



Bridge & Patricxbourne CEP School
Conyngham Lane, Bridge, Canterbury, CT4 5JX

T: 01227 830276

E: office@bridge.kent.sch.uk

W: www.bridge.kent.sch.uk

Monday 1st December 2025

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to inform you that the Governing Body has agreed to begin a period of consultation on a proposal for our school to become an academy and to join Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust, a multi-academy trust (MAT) with a strong Christian foundation.

This is an important discussion for our school and so we want to make sure that everyone feels fully informed, involved and heard throughout the process.

The governors have been exploring this issue for a couple of years, weighing up the pros and cons of academy trusts and looking carefully at what would be right for Bridge. Once they decided it was sensible to explore our options, they looked in detail at a number of trusts to see which would be the best fit. Three clear criteria guided their thinking:

- **A high level of autonomy**, so we can continue doing what we do best without unnecessary interference.
- **Opportunities to work with other schools** – when we choose, not because someone tells us to.
- **More back office support**, particularly around areas like policy writing, compliance, finance, pensions, health-and-safety, etc.

Alongside this, we've had to respond to the changing role of the local authority. The support available has reduced significantly, and the services we can still access are becoming increasingly expensive. We're now in a position where we're paying more for less support – not a sustainable model for the future. Joining a trust like Aquila could offer a stronger, more consistent structure of support, access to shared expertise, and better long-term value.


Our school is in a strong position. We are proud of our pupils' achievements, our positive reputation and the dedicated professionalism of our staff team. It is precisely because



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"I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit." John 15:5



we are thriving that we are now considering how best to sustain and build upon our success for the future.

Why are we considering this step?

After careful reflection, the governors believe that joining Aquila could bring a number of benefits for our school community.

- Strengthening our Christian ethos and identity. Partnering with a trust that shares our faith-based values will help us continue to nurture the spiritual, moral, and academic development of our pupils and staff.
- Collaboration and professional growth. Membership of a family of like-minded schools offers access to a wider network of colleagues, professional development opportunities, and shared expertise across teaching, leadership and support roles.
- Sustainability and strategic support. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, becoming part of a strong, well-established trust provides resilience in governance, finance and long-term planning.

What this means for staff

If the proposal proceeds, the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) will apply. This means that teaching staff will transfer on their existing pay, terms and conditions of employment. Aquila has a pay structure for support staff which has pay bands at each level, ensuring pay progression for more experienced staff.


Aquila is committed to ensuring the Aquila Pay levels (APL) will be better than the Kent Pay Scale. All support staff will transfer to Aquila pay bands from the date on conversion. No member of staff will be paid less as a result of the conversion. Your day-to-day roles and responsibilities will remain unchanged and our commitment to your wellbeing and professional growth will continue as before.

We recognise that change can bring questions, and we want to ensure this process is transparent, open, and consultative.

Next steps

The governors have decided that no further progress can be made without finding out the thoughts and feelings of the staff and parents.

This letter marks the beginning of the consultation period. We will be holding a staff information meeting on Wednesday 3rd December at 3:45pm where representatives from the school and the trust will be available to discuss the proposal and answer questions.



As a school community with a shared Christian foundation and a deep commitment to our pupils, this consultation represents an opportunity to shape our future together. We approach it from a position of strength and with the collective aim of ensuring that our school continues to flourish in the years ahead.

How can I give my views?

The formal consultation period opens today and will remain open until Monday 12th January 2026. You can comment and ask questions using the forms link below or by emailing consultation@bridge.kent.sch.uk

Forms link: <https://forms.office.com/e/sKFdEZMKtn>

The staff bulletin will include answers to frequently asked questions and include any questions raised via email.

Following the consultation period, the Governing Body will consider all the feedback and views it has received during the consultation and will then make the final decision on whether to legally complete the process. We will write to all staff to inform you of our decision.

Thank you, as always, for your dedication, professionalism, and support. We look forward to receiving your responses to this consultation process and, as always, please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Hellman
Chair of Governors

James Tibbles
Headteacher

We want to ensure your needs are met. If you would like this document in any other format or language, please contact us: office@bridge.kent.sch.uk