



Dear Parents and Carers,

We are delighted to inform you that Stockland Primary Academy has requested to join The Redstart Learning Partnership. We believe this will be a positive move for both the school and the Trust. We know you will have many questions to ask about the benefits of this collaboration and the process of joining the Trust. In this letter we will outline what this means for the school and will provide some frequently asked questions which we hope will be helpful to you. We would ask that you read the information and then if there are further questions you would like to ask please send them into the school and we will collate them and send out a reply to everyone just before half term. After half term we will set up some zoom meetings to enable you to discuss any further questions.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

Academies are publicly funded schools, independent of the local authority, held accountable through a legally binding funding agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). Staff are employed by the academy trust.

Multi-academy trusts (MATs) are groups of academies that have come together to form a charitable company, with a single group of 'members' (who have an overview of the governance arrangements) and a single board of trustees. The Circle Trust is a MAT. Even as part of a MAT:

- individual schools remain as separate entities, with separate names and DfE numbers
- individual schools still receive separate Ofsted judgements and performance tables are still based on individual schools

MATs are set up as charitable companies and are accountable directly to the Secretary of State through the regional schools' commissioners.

As charitable companies, MATs have articles of association and a scheme of delegation, legal documents that set out the governance composition and procedures for the Trust.

The people on the main governing board of a MAT are known as Trustees. These roles come with specific legal responsibilities which include:

- ensuring the organisation remains solvent and spends money in accordance with its charitable objectives
- ensuring the schools in the MAT provide a good standard of education

- managing any conflicts of interest

MATs are also required to have a group of members who sit above the board of trustees. The members have a hands-off, but significant, role. They monitor the performance of the trust and hold the trustees to account. They appoint Trustees and the Executive Headteacher. They will intervene if the Trustees are not performing by making changes at board level.

Responsibilities

MATs are required to produce a 'scheme of delegation' which outlines what decisions are taken by whom and at what level of the organisation. MATs must also comply with the Academies Financial Handbook which acts as the financial framework for academy trusts and sets out the financial governance requirements that all trusts must adhere to.

The Redstart Learning Partnership (TRLP)

TRLP is a MAT of 9 primary schools based in and around Chard and Taunton. It was set up in 2015 following the outstanding OFSTED judgement at The Redstart Primary School in Chard. The schools are both rural and urban, large and small, church and non- church with about 1600 pupils and 275 staff. Each of our schools is extremely important yet it is the combination of schools which really makes a difference. Each school is definitely stronger and more successful as part of this larger group. We have managed to maintain a good balance between work that is aligned for the benefit of all schools alongside retaining each school's individual identity.

Over the last 6 years we have been able to benefit from being a group of schools in a number of ways. We have a strong school improvement team who are able to support our schools to be the best they can be. We are able to offer a high quality professional development package to our teachers and support staff ensuring they deliver high quality lessons but also developing their leadership, communication and IT skills. As a Trust we are able to attract high quality staff who can share their skills across a number of schools. We can offer attractive career opportunities keeping our strongest and most skilled colleagues within the organisation so to the benefit of all schools.

We are also able to benefit from reduced costs by merging contracts, buying in bulk and sharing resources. We provide a strong central services team which support HR, payroll, finance and premises, services which it would be unlikely one school could afford on its own.

Providing Trust policies, central services and high quality support all enable our heads to concentrate their time on teaching and learning to enable our youngsters to access a rich and vibrant curriculum which not only gives them the necessary literacy and numeracy skills but also prepares them for life in the wider world.

During the recent Covid 19 pandemic the Trust has shown that it is a resilient, flexible organisation which has been able to meet the numerous demands thrown our way and to support each of our schools and families.

Why should Stockland join TRLP?

As a small standalone academy Stockland has faced some significant challenges over recent years. As with many standalone schools it has become isolated and this has had detrimental consequences on school improvement, professional development of staff as well as monitoring and challenge. TRLP is able to provide this essential support which a school on its own cannot. Geographical location is significant if we want the staff and pupils at our schools to gain the greatest benefit from working together. Stockland is situated within close proximity to Redstart. As a small, rural, church Stockland is also similar in make up to several of our schools. Through discussions we have established the Stockland ethos and that of TRLP are well matched. We have begun working together informally over the last few months.

TRLP has a strong school improvement team who will be able to support the school as it moves forward from its recent requires improvement inspection outcome.

Frequently asked questions

Will we lose our school name or individuality?

Whilst our policies and many practices are aligned across the schools each school within the Trust has its own identity and is part of its own community. There will be no change to the school name or uniform when the school joins the Trust.

Will the school still be a church school?

The school will remain a church school within the Diocese of Exeter. TRLP has a good working relationship with the Diocese of Bath and Wells and has already begun to establish a positive relationship with the Diocese of Exeter. We are committed to enhancing and developing the school's church school distinctiveness to ensure a glowing SIAMS report at the next inspection.

Will we lose our teachers?

The current team at Stockland will all remain employees of the school. However, if they choose to apply for different roles across the Trust they would do so in the same way they would for a school outside the Trust. One of the benefits of being within a Trust can be the flexibility of support if required and on many previous occasions if a school has a teacher absent or a contract ends we have been able to supply a replacement from within the organisation.

Do we have to re-apply for a school place?

As when the school changed from an LA school to an academy all pupils will automatically remain on the school register.

My child has special educational needs. What happens to their funding?

All funding will continue to be allocated in the same way as now and will be provided by Devon LA.

How does the transfer work?

TRLP submits an application to the South West Head Teacher Board and if the Regional Schools' Commissioner and her advisers agree to the proposal the legal teams sort out the paperwork to transfer Stockland into the Trust. It is planned that the application will go to the HTB meeting on March 23rd 2021 and if you have any questions you would like considered at the meeting you are able to submit those in advance.

Kind regards,

Mr Hellowell

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Flack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'k'.

Mrs Suzanne Flack
CEO, The Redstart Learning Partnership