



Unity Church of England Multi Academy Trust

Unity Church of England MAT Consultation on Great Barford Primary Academy adopting a religious designation as a Church of England Academy – Consultation closing report.

From Tuesday 3rd October 2017 to Tuesday 14th November 2017, Unity CofE Multi Academy Trust (MAT) has been actively consulting with Parents, Staff, Key Stakeholders and the wider community on Great Barford Primary Academy (GBPA) becoming a Church of England Academy.

The consultation document, a copy of which is at the end of this report, was published on the academy website. Parents, Staff and Key Stakeholders were directed to the consultation document by email and the academy text alert for parents.

Responses could be returned to GBPA where there was a box for posting responses and Unity MAT provided an email address for responses.

Unity MAT held consultation meetings which were held separately for parents / community stakeholders and then staff on Wednesday 1st November 2017.

The meeting for parents and community stakeholders started at 14:45 and closed at 15:10. In attendance were:

Trustees x 2

LGB x 2

Parents x 2

Wider community x 2

Sarah Evans (Head Teacher)

David Morton (Diocese)

The MAT Board delivered a presentation regarding becoming a Church of England Academy and then opened the floor to questions. The following questions were received and responded to:

How will the curriculum change with church designation?

DM responded with the church view. Not a huge change, the church will work with the school and over time there will be increased links with the school. The schools fundamental values will not change. High quality teaching and learning will continue. The school and church will work alongside each other.

RS responded – All faiths are valued and welcomed

What are the benefits to the school?

DM responded that there would be a Service level agreement between GBPA and the Diocese that includes training for staff. There is a network of 136 schools across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire providing vast experience and support.... creating link schools to build greater expertise.

Will one of the two sites close?

SA answered sharing the current position. All options are currently being looked at based on our current knowledge of pupil numbers although flexibility is needed due to local plans for building in Great Barford and Central Bedfordshire.

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The meeting for staff started at 15:30 and closed at 15:45. In attendance were:

Trustees x2

LGB x2

Staff x5

Sarah Evans (Head Teacher)

The MAT Board delivered the presentation regarding becoming a Church of England Academy and then opened the floor to questions. No questions were received.

At the close of the consultation on Tuesday 14th November 2017, Unity MAT had received:

14 x written responses posted in the box at GPBA

2 x email responses to the Unity MAT Inbox.

To the question, '**Should Great Barford Primary Academy seek faith designation, as a Church of England Academy, as part of the Unity Multi-Academy Trust**', 11 responses were in support of the proposal and 5 responses were against.

The 5 respondents who were against the proposal did not provide any comments or ask questions for Unity MAT to consider and respond to.

There were no comments made on the 11 responses in support of the proposal.

At its meeting on Wednesday 15th November 2017 and having considered the responses to the consultation document and the questions received during the consultation meetings, Unity MAT Board passed a resolution that Great Barford Primary Academy should adopt a religious designation as a Church of England Academy.

Nicholas Papé

Chair of the Trust Board

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Consultation on Great Barford Primary Academy gaining a Faith Designation

You are aware that Great Barford Primary Academy (GBPA) was granted Academy status on 1st June 2017 as part of the Unity MAT (Multi-Academy Trust). The MAT currently comprises two schools: Alban Church of England Academy and Great Barford Primary Academy. For reasons about which most stakeholders are aware, there is a proposal to close Alban Academy from September 2018, largely due to organisational changes that have taken place in Bedford Borough and parts of Central Bedfordshire Local Authorities over the last 12 months or so.

This will mean that the Unity MAT will comprise just a single school (GBPA) in Great Barford from September 2018, which is currently deemed as having the status of a former community school. In other words, Great Barford Primary Academy is not considered to be a church school even though the overall governance structure of Unity MAT has a majority of Members and Trustees appointed by the Diocese of St Albans.

In June of this year, the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE - which has oversight of all Church schools in the Authority), discussed the situation in Great Barford; it was agreed that there should be a move to establishing a single primary school in the village, catering for pupils from Year R to Year 6, and that this should be a school that has Church of England status.

In order to become a Church of England School, it is necessary for Great Barford Primary Academy, through Unity MAT, to obtain the Secretary of State's permission. The Secretary of State will want to see that there is support from the school and wider community for the change and that there is support from the 'relevant religious body' (i.e. the Diocese of St Albans) for such a move. Whilst the Diocese has indicated its in-principle support for such a move, it wishes to consider the outcome of the consultation process before committing to a final decision. To this end, it will make take that decision at a meeting of the DBE in November.

The implications for GBPA of gaining a faith designation, are:

- The school will be designated as a Church of England school, under the umbrella of the Diocese of St Albans, as Alban Academy is now;
- The school will be subject to an additional inspection process, as a church school, under SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools);
- Religious education and worship will be distinctly Anglican.

Since the school is already part of the Unity MAT, there are some things that will not change:

- Staff will continue to be employed by the Unity MAT;
- There will be no changes to the admissions policy that applies to the MAT. If any future changes are proposed, these must be consulted upon;
- The majority of governors on the Trust Board are appointed by the Diocese.

If the change goes ahead, there will continue to be a church school in Great Barford

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The purpose of this document is to seek your views on whether Great Barford Primary Academy should seek faith designation. The consultation period starts on **Tuesday 3 October 2017** and finishes at noon on **Tuesday 14 November 2017**. Apart from this consultation letter, there will be the opportunity to attend consultation events where the process and implications can be explored in more detail. These will be held on **Wednesday 1st November, 2.45pm in GBPA school hall**

It would be helpful if, when you have gathered all the information you require, you could respond to the following question:

‘Should Great Barford Primary Academy seek faith designation, as a Church of England Academy, as part of the Unity Multi-Academy Trust’

YES		NO		DON'T KNOW	
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Comments:

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