

Dear Parent/Carer,

17.12.18

We would like to consult with you about a proposal we believe has the potential to have an extremely positive impact on the education of the pupils at South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust.

During the last few months we have been working closely with a local multi academy trust, Education South West, and we would like your views on a proposal to for South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust to join with Education South West.

Why are we considering merging South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust (SDMAT) into Education South West (ESW)?

Recent evidence has shown that when schools work closely together they can do more to improve the quality of education. To achieve this, schools need to share the same values; this is where South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust have much in common with Education South West.

- Both trusts have a strong moral purpose where the needs of the children always come first
- Both trusts are committed to ensuring that all children achieve well, regardless of their situation or starting point and recognise the importance this has on our society
- Both trusts strongly believe that each school within a multi academy trust must have their own identity within their community which is supported by a local governing body comprised of parents, staff and community members
- Both trusts have a culture of openness and believe that sharing our best practice will only help to improve the education we can provide for the children

What are the benefits of joining two well established trusts together?

Sharing our expertise and experiences

Below are the types of schools currently within both multi academy trusts.

South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust	Education South West
1 secondary school	3 secondary schools
1 studio school	1 all through school (4-16)
5 primary schools (2 with less than 100 pupils)	6 primary schools (4 with less than 100)
1 special school (opening in Sept 2020)	

By joining SDMAT and ESW we will provide a greater number of secondary schools for South Dartmoor Community College and Atrium Studio to work alongside. The schools in ESW will of course also benefit from sharing the skills, variety of schools and distinctiveness of ethos that we have in SDMAT. We will all be able to share resources, schemes of learning and subject expertise. By having more primary schools within the group, we provide opportunity for schools with similar characteristics and challenges, such as very small village schools, to work together. The specialisms SDMAT have in Atrium School (specialising in the built environment) and our special school opening in 2020 will bring new expertise into ESW benefitting their staff and students.

Providing the best education for our children

Education, like medicine, is a profession that has to keep advancing to keep up with the changes in the world around us. We want our teachers to continuously develop their expertise because this will ensure the children get the best education possible. As a larger trust we will have greater capacity to achieve this. The staff in SDMAT will contribute to, and share in all the additional expertise below that has been created in ESW:

- 2 National Leaders of Education (one of whom is an Ofsted Lead inspector)
- Lead Practitioners in English, Modern Foreign Languages and Maths – these teams identify best practice and share it across schools
- A Teaching School Alliance that provides a wide range of training for teachers and support staff
- A Research School (1 of only 22 nationally) that ensures we are able to deliver the best teaching to the children based on international evidence

Attracting the best teachers to work in our schools

Schools across the country are facing a challenging recruitment situation at the moment and therefore we need to attract and keep the best teachers in our schools. As a larger trust, we will be able to offer teachers training from the start of their career through to headship, if they want to progress that far. By increasing the range of schools within our trust, staff will have the opportunity for secondment and progression which currently is hard to achieve with the number of schools we have in SDMAT. We want staff to have a long and enjoyable career with us – we know that it is important to keep teachers in our schools so strong bonds are established with children and parents.

Supporting school leaders and getting the best value for money

There are a lot of things that have to happen in the background for schools to run successfully (aside from teaching and learning). For example, we have finance, HR, payroll, premises, procurement, health and safety and data compliance - all of these things can interfere with a school leader's role if not carefully managed. ESW have created well trained teams to run these services in-house instead of outsourcing to expensive consultants and private firms and SDMAT is starting to use this expertise within our schools now. Specialised staff, whose skills would normally be out of the reach of individual schools, can have influence across the Trust negotiating better discounts. By running these services in-house and to a high standard we will ensure that money is not wasted and as much of our budget, as possible, makes it back into the classroom to support children. This is particularly important because education budgets nationally are getting smaller and we are having to try and do more for less.

What would stay the same if SDMAT merged with ESW?

This proposal is about strengthening the quality of education we can offer, not about changing our schools and their individual values and ethos. Therefore, the name, uniform, school leader, governing body, parent associations etc would stay the same and the children would still be in a school that is familiar to them. What will be improved is the opportunities for schools to share the things they are good at and learn from each other.

What happens next?

We are running this consultation period until January 26th with parents, staff and the wider community. We will be holding a number of open meetings in the new year so we can gather your thoughts and opinions on this.

Rachel Shaw (CEO of South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust) and Roger Pope (CEO of Education South West) will be hosting these on the dates detailed in the table below. You are welcome to attend whichever time/date works best for you, regardless of the location. If you are unable to attend a meeting but have views you wish to share please email them to consultation@southdartmoor.devon.sch.uk.

Yours faithfully,



Mr Graeme Cock

For and on behalf of the Directors of South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust

Consultation meetings			
Date	Time	Location	Who is the meeting for?
8 th Jan	2.30pm	Ashburton Primary School	Parents and community
	3.30pm	Ashburton Primary School	Staff
9 th Jan	4.00pm	South Dartmoor Community College	Staff
	5.00pm	Atrium School	Staff
	6.00pm	South Dartmoor Community College and Atrium Studio	Parents and community
10 th Jan	4.00pm	Buckfastleigh Primary School	Staff
	5.00pm	Buckfastleigh Primary School	Parents and community
11 th Jan	2.30pm	Moretonhampstead Primary School	Parents and community
	3.30pm	Moretonhampstead Primary School	Staff
15 th Jan	4.00pm	Ilington C of E Primary School	Staff (Ilington & Widecombe staff)
	5.00pm	Ilington C of E Primary School	Parents and community
	6.00pm	Widecombe-in-the Moor Primary School	Parents and community