

18<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Dear Staff, Parents and Carers of Dorset Road Infant School and Castlecombe Primary School,

This communication provides staff, parents and carers with an update from the recent Director meetings within The Spring Partnership Trust, where the situation at Dorset Road Infant School was discussed in detail. The outcome of this discussion is that the Directors have given their approval for the Trust to investigate the idea of amalgamating Dorset Road Infant School (DRIS) and Castlecombe Primary School (CPS) onto the current Castlecombe Primary School site.

We understand that this is significant news and that it is likely that you will have lots of questions. We have tried to anticipate the key questions and have provided responses to these below. Further information will be circulated to all stakeholders next term.

**Q) What does this actually mean?**

A) The Trust are looking into the process for applying to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to make a 'significant change to an open academy'. No changes can be made to either school until the RSC has given their approval.

A) Prior to any application being submitted a consultation period would be opened. This will allow all those who could be affected by the proposed change to have an opportunity to ask questions, voice any concerns or state their support. This will include staff, parents and carers of both DRIS and CPS, as well as the Local Authority and the wider local community.

**Q) Why do the Trust think this is the best course of action? What are the benefits?**

A) Both Castlecombe and Dorset Road are relatively small schools, with a 'Good' grading from Ofsted. The Trust is considering how - through being amalgamated into one entity - we could deliver a provision which would enable opportunities for improvement that would not otherwise be possible. The benefits being considered are that:

- there would be a combined, and therefore larger, staff team – able to offer wider skills and expertise, all on one site for children from age 3-11 years old. This would therefore offer a greater depth of teacher subject knowledge to interest and challenge pupils in each curriculum area;
- there would be an even more enriched special educational needs provision - a larger staff team would give children a greater variety of specialist support for special educational needs;

- there would be wider opportunities for pupil's personal development – by working together as one school, both communities could sustain a high quality offer of before and after school clubs which help develop pupil's confidence and self-esteem;
- should the amalgamation go ahead it would allow further enhancements and renovations to be made to the site at Castlecombe Primary School, to the benefit of all pupils, staff and the community.

**Q) Does any of this have any implications on the admissions process?**

A) No. We are aware that there have been some queries regarding the impact on applying for places in Reception class for pupils due to start in September 2020, and wanted to reassure all concerned that all applications should continue in the normal way, for both schools.

**Q) When will we find out more?**

A) We will communicate with all parents and carers again next term with more details regarding this process, but we wanted to make sure that we were keeping everyone involved in the latest developments, and to reassure those with specific questions regarding admissions.

A) All steps in this process are being considered carefully, and there will be no quick decisions made. The consultation process will allow full stakeholder input, and all matters raised as a result of the consultation will be considered equally. We will continue to communicate openly with all those affected. We would like to take this opportunity to state that this outcome was not the intention of the Trust at the point that DRIS and CPS joined TSPT. These actions are not being considered lightly and we are aware of the importance of both schools to the local communities.

Questions can continue to be raised with the Trust by emailing [contact@springpartnership.co.uk](mailto:contact@springpartnership.co.uk). Please note that these questions may not be responded to until January as a result of being so close to the end of term.

On behalf of the Trust I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas.

Thank you,

Jo Brinkley  
CEO  
The Spring Partnership Trust