

Information for parents and local community: Charles Dickens Primary School joining the Charter Schools Educational Trust

Following extensive research, reflection and discussion, the governing body of Charles Dickens Primary School has decided that we will work towards becoming an academy and a full member of the Charter Schools Educational Trust during 2020.

The Charter Trust is a small and respected multi academy trust, currently with two highly regarded non-selective, inclusive, secondary schools in North and East Dulwich. Mrs Cassie Buchanan has been appointed as future leader of the Trust.

The governing body's reasons for this decision

We believe our school needs to be part of a wider family, to make sure we can carry on doing what we do. This means making sure we are able to carry on having a strong senior team and teachers who are experts in their subjects, at a time when school budgets are shrinking.

The Charter Trust is the best possible 'home' for us because CDPS and Charter both believe in outstanding and inclusive education. We believe that schools should be right for the communities they are in – for example, by making sure that children can recognise themselves and their culture in the materials they're learning from. And we believe in schools working together to get better at what they do – including primary schools and secondary schools alongside each other, building on their existing strengths.

Together, we value high academic standards, a strong creative arts content throughout school life and in the curriculum, and a commitment to pastoral care, mental health and education of the 'whole child'. CDPS and the Trust have a shared vision of a Trust in which schools will be responsive to the needs of their diverse local community rather than a one-size-fits all approach; but one where we collaborate with other schools to find out what works best.

We want to strengthen and improve the education we offer to our children, staff and communities. We aim, through research and innovation, to be at the forefront of continuous improvement in school provision and outcomes.

Leadership of the Trust

Mrs Cassie Buchanan will become Chief Executive of the Trust. As a first step, she will take on this role part-time and will remain Executive Head of Charles Dickens. Mr Michael Eggleton and Ms Jemima Rhys-Evans will become Co-Heads of School. We have complete confidence in them to be a fantastic team.

Impact on our school and community

As part of a wider family of schools, CDPS will be able to carry on getting better and better at everything we do – from our creative and inclusive curriculum, to the way we support children with special needs.

There won't be any obvious or immediate change to the education and support you and your children receive from the school. There won't be any change to our school uniform or our school name, hours of the school day, holiday dates, admissions policy, SEND provision, or anything else which will immediately affect our children and community.

We will still have a Governing Body for Charles Dickens School. It will collaborate with the Board of the overall Trust, and some of its responsibilities will change as it collaborates within a wider organisation.

Impact for our teachers and other staff

We will now be part of a bigger family of schools. One of the benefits of this will be that we can keep talented teachers within our 'family' for longer, as they progress in their careers.

There will be no changes to the pay and conditions of any member of the Charles Dickens team directly linked to this decision. However, academies are able to choose their own paycales to make sure they can attract the talented teachers they need, so this may be something the Trust looks at in the future.

Our teachers and school leaders will have more time to concentrate on teaching and learning and the pastoral care of children, because many of the business aspects of running a school (such as school buildings and finance) will be supported by the Trust.

Impact on our school budget

This decision will be positive for the CDPS school budget. At the moment, we have to give the council a percentage of our school budget. The services the council provides with that money have diminished significantly in recent years, so we don't get any benefit from it.

Although the council retains a portion of our school budget, we still have to buy HR, legal services, finance, school improvement support, facilities support and professional development externally. In the future, some of these costs will be met by the Trust's shared services.

We will potentially be able to share the cost of specialist teachers or services with other schools within the academy. This could include education psychology services, speech and language provision, specialist arts teachers and projects.

How to submit your questions and comments as part of this consultation

We are now in a consultation period, and would like to hear questions and comments from members of our community. To respond, please email office@charlesdickens.southwark.sch.uk or hand in a letter to the school office before Friday 28 February. If it is a question and you would like a reply, please include your contact details.

Governors will look at and consider all responses to the consultation, and your views will inform how we proceed. We will also answer all questions we receive. We will share all the questions received, along with answers to them, after the end of the consultation period. We look forward to hearing what you think.