

The Consortium Multi Academy Trust

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Annual newsletter to the parents and families from Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne

17th July 2019

Dear Parents,

As we now dash towards the finish line for what has been yet another successful year for the *Consortium* Multi Academy Trust, we can reflect on a year that has had a variety of ups and downs within the wider education system. While there has been significant concerns raised in the national media around accountability and standards in the academy education sector i.e. the Panorama programme on the failed 'Bright Tribe Trust'; our Trust has continued to grow, flourish and improve. There is a growing body of evidence that when an Academy Trust is well lead and managed at every level it has the potential for significant positive impact for the children and communities that we seek to serve. A recent speech by Amanda Spielman the Chief Ofsted Inspector highlighted the positive impact of Trusts and the speech text can be [found here](#).

First and foremost Consortium is an educational Trust, with a single purpose and that is to provide exceptional education to our children and service to our schools. While 'academy land' uses lots of business language we are not a business, we are an educational charity. This means that our Trustees, as are Locality Committee members (formerly known as school governors) are all volunteers. Consortium operates a strict no 'related party transactions' policy so none of our leaders, other than salaried staff, make any financial gain at all for their contributions. All the money that the Trust receives for maintaining and running our schools is used exactly for that.

It is important to reflect back on why this Trust was created in August 2016, it had a purpose, a mission to champion rural schools, ensuring that we retained these essential community assets in our towns and villages where we could assure exceptional education for your children. While our outlook has moved on since then, with the Trust seeking new partners to join our family of schools, we still hold dear to our founding aims. As an approved Department for Education sponsor Trust we also provide a home for schools that have, for a number of reasons, found themselves in a difficult spot – whether that's an adverse Ofsted inspection report or a threat of closure from the Local Authority. Of our existing 11 schools, six schools joined us in that position, through the hard work of the whole Trust these schools are in a phase of rapid improvement, breathing new life and vigour into the schools.

During this year I am delighted to see Winterton Primary and Nursery School and Helmingham Primary School join the Trust. I am also looking forward to the privately run Helmingham Nursery setting also join us at the end of August.

It has been an exceptionally busy year for the Trust educationally, with routine development work being delivered day in and day out by our wonderful staff, at school level and in the central team. There has been literally hundreds of visits to schools, training opportunities for staff, curricular enrichments and educational visits for our pupils. It really has been a year of significant improvement, I am very proud of what we have collectively achieved and that includes the positive contributions of parents.

During the course of the 2018/2019 academic year we have had three special visits, with Ofsted inspections at Mendham Primary and Nursery, St. Edmund's Primary and Nursery and most recently Glebeland Primary School.

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I am delighted to report that in every case Ofsted have graded our schools as 'GOOD'.

All of the Ofsted reports are available on the Ofsted and school websites and they make great reading, in every case praising the quality of provision at the schools, care offered by the staff, attitudes and conduct of the children and the positive impact that the schools have received from being a Consortium school.

The whole team have been working hard and that includes your children, we are all striving to ensure that the children get the very best start and reach their full potential, no matter what their starting point. This year has seen a strong improvement in 'grades' and development for our pupils. Here are just a few of the highlights.

Reception children are assessed against (GLD) Good Level of Development and Trust wide we have seen a 9% increase in our results with 77% of children meeting or exceeding that expectation; compared to the national average of 72%

Year 1 pupils have a phonics check, again Trust wide we have seen an increase of 5% with 86% of our pupils meeting the expectation and again we have surpassed the national average rate of 82%

End of Key Stage 1 assessments, Year 2 pupils continue to show strong improvement with almost every school meeting and exceeding the 2018 benchmarks for reading, writing and maths.

End of Key Stage 2 assessments, Year 6 pupils remain a focus for the Trust and our schools, most children made excellent progress over the year and worked hard to close some historic attainment gaps. Maths was a particular success, with an 11% improvement in attainment bringing the Trust much closer to the national average. Consortium schools achieved 74% (up from 63% in 2018) against a national average of 79%. We all recognise that further improvement is needed but shouldn't lose sight of the excellent progress that our pupils and schools have made in the past year.

Away from the results tables, I have also had the huge pleasure of visiting schools regularly, observing and in some cases supporting the teaching and learning. We have a vibrant and diverse Trust from North Norfolk to north of Ipswich which is a huge strength. It was a delight to share the joy at the Trust swimming gala held at Framlingham College and the Country Cross run in the historic grounds of Helmingham Hall. I have attended several of the Pupil Parliaments, an initiative that came from the pupils of Glebeland Primary; I was very impressed by the quality of debate and our pupil voice is certainly being heard at Trust Board level.

More recently I have visited our Scout sections at Yoxford & Peasenhall, attended sports days, performances, special assemblies and much more; all of which is inspirational and is a credit to the efforts of all our staff.

None of that is possible without capital investment and as a Trust, with our partners, we have and continue to deliver a strong programme of improving the facilities for our schools. We have seen this year a significant investment in IT equipment and infrastructure at a number of sites. We have number of projects that we are working on currently and are seeking funding for, including new windows at Henley, toilet upgrades at Mendham and a septic tank replacement at Glebeland.

Projects completed this year include:

New Early Years & Foundation Stage block at Southwold Primary School

Re-modelled intervention and teaching base at Rendlesham

Additional security fencing at Barnby & North Cove Primary

Toilet refurbishments at Yoxford & Peasenhall Primary and Southwold Primary

Intervention Room and library space at Winterton Primary

New wall mounted gym equipment at Barnby & North Cove Primary

New Outdoor learning space for the EYFS Centre of Excellence at Yoxford and Peasenhall Primary

Projects underway and due for completion in 2019/20 include:

34 bed residential and beach school facility at Winterton Primary

New indoor heated swimming pool (finally) will get underway at Yoxford and Peasenhall Primary

New intervention and sensory space at Glebeland Primary

Helmingham Primary refurbishment of roof and external wood work

I hope that this gives you a flavour of what is happening across our family of schools, it certainly doesn't record all the work and achievements of the Trust – but it does demonstrate that together pupils and excellence can thrive.

There is always more to do and improve and I am very much looking forward to the new academic year. While the schools are closed, many colleagues based at our office in Halesworth, will be working during the summer to ensure that we are ready for a new and exciting year. We also have our exciting and full ESCape Holiday schools operating at Waveney Valley, Yox Valley and Borders Partnerships.

A key focus for us will be building further on how and when we communicate with our families and communities. In October we will be launching our new Trust wide integrated website and social media platform – the hope is that we will get more of the information that you need directly to you in 'real time'.

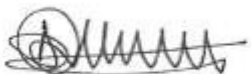
While electronic communications are great to distribute information, it can't ever replace the human need to build up relationships over time, and face to face. We will be considering ways in which the Trust central team can engage with directly with you. We are exploring a number of ways to do that, potentially including a parents' forum and/or a roadshow of some description. We will certainly be improving the written communication with parents, including the introduction of a "Consortium WIDE" (probably need to work on the title a bit!) newsletter to compliment local school newsletters.

The Trust continues to evolve and grow and in an unstable political and financial environment we monitor, and hopefully mitigate, the negative impact of any external influences on our schools. We aim to grow further this year and currently are in discussions with a further four primary schools to hopefully join us. The Trust is also actively looking at creating an all through Trust, from early years through to secondary and with specialist additional needs units or schools also contributing to our rich and diverse family of schools.

At the end of the academic year there is always a move of colleagues; promotions, retirements, secondments and moving on to new adventures and new colleagues joining the Trust. Whether coming or going I would like to express a public thank you to all. Our Trust is our staff and I know that they are our greatest asset. Individual school newsletters will have talked about the individuals but to those of them leaving us next week, thank you for your service and for those joining us, welcome to the *Consortium* Multi Academy Trust.

Therefore it leaves be to simply say thank you for your support and for those parents with Year 6 pupils' good luck for the next stage of your journey. To everyone, I hope that you have a happy, restful and enjoyable summer break.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne
CEO & Principal