



**St. Athanasios**  
Greek School | est.1969 | Cambridge

# Welcome!

**Great honour and a privilege to welcome everyone to this  
information-sharing event!**





# Welcome!

- I would like to thank Fr Konstantinos Garivaldinos, who joins us on behalf of Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira and Great Britain.
- I would also like to welcome Mrs Ismini Chatzigianni-Gkika, representing the Central Education Council of the Archdiocese.
- Representing the Greek Embassy in London is Dr Eirini Veroni, who is the Head of Education Office, and representing the Cypriot High Commission is Dr Vasiliki Kouma, Head of the Cyprus Educational Mission.
- I would also like to welcome Mr Evangelos Giannoudis, Chairman of the Committee of the Greek School of St Athanasios

# Welcome!



- And of course, I welcome all the other members of the School Committee, the Community Committee, and you, the members and parents of our community who graciously gave up your time to be here with us this evening.



- Our starting point is the School Committee's decision to put to vote at the AGM of 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 the proposition to create a separate registered charity for the Greek School of St Athanasios, thereby taking the School outside of the Charity of the Community of St Athanasios.

# My topic: Why is there a School embedded within the Charity of the Community of St Athanasios?



- I will provide you with a brief historic overview of our Community and School and their missions. I will then ask Prof Napoleon Katsos to provide a more detailed explanation.
- Our three guests from London will explain the relationship between St. Athanasios School, the Archdiocese, and the Greek and Cypriot government
- The Chairman of the School Committee will offer the view from the Committee
- We will have 20 minutes for Q&A from the audience, and I will conclude the event with action points.

I hope that by the end of this evening's Information-Sharing event five main points will be clear:



1. That the Charity of St Athanasios will always have a Greek School
2. This School receives tremendous support from the Archdiocese and the Greek and Cypriot Governments
3. Anyone may create a new charity and a new Greek school – but it will be their own private initiative, not the School of St Athanasios, which will continue to operate as it is now
4. The real question is not one or two charities, but the cooperation of the School Committee with the Community and its Trustees and compliance with the laws and regulations of this country, for the benefit of our children
5. Be assured, in September the School of St Athanasios will operate as usual

# Historical introduction



- The Greek Orthodox Community of St Athanasios in Cambridge was founded in November 1968 by the late Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain, Gregorios and was established by Metropolitan Athanasios.
- Since 1994 the Community is registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales (Charity number: 1040908) as a subsidiary of the Charity of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain (Charity number: 243715).

- The Greek school begun in people's living rooms in 1969 and we taught from people's kitchen tables.
- In 1977 we rented Little St Mary's church in Trumpington Road and turned it into a Saturday school.
- Archimandrite Ambrosius was the headmaster and taught the oldest children, Lella Panakas and her husband taught the middle classes, and I taught the youngest children. Some of my students are now parents themselves with children at the school!
- When the late Archbishop Gregorios purchased the Vicarage at 5 Mill Road Cambridge, we used two of the downstairs rooms for Saturday school.
- When the Trustees sold 5 Mill Road and bought the present premises, we renovated the two classrooms (Green & Blue room with a cost over £70,000). We also gave the School use of the two additional Community Rooms behind the altar. The School space has more than doubled in square meters, thanks to our substantial investment.
- We started from very humble beginnings and we are very proud to see what has been achieved today by the people who followed our footsteps!

- As Trustees of the Charity of St Athanasios, we have a duty to the Archdiocese, and to all Greeks and Cypriots in Cambridge and beyond, to offer Greek language classes. This is enshrined in our Constitution and Mission Statement.<sup>1,2</sup>
- We did not *choose* to have a school in our Charity, we have a duty to have one, and we are so proud that this is the case.
- During the 15<sup>th</sup> of May AGM I was not allowed to complete my turn and I had to resort to using the written chat. When I wrote “if the Greek school becomes a different ENTITY it cannot stay here it has to move out” this comment was taken out of context. I was accused of wanting to throw the school out of St Athanasios premises. This is not true and I apologise for any offence and anxiety I caused to parents. I meant that any **new** school would be a different ENTITY.
- On behalf of the Committee and the Trustees I wish to re-iterate that the St Athanasios school will always remain under St Athanasios Charity auspices, and operating from St Athanasios premises for ever!

REFERENCES:

1 <http://www.stathanasios.uk/docs.html>

2 <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/1040908/trustees>



- Passing on now to Prof Napoleon Katsos, Secretary of the Committee of the Community of St Athanasios



# How our Community and School are governed, within the Charity of St Athanasios

- The ultimate responsibility for the good governance of the Community and all its activities, including the School, lies with the Charity's trustees.<sup>3</sup>
- “Trustees are the people who share ultimate responsibility for governing a charity and directing how it is managed and run.”
- Trustees must ensure that the Governing documents of the Charity are observed, they must manage the resources of the Charity wisely, they must resolve any conflicts and manage risks, among many other duties.
- In our Community, the chair of Trustees is ex officio the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain



- The Charity Commission's webpages report all the appointed Trustees and other essential information about our Charity.<sup>2</sup>
- The day-to-day management of the Church and the premises is delegated to the Community Committee, while the day-to-day management of the school is delegated to the School Committee.
- These Committees work in close collaboration, towards serving their respective aims in harmony and according to their governing documents.
- They are both accountable to the Trustees.
- The education policy of the School is set by the Central Education Council of the Archdiocese, and the Education Offices of Cyprus and Greece.



There are times when important decisions must be taken that affect the governance of the School and potentially its role within the Community.

- According to the Charity Commission’s guidelines, and the written instructions of the Chair of Trustees, Archbishop Nikitas (01/06/2021), the School and the Community Committees and the Trustees should always work jointly to find the best solutions. They should then submit these to the Archdiocese, which will give guidance, and indicate which one(s) should be put to the vote by the Parents of the School.
- The present School Officers and Community Officers and Trustees agreed about all the above (decision minuted: 11 July 2021, minutes available from Secretaries of the School and Community Committees)



- Beyond securing the **Trustees and Archdiocese's approval**, the Charity Commission gives additional specifications for General Meetings which deal with the very status of a Charity:
- The agenda and the propositions that will be voted upon must be **circulated to everyone with reasonable notice** (typically 21 days in advance of the meeting), and a **majority of at least 75% members present** must vote in favour for any changes to take effect.
- None of the above conditions were the case at the AGM of 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2022, rendering any decisions taken there as regards the future of the School invalid.

# But all this is hypothetical...



- one cannot simply ‘remove’ the School from the Charity of the Community of St Athanasios, because it is in the Charity’s Constitution, in its *DNA*, in its very nature that St Athanasios Community will always offer two things: the Holy Liturgy, and a Greek Language School<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.stathanasios.uk/files/St%20Athanasios%20School%20Constitution.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/1040908/charity-overview>

- Of course one can register a new School as a new Charity under the Charity Commission
- This new Charity would have its own Constitution, its own School Committee, and its own set of Trustees (i.e. the people who will be ultimately responsible for the good governance of the new School)
- This would be a new, private initiative
- Therefore the new school would be outside the Charity of the Community of St Athanasios, and it would run in parallel with the School of St Athanasios
- So, let's make it very clear: any new school/charity cannot be both outside of the Charity of St Athanasios and inside the Community of St Athanasios, because they are the same thing.

# What are the benefits of the School within the Charity of St Athanasios?



The School is a member of the network of Schools of the Archdiocese

- A seal of approval, a recognition of quality and of standards

Thanks to being in the network of Schools of the Archdiocese, our School

- is a recognised Centre for the Teaching and Examining of Greek Language
- it receives invaluable support from the Greek and Cypriot government in the form of seconded teachers and subsidized teaching hours
- this does not only have huge financial benefits; it also means that the quality of the teaching is of the highest standards and the curriculum is set by expert professionals!
- And of course the School has access to the resources of St Athanasios Community

Indicatively, per academic year, the School saves rent that exceeds £13,000 (thanks to the free use of premises; with the modest assumption of rent charges of £10 per hour/classroom if the premises were not free)

The future: The question is not one or two charities, but the cooperation between the Community and the present School Committee

- Most recently,
  - the present School Committee did not inform the Trustees that it was considering to create a new Charity of the School. This is against Charity Commission guidelines and against what the School Committee Officers agreed (minutes of 11 July 2022).
- Moreover, the Community has identified the following challenges
  1. Complaints procedure needs to be updated
  2. The School accounts need to be reported to the Charity Commission every year, and they need to be periodically audited by an external accountant. By failing to do this, the School Committee fails to comply with the law and creates challenges for itself, e.g. in legitimizing its Bank Account.



3. The present School Committee believes that they can not claim GiftAid, cannot claim donations through Amazon Smile; but the Community can claim Gift Aid, and once we heard about Amazon Smile, we found examples of other Community Schools in the UK who do claim Amazon Smile -

4. The present Officers of the School regularly claim that the School itself owns the premises where the classes are taking place, which is simply untrue, and it also divisive.

The funds to purchase 5 Mill Road were sent by the late Archbishop Grigorios, and the property in 154 Cherry Hinton Rd belongs to the Trustees for the benefit of the Community.

5. The present School Committee refuses to accept members nominated by the Community to join the Committee, despite the fact that this was agreed in the past by other School Committees and also by parents (and it is also prescribed in the Constitution).



Recall that by law, if something goes wrong in the Charity, e.g. if –hypothetically speaking- money goes missing from the School Account, or a major complaint is not dealt with appropriately, it is the Trustees of the Charity who will be responsible, not the present School Committee.

While there has been little cooperation between the present School Committee and the Community and Trustees, this is a recent challenge. In the past, there was a good cooperation even when the School and Community went through difficult times, e.g. when we were moving sites.

# For the future



- We have many challenges ahead of us. The school had a deficit this year; it needs new additional toilets, and a better playground and more space. None of these will be solved by creating divisions, but they will be solved if the present School Committee understands that it has to cooperate with the Community and Trustees.
- The Archdiocese and the Community are determined that the School will run as usual next academic year.
- But their missions has more breadth and depth than the next academic year. They aim to have a Greek Language School operating now, and in ten, and in fifty years from now, because of their historical mission. And they are in a unique position to achieve this.



# Summary

1. The Charity of St Athanasios will always have a Greek School
2. This School receives tremendous support from the Archdiocese and the Greek and Cypriot Governments, it has outstanding teachers, and it is very successful!
3. Anyone may create a new charity and a new Greek school – but it will be their own private initiative, not the School of St Athanasios, which will continue to operate as it is now
4. The real question is not one or two charities, but the cooperation of the School Committee with the Community and its Trustees and compliance with the laws and regulations of this country, for the benefit of our children
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- Thank you

- All documents and relevant info is available online
  - <http://www.stathanasios.uk/docs.html>



- Distinguished guests



- **CONCLUSIONS** – closing remarks at the end of the Information sharing event





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# CONCLUSIONS – closing remarks at the end of the Information sharing event

1. The Trustees will send everyone the minutes of this Information-Sharing event and also upload them online <http://www.stathanasios.uk/docs.html>
2. The proposition to create a new charity for the School of St Athanasios does not comply with the laws and regulations and it is not valid.
3. The Trustees will write to the members of the School Committee to ask whether they are willing to continue serving in the Committee and to take immediate and concrete actions to bring the management of the School within the framework described today
4. We assure all parents that in September the School will operate as usual, within the Charity of St Athanasios
5. H.E. Archbishop Nikitas and H.E. the Ambassador of Greece will visit our Community soon, we'll send everyone an invitation.



- All documents and relevant info is available online
  - <http://www.stathanasios.uk/docs.html>
- With thanks and gratitude to our guest speakers, and to all who attended this event
- Thank you

