



## THE ALDERTON INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Alderton Hall Lane  
Loughton  
Essex  
IG10 3HE

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017

### CONSULTATION LETTER

Dear Parents / Carers

The Alderton schools have been part of a consortium of local schools for over 20 years. We have benefitted from collaborative working, strategic planning, professional development and sharing of resources. We want to build on these successes. We want to work even more closely sharing expertise and good practice as we strive to improve outcomes for children. Therefore, we are looking to form a Multi – Academy Trust (MAT) with other local schools within the Epping Forest Consortium.

#### **What are Academies?**

Academies are state-funded independent schools, receiving their funding directly from the government, rather than the Local Authority. They are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts. Under the present government, the Academy programme has been expanded to embrace all schools, putting more flexibility and ownership in the hands of individual schools, giving greater freedom to innovate and tailor provision to local needs and priorities.

Whilst government timescales and approaches have altered, the direction of travel remains the same and Multi-Academy Trusts have emerged as the preferred academy model. The proposed National Funding Formula for schools will have a significant impact on the Local Authority and therefore the support options available to schools. Schools need to ensure that they future-proof themselves against the financial and structural changes ahead.

#### **What are the implications?**

The stories in the press about the increasing pressures on school budgets are no fiction and finances are being squeezed. We anticipate that support currently provided by the local authority at Essex County Council, will change if they lose a significant proportion of its funding, reducing the services currently available to schools, or increase the costs of buying them.

#### **What next for the Alderton schools?**

Doing nothing is no longer a sensible option and we have done a great deal of information gathering to determine the options available and the best pathway for the children of the Alderton schools. Other schools within the Epping Forest Consortium have also been scanning the education horizons and have made the decision to convert from a Local Authority Maintained School to become a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), inviting other local schools to join them in forming a local learning partnership.

The Alderton schools have been heavily involved in the discussions that have helped shape the direction this MAT might take to maximise the opportunities for collaboration amongst local schools, which could benefit the local community and its young people.

To explore this option more, the governors are considering next steps and looking to initiate conversion to academy status with a view to forming a local MAT.

### **What are the advantages of joining a local MAT?**

The Epping Forest Consortium already supports lots of informal collaboration amongst its member schools. A local partnership in the form of a Multi-Academy Trust would further enhance the potential for all sorts of cost savings, economies of scale and enhanced purchasing power.

Educational and learning opportunities include improved curriculum links between the schools; opportunities for staff to work across key stages (e.g. KS1 – KS2) to enhance expectations and understanding, as well as staff development opportunities – all of which could help staff locally.

### **What difference will it make?**

We are hoping from the outside there will be very little obvious change. The uniform, the staff and the name of our school will all be exactly the same. Behind the scenes things will work a little differently. The school will have a different bank account, we might purchase supplies and stock from different companies but day to day you probably won't see any difference. The children might notice more opportunities to use facilities at other local schools but most of the changes will happen behind the scenes to enhance provision and transition.

### **What happens next?**

Following a 12 month period of due diligence, the full governing body of the Infant School is looking at next steps and considering conversion to academy status, with a view to forming the Epping Forest MAT with at least fifteen other schools in the Epping Forest area. While we have not yet registered this proposal with the DfE and Essex County Council for approval, we are very interested in your views.

As the Junior School is looking to convert in spring 2018, we felt it only right to consult you at the same time as they are consulting since we share a site and serve the same local children and families. Hence we wish to launch a formal consultation with you, the parents, staff and other stakeholders. This is a crucial part of the process, which takes place in tandem with a host of other tasks over the coming weeks.

### **What do you think?**

We are keen to hear your views and your questions. To explain the process more fully and give you the opportunity to ask questions we would like to invite you to an information meeting on **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 2pm in the Alderton Infant main hall**. We will talk to you more fully about the options we have been exploring, the choices made and why, and the timeline for the conversion process.

Please don't worry if you can't be there in person. There will be some information on our school website by Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November specifically relating to the academy conversion process and we will be posting and updating FAQs from both the information evening, and also any we receive by email. Your questions will help governors shape the next steps of the process and understand more fully what is important to you.

Please come and take this opportunity to share your views and find out more.

Ultimately, it's about the children and we feel that converting to an academy and forming a MAT with other local primary schools will offer long term benefits in terms of expected standards and pupil outcomes.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Will this mean another new uniform?**

No, the uniform will remain unchanged if we join a local MAT.

### **Will the school name have to change?**

No. The name of the MAT has not yet been decided.

### **Who will be running the school?**

The Alderton schools will still have their own leadership team and their own Heads. There are no plans to change this while the budget can still sustain it. The full governing body will likely reduce in size to form a local governing body. They will all be accountable to a board of MAT trustees who will oversee all the schools in the MAT.

### **When will the Alderton schools become an Academy?**

If each stage is successful, the Junior school is likely to convert during the spring of 2018 and the Infant school during summer of 2018. Nothing is definite until the secretary of state for education and the school signs the agreement.

### **Is there a financial cost to the school?**

We can apply for a £25,000 government grant to help with any costs linked to the conversion, such as legal fees. We don't anticipate any financial costs beyond that funded by the grant.

### **Will the school have more money if it becomes an Academy?**

The school will still have its own budget allocation from the DfE, but instead of this coming via the Local Authority, it will come via the MAT. Currently the LA keeps a percentage of this allocation. As an academy the vast proportion of the budget will be devolved to the school but a small percentage goes to the Epping Forest MAT. Specific figures will be available once we are able to get funding details from the DfE about budget shares. To get more specific financial information we need to progress to the next stage in the process.

## **Will the schools in the MAT have the same holidays?**

We don't envisage any changes in school holidays as we currently work closely together to ensure that we maximise the opportunity to work together during training days.

If you have any questions, please email us at:

The Junior School – [chairofgovernors@alderton-jun.essex.sch.uk](mailto:chairofgovernors@alderton-jun.essex.sch.uk)

**The Infant School – [governors@alderton-inf.essex.sch.uk](mailto:governors@alderton-inf.essex.sch.uk)**

We can then add your questions to the website FAQs and make sure we include them at the consultation meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> November.

**For Infant parents, if you would like to join us on 7<sup>th</sup> November you can book a place by emailing the school office at: [office@alderton-inf.essex.sch.uk](mailto:office@alderton-inf.essex.sch.uk)**

For Junior parents, if you would like to join us on 7<sup>th</sup> November you can book a place by emailing the school office at: [admin@alderton-jun.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@alderton-jun.essex.sch.uk)

Yours sincerely,

Mrs S Dalby and Mrs L Fox  
Headteachers