



# Unity Church of England Multi Academy Trust

## Important information and consultation regarding education in Great Barford

17<sup>th</sup> March 2017

To all Parents and Carers,

We are writing to ensure all parents and carers are updated on the current position of education in Great Barford. A communication was released for a brief time last week; if you have had sight of this, please disregard it.

It has been confirmed that both Alban Church of England Academy and Great Barford Lower School will be part of the same Multi-Academy Trust (Unity MAT) from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017.

Great Barford Lower School will convert to an academy on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017 and will consult with a view to converting to a Church of England school as soon as possible after that date.

We are excited that both education establishments within Great Barford will be managed by the same organisation. Unity MAT has been in existence since November 2016 and was originally constituted from members of the Diocese of St Albans, Alban Academy and Great Barford Lower School local governing bodies

We would like to reassure you that there are **no changes** planned for September 2017/18 academic year. Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 pupils will be taught on the Alban Academy site by Alban Academy teachers for the whole academic year. **Current year 4 children from Great Barford Lower School who did not formally apply for a Year 5 place through the admissions process will automatically be allocated a Year 5 place at Alban Academy for September 2017.** Years R, 1, 2, 3 and 4 pupils will be taught on the Great Barford Lower School site by Great Barford Lower School teachers for the whole academic year. All pupils will be taught in schools that are governed by Unity MAT, which employs all the staff.

The first challenge of the Unity MAT Board is to consider the best way forward to create the strongest possible educational offer for the village of Great Barford.

Our vision is that Unity MAT will:

- Create one school across both existing school sites;
- Deliver the inspirational curriculum that pupils deserve;
- Secure the highest quality teachers and support staff;
- Be inclusive to all, whilst maintaining a Christian ethos; and,
- Be sustainable and financially viable.

There are a number of factors to consider:

- a) **Two-tier Education:** The move from three to two-tier education in Bedford Borough and Sandy is beginning to have an impact. There are already Year 7 places available

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in Bedford Borough secondary schools, and Sandy Upper School will introduce a Year 7 cohort in September 2018.

- b) Pupils:** We must ensure that pupils continue to receive a first-rate education and that the next steps for education in Great Barford minimise disruption for pupils.
- c) Pupil Numbers:** We respect the right of parents to choose the educational route that they believe is best for their child. At the same time we must plan effectively for the future of the school. Government funding for education is based on pupil numbers. It is forecast that approximately a third of current Year 6 pupils (47 pupils) will leave Alban Academy at the end of this academic year to move to a secondary school from September 2017, along with some pupils from other year groups. A large year group (currently in Year 8) is also leaving, so the reduction in pupil numbers at Alban Academy are forecast to be approximately 100 pupils.
- d) Curriculum and staff:** To maintain strong standards of teaching and learning we must ensure that the curriculum is fit for purpose and can be delivered to a high standard. It is important that the best teachers are well supported to deliver the best curriculum for pupils.
- e) Pupil Places:** Mark Rutherford Upper School have committed to both a Year 7 and a Year 9 point of entry until September 2019. It is not clear at this point what schools in Central Bedfordshire will choose to do.

We have to create a sustainable plan for education in Great Barford. With this in mind we will, within the next week, be opening a consultation to take into account all views. The outcome of this consultation will form part of a business case to be presented to the Diocese of St Albans, which will consider the next steps.

The consultation will be for all parents, staff, Great Barford Parish Council, nearby schools, professional associations and trade unions, local authorities and other interested parties.

The consultation will be about the type of school and the future of education in Great Barford. It will seek your views, and those of all the other stakeholders, whilst asking you to consider the five factors listed above. The two options we will be asking you to consider are:

- **One Primary School across both sites accommodating pupils from Year R to Year 6**
- **One Primary School 'plus' across both sites accommodating pupils from Year R to Year 8**

To take account of the Easter holidays the consultation will run from the date it is published until noon on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2017. Information on how to take part in the consultation will be issued to you very shortly

Sent on behalf of:

Unity MAT  
Alban Academy Local Governing Body  
Great Barford Lower School Governing Body