



April 2018

PROPOSAL FOR THE FORMATION OF THE NENE VALLEY PARTNERSHIP MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Dear Parents and Carers,

Many of you will already be aware that during the previous academic year, the Governors had been considering a move to academy status and were actively exploring a range of models for this process that would be of most benefit to Wollaston school and the local educational community. As a Governing Body, we have continued to explore these options with the Department for Education, Northamptonshire County Council and most importantly, our local partner schools.

We are now pleased to outline our initial plans for the formation of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), initially comprising of Bozeat Community Primary School, Irchester Community Primary School and Wollaston School. The working title for our MAT is the Nene Valley Partnership and although we are establishing this partnership as three schools initially, we have a longer-term vision for the MAT to grow and incorporate other local partner primary schools in due course. We believe that this will be a unique opportunity to promote educational excellence and cohesion in the local area.

There is clear evidence of the benefits of schools working together and of how Multi Academy Trusts can formalise this type of partnership working to provide coherent educational provision for the benefit of all students in partnership schools.

Although there is no longer a compulsion for schools to work within a MAT structure, there are a number of benefits and opportunities which forming a MAT may present, and details of the rationale for this proposal can be found below. Furthermore, within our local area we are fortunate that most schools currently remain under local authority control, meaning that there is an opportunity to establish a local MAT, ultimately comprising of a number of local schools to establish and sustain a coherent and collaborative community education provision.

The Vision

We believe that working in partnership is the best way of securing a long term, high standard of education for all of the children and families that we serve. The Nene Valley Partnership will be established with the following principles:

- Educational excellence and ambition for all;
- A coherent approach to local education for our community, from ages 4-18;
- A partnership of schools, each with their own character, ethos and a mission to serve the needs of their local communities;
- A commitment to outstanding local educational provision; with the MAT enabling schools to support and challenge each other – with school improvement and shared expertise and resources at the heart of our work.

The Proposal

- Wollaston School, Irchester Community Primary School and Bozeat Community Primary School will establish a Multi Academy Trust with the working name of The Nene Valley Partnership;
- Each School is applying to the Department for Education to become an academy, working within the above newly established Multi Academy Trust;

- Formal consultation with the community will begin once applications have provisional approval from the Department for Education;
- The MAT is aiming to become operational in the autumn term of 2018;
- The Nene Valley Partnership will be established with a clear growth plan and will work with other local schools to grow a MAT that includes a range of local educational provision. For further detail – please see the FAQs.

This is an exciting time for all three schools and we believe it is a great opportunity for all of the schools in the local area to work in partnership on forging an excellent, community focused local education system, which drives school improvement and lays long term foundations for educational excellence in our locality.

Further information will follow, once we have provisional approval from the Department for Education. This will then mark the start of a formal consultation period, with the views of a wide range of stakeholders to be sought. As with any significant change, we know there are likely to be many questions which arise during the consultation period and we are keen to learn of the views of all of our stakeholders. In the meantime, if there are any urgent issues that you would like to discuss, and which are not addressed in the following FAQs, please contact myself at the school on headteacher@wollaston-school.net.

Yours sincerely,



Mr James Birkett
Headteacher



Mr Michael Thomas
Chair of Governors



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Will the names of each school change?

There will be no changes to the name of any school in the partnership. We are totally committed to preserving the unique identity and traditions of each school who chooses to join the Nene Valley Partnership.

Will the school uniform change?

As with the school name, there will be no changes to school uniform or identity. We believe strongly in preserving the ethos and characteristics of every school in the partnership and we can see no advantage in changing either the uniform or the identity of the school as a result of a move to academy status.

Will there be any changes to term dates and holidays?

There are no changes proposed to the timings, placement or quantity of school days and holidays at each school.

Will there be any changes to the timings of the school day?

There are no changes proposed to the timings of the school day at any school.

Will there be any changes to the leadership at each school?

All schools in the Nene Valley Partnership will continue to be led by their existing Headteachers.

Will there be any changes to the curriculum?

There will be no immediate changes to the curriculum at any school in the short term. However, one of the benefits of establishing a multi academy trust is to embed best practice across all schools. This may evolve into a more harmonised approach to some elements of the curriculum over time. For example, the possibility of a shared approach to teaching Modern Foreign Languages across the Nene Valley Partnership.

Will this affect school admissions?

Academies do have the authority to change their admissions arrangements only after consultation with local communities and stakeholders. This has not been a reason for the formation of the MAT, nor is there any planned change to current admission arrangements. However, as the Trust grows in the years ahead, it may be that attendance at a school within the trust becomes a selection criterion for admission to Wollaston School. This would be part of The Nene Valley Partnership's aim to provide excellent and coherent education from age 4 – 18. The newly formed trust would of course continue to follow the national admissions code.

How will The Nene Valley Partnership be different to other Academy chains?

At the heart of this proposal is a locally based decision making structure and a shared approach to education. Although a Trust board will have accountability for the MAT, Local Governing Bodies will be retained at every school who joins the MAT, both now and in the future. This will ensure that the identity, ethos and character of every village school can be secured and developed by those best placed to do so – the local leaders and Governors.

The Nene Valley Partnership will be a MAT which will operate only within a tight geographical area – one of our core aims is to guarantee the community education which is so valued by our students, parents and staff. Once the MAT is established, there will be a clear growth plan to invite other local schools to join The Nene Valley Partnership. The eligibility criteria for schools to join the trust will be those schools and villages that are listed in any part of the Wollaston School Admissions criteria. This will ensure that the trust focuses its efforts on serving the needs of local children in a coherent educational structure.

For the avoidance of doubt; the proposed MAT will not seek to operate any other secondary school and will not expand beyond the confines of the local geographical area. Our research into successful MATs leads us to believe that a coherent, local organisation is the best way of ensuring excellent educational provision for our community.

We believe that there is a unique opportunity within our local area to use the advantages of forming a MAT to ensure high standards of educational excellence for every child who attends a partnership school. Both within Northamptonshire and nationally, many schools are converting to academies at a rapid rate. Often this can happen without any local co-ordination or coherence, leading to a fractured local education provision and schools isolated from the benefits of partnership working. There is a unique opportunity now to formalise the collaboration and partnerships between our schools which may not exist in the future.

What other options have been considered?

Remaining with the Local Authority (LA) is an option. However, we would be likely to lose the option to establish a local MAT at any stage in the future. Wollaston is now the only Secondary School in Northamptonshire to remain under LA control and almost half of primary schools are now academies with many planning to convert.

The proposal for the MAT does not mean that work with Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) will cease. If anything, quite the reverse will be the case. We have kept the LA abreast of our plans and are continuing to work with NCC on a range of school improvement activities.

Consideration has also been given to joining an existing MAT. However, this would lose the local geographical structure that is so central to the Nene Valley Partnership. In planning educational excellence for our local community; a bespoke, newly formed MAT was deemed more likely to result in a partnership of schools who provide educational excellence for the needs of their local communities.

What are the benefits of Forming a MAT?

In short, we believe that the benefits lie within establishing a local trust to ensure educational excellence for every student who attends a partnership school. We serve the same families and the same children and the primary benefit is in the power to take decisions at a local level and ensure a 4-18 education system which is both coherent and inspiring.

Some examples of how this would work practically include harmonisation of progress tracking, curriculum and transition; best practice in specific subjects or pedagogy being shared throughout partnership schools and coherent and sustained opportunities for children in all aspects of their learning. Support for families and children would also be co-ordinated to ensure greater cohesion throughout their school careers, ensuring that every child is supported in reaching their potential. Students would also benefit from enhanced opportunities across the curriculum – from specialist subject days, to visiting staff, to enjoying the best of local education provision. All would contribute to an inspiring education with clear processes to secure effective provision.

Establishing a MAT with a clear growth plan also provides the opportunity to forge a lead role in establishing the trust as a hub of local educational excellence. We are fortunate to have great practice in many of our village schools – the trust would be a mechanism to share this practice, to establish centres of expertise, to train teachers across our partnership and to provide the very best professional development for our workforce. MATs are also able to bid for additional funding to play a lead role in both the Local Authority and wider educational community leading to ever-improving teaching and learning and effective school development.

Where are we now?

The Governing Bodies of each of the three founding schools have voted to pursue the proposal to establish the Nene Valley Partnership MAT. They have established a MAT development group, comprised of the Headteachers of all three schools in addition to Governors from each school and a clerk to run the meetings.

What Happens Next?

Each school has completed an application to establish the Nene Valley Partnership MAT and convert to an academy. If this is given provisional approval by the Department for Education, the MAT development Group will then run a formal consultation to gather the views of stakeholders, including parents, staff, neighbouring schools and local community groups. There will be information evenings at all schools and the opportunity to learn more about the proposals.

Due diligence will also be carried out by the Department for Education, the Local Authority and the three schools themselves to understand any obstacles or risks in forming the MAT. Legal representation will also be secured to ensure a smooth transition and this is funded through a grant from the Department for Education.