



# Riverbridge Primary School

## Letter from the Chair of Governors

### Proposal for Riverbridge Primary School to join the Lumen Learning Trust

February 2016

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you know, the governors held a meeting for parents and carers on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February to expand on the proposal to join the Lumen Learning Trust and to answer questions.

The meeting was well attended and a very lively discussion ensued. We were delighted to see about 50 parents and carers turn up, providing a good representation of the parent community. There was plenty of passion in the room from all sides and all in the name of our children.

The panel was chaired by myself and consisted of members of the school's Governing Body and representatives of the Lumen Learning Trust and Echelford School, who are one of the schools to have benefitted from membership of the Lumen Learning Trust.

The Panel:

- **Laura Ellis-Philip** – Chair of Governors, Riverbridge
- **Christine Walls** – Vice Chair of Governors, Riverbridge
- **Syreeta Tranfield** – Governor, Riverbridge
- **Mary Ellen McCarthy** – Executive Headteacher, Riverbridge and Executive Principal, The Lumen Learning Trust (by default of her role, Mrs McCarthy is a member of the Riverbridge Governing Body, and always declares her interest in any meeting regarding conversion to academy status – she does not participate in any corresponding vote)
- **Claire Jones** – Deputy Headteacher, Riverbridge, and an associate member of Riverbridge Governing Body
- **Ray Vango** - Chair of the Lumen Learning Trust
- **Sarah Vernon** – Headteacher, Echelford
- **Jean Maffi** - Finance Manager for the Lumen Learning Trust
- **Mark George** - Chair of Governors, Echelford
- **Paul Grimwood** - Leadership Consultant of the Lumen Learning Trust, currently placed at Riverbridge

The meeting kicked off with Mrs McCarthy providing some background to how the Lumen Learning Trust was formed as a result of the strength of collaboration that became evident when Saxon went from being in special measures to being an outstanding school, and the subsequent supporting role it took when Echelford was struggling.

Mr Vango, the Chair of the Lumen Learning Trust, then gave an outline of how the funding and structure of the organisation works, supported by comments from Mrs Maffi, the Lumen Learning Trust's Finance Manager. There are more details on this in the Frequently Asked Questions document.

Mrs Vernon, Headteacher of Echelford School, provided a very clear picture of the role of a Headteacher in the Lumen Learning Trust. Sarah described how she would not have taken a Headteacher role in a struggling school in the current climate, had it not been for the supporting framework that was in place. She demonstrated how the leadership provided by having Mary Ellen supporting her as Executive Principal, and the overall structure of the Trust ensures that a Headteacher has autonomy and is also able to develop the leadership required.

Many challenging questions were asked and there were times when the discussion became quite animated! Whilst there are parents who remain concerned about Academy conversion and in particular the school's standards, overall the mood in the room was supportive in terms of the proposal. Some parents are feeling quite anxious about the school, rather than about the proposal and this was the first time in a while that there has been an opportunity to raise those concerns in an open forum. It was good to talk through parent apprehensions, and I hope that we were able to demonstrate the governors belief that the Senior Leadership Team has made great strides over the past few months. The pace of change in terms of improvement has picked up and the governors maintain a watchful eye on this.

We have captured the questions from the meeting and our responses in Version 3 of the Frequently Asked Questions document. If you have already read this, then you may wish to start from Question 25 onwards to avoid re-reading!

### **The Consultation Process**

Consultation is a statutory requirement of the application, and the governors must consult with all stakeholders, such as staff, parents, children, the Local Authority and the wider community. We have held a meeting with staff, and while they also have some concerns, the informal feedback has been positive. We have also held a meeting with those children who are members of the School Council, and again, once the initial shock of an announced change had gone, they were welcoming of the idea. We are now circulating a consultation feedback form. When all the feedback has been gathered, we will collate the information and the governors will take a view and make a final decision on whether to pursue the application.

### **Next Steps for You!**

The governors are working hard behind the scenes to make sure we ask the right questions and make the right choice for our school going forward. To help us feel confident in our decision-making process, I would personally be very grateful if you would fill in the feedback form. This is your chance to indicate your support or concerns.

**Please return the form by Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February to the school office.**

Best regards,



Laura Ellis-Philip

Chair of Governors