

**Voluntary Aided Status Consultation Evening of Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June**  
**Feedback to questions asked from the Governing Body (GB hereafter)**

**Governance**

1.1	<b>Q</b>	I want to be a church Governor – how do I go about this?
	<b>A</b>	Write to the incumbent and the Parochial Church Council and express your wish.
1.2	<b>Q</b>	How many religious governors could we have as a maximum?
	<b>A</b>	If you mean Foundations governors nominated by the Church, then as a VA school we could have 6.
1.3	<b>Q</b>	Better control will possibly increase responsibility on GB (still positive)
	<b>A</b>	Yes. We will be able to more effectively tackle some of the issues which we find most challenging. The GB take their roles seriously and more control means that we can be more effective and proactive as opposed to potentially reacting, which can in itself be more time consuming and onerous.
1.4	<b>Q</b>	I'm happy that we will have control over our own governance.
	<b>A</b>	We are pleased to note this and agree as this is important and something that the Governors feel is more secure through the VA route.
1.5	<b>Q</b>	Governor selection and voting – who monitors workload and priorities?
	<b>A</b>	Responsibility is shared by the GB, priorities are agreed by the GB informed by school performance, the Headteacher and inspection reports.
1.6	<b>Q</b>	Would VA change criteria for parent/governor selection?
	<b>A</b>	The elected governors are required to be parents but that is the only criteria to stand. In addition Foundation Governors could be designated as parent Foundation Governors to increase parent representation overall, something not possible as a VC school. (links to 1.2)
1.7	<b>Q</b>	Will this result in more work for GB in form of overseeing more aspects currently overseen by LEA?
	<b>A</b>	In one or two areas yes but not significantly as there has already been such a shift as a result of Government policy and reduction in support from LEA.
1.8	<b>Q</b>	How will it be ensured that capable governors are recruited?

	<b>A</b>	In recent years the incumbent has worked to bring in expertise to the GB and it remains a priority and shared responsibility for Governors. New Governors receive induction training and all governors receive on-going training and this is monitored by the GB.
1.9	<b>Q</b>	If we're going to collaborate with other schools (even VA), won't we lose control at governor level anyway?
	<b>A</b>	No. Rochester Diocese has made it clear that it does not view the model of increased centralised Governance as desirable.
1.10	<b>Q</b>	Shame that the makeup of the GB has to change when it seems to work so well as it is now
	<b>A</b>	At present there are people we would like to bring onto the GB which we can't currently do due to the rules of the VC system. GB's do change over time and this is important to keep the team fresh and also to allow for long serving members to step back when appropriate and new members to join.
1.11	<b>Q</b>	Does the figure of the 2 Church Governors include the Vicar?
	<b>A</b>	This is the current model - yes it does include the Vicar
1.12	<b>Q</b>	Who checks Governors proposals?
	<b>A</b>	The Local Authority and Diocese, and nationally Ofsted. In addition we are required to undergo a statutory 6 week public consultation which is fed into these bodies in respect of this proposed change (we are not yet into this period as no decision has yet been made).
1.13	<b>Q</b>	How is the quality of those appointing the governors ensured?
	<b>A</b>	The GB is responsible for monitoring its own practice and effectiveness. This is also monitored by the local authority, the diocese and Ofsted.
1.14	<b>Q</b>	Needs to be a defined process for the governor selection if going for VA as otherwise the community could lose it's input.
	<b>A</b>	Currently most Governors are parents and staff, and this is unlikely to change, but it will remain important that the local community interests are considered.
1.15	<b>Q</b>	Are all the members of the board in favour?
	<b>A</b>	A decision has not yet been made, but all see the benefits and risks as outlined in the publically available information and no Governor has formally indicated opposition. Unanimous decision to proceed to this stage.

1.16	Q	How will the GB change if it has to have a church governor majority of 2?
	A	Initially it need not change but in time the designated roles would change and new elected governors would join the body so that 6 would be nominated by the Church. See answer 1.14 and 1.2
1.17	Q	Will more Governors be required as workload increases?
	A	No
1.18	Q	Will governors' attention be diverted into fundraising the extra 10% for maintenance?
	A	No. All maintenance funding remains the same. It is only the capital grant that is affected and this is so small that any mayor projects would require fundraising irrespective of school status. We do not foresee such projects in the short to medium term.
1.19	Q	Recruiting governors can be challenging. With greater responsibilities will recruitment become more challenging?
	A	Currently the parent governor positions are contested by election suggesting there are more people willing to be Governor than current serving members.
1.20	Q	How will the GB change if it has to have a church governor majority of 2?
	A	It need not change straight away. See answer to 1.10, 1.2 and 1.14

## Curriculum

2.2	Q	How would GB decide on the RE curriculum?
	A	By taking advice from the Diocese, the local council for RE, a community representative body and the published national guidelines and following the legal requirements. The current curriculum is determined in virtually the same way and no change is envisaged.
2.2	Q	The presentation mentioned no change to curriculum, however, is that set in stone or could it change?
	A	Only if the Government changed Primary legislation (the law about the curriculum) which would have an impact irrespective of school status.
2.2	Q	I would not wish too much religion into lessons

	<b>A</b>	RE is compulsory in all maintained schools in England to an appropriate level. Parents retain the right to withdraw their child from RE.
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### **3 Church Ethos**

3.1	<b>Q</b>	How do you ensure the GB does not take radical decisions on religious education (don't want to squeeze out multi-faith education)?
	<b>A</b>	This is something the GB feel very strongly about. There are a number of measures that can prevent a 'wayward' group of Governors include inspections from Ofsted and the Diocese (the diocese promotes multifaith RE as does the Church of England nationally). One way parents can get involved in governance is by butting themselves forward for election.
3.2	<b>Q</b>	How would other faiths be catered for?
	<b>A</b>	School policies always stress the importance of every child and this requires the school to take account of their individual need and differences. This would continue, as would the multifaith RE curriculum, and the work done as part of the SEAL programme to help support all children's moral, spiritual, social and cultural development. This provision is something Ofsted is very interested in and it continue to be a concern for this school.
3.3	<b>Q</b>	Concern over faiths/mix will not be adversely impacted
	<b>A</b>	It is not the wish of the GB to make the school a school for Christians only. Nor is it the wish for children of other faiths or no faiths to be excluded.
3.4	<b>Q</b>	Is the main concern losing the church ethos or having control over admissions as more was made of the church ethos in the presentation.
	<b>A</b>	Both are areas the GB are concerned about. Because status change is such a key Government policy at the moment the ethos element was discussed in detail at the presentation. The over admissions issue is of long standing concern for the GB.

### **4.0 Admissions and Appeals**

4.1	<b>Q</b>	Could VA preclude non practising Christian children in the village now and in the future?
	<b>A</b>	Potentially but only if the school admissions is over subscribed. However the subscription criteria have not been agreed and there is strong feeling within the GB to ensure local school for local community.
4.2	<b>Q</b>	Good benefits to being VA and would negate split classes but what would criteria be?

	<b>A</b>	A change to VA status would not eliminate split classes only a change in admission numbers can achieve this over time. VA gives the GB more power in admission numbers but current year PAN numbers can not be retrospectively be changed.
4.3	<b>Q</b>	GB of school knows what sort of numbers are good for the school.
	<b>A</b>	Noted.
4.4	<b>Q</b>	More control over admission numbers – a move away from split year group classes a definitive positive.
	<b>A</b>	Noted. Refer to 4.2
4.5	<b>Q</b>	Does that mean most years all families in village, Wateringbury, Nettlestead and Teston will get children into Wateringbury School?
	<b>A</b>	Ideally and based on the numbers for future years intake we have been given from LEA, yes. If the school is over subscribed the admissions criteria (yet to be determined as a VA) will apply.
4.6	<b>Q</b>	Positive to hear about control within the school, the admission number to hopefully give 1 class, 1 year.
	<b>A</b>	Noted. Refer to 4.2 regarding split year groups.
4.7	<b>Q</b>	Will there be greater control over the PAN under VA status?
	<b>A</b>	Yes, for years 2014 onwards
4.8	<b>Q</b>	How do we ensure that we maintain the community school while maintaining our moral, Christian ethos? Admissions should not exclude non church going local children. We must maintain community school. Church attendance does not = Christian. Would not want to see buses coming in to fill places over local children.
	<b>A</b>	It is the governors objective for the school to serve the community and strengthen the church ethos. The governors want the school to continue to serve the local community.
4.9	<b>Q</b>	What change will be made to admissions policy favouring children of church goes above children of those who do not attend church?
	<b>A</b>	This issue will be debated and negotiated by the governors if a decision to change to VA status is agreed. At present the governors have not discussed the admission policy.

4.10	<b>Q</b>	Will you set admissions to 30 children per year group? Concerned with continued split classes.
	<b>A</b>	The published admissions number is not part of the proposed change to the VA status. Split year groups are a function of the admissions number. It has historically not been possible to serve the community and limit year groups to 30.
4.11	<b>Q</b>	Will forms have admission criteria to have vicar sign off school applications?
	<b>A</b>	Possibly. The criteria/requirements will be debated and negotiated by the governors if we change to the VA status.
4.12	<b>Q</b>	Is there a likelihood that numbers could be reduced to 30 and therefore create 1 class per year group in the school?
	<b>A</b>	It is possible the PAN could change in the future. Refer to 4.10 also.
4.13	<b>Q</b>	I would wish that the admission number is made 30 to avoid need for split classes.
	<b>A</b>	Noted.
4.14	<b>Q</b>	No info re admission criteria if aided school church goes preference.
	<b>A</b>	Refer to 4.9
4.15	<b>Q</b>	What do you envisage admission criteria to be?
	<b>A</b>	Refer to 4.9
4.16	<b>Q</b>	Can you envisage how the admission and appeals rules would change?
	<b>A</b>	Refer to 4.9
4.17	<b>Q</b>	Will pupil numbers increase due to funding?
	<b>A</b>	No. The school receives a significant proportion of its funding based on the number of children who attend the school. The only scenario where it may be advantageous to increase pupil numbers is if the school were regularly undersubscribed.
4.18	<b>Q</b>	Siblings coming through the school?
	<b>A</b>	The presence of siblings at the school will be a consideration if/when the

		admissions criteria are debated. Refer to 4.9 also.
4.19	Q	What foreseen changes to admissions criteria are under consideration to aid the community?
	A	Refer to 4.9
4.20	Q	How will the admissions criteria affect families with no faith?
	A	The potential effects on all elements of the community will be a consideration if/when the admissions criteria are debated.
4.21	Q	Neutral question – under VA status the appeals process is set up by governors – Who would be involved in the panel and how would it be independent?
	A	The appeals policy/process would be set by the Governing body. The independent panel would be appointed by the Governing body. The panel would have responsibilities to the implement appeals process itself, not to the governors.
4.22	Q	Will families have to prove they attend church in order to get a place?
	A	Refer to 4.11

## 5. Other

5.1	Q	If we don't do this what do we do?
	A	We carry on as we are and risk that Academy status is imposed upon us. Moving to an Academy would mean we would lose control of our school and its ethos. It is felt this move would not be in the best interest of our school and the community we serve.
5.2	Q	In initial info we were told no major capital expenditure expected in next 5 years. What about in 10 years?
	A	It is unlikely that there will be any major expense in the next 10 years, however refurbishment and maintenance is likely. This expenditure doesn't form part of the capital expenditure and would be part of the annual budget setting process routinely agreed.
5.3	Q	Would the change take place during a school year or would we have to wait till September?
	A	The change of status can take place during the school year and doesn't have to wait till September (the start of the school year).

5.4	Q	Why were parents of prospective pupils not consulted? When the next consultation takes place could these individuals not be included?
	A	The information pamphlet has been distributed to the pre-schools and a dedicated consultation has taken place for parents of local preschools. The proposed change of status and associated consultation has been advertised throughout the village and neighbouring villages via posters, Parish Council notifications and invitation to attend meetings, the church. An additional statutory 6 week period for final concerns to be raised will be held should a decision to change status be reached formally. We are not in that period as yet.
5.5	Q	Focus not just short term. What about impact longer term, e.g. 10 years consider repairs to building.
	A	It is unlikely that there will be any major expense in the next 10 years, however refurbishment and maintenance is likely. This expenditure doesn't form part of the capital expenditure. Currently repairs are covered under a contract we have with KCC. We are constantly reviewing best value of such contracts and this forms part of the normal school budget management process.
5.6	Q	The 2% who said no to the change – do we know why?
	A	Concerns were raised about the Christian ethos and admissions.
5.7	Q	Will parents be expected to donate/fundraise more? Is there a scenario where you may expect a direct debit payment from families like secondary school?
	A	There may be a situation where we will have to raise some funds however the amount is not expected to be significant. Any contribution from parents would be voluntary.
5.8	Q	What are other schools doing? Is there a proven model, similar to proposals, in practice?
	A	There are a number of models currently. Some primary schools are VA and some have moved to academies. In the case of academies in some cases this has been enforced. Some schools also do not mirror our own school situation and ethos and this is a key aspect for Wateringbury. Some schools have made the transition from a Voluntary Controlled to a Voluntary Aided school. We are visiting primary schools that have made this move however we are very eager to ensure we develop and pursue a model that best reflects <u>our</u> needs and ensures our school vision and ethos. Learning from others is a great advantage however we must pursue the model that ticks as many, if not all, of our boxes!
5.9	Q	What happens if PTA is not active in the future?
	A	Firstly it's hard to imagine a school without an active PTA and we feel the



		FOWPS will be active for the life of Wateringbury Primary school in one form or another. If the PTA wasn't active then of course their support would be missed.
5.10	Q	Would we maintain close links with other VA schools?
	A	Yes - maintaining links with other related schools provides a valuable learning and support platform.
5.11	Q	Will there continue to be split classes under VA status?
	A	The current per year numbers can not be changed and so they will continue until the PAN number changes. If the PAN (published admission number) stays at 36 then yes, however it is envisaged that there will be more control over the appeals. If the PAN reduces to 30 then no, although this will take time to work through the school.

**Questions from preschool Parents from the Preschool consultation evening on Weds  
30th June 2012**

6.1	Q	If the school becomes VA and is pressured to become an Academy would there be a Head to oversee 3 or 4 schools?
	A	We think the chance of this is very remote once we are a VA school. It is a greater risk as a VC school as we could easily be integrated into some of the large multi school academy trusts where this goes on.
6.2	Q	Will the sibling rule still apply if there is no evidence of faith?
	A	Decisions about the admissions policy have not been made but in almost all examples of admissions policies in VA schools in the area, the sibling rule appears very high up the criteria list.
6.3	Q	Where would the 10% (for capital) come from?
	A	Fundraising as a school not through FOWPS but assessment is short to medium term requirement very low. Capital allocation as a VC virtually nil under the current forecast budget for the next 3 years anyway.
6.4	Q	What would prevent the school becoming VA?
	A	A number of factors might: If the Governors were not convinced of the merits; an absence of local support; changing circumstances from a change in law (there is a new Education Bill planned);
6.5	Q	Will the admissions criteria be decided before the final decision?

	<b>A</b>	We could not publish an admissions criteria until we had the powers to do so, so we must become a VA school first. However the GB has planned to discuss this issue before making a final decision.
6.6	<b>Q</b>	Could the school still be pressured into becoming an Academy despite being VA?
	<b>A</b>	The school could be pressured, as a result of a poor Ofsted inspection report, but the kind of Academy it could become would be different. It would retain its foundation and admissions powers.
6.7	<b>Q</b>	Church participation included for local parish or Benefice?
	<b>A</b>	The school has historically largely served Wateringbury and the surrounding areas (principally Nettlestead and Teston). The Benefice as an entity is not relevant.
6.8	<b>Q</b>	Will Pan ever be reduced to remove split classes (assuming high numbers of applications)?
	<b>A</b>	It is not possible to make an undertaking about future decision-making. The GB have to balance the quality of education provided by the school and the surrounding population needs. At present the general trend for the local area and local schools is a declining birth rate so this is not an immediate concern.
6.9	<b>Q</b>	How likely are admissions criteria to change for Sept 2013?
	<b>A</b>	The exact timing of the admissions criteria change is yet to be debated and negotiated with the LEA and Diocese.
6.10	<b>Q</b>	On admission would being an active participant in the community be a consideration if a child lives out of the parish?
	<b>A</b>	There are many different possible criteria but note that the Governors are conscious of answer 6.7 and have already stated that they wish the school to continue to serve the community. However, no final decisions about future admissions criteria have been made.