



## Stakeholder: FAQs

### **Proposal that Norton College (Evolution Schools Learning Trust) transfers into the Ryedale Learning Trust**

- **What benefit is there to transferring into/merging with another Trust?**

We have a firm commitment to providing the highest levels of care and academic achievement for all our children and young people, irrespective of their starting points or any disadvantage they may have. Both trusts believe in close partnership working and the power of high-quality education. The impact of a larger trust, with its associated resource, would bring about improvements in all our schools.

Trustees have studied the medium-term financial situation and believe joining together would ensure the long term sustainability of all the schools. We also believe increased partnership working and greater shared buying power would benefit all of our schools whilst allowing each to retain their own unique ethos within their community. Our ambition is that all of our schools would benefit from shared networks, forums, and systems, as well as building on existing strong working relationships.

- **How would the governance arrangements work and would there be any representation from Norton College on the Trust Board?**

Currently each Trust has a separate Board of Trustees. This structure would change and there would be one Trust Board across the newly merged MAT. As Norton College would be joining Ryedale Learning Trust, there would not be representation on the Trust Board. Norton College, like other schools in the Ryedale Learning Trust, would have an individual local school committees (LSC) operating under a scheme of delegation.

It is important to remember that the Trust Board would be responsible for all schools and must not be biased towards any particular school in a Trust; they would have strategic oversight for the educational success, ethos and finances of the whole Trust, with the LSCs working at school level to support this oversight.

Certain decision making has to be at board level to comply with the academies financial handbook, employment law obligations and education law but LSCs would be very much focussed on their own school with continued input of elected parents and staff.

- **What would the leadership structure be in the Ryedale Learning Trust?**

The Trust would be lead by the CEO (Chief Executive Officer), Mark McCandless. They would lead a multidisciplinary team including the CFO (Chief Financial Officer), Helen Coulthard, that would focus on ensuring school improvement and development as well as effective corporate function.

- **Financial implications - how financially secure is the MAT, what happens if one of the schools in the MAT gets into financial difficulty?**

Each Trust is currently financially secure. Budget setting is always carried out well in advance so that any changes which need to be made can be implemented in good time to seek to achieve a balanced budget for every school. Budget monitoring would continue throughout the year by the Trust board, and they would receive monthly update reports. If a school in the MAT is projecting an in year deficit the Trust Board would work with the school to look at cost savings and if appropriate may permit an in year deficit provided there was a financial recovery plan and the central reserve could allow this. This could result in financial delegation being limited under the scheme of delegation if this was not an agreed position so that Trustees have even more oversight of the position.

- **How would finance, HR and premises work in the MAT?**

The merged MAT would have expertise in all these areas. We would analyse the needs of all schools within the MAT and put in place appropriate functions to support the effective running of the school and ensure they are functioning at maximum efficiency.

- **What are plans for future growth and what would the impact of this be (geographical region, how big, does that mean we avoid another merger)?**

The Trust is always open to discussions with other local schools if they wish to formalise partnership working for the benefit of all pupils. Each opportunity would be considered fully and a similar consultation exercise would be undertaken before any decisions were made.

- **What happens if a school in the MAT has a dip in standards?**

The purpose of a Trust is to provide educational support and increased capacity. The oversight from the Trust Board would mean that the trust would know about possible problems at an early stage and prevent this becoming significant through interventions and increased support. However, if this happened we would draw on existing capacity in the trust and where necessary external consultants.

The benefit of an expanded MAT would be the additional resource we were able to provide for school improvement. The strength of the teaching in the schools within the MAT mean that we have a great basis to learn from each other and adapt practice in line with what is evidence based best practice.

- **Does Ofsted consider each school on an individual basis or inspect the MAT as a whole?**

Ofsted considers each school on an individual basis currently but they would look at the MAT board as the accountable body for any individual school. It is likely MATs are soon going to be inspected as a whole too but we don't know how this would look at this stage.

- **Would staff be required to work at both sites?**

Staff who currently have a defined place of work in their contract could not be asked to work elsewhere without their agreement. For new staff who join after any change it may be that their place of work covers different sites or the MAT as a whole as part of their job role.

- **Would admissions arrangements change?**

We would not expect any of the current admission arrangements to change. The Local Authority would continue to co-ordinate the application process for admissions.

It should be stressed however, that the admissions criteria must have regard to the national Admissions Code of Practice.

- **What would happen to the uniform?**

We don't propose to make any changes to the current school uniforms of any of our schools.

- **Would the name of the school change?**

We do not intend to change the name of any school and we are strongly committed to retaining the identity of each school within the Multi Academy Trust.

- **Would the times of the school day and holidays change?**

We have no plans to change the times of the school day or the term dates. Any future changes would be subject to extensive consultation with parents and carers.

- **What happens next, what is the timescale of any change?**

Trustees would need to consider all of the feedback and outcome of this consultation process and then meet to discuss whether they wish to proceed.

Staff and parents would be updated at each stage and staff from Norton College would be part of a separate consultation process under the TUPE regulations

which is more specific and would give them a further opportunity to ask questions and understand how, if at all, their role would be affected.

- **When might this transfer occur?**

The earliest this transfer is likely to be able to be implemented is 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023 and we are keen to continue to take on board the views of staff, governors, parents, pupils, and the wider community throughout the process.