

Dear Parents and Carers,

As you may be aware, there are a growing number of schools converting to academy status. Following the success of Embark Federation which comprises Smalley Richardson Endowed Primary and Kilburn Junior schools, the governors of Embark alongside those of Aldercar Infant and Nursery, Heath Primary Community School, Horsley Woodhouse Primary School, Howitt Primary Community School and Longford Church of England Primary School have agreed to consult on a proposal to convert to academies and form a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The schools will be equal partners within the MAT.

As part of the decision-making process, the governing boards are committed to undertaking full consultation with their communities and will take their views into account before any final decision is made.

This is a strong group of schools making a positive decision together, all sharing our four core beliefs of Family, Integrity, Teamwork and Success. Our shared vision is to create 'stand out' schools at the heart of their communities. We are excited by the potential to be even stronger together for the good of our children. Amongst our group, we have two National Leaders of Education, two National Support Schools, a National Leader of Governance to lead our trustees as well as amazing practitioners with expertise across all of the schools.

In forming a MAT, the over-riding concern of governors is to ensure that our school continues to provide the best possible standard of education and care for our children. With this in mind, we are keen to hear your views.

### **Key points of forming a Multi-Academy Trust**

- Our school will retain its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now with the same school uniform, school name, school times, holiday pattern and admission policy. Most of the changes will be behind the scenes.
- Schools retain their current headteacher and they will continue to lead the school on a day to day basis alongside a local governing board whilst receiving support and challenge from the MAT to ensure the best provision for our children.
- The creation of a MAT means funding for running our schools comes directly to us, meaning we have more control over how it is spent. It will also mean some services can be shared across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children.

Academy status is becoming more common and the government and many local authorities have encouraged and supported schools to organise themselves within groups, such as federations or MATs. As their budgets are reduced, local authorities are also reducing the services that they have available to schools. Making this change now means that we can choose how we want our school to develop.

In the last few months our local authority has made it clear that it expects all schools to consider the pros and cons of such a move. Becoming an academy means removing the school from the control of the local authority. The decision to consider changing our structure has not been taken lightly and all the governing boards have spent a long time looking at the possible advantages and drawbacks of such a move.

Advantages of forming a MAT:

- Research suggests working together as a group of schools raises standards.
- We have focussed on our children from the outset of our discussions with the Embark Federation and they have designed the Embark Award, which will provide a wide range of wider opportunities for all children in the schools involved in the Multi Academy Trust. Parents can look at the Embark award on Smalley Richardson Primary School's website.
- It will help us recruit and retain the best staff and give them the very best development and career opportunities.
- School leaders and teachers can share thinking and planning, helping to spread expertise.
- Governors and trustees can work more strategically, especially during challenging times.
- Groups of schools can find it easier to find and fund specialist expertise (both specialist teachers and specialists in areas such as data analysis, finance, health and safety)
- The MAT structure leaves headteachers to focus on teaching and learning (with the business-side of the role being more coordinated across the MAT).
- Economies of scale can help schools cope better with shrinking budgets.
- We'll have greater freedoms in developing the curriculum to make sure it is personalised to the needs of our pupils.
- We'll be able to create new posts across the MAT that would not have been possible in any one individual school, for example, speech therapy.
- Shared professional development can more easily be arranged and afforded.

Governors believe that academy status within a MAT is the best way to support the school in continuing to develop and improve, and that working together within the MAT will bring benefits to teaching and learning and this will impact positively on children's achievement.

This is a positive decision that we are making as a group of schools, this way we can shape our future together in the best interests of our children, staff and communities.

**What we would like you to do:**

We would like to know what you think of our proposals, so we invite you to take part in our public consultation which will run between Monday 18 June and Sunday 15 July 2018.

We will be holding a consultation day at each school which will give you the opportunity to find out more about the proposed Trust and ask any questions that you may have. The details for Howitt Primary Community School are as follows:

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June**

**9:00-10:00** – informal coffee morning with headteacher, senior leaders, chief executive and trustee representatives of the proposed Embark MAT.

**3:30 – 4:30** – staff to meet with headteacher, senior leaders, chief executive and trustee representatives of the proposed Embark MAT to discuss the proposal and ask any questions they may have.

**6:00-7:00** – a parents' meeting held at **Howitt Primary Community School** for parents/carers to come and find out more about the proposal and ask any questions of the headteacher, senior leaders, chief executive and trustee representatives of the proposed Embark MAT

Please also read the **Frequently Asked Questions** attached with this letter.

Please send any questions and views, positive or negative to [consultation@embarkfed.derbyshire.sch.uk](mailto:consultation@embarkfed.derbyshire.sch.uk). or alternatively you may write into the school.

We do hope that you will contribute your views to the consultation and look forward to seeing you at one of the events or hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

Lynn Pilling

Headteacher