

Email: consultation@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk

Website: www.buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk

Dear Parents and Carers,

Proposal to convert to Academy status and join the Embark Federation Multi-Academy Trust Consultation meeting.

The Governing body of Buxton Community School have resolved to consult with stakeholders, staff, parents and carers on the proposal to convert to academy status and join the **Embark Federation Multi-Academy Trust**.

The consultation period will run from Monday 9th May until Friday 17th June.

This has been discussed thoroughly at Governing Body level. We have taken great care to explore all possible options to ensure that the students of Buxton Community school are placed in the strongest position for the future.

The governing body agreed that making this decision together with three other strong secondary schools from within Derbyshire will strengthen the provision for our young people now and long in to the future. We have chosen EMBARK as we share their core beliefs of Family, Integrity, Teamwork and Success. We also believe in their 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.

In joining a Multi-Academy Trust (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 joining 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 leadership structure with an individual headteacher and who will lead the school on a day to day basis alongside a local governing team whilst receiving support and challenge from the MAT to ensure the best provision for our children.
- The joining 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, over 70% of secondary schools now belong to a trust and many local authorities have encouraged and supported schools to organise themselves within groups, such as federations or MATs. The recent government white paper has also highlighted the national ambition for all schools to belong to a MAT by 2030 at the latest. 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 and play a part in shaping the future of secondary education across the county. 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 bodies have spent a long time looking at the possible advantages and drawbacks of such a move.

Advantages of joining a MAT:

- Research strongly suggests working together as a group of schools raises standards.
- It will help us recruit and retain the best staff and give them the absolute 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 will have greater freedoms in developing the curriculum to make sure it is personalised to the needs of our pupils.
- We will be able to create and share staffing roles that operate across the MAT that would not have been possible in any one individual school
- 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 on children's achievement.

This is a positive decision that the four secondary schools are making together, 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 plans, so we invite you to take part in our public consultation which will run between Monday 9th May and Friday 17th June.

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.

Buxton Community School Consultation day - Friday 20th May

9:00-10:00am – informal coffee morning for parents to be held at **Buxton Community School** with headteacher, senior leaders, chief executive and trustee representatives of the proposed Embark MAT. If you would like to attend, please come along to reception between those times and you will be made very welcome.

There will also be the opportunity for parents to request an individual online meeting to discuss their thoughts, and information about how to book in will be sent very soon.

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

You are welcome to send any questions and views, positive or negative to consultation@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk or alternatively you may write into the school.

Yours sincerely,



Judy Vale
Chair of Governors

Frequently Asked Questions about Multi-Academy Trusts

Question	Answer
What is an Academy?	Academies are state schools which are free from local authority control and directly funded by the Department for Education. They have greater freedoms to determine how the schools funding is utilised to optimise the educational outcomes for their pupils.
How will our school change if it becomes an academy?	To our students, families and our staff, the school will seem unchanged immediately after conversion. We expect that over time however, teaching in the classroom will improve further as best practice and innovative ideas are shared across the trust. The school will continue to focus on the needs of our children and provide a caring, safe and stimulating environment where your child is encouraged to reach their full potential.
Has the decision to convert to an Academy already been made?	No! Until the consultation has been completed and everyone's views have been obtained, a decision will not be made. The governing board must weigh up the pros and cons of academy conversion.
What is in it for our children?	Children have been at the centre of our discussions when considering forming a multi-academy trust. We will look to offer our children the best possible teaching and learning and are committed to providing a wider offer of opportunities for our children and an improved quality of education through better support for staff.
What is in it for the staff?	Embark Federation is committed to its staff and has recently been chosen to showcase this for a national case study on staff workload and well-being. Staff will have opportunities to develop their careers within the trust rather than having to seek promotions elsewhere. Working together as a group of schools mean that we can provide even better quality professional development for staff. Terms and conditions remain the same and indeed we will be looking to enhance these for staff when possible.
Would the name of the school change?	No! The school has a unique identity within the community and the trust will not enforce a change to the school's name or uniform.
Why is our school considering becoming an academy?	Given the changes to the local and national educational landscape, the recent government white paper outlining the national changes with all schools becoming academies by

	<p>2030 and the governors feel that now is the time to take control of our own future.</p> <p>Governors considered the decision to become an academy and be part of the set-up of the Embark Federation Multi-Academy Trust (subject to consultation) because of the benefits for the students and staff as well as because government policy is clearly directing schools towards academy status.</p>
Will the curriculum change?	All the schools within the trust will continue to provide a balanced curriculum and will be judged against national standards, which to a considerable extent, are based on the National Curriculum. We will have the freedoms to develop personalised curriculums for our children where appropriate and valuable.
Will children with additional funding for SEND be affected by the proposed changes	No. EHCP and other SEND funding follows pupils and children with additional or special needs, so they will continue to receive the same levels of support as they do now. High needs funding will still be provided by the local authority even if we are an academy. Our view is that we will be able to enhance provision for all groups of students as the trust will be able to develop its own structures to support more effectively
How will this affect the relationships between local schools?	The schools have strong collaborative working relationships within their clusters and this will continue. We will work together with local schools and Embark will work closely with other trusts sharing ideas and best practice.
Will Ofsted inspections continue?	The position is the same whether schools are academies and inspections will continue in the same way
What is the legal status of the land the school occupies?	The land will be leased from the local authority for 125 years initially. The land stays in public ownership and subject to the same protections.
Would there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?	Schools will still be obliged to adhere to the Admissions Code and any changes would have to comply. The local authority administers this and would still have overall authority to ensure schools are complying with the code.
Will the final decision be taken by the governors?	The governors have the final say but will consult with parents, staff and the LA. The governors' role is to act in the best interests of their school, children and community .
Who employs the staff in an academy?	The trust itself is the employer, not the local authority as it is currently.
Will terms and conditions for staff change? Are their jobs secure?	<p>At no point has the governing board considered that varying any staff contract would be in the interests of the school. No changes are envisaged, the nationally agreed teacher's pay settlement would continue to be applied and local government support staff agreements have been honoured in the same way.</p> <p>Embark Federation wishes to become an employer of choice</p>

	<p>and enhance terms and conditions for staff.</p> <p>The school recognises the importance of all staff to the life and ethos of the school. Staff are valued, their opinions are important and good employee relationships are the bedrock to the continuing improvement of outcomes for children.</p>
Can we afford the set up costs of becoming an academy?	<p>Each school is awarded a £25,000 by the Department for Education to cover the costs of setting up. The governors have carefully assessed the costs and concluded that the transfer can be met without using any of its current budget for running the school.</p>
How is an academy funded?	<p>Academies are funded directly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (part of the Department for Education). https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/education-and-skills-funding-agency</p> <p>This means that each school will receive 100% of their grant rather than some of this being diverted to the local authority.</p>

If you have any further questions, please direct them on email to consultation@buxton.derbyshire.sch.uk