



Droxford Junior School
Union Lane, Droxford, Hants.
SO32 3QR

☎ 01489 877537

✉ adminoffice@droxford.hants.sch.uk

🌐 www.droxfordjunior.co.uk

Headteacher: Matthew Dampier

Thursday 5th December 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

I hope you are well and beginning to look forward to the Christmas break as much as we all are, here at Droxford Junior School.

It has been a busy and successful 2024 – one which has seen another cohort of Year 6 children move onto Year 7, after being with us for four inspirational years and a new cohort of Year 3 children starting on their journey. We continue to provide a varied, enriched and inspirational curriculum where we intend all children to thrive. Our SATs results were once again extremely impressive as were our Year 4 Times Table checking results.

Of course, in between all this we were judged 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in all areas in our most recent inspection – ensuring we will have been judged this way until 2028 (a total of 16 years); we have further developed our role as an Ambassador School for the South Downs National Park; retained our Gold award for school sport and just recently been commended by the Local Authority as being 'an exemplary school', in our annual county inspection.

Not wishing to rest on our laurels; with a desire to keep pushing the school forward to better the outcomes for all children and provide the best possible place to teach and learn; I am pleased to announce that the governors have agreed with my proposal to work in closer partnership with Winchester University Academy Trust schools.

This means we will be leaving the partnership with Hampshire County Council – our Local Authority and join University of Winchester Academy Trust. There will be no noticeable change that you will see as parents but hopefully, even more positive opportunities and outcomes for our children and staff here at Droxford.



Key points to converting to academy status with the University of Winchester Academy Trust.

- Droxford will not change its character, ethos, vision or values and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now
- Our school name will remain the same as will the school uniform and of course the building and grounds positioned as they are



- We will retain the same holidays as Hampshire Schools
- Our admission policy remains the same which includes the catchment area and the linked infant schools (Meonstoke and Newtown Soberton)
- We will still feed into Swanmore Secondary School with the other alternative Year 7 routes remaining the same
- We will continue to work closely with the Swanmore network of schools and compete in all local competitions as normal
- The bus system to school remains the same as well
- I will remain Headteacher, Mrs Smith as Deputy and Mrs Burrell as SENCo. In fact **all** staff and governors will remain at the school
- We are aiming to start as an Academy school within the Trust on the first day of the 2025-2026 academic year, in September 2025

The present government is as committed to the academy process as previous governments – although not forcing schools to convert. However, if a new school is built: such as the ones which will appear in the new Whiteley, Borley Green and Wellbourne housing estates, will all become academy schools from the start. That is because all new schools built have to become an academy and join a Trust. This is part of the Academy Act 2010. Therefore, the academy process is not going to disappear.

Step outside of Hampshire and there are counties full of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) – it is standard educational practice in many counties. Hampshire has remained more Local Authority controlled in terms of schools but the overall academic success of late and less favourable financial landscape of the County Council has changed more recently. I am convinced more schools will look to join a Trust in Hampshire and I wish to join the best on my terms. We have been fully welcomed by the trustees and they are delighted we are on board!

Two other schools will also be converting to academy status and joining UNIWAT at the same time us; both recent Ofsted ‘Outstanding’ – meaning of the 8 schools in the Trust - 4 are Outstanding with the other 4 judged Good with Outstanding characteristics.

Reasons for Droxford Junior School moving to the Winchester University Academy Trust – *all focussed on better outcomes for children*

- Increased capacity to share excellent practice through a select ‘family’ of high-quality schools
- Develop the highest quality teaching, learning, leadership and management
- Provide greater scope for professional development of staff
- Be part of supportive systems and expertise, shared amongst a smaller ‘pool’ of schools – readily available at no cost
- Although in the Trust we can still work with the Local Authority – therefore having the best of both worlds
- Be part of a genuine and supportive network of alike schools – ‘family’ that is closer than the Local Authority offer
- Will raise the profile of the school further; aiding future recruitment opportunities and improving the marketability of the school



- We will retain the autonomy and uniqueness of this ‘Outstanding’ Meon Valley school whilst being aligned to an internationally renowned teacher training University
- Be part of shared central services across schools, in a fairer, efficient way
- Avoid local authority difficulties that are impacting all Hampshire schools already (for instance HC3S – Hampshire School caterers will cease working in 2026)
- I will lead this school into a Trust on my terms – of my choice, choosing the best in Hampshire and being welcomed as an incredible school, with open arms and highly valued.

Myself and the governors are thinking bigger picture here; future proofing in terms of finance (although we still need financial support – another important letter to follow in the new year) and future proofing the highest standards of educational support. We will remain forward thinking, progressive and strategic as ever.

Mrs Nicola Wells (CEO of UNIWAT) will be speaking to my staff on Thursday 12th December and you will have the opportunity to meet her and myself afterwards at a parent’s meeting between 5 – 6, to answer any questions you may have, as we open up this formal consultation process to parents. If you are not able to attend, please do not hesitate to contact me via the normal school channels.

For more information concerning UNIWAT <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/>

We have also attached an FAQ document to this letter and a dedicated web page regarding this process, will be set up in due course, on our website.

Parents consultation meeting Thursday 12th December 5 – 6 – school hall. Contact the school office if you wish to attend – but drop in last minute if your are currently unsure of home plans. Tea / coffee / biscuits provided.

We are excited about Droxford Junior School’s future and are always grateful of your support and patience

With best wishes



Matthew Dampier
Headteacher



Helen Parrott
Chair of Governors

Vision: ‘Equipping our children with the knowledge and skills to navigate life successfully’.



FAQ's for Parents

1. What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is normally formed when a number of schools join together as a single Trust. In this case the University of Winchester Academy Trust (known as the UNIWAT) with a Board of Directors answerable to the Trust's members. The Trust becomes independent of the Local Authority (in this case Hampshire County Council), with all staff becoming employed by the Trust, and all assets transferred to the Trust.

The Trust is the legal entity and it has one set of Articles that govern all the academies (each school) within it. The Trust has a Master Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State and each academy also has a Supplemental Funding Agreement. Each of the academies in the Trust has its own Local Board that deals with local issues.

The Trust would be accountable for all its academies within its MAT. However, before anything is signed, the Trust would work with schools to agree those matters that will be handled centrally and those that will remain the responsibility of the individual academy's Local Board. This agreement is called the Scheme of Delegation.

2. Are other schools also creating MATs?

There have been many MATs created across the UK since the opportunity was first opened up in 2010 and there is a push to ensure that more schools become academies in the future. This is because it enables schools to develop a more flexible curriculum that is able to serve the needs of the community better, work in partnership with other schools to develop best practice, and create a more efficient service delivery for schools with the MAT.

MATs have for several years now been the government's preferred vehicle for schools' improvement, and they have sought to encourage more academies to be part of larger organisations.

3. Why are we looking to join at MAT?

We believe that joining the UNIWAT Trust is the right move for our school, its pupils and the wider community which we serve. It will offer us a range of benefits, such as:-

- We have always ensured our school can meet the needs of our local community, rather than simply serving the Local Authority. However, being an academy gives the school even greater freedoms and independence to ensure we are delivering what our families and children need.
- Giving us the improved scale to ensure services across the school are delivered at a better cost allowing us to spend more of our budget on your child's education – from finance and resources, to capital, HR and marketing. This allows our school to concentrate even more of our efforts and energies on ensuring your child or children are getting the best education possible.
- Enabling us to have a network of peer schools which is wider than our current one, and allowing us to grow more collaborative partnerships with a wider group of local and countrywide groups. We have always been keen to learn from others and share our strengths and this approach will enable us to further develop our partnerships with like-minded schools and their leaders.
- Improved recruitment and retention of high-quality staff members. Becoming a member of a Trust enables significant progression opportunities for staff, which helps us to retain our best employees, and also develop future leaders. As part of a Trust, we will also have access to enhanced continuing professional development for staff, giving everyone the opportunity to further develop themselves.
- To be aligned (but not financially governed) to a high regarded 'outstanding' University, with a long-standing tradition of training teachers of the future, it is a real privilege.



4. Which schools are currently part of the UNIWAT and are any others looking to join?

There are five schools that are currently part of the UNIWAT. These are:-

- Awbridge Primary School - <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/Awbridge-Primary-School/>
- Barton Farm Primary School - <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/Barton-Farm-Primary-Academy/>
- Halterworth Primary School (and Training School) <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/Halterworth-Primary-School/> and <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/Halterworth-Teaching-School/>
- Stoneham Park Academy - <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/Stoneham-Park-Academy/>
- Wellow Primary School (and Pre-School) <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/Wellow-Pre-School/> and <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/Wellow-Primary-School/>

There are two other schools joining with us as well, further strengthening the Trust with 'outstanding' schools.

5. Who are the UNIWAT?

Information taken from the UNIWAT website:-

The UNIWAT began in 2014 when the University was designated as the named sponsor for two new schools to be opened in Hampshire. These two academies at Barton Farm (Winchester) and Stoneham Park (Eastleigh) in September 2020. In December 2020, three well established Romsey primary schools, Halterworth, Awbridge and Wellow Primary schools joined the Trust and began to operate as a 5 school MAT.

Sponsored by the University of Winchester, our Trust benefits from the significant experience that Trustees based within the university bring to schools. Additional trustees were appointed to the Trust in December 2020 and were chosen for their knowledge, experience and skills to ensure that we are able to support and challenge our CEO and senior leaders to ensure the values of the Trust are upheld.

Local Academy Committees (LAC) represent the individual schools and are structured to sit alongside other Trust committees. Each LAC, takes responsibility for the individual performance of their school/s, working with school leaders and staff to represent the interests of that local community. Details about each LAC can be found on the individual school website.

In 2023 Barton Farm and Stoneham Park received their first Ofsted reports with Barton Farm gaining an 'Outstanding' judgement and Stoneham Park 'Good' with outstanding for behaviour. Our three Romsey schools also received 'Good' Ofsted reports which included outstanding judgements for behaviour and attitudes, Early Years provision and personal development.

The Trust is proud of its ethos and aims to be, 'Successful, Aspirational and to offer Inclusive Learning for everyone.' Whilst we are justifiably proud of extremely high outcomes of all key stages, we also want to ensure that every child feels safe and happy within our schools. We achieve our ambitions through a collaborative approach to working between schools, the University and also our extensive training provision for teachers at all levels of their careers.

Our team of highly skilled SENCO's work across the Trust to ensure all pupils receive high quality inclusive education.

The Trust has a central business team which provides support to its schools for Human Resources, Finance, Estates Management, Health and Safety, Compliance and Administration.

Why is the UNIWAT different?

The University of Winchester values of 'compassion, 'individuals matter' and 'spirituality', they underpin our Trust, and are deep rooted in our everyday work.



As an outstanding provider of Teacher Education, the university is committed to providing excellent professional development for all UNIWAT staff. This is funded by the university and designed to meet the needs of our schools, according to our annual identified priorities. This is open to all staff and draws on the latest research informed practice. In 2022 launched our first international study opportunity. Five UNIWAT staff visited Denmark to work alongside colleagues at the University of South Denmark to study early years learning and the use of the outdoors. The visit enabled staff to work with the Lego Education department for a day and to visit schools and other settings.

The Arts Council England have selected our Trust to be a Creativity Collaborative, this means that with a large grant of 360K over three years, our Trust and invited colleagues from other schools will have access to the very best international experts in this field, Teachers and leaders will be supported with resources to innovate learning and develop a truly inspiring creative pedagogy at the heart of our schools.

Our Trust has ambitions to grow to a medium size (10-12 schools max). We aim to focus our work in primary, we recognise that there are huge opportunities for primary colleagues and leaders to collaborate and support each other. School leaders form a Leadership Board and are able to influence the development and direction of the Trust.

Governing boards from each school form Local Academy Committees. This structure ensures that governors through peer support and attendance at Trust Board / Committees, also have a voice which is valued and listened to by Trustees.

More information can be found on the website at, <https://www.uwinat.ac.uk/index.asp>.

6. Will there be changes to our school?

UNIWAT is clear that its vision is for schools to retain their sense of place and their local community identities, so there wouldn't be any costly branding changes, or uniform changes. The changes will be centred around our school having even greater opportunities for the children and enriching the curriculum further. The recruitment of staff will remain the responsibility of the school's leadership and the day to day running of the school, the curriculum, the holiday dates the times of the school day and all of the other decisions that affect you and your children will be completely at the discretion of the Headteacher and Governing Body.

7. When is this proposed to happen?

Subject to the outcome of the official Department for Education conversion / UNIWAT due diligence process, the plan is to join UNIWAT from 2nd September 2025.

