



NORTHUMBERLAND

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Headteacher: Richard Oades

Dear Parents/Carers,

As you may be aware there is a drive for all schools to convert to an Academy or become part of a Multi Academy Trust. Unlike a stand-alone academy, a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a single charitable company with an overarching board of directors across a number of schools. It is the responsibility of the MAT to form a strong, strategic, collaborative approach, with shared accountability, to improve and maintain high educational standards across the communities. This letter marks the start of a consultation process.

We are clear that our vision is to provide the best quality of education for all, and in doing so maintain our unique identity. We want to inspire excellence for our children and to improve outcomes for all and to continue to ensure that Highfield Middle School remains at the heart of our community. Governors of Highfield Middle School have been exploring how best to continue to improve the experience and resources offered to our children. The role of our Local Authority is diminishing, and going forward, the governors have concluded that we feel it is important to become part of a Multi Academy Trust with other like-minded schools who share our visions and have similar values to ours. Over the last year we have been actively researching and discussing various options with different schools and stakeholders in the surrounding local area. Following these discussions an initial group of ten schools, across three phases of education, have agreed to begin to explore what a MAT might look like for our schools working in formal partnership together. We are a group of schools who want to secure our future and *deliver excellence together*. The schools currently involved in the discussions around the formation of 'The Tynedale Community Learning Trust' are:

Corbridge Middle School;
Highfield Middle School;
Mickley First School;
Ovingham C of E First School;
Ovingham Middle School;
Prudhoe Castle First School;
Prudhoe Community High School;
Whittonstall and Broomley Federation of First Schools; and
Wylam First School.



Our Tynedale Community Learning Trust will be made up of 9 community schools and 1 church school which means that certain governance structures need to be in place as part of the proposed MAT. There will be 5 Members (similar to shareholders) and 11 directors. In our consideration of the various options of governance structure, we focused upon two:

- the possibility of 25% of Members and 25% directors being appointed by the church
- two Members having direct links to the church, a third jointly approved by the schools and church and the final two, community members. All five members sign the company documents and also a Members agreement confirming that the appointment of all directors will be on the basis of skills.

We are proposing that we proceed with the latter option in order to offer all church and non-church schools the opportunity of joining the MAT in the future. This latter option also ensures that all directors are recruited on the basis of their skills and not on their links to the church. The company documents will be based on template documents agreed nationally between the Department for Education and the Church of England. The Members will have the responsibility for appointing the majority of Directors of the MAT, based upon skills. The community schools will remain as community schools, and the church school as a church school with the individual character and ethos of each school being protected by legally binding documents.

By creating our own unique MAT now, the Tynedale Community Learning Trust, we would be part of leading the way for future generations of children and our local communities.

If you would like the opportunity to meet with staff and governors and to explore the opportunities and benefits of being part of a Multi Academy Trust, then please attend one of the drop sessions:

Tuesday 20th June, Highfield Middle School from 6pm – 7pm

Thursday 22nd June, Highfield Middle School from 4pm – 5pm

The aim of the drop in sessions is to hear your views and answer any questions you may have. We have also published a list of frequently asked questions on our website, should you wish to know more. Finally, we have provided a 'Frequently asked questions and consultation response sheet' attached to this letter, should you wish to provide a written response to the consultation.

Please note our consultation process will close at 5pm on 7th July 2017.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Oades', written in a cursive style.

Richard Oades
Headteacher