

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018

Dear Parents

As you know, your school is one of the eight members of the Ninestiles Academy Trust family. Whilst I know that your first interest will be the school that your child attends, I know that many of you are also interested in what it means for your school to be a part of the bigger organisation.

I am therefore writing to share our vision and values for the Trust and for the schools and the college within it, and to update you on what's been happening in the Trust in the first year of my tenure as CEO since May 2017.

From this point, I will send out a termly update to all parents, and ensure that this is on the Trust website for all to read. Here's the link to the website.

<http://www.ninestilesacademytrust.org.uk>

### **What are we all about?**

Most importantly this year, we have reframed our Trust vision and values. The Board of Trustees and I wanted to make them clearer and sharper, and after discussion with schools we arrived at the motto and explanation below.

## **Strength through Diversity Ambition through Challenge Excellence through Curiosity**

- In our Trust, we celebrate the rich and diverse school communities that make up our schools. Sharing, listening to and respecting each other's views and beliefs make our Trust stronger. We support each other, honouring our different backgrounds, to create a safe and equal environment for all.
- We are fiercely ambitious for all our pupils and challenge them to do their best, every lesson, every day. We check their achievement and progress against the highest national standards. This ensures that we are always looking for ways to improve, and that we insist, relentlessly, on the highest standards of teaching and learning. Everyone in the Trust is continually challenged to improve on their previous best.
- Curiosity is the engine of intellectual achievement. In our Trust, we encourage and provoke pupils' curiosity so that they are inspired to seek out new knowledge, learn new skills and achieve excellence. Curiosity is closely linked to empathy, helping us all to develop better relationships. The life of a curious person is never boring!

We want these values and this vision to run through all that we do, and to underpin the vision and identities of our individual schools and college.

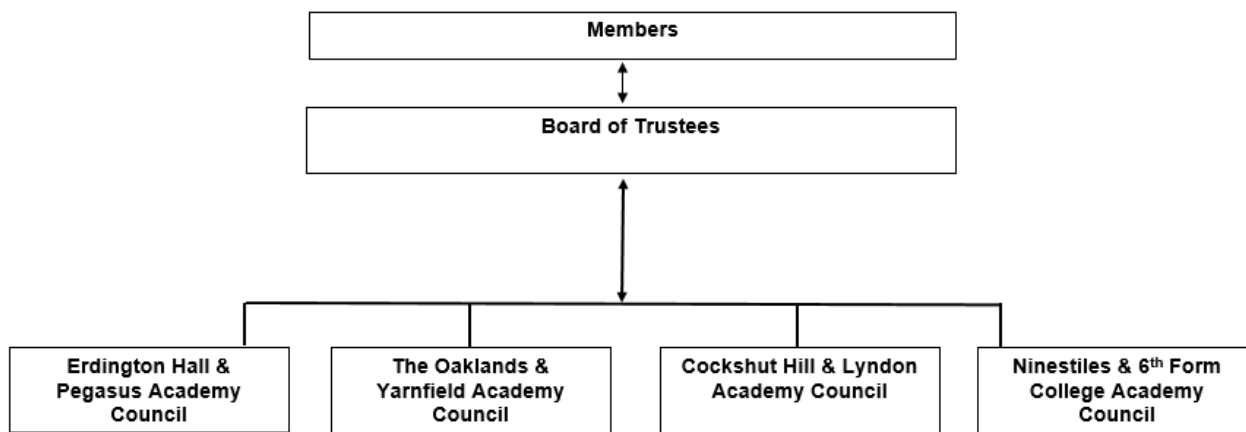
In our discussions and strategic thinking we are focusing on the rapid developments in the great city of Birmingham and, more widely the UK, to ensure that the education we provide equips our learners to take a confident and assured place in developing their future world. Our growing links with business and industry, universities and other organisations, supplement the wide range of enrichment activities in place at each of our schools and the college.

I would welcome any parental feedback on this vision and values statement - the wording may evolve as the Trust moves forward. However, the core values will remain the same, reflecting the importance we place on diversity, equality and respect for all in our Trust family and beyond.

## Updates:

We've had some significant staff and Trustee changes since September.

## Governance



You may know that the Trust is governed by the **Board of Trustees** (similar to the governing body of a school, but with different responsibilities). In addition, there are five **Trust Members**, who guard the values of the Trust and ensure that all our work aligns with the vision. (Please see the website for details.)

Each individual school also reports to an **Academy Council**; each AC oversees two schools, checking on how leaders are ensuring that all learners make great progress. The Board of Trustees oversees the work of the Academy Councils.

Many of you are valued volunteers on these essential Academy Councils, which challenge and support school and college leaders to do the best for their learners. If any of you are interested in becoming Councillors, please do get in touch with your school's Principal – we're always interested to hear from parents who can support us.

A new Chair of the Board of Trustees, **Mr. Alan Price** was elected in September 2017. **Mrs Karen Crowston** is the Vice Chair of the Board. The restructured Board is now made up of Trustees with a wide range of expertise and experience. Trustees are clear about their brief to challenge and support the Executive Leaders, to ensure the best outcomes for all learners across the Trust family.

You can find the minutes of the Board meetings and the Academy Council meetings on the Trust website. They are published after they have been approved by the relevant Council and Board. You will also see the schedule of meetings on the website.

## Trust Leadership

We have recently completed the final appointments for the Trust's Executive team. The Executive Directors lead strategy and operations in all the key areas: **Finance; Strategic Business; Estates and Facilities; Human Resources; IT; School Improvement Primary and School Improvement Secondary and 6<sup>th</sup> Form.**

Schools pay a management fee from their funding to the Trust. In return, we offer significant support to our family of schools and the college, in all these important areas. The aim is to free up school and college leaders to focus on teaching and learning, and to reduce the burden of managing other aspects. We provide internal and external expertise and support for schools so that standards continue to rise. In addition, our Teaching School brokers school to school support across the Trust family, building on and sharing expertise.

**Together, we are much more than the sum of our parts.**

## School leadership

I'm delighted that we now have appointed some excellent leaders and Principals in our schools this year, and in the college. We have a new permanent Principal at Ninestiles, The Oaklands Primary and The Sixth Form College Solihull. This has provided a strong base for stability in our schools from which to move forward rapidly. We are proud of the superb talent we have across our leadership teams. At Yarnfield Primary, we have an interim leadership solution to support the school as it emerges from an Ofsted category of concern. In this school we have an Executive Head and a Head of School – a different model from the other schools.

### **Systems and Processes**

The most important people in the Trust are your children – the learners that attend our schools and the college. We need to make sure that we are all making a difference to their learning and progress, whatever our role in the Trust.

In the last few months we have developed a comprehensive system and set of processes for supporting, challenging and checking everyone's work. It's now very clear to everyone what they need to do and when, and what support is available when needed.

Sir David Carter, the National Schools' Commissioner, visited the Trust in January. He was very pleased with the developments and improvements that have begun, and agreed that to all intents and purposes, ours is a new Trust. We have some exciting challenges ahead, and are determined to get all our schools and the college to the highest standard possible.

### **Benefits to the schools**

I've already mentioned the benefits of having a core team of experts in the Trust that school leaders can make good use of. In addition to this, schools in our Ninestiles MAT family can take advantage of all the expertise in each other's schools. Earlier this term our teaching school ran a 'Teachmeet' evening where teachers came together to share great ideas and best practice. We are currently planning to hold an inspiring leadership conference and a curriculum conference in the summer term. Teachers have opportunities to extend their experience and take advantage of leadership opportunities to develop their careers across schools in the Trust.

Leaders have worked together to develop an exciting and innovative curriculum for all our Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) students across all the secondary schools, and we're in the process of developing a new curriculum for our primary pupils. This will save teachers time and reduce their workload as we move forward

We're also able to save our schools money – economies of scale mean that we can make significant savings. With our new procurement team, this will become even more effective – essential in these financially challenging times.

The most important asset in a school is the quality of our teachers. We're lucky to have a strong workforce, but given the national shortage of teachers we're working hard with our Teaching School to bring great new teachers into schools, and as a Trust to develop our recruitment and retention policy and practices. Our highly experienced new HR Director is leading the way in this initiative.

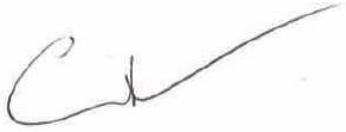
### **The future...**

I want to make sure that all our schools offer an excellent education to all our learners. And we need to make sure that we have the capacity to do this before we take any more schools into the Trust. By 2019 we think we'll be in a strong position to welcome another couple of schools into the Trust. But rest assured, neither the Board nor I are driven by dreams of rapid or extensive growth in the number of schools in the Ninestiles Academy Trust Family.

We are passionately ambitious for all our learners – and are driving forward to ensure the reality of great progress and achievement for all.

I wish you all a peaceful and relaxing Easter break, with, hopefully a bit more warmth and sunshine than we've had so far this year!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CA', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Catherine Anwar  
**CEO**  
**Ninestiles Academy Trust**