

Wednesday 24 April 2024

### Reach Trust Consultation

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Dear Parents and Carers,

On taking the Executive Headship in September 2023, I was made aware that Valentine was part of the Reach Co-operative Trust as an 'associate member'. This came after a vote taken by the Governing Body on 13 March 2023, under the leadership of previous governance.

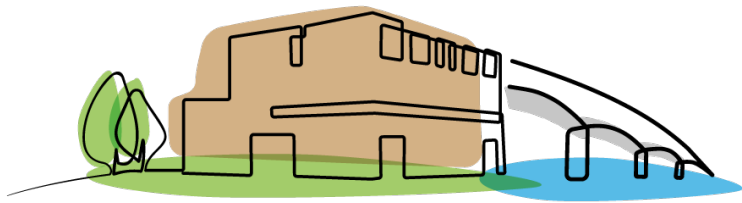
The purpose of joining a Co-operative Trust is to keep schools in the local community and to stop schools being moved into Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). This happens by creating 'foundation schools' which remain part of the local authority through cluster groups with no change to funding, access to support from the LA or to the terms and conditions for our staff members. There are currently four Co-operative Trusts in Southampton in different localities. Over 70% of the schools in the city are in a Co-operative groups: 'Aspire', 'Southampton Co-operative', 'Reach' and 'Bridge Education' can all be googled. These are not MATs and help over 40 schools stay as LA-led schools.

Valentine Primary School has had three consecutive Ofsted judgements below 'good' (2016, 2019, 2022) and because of this will be ordered into a Multi-Academy Trust. This is the current law of our country, and the direction that happens when a school does not make necessary improvements. The local authority and the governing body have no power to stop it – it is a decision made by the Regional School's Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

In February, the Chair of Governors met with the Governing Body to look at options to appeal and to halt an academy trust from taking over. At that time, it was clear that a full statutory consultation had not happened to join The Reach Co-operative, under the previous governing body. This was rectified with the help of the Local Authority who have been supporting with the process.

As Amanda stated in her letter – the school has already been a partner member with the previous Headteacher attending Reach Co-operative Trust meetings with other headteachers and leaders. This has been positive for Valentine, at a time when it has needed support from other schools. The Chair of Reach Co-operative Trust (Jason Ashley – Head of Redbridge Secondary) attended the short Ofsted visit for Valentine in September 2023, to lend support and explained how the school had been working in the Trust and the relationship it now had.

However, it is clear that parents were not made aware of this and need to know more about it. This will help to form a clearer view of where you see the future of your child's school heading.



# VALENTINE

## PRIMARY SCHOOL

Having received and read the parent comments and anxieties on a Valentine Parent Facebook account, I have asked the local authority take action to extend the consultation by 4 weeks until 31 May 2024. This will give the leadership team ample opportunity to send out more information to parents and carers.

We will create a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) leaflet, and print and send this home to you by Friday 26 April.

I have also seen via info@ emails, that there is a form alluded to in the information on the website, that does not exist. To be clear, parents and carers do not need to complete a form but to respond by either:

- Writing an email [reachconsultation@valentineprimary.co.uk](mailto:reachconsultation@valentineprimary.co.uk)
- Or writing to the school address: Valentine Primary School, Valentine Ave, Sholing

The comments, views and opinions sent will be shared with governors by the Local Authority – who hold the email account. These will form the basis of a discussion that the Governing Body have to formally approve the school joining the Reach Co-operative Trust.

**We do not need to rush a decision on the Reach Co-operative.** It is important to me that parents and carers, the staff team, and my leaders, are able to properly digest the information that has a bearing on the school's future. So let's get more information out to you. If you require further information from Friday – please email info@ a leader will contact you directly.

The most important thing right now is consistency and keeping the focus for our staff, pupils, and parents on continued school improvement. The children are learning more than ever in class and our staff team is getting stronger and stronger – evidenced through less sickness absence and more stability for each child. Behaviour is improving very well with consistent expectations as well as improved rewards. It is a joy to walk the corridors now that they are fully repainted and the graffiti and holes in the walls have all been removed. And – best of all – children are increasingly reporting how much happier and safer they feel - that's what is important.

Yours sincerely,

DJ Constable-Phelps .

Mr D Constable-Phelps  
Executive Headteacher