim Executive Board (IEB) will remain in place until the school joins Aletheia, at which point a new Local Governing Body (LGB) will be formed. Some members of the IEB will remain in place during a period of transition. The new LGB will include elected parents and staff. The Trustees, in consultation with the IEB (and, in the case of Foundation Governors for Church schools, the Diocese) will ratify all new governor appointments. The Trustees have the right to appoint additional governors where appropriate and to remove governors if necessary.

Is this a governor decision or is it being forced? Is the school in financial difficulty?

This is not being forced, it is a strategic decision that the IEB are making. The school is not in financial difficulty, though in common with smaller schools, the finances are coming under pressure. Within Aletheia the school will be supported by a strong school improvement team who will work with us on our priorities; by an established and well qualified finance team and a range of other central services, including HR, payroll, legal advice and ICT technicians. Cost effective support will help to ensure that we can continue to focus the major part of the school's budget on teaching and learning.

Isn't this just what the Government wants? Is there any point in giving our views?

Conversion to academy status within strong multi-academy trusts is certainly the direction set by the Government and there may be fewer choices in the future, but that is not why Governors are making this proposal. We see real benefits for the school and therefore for your children if we join Aletheia. It is important to us that parents, staff and the wider community have the chance to explore what this means and to understand why we think that. Having done so, we hope you will agree with us – but we will consider all views expressed before committing the schools to this way forward.

Doesn't joining an academy trust mean that everything will change?

No! Aletheia is committed to working with its schools and supporting them to improve. Staff continue in post on transfer and all pupils remain on roll. Term dates, school times, uniform and admissions arrangements will not change. We are lucky in that we are already seeing what it is like to work with Aletheia as they are already supporting us. We recognise that information widely available on the internet and social media identifies a different approach in other cases when schools have become academies. There are Trusts who make changes when schools convert, who impose a curriculum model and ways of working, who take a higher proportion of the school's budget to spend on large and highly paid central teams. Aletheia does not behave in that way – and will not do so.

What are the risks of making this change?

We recognise that this is a significant change in the legal status of the school, but joining a Trust established by the Diocese of Rochester, which shares our commitment to ensuring all children achieve their potential seems to the IEB to be a positive way forward. Aletheia will work with us, will help us to sustain levels of funding for teaching and learning within school and will free time for leaders to focus on outcomes for children.

When will these changes take place?

The academy conversion process begins with an application to the Secretary of State for Education for an academy order. This is in effect a permission to convert – and confirms that the Secretary of State, through the Regional Schools Commissioner, is happy for us to proceed in this way. Subject to receiving an order, we hope to be able to complete the process of conversion in Winter 2022.

How can I find out more?

We are holding two meetings in school (see the attached letter) where we will say a little more about what this proposal means for our school. All parents, carers and members of the local community are welcome to come along to find out more and to ask questions. There is also the opportunity to comment or to ask questions in the form online or to email or write to the school office.

How can I make my views known?

If you have any comments or questions on the proposal, or to tell us whether you agree with it please respond online at <https://forms.office.com/r/cYx3eSsXmi> (this is a short, 4 question, survey) before the consultation closes on Friday 24 June 2022.