



ST. HILD'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

KING OSWY DRIVE • HARTLEPOOL • TS24 9PB

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Headteacher: Mrs. T. Gibson, BEd. Physics.

At St. Hild's Church of England School we aim to provide all of our pupils
with a world class education in a Christian context.

We expect to find God at work in our school.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

To:

Pupils, parents and carers

Employees and their trade union representatives

Community users

Hartlepool Borough Council Children's Services,

Local schools and colleges

Local Church of England representatives including Parochial Church Councils of St Hilda's and Holy Trinity West View, Hartlepool

7th December 2020

Dear Stakeholder

Formal notification of St Hild's Church of England School becoming a sponsored academy

I am writing to you on behalf of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) of St Hild's, which was appointed by the Department for Education after the school's last Ofsted inspection in September 2019. This letter confirms the Department's plans for St Hild's to become a sponsored academy to ensure local stakeholders are informed about the proposals and have the opportunity to respond.

The Department decided in November 2019 that St Hild's must become a sponsored academy. In July 2020, following consultation with the Director of Education for the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle, the Department identified NEAT Academy Trust as being the most suitable sponsor for St Hild's. NEAT is a community-based trust operating within North East England and already has a mixture of Church of England and non-faith schools.

I have invited Paul Rickeard (Director of Education, The Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle), Debi Bailey (CEO, NEAT Academy Trust) and Tracey Gibson (Headteacher, St Hild's) to share their views about the way forward, which are set out overleaf. The attached document also describes the background to the proposal, tells you more about NEAT Academy Trust and explains how you can respond.

Unfortunately, it is not currently possible to invite all stakeholders into school to gather views face-to-face due to the potential risks from Covid-19; therefore, the IEB strongly encourages you to raise questions and to respond to this document by e-mail or letter (or telephone if necessary).



"I have come that they may have
life in all its fullness." - John 10:10



Key staff from NEAT Academy Trust will be available to hold virtual meetings throughout the stakeholder engagement process with small groups of staff, parents/carers and members of the local community so please contact Anna Wilcox, Head's PA if you would like to take part.

Please raise any queries early in the stakeholder engagement process so that a response can be provided. The final deadline to share your views about the way forward is set out below. The Department will not change its decision that St Hild's will become a sponsored academy nor will the identified sponsor be changed, however the IEB would find it helpful to understand the level of support or challenge to ensure the transition to a sponsored academy is as smooth as possible for all parties.

The IEB will meet to consider all responses from stakeholders during week commencing 8 February 2021. If you would like to submit your views to be considered by the IEB, please do so **no later than 3pm on Thursday 4 February 2021**, either by

- e-mailing Anna Wilcox, Head's PA at wilcox.a@st-hilds.hartlepool.sch.uk, who will forward these on to me; or
- sending a letter to Mr M Hughes, IEB Vice Chair, St Hild's Church of England School, King Oswy Drive, Hartlepool TS24 9PB.

Please mark any correspondence 'Academy Consultation' so that it can be easily identified and forwarded to the IEB. If you are unable for any reason to respond in writing, please telephone St Hild's Church of England School on 01429 273041 and ask to speak to Anna Wilcox, Head's PA, who will make a written note of your comments and forward this to the IEB on your behalf.

Yours faithfully



Mark Hughes
Vice Chair
St Hild's Church of England School Interim Executive Board (IEB)



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Message from Mrs Tracey Gibson, Headteacher, St Hild's Church of England School

I have now been Headteacher at St Hild's for 5 years and have the privilege of being the school's longest serving Headteacher. Myself and the staff remain resolute that we will continue to strive to provide the highest quality education within a Christian and fully inclusive context. We are proud of our school and its pupils and value its uniqueness. I echo the comments from Mrs Bailey and Mr Rickeard and am delighted we have found a home as part of the NEAT Academy Trust, whilst still remaining very much at the heart of Hartlepool and the Diocese of Durham. We have a lot to gain from this new partnership and a lot we can share with the Trust and its schools. Exciting times lie ahead for St Hild's and its community.

Message from Mrs Debi Bailey, CEO, NEAT Academy Trust

As CEO of NEAT, I am both delighted and excited by the prospect of St Hild's joining our trust. Education really can open doors and for me, it is more important than ever that our young people get the best possible education, as we strive to provide all of our learners with the skills and experiences that will prepare them for life. While formal qualifications are very important, education is far more than this: it is the ability to problem solve, communicate effectively, and think creatively, developing confidence and resilience. NEAT is committed to giving every young person the experiences and opportunities they need to be successful.

I have had the privilege of getting to know the pupils and staff of St Hild's during my time as Chair of the IEB and I feel our vision as a trust aligns fully with that of St Hild's. I can assure you that the decision to appoint NEAT as the academy sponsor for St Hild's was made solely by the DfE's Regional Schools Commissioner and her Headteacher Board and I have withdrawn from every IEB meeting when academisation has been discussed, and continue to do so, to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. Through my work with St Hild's I am confident that the school is well placed to continue on its journey of improvement and we look forward to being a part of that journey with you all.

Message from Mr Paul Rickeard, Director of Education, Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle

A successful school is one that is rooted in a community committed to its values and St Hild's is certainly a school committed to achieving the best for its pupils and the community it serves. Since becoming Director of Education for the Diocese of Durham almost five years ago the School has faced many challenges and despite the best efforts of its staff, we have been unable to provide for the children at St Hild's in the way that we have wanted to. The Direct Academy Order from the Department for Education allows us to give St Hild's a complete fresh and new start. NEAT is a Mixed Multi Academy Trust that we work with closely and have done so for several years. The vision and values of the Trust are fully aligned with what we as a Diocese want for our children and to the values the School holds dear. This is an exciting time for St Hild's as the Trust are committed to giving every young person the experiences and opportunities they need to be successful.



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Information about St Hild's becoming a sponsored academy and joining NEAT Academy Trust

Background

Under section 4 of the Academies Act 2010, the Secretary of State for Education must make an academy order in respect of a school maintained by a local authority if it has been judged to be 'Inadequate' by Ofsted i.e. it is a school requiring significant improvement or special measures.

St Hild's Church of England School was judged by Ofsted to be 'Inadequate' in September 2019. In November 2019 the Department for Education (DfE) issued the academy order for the school to become a sponsored academy. This means that St Hild's will no longer be run by Hartlepool Borough Council but will join a multi academy trust that the DfE has identified as being suitable with the skills and capacity to improve the school's performance.

During 2019-20 St Hild's received support from the government's Opportunity North East Vision school improvement programme, which is continuing in 2020-21. In January 2020 an Interim Executive Board (IEB) was appointed by the Department to oversee the school until it becomes a sponsored academy. The IEB includes representatives of the local authority, other education providers and the Church of England. Debi Bailey, CEO of NEAT Academy Trust was also invited to join the IEB as a school improvement specialist. The IEB and school colleagues have worked closely with the ONE vision programme to address the areas for improvement identified by the Ofsted inspection. All agree that a positive, effective partnership has been established.

NEAT Academy Trust has been formally identified by the DfE as the sponsor match for St Hild's, which means that St Hild's will join NEAT as a sponsored academy when the legal process to transfer control from the local authority to the trust is complete.

Who are NEAT Academy Trust?

NEAT Academy Trust is a community-based multi-academy trust of Church of England and non-faith schools operating in the North East of England. The trust's legal documents and governance arrangements protect the character of both types of school and therefore enable St Hild's to remain a Church of England school when it joins NEAT. There are currently four primary schools (including one Church of England school) and one secondary school within the trust.

Each school in the trust is encouraged to develop its own distinctive ethos and, where relevant, its religious character and ensure it best serves its own local community. All schools work collaboratively to pursue the trust's common purpose, which is to nurture, educate, achieve and transform, and to ensure the trust is self-improving and self-sustaining. The NEAT values are at the heart of the trust and provide an environment which enables pupils and staff to contribute fully to the trust community and prepares them for the next stage of their lives and careers.

The trust has particular expertise in working with vulnerable pupils and their families to remove barriers to effective learning, in safeguarding children and young people and in supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. It has growing capacity to support other schools to improve.

NEAT has a teaching school and a research school within its family of schools, which enables schools within and outside of the trust to continually improve and evolve through providing access to research, developing evidence-based practice and delivering a comprehensive CPD programme.



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You can find out more about NEAT from:

- the NEAT Academy Trust website: www.neat.org.uk
- the NEAT Academy Trust YouTube channel: this has a Welcome to NEAT Academy Trust video at <https://youtu.be/cawBWv9Kv3s>

During week commencing 14.12.20 NEAT Academy Trust will share answers to some ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ to explain more about what St Hild’s joining the trust would mean for pupils, parents/carers, staff and other stakeholders. These will be added to throughout the stakeholder engagement exercise in response to questions raised.

What is an academy trust?

Academies are schools that are funded directly by the DfE. That means that they have greater freedoms and flexibilities as they are independent from their local authority. A multi-academy trust is a trust with more than one school.

Each academy trust is a charitable company and is required to provide education for the public benefit. Significant changes to how an academy trust operates have to be agreed by the DfE and its financial arrangements are overseen by the DfE’s Education and Skills Funding Agency and scrutinised by external auditors. Academy trusts cannot divert public money provided for the purposes of education to other activities. They are governed by volunteers comprising members, a board of non-executive directors/trustees and local governors for each academy. The board of directors is accountable to the DfE for all aspects of the trust’s performance and they have a legal duty to act in the interests of the trust. The freedoms, rights and responsibilities of the trust are set out in a funding agreement between the trust and the Secretary of State for Education.

Some multi-academy trusts are “mixed” in that they include both Church of England and non-faith schools.

What will stay the same when St Hild’s joins NEAT Academy Trust?

As a multi-academy trust that already includes a Church of England school, NEAT’s legal documents and governance arrangements protect the character of both types of school.

St Hild’s will continue to be a Church of England school and retain its Christian character and values when it joins NEAT, although it will become an academy (instead of a voluntary aided school).

There will be very little that obviously changes in the day-to-day running of St Hild’s. NEAT Academy Trust encourages all of its schools to have their own ethos and identity, whilst working together in partnership as one trust, and to be at the heart of their local communities. St Hild’s will remain a welcoming and inclusive school and neither the IEB nor the trust intends to change, for example, the school uniform, term/holiday dates or the basis for admissions.

Although it has freedom not to do so, NEAT follows national agreements on pay and conditions for teachers and support staff and works proactively and positively with union representatives. The employment rights of current employees will be protected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, known as TUPE. This means that staff in scope will transfer to NEAT under their current terms and conditions with pension rights and continuity of service preserved.

St Hild’s will be subject to the same Ofsted inspection framework as all other schools. The Durham Diocesan Education Board and Hartlepool Borough Council will continue to have broad oversight of all schools within their jurisdiction including academies.



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What will change when St Hild's joins NEAT Academy Trust?

NEAT Academy Trust will create a local governing committee (LGC) specifically for St Hild's, which will replace the Interim Executive Board (IEB). A LGC in NEAT has a different role to the Governing Body that St Hild's had prior to the IEB being formed. It will report to the trust's board of directors and act as the board's "eyes and ears" by providing assurance about the quality of education and the quality of care that the school is providing. Local governors will be drawn from a range of backgrounds across the St Hild's community, including representatives from the Church of England, and parents and staff will have the opportunity to be elected to the LGC.

There may be some changes to who is authorised to make certain decisions and agree policies as each academy trust has its own Scheme of Delegation, which sets out the decisions that the trust's board of directors delegates to others to make on their behalf. For example, academy headteachers are appointed by the trust's board of directors, although all other staff will continue to be appointed by the headteacher of the school.

Through the sponsorship process NEAT is able to access funds from the DfE to build its own internal capacity and to invest in improving St Hild's performance. The trust is currently recruiting to a senior school improvement post and the successful candidate will work closely with St Hild's and NEAT's other secondary school to support the next stages of their improvement journey. This will give colleagues in both schools the opportunity to work jointly on priorities and approaches where there are common interests. St Hild's will also benefit from access to NEAT's extensive CPD programme, its role as a Research School and a range of trust-wide services including Finance, HR and Governance.

The DfE makes a small grant available to trusts that are sponsoring an academy to improve the school's environment. Although St Hild's benefits from a modern, purpose-built site, this funding will enable small changes to be made to improve the environment for pupils, staff and community users. Plans include providing welcoming reception areas and improving signage.

When will St Hild's join NEAT Academy Trust?

The trust is working towards a target date of 1 April 2021 for St Hild's to join NEAT. This is dependent on completion of the legal process for a maintained school to become an academy and there can sometimes be delays in this beyond the control of the trust or the school.

Stakeholder engagement process

The academy order from the DfE requiring St Hild's to become a sponsored academy will not be withdrawn nor will the sponsor match be changed. However, it is important that the views of stakeholders are formally considered by the school's Interim Executive Board (IEB) and you have the opportunity to ask questions of the IEB, the Diocesan Director of Education and NEAT Academy Trust to ensure there is a shared understanding of the way forward.

We strongly encourage you to contact us with questions and/or comments as soon as possible. Any formal responses to this consultation must be received no later than 3pm on Thursday 4 February 2021 by e-mail to wilcox.a@st-hilds.hartlepool.sch.uk or by post to St Hild's Church of England School, King Oswy Drive, Hartlepool TS24 9PB.

All submissions received by the above date will be considered at a meeting of St Hild's Interim Executive Board week commencing 8 February 2021.



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