

What's the proposal?

The proposal in simple terms is that Luddenden CE School becomes an academy within Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust.

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

This means that our school would be part of a wider group of independent schools.

Academies are independent, state-funded schools who receive their funding directly from central government rather than the local authority.

The daily running of the school is still with the headteacher but they are overseen by academy trusts (instead of the Local Authority).

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership. In a Multi Academy Trust each school has converted to an Academy. In the future, it will be possible for other schools/Academies to join the Trust.

Why is this happening?

The Governing Body and Leadership team recognised that at some point in the future it may be required to join an Academy Trust.

Over the last few years it has explored a number of potential options in great detail

The opportunity to join Learning Accord MAT presented itself relatively recently and the Leadership team and Governors have spent a lot of time talking to the Trust's CEO and between themselves to thrash out the opportunities, issues, concerns and benefits around whether this would be a good option for Luddenden CE School. Our children and the identity and values of our school were at the heart of all these discussions.

Learning Accord is already an established and successful MAT. After much thought it is felt that this is a very positive step for our school going forward and the best option we have or are likely to be able to explore.

We have provisionally made a (unanimous) decision that the opportunities Learning Accord MAT can provide for us (and vice versa) are the most positive option.

When will it happen?

Once the final decision is made this can happen relatively quickly and most likely before the end of this calendar year.

The Trust needs to complete due diligence on our school and our school needs to go through the legal procedure to become part of the MAT.

Staff and union consultations are also ongoing alongside this.

Why are you considering this particular option – what were the alternatives?

As we said earlier, other options have been explored but not to the satisfaction of Governors or the senior leadership team.

The risks associated with waiting could be that we have to accept something or be directed towards something which doesn't fit the school or our pupils' needs.

I want to know more about Learning Accord MAT?

Here's what Elaine Watson, CEO, says about the trust;

The Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust is an inclusive trust which welcomes church and community schools and celebrates diversity and distinctive context. We recognise that for our learners, life chances are formed throughout their primary education. Our responsibility is to celebrate each child's talents and build upon each child's experiences to ensure that they make the progress that they deserve. Our aim is that all will flourish and achieve the highest standards.

The Board of Trustees of the Learning Accord MAT is committed to ensuring a high performing multi academy trust that delivers the very best educational experience for pupils at all of our academies. The Trust aims to respond to the changing educational landscape as more and more schools convert to academy status. This document sets out how we will plan, guide, support and improve our academies including schools that will join the Trust. We will ensure that the Trust has a clear focus on improving leadership and governance, and teaching and learning, and on raising standards.

Our business model is built upon the premise that we deliver efficiency, effectiveness, increasing economies of scale whilst sustaining high standards and a culture of positivity. Our intention is to grow our central team to respond to our growth strategy in order to maximise our resources and achieve greater capacity.

I am delighted to have a talented and skilled Board of Trustees which provides both effective support and direct challenge. This ensures that the Trust is committed to developing all of its employees, both teaching and non-teaching. As a multi academy trust, we provide a supportive climate for all of our academies in which to develop, with the leadership and track record to succeed.

What if we do nothing?

We're not sure what the future holds and what the Government may enforce in terms of academisation.

The risk could be that we run out time to find the most suitable option for our school and have to join a trust that does not support our ethos.

Plus, as funding for schools becomes tighter, being part of a larger group of schools provides financial benefits over time.

What benefits will there be?

One of the main benefits is the schools in the Trust being able to access shared services. Whereas our school has to appoint its own providers and has its own contracts for certain services (e.g. IT, human resources, legal etc.) the Trust will have a service which is available to all schools.

As well as sharing our best practices with other schools we will also be able to benefit from the expertise, facilities etc. across the other schools in the MAT.

The main point is that nothing changes in the day to day running of school unless we want it to and we are set to benefit financially and in terms of resources as above.

What are the staff's views on this?

The staff are aware and supportive of the proposal. They have met with members of the trust and had a number of opportunities to discuss the implications and possibilities with regards joining the trust.

What changes will we see?

The day to day running of the school will remain exactly the same.

The Governing Body and leadership team will still have the same authority over our school and importantly the children will see little or no differences.

We will continue to teach the National Curriculum and follow all the statutory regulations governing all schools and will still be subject to Ofsted inspections.

As we do now, we will continue to accept pupils regardless of background or ability and will serve the unique needs of every child within the school.

Will the school name change?

No. Unless the school decides to change its name it stays the same and we have no plans to do this.

Will the uniform change?

No. Unless the school decides to change its uniform it stays the same and we have no plans to do this.

Will holiday dates change?

No. We are in control of our holiday dates and have no plans to change them.

I'm worried about continuity of teaching?

The school will still make its own decisions with regard to teaching staff, recruitment etc. so there will be no difference.

Will Treetops change?

Treetops will continue to run as usual. The school will still have decision making authority around out of school care provision. There are no plans to make any changes.

Will there be any change to school lunch provision/provider/cost?

We are happy with our current provider and have no plans to make any changes as long as they remain cost effective.

Will there be any impact on school trips /swimming lessons /free fruit and milk?

There will be no impact on school trips as these are funded by parents.

In terms of swimming lessons, these are currently funded by school not the local authority so there will be no change.

Those children who receive free fruit and milk will continue to do so.

What happens to our 'CE' status and links with the church and diocese?

Nothing would change.

The Learning Accord Multi Academy Trust is an inclusive trust which welcomes both church and community schools.

Luddenden CE would still have links with St Mary's Church and the diocese as it does now and would dictate its own curriculum and activities in terms of religious education and activities.

What if the parents don't want this to happen?

We are having a consultation meeting to give parents the opportunity to air their views on this.

If there are any issues and concerns raised at this meeting we can work with the Trust, Governors and leadership team to provide answers and assurances. If any major issues arise which the Governors had not considered these will be taken very seriously.

We hope that given the chance to digest all the relevant information and understand the alternatives that parents will agree this is in the best interests of the school.

The final decision on whether to go ahead lies with the Governing Body.

How does this affect the school financially?

The school receives an amount of money per pupil every year. A small percentage of this amount will go to the Trust to provide shared services etc. for the schools within the MAT.

Currently the Local Authority take a cut of the funding we receive so it won't cost us more than we currently pay out.

This contribution will give us access to shared services and economies of scale that being part of a larger body would enable. The benefits of this would increase as the number of pupils in the MAT does.

This doesn't include Pupil Premium, Early Years of Special Educational Needs funding, additional income or any fundraising that is done by school. This money stays with Luddenden CE.

The school will also receive a grant to convert to academy status and to invest in further school improvement.

What if we don't like it when we've joined?

Once a school has joined a MAT it can't leave. However, the work we've done with the Trust's CEO and between ourselves gives us confidence that this is the best option for our school.

This is the same for any school converting to Academy status.

How can I find out more?

Please do not hesitate to email any questions, concerns or comments you may have.