



STAR Multi-Academy Trust - Consultation

We are writing to you on behalf of our Governing Body to inform you that we are consulting with parents, carers, staff and the wider community on proposals to convert our school to an academy, and together with eight other schools from the STAR Teaching School Alliance, to set up a 'multi-academy trust' (MAT), to be **provisionally** known as '**The STAR MAT**'. Our proposal to do so comes after a lengthy process of discussion between our headteachers and governing bodies. The nine schools involved are:

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| Appleton Roebuck Primary School | Sherburn High School |
| Kellington Primary School | Tadcaster Grammar School |
| Kirk Fenton Parochial CoE VC Primary School | |
| Monk Fryston CoE VC Primary School | |
| Riverside Primary School | |
| Sherburn Hungate Primary School | |
| South Milford Primary School | |

Other schools may consider joining the trust over time, and we remain committed to working with all of the schools within The STAR Teaching School Alliance. We are also applying to become an academy sponsor so that we can support local schools which are not yet good or outstanding.

Because the MAT would include Church of England schools, we are proposing a trust governed by Church of England 'Articles of Association' which guarantees an appropriate role for the Diocese of York and that the CE schools retain their Christian ethos, while at the same time allowing Community schools to preserve their own ethos too.

Academies are state schools which become the responsibility of the MAT and which are funded directly by the government rather than through the local authority. The MAT has to establish strong and effective systems of accountability and governance to ensure that the schools are successful, sustainable, and, above all, provide the highest possible standards of education and care for children and young people. The current government are committed to supporting good schools in converting to academies and to take the lead in supporting other schools as part of multi-academy trusts; they are also committed to converting 'under-performing' schools, or those that are placed in an Ofsted 'inadequate' category, to academies. The majority of secondary schools in England are now academies, and approximately a quarter of primaries. The number is increasing steadily, including in North Yorkshire.

Because all of the schools that are currently considering establishing the STAR MAT are judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted, we can voluntarily choose to consider academy status, rather than have this 'imposed' on us and become sponsored academies run by an existing multi-academy trust or 'academy chain'. Our schools could also have the option of joining an existing multi-academy trust, but our Heads and Governing Bodies believe that our schools are in a strong position to establish our own.

There is no desire or plan to establish an academy ‘chain’ at a regional level. The success of The STAR Teaching School Alliance so far has been based on strong collaboration between schools serving our local communities, and enabling all of them to make their own distinctive contribution to the partnership. There is a very strong commitment across our schools to keep our values and current ways of working.

WHAT PARENTS AND CARERS NEED TO KNOW

- Our school will not change its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now
- Church of England schools will retain their Christian ethos; Community schools will retain theirs
- The MAT Board will ensure that effective and appropriate oversight of all of the schools is carried out, and the Headteacher and Local Governing Body will continue to run the school on a daily basis much as they do now, and parents will continue to be represented on the Local Governing Body
- The name of the school will not change (although Monk Fryston and Kirk Fenton will drop the ‘Voluntary Controlled’ from their name), and although the MAT will become the admissions authority in place of the LA, its admissions policy will stay the same.
- Children with special needs will continue to receive additional support in the way they do now
- Our local schools will continue to work very closely together for each other as well as your children, and will be provided with more support to help them become even better
- The multi-academy trust arrangements will share some central services across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children

WHAT STAFF NEED TO KNOW

- The STAR MAT would be your employer instead of the local authority (North Yorkshire County Council), unless you work for a service that is contracted by the school (eg catering)
- Staff would transfer to the trust under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) regulations, retaining current pay, terms, conditions and pensions
- The day-to-day responsibility for the curriculum, teaching and learning approaches, and classroom management would remain with the Headteacher
- Staff will continue to be based in individual schools unless they wish to apply for and are appointed to a trust-wide role; as now, there could be opportunities to work collaboratively with other staff and schools across the partnership
- As now, Headteachers will work closely together to agree shared approaches which will benefit teaching and learning, led by a ‘Chief Education Officer’ who may continue to have responsibilities in his or her own school as well as strategic responsibilities across the MAT

WHAT THE WIDER COMMUNITY NEEDS TO KNOW

- The STAR MAT will work very closely and co-operatively with local partners, including other schools, community groups and organisations, the Diocese of York, and North Yorkshire County Council
- The STAR Teaching School Alliance will continue to exist, providing a range of school improvement and other services to schools within the MAT, and other local schools.

WHY ARE OUR SCHOOLS CONSIDERING STRENGTHENING THEIR PARTNERSHIP BY SETTING UP A MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST?

Staff, parents, carers and governors will be aware that there has been a strong tradition of collaboration between local schools over many years, particularly since we established the STAR Teaching School Alliance. Our schools are now looking to strengthen the partnership still further by exploring a 'multi-academy trust' approach. There are a number of reasons for this:

- **We want our pupils and students to achieve even better outcomes and for all of our schools to become outstanding.** We will continue to build and secure local school improvement capacity, and shared development strategies, which can help us do this, by providing appropriate levels of challenge and support within the partnership, and intervention where necessary. We have built up strong relationships and high levels of trust which are not dependent on single relationships between individual heads.
- **We are near enough to each other to build a strong local partnership**, building greater community cohesion, and more shared activities across all of our schools, benefiting pupils and students as well as our staff. These could include shared approaches to curriculum planning, teaching and learning, professional development, and opportunities to share specialist roles across more than one school.
- **At a time of reducing funding in schools, formal partnerships can more easily achieve 'better value'** by having more efficient central and shared services and enabling individual schools within the partnership to focus more resources on teaching, learning and pupil/student support. As a multi-academy trust of over 3000 pupils and students, and 9 schools, we would have access to the School Condition Allocation (SCA) which would enable us to access capital funding for our school buildings.
- **As local authority capacity to support schools reduces, the national expectation is that schools will group together to support – and challenge – each other** through effective governance and accountability at local level. As good and outstanding schools working together in a strong Teaching School Alliance, we are very well-placed to achieve this.

WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL BENEFITS AND POTENTIAL CHALLENGES OF SETTING UP A MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST?

The rapid growth of academies across England does not mean that this approach is right for every school. Heads and governors have spent much of the past few months considering benefits and risks of converting to academy status and exploring different structures. This has helped us to develop a structure which heads and governing bodies think will be both effective and also preserve our values and existing strengths, including the distinctiveness of our schools.

One important feature of our proposed structure is that our MAT can include both church and community schools. This is explained more clearly in the proposed MAT structure (please see below).

We already provide many benefits for schools, pupils, students and staff through our existing activities. The key additional practical benefits for our schools, learners and staff of establishing a multi-academy trust are:

- **Strong governance** at a strategic level, clearer local accountability for school improvement, and more capacity to support each school
- **More financial stability** and sustainability at a time of shrinking funding and rising costs, and an **opportunity to strengthen our schools' organisation and infrastructure** – facilities (eg buildings and grounds, ICT, catering), finance, and HR functions
- **Greater opportunities for recruiting new staff**, retaining our existing staff, leadership development and staff professional development
- **Choosing our own structure** and reducing the risk of our own schools becoming part of other multi-academy trusts, with an 'external' sponsor, if any became 'eligible for intervention' by the DfE

Potential challenges for us – and how they can be addressed

- **Our schools would no longer be local authority maintained, but would still be part of the network of North Yorkshire schools:** the view of the council is now that “every school should have the space and freedom to make the best decisions for the children of the community that they serve both now and into the future”.
- **The MAT would be taking on more significant and complex financial, legal and employment commitments**, but would be able to appoint new, or train existing, staff to do this – or continue to buy services from the local authority or other providers as schools do at present
- **We need to make sure that our school leaders and governors are able to focus on leading and governing their schools** during any significant change process by using funding from the government (£25,000 per school) to help create expertise and capacity to carry out the legal and other processes involved
- **We need to get the balance right** between individual school autonomy and the 'collective' accountability of the multi-academy trust ('MAT'). We have done this by developing a 'Scheme of Delegation' which outlines the responsibilities and relationships between the schools, governing bodies and the MAT Board.
- **We need to make sure that our MAT governance arrangements are both representative of our schools** and wider community **and of the range of skills and qualities needed** to be effective. We have been very fortunate that a number of people from our locality have relevant knowledge about running complex organisations, and have experience of school

governance, and have offered, through school governing bodies, to be Members or Trustees in the STAR MAT.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT – WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME?

In a MAT, the Trust becomes the employer, not the local authority, and the ‘TUPE’ arrangements guarantee that all staff transfer on their existing pay, pensions and conditions. The Trust can choose to continue to buy (as the schools currently do) North Yorkshire payroll services to administer staff payment arrangements, and to buy other services from the local authority too, if they represent high quality and good value. **Schools are not financially disadvantaged by becoming academies**, and indeed, they receive some additional funding to help them fulfil some of the functions carried out by the local authority. Further additional funding continues to be available for learners with special needs, for pupil premium, etc

Each school will retain its own unique identity and distinctive characteristics, and the daily life of the schools will continue to be run, as now, by the headteacher and local governing body. Our existing partnership activities around teaching and learning, curriculum enrichment, staff development, joint training, guidance and support for vulnerable children and young people will all continue and grow.

The most important differences concern governance and accountability. Multi-academy trusts are governed by Boards of Trustees who are chosen for their relevant skills and experience, their willingness to commit time to the role (they are unpaid), and their ability to both challenge and support the work of the schools.

The Board of Trustees are appointed by five ‘Members’ who represent the local and wider community, and in our case, The Diocese of York . Because the proposed MAT will include Church of England schools, a majority of members are nominated by the diocese to ensure that the trust will guarantee that those schools retain a Christian ethos.

It is the duty of Members to appoint Trustees who have a wide range of skills and experience – not just on education, but also on finance, legal matters, HR, facilities management etc. The intention of our schools is that they can also have a strong voice at Trustee level, and a number of proposed Trustees have experience of school governance. There will be a close link between the Trust Board and our proposed Chairs of Governors’ Group.

The Board of Trustees is accountable to the government for both funding and school standards. Schools continue to have their own headteachers and governing bodies (‘Local Governing Bodies’), which continue to have parent and staff representatives, and ‘foundation governors’ in CE schools. Schools will have high levels of autonomy as they do under local authority control, but the funding will come ‘through’ the MAT under a ‘Master Funding Agreement’ between the MAT and the DfE. The MAT Board agrees the school budgets, and there is a scheme of financial delegation which sets out what spending decisions the school can take. The Local Governing Body is

accountable to the Board of Trustees for standards and outcomes for pupils and students, and the Board can intervene to support and challenge the governors if there are concerns about the school.

A key ‘new’ role is that of the Chief Education Officer. In the same way that each school must have a designated headteacher, a MAT has to have a designated leader (sometimes referred to as a Chief Executive Officer or CEO). The role of the CEO is to work with both the Board of Trustees and the other Headteachers in developing the life and work of the MAT, with a particular focus on teaching, learning and school standards. There would still be the expectation that heads and other staff would continue to play a vital part in leading activities across the partnership in much the same way as they do now. There would be a transparent and robust recruitment process for this role, which would be undertaken by The Board of Trustees once appointed.

What Will The Structure of The STAR MAT Look Like?

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| MEMBERS (5) |
| Members to be The Diocese of York Educational Trust (DYET), 2 DYET appointees, and two from our local communities |
| The Members appoint the Board of Trustees |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board of Trustees (up to 11) will be chosen by the Members on the basis of their relevant skills and experience in education, facilities management, HR, legal matters and finance, as well as their understanding of our schools and communities. DYET will also be entitled to appoint a Trustee. • The Trustees are accountable for standards across the schools in the multi-academy trust, and for the funding, which comes directly from the government. • There will be a number of committees: Audit, Finance and Resources, Standards, Church School Scrutiny |
| The Trustees appoint the Chief Education Officer |
| The Chief Education Officer is accountable to the Trustees. He or she works closely with the headteachers, and is the link between the schools and the Board of Trustees. The headteacher group is, in effect, the ‘senior leadership’ group of the MAT, and works together to ensure coherence in implementing trust-wide priorities across the schools. The Chairs of Governors group will meet on a regular basis, and is an important forum for ensuring two-way communication between individual schools and the Board of Trustees |
| Individual schools will be led by their headteachers and local school governing bodies (including parent and staff representatives), supported by the Trust Board. Schools have high levels of autonomy, but the Trust Board and CEO will have the authority to intervene and support a school that is at risk of becoming vulnerable. Individual schools keep their unique identity, name and distinctiveness |
| Some services may be shared between all of the schools – eg finance, facilities management, HR functions, ICT systems. Some will be provided ‘in-house’, others by ‘external providers’, including the local authority. There will be a very strong shared focus on teaching, learning and raising standards, building on the success of the STAR Teaching School Alliance |

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- Formal consultation will begin on Wednesday 13th December 2017, and continue until January 26th 2018.
- There is a consultation questionnaire with this letter. If you would like to give your views, or have any questions, please complete it and return it to your/your child's school (if staff member or parent/carer) or your nearest school if a local resident, or email to STAR-MATProjectTeam@mfschool.net
- There will be opportunities for staff briefings in each school and unions will be consulted too
- All are welcome to a consultation event at Tadcaster Methodist Church (40 High Street, Tadcaster LS24 9AT) on Monday 22nd January from 18.30 to 20.00 to find out more
- If you are unable to make the event, please make arrangements to see the headteacher at your local school
- Governing Bodies are invited to meet on Monday 15th January at Sherburn High School (18.30 to 20.00) to consider any issues which have arisen so far during the consultation period
- This will provide an opportunity to decide whether or not to proceed further with the application
- Applications are considered by the Regional Schools Commissioner for The North (a DfE post), advised by a Headteacher Advisory Board, who decides on whether or not to approve the application.
- If the application is approved, the government provides funding (£25,000 per school) to pay for the legal and other costs of conversion; during this time, the Members, Board of Trustees and Chief Education Officer would be formally appointed
- This process will take several months, after which the schools formally convert to academy status – possibly during the Summer Term 2018

Headteacher

Chair of Governors

December 13th 2017