

Joint C of E and Catholic trust could run island's academies



We can work together

Bishop Christopher and Bishop Philip with students from Christ the King College, a joint Catholic and C of E school

CHURCH of England and Catholic schools on the Isle of Wight could be brought together into one, island-wide academies trust.

Bishop Christopher and his Catholic counterpart Bishop Philip Egan have agreed to a feasibility study to see if a joint Anglican/Catholic trust could be an option to ensure academic standards are maintained and driven upwards at island schools.

Education staff in both dioceses will consider between now and May the potential benefits and challenges to such a proposal. The idea would also require approval by the Department for Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner before any firm decisions are taken.

Any new trust would not be run by either bishop or diocese, but by a separate group of trustees and a formally established company, as is the case for all multi-academy trusts.

Each Catholic school in this trust would become a Catholic academy, each C of E school involved would become a C of E academy, while the two joint C of E/Catholic schools on the island would become joint C of E/Catholic academies.

The Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth had already announced that it expects its four Catholic schools on the island to join one of the multi-academy trusts being established.

The governing bodies of some of the 11 Church of England schools and two joint C of E/Catholic schools on the island had also expressed an interest in academisation.

If such a multi-academy trust is created, island community schools could then also apply to join in the future, when the success of the trust is secured. They would remain as community academies within this new trust. They would not be asked to become C of E or Catholic academies.

The two bishops have written jointly to all the headteachers, chairs of governors and foundation governors at their schools on the island outlining plans for the feasibility study.

They said: "Our historic, current and future commitment as diocesan bishops to taking a lead in advancing the spiritual, economic, social and wider flourishing of communities on the island continues, and we are acutely aware that this is demonstrably evidenced in our support for schools and all they can bring to families and society."

"As part of our considerations as to how we might best work with schools in achieving the best outcomes for our children on the island, we have decided to commission a feasibility study on the potential establishment of a joint Anglican-Catholic multi-academy trust (MAT).

"This is not a signal of intent to definitely set up a MAT, but is an initial exploration of the options, challenges, opportunities and issues that need further consideration."

Our director of education Jeff Williams, said: "We have already set up the Portsmouth and Winchester Multi-Academy Trust, but it is hard for schools on the island to receive support from other academies in this trust because of the distances and travel involved."

"Our Church of England and Catholic dioceses already work

closely together in the two joint island schools, so our feeling was that we could extend that co-operation across the Isle of Wight.

"This emphatically would not involve the creation of some church school 'enclave', as can be seen by our willingness to involve community schools.

"And any community schools joining this new MAT would retain the character and ethos of a community school – it would be unlawful to expect them to change.

"But this eight-week research project should give us an idea whether there is the appetite and practical support for this plan in the schools, the local community, and in government."

Anyone who has any views about the proposals can email them to IslandMAT@portsmouth.anglican.org

Listen to music of Abba at festival

AN ABBA tribute band will be among the groups playing as part of this year's Waterlooville Music Festival.

The festival, which is organised by and hosted by St George's Church, is now in its 12th year, and attracts around 4,000 people for a week of concerts.

This year it will run from June 10 until June 18, and will include a party night with tribute band Abba Inferno on Tuesday 13 June.

Local band Strumdiddly-umptious play on Saturday 10th June and other evenings feature the Hampshire Constabulary Band and Hampshire Guitar Orchestra. The annual folk and ale night is hosted by Jigfoot on Friday 16th June.

The idea for the festival came from St George's parish priest Canon Mike Sheffield. "I initially wanted to run a modest music festival in our church," he said. "The church should be the centre of the community and I thought this was a great way of bringing people into our church to see what we are about as well as to enjoy some wonderful music."

The week culminates with the ever-popular Last Night of the Proms with the Meridian Wind Band, conducted by worshipper Don Lloyd.

Full details of all the concerts and ticket prices are on www.waterloovillemusicfestival.org

Minister praises school's achievements

EDUCATION minister Nick Gibb has praised the academic progress of pupils at West Meon C of E Primary School.

The Minister for School Standards wrote to the school to congratulate it for being among the top three per cent of schools in England for the progress made in reading, writing and maths.

It came after an Ofsted report last year praised leaders and governors at the school for their high aspirations.

Headteacher Julie Kelly said: "For those who think a small school cannot deliver a broad balanced curriculum, high academic results and a strong social, moral, spiritual



Pupils from West Meon C of E Junior School at Meon Springs and cultural ethos, West Meon proves them wrong.

"The whole school community was thrilled to obtain the official recognition

by the Rt Hon Nick Gibb of the hard work put in by the pupils and staff, with the support for parents and governors."

The school has also been

keen to provide pupils with broader experiences, and its commitment to increase competitive sport saw them attain the Gold Award for Sports, which they will be celebrating at the Aegeas Bowl in the summer.

Most of the juniors learn a musical instrument and are currently rehearsing with choir masters from our cathedral for a future concert. West Meon is organising a joint orchestra event for other local schools.

And outdoor learning is also a focus at the moment. Junior pupils spent a night at the yurts in Meon Springs, and then walked the couple of miles back to school.