



Academisation Consultation - Sussex Pioneer Trust Wednesday 22nd May – Wednesday 19th June

Dear Pioneer Parents and Carers,

We are writing to you all to share some news about the future of The Pioneer Federation of Schools. This is an exciting piece of news and will possibly involve Pioneer becoming a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

The Governors of Pioneer Federation are always looking for further opportunities to fulfil our vision, to enable our children to flourish and prepare them for the next stage in their learning.

In March 2022, the government published a white paper which stated all schools were required to develop or join a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) by the end of 2030. As a result, the Governors and the Leadership team began to explore options for our schools in conversations with both the Local Authority and Diocese of Chichester.

While the government has now withdrawn the immediate need to academise, the future direction for all schools is towards academisation, with the Local Authority having less capacity to support the maintained schools in East Sussex. After much research and investigation, the Governors felt that developing our own Multi Academy Trust would mean that our schools could provide even more opportunities and improve outcomes for everyone.

In arriving at this conclusion, we have had discussions with the Department for Education's South East Regional Director, Leaders at the Diocese and Local Authority and other MATs. We have also attended several MAT interviews at the Diocese.

Throughout the process, it became clear that the Pioneer Federation had been operating as a MAT for several years in all but name. By developing our own Trust we are able to choose the direction and own destiny for our group of small schools, all without losing our unique identity and our characteristics, which make our schools special.

Our proposal now is to establish a Multi Academy Trust called **Sussex Pioneer Trust**. It would be a Diocesan academy trust, co-sponsored by the Diocese of Chichester that will include both church and non-church schools, with the Diocese providing support and expertise for the Trust. It would be a small school MAT, specialising in schools with less than 150 pupils. Over the last 12 years, we have become experts in small school improvement and development. Other schools would potentially join our group of schools as we have a strong understanding of the benefits and pressures of small school mixed aged classes/teaching.

We have learned through our federation that collaborative working with other schools can provide improved educational experiences for our own pupils through teaching and learning, an enhanced and engaging curriculum, staff development and opportunities for progression, streamlined services including finance, human resources, legal services, school improvement structures, and governance arrangements.

Whilst they are united behind a core Pioneer vision and ethos, the schools in the Pioneer Federation are all unique, and this is something that we would want to continue to preserve and celebrate in the future as a MAT.

The conversion will bring little change to our day-to-day activity in our schools. There will be no change to the staffing in the schools as a direct result of any conversion, beyond further retention. The key requirement throughout this process has been to focus on the benefit for all our children and staff long term. The school leadership sees this as an exciting and positive step for the federation and we hope that you will agree.

If we develop the **Sussex Pioneer Trust**, we would:

- Have greater autonomy and independence as MAT.
- Have stronger stability long term in an ever-changing educational landscape.
- Be able to expand and develop with other Sussex schools, as there is a need for a small school MAT in Sussex. Our MAT specialism/experience is small schools with mixed aged curriculum for 12 years.
- Keep our school names and uniforms.

- Keep and develop further our own Pioneer curriculum.
- Continue to have a Pioneer Trust governing body, including representation from staff, parents, our parish churches and the local community, as we do now.
- Maintain and enhance the school's Christian ethos in our church schools.
- Keep our school visions and values.

As a growing Sussex Trust, the benefits to children and staff would include:

- Strong focus on improving experiences and outcomes for all children as we capitalise on the expertise and strengths of the growing Trust schools.
- Stronger retention of talented staff, as they have an even clearer career path within the MAT growth.
- Children having even more opportunities for joint activities with other local schools in the growing Trust.
- Economies of scale achieved with sharing of resources between Pioneer Trust schools, together with some financial savings will ensure that we will be able to put more resources into the classroom.
- Staff receiving outstanding training and development opportunities and access to professional expertise within Pioneer Trust.

There will be no impact regarding secondary school options when your child leaves Pioneer schools at the end of year six.

Following the Governing Body's decision to proceed to consultation, we want to share this proposal with you and what it would mean for our schools. We are doing so at this stage in its development, to give you the fullest opportunity to help develop our thinking. We invite you to ask any questions that you have.

A survey, which can be found using the following link

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSFwDzP8XFIQnQei25rDKsnyjVyMhWAQmojPDQ2BmTyNf-sXtA/viewform?usp=sf_link or in the QR code below, provides opportunities for you to ask any questions that you have. This survey will remain open throughout the consultation period, which will end on Wednesday, 19th June 2024.

In order to provide parents and carers with an opportunity to hear more about the proposal and to ask questions of the school leadership and Pioneer Governors, there will be a meeting held at the school at **Chiddingly School on Wednesday 5th June 5:30**, where a short presentation will take place. Please register your interest in attending via the following link

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZsv7klecaZrs4gB0kgr5Gg7Pd85AAR52Sr4tw5VVNI3V0g/viewform?usp=sf_link or use the QR code at the bottom of this letter. You can complete the survey, even if you are unable to attend the meeting.

Some answers to common questions are attached to this letter and we will publish answers to all the questions raised during this process – including those raised at meetings – on the school website. There is an opportunity for you to ask for a personal response to any individual question you have about the impact on you or on your child, but otherwise we intend to publish answers so that they can be seen more widely. We look forward to receiving your questions and to hearing what you think about this proposal.

Yours sincerely,



Alan Brundle- Pioneer Federation Chair of Governors & Vice Chair of Chiddingly



Jeremy Sykes – Vice Chair of East Hoathly



Kelly McDonagh- Vice Chair of Park Mead



John Black and Lorna Duggleby- Joint Vice Chairs of St Mary

Academisation Consultation Survey

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfWdzP8XFIQnQej25rDKsryjVyMhWAQmoJPDQ2BmTyNf-sXtA/viewform?usp=sf_link



Academisation Consultation Meeting

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScZsv7klecaZrs4gB0kgxr5Gq7Pd85AArS2Sr4tw5VVNI3V0g/viewform?usp=sf_link

