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Letter from Chairman and Head Teacher

18th April 2017

Dear Parents,

You may be aware from the articles in our newsletter, feedback from parent forums and national press coverage that many schools are considering becoming academies and joining together to form Multi Academy Trusts (MATs).

There are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, MATs are the Government's preferred way for schools to work in the future. Initially it was stated that all schools 'must' become academies/MATs by 2020; now the Government are saying it is 'expected' that they will.

Secondly, most of the services previously provided by Cheshire East Council's education department are unlikely to continue beyond the next 18 months as they will no longer be financially viable. So schools now have to find ways of sourcing those services themselves. One of the main ways to do this is to collaborate together – hence the move towards Multi Academy Trusts.

In the light of these changes, Bexton has taken a pro-active approach and has been considering a variety of options over the last year. We have been approached by a number of excellent schools inviting us to join-in with them and we have therefore had to consider carefully what we want to achieve from the process.

We decided that if we were to become part of a Multi Academy Trust, then our overarching objective for doing so *must* be to improve the outcomes for our children. We have always believed in improving the children's school experience and therefore improving teaching and learning should remain top of the list.

Secondary objectives included:

- Retaining a good level of control over our affairs
- Retaining Bexton's values and identity within the community
- Increasing financial efficiencies
- Providing greater work opportunities and progression for staff

Essentially we had two possible models to choose from:

- A primary-to-primary model where two or more primary schools join together
- A secondary-to-primary model where a secondary and a number of primaries join together

We have spent the last 6 months evaluating our options against the above objectives and have come to a decision that the primary-to-primary model provides overwhelming advantages to our children and our school.

Holmes Chapel Primary School (HCPS) approached us at the start of the process and we judged them to be the best of our primary-to-primary options. We have therefore decided in principle to join with HCPS with a view to growing the MAT in the future with other primaries, at a pace to suit ourselves. HCPS is already an Academy and it has OFSTED 'Outstanding' status. We have a very similar vision and ethos towards the education for our children and have been collaborating with them for a number of years.

Importantly, we have also jointly agreed that both schools will have 'Founder Member' status in the new MAT with equal 'shares' on the main Board. This means we will have a high level independence and control over what happens in the future – something that Bexton and its parents have always valued highly. This new MAT will not grow to include secondary schools in any areas.

This decision was agreed overwhelmingly by the Governing Board; it was the clear recommendation of the Head and the SLT; and it is supported wholeheartedly by the staff; in addition the options have been discussed twice at our Parent Forum.

As parents in Knutsford, you also need to know that our other final option was to join the Knutsford MAT (KMAT). This MAT currently includes Knutsford Academy and the Studio School and we believe the intention is to include Egerton Primary in the future. We have the highest regard for KMAT and the progress they are making and they will continue to be strong partners in the future. At present we have cross-representation of Governors on our respective Boards and we expect this to continue. We have also been reassured that KMAT expect the transition of pupils from Bexton to KMAT to be unchanged and continue to be as strong, if not stronger.

So our decision came down to one major factor - we believe that Bexton pupils, *throughout the age ranges*, will benefit most strongly from a primary-to-primary MAT.

This is a decision 'in principle' at the moment and we will now start to progress this decision. This will involve formal consultation with staff and you, the parents. We are confident that the process has been thorough and professional and is a decision which has the best interests of our children at heart.

We have posted a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document on the website with additional information on becoming a MAT, but if you have any further queries, please forward them to head@bexton.cheshire.sch.uk so we can add them to the list.

Thank you for your continued support.

Peter Woodhouse
Chair of Governors

Emily Armstrong
Headteacher