

# **Staff Information Session with Annie Wiles**

## **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December**

### Summary of Key Points from Aquila Presentation

#### Background of Aquila

Aquila currently consists of 16 schools, established by the Diocese of Canterbury. A 17th school joins on 1 April, and there is potential for Bridge & Patricxbourne to become the 18th from 1 September.

#### Employment, Pay and Conditions

##### Teachers

- Teachers continue on national pay, terms and conditions.
- All teaching staff TUPE across.

##### Support Staff

- Move onto Aquila Pay Levels.
- The Trust is committed to being a Real Living Wage employer.
- Pay banding ensures support staff are always better off than under KCC.

#### Pensions & Service

- TPS and LGPS remain unchanged.
- Continuous service is unaffected.

#### What Parents and Children Will Notice

- On a day-to-day basis, no significant change for pupils or families.
- The main visible difference: the Aquila logo on signage and letterheads.
- Whether "Academy" is added to the school name is a governing body decision.
- No change to uniform, school day or routines.
- The first day of the academic year is the Aquila Conference for staff.
- Being part of a larger organisation enables better value for money and purchasing power.
- Term Dates: Remain the same.
- If economies of scale generate savings, this provides additional funds for the Governing Body to allocate.

#### What Aquila Gains from Schools Joining

Aquila retains 5% of the General Annual Grant (GAG) as a top-slice. In return, schools receive:

- Six school improvement visits each year (currently we receive two via TEP).
- Access to:
  - Educational Psychologist
  - Speech and Language Therapist
  - Assistant Educational Psychologist
  - (Support is allocated according to need.)
- Head of Estates support, prioritising “safe, warm and dry”.
- Schools retain their own capital funding (approx. £8k).

The Trust expects every school to contribute to the wider organisation, including sharing examples of best practice.

### Capacity and Growth

- Aquila conducts due diligence when a school expresses interest in joining.
- Some schools have been turned away due to insufficient resources or financial risks.
- No formal cap, but the Trust won't expand if it would weaken existing schools.
- Beyond the 5% top-slice, no funds are used to subsidise other schools.

### Collaboration Across the Trust

Examples include:

- Inter-school competitions (e.g., maths times tables).
- Opportunities for staff to lead additional initiatives.
- Curriculum development projects — e.g., RE curriculum booklets outlining core learning, especially around Understanding Christianity (not compulsory).
- Shared resources, planning support and early work exploring AI tools (SLTAI, TeachMateAI).

### Key Operational Support

HR, Health & Safety, Cybersecurity: Managed centrally by teams at Aquila HQ.

### Mental Health & Wellbeing:

- Central Mental Health First Aider role.
- Strategies supported at school level.
- SENCO network.
- Ed Psych support.
- Access to existing staff care services.
- Crisis management support.

#### Recruitment:

- HT decides whether to replace staff.
- HR drafts adverts; schools tailor them.
- Adverts placed on Kent Teach; applications received via the platform.
- HT recruitment is led by the Trust.
- Trust representation on interview panels is optional and by request.

#### SEN Support:

- SENCO network.
- Direct access to Ed Psych.
- Continues access to Kent STLS.

#### Finance:

- Schools move to a different finance system.
- Training provided.
- Invoicing can be school-based or central.
- Existing internal processes can remain.

#### MIS:

- Switch to BromCom — a single MIS covering attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and parental access via the My Child at School app.
- Built-in AI features for reporting.
- One cost covers everything.

#### Staff Development and Mobility

- Annual Aquila Conference—a full-trust training day with keynote speakers and a theme set through consultation and horizon scanning.
- Potential for staff to move between schools, though never forced.
- Internal advertising of roles is common.
- Temporary placements are sometimes used for leadership development.
- Trust supports governor training and can assist with panels (e.g., disciplinary).

#### Estates and Legal Matters

- Buildings are currently held by site trustees/KCC.
- These transfer to the Trust under a legal agreement.
- Trusts cannot sell school playing fields.
- DfE insurance provides cover for emergencies.

#### Sustainability and Wider Opportunities

- Many Trust schools use Forest School and OPAL play approaches.
- Aquila has a Trust-wide sustainability strategy, working towards net zero by 2030.
- Schools can add their own local initiatives.
- SALT access is supplemented by training programmes to build internal capacity.

- Appointment of an Assistant Ed Psych has increased support availability.

### Leadership Background (Annie)

- Former teacher: Y2, Forces school, TEFL.
- Leadership roles in maths, SENCO, science, art.
- Deputy Head and Headteacher in the state sector (HT at All Souls, Folkestone).
- Approached by the Diocese to support school improvement during the formation of Aquila.
- Joined the Trust in September 2015.