



The Axe Valley Community College Academy Conversion Consultation Paper

Should The Axe Valley Community College (TAVCC) convert to an academy and, at the same time, join a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

The Governing Board of TAVCC has put together the following information to help parents, staff, pupils and other interested parties comment on whether it is right for our school to convert to academy status and join a MAT at the current time. There will also be presentations and question and answer sessions for all groups concerned (see the section 'Have Your Say').

We would like to invite you to send your comments to
consultation@axevalley.devon.sch.uk

Please put 'Academy Status' in the subject line and please indicate your interest i.e. staff, parent, pupil.

The consultation will run from 16th May until close of business on Friday 17th June 2016.

Thank you for your consideration.

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What is an academy?

An academy is an independently managed school which is funded directly from central government rather than by the local authority.

Benefits of being an academy and part of a MAT

- **academies are independent of local authority control** – this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves
- **academies receive their funding direct from central government** – this means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services
- **academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught** – this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider is appropriate for their pupils
- **academies can set their own pay and conditions of service for their staff** – academies have the freedom to alter the pay and conditions of their staff (subject to normal employment law protections for staff) and so can provide staff with different pay and conditions than previously but undertake to at least match national pay and conditions
- **academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects** – academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries

Disadvantages of being an academy and part of a MAT

As an academy we will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and, property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs and can often negotiate better deals.

Background

More than 60% of secondary schools in the country are academies and, in Devon, almost 57% of secondary school pupils are educated in academy schools. Recent statements from the government and the publication of the White Paper “Educational Excellence Everywhere” on 7th March 2016 express the intention that all schools will have to convert or be committed to converting to an academy by 2022 (see link below for further information). However, an announcement by the Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, on Friday 6th May confirms that ‘outstanding’ or ‘good’ schools will not be forced to convert to academies.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508447/Educational_Excellence_Everywhere.pdf

Maintained schools with small sixth forms (fewer than 250 students) are particularly at risk of losing their Key Stage 5 due to small class sizes, inability to offer a sufficiently broad curriculum and the increasing need to top up post-16 funding from the 11-16 budget. Falling rolls in East Devon are further increasing the financial burden on school sixth forms as income decreases but running costs increase.

The Governing Board of TAVCC has taken a proactive stance on seeking a sustainable solution to ensure the young people of the Axe Valley and surrounding area will continue to receive quality education from 11-19 years of age in their own community. This has involved many months of lengthy discussions with other local schools to find a mutually beneficial partnership. Our aim is to be in charge of our own destiny and not be forced into a MAT which may link us with schools that don't share our ethos and values.

Having carefully researched and discussed options with a number of local schools, it is the considered opinion of the Governors that a lasting partnership with Holyrood Academy as part of a MAT offers the greatest benefit to students, parents and staff and will allow The Axe Valley Community College to retain its individual identity and best serve the community.

Context

The Axe Valley Community College

- We are a smaller than average 11-19 secondary school with 788 pupils.
- Our sixth form currently consists of 120 students with some classes having as few as one or two students, particularly in Modern Foreign Languages.
- Current predictions for the next few years in East Devon estimate falling transition numbers from primary to secondary with an average intake each year in our college of 125 rather than our published admissions number (PAN) of 150 pupils.
- With reduced rolls the proportion of budget required from the 11-16 funding to maintain the sixth form is increasing to an unsustainable level.

Our Vision

- A school which serves the community by providing high quality education for our young people coupled with a rich extracurricular programme to equip students with the skills required to succeed in the modern world.
- A school that provides an environment conducive to learning.
- A strong sixth form facility with a broad offer of both academic and vocational qualifications as well as excellent independent careers guidance.
- High quality continuing professional development (CPD) for all staff leading to opportunities for advancement either in house or in other organisations.
- A school that is the first choice for teachers looking for the finest professional experience.
- Sustainable links with feeder primary schools for a smooth transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.
- Preservation of our individual identity to best serve the needs of the Axe Valley and the surrounding communities.

Why We Need Partnership

- To maintain a sixth form centre for the young people of the Axe Valley and beyond.

- To improve the outcomes of our students by:
 - improving transition for pupils entering Year 7 by working with our feeder primary schools in Key Stage 2
 - increasing the quality of education through shared best practice within the partnership
 - having greater leadership capacity to drive improvements in teaching, learning and behaviour
 - collaboration on marking and moderation of assessments across departments
 - offering enhanced opportunities through greater student numbers such as extracurricular and educational trips
- Improved CPD opportunities for all staff.
- Financial savings by integrating core services.

Partnership with Holyrood Academy

Reasons for Choosing Holyrood

Governors have worked for many months looking at all the options of local partnerships and various models have been considered such as federation, cooperative and multi-academy trust. During our investigations the first question has always been, *“Will this partnership improve outcomes for our students?”*

We believe Holyrood is the best partner for us for the following reasons:

- our pupils are from very similar environments with a broadly similar prior attainment profile
- we both share the ethos of excellence for all
- both schools have sixth forms that are considered vulnerable on their own but would constitute a viable proposition if they combine some of their operations
- Holyrood already has a strong leadership structure with capacity to work across two schools as needed
- although it is already an outstanding school, Holyrood continues to improve and we can join them on that journey
- Holyrood agrees that Axe Valley has and should maintain its own identity

Management Partnership

The announcement of Mr Smith’s resignation as our Headteacher in 2015 created the perfect opportunity for change. We have entered into a management partnership with Holyrood with the intention of becoming a MAT in the coming months. The Governing Board will be monitoring the changes that the new leadership brings to the College with particular consideration to pupil progress.

What would MAT status mean for staff?

Change of employer

Devon County Council is the current employer of staff at TAVCC. Should the college become part of a Multi-Academy Trust all staff currently employed by the college will automatically transfer to the MAT

on their current pay and conditions. Although the MAT will have more freedom to amend those pay and conditions in the future the Governing Board does not intend to take such a step and, in any event, any change to pay and conditions would need to be fully consulted upon with staff representatives.

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) – TUPE

The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (commonly known as 'TUPE') protects employees' terms and conditions of employment when their employment is transferred from one employer to another. In the case of an academy conversion, the employment of staff will transfer from the local authority to the academy trust. All staff will transfer to the academy trust on their existing terms and conditions of employment.

Under TUPE, the current employer and the academy trust will inform any recognised trade unions or elected employee representatives of the fact that the transfer is to take place, when it is to take place and the reasons for it.

Will the name of the college change?

Legally the school will be an academy and not a community college so we will have to change our name. However, any change of name will continue to reflect our position as serving and being at the heart of communities throughout the Axe Valley.

Will the uniform change?

There are no current plans to change the uniform but this will be reviewed every few years by governors as it has always been. Keeping our own smart and distinctive uniform is important to maintain the identity of The Axe Valley Community College.

Will admission arrangements change?

As a community college, admission arrangements are set by the local authority and the local authority also decides which pupils should be offered places at the college. As an academy, we will be in a position to put in place our own admission arrangements and decide which pupils should be offered places in accordance with those arrangements. The academy will still be bound by the National Admissions Code and Admissions Appeals Code and so cannot change significantly.

The current admission arrangements will remain in place for the time being. We will continue to be committed to offering high quality education to all the children and young people in our community commensurate with our equality policy.

If the academy wanted to change its admission arrangements, consultation would be required.

Will the curriculum change?

As an academy we will have greater freedom to set our own curriculum which means we can tailor our offer to suit the young people in our community. We will, however, continue to provide a broad and

balanced curriculum which best meets the needs of all students across the ability spectrum with particular regard to our more vulnerable groups of pupils such as those with Special Educational Needs.

How will governance change?

The college must remain accountable for providing good quality education to its pupils, showing good pupil progress and giving good value for money. There will continue to be a Local Governance Committee to oversee the educational standards at the college. This will consist of current governors and will operate much as it does now. The Headteacher will continue to operate the day to day running of the college and will be responsible to the Executive Headteacher of the MAT as well as the Local Governance Committee.

Strategic vision, employment, overall finance and facilities management will be the remit of the Board of Directors of the MAT. The Executive Headteacher and Local Governance Committee will be held to account by the Board of Directors.

Who is being consulted regarding this change?

We are consulting the following groups:

- parents/carers of pupils at the college
- staff currently employed at the college and any due to take up a post in college in the next academic year
- pupils at the college
- parents in Years 5 & 6 at feeder primary schools or those with children starting Year 7 in the next academic year (2016/17)
- the wider local community

Have Your Say

Before we make our decision regarding academy status and joining a MAT we would like to hear your views. We will be giving presentations to parents, pupils and staff at the times given below where there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

Pupils	Year Group Assemblies week beginning 16 th May
Staff	3:45pm Monday 23 rd May
Parents/Carers	6pm Monday 23 rd May

Governors are interested to know your thoughts on this important change in our status. Please take the time to respond to our consultation by sending an e-mail to consultation@axevalley.devon.sch.uk putting 'Academy Status' in the subject line and indicate your interest (parent, pupil, staff etc.). The consultation will run from Monday 16th May until close of business on Friday 17th June 2016.

Should you require any further information please contact Mrs Heather Burnett, Chair of Governors, at axevalleychairofgovernors@gmail.com