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18 May 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

Following on from the meeting on Tuesday 1st of May where as part of the consultation process for joining an Academy Trust, parents and carers were invited in to hear from a representative from the Preston Primary Academy Trust (PPAT) and ask any questions that they had. As a Governing Body, we have been able to reflect on the questions and issues raised from the twelve families who joined us for the meeting, and considered the comments given in the eight 'Consultation Reply Forms' received, and respond to these as follows:

Why the Governors have been considering joining an Academy

The Governing Body have been thinking about joining an Academy for over four years for two reasons. Firstly, because the Government had made it a requirement that all schools became part of a Multi-Academy Trust, although this has since changed. However, for us as a Governing Body we strongly believe that in order to be able to provide the very best for the learners at Countess Gytha we need to secure the Academy partnership of our choice whilst we still can. Secondly, it is important to note that Local Authority's (LA) resources are dwindling due to government funding policy, and therefore making it difficult for them to provide meaningful support for schools. Being part of an Incoming Trust allows us to procure from the open market, this also includes buying services back from the LA where they work well and provide value for money.

Why we have suggested Preston Primary Academy Trust (PPAT)

As you know from the Spring Term last year Preston Primary Academy Trust was brought in to help us during a very difficult time for the school. The support received by the PPAT team has been very successful and in a very short space of time the school made huge leaps forward in improving standards. This was achieved by PPAT putting in place interim leadership, supporting with improvements to teaching and learning, helping us to recruit staff, including our new Headteacher and ensuring that all statutory requirements were being followed. Due to the 'Requires Improvement' judgement from Ofsted support from an 'Outstanding' school is an LA requirement, and so we have further benefited from their continued support.

As a Governing Body we would like to reassure parents that the decision to potentially join a Multi Academy Trust is not one we have taken lightly. As Governors we want to ensure that we are doing the right thing for the school. We reiterate that this is something we have reflected on over considerable time to ensure that we are doing the very best now for the school, and importantly the very best for the FUTURE stability and security of Countess Gytha. Some parents have expressed concern that if we become part of an Academy, particularly the PPAT we would become similar to big schools in Yeovil. Once again, can we reassure you that becoming part of the PPAT would not

impact in any way on the day to day running of the school. Our school name will remain the same, we will still have our own Headteacher which will ensure autonomy for our school, the terms and conditions for staff will not change and the children will be taught as they always have been, from the National Curriculum. Our ethos will continue ensuring that our lovely village school, which we all feel very passionate about remains distinctive from other schools. Our school is very special and our aim is to provide an environment that offers our children the very best standard of education. Over the last year we have been able to build a strong relationship with PPAT, and feel very fortunate to have been in the position where we have been able to sample a potential Incoming Trust before committing to join.

From the written comments we have received some parents asked for information on the Pros and Cons of joining a Trust and so we have added this in the table below:

Pros for joining a Trust	Cons for joining a Trust
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independence from LA control, for example from following regional priorities which might not meet the needs of the school ○ A greater percentage of the General Annual Grant given by Government and other funding will be retained by the school compared to the amount the LA allocate. Somerset LA retain approx 10% of funding ○ Finding local solutions which deliver the most from the funds available ○ Seeking new and innovative solutions and economies of scale ○ Sharing of staff (if agreed) across more than one site, for example specialist provision such as SENCo or subject specialisms. ○ Opportunity for interschool activities e.g. sporting events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change to the role of local governors (possibly not in practice but the legal structure if different) ○ Increase in financial and regulatory oversight

The Governing Body have agreed to extend the consultation period which ended on Friday 11th of May until Friday 8th of June, to enable further reflection on the information provided.

PPAT has a proven track record of achieving excellence and we strongly believe that this is the way forward for our school.

Yours sincerely,



Lisa Goodland, Headteacher
On behalf of The Governing Body



Lucy Jones, Chair of Governors