

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Head Teachers and Governors for their recent update regarding Multi Academy Trusts and Horizon Multi Academy Trust in particular.

I do have a few comments and questions to ask. The subject is quite new to me as a parent and there is a large amount of information available online which I have attempted to digest. I apologise if I ask a question which is already answered within the Horizon website....I most probably missed it!

1. Is there a lead school within the Horizon MAT and which school is it?

Elburton was the lead school in the creation of the MAT as it was an existing registered Company and Hooe and Widewell joined that. Elburton's policies for HR etc then became the policies for the MAT. However, now there is not a lead school - the Trust is one legal entity and the Board that was created for the Trust having the legal and moral responsibility for all schools within the Trust.

2. Does Horizon MAT have a current five year recruitment & retention strategy or are there plans to introduce such a strategy?

No but we are looking at this in light of current pressures on recruitment. We wish to be an organisation that recruits staff because of its reputation and what we can offer. We have developed in Trust training, we are identifying talent and we work very closely with training providers ie Devon Primary SCITT. We also are identifying talent and wish to ensure such teachers are nurtured and developed to produce the next generation of future leaders.

3. How do Horizon MAT propose to become an employer of choice?

See above but ensuring that staff are treated decently. We awarded 2% for all teachers on MPS scales last year - recommendation was only 2% for MPS1 and 6 and 1% elsewhere. All non teaching staff are played at least the Plymouth living wage. We want to offer training opportunities. One of the schools about to join the Trust has a headteacher appointment and there were 9 candidates. This is a high field in the current climate and we feel maybe because it will be working within our supportive and collaborative MAT.

4. I note on the Horizon website the focus by September 2018 will be to have engaged with the local authority in shaping relationships with other MATs within the City. What progress has been made in relation to this aim?

The CEO meets regularly with the other CEOs in the city in a Forum to discuss issues and look towards cooperating where appropriate. The CEO also sits on the Plymouth School Improvement Board. There is regular contact between the CEO and other MATS and CEOs.

5. I am aware when a school becomes part of a MAT it's fund balance 'goes into the MAT pot', how is expenditure monitored between schools to ensure each receives a fair and proportionate amount of funding?

This is not always the case and in the case of Horizon MAT each school maintains control of their own budget. This would only change if a school were to fall into a deficit position. Funding from the ESFA is received and receipted into our finance system under each individual school name, as with the I&E for that school. This therefore allows for very accurate monitoring at school level. The allocation of funding remains as it always has been, based on pupil numbers at that particular school. You are right in that the funds for any school become the Trusts. However, we operate the following policy that funds allocated to a school, including their carry forward reserve on conversion are for the school. The best way to look at this is to think of the overall budgets for the schools as a disc drive (the whole budget) and each school having its own directories (their budgets). Schools will plan with the Trust business managers their budget - this will then be agreed by the Trust and then administered and monitored by the school with the Trust overseeing that the agreed budget is adhered to as any overspend would adversely affect the other schools in the trust. The school would be expected to aspire to 1/12th of salaries as a reserve - recommended by accountants but could have a reserve greater than this i.e for specific projects the school was working towards. There are various safeguards regarding spend outside of agreed budgets, staffing arrangements and fixed capital assets.

6. I am aware Horizon MAT currently consists of 4 Schools. What schools are poised to join in Spring 2018 (4 more)?

Plaistow Hill Infants, Ford and Victoria Road should be converting on 1st April. Riverside have academy orders but as a PFI the process will be much slower.

Finally my observation is in relation to re-brokering. I am aware should a MAT be failing a school can leave and join another MAT however I believe this is a slow and complex process which has to be agreed by the RSC. This does cause me a degree of concern. Your thoughts on this would be welcome?

I think if a school was being failed by the Trust that the RSC amongst others would

be involved well before it got to the stage of re-brokering. There are only a few schools that this happened to - sometimes because the Trust is failing them, others where the demographic distances make the arrangement impractical and others where schools were sponsored and they were now good or better and the previous arrangement might not be appropriate. Only academy arrangements have to be agreed and are closely monitored by the RSC. Their aim is for all pupils to have the entitlement of good education.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to ask these questions. I hope whatever decision is made it is the right one for the school, staff and pupils.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind regards,

Paul Fryer