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## Information for parents and other stakeholders

Thornden and Hiltingbury Junior School are actively considering joining together and becoming a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). Thornden has been an academy since 2011 and Hiltingbury Junior School is a Hampshire Local Authority school. Both schools have worked closely together and formalising this partnership is now being explored by the respective governing bodies.

Nationally there are an increased number of schools coming together and reinforcing their relationships, with in excess of 1600 MATs established across the country. The purpose of our two schools joining together would be to create a local solution to the educational needs of the young people who attend the schools, strengthening the journey for all children. The Governors at both schools can see potential benefits in us formally working more closely; this includes work around transition from one school to the next, but not being limited to a few weeks in year 6. We would have the potential to use staff across two schools, developing specific opportunities for students as they move through our schools. While the benefit of a MAT would not specifically be financial, in the current climate we would certainly expect to benefit from better economies of scale over time.

Sometimes, when two schools join, one is specifically supporting the other. This is not the case here. Hiltingbury Juniors and Thornden joining would offer mutual benefits to the children in both schools without losing the identity of either. Both schools would retain their own Headteachers, their specialist staff, their uniform as well as individual links with parents and the community, but together we could create stronger experiences for our children as they move through their educational experience.

As Hiltingbury Juniors parents will be aware, Sam Hunter, the current Headteacher, is relocating to Devon and the recruitment process for a new Headteacher is underway. This appointment will be made ahead of any possible MAT formation which would not take place until Easter 2019 at the earliest. Recruiting an exceptional candidate to drive the high educational standards achieved at Hiltingbury Juniors, is integral to this process.

As a Local Authority school, Hiltingbury Juniors will have to consider conversion to an academy preceded by a formal consultation. This letter is not part of that formal consultation, but both schools wanted to communicate our thoughts with you at this early stage.

At the end of this communication are some questions that are often asked when MATs are formed. There will undoubtedly be additional questions, and these can be addressed either to

Judith Rutherford  
Hiltingbury Junior School Chair of Governors  
at [adminoffice@hiltingbury-jun.hants.sch.uk](mailto:adminoffice@hiltingbury-jun.hants.sch.uk)

or Derek Boden  
Thornden Chair of Governors  
at [chairofgovernors@thornden.hants.sch.uk](mailto:chairofgovernors@thornden.hants.sch.uk)

Questions will be collated and circulated with responses to the parents of both schools ahead of Hiltingbury Juniors starting a formal consultation.

Please be assured that this proposal will be carefully considered by the Governors at both schools. We will not rush to make a decision and will place the best interests of all our children at its core.

Judith Rutherford  
Chair of Governors, Hiltingbury Junior School Chair

Derek Boden  
Chair of Governors, Thornden School

Sam Hunter  
Headteacher, Hiltingbury Junior School

Su Whelan  
Headteacher, Thornden School

## **Frequently Asked Questions that are often asked about MATs (Multi Academy Trusts)**

### ***What is an Academy Trust?***

An Academy Trust is a charitable company limited by Guarantee. It receives its funding directly from the Secretary of State rather than via the Local Authority

### ***What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?***

A MAT is formed when two or more academy schools join together.

### ***Is one school taking over the other?***

Both outstanding schools have a unique character and identity and this would be maintained and embraced. Neither school would be 'taking over'; a MAT would be formed which would oversee both schools

### ***What would this do to the catchment of both schools?***

The schools would retain their own catchment areas and admissions criteria. A student being in Hiltingbury Junior School would not have preference over students from other linked primary schools when it came to admission into Thornden.

### ***Will the students from other primary schools be at a disadvantage?***

No. One of the positive factors in this option is that Thornden would develop an even better overview of how students are working at the primary stage. Students from all primary schools would then be supported to develop and achieve to the best of their potential. Thornden draws students predominantly from linked schools but also takes individuals who are in a larger number of junior schools.

### ***Can other schools join the MAT?***

At this stage, consideration is being made only to Hiltingbury Junior and Thornden forming a MAT.