



CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED MERGER OF ARK PRESCHOOL WITH WANTAGE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

We are currently consulting on a proposed merger of The Ark Pre-School, Wantage with Wantage CE Primary School. For more information, please see below.

If you would like to comment on this proposal, you are invited to complete the Consultation Feedback form here: <https://forms.office.com/e/gJY0tbuTq2> by the **closing date of midnight on 31st July 2024.**

PROPOSED MERGER OF THE ARK PRE-SCHOOL AND WANTAGE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Vale Academy Trust (VAT) is proposing to merge The Ark Pre-school with Wantage CE Primary School, Wantage.

The Pre-school currently leases their premises from VAT at the Butler Centre and many children who attend the Pre-school naturally move on to Wantage CE Primary School. By joining the Vale Academy Trust the pre-school will have a more secure future in the management of its staff and the facilities.

In legal terms, the proposals are that the school will extend its age range to take children from 2 years old and the Pre-school Charity will close and transfer all its assets to the Vale Academy Trust as part of Wantage CE Primary School. The Pre-school will continue to operate from its current premises as part of the School Nursery. There will be no change to staff, systems or routines. The intention is that The Ark will continue as it currently does in the same setting. Children and parents should see no change.

The children who are attending when the transfer takes place will continue to attend and those who are on a waiting list will be offered places in the usual way.

All the current Pre-school staff who are on permanent contracts will be transferred into the employment of the Vale Academy Trust under the 'Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment' (TUPE) regulations and they will be part of the school staff, managed by the Headteacher.

This change will not make any difference for children attending the Pre-school: they will be in the same building and have the same staff. The Trust has committed to accept the current admission arrangements, so any children who have already been offered a place for the future will still have that place available. Those who are on a waiting list will remain on the list in the order it currently stands.

There will be no requirement for parents to choose Wantage CE Primary School for their children. Staff would continue to work with all local Primary Schools, as they do now, to ensure a smooth transition for their child, whichever school they move on to.

There are a two main reasons for making this proposal:

1. The oversight and management of the provision for the youngest children will no longer rely on volunteers. The Pre-school has been very fortunate to have a good committee but they are volunteers and there is no guarantee that volunteers will come forward to take their place. By coming under the management of the school, with the central team of the Vale Academy Trust to call on when needed, the management of staff and premises will be secure for the future.

2. To give pre-school staff more opportunities to work with school staff and share their skills and expertise.

The Trust proposes to make this change from 1st February 2025 or as soon as possible after that.

The Trust, supported by the Pre-school, is therefore undertaking a formal consultation on two points:

1. To expand the age range of Wantage CE Primary School from the current aged 3-11 years to aged 2 -11 years.

2. To close The ARK Pre-school Charity and transfer the assets to the management of The Vale Academy Trust as part of Wantage CE Primary School, Wantage.

To respond to this consultation please go to this link
: <https://forms.office.com/e/gJY0tbuTq2>

Alternatively, you may respond by

- emailing Wantage CE Primary School (FAO Andy Browne)
on: officewa@wantagece.vale-academy.org

- emailing The Ark Pre-School on: wantagepreschool@hotmail.co.uk
- handing in a written response at the reception office of Wantage CE Primary School.

This consultation will close at midnight on Wednesday 31 July 2024.

Following the consultation, the Trust will submit an application to the Regional Director for Education who will be the decision-maker on this proposed merger.