

9TH February 2017

Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust Communication Brief

The Governors of Tavistock College are pleased to announce that we are working with a number of our neighbouring schools on the possibility of forming a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). A MAT is a group of schools that work together in a formal arrangement. All schools within a MAT are governed by a single board of trustees. The board of trustees is responsible for decisions relating to how each school is run but there will still be a local governing body who will monitor and challenge the quality of education in each school.

- Chagford C of E Primary School
- Crediton – QE Academy Trust
- Dartmoor Federation
 - Okehampton College
 - Boasley Cross Primary School
 - Bridestowe Primary School
 - Exbourne C of E Primary School
 - Lydford Primary School
 - Northlew and Ashbury C of E Primary School
- Holsworthy Federation
 - Holsworthy College
 - Black Torrington C of E Primary School
 - Bradford Primary School
 - Bridgerule C of E Primary School
- North Tawton Community Primary School
- Okehampton Primary School
- South Tawton Primary School

Why are we doing this?

We believe that to ensure that all our children continue to receive the best possible educational opportunities we must partner with like-minded schools. Similarly, if we are going to attract the best and develop our existing staff we must be part of a larger educational community. Traditionally we would have looked to our local education authority to provide such challenge, advice and support. However, with continued local authority cut backs and the diversion of funding directly into schools this service is becoming more and more problematic. Our experience of local informal partnerships to date has been encouraging and we have already joined the Dartmoor Teaching Schools Alliance based around Okehampton College. We therefore see the formalising of our partnership arrangements as being the next logical step. Furthermore we believe that by proactively choosing and forming the structure and ethos of the partnership we can ensure that our local community, for both today and tomorrow, is best served.

What is being proposed?

We are considering that our school becomes an Academy School within a Multi-Academy Trust. An Academy School is no different in appearance to a Local Authority Maintained School (LA). Both types of school receive its funding from central government. For a LA school, funds are routed first to the LA who can retain an amount to fund its central services. For an Academy, the same funds are sent directly to the school who can then decide how all the monies are spent to best effect. A MAT is a group of

Together: we care, we challenge, we excel

Academy Schools that work under a single governing board (The Academy Trust). Legally it is a charity and so cannot be run for profit. All funds received must be used for the benefits of the children it serves.

We believe that this autonomy will allow us to direct resources in the best and most effective way to benefit our children.

What is our vision?

We intend to call the Trust the Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust. Our vision for the Trust is that:

- It will provide the highest possible quality of education for all our local children. This will be cross phase; from pre-school to age 19.
- It will have a co-operative ethos.
- Education should be community based, inclusive and will respect and retain the ethos of each school including church schools.
- Be an underpinned top quality Teaching School (The Dartmoor Teaching School); we intend to have a strong capability to develop all our staff. All schools in the MAT will be part of the Teaching School Alliance.
- It will develop high quality cross-phase teaching.
- It will mirror existing staff terms and conditions and will recognise from the outset the importance of retaining and attracting staff of the highest calibre
- We believe in the benefits to the community of local schools and would therefore always attempt to maintain rural schools subject to their viability

What would the local structure look like?

Locally there will be very little change. Schools will still retain their individual names and uniform policies. There will still be a Head on-site responsible for the day to day running of the school. There will still be a local governing body who will monitor and challenge the quality of educational provision in the school.

The difference is that in future individual schools will be supported by the Dartmoor MAT's board of Trustees. These Trustees will have legal responsibility for monitoring the quality of education across the schools in the MAT and ensuring the appropriate resources are made available. As part of the process for setting up the MAT the organisational structure and who is responsible for what (called a Scheme of Delegation) will be defined in detail.

However the basic principles of the board will be:

1. If a school is successful and viable to leave it alone to run itself.
2. If a school is struggling to use the resources and expertise in the MAT to support that school.
3. Ensure that staff have the knowledge and resources to provide high quality education.

What are the next steps?

All the schools have "expressed an interest" to form the MAT with the local office of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). It is the RSC who will ensure that our proposals will work and will eventually decide if the MAT can go ahead. Our next step is to submit a formal application to the RSC. This outlines in more detail the governance structure of the MAT and provides basic information about each school. If the application is approved each school receives a one-off grant to cover the admin and legal cost involved in converting from a LA controlled school to an Academy.

Part of this process will be us consulting with parents, staff and other stakeholders. We intend this is be in the form of written briefs and open meetings for example. Please look out for them.

We hope to have our application accepted by Easter. The conversion process can then take typically six months. At the end, the MAT is formally created and all sign a funding agreement directly with the Department of Education. Although we believe this is the way forward for our school no final decision has been taken and the governors can decide to pull out at any point up to this funding agreement being signed. Rest assured we will not sign **unless we are convinced that doing so is in the best interest of our current and future children.**

Have you any questions?

As we move through the conversion process we intend to issue regular updates. Open consultation meetings will be held. However if you have any immediate questions or concerns please put them to me, in writing, via the school office email, office@tavistockcollege.devon.sch.uk



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