



Great Marlow School

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Dear Parents/Carers

Our priority at Great Marlow School (GMS) is to continue to provide an excellent education for our children while protecting the school's role at the heart of our community and retaining its unique qualities and strengths.

As you will be aware, over the last few years, there has been a considerable drive by the government to convert schools into academies. GMS became a standalone academy on the 1st August 2011. It is now the view of central government and certain educationalists that these academies should come together and form Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is where a number of academies create a single trust with a board of trustees answerable to the trust members.

It is widely recognised that school to school collaboration, which provides opportunities for shared professional development, leadership development and pooling of expertise is one of the most effective ways of developing schools, teachers and, ultimately, the children. Those in favour of MATs believe that they are the best way to achieve this school to school collaboration. Nationally, at the current time, approximately 40% of secondary schools are in MATs; 36% of secondary schools are standalone academies and the remaining 24% of schools remain under local authority or diocese control.

GMS's governing body and leadership team are constantly looking to improve outcomes for our students and, as part of this work, members of the governance team have proactively undertaken to widen their knowledge and understanding of how MATs operate in the south-east of the country. Part of that process has involved taking part in discussion forums with leaders of local primary and secondary schools. It appears from these initial investigations that the most effective and successful MATs unite schools located geographically close to each other.

There is currently, a local MAT: the Marlow Education Trust, which consists of Sir William Borlase's Grammar School and Beechview Primary School in High Wycombe. Marlow Education Trust have been a part of our local discussions on MATs, which have involved all of the Marlow primary schools. Following these discussions, the 'Trustees' have asked the governors of Great Marlow School to consider joining the Marlow Education Trust.

The decision on whether or not to join a MAT, be it Marlow Education Trust or any other, will only be taken after comprehensive research and consideration of the findings. The governing body and leadership team work conscientiously to provide the best educational climate for the children, staff, parents and carers (our stakeholders) and the wider community and this will not be compromised. Be assured, no decision will be

made without undertaking a full and detailed consultation process with all stakeholders. All views will be given full and careful consideration before a final decision is made.

The GMS's governance team has committed itself to undertake a full fact finding programme with the Marlow Education Trust to ensure all future decisions are based on all available information.

Throughout the detailed fact finding programme to be undertaken, all options will be considered as part of the decision making process including remaining a standalone academy.

We welcome, and actively encourage, your views and questions, please email them to CoG@gms.bucks.sch.uk
In addition, we have arranged an information evening for all parents and carers on Thursday 26th April starting at 6.30pm.

Yours faithfully



Mr K Ford
Headteacher



Ms Sally Brooks
Chair of Governors

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is an Academy?

An academy is a publicly-funded school that is independent of the local authority (LA). It receives its funding monthly direct from central government. It has greater freedoms and responsibilities than “Maintained” schools that are run by the LA. It still must, though, follow the law and guidance on admissions, exclusions and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Great Marlow School became an Academy in 2011.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is where a number of academies create a single trust with a board of trustees answerable to the trust members.

What does the national landscape look like?

Academies have evolved over successive governments. Nationally, at the current time, approximately 40% of secondary schools are in MATs; 36% of secondary schools are ‘standalone’ academies and the remaining 24% of schools remain under local authority or diocese control. This government recognises the value of a self-improving school system in which groups of schools work closely together to continuously improve, and with the constant reductions in school funding, the cost-savings of schools maximising economies of scale together could be significant.

What are the potential benefits for our students in forming or joining a MAT?

- They could benefit from the experience of shared resources, facilities and activities.
- They could have the opportunity to work more closely with other children at different schools on academic projects, sporting pursuits, enrichment activities, trips and clubs.
- The children could have the opportunity to learn from teaching professionals that have a wider range of skills and experiences.
- Children could financially benefit from the conversion, as any cost saving efficiencies would be driven back into their education.

Why ‘Fact Finding’ with Marlow Educational Trust?

Investigations to date appear to show that the most effective and successful MATs involve local schools that are geographically located close to each other. In our discussions with our local primary schools they have expressed an interest in collaboration at a local level. A key part of our decision making will be the position of our local primary schools and their involvement in any future local MAT structure.

‘Fact Finding’ will involve:

- testing the strategic rationale for the tie up: will it improve the life chances and attainment of all children
- identifying risks, liabilities, cultural differences and practical issues that may cause difficulties
- understanding the internal capabilities, strengths and areas for improvement of all schools in the MAT
- examining broader systems and processes, management and financial structures, future opportunities and business plans