

SOUTHEND EAST COMMUNITY ACADEMY TRUST

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Chair of Trust Board: Karen Dovaston
31st October 2022

Dear Parents/Carers/Staff

I am writing to inform you that our Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ruth Brock, has taken the decision to retire from her position with SECAT, and will be leaving us on 31st December 2022.

Ruth has been committed to and worked tirelessly for the Trust since she joined us in September 2018. The Trust has gone from strength to strength in that time and established itself in the local community. This is in no small part down to the vision and endeavour of Ruth and her desire to ensure that the Trust does its best for all of the children to be educated by SECAT. We know that the Department for Education now regards SECAT as a strong Trust that supports its schools and families very well and is keen to work with them to explore opportunities to widen this support in our local communities.

A Trust is designed to improve the educational outcomes of its pupils and to give children the opportunity to thrive and be successful in life outside of and beyond school. Making sure a Trust is financially viable is key by ensuring use of government funding, targeted in the right direction, is challenging for any Trust. At SECAT, with the development of the team who manage our finances, investment in the people and the systems to ensure that Headteachers carry out the core function – leading and managing their schools - and taking ‘in-house’ functions such as ICT, Estates, HR, Communications, Catering and Extended Schools, Mrs Brock has been pivotal in making that shift.

The Trust Board considered a number of options for moving forward as the next step on our journey as a Trust. After careful consideration and discussion, including with the Department for Education, the Trust Board has decided to proceed with succession planning. In any organisation, enabling and empowering staff to step into other roles, is crucial to both the stability of the organisation and is an excellent opportunity to recognise and further develop staff. As you will know we take opportunities to do this at all levels, where individuals demonstrate the right skills, experience, and expertise to do so. Indeed, two of our current Headteachers have been Deputy Headteachers within the Trust before moving to their current roles.

As such, after due process and assessment, the Trust Board has appointed Ben Stickley – current Chief Operating Officer (COO) – to the role of CEO with effect from 1st January 2023. The value that he has added to the Trust since joining as an external Trust Board appointment in 2020, has been and continues to be, considerable. Ben is a highly experienced leader in the education sector, and also brings significant experience from the charity and commercial sectors. He has worked in leadership

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roles in education in both Secondary and Primary settings and consults for the Department for Education via the Trust working with schools, Trusts and Local Authorities around the country.

Debbie Trumble – current Deputy COO – will take on the role of COO from 1st January 2023. Debbie is very well qualified to take on the role of COO with many years' experience of school operations and finance, both from a school and Local Authority background and also an external audit perspective. The role of Deputy COO will not be replaced as we continue to take every opportunity to maximise the efficiency of our central services and minimise as far as possible the financial pressures on schools in challenging financial times.

The Trust Executive Team – which consists of all of our Headteachers, the Directors of Education and People, and the managers of each of the central services remains as it currently is.

I am sure you will, as I do, want to wish Ruth well in her new venture. She leaves the Trust in a very good place and in very safe hands.

Kind Regards



Karen Dovaston
Chair of Trust Board

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