

## GNET Developments: Summary Version

### Dear Parent / Carer

As Chair of Trustees I am writing to you to let you know about latest developments at GNET, the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) to which Carlton-le-Willows and Netherfield Primary School belong.

### What is GNET?

GNET was formed in 2016 with the strategic intent to develop and grow by attracting local schools to join our Trust. Despite our best efforts this growth strategy has failed to deliver. There have been many reasons for this, including a lack of suitable schools, competition from other larger MATs and some local feeder primary schools joining other MATs.

### Why does GNET need to grow?

The role of Trustees is to consider strategic risks and opportunities to the trust as an organisation including over the medium to long term. The Board has concluded that remaining as a two-school trust of just one primary and one secondary is not in the best interests of our children, parents, carers, staff or wider community. There is an emerging consensus within the education sector, confirmed by a recent Government White Paper, that the future lies in trusts which are bigger than we are.

### Why EMET?

GNET trustees have decided that East Midlands Education Trust (<https://www.emet.academy>) appears to be the most suitable trust for us to consider joining and to fully explore this option through a formal consultation process. EMET share many of our core values and ethos. We both have a lot to offer each other in terms of sharing best education practice and collaborative working to ensure the best outcomes for all pupils. We believe that both trusts will be stronger together. Some reasons for identifying EMET include:

- EMET is currently a partnership of 20 schools with two more due to join shortly, to consist of 9 secondary schools, 12 primary schools and a key stage 4 Alternative Provision, all based in the East Midlands. Joining a mature MAT which already consists of both multiple primary and secondary schools will provide access to school-school support mechanisms at both levels.
- EMET offer their schools a high degree of autonomy, believing that school leaders and governors are best placed to make decisions about their school. They do not dictate from the centre how schools should be run, ensuring that school leaders and governors remain truly accountable to their local communities and parents.
- EMET is a high performing trust, in which all but one of its schools are judged by Ofsted to be good, with two being Outstanding. This in-house experience of building and maintaining excellent schools matches our own ambitions for excellence at Carlton-le-Willows and Netherfield Primary School.
- EMET is financially sound, enabling investment of £26m in its schools over the last six years.

EMET has offered GNET a seat on their board of trustees should we join them, ensuring the EMET board will include a trustee with a local perspective and many years' experience serving our schools.

### Next steps

The proposal to join EMET will be considered on 27 April by the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Advisory Board at the DfE. If approved, we will move to a period of formal consultation during which there will be opportunity for parents to contribute their views to the process. In the meantime, if you have any comments about these proposals, please email your views to [GNETconsultation@gmail.com](mailto:GNETconsultation@gmail.com). You will not receive an individual response to your submissions, but I can assure you that trustees will consider these views as part of the on-going process.

Jon Garibaldi  
Chair, Greater Nottingham Education Trust

Paulo Karat  
Vice Chair, Greater Nottingham Education Trust

## GNET Developments: Expanded Version

### Dear Parent / Carer

As Chair of Trustees I am writing to you to let you know about latest developments at GNET, the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) to which Carlton-le-Willows and Netherfield Primary School belong.

GNET was formed as a MAT in 2016 with the strategic intent to develop and grow by attracting local schools to join our Trust. Despite our best efforts this growth strategy has failed to deliver. There have been many reasons for this, including a lack of suitable schools, competition from other larger MATs and some local feeder primary schools have joined other MATs.

Whilst it is clear that Carlton-le-Willows is a strong school and Netherfield Primary shows very promising signs of improvement, we are not a particularly strong or attractive trust for other schools to join. It is increasingly hard for smaller trusts like ours to achieve growth, as acknowledged by many school leaders.

### Why does GNET need to grow? Why aren't we OK as we are?

The role of Trustees is to consider strategic risks and opportunities to the trust as an organisation including over the medium to long term. The Board has concluded that remaining as a two-school trust is not in the best interests of our children, parents, carers, staff or wider community, and that doing nothing is not an option as acknowledged by the CEO in a recent meeting with staff.

### The case for growth

With more schools within their family, MATs are better able to:

- Pool resources and use school-to-school support and partnerships to provide educational opportunities for children, including those with special education needs and disabilities.
- Facilitate better professional development leading to better teaching and improved outcomes for pupils.
- Support career development, recruitment and retention through structured and diverse career pathways within the Trust.
- Streamline and (ultimately) improve back-office functions such as HR, Marketing, Operations and Finance so that school leaders can prioritise education of children, better teaching and knowledge-building within their family of schools.

Whilst there is no 'magic number', there is evidence of an emerging consensus within the education sector that with 12 to 20 schools, or between 5,000 to 10,000 pupils, a school trust becomes sustainable in the medium to long term, with 20 or more schools being the size at which a MAT becomes economically more successful, enabling the full benefits of centralisation and scale to be felt for the benefit of all schools within its family. The Government recently published a White Paper setting out its expectation that most trusts will be on a trajectory to serve a minimum of 7,500 pupils or run at least 10 schools.

### The case for joining a larger MAT

As Trustees, we do not believe that organic growth is a realistic and viable option. We have grown by just one school in the last six years. Furthermore, when small trusts like ours take on another school, often a school requiring improvement, this requires a proportionally much larger investment of central resources compared to a trust of 20 schools taking on one or two additional schools. We fear that organic growth, even if it were possible, would be potentially detrimental to the school improvement agenda at Carlton-le-Willows and Netherfield Primary School.

Trustees have concluded that joining a larger MAT has the potential to help our two schools in their school improvement journey through greater collaboration, opportunities for staff development, sharing of best practice and resources and through robust and well-established systems of governance and oversight, collectively providing the best environment for improvements in the education of your children.

In the autumn term, 2020, Trustees commissioned an expert external review of our trust governance structures and also began a process of exploring, with the CEO, the possibility of GNET joining a larger trust. A number of trusts were identified by our CEO, considered by Trustees, and then several were approached for exploratory discussions. In the autumn of 2021, after due consideration, we agreed as a Board that our preferred trust would be East Midlands Education Trust (EMET).

## The case for joining EMET

The main considerations for choosing EMET are as follows:

- The East Midlands Education Trust (<https://www.emet.academy>) is currently a partnership of 20 schools with two more due to join shortly. With these two additional schools, EMET will consist of 9 secondary schools, 12 primary schools and a key stage 4 Alternative Provision. These schools are all based in the East Midlands and within close proximity. Joining a mature MAT which already consists of both multiple primary and multiple secondary schools will provide access to school-school support mechanisms at both levels.
- EMET places great emphasis on a family of schools approach, and almost all of its primary schools are feeders to secondary schools in their trust. EMET offer their schools a high degree of autonomy, believing that school leaders and governors are best placed to make decisions about their school. This approach is being shown to be the most resilient of the academy trust models. Consequently, they do not dictate from the centre how schools should be run. This model ensures that school leaders and governors remain truly accountable to their local communities and parents.
- EMET is a high performing trust. According to the DfE performance tables, of the 102 academy trusts which are listed, EMET is 15<sup>th</sup> in the entire country in performance at GCSE and 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 58 trusts listed at post 16. Behind this success is a robust school improvement approach which has ensured all but one of its schools are judged by Ofsted to be good or better. Two of its schools are judged to be Outstanding by Ofsted. This in-house experience of building and maintaining outstanding schools is attractive to the Board, which has significant ambitions for the achievement of excellence at both Carlton-le-Willows and Netherfield Primary School.
- EMET is financially very sound which has enabled the trust to invest £26m in its schools over the last six years.
- They offer skilled professional central services including trust leadership, governance and legal support, HR, finance, audit, health and safety, estates, and other support in areas such as catering and IT. By centralising these services they are able to gain efficiencies through economies of scale.
- Finally, EMET has offered GNET a seat on their board of trustees on conversion. We see this as an important offer as it will ensure the EMET board will have access to a GNET representative with many years' experience serving our schools who are able to offer a local perspective.

GNET trustees are confident that EMET represents a very strong trust for us to join. EMET are like-minded, and share the same core values and ethos as GNET. We both have a lot offer each other in terms of sharing best practice, including by collaborative working, to ensure the best outcomes for all pupils across the larger family of schools. We believe that both trusts will be stronger together.

## Next Steps

The Regional Schools Commissioner and the Advisory Board at the DfE are due to meet, on 27<sup>th</sup> April, to consider the proposal for GNET to join EMET and move to a period of formal consultation. If the proposal is agreed then there will be further opportunities for parents to contribute to the process.

In the meantime, if you have any comments about these proposals, please email your views to [GNETconsultation@gmail.com](mailto:GNETconsultation@gmail.com) You will not receive an individual response to your submissions, but I can assure you that trustees will consider these views as part of the on-going process.

I would like to thank you for reading this important information about GNET and, if the DfE does agree to us moving to formal consultation, then I look forward to engaging with you further and listening to your views, before the Board of Trustees make a final decision regarding GNET joining.

In the meantime, please let me assure you that everyone at GNET remains focussed on delivering the highest quality education for your children within our two schools.

Jon Garibaldi  
Chair, Greater Nottingham Education Trust

Paulo Karat  
Vice Chair, Greater Nottingham Education Trust