

Fore Street
North Molton
Devon
EX36 3HL

Mrs Angela Fernyhough, (Head Teacher)

Tel & Fax (01598) 740343
e-mail: HYPERLINK "mailto:admin@north-molton-primary.devon.sch.uk" admin@north-molton-primary.devon.sch.uk

Proposal to convert North Molton Primary School to become an Academy and a member of a Multi Academy Trust known as the Tarka Learning Partnership with effect from 1st June 2020.

Consultation begins on 5th March and ends on 16th April 2018

5th March, 2020.

Dear Stakeholder,

As you may be aware from the media and recent correspondence, the educational landscape has changed significantly in recent years. Probably the biggest change has been the diminishing role of the Local Authority, in our case Devon County Council, and the emphasis on schools supporting one another. There has been a significant growth of Multi Academy Trusts (MAT's) across Devon and the country.

We are therefore consulting on North Molton Primary School becoming an Academy and joining:-

- **Eden Park Academy,**
- **Landkey Community Primary Academy**
- **Newport Community School Primary Academy**
- **The Park Community School**
- **Roundswell Community Primary Academy (a new primary school currently being built)**
- **Sticklepath Community Primary Academy**
- Fremington Community Primary and Nursery School is also consulting at the present time as part of their conversion process to become an academy and part of the TLP.

This school has been investigating a range of options over recent years and has been actively discussing and researching this option for two years. The Trust is led by Andy Cotton, former Head Teacher of Newport Community School.

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 types of 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 (MATs) have emerged as the Government's preferred education model. The National Funding Formula for schools and the continued academisation of the school



system will have a significant impact on the Local Authority and, therefore, the support options available to schools. Schools need to ensure that they futureproof themselves against the financial and structural changes ahead.

What are the benefits of joining the MAT? First and foremost the schools are collaborating to ensure improved outcomes for both staff and children/young people. The other benefits are the subject of an extensive, but necessarily detailed document outlining the benefits to staff, children/young people and their local community. This is available on the school's website.

What are the implications of the new funding arrangements for our school? The stories in the press about the increasing pressures on school budgets are real and finances are being squeezed. We anticipate that the support currently provided by Devon County Council will reduce and there are very clear signs that this is already happening. Services to schools will become more expensive and offered by fewer and fewer people. This Trust will provide bespoke services to schools.

What is next for North Molton Primary School? Doing nothing is no longer a sensible option. We have carried out a great deal of information gathering to determine the options available and the best pathway for the school. We have been meeting the other proposed partners over the last four years, including other schools in our area and taking advice from a range of people. North Molton Primary School has been engaging with Tarka for the past two years, more recently becoming fully engaged with collaboration with Trust schools through leadership meetings, writing moderation and training. To explore this option further, the Governors have formally agreed to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to Academy status for North Molton Primary School with the intention to joining the Tarka Learning Partnership MAT.

What difference will it make? We are hoping from the outset there will be very little obvious change. The staff and school site will all be 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 period of due diligence in which the Trust has devoted approximately 9 days of work examining all aspects of the running of our school, covering the quality of education, pupil behaviour, health and safety, finance, personnel, governance, legal, operational, premises, safeguarding and school leadership, the Full Governing Body has voted to pursue the next steps to initiate conversion to Academy status, with a view to joining the MAT. We have registered this proposal with the DfE and Devon County Council for approval. Another important part of this phase is to launch a formal consultation with you, the parents, staff and other stakeholders. This is a crucial part of the process that takes place in tandem with a host of other tasks that will be completed over the coming months.

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 Monday 23rd March in the School hall led by our Governing Body and supported by representatives of the Tarka Learning Partnership at 5:30pm. 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



information available on our school website, specifically relating to the Academy conversion process. In addition, we will post FAQs anonymously from the information meetings. 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 joining this MAT with other local schools will offer long-term benefits in terms of expected educational standards, pupil care and outcomes.

Please refer to the information pack and the response form on the school's website for further information. Each member of staff, parent or carer may send in a response to this consultation.

If you cannot find the answer to your questions and are unable to attend one of the consultation events then please email: consultation@nmp.school

Please send all MAT consultation response forms to: consultation@nmp.school by 16th April 2020.

Alternatively you can write to the school: Mrs Angela Fernyhough, North Molton Primary School, Fore Street, North Molton, EX363HL by 16th April, 2020

Please mark the envelope 'MAT Consultation'.

The closing date for all representations to be made is 16th April 2020

We look forward to receiving your comments and meeting you at the consultation meetings
Yours sincerely,

Angela Fernyhough

Helen Smith

Head Teacher,
North Molton Primary School

Chair of Governors

