

22nd July 2025

Dear All

I am delighted to announce that the change of status for Lapford Community Primary School has today been confirmed by the DfE.

From September 2025, the school will become a Church of England primary school. Given that this is now confirmed, the school will also change its name.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the recent consultation on the change of name. Responses to the comments are included below.

The Directors of Chulmleigh Academy Trust, and senior leaders carefully considered the responses. What we found particularly interesting was the history surrounding the Anglican church- as outlined by local historians at a recent parish-council meeting.

Having taken this into account, directors have therefore agreed that the school will become: 'St Thomas of Canterbury CE Primary School, Lapford'

Next year, there will be an official re-opening of the school. More details will follow in the autumn.

Thank you again for your support during this historic moment in time for the school and the village.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Sarah Healey
Primary Deputy Executive Headteacher

Responses to consultation feedback:

Consultation not wide enough

People immediately connected with Lapford and the school were consulted: staff, parents, children, the community, including the Parish council, Lapford's three churches, Devon County Council and Exeter Diocese.

It was felt there was no need to consult more widely as the views of the Lapford pupils, parents, staff and village community were the most important.

Not received consultation information

This information was sent out via emails, as is the usual method of communicating.

No need to change name- school and village are wonderful

Agree with this, but currently pupil numbers are too low. From September, only 41 pupils are on roll from Reception to Year 6. If the school was full, there would be 105 children enrolled. Primary pupil numbers are low nationally. Local residents appreciate what a great school it is, but to attract more children, the net needs to be cast further afield. A large rebrand with national press coverage will draw attention to the school and hopefully attract families considering a relocation to this hidden gem. The present low pupil numbers do not make the current class or staffing structure sustainable in the long term.

Cost to parents because of rebranding

There will be no cost to parents.

St Martha not a 'local' saint

Agree with this. Martha was a suggestion. The fascinating history surrounding Thomas Becket and Lapford was hitherto unknown to the trust and to the school. We are delighted that by consulting on a name we have found this out. We agree it makes more sense to adopt a saint who continues to engage local pride.

The Trust makes some financial gain by this process

There is no financial benefit to doing this unless pupil numbers increase. The more pupils, the more funding. Increased funding because of more pupils, goes directly to the school.

Church schools receive more money

Not true. Pupil funding is the same for all schools irrespective of whether they are a church school or not.

Use of social media

Negative comments on social media and in the local press are not helpful to the school. If parents/grandparents/carers wish to support the school, then we need as much positivity as possible. If parents/grandparents/carers have concerns about the school or trust going forward, please contact the school or trust directly.