

May 2018



SIR JAMES SMITH'S
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Local schools joining together to form a multi-academy trust (MAT)

This letter has gone out to all parents/carers with children attending the following schools: Camelford; Otterham; St Breward; St Teath; and Sir Jim's. Copies have been sent to other local schools.

You are probably aware that more and more schools are becoming academies and joining together to form multi-academy trusts or MATs. The government remains determined that all schools will become academies. In Cornwall the majority of secondary schools are academies and nearly half of all primary schools. Schools that convert to academies change their legal status and take over responsibility for running their affairs. With the government pushing academies, and as austerity bites more deeply and the local authority shrinks further, there is an inevitability that schools form local clusters to manage their own affairs.

Governors and senior leaders in our schools have decided now is the right time for our schools to join together in a formal arrangement. This will be North Cornwall's first planned primary-secondary academy trust. The proposed name is the 'North Cornwall Learning Trust' or NCLT. The trust will appoint a new Board of Trustees to oversee all the schools. Trustees will work closely with a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Financial Officer (CFO). It is recommended and normal practice that the CEO of a newly formed MAT is a serving headteacher. I expressed an interest in the role and this was supported by my headteacher colleagues.

There are lots of reasons why we think this would be good for all our schools. The fact that our schools have been working together for several years makes the process seem a natural progression. The MAT will usher in greater opportunities for pupils both in the classroom and beyond. By working together we are determined to raise standards. The continuing funding shortfall (in real terms) means schools need to work together to ensure constrained funding is used effectively. As local authority support withers there is a growing need for school-to-school support, especially for smaller rural schools and those identified by Ofsted and/or the DfE as requiring support. And to reduce professional isolation, teachers need to work together closely, especially regards teaching and learning strategies, sharing best practice and planning lessons to raise standards.

When schools join our MAT they stay as unique schools with their own head, local governors, uniform and so on. The NCLT is not about to clone schools or suffocate them with centralised bureaucracy. There will be significant change to the business side of running schools – we have to make falling real-terms funding levels go further if we are to keep our schools open, viable and vibrant. We believe our MAT will help pupils, staff and parents/carers.

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A Co-operative Foundation Trust School



A local MAT will also help to keep accountability in the hands of the local community rather than our schools being 'taken-over' by an organisation based elsewhere in Cornwall in which there is little or no local representation. It also means funding for pupils in North Cornwall is spent on schools, pupils and staff in this area.

At a recent meeting, the Regional Schools Commissioner gave us permission to form a new MAT. We now need to consult our stakeholders. To find out more please visit the school website where you will find lots of information. Additionally, you are cordially invited to attend an evening meeting to be held at Camelford Primary School where senior staff and governors will explain the changes. Prior to attending the consultation event please read the public consultation paper which provides lots of information. During the evening there will be an opportunity to ask questions. In accordance with DfE regulations, all questions and queries will be noted and a response will be posted on-line.

The public consultation event will be held in the main hall at Camelford Primary School starting at 5pm on Wednesday 6th June, 2018.

Yours faithfully,

**Jon Lawrence (CEO), Lee Bacchus and Helen Ward
on behalf of North Cornwall Learning Trust**