



*Developing and learning together to achieve excellence for all...*

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Consultation on the merging of the Plym Academy Trust with the Westcountry Schools Trust.**

You may recall I wrote to you in February concerning the proposal for Plym Academy Trust to merge with Westcountry Schools Trust. During the intervening time the Trust Board have continued with their due diligence work surrounding the merger. Approval has been granted by the Regional Schools Commissioners Office and all being well, the merge should take place from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

I would like to offer you the opportunity to attend a drop in session with representatives of the Plym Academy Trust and the Westcountry Schools Trust including the CEO to ask any questions you might have on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May between 5.15 and 6.15pm at Boringdon Primary School.

If you are unable to attend the drop in session and have any questions, please email [admin@plymacademytrust.co.uk](mailto:admin@plymacademytrust.co.uk). I have copied my earlier letter below for your information

Yours faithfully,

*Ian Cload .*

Mr Ian Cload  
CEO Plym Academy Trust

Mr John Agnew  
Chair of the Trust Board

11<sup>th</sup> February 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,

### **Securing the future for the children and families of the Plym Academy Trust. Plym Academy Trust to merge with the Westcountry Schools Trust.**

Apologies for the long letter but I felt it was important for you to have a brief overview of our proposals to secure the future for the children in our schools.

In my opinion the Plym Academy Trust (PAT) is a unique organization that has been very successful since its formation. It has been a very positive journey. All five schools have played an equal part and all have benefitted. Teaching and learning has improved, collaboration, sharing of best practice, ideas, resources, subject expertise and pedagogical practice all have helped to improve achievement. The formal collaboration and trust has brought about swift and unhindered progress for all. Leaders and teachers have shared thinking and planning, spreading expertise enabling challenges to be tackled together. Governors and trustees have become more strategic and focussed. Shared professional development whether led by staff from one of the partner schools or an outside body has been successful and is developing. We have benefitted from £2.5 million of funding for our buildings which have suffered from years of lack of investment. We have five excellent schools.

However, the job of the Trust Board is to secure the life chances of the children who attend its schools into the future. One of our prime objectives is for the central team of the Trust to effectively facilitate teaching and learning in the constituent schools. To sustain our development and achieve our aims into the future, the central team of the Trust requires additional support which can only be achieved through expansion. In Feb 2018 with the picture of academies in Plymouth and its surrounding area it was felt that piecemeal growth was not going to be possible or effective. Geography, ethos and transition are important. The next step was exploratory talks with possible partners. After much thought and discussion, the Trust Board have decided that a merger with the Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) should proceed with the intention of us joining on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019. The merger has just been agreed by the Regional Schools Commissioner's office.

WeST is comprised of:

Secondary schools: Ivybridge, Heles, Coombe Dean, Plymstock and Callington.

Primary schools: Oreston, Dunstone, Stowford, Woodlands Park, Yealmpton, Holbeton, Wembury and Sherford Vale.

One HIE college: The Learning Institute.

WeST has the capacity, the resources and economies of scale to achieve what the PAT requires and forming a partnership at this particular point in time, provides us with a window of opportunity to very much influence the development and shape of the organisation. The WeST MAT currently includes a diverse group of schools, primary and secondary, with many high performing and others with challenges to face. I believe it is a good mix that will enable collaboration and trust to continue swiftly and unhindered. I also believe most of the schools in the Trust face similar opportunities and challenges which enable leaders and trustees to understand each other's issues, benchmark performance and to find solutions within. WeST has the advantage of size and locality. The primary group would operate in two hubs. We would also benefit from access

to secondary subject expertise and their facilities. Transition from KS2 to KS3 would be enhanced. The community of our Plympton schools would be served by one MAT with a common aim.

Effective financial management has always been important, but in the current economic climate it is crucial. While improving pupil progress and outcomes should be the number one goal of any MAT, this can only be achieved through sound financial management. Financially we will be more secure as we will get more services and access to teams with greater capacity. The cost of the central services offered by WeST is very similar to what we currently pay. However, it would appear that schools would be better off by the amount of capital funding that they automatically receive and from access to school improvement bids that only large MATs can make.

The financial future of WeST is looking healthy, particularly considering the housing developments at Sherford, Coypool and Billacombe etc. which will ensure pupil numbers increase, securing our future funding.

The staff of PAT, are our most important 'assets.' When the merger goes ahead staff will Tupe across to WeST on their current terms and conditions and the intention will be no reduction in staffing levels within any of the schools as a result of the merger.

The plan for the PAT central team would be for myself as the CEO to become the School Improvement Partner for the Plym hub of primaries, the PAT CBM to become the finance support for the Plym Hub of primaries and the PAT Facilities manager to join the WeST Estates team, possibly working across all schools.

The ethos and vision of WeST aligns with that of our schools. It is reflected through its stated values, approach to stakeholder engagement and its governance structure, as well as in any trust-wide policies. It would appear that WeST wants the same things for the children in its care as we do. They already provide for many of the same families that we do. The ethos and culture is set by the trust's members and trustees, and so should remain consistent even if the leadership of the MAT changes.

This decision has not been taken lightly, but has been discussed and considered extensively by the Trust Board and the Headteachers of the five Trust schools. We feel confident that the arrangements being co-constructed will support, challenge, sustain and improve further outcomes for our children.

Personally, if like me you find change challenging, you can take heart from the fact that when the PAT formed many of us were very anxious. However, that decision has proven to be more positive than we could have ever imagined- a considerable achievement considering that we are living through the most challenging economic and political times I can remember in my 32 years of teaching experience. My aim as a headteacher and now as the CEO of the Trust has always stayed the same, to simply try my best for the staff and children I serve by using the resources currently at our disposal to enable teaching and learning to thrive. I believe that by joining WeST, we increase our chances of maximising resources and safeguard our chances of ensuring the excellent job we have started continues into the future.

Ian Cload .

Mr Ian Cload  
CEO Plym Academy Trust