



Stakeholder Consultation on Little Birch Pre-School joining Blandford
St Mary CE Primary School and the Diocese of Salisbury Academy
Trust

Wednesday 22nd October – Wednesday 12th November



Introduction

This document has been created collaboratively by the Trustees of Little Birch Pre-School and Blandford St Mary CE Primary School, following initial discussion about the proposal set out below.

Our collective proposal is for Little Birch Pre-School to join Blandford St Mary CE Primary School and become part of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust from 1st September 2026. Before any major decision can be made about the future of a preschool provision, there has to be consultation with those people likely to be affected by the change. The purpose of this document is to consult with the Little Birch Pre-School and Blandford St Mary CE Primary School community, and all others with an interest in the future provision of education for children in the area.

This document gives background information and asks for your views. It is really important that we can get your views and responses and ask your help and support in engaging in this consultation. Thank you.

Stakeholders

In discussion with the Trustees of Little Birch Pre-School, Blandford St Mary CE Primary School, the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust and the Local Authority, and in line with the Academies Act 2010, the stakeholder groups for this consultation have been identified as:

- parents/carers of pupils at the settings
- parents/carers of pupils interested in a place at the school for the next academic year
- staff working at the settings and any staff due to be employed at the school from the next academic year
- Governors and Trustees from both settings
- the local authority
- Local schools who might be affected or have an opinion on the change
- Parish Councillors
- PCC
- Local councillors
- MP

Context

Little Birch Pre-School

Little Birch Pre-School provides term-time only early years education and care for children aged 2 -4 years in the village of Blandford St Mary. The 30 place setting supports up to 60 families each year, offering both funded and non-funded childcare places.

Operating as a registered charity, Little Birch Pre-School has been a valued part of the local community for nearly 20 years. Situated within the grounds of Blandford St Mary, Little Birch Pre-School is committed to delivering high quality, child centred early years education, keeping children and their families at the heart of everything we do.

The pre-school employs a dedicated team of nine qualified Early Years Practitioners and currently supports two apprentices as part of its commitment to developing the next generation of early years professionals.

Blandford St Mary CE Primary School

We offer excellent standards of care, guidance and support and a high-quality learning environment to support all learners equally. The school upholds an ethos of high expectations which provides children with challenging opportunities where children acquire skills, knowledge and confidence that can be applied to all future learning experiences. These opportunities encourage respect, self-belief, excellence and enjoyment and prepare our pupils for the next stage of their education.

The atmosphere at Blandford St Mary is friendly and all of our teachers and staff are committed to developing our children academically, physically, emotionally and socially, giving them the very best experiences of learning. We believe that children learn best when they feel safe, valued and are happy to come to school.

We pride ourselves on good relationships with parents/carers - we value your opinions and welcome your involvement in all aspects of school life.

The Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust (DSAT) is a dynamic Trust, working across a range of schools within the Diocese of Salisbury with extensive experience of learning, teaching, leading and managing schools from Nursery to Year 6. Our vision is to develop thriving learning communities within a church school context, that enable children to achieve beyond what they might otherwise expect. We are constantly developing and growing as we seek to meet the needs of our children and young people. We are proud to be a Trust that has provided a home for schools in a range of circumstances, including those who have had the most challenging of times. We are committed to securing long-term and secure early years provision in an education sector that is currently facing many challenges.

The most important part of what we do is help facilitate improvement in our schools such that the children have the very best possible experience as they grow into mature and confident learners with a strong sense of morality and values from Nursery to Year 6 and beyond. On the DSAT website (www.dsat.org.uk) you will get a sense of what we offer to our existing schools and our prospective joiners. Equally, from our school pages (www.dsat.org.uk/schools/) you will get an understanding of all that we offer to our children, families and communities as part of our family of schools.

Why are we considering this?

We know that it is vital that we get Early Years education right for all our children, and want to ensure that we can do everything in our power to enable high-quality, purposeful and inclusive learning that will underpin the learning journey of all children for the rest of their lives.

We strongly believe that we can provide that continuity of learning for all children, grounded within a strong community: belonging and building together for an exciting future together as one school. We believe that the time to do that is now.

Through our continued collaboration and work together our Pre-School and School have reached a stage where, to be able to develop our shared vision for the community and for all children, we know that we have to come together to realise the significant benefits of becoming a single 2yr – 11yr school.

In addition to the educational benefits, we are seeking to ensure sustainability of our pre school provision in Blandford St Mary by providing a strong underpinning within a Trust; and to take collective opportunities to plan for housing and infrastructural growth in our area to ensure that we, collectively, are the educational provider of choice.

Little Birch Pre-School, Blandford St Mary CE Primary School and the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust are highly committed to the long-term future and success of Little Birch Pre-School and believe that this can be best achieved by a joint commitment to developing an all-through primary school provision for outstanding learning and education in the community.

Next Steps

At the close of the consultation period the Trustees of Little Birch Pre-School and the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust will consider the responses and will create a response document that will be shared with stakeholders. This document will, having considered all responses, set out the final decision of the collective partners as to whether or not to submit an application to the Regional Director of the Department for Education for a 'significant change' application. Feedback from the consultation will be shared with the Regional Director as part of the process.

If this proposal is accepted and approved by the Regional Director we will write to you with more detail about what it looks like for pupils, staff and governance. Again, if the proposal goes ahead, there would be a separate TUPE consultation for all staff affected by the change.

Consultation

We hope that our reasons for this proposal and consultation are clear, and we would like to seek your views on the following areas, please:

Key Questions

- Do you support the proposal for Little Birch Pre-School to join Blandford St Mary CE Primary School and become part of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust?
- What positives would you identify from this proposed change?
- Do you have any concerns about the proposal?
- If you do not support the proposal, what is the basis for your objection?
- Have you any further comments you would like to share with us?

Meeting/Drop-in Session

To support the consultation process, we are providing a face-to-face meeting/drop-in session for anyone who may like to attend including parents, carers and guardians; staff of the pre-school and

the school; employees of the Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust; other key stakeholders involved in the consultation.

The meeting will be held on **Thursday 6th November at 3:30 pm at Blandford St Mary CE primary School.**

If you would like to attend, please email office@blandfordstmary.dsat.org.uk

Stakeholder Engagement – how do I respond?

Responses can be made:

- via this online form link [<https://forms.office.com/e/0Lqt6bh7bH>]
- by emailing **office@dsat.org.uk**, or
- in writing to **Diocese of Salisbury Academy Trust, The Avenue, Wilton SP2 0FG**

Please note, all responses must be received by 4pm on 12th November 2025. Thank you.

A copy of this consultation document can be accessed through <https://www.dsat.org.uk/consultations/>

Our sincerest thanks for your consideration of, and participation in this important consultation. Your views are extremely important to us and we very much look forward to hearing from you.

