

## **MAT Update for Parents and Staff – February 2018**

Further to the Woodleigh Federation schools being given their Academy Orders to become part of the Link Academy Trust, we would like to provide some further information as to how things are going and what we expect to happen in the not too distant future.

We hope this provides you with answers to questions you might have thought of but please do not hesitate to contact your Head of School or the Governors (via the Clerk, [m.lambourne@yeoford.devon.sch.uk](mailto:m.lambourne@yeoford.devon.sch.uk)) or The Link Academy Trust ([academyadmin@thelink.devon.sch.uk](mailto:academyadmin@thelink.devon.sch.uk)) if you have anything further that you would like answered or explained. **A parent information meeting will be held at 6.30pm on 7<sup>th</sup> February, at Tedburn School.**

The Heads of School and the Governors have been working hard over a long period time on how the Federation would evolve over time and how it would work without the leadership of Sue Leyman and we firmly believe that (having explored many, many options) becoming part of the Link Academy Trust (LAT) is the best way of securing a future for our small village schools. Our schools will be able to run as they are with the security of a larger organisation behind them but one that follows the small, village school ethos that we all know and love.

### **How do we expect things to progress with the academisation process?**

- Conversion date – this has been set by the Department of Education as 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018.
- LAT 'growth check' instigated by Regional Schools Commissioner (anticipated some time during the Spring '18 term).
- Land and leasing – is being dealt with by the solicitors.
- TUPE of all staff – staff TUPE meeting was held in January with the unions present and a Devon County Council HR representative. No issues have arisen with positive feedback received from staff.
- Conversion grants – £25,000 per school (£75,000 in total for the Woodleigh Federation) has been granted. This money goes towards the conversion process (solicitors' fees, etc.) with the remaining balance paid to each of the Woodleigh schools. However, if the Woodleigh schools do not sign up and become part of the LAT on the conversion date, any remaining conversion grant funds will need to be returned to the Dept. of Education.

### **How have things been running under the Management Partnership?**

- Management Partnership – this has been working well and the management partnership will continue along these lines until the Woodleigh Federation schools formally become part of the LAT. This partnership has allowed our Woodleigh Heads to work closely together, with advice/mentoring/support from Nicky Dunford, CEO and Tony Calcutt, Executive Principal.
- As part of working more closely, the Woodleigh Heads have been meeting more regularly than ever before, undertaking learning walks together, sharing knowledge, experience, best practices and ideas. The Heads have also been monitoring and appraising their own staff directly.
- Heads have been on training courses with the LAT and other courses are expected for all staff.
- Woodleigh Schools continue to work with the Crediton Learning Community and QE, there will be no change to the arrangements already in place.
- Finance and other central services continue to be managed as they currently are, i.e. managed by the Woodleigh finance administrator and Heads of Schools. However, Matt Matthew, LAT Business Manager has assisted and we are already accessing some of their

central services, e.g. having an IT healthcheck and splitting the budget so that each Head of School can see their own share of the central Woodleigh budget and spend it accordingly (in line with their own school's school improvement plan).

- Governance – the Woodleigh Governing Body is still in place.

### **How do we see things running after the conversion date?**

- Woodleigh Heads of School will continue to report to Nicky Dunford. However, if the LAT continues to add further primary schools to its MAT, it may become apparent that an “area manager” type role might be required.
- Woodleigh Schools will continue to work with the Crediton Learning Community and QE. There will be no change here and QE will continue to be the “feeder” secondary school for the Woodleigh primaries.
- Cheriton Bishop and Yeoford schools are both keen to develop Foundation Stage Units where the pre-school children and staff come under the school umbrella. This is a priority, especially at Yeoford (whose committee led pre-school closed in December '17), and we are hoping to get these up and running for the start of the September 2018 school year.
- Finance and other central services will be managed by Matt Matthew, LAT Business Manager with the Woodleigh Heads responsible for their own school's budgets.
- The Woodleigh Heads of School are currently teaching 60% of their time with 40% spent on their management role. This is a lot to ask of our Heads and it is envisaged that this split will change to 50%/50% in line with the other Heads in the Link. This will mean that, at some point, more staff will be employed in the Woodleigh schools. With central “business” services managed by the LAT, some of the management burden will be taken from the Heads, allowing them to focus on school life and the children.
- Staff will have more chance for personal development. There will be a greater “pool” of like-minded teachers for staff to work with. The LAT will provide training courses. There will be more scope for staff to progress in their careers, if they so choose, as there are more schools in the mix. Within the Federation, we have occasionally found it necessary to move staff around the three schools. This may still be required from time to time but would be done by mutual agreement.
- The Woodleigh Governing Body in its current form will cease at conversion. At that point two or three governors will be appointed to each school to act on the Woodleigh Local Governing Body which will focus on teaching and learning in the schools. The higher level governance will fall to the LAT's Board of Directors. We are hoping that there will be one parent governor from each school on the new Local Governing Body.

### **How will the school funding work after conversion?**

- Local Authority maintained schools receive their money for the year in April and their financial year runs April to March. Academies receive their money on a monthly basis and their financial year runs from September to August; this means that a monthly reconciliation of all income and expenditure takes place at the Link.
- The Local Authority takes a “top slice” from the funding it receives from the Department of Education for its maintained schools with the Schools then having to buy back services it wishes to use. As Academies, we will receive funding directly from the Department of Education and only buy those services required and, as part of the MAT, there will be greater opportunities to gain Value for Money by tendering as part of the larger group of schools.
- As a charitable trust, the Link Academy Trust can access grants not available to maintained schools.

- The National Funding Formula will apply to academies and maintained schools. The LAT Business Manager has done some early modelling ahead of any budget announcements and early indications are positive for all schools within the LAT including our 3 schools.
- As a charitable trust and a registered company, the LAT follows strict accounting procedures and rules with a whole range of reporting responsibilities that include monthly reporting to the CEO and Chair of Finance, termly finance management reports to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and Full Trust Board as well as internal audit officer visiting all schools within the Trust and scrutiny of the central finance function 6 times a year. On top of this and as best practice, two of the Trust's directors undertake checks and controls following a prescribed format developed from the Financial Management and Governance Evaluation checklist. The Trust completes annual returns to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and is fully audited annually by the external auditors with a copy of the accounts sent to the ESFA and the Charities Commission. The accounts can be found on the Link Academy Trust's website. The Business Manager reports to the Financial Director, a qualified, experienced accountant. For clarification, none of the Directors are paid, only the CEO and the Executive Principal are paid for their services.
- As part of extending the MAT by taking on the Woodleigh Federation, the Link will be subject to an external 'growth' check by the Regional Commissioner's office and will include a review of all financial areas.

#### **The Link Academy Governance Structure**

- The Link has a board of directors made up of highly skilled professionals. For clarification, the only directors that are paid are Nicky Dunford as CEO and Tony Calcutt as Executive Principal. All other directors give their time voluntarily, as do the governors on the Local Governing Bodies.
- Above the Board of Directors sit LAT Members. MAT Members are the subscribers to the Articles of Association. They have an overall view of the governance of the Trust. Members can make amendments to the articles to support stronger arrangement in the governance  
The Link Academy Trust has five members:
  - The Exeter Diocesan Education Network (EDEN)
  - University of St Mark & St John, Plymouth
  - The Deanery Synod of Totnes
  - The Bearnese' Trust
  - Isabel Cherrett, Chair of Board of Directors
- The Link's scheme of delegation can be found on their website at <http://thelink.academy/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Scheme-of-Delegation-2018.pdf>