

Greystones Primary School

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Friday 22nd November 2024

Dear Parents and Carers,

We wrote to you in April 2024 letting you know that a working party of Greystones Governors were considering our school's options with regard to joining a Multi Academy Trust (also known as a MAT). In the past decade or so, reduced funding for local authorities has affected their capacity to support local authority schools while academy trusts have become a more established and widespread way for schools to be financed and organised. MATs come in a variety of sizes and they have a good deal of freedom regarding their priorities and organisation.

Governors have been through a thorough process in the meantime, researching the possible local and national Trust options we felt aligned with our priorities for Greystones. We have met with a small number of potential Trusts a number of times.

Joining a MAT is a significant decision and governors and leaders at Greystones have been working to ensure that all potential decisions about academisation are driven by the best interests of children, staff and our community. It is important to us all that the Greystones Primary ethos and values sustain throughout any change in status and that the school continues to develop in ways that benefit our children and their learning.

This letter is to let you know that Governors have agreed to take the next steps to join a particular Trust, which is based in Sheffield. We have narrowed our search down to this Trust because there is a strong alignment with our values and we believe this MAT will allow us to continue to improve our school as part of a wider supportive partnership.

We will now engage in a period of more focused discussion with the Trust, during which we will share more detailed information about our school, regarding our curriculum, our staff team, our finances, our buildings etc. We hope to be able to write to you in the coming weeks with more information, including the name of the Trust.

We are at the early stages of this process and will continue to communicate with you as things progress. In due course, if the decision is made to proceed, we will also be inviting you to an initial meeting to discuss this further with you. We will outline our rationale, and provide an opportunity to answer any questions you may have. In the meantime, we hope that you find the FAQs below helpful, and that it may answer some initial questions.

If you have any questions or comments, you can do this via the enquiries email (enquiries@greystonesprimary.com). At all stages in this process we are interested to know what your thoughts are, as this input can inform governors as they make final decisions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Mark Wilde'.

Mark Wilde, Chair of Governors

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Sinead Gaffney'.

Sinead Gaffney, Headteacher

Why is Greystones considering joining a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) now?

The possibility of joining a MAT has been seriously explored and considered by the Governing Body at Greystones for a number of years, going back to before the pandemic. Our school has always valued close working partnerships with other schools and the benefits these bring in terms of school improvement and addressing shared priorities in a group. Alongside this, the support available to Greystones Primary School from the local authority has diminished over the years – for a number of reasons. As more schools within the local authority choose to academise (including some of our neighbouring schools), the ability to support each other is also diminishing, with time and cost pressures increasing. However, identifying the right Trust for us is a wide-ranging question that needs to be taken seriously and has been considered at length by the school's committed team of governors and leaders.

How would joining a MAT benefit the children at Greystones?

Our hope in joining the right Multi Academy Trust is that, through strong back-office support, the senior leadership in school will be able to focus more of their time on the quality of education and children, rather than on things like facilities management, health and safety and payroll. We already enjoy good working relationships and support with many of our local schools. However, being part of a larger, more formalised partnership should mean more specialist support, opportunities for staff professional development, collaboration and shared moderation. As a result, this should further enhance the educational offer children get at Greystones.

How will the curriculum be affected?

MATs can choose their own curriculum, though in reality most MATs do follow the English National Curriculum. Schools in multi academy trust are still judged on results at end of key stage 2 tests for the national curriculum in maths, reading, writing and science. At Greystones, we have shaped our core and wider curriculum according to the strengths and needs of our pupils, and the priorities of our community. We review it regularly to ensure our children are achieving the highest standards in their learning and are well-prepared for their next steps. We do not envisage any significant changes to our curriculum as a result of joining a MAT.

How will the school maintain its own identity within a MAT?

This is a key priority for us – we are proud of Greystones' ethos and values and we are only looking to join MATs who share the same values and support schools to retain their individual identities. We work hard to be the right school for our community, supporting all children to thrive in a transforming world and to have excellent academic outcomes. It is essential to us that our values align well with those of the MAT – both in principle and in practice.

Would there be deviation from the 'set' school holidays?

The school holidays would be the same as they are now if we join the proposed Trust, as they choose to stay in line with those as set out by Sheffield City Council. Our school would continue to set our own INSET or training dates, some of which may be directed by a MAT in the future.

Can you provide any reassurance that we won't lose staff to other schools within the MAT?

The Trusts that we have spoken to do not ever require staff to work in different schools. Job opportunities may arise in other schools within a Trust which any employee of the Trust may wish to apply for.



How does funding work, specifically for staff pay?

Historically, pay and conditions for school leaders and teachers are set at a national level. However, academisation has provided employers with the scope to set terms and conditions themselves. The MAT we are in discussions with has adopted the national pay and conditions for their staff.

Will there continue to be a school governing body with parental representation?

Yes. In MATs, school governing bodies are called 'local governing boards'. We are seeking a Trust who would ensure that its schools retain their LGB.

Will the school uniform change? Will the school name change?

No and no. Sometimes MATs do change uniforms and school names. We are not interested in joining MATs who take that kind of approach because Greystones would not benefit from changes like that. Decisions around our school uniform would remain a choice for the school's leaders, in consultation with parents and carers.

