

Coten End Primary School Information Evening Monday 18th March 2024

Consultation about academisation and proposal to join Stowe Valley Multi Academy Trust (SVMAT)

Meeting began: 6.15pm

Meeting ended: 7.40pm

The meeting opened with a welcome from Sarah Sheepy (SS), Headteacher. The purpose of the meeting is to consult with stakeholders (parents) about the proposal to convert to an academy and at the same time join SVMAT.

Introductions were made:

Coten End

Hannah Webber (HW) – Chair of Governors (parent at school)

Helen Thompson (HT) – Co-opted Governor with responsibility for EYFS and SEND (previously parent governor and current parent at school)

Emma Sims (ES) – Vice-Chair and Governor responsible for safeguarding (parent at school)

Nick Williams (NW) – Assistant Headteacher and Staff Governor

SVMAT

Ranjit Samra (RS) – CEO of SVMAT

Sam Godfrey (SG) – Director of Safeguarding

Jen James (JJ) – Director of Inclusion

A presentation followed, summarised below:

<p>Why have we decided to become an Academy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Education, academisation has been an ongoing agenda in the last 15 years with an increasing number of schools becoming academies. • DfE aims for all schools to be part of well-established and successful MATs • We have experienced significantly reduced support and input from the Local Authority at a time when the challenges facing schools only become greater; this is due to reduced personnel within the LA. • Academisation has been on the school's Learning Improvement Plan (LIP) since Autumn 2022 and discussed at subsequent meetings of the Governing Body. • SS has discussed the implications of academisation with HT colleagues as part of the local consortium, some of which area already academies and this has been part of evidence gathering. • We will benefit from better support with capital projects, Continuing Professional Development for all staff, SEND support, Safeguarding etc. SG (Director of Safeguarding) carried out a safeguarding audit in October which demonstrated the value of the level of support • There will be increased opportunity for professional development for both teaching and non-teaching staff with expertise shared and collaboration throughout MAT • We feel it is now the right time to do this whilst we have a choice and whilst SVMAT still has capacity to add more schools. Currently there are 11 schools in SVMAT and they will be joined by Myton School.
<p>Why have we chosen Stowe Valley MAT?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do value community standing as a school and this is equally valued by parents. Knowing how SVMAT operate the 'family of schools' ethos is key. Schools will not be carbon copies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have engaged successfully in a 'try before you buy' process with Stowe Valley, particularly with regard to Safeguarding and SEND as well as supporting them with the opening of Myton Gardens • The opening of the new schools in Warwick (Myton Gardens and Oakley School), as well as Myton School joining the MAT, enables us to work collaboratively as local schools serving our local community • We wanted to join a MAT that was not a national one as these tend to mandate the curriculum, policies etc. • There are other local MATs that we did not feel matched our values and ethos • We are currently going through a rigorous due diligence process exploring finances, staffing, curriculum, premises, educational standards, capital, policies and legal issues - this is a two-way process 								
<p>What changes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will no longer be controlled by the Local Authority • Staff will be employed by SVMAT, not Warwickshire County Council • Recruitment will be carried out centrally but determined by the school • Our funding 'top slice' goes to the MAT to fund central services, rather than us paying the LA for services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Central Personnel:</i> HR / Estates / IT / Finance / Media / Governance / Safeguarding / Inclusion / Professional Learning/CEO / CFO ○ <i>Procured central services:</i> Staff Wellbeing, CPOMS, Legal ○ <i>Statutory Costs</i> <i>IT / HR management / PR media / websites</i> 								
<p>What stays the same?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our values and ethos • School name • Uniform • Staffing and Staff Pay & Conditions – both teaching & non-teaching staff (staff are TUPE'd across to SVMAT) • Majority of policies e.g. Relationships & Behaviour, Curriculum policies etc. • Curriculum design and planning • Extra-curricular events, trips, visits etc. • Admissions (managed centrally by LA) for Reception, in-year and Secondary • School holidays and term times 								
<p>Timescale to date</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1473 730 1653">Autumn 2022 2022/2023</td> <td data-bbox="730 1473 1497 1653">Academisation included on LIP Discussions at Governors' meetings, discussions with MAT and headteacher colleagues, presentations from colleagues who had experienced academisation and joining a MAT</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1653 730 1731">Autumn 2023</td> <td data-bbox="730 1653 1497 1731">Presentations to Governors by MATs (including Stowe Valley)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1731 730 1843">January 2024</td> <td data-bbox="730 1731 1497 1843">Consultation with staff; visit to a SVMAT primary school; meeting of Full Governing Body to progress; meeting with DfE</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="432 1843 730 1921">Jan/Feb 2024 March 2024</td> <td data-bbox="730 1843 1497 1921">Due diligence process begins and is ongoing Consultation with parents and stakeholders</td> </tr> </table> <p>There was a Staff consultation prior to this parent consultation as it has been very important to gain staff opinions; SS reported that staff have been incredibly positive about academisation.</p>	Autumn 2022 2022/2023	Academisation included on LIP Discussions at Governors' meetings, discussions with MAT and headteacher colleagues, presentations from colleagues who had experienced academisation and joining a MAT	Autumn 2023	Presentations to Governors by MATs (including Stowe Valley)	January 2024	Consultation with staff; visit to a SVMAT primary school; meeting of Full Governing Body to progress; meeting with DfE	Jan/Feb 2024 March 2024	Due diligence process begins and is ongoing Consultation with parents and stakeholders
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Projected timescale	End of March 2024	Submit application to DfE
	May 2024	Meeting of advisory board at DfE to consider application
	May 2024	Legal considerations begin – land, access rights etc.
	Summer 2024	Ongoing partnership working with Stowe Valley including Myton Gardens Primary School
	Autumn 2024	Approval by DfE; finalising process
	January 2025	Anticipated date for conversion to academy status and joining SVMAT
	There is a degree of uncertainty whether any General Election may have an impact on timescales.	

Questions provided by Parents

What are the benefits to academisation for school, families and children?

- *School:* leadership development, CPD opportunities, increased collaboration across schools, quality assurance including evaluations by colleagues, central team with accessible expertise (e.g. SEND & safeguarding), access to capital funding, “one phone call away from a solution”, which is not always the case with the LA.
- *Families and children:* the impact of the above - teachers who have a wider range of CPD and experience with shared expertise, stability and long term viability of the school
- Better trained staff, better environment, and safer school means outcomes for children and families will only be better.

We’re mindful that much of the prior experience amongst Stowe Valley MAT’s central team is from the secondary school sector.

How will Stowe Valley MAT ensure that appropriate peer support is provided to school, from those with experience and understanding of the primary school sector?

- Support from Primary Lead
- There is experience in central team across both primary and secondary
- There are 7 primary schools and the MAT was formed with a primary. Jen James (Director of Inclusion) is an ex Primary Head.
- All primary schools are Good, they are popular with growing pupil numbers and have had significant capital investment over recent years
- The ethos is a family of schools with shared resources, expertise and experience.
- Coten End will share own experience and expertise within the MAT

So much of the success of Coten End Primary School is based on ‘whole child learning’, with opportunity for children developing a range of skills and taking in a range of experiences, including contributing to the school community, promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity.

How can we be reassured that SVMAT will look beyond a traditional curriculum/attainment focus, and keep a focus on children’s development in the broadest sense during their crucial primary school years?

- Important part of due diligence is looking at ethos and values
- Broad based curriculum with ‘memorable experiences’
- All schools are a reflection of their own communities. They are different and unique but part of a ‘family’.
- In a conversation with the Chair of Trustees of SVMAT, HW asked what she was most proud of – the answer was the memorable experiences that the children have, there is collaboration across schools

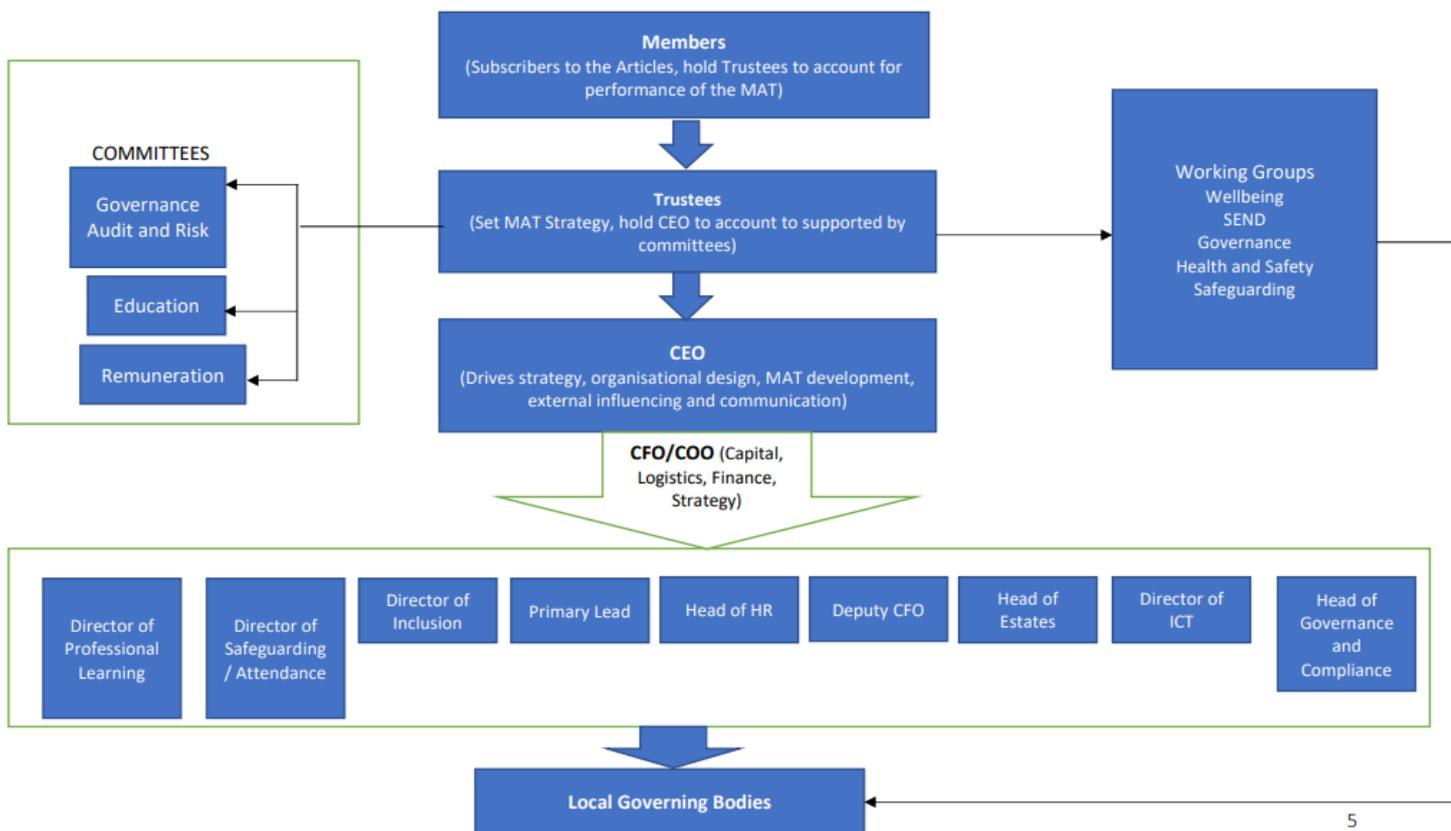
and events for all of the children, including one whole event at Belgrade Theatre. There is a clear ethos of wanting children to be happy with brilliant memories of school with experiences including speakers in school, residential and other trips.

Interested to understand the role of the Coten End governors under SVMAT and where accountability lies for school performance between SVMAT and Coten End?

Who holds SVMAT governing body / trustees to account for their performance?

- Trust board have overall responsibility and Trust structure shows levels of accountability.
- Trustees are held to account by the Members who are educationalists and business people.
- SVMAT believes decisions should be made as close as possible to the impact - would have local governing body (LGB) with parent representation (parent governors)
- Headteachers are accountable to LGB for individual school performance and schools are responsible for quality of education.
- Also work closely with CEO to ensure performance/vision consistent with the trust

TRUST STRUCTURE



What costs are associated with joining SVMAT? Mrs Sheepy’s email outlined the benefits but do the benefits outweigh the costs?

- When academies were first brought in, there was a large financial driver to academisation, however this is now not the case and this decision to convert is not motivated by money
- Many benefits such as are staff development / CPD difficult to quantify
- £25,000 grant from DfE to cover legal costs of conversion

Linked to this what proportion of Coten End's budget will it no longer be in direct control of if contracts for certain things, ie. catering, cleaning, waste etc, are managed by SVMAT?

- 'Top slice' management fee is 5%; this management fee is roughly equivalent to percentage given to LA for similar services
- All current contracts are honoured for the duration of the agreement. At the end of the Educaterers (current school mean provision) contract, the staff will be able to TUPE across to the MAT catering team.

What are the exit arrangements if the relationship with SVMAT does not work out as expected?

- Up to the point of signing the funding agreement, we will be able to withdraw
- Once signed, legally binding agreement between Secretary of State and the academy
- Once converted cannot return to LA maintained status
- If a school is unhappy – it requires the consent of the Secretary of State for Education, identification and consent of another MAT
- Process has taken 2 years to get to this point; not a rushed decision.
- There is a potential risk also of staying with LA and SS would not do anything to jeopardise Coten End now or in the future.

It is the wish of the DfE that all schools should develop a Climate Action Plan by 2025. How are schools within the trust doing in developing theirs?

- Sustainability is in the SVMAT Strategic Plan
- LGB Chairs meet together each term and have sustainability as a standing item on the agenda
- One school is taking the lead in developing sustainable approach for the physical environment
 - Support of Sustainability Officer from Warwick District Council and an Environmental Consultant
- From the educational aspect, a second school is leading including initiatives such as forest school
- Collaborating with other academies who are recognised leaders in sustainability
- Signed up to Let's Go Zero initiative with focus on 2030 commitment to Net Zero
 - Climate Action Plan forms the first part of this

The community spirit of Coten End Primary School is wonderful. This is driven by all members of the amazing school team, led by the experience of Mrs Sheepy, and through working in close collaboration with local families and local professionals/support agencies. Any and all school decision making (including development of school policies) is based on the needs of the local community, and is developed in conjunction with members of that community.

How can we ensure that school will continue to work in this way?

How do we avoid a situation where school decisions and policies are directed by MAT-wide, blanket initiatives that fall short in being tailored to the school's local context?

- SVMAT was chosen by Governors as having the same ethos as Coten End. There will not be a regimented approach and this ethos will be further explored within the due diligence process being carried out. The due diligence is very much a 2-way process. There is never a desire to weaken a school through academisation; the opportunity to share best practice within many aspects of school (management, teaching, admin) will enhance these areas.
- There are specific policies in place MAT-wide, eg Safeguarding, Health & Safety; model templates are provided to schools with a need to contextualisation.
- Other policies that have been developed by, and are pertinent to, CEPS will stay in place, e.g. Behaviour and Relationships policy

What is the impact on staffing ratios, and distribution of staff? Would staff be expected to work in other schools in the trust and vice versa? Will staff's salaries be affected? Are only qualified teachers employed?

- Staff not 'expected' to work in other schools but opportunities may arise
- Possible increased retention
- All staff's pay and conditions remain the same
- Employment of staff is determined by individual school and CEPS has never employed unqualified teachers nor would we intend to
- Staff can still be in unions
- Any changes in national pay and conditions will be matched by SVMAT.

Does the timing of this have any correlation with the recent OFSTED inspection?

- Unrelated to OFSTED – has been part of school LIP for 2 years
- We are still awaiting the final Ofsted report.

Why do you feel it's is the right time now to join a MAT, what would happen if we waited?

- LA support diminishing - as more schools convert, less resources available
- SVMAT offers an opportunity and may not always have capacity
- "Try before you buy" experience has demonstrated how good the support can be
- RS commented that Trustees only want to grow at a certain rate, with schools within 30 minutes' drive. Schools chosen share the same ethos and schools have been refused. Growth of the MAT is discussed with members and trustees.

How can you reassure us that the values, ethos and priorities of Stowe Valley academy align with that of Coten End?

- Part of due diligence process and our experience of working with colleagues in the MAT so far

Who will have final say over any decisions that need to be made once we join the MAT? For example, regarding the general running of Coten End, the policies that are put in place, staffing etc.

- The SVMAT Scheme of Delegation clarifies responsibility and lines of accountability, <https://www.stowevalleymat.com/governance-documentation/governance-documentation-clone>
- Responsibility of day to day running remains with HT

Will Coten End have to adopt any particular changes that the MAT insists on? For example, will the multi-agency teams Coten End currently work with need to be replaced? Will there be any changes to teaching staff?

- No planned changes to teaching staff
- No school joining SVMAT has made redundancies as a result
- As existing contracts finish over time they may move to become SVMAT contractors

My child is autistic and has an EHCP.

Are there any implications for the SEN provision at Coten End?

- School will access SEND support from MAT but can enhance with other agencies and share resources and specialists
- JJ (Director of Inclusion) spoke re SEND provision. Works with SENCOs in all schools meeting on a fortnightly basis, looking at gaps and resources needed; there is an increasing diagnosis of certain conditions (SEMH etc), and Lego therapy is being implemented. SENCOs have training together and disseminate this training across school. Services can be shared across schools, eg Educational Psychologist (EP) service; SVMAT buys in to ex-LA EP service which provides additional time of EP when needed. Strengths and needs of schools are considered when provision is disseminated.

- SEND Supported will continue; there is increased buying power within the MAT.
- If a school has a particular service that works, then this will remain in place.
- The provision in place for EHCP is a legal entitlement that will not change by joining SVMAT
- There is cross-MAT training provided to support staff.

Who are the SVMAT accountable to in terms of safeguarding and how do they work with other local organisations on this?

- SVMAT work with LA and Safeguarding Leads from MATs across the country
- SG (Director of Safeguarding) is a member of NASA (National Academy of Safeguarding Advisers) and looks at what is happening nationally as well as local contexts. SG attends a conference three times a year where directors of safeguarding meet to discuss best practice.
- Safeguarding team are accountable to Trustees and Members Chair of Trust board, part of whose role is to challenge SG in order to ensure the highest levels of safeguarding are in place.
- Referral process within school remains the in terms of working with Children’s Services etc. with support from SG in terms of escalation and challenge if needed

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

Any impact on KidzOwn?

- No. Information will be gathered from Companies House and sent to CFO. Lease arrangement checked etc as part of due diligence process.

What happens to land?

- The land on which school sits is leased from WCC – this stays the same; it is a 125-year lease on peppercorn rent. Decisions regarding use of the land will be made by the school.

Is there any expectation of additional financial contributions to school from parents?

- No.

Is there any evidence that school Ofsted rating is reduced or increased after moving to MAT?

- All schools with SVMAT are Good or Outstanding. At point of their conversion 2 schools Required Improvement and are now Good. The most recent Ofsted inspection was at Kineton High and all primary schools have been inspected in last academic year.

It was said that school-led policies will remain with HT primarily; will aspects of curriculum be the same as in other MAT schools?

- Curriculum design remains within school control; advice is sought and research always carried out, and there are benefits to learning from colleagues; quality assurance and collaboration will allow effective sharing of good ideas!
- Collaboration and sharing practice is important for staff. This currently happens with Myton School but there will, in the future, be greater collaborating opportunities and opportunities for staff CPD.

Does the Scheme of Delegation lay out the rules of who controls what?

- Yes.

How specific is it?

- As mentioned, policies can be contextualised locally. School can keep full control of policies, however some will be statutory and there will be management time saved by using blanket policies (contextualised) where necessary. There are examples of policies on the various SVMAT school websites.

Are staff contracts TUPE'd across?

- Yes. New staff would be on SVMAT contracts.
- RS (CEO) commented that staffing was at capacity in most SVMAT schools (slight exception with secondary schools). SVMAT has a good reputation as an employer. There is a large wellbeing package for staff (including 24 hour GP service, counselling, physio). Recruitment fairs are held in schools and are going very well.
- Training and CPD is for all staff and all are included in INSET days with specific separate meetings, support and CPD for different designations of staff. The INSET day in January is attended by every member of staff in SVMAT (currently 650 employees)

Is SVMAT a private company?

- It is a charity.
- SVMAT was formed in 2017 and considered to be a medium sized trust.

Is there an alternative for CEPS?

- The trend is for schools to become academies with no real alternative. There has become a growth in academisation as it is now a choice rather than mandatory and there is choice. Local MAT options have been looked at and SVMAT is the preferred choice.