



Press Release

THE PALLADIAN ACADEMY TRUST (PAT) – A NEW EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE IN BANES

Tim Withers, Chief Executive Officer of the Palladian Academy Trust, says:

As of 1 November, a real red letter day informally known as 'Palladian Day,' the PAT encompasses eight schools: Combe Down Primary School

Oldfield Park Infant School

Oldfield Park Junior School

Ralph Allen School (secondary school)

St Martin's Garden Primary School

St Philip's Primary School

Widcombe Infant School

Widcombe Junior School

It is less than eighteen months since we began our discussion on becoming a trust, and we have been very encouraged by the National Schools Commissioner, Sir David Carter, who commented this week that he expects the PAT to do very well, due to our collective strengths, and the thoroughness of our research and preparation.

This week I will be attending a meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, to reflect on the mutually enriching possibilities of church schools working with non-denominational schools.

Already we are working together in new ways and taking learning into new places.

Ten reasons follow we are excited about our new educational partnership.

For anyone who is unsure about how a trust works, I am very happy to meet with you to discuss this.

Newly begun, the Palladian Academy Trust expects to be educating local children for many years to come, and offering new and exciting opportunities.

1. Working as a single organisation, **support and expertise** can be shared within a family of schools, especially where schools of different phase and character are working together.
2. The PAT is building on existing foundations of **excellent working relationships** between schools. That is why we have come so far, so quickly!
3. There are far more possibilities for **professional development** within the Trust, which supports the **recruitment, training and retention** of excellent staff. Our ambition and intention is to be a great local employer – and we are already seeing staff enthusiasm for new professional opportunities.
4. **Employments can be made by the Trust**, so that colleagues in IT, site maintenance or HR can work efficiently across the whole group of school, whereas an individual school would not always be able to afford this.
5. **Very short journey times** separate our schools, so that staff and students will not spend unpractical amounts of time in transit. This has sometimes been a challenge for other trusts.
6. The partnership of our schools within a Trust doesn't cancel other practice that may have previously worked to the advantage of students; we won't forget our old friends or pull up the drawbridge! Instead, our model is a **Venn diagram of professional relationships**; the Local Authority is a very significant partner, and we are already working with BANES for the good of education and welfare.
7. Trusts are playing a key part in shaping a **new educational landscape**, and are able to open new provision. Bath is in need of new free schools and academies, for example in areas of development such as Foxhill. While the LA can commission, it cannot work to open new provision itself.
8. **A different model of governance** is possible, with a Board of Trustees as well as school governing bodies. Why have eight different pay policies, when you can have one? This time-saving will enable school governors to focus on teaching, learning and standards without distraction.
9. A new conversation is possible. For example, in computing, language learning or literacy we will be able to plan more effectively for a **4 – 19 continuum** in our area to harmonise the curriculum and build on each Key Stage successively, avoiding discontinuity (for example, Spanish studied in KS2, then French offered in KS3)
10. **Economics** in a time of financial challenge: group negotiation on price with, say, a utilities company is far more advantageous than operating solo. Money saved can be spent directly on children's education.

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Photos: The headteachers of the eight schools which have formed the Palladian Academy Trust, photographed at the Palladian Bridge in Prior Park Garden

From left to right:

Andy Joy, St Philips C of E Primary School

Alison Watts, Widcombe Infant School
Richard Bullard, Combe Down C of E Primary School
Claire McMurtry, Oldfield Park Infant School
Tim Withers, Chief Executive Officer (Executive Principal, Ralph Allen School)
Jo Marsh, Chief Operating Officer (Business Director, Ralph Allen School)
Matt Stone, St Martin's Garden Primary School
Claire Taylor, Widcombe C of E Junior School
David Goucher, Oldfield Park Junior School