Working with the

Reaching Great Heights!
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

THE PROPOSED ‘REACHING GREAT HEIGHTS’ MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST, June 2016
The Greetland Academy’s Role as an Academy Sponsor

The Greetland Academy has a long history of supporting, advising and sharing with others: as a Beacon School; guiding Calderdale Schools when the Headteacher chaired the LA Heads association; leading schools through academy transfer; currently supporting the regional Teaching School Council; membership of the National Academies Financial and Assurance Steering group for the EFA; contributor to the Business Manager Mentoring Programme; a National Leader of Education and multiple Specialist Leaders of Education delivering School to School support, Initial Teacher Training and supporting the Outstanding Teacher Programme. Following our conversion as an outstanding converter to academy status and our subsequent developments we believe we are in a strong position to bring about additional drive, purpose, innovation and ultimately improved opportunities for pupils and staff in other schools.

The Greetland Academy proposes to set up an overarching Academy Trust from our Governance with a board of directors. After assessing the potential existing expertise within the Governance of any school to be sponsored, local advisory boards would be developed alongside any appropriate rebranding. Strategic management, network management and service responsibilities would be developed using our expertise. A proposed top slice to ensure appropriate support would be approximately 4% (dependent on need and impact on all parties).

The Greetland Academy has a history of improving performance: we have developed strong networks and partnerships with many consultants and external advisors; we have an experienced senior team and governing body with many areas of expertise including curriculum areas, key stages, inclusion, finance and business management. We have the capacity and expertise to make a significant impact on improving opportunities for pupils through raising attainment and improving the teaching and learning experiences in other schools.
We see the opportunity for others to join our MAT as the chance to utilise and consequently gain from our successful ethos, organisational practices, staffing structures, staffing expertise, leadership and management expertise and curriculum innovation. We offer strong academy conversion expertise and effective connections with HR, legal and insurance providers. In addition to this we are a split-site school with many years’ experience of successfully running dual sites.

**Our Vision Statement:**

The Greetland Academy strives to always provide an inspirational, positive and welcoming environment where there is a sense of pride and fun and where everyone works together with confidence, enthusiasm and mutual respect. We aim to nurture academic, personal, spiritual and social development in a caring and professional manner so that all achieve their full potential and all can reach great heights.

**Schools joining our Multi-Academy Trust**

Our current plans to grow the trust are focused on finding ‘like-minded’ schools with similar values and principles to join us as partners. We believe that schools joining in this way would reap many benefits from such collaboration and would also enhance the capacity of the trust. This would not be a significant loss of control or status for heads or governors, but in fact an opportunity to take greater control at a critical time of change in the wider organisation of schools. We would welcome a discussion with any school who might be interested in joining us in this early but exciting stage, as we shape and develop our multi-academy trust.

For any school facing a potential change of leadership, the offer of guidance and training for a new leader could be a key benefit providing the confidence needed to step up to the challenge of Headship.

The National Governors Association now provides information about the benefits of working in formal collaborations and the need for schools to be in control of their own destiny.

Any school wishing to join the MAT could be fully supported through the legal process by our experienced team and solicitors.
Six Principles for our MAT

- A commitment to a culture of lifelong learning for all.
- A relentless pursuit of excellence in all aspects of school life.
- A purposeful curriculum, which is bespoke, unique and reflects each school's geographical and cultural identity with strong links to the community and the outdoors.
- Strong emotional and pastoral care for all children.
- Robust systems for monitoring important areas of school life such as health and safety, safeguarding and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Successful partnerships with parents and families

Governance for joining schools

It is expected that Good or Outstanding schools joining the trust would retain their local governing body with similar powers but would pass on some of their statutory responsibilities. Schools joining who are not Good or Outstanding would have gone through a due-diligence process and any potential changes would be identified.

A number of different models are possible however and a new school may wish to be part of the innovative governance structure we are developing with a very clear focus on the quality of education. In this model, governors would work across the trust providing them with the crucial ability to make comparisons between schools. They would be representative of the schools within the trust and follow a structured programme of visits where they effectively review monitoring. The opportunity for governors to compare practice would add value to their findings and outcomes.

Central services

As school improvement support from local authorities has decreased in recent years it has become increasingly challenging for individual schools to provide the comprehensive range of services that children and staff require. Our trust would provide an effective means to better source these services, tailoring them to the needs of our schools. Our central services would expand and evolve as our MAT grows and will be tailored to the needs of children and communities. Back-office services include accountancy, business management, strategic IT, income generation, marketing and procurement. All this is intended to support school leaders, freeing them up to focus on first-class teaching and learning for all.
What would be the benefits of joining our MAT?

Current research indicates that many schools and academies ‘join a sponsored organisation in order to improve their performance’ (three-fifths of Academies are within a Multi-Academy Trust structure - March 2015).

In order to improve teaching and learning opportunities for all our MAT partners we strongly believe that our current track record and staffing structure will enable all within our MAT to build on:

- Existing successes
- Partnerships
- Collaborations
- School to school support opportunities and networks

Potential effectiveness benefits for schools within our MAT: clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; enhanced ability to hold organisations to account for the educational performance of schools and their pupils; overseeing the financial performance of the school to make sure its money is well spent and being able to evidence good value.

We can provide access to specialist staff, organisations and opportunities through our existing staffing structures, linking Teaching School provision and projects, Schools Direct & SCITT access to additional future teachers. This will ensure MAT members have access to:

- shared best practice
- expertise in school improvement
- expertise across leadership and management to allow managers to focus on improving teaching and learning outcomes eg. data & pupil progress
- the pooling of back-office centralised services and contracts
- bespoke funding via bids for school facilities, buildings and provision
- flexibility of approach to meet the needs of specific academies
- increased staffing potential, opportunities and a flexibility for staff across different academies for career progression
- succession planning opportunities
- high quality staff development from within the MAT and Teaching School Alliance (Teamworks TSA)
- enrichment opportunities for pupils across academies
- high impact educational research projects (such as recent maths and drama research via Teamworks TSA)
- a breadth of educational forums and networks at the forefront of educational development (e.g. SSAT forums, Teaching School Council Association, Finance Steering Group)
Joint professional development

The trust would offer many opportunities for high quality professional development due to the wide range of expertise it could draw upon. The Greetland Academy has a long history of high quality JPD and the development and retention of staff. Action research carried out in coaching teams across partner schools would be key to school improvement. The regular opportunity to teach and observe in other schools is often a new experience to many long-serving teachers.

Leadership Development

The opportunity for staff to be retained within the MAT is a significant benefit and would most likely serve as a way of offering staff career progression and/or greater professional challenge without the need to leave our employment. As an example, a middle leader in one school looking for career progression would currently need to apply externally for a job – promotion within the MAT retains skills and experience.
The Greetland Academy ‘Reaching Great Heights’
Proposed Multi-Academy Trust model

This model shows the initial basic structure for accountability and information gathering/sharing. Each of the academy LGBs or councils will have the same schedule of meetings happening at the same times of year. These will also have pre-set non-negotiable agendas for each sub-committee. However, as all academies are different there is the capability for individual academies to add to these agendas.

Each academy has the same rights and autonomy as the others as long as they are ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’. Any schools joining that are judged to be ‘Requires Improvement’ or ‘Inadequate’ would not have the same autonomy initially. A clear risk assessment and due-diligence would be completed and support put in place to ensure these schools are able to become ‘Good’ or better, which in turn would bring autonomy. All schools will report to the Trust Board.

The vision and direction of the MAT would be driven primarily by the heads/principals of all the MAT schools.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Multi-Academy Trust? (MAT)
A group of academies who are working together to achieve the best outcomes for their children. The schools are linked in a formal way, but not always sharing direct governance.

What are the key benefits of being in a MAT?
- The sharing of expertise and joint staff professional development
- An increased capacity to grow and develop leaders
- Freeing up senior leaders to focus on work that really matters
- An improved career path for talented staff, retaining high quality professionals
- Financial savings around procurement due to bulk purchasing of goods and services
- Shared back-office support services, saving money and greater financial security
- Providing links with others that our children can benefit from e.g. visits, sporting opportunities, enrichment activities, school council development etc.
- High quality governance with a clear focus on strategic development and teaching and learning accountability

What would make you different from other sponsors?
The Greetland Academy does NOT want to ‘take over’ any schools nor do we want to make all schools clones of ourselves or each other. We believe in collaborative work – working together as a MAT for the mutual benefit of all, with a shared focus on school improvement. We also believe that each academy should retain its own identity whilst benefitting from working as part of a group of like-minded schools.

Will we be able to improve the services and support that we offer children and their families?
Children and families should directly benefit from a school’s membership of a MAT through an improved capacity to establish and develop support services such as pastoral care, family support and education psychology.

What will this actually mean for the staff and families of a school joining a MAT?
Life would continue as usual with the ethos, values, uniform and culture of each joining school remaining their own, and unchanged unless they are a contributing factor to a school’s vulnerability, as identified by Ofsted.

How would you identify the priorities for our school/assess our school needs?
By using school data, the School Improvement Plan and any Ofsted reports alongside a moderated review picture; a joint view would be agreed on current and future priorities.
Would a joining school lose control of its own budget?
The MAT’s qualified accountants and business director would have an overview of all financial matters and would be expected to provide best value practices through procurement, income generation and efficiency. At a local level, schools would still make decisions about how they spend their own allocated budgets.

How would central services be paid for?
Schools would not be charged with a ‘one size fits all’ top-slice but instead would be charged proportionally to each school’s level of need. This charge would include a general contribution to allow the MAT to operate. The charge would be around 4% of a school’s GAG (General Annual Grant) and we would hope that most schools would see a net financial gain with this arrangement. Pupil Premium, sports funding and other such funding streams would not be included as part of this charge. Our financial models are based on providing central services including a CEO, Director of Finance, Head of HR, Estates Management and IT strategic network management.

The Greetland Academy would equally financially contribute to the MAT.

Would a school’s funding and budget be used to support another school?
No.

How much support would be given for the process of academy conversion?
Conversion will be handled by the MAT together with our professional partners and legal teams.

Would our school staff end up working in a partner school?
This is possible, but only if existing staff choose to do this to further their career. New staff recruited once the school is a member of the MAT, would be employed by the MAT. Leaders would always take account of staff preferences and experience before suggesting a move.

Would the current Headteacher of a school remain in charge, retain their status, position and responsibility?
This is the job Heads are paid for and they will be left to continue to do it. They will have the option of passing on some parts of their job to the central team should they wish. Their performance management and professional priorities will be co-ordinated by the CEO of the MAT for consistency.

What about career progression for a Headteacher?
As our trust grows it would be possible that Executive Head opportunities may arise. The growth plan would include some Heads of School or Headteachers stepping up to be Educational Leads for groups of schools.
Would there be separate OFSTED inspections for partner schools?
Yes, schools would be still inspected separately, this may be as part of a batch of schools within a MAT. MATs will be inspected in the same way that OFSTED currently inspect local Council’s Children’s Services.

Would our governing body lose the power to make decisions affecting our school?
It is expected that Good or Outstanding schools joining the trust would retain their local governing body (LGB) with similar powers but less statutory responsibility. We believe that by being relieved of some statutory responsibilities, LGB’s can become more effective in their focus to provide challenge and support in the delivery of educational excellence and to better ensure outstanding outcomes for all pupils.

What is the bigger picture both locally and nationally?
Local authorities have a changing role in Education; most school improvement funding is due to end in August 2017. This is against a backdrop of the government strongly encouraging schools to join MATs.

What would happen to the name of the school?
There would be no requirement to change the name of a joining school.

As a MAT academy would we still be able to continue be involved with our existing collaborative groups and networks?
Yes. The Greetland Academy, as an example, would continue to be involved in the Calderdale Heads’ meetings and with our local Elland cluster via our Head of School. Any collaborations that have a positive impact on schools and children are good.