

6 May 2016

To: Parents and Carers

Dear Parent/Carer

West Lakes Academy has continued to improve year on year and has unceasingly helped other schools in the region in their desire to do the same. The Department of Education is now keen for all schools to become academies and recent statements have indicated that schools should work more formally together in “multi-academy trusts”. It is important that our academy is proactive in responding to this agenda and I write to consult you about our plans.

The Sponsors (Sellafield, NDA and UCLAN) and Governors are keen for us to apply for Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) status. We wish to create a Trust that fully reflects our values and that has benefits for all the students in all the schools that may wish to join. West Lakes Academy has had a very long and proud reputation for working with and alongside a large number and wide range of partners to benefit the children and young people in those schools and the West Coast. We hope to build on those strong partnerships by providing real support and help where it is needed.

Should we be successful in our application for Multi Academy Trust status, our own Governing Body would remain in place but an over-arching Multi Academy Trust (MAT) would hold the Academy (and any other schools that become part of the Trust) to account. Our Governing Body would continue to make the decisions about how our Academy is run meaning that West Lakes Academy and all other schools in the MAT would retain their unique culture, ethos, high standards and working practices.

There are many advantages in such an arrangement, including opportunities to share best practice in teaching and learning and we feel this is a natural “next step”, with us formally sharing our excellent practice with other schools.

As part of our consultation, we are keen to hear your views. If you wish to respond or to ask any questions, please email us at MAT@westlakesacademy.org.uk, or send a written response addressed to Miss Stevenson, PA to the Principal, at the Academy. Parent Governors are particularly keen to be part of the consultation process and I have attached a list of their names; if you wish to contact a Governor directly, please contact the Academy in the first instance.

The period of consultation will open on Monday 9 May and close at 3.30 pm on Friday 27 May. We have also organised a Parents' Information Evening at 6.30 pm on Monday 16 May. The evening will include a presentation on our reasons for exploring Multi Academy Trust status and there will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions. We hope that our Governors will be able to attend so that you have the chance to talk with them. If you would like to attend the meeting, please complete the attached reply slip and return it to the Academy via your child. This will give us an indication of numbers likely to attend. We look forward to hearing from you.

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is a single legal trust that is responsible for Multiple Academy Schools. By entering into a MAT, all schools will become part of one legal entity with, it is important to note, each school retaining an individual identity and a Local Governing Board.



Academy Principal and Chief Executive: Jonathan Johnson

West Lakes Academy, Main Street, Egremont, Cumbria CA22 2DQ

t: 01946 820356 e: contactus@westlakesacademy.org.uk w: www.westlakesacademy.org.uk

In practical terms there will be very little visible change in the way that all schools operate. Our values and ethos will also be maintained and our goal will remain to provide the outstanding education we are known for.

What are the benefits of creating this MAT?

Continuing to provide the best possible education for our students is always our first priority. The West Lakes Multi-Academy Trust will support improved collaboration, coordination and understanding between ourselves and the partner schools on a range of matters from curriculum and staffing to the sourcing of services. It will provide staff with wider development opportunities and build upon the existing partnerships by enabling and encouraging greater mutual support and challenge between the schools.

We believe that there will be opportunities for improved efficiency in a MAT which will be important for navigating tighter funding in the forthcoming years.

What are the disadvantages?

The Governing Board has given this matter careful consideration. We understand and are very aware that in order to provide support from a position of strength, our focus must remain on our students and the maintenance of the excellent standards and achievements enjoyed at the Academy. We will avoid any activity that dilutes the experience for any of our students.

From this position we will focus upon the need to continue and indeed enhance our many less formal partnerships across the region and the county. Likewise we believe that as we grow we will be able to support other schools effectively by having the resources that will enable improved engagement and influence with the wider community.

What happens next?

The period of consultation is opening on Monday 9 May and closes at 3.30 pm on Friday 27 May. We will also be hosting an open evening at 6.30 pm on Monday 16 May where you can talk to the Governors and Academy Leadership Group.

From Monday 9 May there will be more information available on the academy website and you are encouraged to send your questions, concerns and opinions to MAT@westlakesacademy.org.uk. We will publish your views and responses as appropriate on our website, and consider the whole as a full Governing Body before we reach our final decision. To ensure your view is heard, please send in your email by 3.30 pm on Friday 27 May 2016.

Throughout the consultation period and beyond, the Governing Body and Academy Leadership Group will continue to discuss and agree further details of the MAT. Following consultation the Governing Body will meet, consider all the information and agree the way forward. Should the decision be to continue, the formal academy conversion is likely to take effect from 1 September 2016.

Thank you for your time, consideration and continued support for our great Academy.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Johnson
Principal and Chief Executive



Adrian Thompson
Chair of Governors

Parent Governors – Mrs Susan Alderson and Mrs Gillian Butterworth

REPLY SLIP – Please complete and return to Caroline Stevenson at the Academy by Friday 13 May 2016

I/We: _____
(Insert names)

Will be attending the consultation evening on Monday 16 May 2016 at 6.30 pm.