

## **Meeting for parents of academy conversion**

**20-09-17**

### **Gail Velasquez (CoG), Maggie Morrissey (Vice Chair), Stuart Ayres (Executive Headteacher FGT)**

The meeting was opened by Gail Velasquez (GV) and all parents were made welcome and thanked for attending. GV introduced Stuart Ayres (SA) and Maggie Morrissey (MM).

GV started by explaining the process governors had gone through to start the academy conversion. This was originally discussed back in 2014 when the government agenda became focused on academy conversion. St. Peter's was not forced into an academy, and governors decided that it wasn't the right time for the school. The governors kept the academy discussion on each full governors meeting agenda, and a working group was put together to look into academies ongoing. The last 2 years have seen a vast reduction in the funding and support from the local Authority (LA), and governors have had more conversations about making a choice on an academy as we saw this affecting school pupils and staff. Cuts in funding meant less money for children to attend outdoor education, and less money for keeping up staff training. GV went on to explain that the governors looked at three Multi Academy Trusts:

Staffordshire University Academy Trust

St Chad's Academy Trust (the Diocese)

Future Generation Trust

Governors put together a list of questions as a fact finding mission, and asked each MAT the same questions to gather information. We then asked each MAT to present to us, discuss the answers to these questions, and give them an opportunity to explain what they could bring to St. Peter's. GV explained that governors had already decided that the Trust must offer the same morals and values as St. Peter's, and be a community-minded Trust. GV explained that on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2017 the working group gave a recommendation to governors that Future Generation Trust were the MAT chosen for us to apply to join. This was based on the small Trust vision, the values of the Trust and the two schools already in the MAT, and the information we had received. GV explained that the governors asked Samantha Price (Headteacher) and Paul Woodhead to step out of the room whilst decisions and voting took place, as they are Trustees on FGT. The governors voted unanimously to apply to join Future Generation Trust. The Trust was set up by St. John's Primary School in Essington, and also has a small community school in the Trust, which is Gentleshaw Primary School. A maximum of 6 schools are expected to make up the MAT. GV explained that the day after this decision was reached by the governors, all school staff were gathered together and GV announced the decision the governors had made. Samantha Price, MM and Alun Thomas (Foundation Governor) also attended the meeting. GV stated that staff were a little

surprised, but after asking several questions, were understanding of the need for the decision. They were reassured that they could speak to GV, SP, Will Stevens (Deputy Head) or Katie Ryndycz (staff governor) at any time with any questions or queries. GV explained that staff were informed that they would not see any changes to their terms and conditions, pensions etc. GV explained that there was a consultation which took place for parents and other stakeholders, and an email address set up for questions. One had been received and query has been answered.

A question was asked by a parent about the staff and how they feel. GV asked Sarah Smith (teaching staff) and SS explained that at first the staff were worried, due to the “stigma” that can be associated with academies, if forced. SS said staff soon realised the need for the change to support them to achieve great progress and achievement with children. WS added that there really does need to be support from somewhere as the LA can no longer support schools and the children with current levels of funding.

Another parent asked about the school which joined FGT which needs a lot of support. SA answered this question, explaining that a lot of work has already been done with Gentleshaw, using teaching staff from St. John’s, support with teaching and learning, and an overhaul of leadership and management. Changes are already showing and will continue to improve standards. The parent asked if the need for more improvement would take away from St. Peter’s. SA assured everyone that the same funding would go to St. Peter’s with just the 5% going into the Trust as every school gives. Any support needed by St. Peter’s will be just as readily given.

Another parent asked about the accounts of FGT, and how the funding works. SA again responded and explained the funding which comes from the government will come directly to FGT and cut out the LA. 5% will go to FGT, as is the norm. Staff will be paid by the same system as currently, and no changes to their pensions will be made. They will undergo a TUPE process and be supported throughout.

MM gave further reassurances of the processes which had taken place over many months, all fully minuted, to come to this decision. She explained that the governors would only have done this if it was right for the school, and we needed to find the right Trust to support us. MM explained that governors didn’t want to be left with no support from LA, and be swept into a large MAT in which we may be lost.

GV asked if there were any more questions. There were none.

GV thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.