

## **THE OXFORD DIOCESAN SCHOOLS TRUST (ODST)**

### **Being a Community School in ODST**

The Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust is a "mixed" MAT (Multi Academy Trust.) This means it is suitable for both church schools and community schools working together in partnership. Burford Primary School is the first community school to express a firm interest to join and we would be delighted to welcome the school into our family.

We are wholly committed to preserving and developing the unique characters of all our schools. Some are large, some very small, some are village schools, others are situated in towns or cities. The communities they serve are very different. Every child is special, and so is every school. All our schools serve their local community, whether they have a Church of England designation or not.

As an organisation set up with a passion for school improvement, collaborative working and preserving the unique character of small schools and Church of England schools, we believe we can understand and support the development of Burford Primary within the partnership of schools in the area.

ODST is a charitable, limited company, regulated by both the DfE and the charity commission. It has been set up according to national model documentation for academies. As with all Academy companies, it has an "object" - and the directors are committed by law to upholding that object. Our object is this:

- (i) Church of England schools designated as such which shall be conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Church of England both generally and in particular in relation to arranging for religious education and daily acts of worship, and having regard to any advice issued by the Diocesan Board of Education; and
- (ii) other Academies whether with or without a designated religious character; but in relation to each of the Academies to recognise and support their individual ethos, whether or not designated Church of England.

In summary the differing categories of schools in the Trust (community, VA, VC) are protected, respected and preserved.

In addition, the Trust signs a funding agreement with the DfE for each school in ODST. Voluntary Aided church schools have rights in law to protect their unique category, for example they can advertise for staff to be practising Christians. This right, enshrined in legislation for maintained VA schools, passes into a contractual agreement via the funding agreement for academies which were formally VA. The funding agreement signed for a Community school such as Burford would not contain clauses which allow the Trust to do that, so the ethos of the school as a community school would not be affected by changes to employment practice over time.

Burford Primary school, should it come into ODST, would have a local governing body made up of elected parent governors, staff governors and community governors. Although we have committed to this anyway as best practice, the funding agreement signed by the DfE would have additional clauses inserted to ensure that is always the case.

Although the directors of the MAT are appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) they are chosen according to the skill set needed to help the company be effective. They do not represent the DBE. A number are drawn from the local governing bodies of schools in the Trust. They are bound by company law as well as their own protocols to ensure that the community ethos of community schools is secure in the long term. ODST works flexibly with its member schools and would work closely with Burford Primary School to ensure it maintains its ethos as a community school and remains a special place of learning for children in Burford.