

Belmont School  
Warden Hill Road  
Cheltenham  
Glos. GL513AT

Headteacher: Mr Kevin Day BA(hons) NPQH

June 2019

Dear Parents, Carers, Staff, Friends and Partners of Belmont School,

### **Formal Consultation process to convert to an academy and join a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)**

We are writing to you on behalf of our Governing Body to invite you to take part in the consultation process on the proposal to convert our school to an academy and join the newly formed SAND (Support, Achieve, Nurture & Develop) MAT led by Milestones School. Following this consultation the governing body will consider the responses as part of their investigation as to if the school should proceed with this process with a view to conversion in the 2019/20 academic year.

Academies are publicly funded organisations with funding distributed to the multi academy trust from both central and local government. The MAT has to establish strong and effective systems of accountability and governance to ensure that the schools are successful, sustainable and, above all, provide the highest possible standards of education and care for children and young people.

As a school judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted we are well placed to voluntarily choose to consider converting to academy status to shape our own future.

### **Why are the school governors and Headteacher proposing to join a Multi-Academy Trust?**

The structure of educational provision has been changing in England over the last few years. Successive Secretaries of State for Education have consistently voiced a desire for all schools to convert to academies and local authority capacity to support schools has diminished over time. The current climate of reduced spending in the public sector has begun to impact our schools significantly and we feel that we need to be proactive in setting the direction for our school ourselves and ensure the direction is focused on our pupils' needs.

By joining a Multi Academy Trust we believe that we will be able to better promote a strong special school voice for our pupils in the ever-changing landscape of education. A stronger voice is needed to advocate for our pupils, to hold other services to account and to ensure provisions that our pupils need are not neglected.

At a time of reducing funding in schools formal partnerships can more easily achieve 'better value' by having more efficient central and shared services thus enabling individual schools within the partnership to focus more resources on teaching, learning and pupil support. For example, at Belmont we currently spend £16,000 per year on insurance, by joining the MAT we forecast a £2,540 annual spend on insurance, therefore releasing over £13,000 extra per year to support the children and learning.



*"To always be the best we can be"*



### **Why are we proposing to join the SAND Multi Academy Trust?**

The school governors are committed to meeting children's future needs and ensuring outstanding progress and outcomes for all. To ensure this, the governors have considered many different MAT's and options over the past 4 years. Following this extensive work the governors feel confident of the many potential benefits that the SAND MAT can bring to our community and children and to progress to consultation.

The letters SAND stand for Support, Achieve, Nurture & Develop, this clearly expresses the promoted values of the MAT which the governors feel mirror the Belmont ethos and align with our core value of enabling our students to be the best they can be.

Belmont has in the past worked with the Milestones school who are the lead school in the MAT and both schools have strong commitments to SEND development, Outreach and professional excellence. The vision of the SAND MAT is to grow committed and expert leaders in the field of SEN to ensure sustainability for the future and very high standards for the future children and families who attend Belmont.

The SAND MAT plans to establish a traded service – SAND Outreach Service to support schools with their SEN practice and develop support and information services for families. Many services have disappeared and we recognise that there are major gaps in supporting families with strategies and information that could help them and their child with additional needs at home.

The SAND MAT board will have the responsibility to ensure that standards across the schools are continually improving, through a shared school improvement model that includes developing new teaching and learning support staff, continued professional development, sharing best practice across schools and embracing new Government led changes to assessment and inclusion for SEND.

### **Who is the SAND Multi Academy Trust?**

If, following further investigation including consideration of this consultation, the Governing Body approves a recommendation to join the SAND MAT Belmont will join at least two other schools in the MAT:

**The Milestones School Gloucester** – an outstanding school for pupils with special needs aged 3 – 16

**Paternoster School** – a special school for children aged 3 – 16 based in Cirencester.

At this time one further special school is also in consultation to join the SAND MAT.

The Milestones School is the 'lead' school and the MAT has a board of Members and Trustees. Currently the board includes:

- Richard Levinge, Chair (Current Chair of Milestone & Specialist in Governor / Education Training)
- Lyn Dance is the Executive Principal and Accounting Officer (current Headteacher of Milestone)
- David Ellis, Chief Executive of Star College
- Janine Smith, Education Special Needs Practitioner - Secondary specialist
- Martin Hughes, Chair of Executive Homes. Qualified Finance Director
- Antonia Noble, barrister experienced in safeguarding and GDPR and works for council on SEND
- Ian Heather, HR consultant to oversee staffing

Our Governing Body currently believe that by joining the SAND MAT we can be confident that our children will feel happy and safe and will achieve their full potential, developing the skills they need to succeed and enjoy life. Belmont school can continue to be a centre of excellence providing exceptional learning experiences for each and every pupil and, through valuing and respecting the staff team and community, we can continue to provide the outstanding provision our children deserve. Most aspects of school life will not change. For example the school name and uniform, and the Belmont staff team, will remain the same. This proposal is about building on our successes, and making it possible for us to maintain our standards, and indeed improve on them, in the long term.

### Further Information

- There is more detailed information for parents and carers, school staff, and the wider community known as 'Information Sheets'. These are available on our web-site: [www.belmont.gloucs.sch.uk](http://www.belmont.gloucs.sch.uk)
- We have produced a set of Frequently Asked Questions, also available on our website.
- We are offering a range of meetings and drop-in events, listed below. If you would like to attend please join us on one of these occasions.
- If you have further enquiries please contact the school office on 01242 216180 or e-mail [consultation@belmont.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@belmont.gloucs.sch.uk)

### Consultation Events

Date	Time	Event Details
Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> July	11am to 1pm & 2pm to 4pm	Parents & Community Consultation
Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> July	4pm to 8pm	Parents & Community Consultation
Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup> July	3.10pm to 6.00pm	Staff and Union consultation

### Next steps

The formal consultation process will begin on 10th June 2019 and close at noon on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019. There is a consultation questionnaire which can be completed online (please see link below). If you would like a paper copy of the questionnaire please contact the school office.

The Governing Body will consider any issues which arise as a result of the consultation period to inform their decision on whether or not to proceed further with the conversion to MAT status at this time

***We would be very grateful if you could kindly complete the brief questionnaire by 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019.***

[Click here for Consultation Questionnaire](#)

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Day



Headteacher

Roger Brookin



Chair of Governors