

1 December 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Conditional Consent to Consider Academy Conversion**

We are pleased to share with you an important step forward for SMRT as we look to secure a strong and vibrant future for the school within a changing local educational landscape. The SMRT Governing Body is committed to exploring the best options for our school, and as part of that commitment Governors have been assessing whether SMRT should remain as one of only two remaining Local Authority secondary schools in Bristol or explore joining a Multi-Academy Trust. After much evaluation the Governing Body has decided to take the next step along the process toward deciding whether to join a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) or remain as a Local Authority Voluntary Aided School.

In 2023 the Governing Body working closely with the Headteacher recognising the need for SMRT to work reciprocally and collaboratively with other schools in the city for mutual benefit. We considered engaging with several Trusts and after due consideration governors agreed to engage with Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP) as they were considered to be an organisation that we would be most likely be aligned with in terms of values, Christian distinctiveness, geography, capacity to improve educational outcomes, and operational resilience.

Earlier this year Governors set up a working group, including Governors, the Headteacher, and representation from the Diocese, to consider the way forward. This gave us the opportunity to explore joining a Trust in detail, including reviewing other local and national Trusts and taking advice from the Diocese.

After careful consideration and consultation with the Diocese, Lighthouse Schools Partnership stood out as the Trust in Bristol with the necessary foundation (Christian) governance to safeguard our Christian distinctiveness - an essential part of our mission, vision, and values. LSP have proved to be a strong and effective learning partner for SMRT over the last two years, and we are keen to consider the potential to work more closely with them as they share our commitment to educational excellence, serving the community, and Christian distinctiveness.

### **Lighthouse Schools Partnership**

There are currently 34 schools in LSP all of which are in Bristol, North Somerset and Bath, and Northeast Somerset. Schools local to us include St Mary Redcliffe CE Primary School, Easton CE Primary School, Fishponds CE Primary School, and Horfield CE Primary School. We have

also been informally collaborating with LSP secondary schools, Backwell School, Chew Valley School, Churchill Academy & Sixth Form, and Gordano School for more than a year. LSP has representation from the Diocese of Bristol in its governance structure and has an excellent relationship with the Diocese of Bristol and the Diocese Bath & Wells, so our distinctly Christian character as a Voluntary Aided school would be respected and protected.

Governors can see many advantages for children, families, and staff in SMRT joining LSP. In particular, the ability to share resources and expertise across schools and benefit from the Trust's strong services offer to support the day-to-day operations of our large secondary school in an ever-changing educational landscape. LSP have genuine respect for the achievements, innovation, and expertise that SMRT offers and are keen to learn from SMRT. Governors have also been attracted to LSP's excellent staff development and 'school improvement' offer to ensure that we maintain the high quality of teaching at SMRT but can also share our expertise and unique character to benefit other schools in Bristol and beyond. Together as a School community we will review and look at the potential of joining LSP through the due diligence process in the coming weeks.

### **What is the next step?**

In November the Full Governing Body (FGB) agreed, after considerable deliberation and in consultation with the Diocese, to move to the next stage in the process which is, according to DfE guidance, to formally confirm **Conditional Consent** for the school to work with Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP) to assess whether SMRT joining LSP is the right move for both parties.

**Conditional Consent** is a decision in principle that is not final and is dependent on both consultation and due diligence. The FGB will sign off the outcome of consultation and due diligence and only then proceed to academy transfer if fully satisfied that this is the right move for SMRT for now and the future.

This is an important first step, and we look forward to hearing your views and engaging with all stakeholders in the upcoming consultation process, that will include staff, parents/carers, students, and other stakeholders (see details below). Our aim is to ensure SMRT continues to thrive, offering the best possible education and support for our community.

Following the consultation process, and if we move forward, an application will be prepared and submitted to the Department of Education who would then grant an **Academy Order**.

An **Academy Order** is the power delegated from the Secretary of State to transfer a school from Local Authority control to membership of a Multi-Academy Trust. The Academy Order is given to the school. It names the MAT that they have asked to join. A careful review and necessary due diligence are then undertaken by both the School and the Trust, and a final decision will only be taken by Governors once that has been completed. This will take several months to complete and either party can withdraw from the process at any time.

### **Consultation with parent and carers**

Your voice is important, and we encourage you to engage in the consultation process to learn more about academy status and Lighthouse Schools Partnership. We will have an Academy

Consultation page on our website from 2 December where you will find further information on our proposal and our FAQs document. You can also find out more about LSP by [visiting their website](#).

Consultation will include (but is not limited to):

- In-person and online consultation meetings with LSP in January/February. SMRT governors will be in attendance.
- Opportunity to share questions and thoughts via email.

Dates will be shared in a Consultation Schedule on 2 December 2025. Please note these dates are subject to change.

The 10-week consultation period, excluding school and public holidays officially opens at 4pm on 2 December 2025. We have extended the period of consultation beyond the statutory 6 weeks to provide as much time as possible for reflection and feedback, and this will close on Thursday 5 March at 4pm.

We look forward to engaging with you in exploring this very important step for our school.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen Brooke (Chair of Governors)



Andy Spens (Vice-Chair of Governors)



Del Planter (Headteacher)