

SAST

SHERBORNE AREA SCHOOLS' TRUST

This document provides the proposals for the formation of a multi-academy trust (MAT) in the Sherborne area including the conversion of maintained schools to become a converter academy schools. The following schools would be in the first phase:

Buckland Newton CofE VC Primary School

Sherborne Abbey CofE VC Primary School

Sherborne Primary School

St Andrew's CofE VC Primary School

St Mary's CofE VC Primary School

The Gryphon School

Thornford CE VA Primary School



Executive Summary

Sherborne Area Schools Trust – Establishment of a Multi Academy Trust - Executive Summary

The establishment of a new multi academy trust would allow the links between our schools to further strengthen supporting a continuity of education from 0-19 within our community. The Sherborne Schools' Partnership has worked closely together for many years to provide an excellent education for our young people, and so to collaborate more closely is an exciting prospect, particularly as academies also have greater flexibility in delivering the curriculum.

A Project Steering and Interim Board comprising a Governor and the Headteacher of each School have been evaluating and designing a MAT to serve the Sherborne area. Key Features would be:

- the creation of a new mixed primary: secondary MAT with 7 schools
- the formation of a new hub in an identified target area (Dorset) for academy provision
- a MAT with 2700 pupils from 0-19 years
- a large specialist workforce of 184 teachers (151 fte); 292 non-teaching staff (158 fte) including 92 teaching assistants; 37 office/support staff
- a combined budget of £13.2 million expenditure

The opportunities include developing our provision, sharing best practice, being more creative in our curriculum, enabling further development of our teachers/staff and taking collective responsibility for all of the children's development and progress. There is also more freedom on how we spend our funding and we would be able to explore opportunities for financial efficiency, determining for ourselves which services and providers we will buy into to provide outstanding provision for our children.

The possibilities, benefits, issues and risks of converting to become an academy have been followed closely and, more recently, researched in detail. The Governing Body alone makes the decision to convert. The educational benefits for the students, staff, parents and wider community will be the key factor in making any decision to change status.

The Mission

- To be a special collaboration of high performing primary, secondary and alternative provision schools seeking to ensure an excellent and sustainable 0-19 education for children within our community across West and North Dorset.
- To build upon the existing good relationships across the Sherborne Schools' Partnership and the Sherborne small schools' cluster and develop as a family of schools working together to strengthen each school and inspire our young people and their families.
- To have a shared commitment to creative and innovative learning opportunities, high aspirations and leadership, and academic success within inspiring schools, alongside developing the personal attributes for everyone (children and staff) to thrive at every stage of their learning journey.

The reasons for consideration of conversion to become an academy are:

1. Students will make even better progress and improved outcomes

- At each staging post students will make more progress, meeting and exceeding expectations, at the end of EYFS, KS1, KS2, GCSE and A Level
- There develops a shared ownership, understanding and support for children's full education journey from 0-19
- Expertise and success across subjects and phases of education is shared so that transition points see no regression
- Early, continuing and impactful support for key groups such as SEND and disadvantaged students to narrow any gaps
- Collective goal to develop the love for learning including the core skills of reading, writing and Maths
- The MAT will support its schools in tackling performance issues which are common across the group.
- Promotion of destinations and futures supporting all students to achieve their aspirations into an apprenticeship, training, employment, university and beyond

2. Preserving, protecting and enhancing what we have

- Providing high quality education for a coherent and distinct geographical and educational area.
- Designing an education provision for our communities - taking local ownership and control. The MAT is both determined locally and accountable locally – there is no linking into a business-driven national academy chain.
- This is an evolution from close working as a soft federation as the Sherborne Schools' Partnership
- Sustaining an outstanding shared culture and philosophy through the consistent values and ethos
- All the schools provide a positive, calm and caring environment and promote the highest possible rounded education for all developing the personal attributes and qualities to thrive and make a positive contribution throughout life
- Member schools maintain their own character, such as church and community status.
- Preserve and sustain village primary schools in their community
- The school's day-to-day organisation, experiences and opportunities would feel the same for students and parents.
- There are no plans to change the school name, the school uniform, the school day, or admissions criteria.
- All schools aspire to develop and improve individually and collectively – being outward facing, making regional, national and international links and bringing them to our students

3. The schools have the experience, expertise and quality to operate as a MAT

- There is considerable experience and expertise at Governor level – there is a depth of interested and committed members of the community to support the MAT including at Member and Trustee level
- It is very strong alliance of schools with 2 judged outstanding, 4 good and the Sixth Form outstanding – every school has expertise to share and contribute. We are even stronger together.
- There is a strong blend of experienced Headteachers and senior leaders
- The Gryphon has been an academy school since 2012, has experience of operating independently including the regulatory and financial requirements
- There are already significant examples of each school managing its own business eg site maintenance, IT support, Broadband, minibus servicing, MIS, Nursery, pre-school, Catering etc.
- The level and quality of LA support is limited and declining -LA services which are valued will continue to be commissioned.

4. Even better teaching and learning

- Supporting excellence in teaching and learning through shared leadership, self-evaluation and professional development.
- Establishing subject groups and expertise across all schools - review and disseminate excellent practice
- Develop as a focus and hub for teacher training, professional development, leadership training and school to school support
- Developing new curriculum, assessment systems and tracking systems for progress to be used by all schools
- Sharing and co-ordinating best practice in support for disadvantaged and SEND students including identification
- Developing literacy skills of all students from 0-19 in reading, writing and SPAG

5. It will provide the resources to support outstanding teaching and learning

- It will help schools to maintain staffing levels, to maintain student:teacher ratios and to maintain class sizes.
- There is potential freedom to adjust and personalise the curriculum.
- The high levels of pastoral and classroom support for students and teachers can be sustained.
- There are opportunities for staff to work across schools supporting career development, recruitment and retention
- Flexibility to produce bespoke job descriptions and remuneration to secure the highest quality of staff.
- It will facilitate a bid for Teaching School status

6. High impact school to school leadership support

- Supporting the school improvement strategies of all schools and supporting the specific needs of any school identified as in need of improvement
- Being outward looking, linking to the best educational practice globally
- Developing leadership capacity at all levels to support the highest possible quality of education
- Developing talent at middle and senior leader level including SLEs and LLEs at both primary and secondary primary
- Enabling sharper and dynamic leadership - the ability to progress matters more quickly and to take advantages of opportunities.
- Establishing relationships with other outstanding institutions and professionals to support school improvement.

7. More integrated and co-ordinated support for students and families

- Maintaining consistency of approach for high attendance, e-safety, multi-agency working, RRS, safeguarding
- Early intervention - the ability to employ or commission our own family support services eg attendance, Emotional and social mental health, parent engagement
- Develop a SAST curriculum which ensures our children are global learners, sustaining a diversity of extra-curricular opportunities, clubs, trips and experiences
- Supporting and encouraging spiritual, moral and social stability for Christians, those of all faiths and none in our community
- Promoting the personal qualities of respect, independence, mutual support, motivation, high expectations and resilience
- Developing co-ordinated support systems for mental health, ASD and behaviour support for students and families

8. Securing and managing resources and facilities to sustain high quality provision

- Ensuring that resources are used to focus on our particular and local needs.
- The ability to choose and commission outstanding quality services and resources eg energy, HR support, legal advice, Governor support, payroll, finance support, asset management, Health and Safety guidance, insurance, banking and financial services, administration, student and family support.
- Developing shared support services for estate management, finance, HR, IT/e-learning, admin services, SEND, pastoral care
- Provide economic savings at a time of real term budget cuts - operate in a financially efficient way adopting shared services, including procurement opportunities, to deliver benefits for all schools.
- Dorset is one of the lowest funded authorities in the country. Schools face 8% real term budget cuts - School income is not expected to increase; there will be an inflationary increase in staffing and other costs.
- Ensuring student recruitment remains high in all schools through excellence and joint promotion
- Explore education commercial opportunities eg on-line services, alternative provision, training courses, leadership support, pre-school/nursery places
- Producing a campus capital development programme for the Trust to address maintenance and learning design needs

These reasons support the strategic goals for the Schools to be of the very best schools not only in Dorset but in the South West and nationally. Headteachers and Governors want the SAST to be a beacon of excellent practice which other schools wish to learn from.

The current position

- Since 2014 there have been on-going informal discussions about options for more formal partnerships including academies and trust establishment.
- In 2015 external advisors were engaged to provide guidance and support. Individually, schools also explored other options, including attending events organised by the Diocese of Salisbury and other organisations.
- Since May 2015 Lock House Consulting has provided external independent guidance and support. There have been intensive workshops, SWOT analysis and the sharing of values leading to a Memorandum of Understanding being established and agreed by all schools.
- A Project Steering and Interim Board (PSIB) was set up in January 2016 to lead the development work and detailed planning and preparation phase. One school has chosen not to be involved at this stage; one has chosen to join the Diocesan MAT.
- During the Autumn Term 2016 detailed due diligence work has taken place to ensure a sustainable Multi-Academy Trust can be established. This included an in-depth evaluation of key aspects of the potential MAT such as education performance, finance, organisation, staffing, legal/compliance and commercial.
- Approval for Church of England Schools has been sought and approved
- Applications to the DFE has been made by each school for Academy Orders (agreement and permission to progress) for the and for the single academy trust to become a multi-academy trust
- These applications were taken to SW Regional School Commissioners Headteacher Board on 30 January 2017 and approved without issue. The Sherborne Learning Centre are not part of the final application as further work is required on due diligence.
- An application to the Regional Academy Growth Fund Application to support set up costs has been made

The next steps

- Schools are now in a position to share in detail the proposals for the SAST including
 - ✓The Memorandum of Understanding
 - ✓The Development Strategy
 - ✓The Scheme of Delegation
- Through February, March and early April there will be further information sharing and consultation with staff and stakeholders
- For new potential academy schools there is formal consultation (TUPE) with staff and professional associations/unions
- The Governing Body of each school makes the final decision on whether to become an academy and to join the SAST
- SAST could be established during the Summer Term of 2017 subject to consultation and the decisions of each Governing Body