



22nd November 2018

Dear Parents/Carers,

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

As you will be aware, a formal consultation was held from 1st October 2018 to 1st November 2018 at Bozeat Community Primary School, Irchester Community Primary School and Wollaston Secondary School. This was led by the respective Chair of Governors of each school.

We thank all who responded to the consultation and a summary of questions received and the responses from governors can be found overleaf. We received no objections to any of the schools converting to Academy Status, nor any objections to the formation of The Nene Valley Partnership.

Having addressed the questions overleaf, we are now pleased to begin the next stage in formally establishing our Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), The Nene Valley Partnership. This includes appointing a legal team to lead the process of conversion and to work with Northamptonshire County Council to ensure a smooth transition. As a newly established MAT, we have successfully bid for grants from the Department for Education to cover the cost of conversion, so all existing school budgets will be unaffected. We are planning to convert during the latter part of the Spring Term 2019.

This is an exciting time for all three schools, as we work together to make the vision of a local partnership, focused on a cohesive educational provision for students aged 4 to 18, a concrete reality.

We thank students, parents, staff and the wider community for all of their support and we look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead, to provide educational excellence and ambition for all.

Yours sincerely,

On Behalf of The Nene Valley Partnership,

Dr M J K Thomas
Chair of Governors
Wollaston School

Mrs J Lea
Chair of Governors
Irchester Community Primary School

Mr D Snape
Chair of Governors
Bozeat Community Primary School

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE FORMAL CONSULTATION TO ESTABLISH THE NENE VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE NENE VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

Where will the MAT be funded from or will it be self-funding?

Each individual school within the MAT will still receive its allocated funding; the only difference being that this will come directly from central government rather than from the local County Council. A small percentage of this funding, from each member school, will be "top-sliced" into the joint MAT funds, as is set-out in the rules of establishing a MAT. These funds will be used for joint projects aimed at school improvement across the participating schools with the aim of improving standards for all pupils within the schools and creating a cohesive education experience from age 4 to 18.

Why are there only 3 schools joining the MAT?

The Governors and Headteachers of all primary schools who are traditional partner schools with Wollaston Secondary School, were invited to attend information sessions regarding the establishing of a local MAT over the past 2 years. Irchester Community Primary School and Bozeat Community Primary School expressed the intention of establishing The Nene Valley Partnership at this initial stage, alongside Wollaston Secondary School. As detailed in the consultation document, it is the intention to invite other schools to join in the future, however the trustees will not accept applications from other schools from outside the local geographic area of the Nene Valley.

Would authorities be able to insist that particular schools join our Trust, particularly if they were failing? Will we be able to vet school who wish to join the trust?

The new MAT cannot be compelled to accept new schools against the wishes of the Trustees. The trust has a clear view that it would like to expand by the controlled inclusion of further primary schools within our immediate catchment area. The trust would certainly vet any application to join it.

How can our school express an interest to join The Nene Valley Partnership?

The Headteachers of the three schools which will initially form the MAT, have agreed that that there will be no immediate plan to expand it by adding more schools. However, we are very happy to come and talk to your Governing Body about the vision and aims of The Nene Valley Partnership.

It is likely that the earliest time that Expressions of Interest from new schools wishing to join the MAT will be September 2019.

Why are Wollaston Primary School not joining the MAT?

Wollaston School initially started discussing the formation of a Multi-Academy Trust in 2015, and at that point Wollaston Primary School expressed an interest in joining the trust. They did, however, want to academise at the earliest opportunity and other schools were not ready at that stage to convert. Wollaston Primary School therefore decided to join the INMAT Trust, converting on 1st April 2017. All three schools of The Nene Valley Partnership will continue to work closely and collaboratively with Wollaston Primary School.

Will new governors will be recruited on the same basis as currently?

Each school will retain an individual governing body with its members comprised in accordance with current rules. The only difference being that there will be no requirement for a designated "Local Authority" governor, and this will become a co-opted governor role similar to ones currently in place.

Will Parent Associations and fundraising monies be preserved to serve the school at which monies have been raised?

All Parent Association and Friends organisation funding will be retained in individual school budgets and will be used to benefit the children and schools at which the monies have been raised.



Will we be looking at the curriculum we offer, particularly at KS4?

Each school looks very carefully every year at the subjects and curriculum that we offer and there will be no change to this approach on conversion to Academy Status or when we establish The Nene Valley Partnership.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

What will the selection criteria be for attending Wollaston School? For example will the children from NVP schools have first refusal when attending?

As detailed in the consultation letter and FAQ's, admission criteria is one area that MAT's can determine for themselves. Once the MAT is formally established, each school would be able to set their individual admissions criteria. There will continue to be a commitment to ensuring a coherent local education provision and any proposed changes would be fully consulted on.

Will the admissions criteria give priority to children of staff working at the school?

Changing admission arrangements to any school will not be part of the conversion process. However, once The Nene Valley Partnership is formed, we will be able to set our own admission arrangements and we will consult on this. The suggestion is one that will be considered, because there are potential benefits for the recruitment and retention of excellent staff.

QUESTIONS REGARDING EMPLOYMENT BY THE NENE VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

What are the circumstances in which contractual variation is permitted under Trade Union Protected Employment (TUPE)? Realistically, how long will the TUPE conditions be applied to the new Academy? Which pension rights transfer across? Will the policy on the management of sickness and support to individuals be similar to that provided by NCC?

TUPE protects transferring employees from unfair dismissal and from changes to their terms and conditions, where the reason for the change is the TUPE transfer, unless it is with their agreement, or the academy feels certain that it can show an employment tribunal that it is for an economic, technical or organisational reason which entails changes in the workplace. There is no fixed timescale after which TUPE protection no longer applies unless a dispute is agreed by an employment tribunal.

It is the stated intention of the three Governing Bodies that the conversion to a MAT should change as little as possible regarding existing terms and conditions of their employees and that NCC policies should operate in a similar way as they now do. The TUPE Discussion Meetings, led by NCC, with all staff and their Professional Associations and Unions will be held next year, shortly before the actual conversion takes place, during which, the responses which are outlined above will be discussed and clarified.

Could hours of employment for employees change under the Academy in the future?

There is always the possibility that hours of work could vary in the future in any school whether they are part of a MAT or not. Initially it is not the intention of the Trustees to change working conditions of any member of staff.

Is there the opportunity for job roles to increase within the Academy if this proceeds?

The simple answer is "Yes", just as there is the possibility for an individual's role to increase within in the school at the moment.

COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION

What is the commitment to sport and supporting local sports clubs? Would we look at replacing the astro turf? Could local community clubs assist the MAT to help improve facilities at Wollaston?

The Nene Valley Partnership will continue to remain committed to sport and supporting local sports clubs.

The Governing Body of Wollaston School is aware that the Astroturf pitch needs to be replaced. It is a question of raising the funding for this to occur. As a trust we will be able to apply for grants which would not be available to Local Authority controlled schools. We would also be very keen to work with local community groups to support improving the sporting facilities at the school. Obviously, at this stage, much of the effort at school is directed towards the formation of the MAT, but we would be very interested in hearing any ideas that community groups might have about how we could work together in partnership to secure the necessary funding.

We have also received a message of support from a local Parish Council, who would also encourage other local schools to join the Nene Valley Partnership when appropriate.