



## **RATIONALE FOR ACADEMY CONVERSION**

The approach Stamford Park Primary School's governing board has followed is quite simple: 'Better Together.' Our view is that the education landscape is becoming tougher and financial pressures are growing. We feel that we would be 'better together' with similar minded schools, who would strengthen the foundations of our school. Our view is that education could be more specific to our cohort of children, based in a more relevant local knowledge base. We feel we would be 'better together' using certain expertise from other local schools in the Trust to help bolster certain subjects. Our view is that our staff are incredible and knowledgeable – and we feel we would be 'better together' to allow staff to grow and have access to further continuing professional development and other subject-expert colleagues to work closely with.

The decision to explore an academy conversion is driven by a wish to maintain the standards that have already been achieved at SPPS, as well as the need to move forward and keep improving at what is an extremely challenging time for all schools.

SPPS has historically bought many services from the Local Authority (LA), as well as relying on it for vital advice and up to date information. However, in the last few years we have found that, due to budget cuts at the LA, there has been a decline in the quality of all these areas. We have, as a result, withdrawn from many of the services previously bought from the LA, such as finance support, HR consultancy, mental health support, school meal service, EAL support, IT support, governor services and advisory services. These services are now being provided to SPPS by private companies (or, in the case of school meals, by running the operation in house, employing our own kitchen staff) which means that the role that the LA plays in relation to SPPS is far less than it once was. It also means that SPPS no longer has an overall strategic partner.

In addition, management of finance in the school is a constant challenge and SPPS has to make the best use of its allocated budget. SPPS Governors feel it would be wise to investigate whether being part of a multi-academy trust (MAT) could provide better management of our budget as well as improved economies of scale. While it is clear that becoming part of a MAT would not lead to our overall budget increasing, it was noted that SPPS would no longer have to pay back a proportion of our budget to the LA, and would instead pay the MAT for overall, and more clearly defined, services, thus allowing more certainty as to where our money was being allocated.

Having decided that an academy conversion was a potential alternative to amalgamation, we considered local MATs to identify the one that we felt was the best fit for SPPS. We were looking for a shared ethos and aims, financial stability and geographical proximity.

The Hamblin Education Trust (HET) is a good fit on all these points. It is a relatively small trust but with a strategy of growth and SPPS would be the first primary sector school to join. The HET is run by highly experienced specialists in the fields of education, finance, business development and property management and would be able to fill the role we have identified of being a high-level strategic partner.

The HET can add further value to the teaching of core subjects, especially in identifying the key knowledge and skills required for pupils to be secondary ready and to accelerate progress in Years 5 and 6.

The HET will provide support for "back office" functions such as continuing SPPS's current relationship with AGSB in relation to IT support, and extending joint working to cover finance, estates, HR and other

administrative functions. By doing so operations can become more efficient and cost effective, thus adding financial value to the operation of all three schools.

The Executive Head of the HET is an Ofsted Inspector of both secondary and primary schools. He will be able to provide quality assurance to SPPS, in our already good school.



The formal consultation with parents and other parties has been launched on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and will run for 4 weeks, ending on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023. After this date, the SPPS Governors will take a final decision as to whether to proceed with an academy conversion and joining the HET, and the HET will take a similar decision. Should both parties decide to proceed, it will then be for the DfE to confirm a final decision.

On behalf of the Governing Body of SPPS