

## **PRESS RELEASE**

6<sup>th</sup> October 2020

### **Colston's Girls' School announces consultation result**

Following a thorough consultation that included an online public survey and a series of lessons and debates in school, 81% of students and staff at Colston's Girls' School (CGS) and V6 voted on whether to keep or change the name of their school, with the ballot closing last night.

This morning, the Board of Trustees for Venturers Trust reviewed the vote, alongside an analysis of the public consultation, and they have announced their decision to change the name of Colston's Girls' School.

Established in 1891, 170 years after the death of Edward Colston, CGS was built with money Colston had endowed to support education and the school was therefore named after him. The name of CGS has been a regular topic of debate across the city and in June the Chair of Trustees for Venturers Trust, Gail Bragg, announced that the school would launch an open and transparent consultation placing the student voice at the heart of the decision-making process.

The online survey, which was open to the public between 17th July and 14th August 2020, received 454 responses, of which 286 respondents said no, CGS should not change its name; and 168 said yes, it should – a majority of 63% voting against changing the name.

Students collated further opinions from across the city adding to a robust bank of resources that included interviews with leading Bristol figures, to help stimulate discussion and debate within a series of lessons and workshops for CGS and V6 students in preparation for the vote. Academic and historian Professor Madge Dresser provided students with advice on how to facilitate a balanced debate process.

Current students and staff were eligible to vote in a final poll and Gail Bragg announced today that 75% of the votes were in favour of changing the name. She said: "The Board of Venturers Trust has unanimously agreed to change the name of CGS, following a very clear result from the school community vote.

"I'm incredibly proud of our students who have shown maturity and sensitivity in developing and delivering the consultation. The broad spectrum of feedback from within the school and from the online survey, make it very clear that there are strong feelings on both sides of the debate. For some people this announcement will be disappointing and for others it will be cause for celebration and it's important that we acknowledge that.

"We will not be erasing the history of CGS, it is a part of Bristol's story which is now an integral and permanent part of the curriculum. However, the school will be forging a new identity that represents its diverse and inclusive community and this is the momentous beginning of a new chapter."

Kerry McCullagh, Principal of CGS, said: "Students have learnt so much about the democratic process and have expanded their own opinions by talking and listening to such a wide range of people. I am particularly impressed by the way in which all opinions were genuinely welcomed so that those who expressed a desire to keep the school's name were able to do so without worrying that others might judge them.

“The entire process has been positive and perfectly illustrates the inspiring qualities of our compelling students. These are difficult conversations with strong views on both sides and the classroom has provided a safe space in which to explore complex issues. Students were encouraged to seek and understand the views of others and not just to make themselves heard, which is a really valuable life skill.”

Using the extensive feedback gathered during the consultation process, students will now develop a list of potential names which will be reviewed by the Venturers Trust Board, with a new name expected to be revealed by the end of the month. A detailed report including feedback from the online survey will be made available on the CGS website when the full process has concluded.

CEO of Venturers Trust, David Watson, said: “Students have experienced the power of democracy first-hand and I am extremely proud of the respect they have shown for others throughout the process. It is important that young people understand how to influence change in a positive way so that they develop the core skills necessary to build a sustainable and inclusive future for a global community. In a year that has been filled with so many different challenges, the school community can look to the future as they rebrand and renew.”

ENDS

**Notes to editors:**

[Colston's Girls' School](#) is a non-selective academy located in Montpelier, Bristol, educating 940 students. It is the top performing state school in the region and in March 2020 received the SSAT (Schools, Students and Teachers Network) Educational Outcomes Award for being in the top 10% of non-selective schools nationally for attainment and for being in the Department for Education Band 1 for student progress at Key Stage 4. In 2019, BAME Year 11 students outperformed the whole school average achieving a Progress 8 score of 0.58, against a national average Progress 8 score of 0.

The sixth-form provision of Colston's Girls' School, [V6](#), is co-educational.

CGS and V6 are both part of [Venturers Trust](#), which is sponsored by the [Society of Merchant Venturers](#) and the [University of Bristol](#) and regulated by the Regional Schools Commissioner and Ofsted.

For further information about the background to the consultation, how the process was developed, the timeline of activities and next steps, please visit the [CGS website](#).

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