

# **RATIONALE FOR SELECTING AQUILA AS OUR PREFERRED ACADEMY TRUST**

After a thorough and careful exploration of several academy trusts, governors concluded that Aquila offers the strongest alignment with Bridge's values, ambitions, and future direction. From the outset, governors were clear about three essential criteria: a high level of autonomy, the ability to engage in chosen and meaningful collaboration, and strong, reliable back-office support. While each trust had strengths, we also identified limitations that meant they were not the right strategic fit for our school.

Tenterden Schools Trust was discounted due to its geographical spread, which would have limited day-to-day collaboration and reduced opportunities for the purposeful partnerships we are seeking.

OCMAT was also considered; however, its portfolio—primarily made up of small village schools—did not reflect the profile, scale, or context of Bridge, making long-term alignment less viable.

Canterbury Schools Trust and EKC were similarly explored, but neither had church articles at the time we began this process, which is an essential requirement for us as a Church of England school.

We also met with DEALT's CEO and had constructive discussions. However, we ultimately concluded that the trust's central infrastructure did not yet provide the level of back-office capacity and operational support we require.

In contrast, Aquila combines strong church school foundations with a proven record of effective school improvement, robust central services, and a collaborative culture that mirrors our own ethos. Most importantly, Aquila aligns closely with the three priorities set by governors—offering appropriate autonomy, opportunities for purposeful collaboration, and strong back-office provision. This gives governors confidence that Aquila is the right partner to support our continued growth and success.