

Proposal to become an academy and join Enlighten Learning Trust



The Governing Body of St Martin's Voluntary Aided Schools is proposing that our schools become academies in partnership with the Enlighten Learning Trust (ELT). Our Governing Body welcomes your questions and comments about this proposal to help inform its final decision.

This period of consultation and dialogue will commence on Thursday 20th May 2021 and end on Thursday 1st July 2021.

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school, funded directly by central government. When a school such as ours becomes an academy, they gain some additional freedoms and responsibilities. Further details can be found in the 'Frequently Asked Questions' document on our ['Academy Consultation webpage'](#). Joining an academy is known as 'academisation'. Historically, some schools have been forced to join academies to address low standards of learning and teaching and this has understandably led to some negative press. St Martin's Schools, by contrast, are consistently high achieving schools and this proposal is driven not by the Local Authority or government but by the Governing Body's considered belief that pupils and teachers will benefit from collaboration with carefully selected schools which share our values and vision.

Successful Collaboration

Our schools have collaborated with other schools within ELT since March 2018. As part of this collaboration, we have benefited from regular Business Manager expertise, supporting the financial aspect of the schools. Further to this we have held joint moderation sessions examining children's work which has supported teacher judgements and enabled us to share good practice. Our leaders have engaged in continuing professional development facilitated by ELT. This has enabled them to develop their leadership and teaching and has inspired them to take a lead on aspects of school development. It has also empowered them to encourage and motivate other aspiring leaders to develop their own skills. Throughout this period, we have been able to benefit from this collaboration with ELT, whilst retaining our individual distinctiveness within the community, which remains of paramount importance to each school.

Why now?

We appreciate that the unprecedented uncertainties generated by the COVID-19 Pandemic may make any contemplation of change particularly challenging. None-the-less, our resilience as a school community over the last 12 months has given us further reason to believe that it is through excellent team work that we move forwards and flourish. Below, we briefly

summarise the reasons why we believe further collaboration will serve our children and staff so well.

1. We are stronger together

The successful federation of St Martin's Infant and St Martin's Junior Schools in 2016 has demonstrated the benefits of collaboration. Having seen the growing opportunities for both pupils and staff at St Martin's Schools over the last five years, the Governing Body has volunteered a healthy period of time into researching viable partnerships and evaluating the potential outcomes of further collaboration.

We believe that collaboration with ELT will further improve outcomes for pupils and staff. It will do this through drawing on a wide bank of expertise, creating further economies of scale and sharing resources to give our schools an even stronger, more resilient structure, to ensure that every child's learning opportunities are maximised and that every member of staff has encouragement to grow and to lead.

2. Seeking the best for all children is our responsibility as a Christian school

Our Diocese, the Diocese of Guildford, is strongly encouraging its schools to academise for the future protection of its distinctively inclusive and values-driven education. The Governing Body passionately believes that, as schools rooted in Christian values, we have a moral duty to strive for educational excellence which reaches beyond our own walls. Through formal partnership with other, like-minded schools, we can ensure that an even greater number of children flourish and experience the fullness of life.

3. Enlighten Learning Trust shares our vision and our values

ELT feels like a natural partner for St Martin's Schools on account of its inclusive yet distinctly Christian ethos, its vision of schools as equally important family members and its unassailable and aspirational commitment to the belief that every child is deserving of a nurturing, holistic and empowering education.

ELT's vision, values and purpose are aligned with our own. Like us, it aims to bring about positive social change by equipping children for a rapidly changing world (<https://www.enlightenit.education/about-elt/elt-vision>).

By joining ELT, we would not be 'taken over' and would become an integral part of a 'family of schools'. Our precious and distinctive vision and values will be celebrated and championed such that the 'St Martin's Schools' way' will thrive.

4. There is a national move towards academy status for all schools

Some Local Authorities are vastly reducing and withdrawing support for education, meaning that the system of education in this country is increasingly school-led. As a consequence, we believe that schools in Surrey are becoming increasingly isolated often with little support, a greater sense of competition and a disproportionately large amount of time spent by leaders on tasks which would have previously been undertaken by the Local Authority. This all culminates in less time to focus on excellent teaching and learning.

Academisation seeks to address this imbalance, re-establishing pupil outcomes as the top priority of partnered schools. Within Surrey, 123 out of 296 primary schools and 42 out of 53 secondary schools are now academies (October 2020). Over half of children nationally are now educated in academy schools. The government's vision is for every school to be part of a family of schools in strong academy trusts.

Summary

In summary, the Governing Body believes that both the children and teachers at both of our schools will benefit from collaboration with ELT through shared vision and values, further strengthening our resilience and the opportunities of our staff, all centred around maximising the outcomes of our children through educational excellence.

How can I have my say?

We want to listen to your views and to answer outstanding questions. We encourage you to join our dialogue by:

- Completing the questionnaire, which will be emailed to you on Thursday 10th June 2021 following the opportunities for discussion as listed below. This should be completed by Thursday 1st July 2021.
- Emailing the school using the email academy@stmartinsepsom.school to ask questions relating to this consultation. This information will help us develop our FAQ document.
- Attending a Covid-secure drop-in session with a Governor and a member of the Leadership Team to answer any questions you may have. These can be booked online ([click here to book](#)) or on the webpage 'Academy Consultation'.
 - Tuesday 25th May 2021 2.00pm - 4.00pm (in the school library)
 - Wednesday 9th June 2021 9am – 11.30am (in the school library)
 - Thursday 10th June 2021 6pm – 7pm (in the large hall)

If there is a demand for more meetings we will arrange more.

Alternatively, please feel free to come and chat to any member of the leadership team when they are on the playground before or after school.

- Meeting Mike Boddington (CEO of Enlighten Learning Trust) who will be available, before and after school, on the playground for a covid secure chat on Wednesday 9th June 2021.
- Attend one of two virtual meetings with Mike Boddington (CEO of Enlighten Learning Trust) on Thursday 10th June 2021 from 5pm to 6pm or Tuesday 15th June 2021 again from 5pm to 6pm. If you would like to attend one of these virtual meetings, [please click on this link to register your attendance](#).

Our parents, staff and the Diocese are being consulted as part of this process.

The consultation closes on Thursday 1st July 2021. Please share any views you wish to by completing the questionnaire before this date.

What happens next?

Our Full Governing Body will consider all feedback received prior to making a final decision about becoming an academy and partnering with ELT. Should the proposal proceed, it is anticipated that St Martin's would convert to academy status on or after the 1st January 2022. Should the proposal not proceed, St Martin's Schools will remain maintained schools. For more information about our proposed conversion please visit our [Academy Consultation web page](#).



Anthony Marsh
Executive Principal



Robert Burns
Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Full Governing Body of St Martin's CofE Voluntary Aided Schools