



28 January 2019

Dear Families

This summer Andrew Hutchinson will be retiring from his post as Chief Executive of CAP after 20 years of service to education in Cambridge. Andrew joined Parkside Community College in 1999 as Principal, leading the school to an outstanding Ofsted grading in 2004, establishing the Parkside Federation with Coleridge Community College in 2005, and then growing our Partnership to include Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology and Trumpington Community College. Andrew's commitment to the principles of excellence, innovation and collaboration, and to achieving the best possible outcomes for every student, has resulted in our Multi Academy Trust becoming one of the highest performing groups of schools in the country in 2018.

Andrew's departure after such a long period of service is clearly a significant moment for our Trust, and our Board has been considering the options available to us that will allow us to realise our strategic vision for our four schools as a Leading Learning Partnership, providing exceptional education for the Cambridge community. We are ambitious for our schools, but we are very conscious our ambition is set against a continuing reduction in funding available to us. We have been very successful over the last ten years or so since federation with Coleridge in achieving economies of scale. This has allowed our schools, which are relatively small in comparison with other secondaries, to offer a wide curriculum and many extra-curricular activities through sharing teaching staff and students accessing specialist facilities across the partnership. Centralising our support services has also meant these are highly cost effective. However it is clear that our budgets will come under increasing pressure in the years ahead, and the best way to respond to this pressure is to grow the Trust significantly.

Our Board has, over the last year, considered three different scenarios for the future of the Trust; staying as we are and hoping that other schools might choose to join, merging with another similar sized local Multi Academy Trust to effectively double our current size, and joining a larger MAT which has a well developed structure to support schools. We have explored the pros and cons of each option, always with the guiding principles of ensuring that our schools are enabled to improve the education they provide for young people, and that the highly effective partnership we have established in Cambridge is not compromised. We have held two strategy days, several Board meetings focussing on future options and engaged with a number of key stakeholders, including visits to schools run by other Trusts.

After much deliberation our Board, along with the Chairs of the schools' Governing Bodies has concluded that the best way forward for our Trust is to join the United Learning group of schools www.unitedlearning.org.uk as a locally distinct partnership. We have an ambition to be a Leading Learning Partnership, and we believe that United Learning can offer us the capacity to realise that vision. We would aim to do this from September 2019. We believe that this will enable us to function in much the same way as our partnership has operated, with an Executive Headteacher based at Parkside Community College, a Partnership Board and School Governing Bodies, while having access to a national team of subject advisers and highly effective educational leaders, as well as central expertise in areas such as IT, HR and Finance. United Learning have indicated to us that they are excited about our request to join their group, and recognise that we will bring significant strengths to their Trust.

Most importantly for us, we consider that United Learning will enable us to make all our schools better - they have both high performing schools such as Paddington Academy and independent schools such as Guildford High School, rapidly improving schools serving socially mixed communities, and schools which have recently opened and are growing to full capacity, all of which we will be able to learn from.

Parkside Cambridge CB1 1EH Tel: 01223 712600 Fax: 01223 712601
Email: enquiries@parksidefederation.org.uk www.parksidefederation.org.uk

In summary we believe joining United Learning will offer us the following key benefits:-

- It will help us further improve the quality of education in our schools. United Learning have a team of national subject expert advisers led by Dame Sally Coates, and Headteachers across the group work together to learn from each other through visiting each others schools and sharing best practice.
- It will help us maintain a wide curriculum and a range of extra curricular activities for students. The last few years have seen a reduction in funding, and this is set to continue into the next decade, so by achieving economies of scale that being part of a larger group brings, we can devote a higher percentage of our income to classroom activity.
- It will help us continue to recruit and retain high quality staff at a time of increasing teacher shortage. United Learning have a flourishing teacher training programme, which would be expanded to Cambridge, as well as high quality staff development programmes. Our staff will have the support and opportunity to progress their careers, and we will be able to make our schools even more attractive places to work.
- It will enable us to develop our strategy of being a Leading Learning Partnership, with local and partnership governance being highly relevant and valued.

We will now be writing to United Learning to formally request that we join their Trust with a response expected by the end of this term. At the same time we are now seeking your views about this plan. The proposal will then be put to the Regional Schools Commissioner Headteacher Board later this year.

We would like to offer you the opportunity to hear from members of our Board and Jon Coles, Chief Executive of United Learning at 6pm on Wednesday 6th February in Radegund Hall at Coleridge Community College. Jon will talk more about their Group and how our four schools and partnership will benefit from being part of United Learning. If you are not able to attend and have any questions or wish to make any points, please email us on gandafamilies@cap.education by Thursday 28th February. There will also be opportunities for student feedback through our school councils.

The CAP Board is enthusiastic about the new opportunities that being part of United Learning will bring. Some of these are outlined in a letter from Jon Coles, CEO of United Learning, also attached. We appreciate any comments that you might have and will of course keep you informed of further developments.

Yours sincerely



Janet Swadling
Chair of MAT Board