



Appointment of Executive Headteacher for Victoria Infant & Nursery Church of England and The Thomas Coram Church of England schools

Dear Parents and Carers

The Governing Bodies of Victoria Infant & Nursery CofE School (Victoria) and The Thomas Coram CofE School (Thomas Coram) are pleased to announce the appointment of Mr Rob Halls to the post of Executive Headteacher, to lead both schools from 1 September 2017.

Mr Halls is an experienced Headteacher, who has been Headteacher at Thomas Coram since September 2013. He has nearly 15 years' experience in senior leadership in a number of schools across the primary stage, which has included 12 years leading Church of England schools.



How will the schools work together?

Victoria and Thomas Coram staff have worked together informally for many years. This has ranged from shared training, curriculum knowledge and resources, to ensuring a successful transition for the children when they move from Year 2 at Victoria to Year 3 at Thomas Coram.

Since last year the Governors and leadership at both schools have been discussing how we can collaborate even further for the benefit of the children across all the primary stages. Working more closely together will also help to find financial efficiencies for both schools in the future. The result at the end of last term, after approval by the Diocese of St Alban's Board of Education, was that both Governing Bodies agreed to enter into a 'formal collaboration'. We have set up a group of Governors from Thomas Coram and Victoria, who are currently looking into a longer-term vision for both schools. Whilst we work on this vision and identify more areas where the schools can work together to better support the children, both Governing Bodies also agreed last term to recruit an Executive Headteacher for September 2017.

What is an Executive Headteacher?

An Executive Headteacher is responsible for two or more schools. It is becoming quite common for primary and secondary schools to share experienced Headteachers in this way. In our case, Mr Halls will be responsible for the strategic direction of both Victoria and Thomas Coram, including overseeing school development plans, key budget spend and ensuring a co-ordinated Christian ethos across both schools. He will be working closely with senior leadership teams across both schools to ensure we maintain the consistently 'Good' or better level of teaching and learning for the children. You can expect to see him working across both school sites every week.

The post is a two-year interim position while we shape in detail the longer-term vision for Victoria and Thomas Coram schools.

Does this mean Thomas Coram is taking over Victoria?

Our collaboration is an equal partnership, and we have the same number of Thomas Coram and Victoria Governors in the group looking at the longer-term vision for both schools. In his new role as Executive Headteacher, Mr Halls will be spending an equal proportion of his time at both schools.



How will this affect my child(ren)?

Our aim over the next two years is that there will be more opportunities for the schools to share resources, ideas and curriculum expertise to the benefit of children across the full primary stage.

Is either Victoria or Thomas Coram closing, so that both schools move to one site?

From this September, the schools will be sharing an Executive Headteacher. They will each be run on a day-to-day basis by a Head of School, and will continue to operate on their respective school sites, so neither school will be closing. There will still be separate Governing Bodies for each school, and separate Ofsted inspections.

Will this affect children moving from Swing Gate Infant School & Nursery, to Thomas Coram?

There will be no difference to Swing Gate children as they move to Thomas Coram, their linked junior school. Children on roll in Year 2 at Swing Gate remain a high priority admissions category alongside Victoria pupils. Swing Gate and Thomas Coram staff have worked together informally for many years, and will continue to do so to ensure children at Swing Gate are fully prepared for transition to their junior school.

Will we be consulted on the longer-term vision for the two schools?

Both Governing Bodies and Mr Halls strongly believe in and are committed to the ongoing provision of Church of England primary school education in Berkhamsted. Once we have analysed the options and discussed these with the Diocese and the Local Authority, Hertfordshire County Council, we will put forward our proposal to staff, pupils, parents and carers and the wider community before any final decision on direction is taken.

When can we expect to hear more?

Mr Halls will be informally supporting the group of Governors this term as we make arrangements for the new leadership structure across both schools for September. He will also be spending some time at Victoria this term, getting to know the staff and children. We will share more news on the leadership posts as soon as possible.

Who can I talk to if I have further questions?

If you have any further questions, please in the first instance contact your school's office. If it can't be answered by the individual school leadership team, they will pass the query on to the school's Governors.

Nick Heath
Chair of Governors, Thomas Coram

Jenny Jenkins
Chair of Governors, Victoria