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July 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

With the end of the academic year fast approaching, I thought it would be useful to write to you with some updates from across the Midsomer Norton Schools' Partnership Trust. As always, I would like to thank you for your support over the last year. I would also like to publicly thank the 3000 Trust staff for their incredible input, which has meant we have had a very successful year once again. In all measures used by the DFE, Ofsted and other external organisations, the Trust continues to be highly regarded with excellent schools. As I always say, I know we are not perfect, but there is no doubt about the positive trajectory of the Trust and its success at school level. Pupils have also continued to be a delight to work with, serving as a constant reminder of hope for the future, whatever the challenges might be.

At this point in the year, most examinations and national assessments are completed, including those in our primary schools. I am delighted that our Year 1 children have again exceeded all Trust records with over 90% of children passing the phonics screening test. This early indicator of reading competence is an important step in any child's development and our combined score is some 8% above the national rate. Well done to the teachers, support staff, children and of course parents, who have helped so many over this important hurdle. We must never underestimate just how important reading is in everything we do. Not just because it allows pupils to do well in school or in their jobs later in life, but also because reading can help pupils know more, as well as support them to be more imaginative.

In Reception, 81% of children achieved a Good Level of Development across the Trust – some 12% above national rates. For the last 5 years the Trust schools have exceeded the national rate by some margin. This indicates that children have had an excellent start to school and can manage social situations well, are beginning to read, use numbers with more fluency and show learning across a wide range of other skills. We are seeing a drop in the proficiency in speech and language in Trust schools, which is a pattern seen nationally and can be attributed to too little conversation between adults and children at home. This drop in adult to child conversation time reflects our use and some might say over-use of electronic devices. Please do try and talk to your children as much as possible. I know this can be challenging and often answers are not forthcoming, but as we all know, children have plenty to say and as adults we need to help them articulate this through speech and not just via Snapchat or TikTok.

In the Year 4 timetables tests, our pupils across the MAT have achieved well. The average score for the Trust in the online Government test, was 22 out of 25. Incredible when you consider this includes all SEND pupils and children from across the 19 primary and first schools. In Year 6, outcomes have been incredible. All previous records for the Trust have been exceeded and we are significantly above national averages in all measures. 71% of pupils achieved Age Related Expectation in Reading, Writing and Maths combined - some 10% above national rates. The percentage of pupils achieving Greater Depth in these assessments also exceeded the national rate by 5%. I have no doubt that this will place MNSP in the top 10% of Trusts nationally. These outstanding outcomes are the result of hard work from children, staff and parents. They are also the result of outstanding leadership by the Headteachers of our schools.

Throughout the year we have had the usual visits from Ofsted. All schools have either maintained their strong 'Good' or 'Outstanding' judgement, or have improved their grading. I was very proud of pupils and staff at St Mary's Primary in Timsbury when the school was graded 'Outstanding in all areas' Before the school joined MNSP it was graded 'Inadequate', had a falling roll and was weak across the board. Now children are receiving high quality provision and the school is growing in popularity again. Critchill Special School was also graded 'Outstanding' in all areas, up from 'Good'. High Littleton Primary remained 'Outstanding' following its recent inspection and Trinity Church School secured the top judgment in its recent SIAMS - church school inspection.

There are many other great news stories about the schools in the Trust and we continue to ensure we support schools to improve quickly and sustain the improvements made.

We now have 36 schools and just over 16,500 pupils. We are also set to grow again over the course of the coming year and I anticipate we will have over 40 schools in the Trust by this point next year. We hope that Pyrland Academy in Taunton will join us in early 2026, although we are already working with this school to support it after a difficult few months. Selwood Academy in Frome have also indicated they would like to join the Trust and this could help us reshape education in Frome. Selwood brings a lot of capacity as a very strong middle school and we look forward to working with the leaders and wider staff over the coming months. We have also been asked to provide a coherent solution to the education landscape in West Somerset. This is further afield of course and will require some restructuring of the MAT. What is clear though, is that this part of the South West really does need a strategic plan to ensure all children receive good quality provision.

As a Trust we remain financially strong, which means our schools can benefit from additional staffing when needed, but also improvements to infrastructure. We have worked hard to ensure that where pupil numbers have fallen, we have managed staff reductions as sensitively as possible with redeployment to other Trust schools. This is of great benefit to schools in MNSP, as it means we can retain the best staff whatever the trend in numbers might be. By and large, despite a 0.5% increase in funding with an 8% increase in costs, we have maintained or increased staffing levels in the majority of our schools. This is the result of astute financial management and wise investments.

The financial strength of the Trust also allows us to complete improvements to school buildings. We have a record number of projects planned for the Summer break including new changing rooms at Frome College, complete refurbishment of the Boulton Building at Beechen Cliff School, new pupil toilets at a number of schools including Oakfield Middle, new SEND areas at St Mark's School, a further extension to buildings at Critchill School, reconfiguration of corridors and classrooms at Trinity First School, refurbishment of the gym at Somervale, re-rendering and new windows to the old building at Norton Hill, a new AstroTurf at Notton House and many other smaller projects which will make learning and working in the Trust schools more pleasant and effective.

Going forward into the next academic year, we remain determined to help pupils to be happy and do well in our schools. We know that whilst the Trust remains one of the highest performing in the country across all phases, we must not stand still. To that end, the following aspects remain key improvement focus areas:

1. Attendance of all pupils including those who are pupil premium and SEND.
2. Supporting children to develop resilience in learning.
3. Improving mathematical fluency of children.
4. Teaching and assessment of foundation subjects in primary schools.
5. Improving the curriculum and teaching of science in primary schools.
6. Improving further the precision of teaching across all schools, to better meet the needs of children.
7. Improving leadership at all levels in schools.
8. Improving outcomes and opportunities for our most vulnerable children.
9. Improving the curriculum offer in our special schools

Naturally, this is just a flavour of the key areas for development this coming year and the MAT improvement plan will detail many more, but this demonstrates that whatever the political agenda, we remain squarely focussed on raising standards for children.

Over the course of the year we have made some new appointments to schools at a senior level. I am sure you will join me in wishing the following colleagues the best of luck in their new roles:

1. Mr Matt Doble has been appointed as Headteacher of Preston School in Yeovil. Mr Doble was previously the Deputy Headteacher at the school.
2. Ms Dominique Deiuliis has been appointed as the Headteacher of St Matthias School in Bristol. Previously Ms Deiuliis was the Head of Site for Rush Hill in Bath.
3. Mr Karl Musson has been appointed as Head of School at Ansford Academy. Previously Mr Musson was the Deputy Headteacher at Ansford.

4. Mr Tim Yeates has been appointed as Acting Headteacher at Bucker's Mead while Mr Lawrence (the Substantive Headteacher) provides support as Headteacher at Pyrland School.

There will, of course, be many more new staff starting with us in September and I am sure you will wish them a warm welcome.

As a final reminder, please make sure that you check the term dates and INSET training days relevant to your child's school for September and next academic year. These can be found on the Trust website [HERE](#)

I hope that you all manage to enjoy some quality family time over the Summer and thank you once again for your continued support.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alun Williams', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alun Williams
CEO