



Dear Parent/Carer,

## **Consultation on the proposal to merge Higham Lane School Trust and the Central England Academies Trust (CEAT)**

### **What are MATs?**

Multi-academy Trusts (MATs) are groups of academies that come together to form a charitable company with a single group of 'members' (who have an overview of the governance arrangements) and a single board of Trustees. Higham Lane School is currently a Single Academy Trust (a SAT).

The ambition to form a Multi-academy Trust (MAT) has been part of Higham Lane School's School Development Plan for the past two academic years.

Even as part of a MAT, the following still applies: -

- individual schools remain as separate entities, with separate names and DfE numbers.
- individual schools still receive separate Ofsted judgements and any published performance tables are still based on individual schools.

### **National Initiative to Merge Like-Minded Trusts**

The Department for Education is encouraging mergers of like-minded trusts, recognising the development of capacity for school improvement and to empower school leadership to reach beyond traditional confines. In a letter to single and small academy Trusts on 17 January 2022, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) wrote:

*"I wanted to write to you to underscore the Department of Education's ambition, outlined by the Secretary of State in his speech to the Confederation of School Trusts last year, for every school to be part of a family of schools in a strong MAT."*

In addition, the new education white paper 'Opportunity for All' - 28 March 2022, again presents the case for a coherent education system comprised of schools within strong multi-academy Trusts, with the intention that all schools would be academies in Trusts by 2030. Staying as a SAT leaves Higham Lane School in a vulnerable position if we want to maintain our school identity and autonomy in the long term. Indeed, a MAT would need to be formed in advance of the opening of the new Free School- "Higham Lane North Academy" in the near future. It is the duty of the Trustees to ensure the long-term future of the school and, with this in mind, we have been looking at the local education landscape for suitable partners.

### **The Benefits of Joining CEAT**

We have found much common ground with Central England Academy Trust (CEAT), which currently runs Oakwood Primary School and Oakwood Secondary School, here in Nuneaton. As well as the traditional benefits associated with Trust growth, CEAT have been looking for a Trust or school to join with them to lead an expansion into the mainstream and secondary sectors. Being a "mixed" trust (which has schools that cover all aspects of education) would provide additional insight and expertise across a new Trust, including both mainstream and special education provision. There are a growing number of this type of Trust across the country and they are recognised as having particularly high levels of development potential.

**Next Steps**

Our Trustees approved the initial investigations into a merger with CEAT and both parties are currently working through a rigorous due diligence process. The proposed merger has been approved in principle by the Trustees of both Trust boards and the proposed merger will now go forward to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and Advisory Board for approval. We hope to merge in the autumn of 2022, although this date is to be confirmed.

**Answering Your Questions**

We have developed a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) which accompanies this letter to help explain why we have decided to go down this route. We are currently planning a number of different ways in which we will be gaining your views, addressing any concerns and answering any questions you may have. In the meantime, please do email [feedback@highamlaneschool.co.uk](mailto:feedback@highamlaneschool.co.uk) if you have any urgent questions on this matter that are not covered in the attached FAQs document.

In conclusion, we believe that this is an exciting and beneficial development for Higham Lane School and all the children who will be attending schools in the newly-expanded CEAT MAT. We welcome your feedback and look forward to your support on what is an important next step for Higham Lane School.

Yours sincerely,

Higham Lane School