



Paxcroft Primary School
Ashton Street
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 7EB

Tel: 01225 762244
E-mail: admin@paxcroft.wilts.sch.uk

Acting Headteacher: Mr Alex George

Monday 13th January 2015

Dear Parents/Carers,

Over recent months our school has been exploring the benefits provided by converting to academy status and joining a multi academy trust (MAT).

Informed by this exploration we have applied to the Regional Director seeking agreement to become part of EQUA Mead Learning Trust. A decision we are excited about and one which we strongly believe will provide new opportunities for our school, our staff, our children and our families within the community we serve.

EQUA Mead provide a high standard of education and have a well-aligned set of values that reflect those that are important to us. Through an initial phase of exploration, it is clear that there is considerable synergy between our school's vision and values and those of EQUA Mead. We prioritise the importance of our local community and strive every day to do the very best for all children in our care. A principle evident in the work of the trust.

Our school is a community, and we are committed to gaining feedback from all stakeholders, parents/carers and the wider community. We think it's important that everyone can give feedback, ask questions and explore the proposal in more detail if they wish.

The Governing Body will now conduct a formal consultation process and as part of this process we are launching a listening exercise to gather viewpoints on the proposal to convert to academy status.

This consultation period will run for a 4-week period from Monday 13 January 2025 to 14 February 2025. There is a set of questions and answers and further information below. You can find out more and give your feedback through:

- A survey which can be accessed online at <https://forms.office.com/e/jcDTvwmT8L> or a paper copy can be collected from the school reception
- A drop-in session taking place on **Wednesday 29th January** at 5pm-6pm in school. This event will be attended by representatives from EQUA Mead along with senior leaders and Governors from our school. It will provide the opportunity to ask questions and share feedback. No booking is required – just come along, everyone welcome!

As a valued partner of the school, we invite your feedback. Following the close of the consultation we will ensure you remain informed of the outcome.

We look forward to hearing from you during the consultation period.

Kind Regards

Andrew Ross
Chair of Governors

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CARERS OR OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

Key Facts about Academies

What is an academy?

Academies are state-funded schools but they are independent of Local Authorities (LA's) meaning they are not run by councils. Over half of pupils in England are already educated in academies and there are three types:

- Converters – formerly LA schools that chose to become academies;
- Sponsored – previously underperforming LA schools in need of support, and/or judged 'Inadequate' by Ofsted, where the law requires them to become academies; or
- Free schools – brand new schools established to meet a need for good school places in the area.

If trusts have greater freedom, how are they accountable?

This freedom does not mean academies are not regulated. The department's National and Regional Schools Commissioners and their teams, together with the Education and Skills Funding Agency, provide robust educational and financial oversight of all academy trusts.

Academies are still subject to Ofsted inspections and ratings in exactly the same way as LA maintained schools. In fact, academies are subject to greater accountability than council-run schools.

What are multi academy trusts?

Multi-academy trusts are charities that have responsibility for running a number of academies. They cannot, as charities, be run for financial profit and any surplus monies must be reinvested in the trust.

By working in partnership with each other, the schools within a trust can share staff, expertise, effective teaching practices and work together to deliver the best outcomes for pupils.

While other types of school partnerships can be effective, the key difference with academy trusts is that there is shared accountability for standards across the trust; all schools within the trust support each other and the trust is accountable for them all.

Why is the Government's focus now on supporting schools to join strong trusts?

Joining a multi-academy trust remains a positive choice for schools. They enable the strongest leaders to take responsibility for supporting more schools, develop great teachers, and allow schools to focus on what really matters – teaching, learning, and a curriculum that is based on what works.

Multi-academy trusts have the capacity to provide high-quality training and evidence-based curriculum support for already great teachers, freeing them to focus on what they do best – teaching.

What is the curriculum model in an academy?

Academies are required to have a broad and balanced curriculum that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life. The curriculum must include English, Maths, and Science; Religious Education; and Relationships education and Health education. Academies are required to take part in the same pupil assessment arrangements and to report on the achievement and attainment of pupils in the same way as all other state-funded schools.

How does the funding work?

The MAT will receive the General Annual Grant from the Secretary of State calculated as the equivalent to that which would be received by a LA maintained school taking account of the number of pupils at the academy. Capital funding is also available, channelled through the academy trust. Every academy trust must abide by the requirements of and have regard to the guidance in the Academies Financial Handbook.

What is the admission policy of an academy?

Academies are required to provide education for pupils wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated. Academies must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places.



Academies are required to provide education for pupils of different abilities (i.e. they may not select pupils by ability).

About EQUA Mead

Who are EQUA Mead Learning Trust (EMLT)?

EQUA Mead is a merger of two local trusts (EQUA Multi Academy Trust and The Mead Multi Academy Trust). They have proven experience of delivering an excellent education for all children and we are excited by the expertise they can bring to our school, but also by what we can share with them.

<https://www.equamead.org/>

What are the benefits for our children?

By being part of a trust that adopt a founding commitment of equality for all children and a belief in the benefits of collaboration, we will be able to offer a much greater range of opportunities, both educationally and through enrichment activities.

All children and young people will have potential access to a wider curriculum through increased cultural capital opportunities and further collaboration in sport, the arts and learning outside the classroom.

A highly effective, friendly and practical Improvement Team with experienced primary, secondary, special educational needs and child welfare specialists will ensure our provision is the best it can be, while a sharp focus on meeting the needs of disadvantaged children and young people, and those with additional needs and special talents, will ensure inspirational learning for all.

Will our school lose its individuality?

The identity and ethos of our school will not be changed as a result of academisation. EQUA Mead celebrates the fact that each school is unique.

The school will continue to have a governing body; all children on roll at the school will continue; times of the school day, term dates will remain the same.

Will the school name change?

The name of the school will not change.

Will school uniforms change?

No! The special identity of our school is very important.

Will staff lose their jobs?

No, nobody will lose their job and the school will run in the same way it has been. Changes will be with systems and some areas of governance.

Will teachers' pay be affected?

All teachers are currently paid in accordance with the statutory provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and stay within the legal framework of other relevant legislation that affects all employers, for example, legislation on equality, employment protection and data protection. This won't change following academisation.

Will support staff pay be affected?

All our support staff are paid in accordance with the Wiltshire Local Government Pay Scales and Local Government Pension Scheme. This won't change following academisation.

If nothing changes, then what's the point?

Multi-academy trusts have the capacity to provide high-quality training and evidence-based curriculum support for already great teachers, freeing them to focus on what they do best – teaching.

I've heard about experiences in previous EQUA or The Mead schools before the MATs merged

So had we. We have had conversations with EQUA Mead about their approach now its combined compared to the separate approaches before. We have spoken with other schools in Trowbridge who have recently joined EQUA Mead and we were satisfied that EQUA Mead's ethos and values matches that of Paxcroft.



About the process

How did you come to this decision?

The Governing Board have been discussing the possibility of academisation for several months with the leadership of the school. In the Autumn term the governing Board undertook an exploration first focusing on what we and the leadership want the school to be, what it needs to retain and where it needs more support. From that we had a list of things we wanted any potential MAT to meet. We used that list to create a list of possible MATs that could be suitable to Paxcroft and invited several to present to the Board and the leadership. Following the presentations and several conversations and meetings we felt we had all our questions answered and we came to the conclusion that EQUA Mead was the best fit for Paxcroft and met all our requirements.

Is the decision already made?

No, we have submitted an application to join EQUA Mead but there is a period of consultation with relevant stakeholders and a period of due diligence for both the school and the MAT where we will each need to ensure that everything is in order. If everything is satisfactory then conversion can happen. We can choose to pull out at any point until the final conversion documents are signed a few weeks prior to conversion.

Who has made this decision?

The decision ultimately lies with the Governing Board but it has been a collaboration between the Governing Board and the leadership of the school.

Can we go back to the Local Authority if we don't like the MAT?

No, once a school is in a MAT it cannot choose to return to the Local Authority.

What are other schools in Trowbridge doing?

Many of the Trowbridge primary schools are either in a MAT or considering joining one. Many of the Trowbridge primary schools are in EQUA Mead. Joining EQUA Mead too will allow us to continue to work collaboratively with local schools.

