



The Dartmoor Federation comprises:

- Boasley Cross Primary School
- Bridestowe Primary School
- Exbourne Church of England Primary School
- Lydford Primary School
- Northlew & Ashbury Parochial Church of England Primary
- Okehampton College



Lydford Primary



Okehampton College

10 February 2017

Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust – Communication Brief

As I am sure you are aware, the educational landscape has changed significantly over recent years, both locally and nationally. Schools are now working much more collaboratively to further enhance the teaching and learning opportunities for both students and staff. Our Teaching School now has over 40 member schools with everybody benefitting from enhanced training and pedagogy. As a result, we have been looking closely at this developing landscape and how best we want to align our Federation for the future.

With this in mind, The Governing Board of The Dartmoor Federation are pleased to announce that we have been working with a number of our neighboring 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 board who will monitor and challenge the quality of education in each school.

It is envisaged that the Trust will consist of the following schools and Federations.

Secondary Schools	Primary Schools
Okehampton College (The Dartmoor Federation) Tavistock College Holsworthy College (Holsworthy Federation) Queen Elizabeth Academy, Crediton	Boasley Cross Primary School (The Dartmoor Federation) Bridestowe Primary School (The Dartmoor Federation) Exbourne C of E Primary School (The Dartmoor Federation) Lydford Primary School (The Dartmoor Federation) Northlew and Ashbury C of E Primary School (The Dartmoor Federation) Okehampton Primary South Tawton Primary North Tawton Primary Chagford C of E Primary Black Torrington C of E Primary School (Holsworthy Federation) Bradford Primary School (Holsworthy Federation) Bridgerule C of E Primary School (Holsworthy Federation)

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 staff 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. 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 is best served.

What is being proposed?

We are considering that our schools become Academies 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 Academy Schools that work under a single governing board. It is legally 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 underpinned by a top quality Teaching School (The Dartmoor Teaching School Alliance). 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 Headteacher/Head of School on-site responsible for the day-to-day running of the school. There will still be a local governing board who will monitor and challenge the quality of educational provision in each school.

The difference is that, in future, individual schools will be supported by The Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust 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 to support school improvement through the wide diversity of expertise available within the MAT.

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 costs 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 to be in the form of written briefs and open meetings accessible to everybody. Please look out for more information about these events.

There is obviously a lot of work ahead to ensure that the governance and leadership structure are appropriate for our proposals. It is the norm for this process to take anything between 6 and 12 months from the initial registering of interests. Although we believe this is the way forward for our schools, no final decision has been taken and the governors can decide to pull out at any stage up to point the Department for Education formalises the academy paperwork. **Rest assured we will not sign such documents 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, address to me C/o Okehampton College, Mill Road, Okehampton, EX20 1PW or by email chair@okehamptoncollege.devon.sch.uk



Ian Courtney

Chair of Governors, The Dartmoor Federation