



# Tavistock COLLEGE

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SJO/AT

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## MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST CONSULTATION

In April 2017 the Governing Body of Tavistock College consulted with you about the possible formation of a new multi-academy trust to be known as the Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust (Dartmoor MAT). Since then a steering group comprising a governor and the Headteacher or Principal from each school have been researching, evaluating and designing this Trust. A number of schools have expressed an interest in forming this MAT. They are:

Okehampton College  
Tavistock College  
Queen Elizabeth Academy, Crediton  
Holsworthy Community College  
Okehampton Primary School  
Boasley Cross Primary School  
Bridestowe Primary School  
Exbourne C of E Primary School  
Lydford Primary School  
Northlew & Ashbury C of E  
North Tawton Primary School  
South Tawton Primary School  
Chagford C of E Primary School  
Black Torrington C of E Primary  
Bradford Primary School  
Bridgerule C of E Primary School  
Highampton Primary School

Our proposal for conversion to academy status in order to form the MAT is underpinned by a shared commitment to ensure the best possible outcomes for students at Tavistock College and that the individual identity, characteristic and ethos of our school is maintained and strengthened.

As part of the decision making process, the Governing Body is committed to undertaking full consultation with our stakeholders, and will take their views into account before any final decision is made. The purpose of this statement therefore, is to introduce the proposals to you, inform you where you can find additional information and how you can take part in the consultation.

### What is an academy?

An academy is a state school that is run by an academy trust. The academy trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the academy. The academy is funded directly by the Government not through the Local Authority. The trust is given charitable exemption, which means it must operate much like a charity.

**Together:** we care, we challenge, we excel



## What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A multi academy trust (MAT) is where a number of schools join together and form a single trust with a board of directors (trustees) answerable to the trust's members. Members of the trust are responsible for the strategic oversight of all academies within the trust. They are the conscience of the trust, ensuring that the objectives are upheld and they monitor the effectiveness of individual academies, manage central services and report to the Secretary of State. They work to ensure that individual academies are performing to the best of their ability and that they get the support and challenge that they require. The trust will delegate many powers to a Local Governing Body (LGB) which will have a role similar to that of the current school Governing Body. Leadership of the academies will be undertaken by the existing head teachers with a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) in place to maintain standards across all of the academies.

## Why convert to a Multi Academy Trust?

One of the aspects considered by the Governing Body in making its decision was that it was better for Tavistock College, as a strong and successful school, to be at the forefront of this process by founding our own MAT in partnership with like-minded schools who share our core aims and values. This would allow us to create a MAT geared to our own values and successful practices rather than, potentially, be pushed to joining an existing MAT that does not share our co-operative identity.

## What other advantages would creating a MAT bring?

There will be a number of benefits to Tavistock College:

- Better opportunities to share best practice and professional development programmes across the schools, adding real value to the education of all children through membership of the Dartmoor Teaching School Alliance.
- Opportunities for the students and staff to work together across the schools.
- More opportunities for staff retention, deployment and promotion, by keeping good staff within the trust who might otherwise further their career elsewhere.
- A broader base for developing leadership.
- Increased economies of scale in the running of central services such as finance, HR, and premises management.
- A 'cluster' model, providing local solutions to benefit the pupils of Tavistock.

## What are the risks of joining a MAT?

It is difficult to quantify the risks involved in academy conversion and joining a MAT, as every conversion process is different. Some stakeholders involved in any conversion may be concerned about the financial arrangements which will be put in place in case these adversely affect their own school. They also may worry about the degree of independence their school will have in managing and recruiting staff and in setting a curriculum, and about the way that leadership and governance will function within the MAT. The way to ensure that these possible concerns do not place any of the schools involved at risk is to set up the MAT in a mutually beneficial way with a strong and positive ethos in place, and to ensure that it is well-run. A rigorous due diligence process will be undertaken and the outcomes considered before any final decision is made. There has been a great amount of collaborative groundwork undertaken by representatives of all the schools involved in this proposed MAT to ensure that all of the schools agree with the proposed structure for the MAT. There has also been work undertaken to ensure that the proposed Scheme of Delegation, which defines how the leadership and Governance of the MAT will operate, is fit for purpose. From the beginning it has been clear that all of the representatives have been determined to preserve the independence and unique character of their schools, and to make sure that key decisions on staffing, curriculum and the use of resources will be made so as to benefit the students and families of each individual school, as well as the local community as a whole. It should also be noted that there are risks in not becoming a MAT. In the future, any school could be influenced to become part of a broader academy chain. Creating a local MAT, under local direction, offers the best opportunity to sustain vibrant, successful local schools.

## What changes will this bring to Tavistock College?

Under the proposed model, governance of our school will continue at a local level. The make-up of our Local Governing Body would remain unchanged. There will be an overarching Multi Academy Trust Board of Directors (Trustees) consisting of many representatives from member schools' existing Governing Bodies. Each school within the MAT will remain focussed on delivering excellent teaching and learning within its local

community. Tavistock College will continue to be run by its Principal. We now have the opportunity to work together in a supportive Multi Academy Trust which builds on the collaborative structures already in place between the schools. This will give extended opportunities to share good teaching and learning, join together to buy resources and develop a collaborative way of working for the benefit of all our children whilst providing new opportunities for them to work across schools and access different learning opportunities.

How can I make my views known?

You are invited to submit your comments and views using the following e-mail: **consultation@tavistockcollege.org**. In addition, we invite you to attend the consultation event detailed below. Any views expressed at this meeting will be captured and included in the final considerations of the Governing Body. This meeting will be held at Tavistock College on 5th October 2017 in the main hall.

**Staff:** 3:30pm to 4:30pm

**Parents and community stakeholders:** 5:00pm to 6:00 pm

**Students:** in tutor time in the week beginning 2nd October 2017

A record of the meeting will be distributed to all parents and placed on the school website alongside answers to questions that were determined at a previous consultation. The formal consultation period starts on **18th September 2017** and will close at 4pm on **Friday 20th October 2017**.

The Governing Body will consider a report on the academy consultation before making a final decision on whether to proceed with the proposal. If the Governing Body agrees to proceed Tavistock College will join the Dartmoor MAT and the school will aim convert to academy status on **1st January 2018**.

We hope that you take part in this consultation, either through emailing your views or by coming to the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> October. As a co-operative school, we greatly value your input. We have included some frequently asked questions and answers with this letter in order to assist with the consultation process.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Jones  
Principal



Ralph Crook  
Chair of Governors

## **Frequently asked questions**

1. Who will be responsible for running our school? The newly formed Trust will have Trustees including individuals from the existing Governing Body. The Trustees will delegate powers to the governing body which will be a similar role that they currently have. The Principal will continue to be responsible for the day to day running of Tavistock College.
2. What is involved in becoming an academy? The school will complete a consultation with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community which the Governors will take into account in reaching its decision. The Governing Body has voted for this proposal in principle and received an 'Academy Order' from the Regional Schools' Commissioner's office. The Secretary of State for Education will decide (or not) to approve our application if Governors decide to proceed. The school has been given £25,000 and the vast majority of this will be used in the conversion process including legal fees and so on.
3. Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform? No, the Governors have no plans to change the name, logo, uniform or individual identity of the school. We are proud of our identity as Tavistock College. Letter headings may change slightly to reflect our participation in a MAT, but little else will change.
4. How will the students be affected? In many ways they will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our students. However, in time they may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupils' learning.
5. How will being part of the MAT improve standards for our children? This will enable us to utilise the expertise of staff from schools in the MAT to raise the educational achievement of all children through collaborative working and shared training where appropriate. Each school has talents to be proud of. When they come together in partnership these talents become greater than the sum of their parts.
6. How will being an academy affect staff? Currently, the employer for staff is the Governing Body of Tavistock College. After conversion all staff at all the schools will be employed by the Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. Staff will have increased opportunity to work with colleagues in other schools and receive valuable professional development through the corner stone of the MAT, the Dartmoor Teaching School Alliance.
7. Will we get more money as an academy? Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. All funding comes direct from the Education Funding Agency to the Multi Academy Trust which controls the overall budget. Each school does not necessarily have more money, but as a group the schools are better able to control their part of the budget.
8. How will admissions to the school be affected? The school will become its own admissions authority but will be required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient places locally and will co-ordinate the admissions process for all schools. This means parents will still only have to complete one application per child. Applications will still be via the co-ordinated process.
9. Will the school have to follow the National Curriculum? Academies are not required to teach the National Curriculum but rather a broad and balanced one that includes English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Within the Trust, the individual academies will be responsible for their own curriculum development in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and in line with the expressed aims and values of the Trust.
10. Does becoming part of a MAT change the relationship with other schools? No. Each Academy within the MAT will continue to collaborate and share best practice and expertise with all other local schools and the wider community.
11. Will Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) responsibilities change? No. Responsibilities as part of a MAT in relation to SEND will be the same as they are now. A child with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) can still nominate an Academy as their school of choice.