



Department
for Education

Lisa Mannall
Regional Schools Commissioner
for the South West
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Academy Management Committee
Steiner Academy Bristol

7 June 2019

Dear colleagues,

Steiner Academy Bristol – sponsorship and next steps

I am writing to update you all on the future of the Steiner Academy Bristol, in your capacity as the Academy Management Committee.

Firstly, I would like to thank all committee members for the significant contribution you have made to supporting the school following its “Inadequate” Ofsted judgment in November 2018. This has brought effective oversight and fresh rigour to the school’s governance, and has enabled the leadership team, in collaboration with the Cabot Learning Federation, to make important early steps in the school’s improvement journey. The school-led system is dependent on credible leaders and governors being willing to support challenging schools, often at the cost of considerable personal investment. The time and expertise the committee has dedicated over the turbulent past few months can hardly be overstated.

As you know, the department has considered carefully the options for the future of the school. When an academy is found to require “Special Measures,” the department has the power to transfer it to a sponsor multi-academy trust (MAT) or undertake alternative forms of intervention, including closure. In this case, I have considered all these options carefully, to assess how the needs of pupils can be best met, given the serious concerns about standards and safeguarding raised by Ofsted.

I am pleased to be able to write and confirm that, following a process to identify possible sponsor options, the department has approved Avanti Schools Trust as the sponsor in principle for the Steiner Academy Bristol, as well as two other schools based in Exeter and Frome. I hope that this will provide certainty to pupils, parents, and staff about the future of the school, as well as reassurance that the department recognises the urgent need for improved educational standards and continued leadership support. I expect the trust to complete its due diligence with a view to the schools formally transferring in the autumn.

While I believe that Avanti has the capacity to deliver an excellent education for pupils at the Steiner Academy Bristol, I also recognise that this will not be a simple improvement process, and that there will be further challenges ahead. I remain concerned about the standard of education at the school, and the RSC office will be

closely monitoring progress after the school transfers. In addition, I have asked Avanti to review the all-through operating model and consider whether this is educationally and financially sustainable in the longer term.

I appreciate that the school community will have questions about this next stage, and I have asked Avanti to undertake a listening period for stakeholders before the end of the academic year. This will allow parents and staff to discuss the trust's vision for a new culture of high educational standards and child development within the school, as well as changes to aspects of teaching and the school curriculum. Avanti will write shortly to confirm details and timescales for this process.

I would be grateful if you could ensure that all members of the Academy Management Committee, the Members and Trustees of the Steiner Academy Bristol trust, and the school's senior leadership team have sight of this letter, and that a copy is made available on the school's website for parents and staff.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Mannall', followed by a small dash.

Lisa Mannall
Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West