



1st October 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

CONSULTATION ON THE FORMATION OF THE NENE VALLEY PARTNERSHIP MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Many of you will be aware that during the last academic year, the Governors have been considering a move to academy status and have been actively exploring a range of models for this process.

As a Governing Body, we have submitted our application to the Department for Education for the formation of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) which will be called The Nene Valley Partnership, to initially comprise of Wollaston School, Bozeat Community Primary School and Irchester Community Primary School.

Over the summer our application was approved and as a result we are now pleased to enter into formal consultation with you as parents and carers. Separate consultations will also take place with students, staff and the wider communities of each school.

The period of consultation will be from **1st October 2018 - 1st November 2018** and will give you the opportunity to raise any thoughts you may have and to ask any questions in relation to the establishment of the MAT.

We believe that the formation of the Nene Valley Partnership will provide an important opportunity to promote educational excellence and cohesion in the local area. We have a longer term vision for the MAT to grow and incorporate other local schools in due course.

There is clear evidence of the benefits of schools working together and 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 many of the primary schools currently remain under Local Authority control, meaning that there is an opportunity to establish a local MAT, ultimately comprising 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 Nene Valley Partnership will be established during the Spring Term 2019 with a clear growth plan and will work with other local schools to grow a MAT which includes a range of local educational provision.

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 focussed local education system, which drives school improvement and lays long term foundations for educational excellence in our locality.

As with any significant change, we know there may be questions which arise during the consultation period and we are keen to learn of the views of all of our stakeholders. If there are any issues that you would like to discuss or you have any questions which are not addressed in the following FAQs, please email them to AcademyConsultation@wollaston-school.net.

If there should be any issue that you would prefer to discuss face-to face I will be available from **4.00pm – 6.00pm on Wednesday 31st October** to meet with you at the school. It would be very helpful if you could let Mrs Louisa Nixon, the Headteacher's PA, know if you plan to attend. Mrs Nixon can be contacted on l.nixon@wollaston-school.net.

Yours sincerely



Dr M J K Thomas
Chair of Governors, Wollaston School



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 (NVP).

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 (MAT) 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 local 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 initially 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.

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 NVP 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 only one of two Secondary Schools 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?

Each school has received approval from the Secretary of State for Education and the Department for Education to convert to Academy Status and establish the NVP MAT.

During October 2018, the Chairs of Governors at each school will conduct a consultation with all stakeholders. Following this, Governors will summarise the views exposed during the consultation period and address any arising questions or concerns.

What happens next?

Following the consultation, each school will begin preparing for the process of conversion. This is a legal process and solicitors will be appointed to manage this. A dedicated grant from the Department for Education covers the cost of this process. The aim is to have this completed during the Spring Term of 2019, which will enable the conversion of all 3 schools to academies and the formal establishment of the Nene Valley Partnership in April 2019.