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5th May 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Proposal to convert to Academy status and join the Embark Federation Multi-Academy Trust.
Consultation Meeting for parents and carers - Weds 11th June 5.15pm at school

At the Governing Board meeting on 3rd March 2025, the Governing Board of Buxton Junior School resolved to consult with stakeholders, staff, parents and carers on the proposal to convert to academy status and join the Embark Federation Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The consultation period will run from today **5th May 2025 until 13th June 2025**. This has been discussed thoroughly at Governing Board level. We have taken great care to explore all possible options to ensure that the children of Buxton Junior School are placed in the strongest position for the future.

We have chosen Embark as we share their core beliefs of Family, Integrity, Teamwork and Success. We also believe in their shared vision, to create 'stand out' schools at the heart of their communities. We are excited by the potential to be even stronger together for the good of our children. In joining a MAT, the over-riding concern of governors is to ensure that our school continues to provide the best possible standard of education and care for our children.

In addition, we are making these plans with other local schools who are part of COBRAS (Collaboration of Buxton and Rural Area Schools) as this will enable us to create a High Peak Hub of Embark schools comprising Buxton Community School (already an Embark School), Buxton Infant School (our main feeder school), Harpur Hill, Burbage and Fairfield Infants. We have good relationships with these schools already and often work closely together; we now feel there are significant benefits of working together more formally.

With this in mind, we are keen to hear your views.

Key points of joining a Multi-Academy Trust:

- Our school will retain its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now with the same school uniform, school name, school times, holiday pattern and admission policy. Most of the changes will be behind the scenes.
- Schools retain their current headteacher and they will continue to lead the school on a day-to-day basis alongside a local governing team whilst receiving support and challenge from the MAT to ensure the best provision for our children.
- The joining of a MAT means funding for running our schools comes directly to us, meaning we have more control over how it is spent. It will also mean some services can be shared across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children.

Academy status is becoming more common, and the government and many local authorities have encouraged and supported schools to organise themselves within groups, such as federations or MATs. As their budgets are reduced, local authorities are also reducing the services that they have available to

schools. Making this change now means that we can choose how we want our school to develop. Our local authority has made it clear that it expects all schools to consider the pros and cons of such a move. Becoming an academy means removing the school from the control of the local authority. The decision to consider changing our structure has not been taken lightly and all the governing boards have spent a long time looking at the possible advantages and drawbacks of such a move.

Advantages of forming a MAT:

- Research suggests working together as a group of schools raises standards.
- It will help us recruit and retain the best staff and give them the very best development and career opportunities.
- School leaders and teachers can share thinking and planning, helping to spread expertise.
- Governors and trustees can work more strategically, especially during challenging times.
- Groups of schools can find it easier to find and fund specialist expertise (both specialist teachers and specialists in areas such as data analysis, finance, health and safety)
- The MAT structure leaves the headteacher to focus on teaching and learning (with the business-side of the role being more coordinated across the MAT).
- Economies of scale can help schools cope better with shrinking budgets.
- We'll have greater freedoms in developing the curriculum to make sure it is personalised to the needs of our pupils.
- We'll be able to create new posts across the MAT that would not have been possible in any one individual school, for example, speech therapy
- Shared professional development can more easily be arranged and afforded.

Governors believe that academy status within a MAT is the best way to support the school in continuing to develop and improve, and that working together within the MAT will bring benefits to teaching and learning and this will impact on children's achievement.

What we would like you to do:

We would like to know what you think of our plans, so we invite you to take part in our public consultation which will run 5th May 2025 until 13th June 2025. We will be holding a consultation day at school on **Wednesday 11th June** which will give you the opportunity to find out more about the proposed trust and ask any questions that you may have. It is also our sports morning that day so we should hopefully have lots of parents and carers in school to be able to meet the Embark team.

Wednesday 11th June 2025 (This is also our sports morning)

8.30 – 9.15am CEO of Embark Mr Matt Crawford will be available at the main gate to chat with parents and carers informally about the proposed changes and answer any questions parents and carers may have.

4.00 – 5.00pm CEO of Embark Mr Matt Crawford and trustee representatives to meet all staff at school to discuss the proposal and answer any questions staff may have.

5.15 – 6.15pm CEO of Embark Mr Matt Crawford, trustee representatives and governors to meet parents and carers at school to discuss the proposal and answer any questions parents and carers may have.

Please also read the Frequently Asked Questions below.

Please send any questions and views, positive or negative to: headteacher@buxton-jun.derbyshire.sch.uk or alternatively write to the school.

Kind regards,



Ros Carter
Headteacher, Buxton Junior School



Corryn Walker
Chair of Governors, Buxton Junior School

Frequently Asked Questions about Multi-Academy Trusts

Question	Answer
What is an Academy?	Academies are state schools which are free from local authority control and directly funded by the Department for Education. They have greater freedoms to determine how the schools funding is utilised to optimise the educational outcomes for their pupils.
How will our school change if it becomes an academy?	To our children, families and our staff, the school will seem unchanged immediately after conversion. We expect that over time; however, teaching in the classroom will strengthen further as best practice and innovative ideas are shared across the trust. The school will continue to focus on the needs of our children and provide a caring, safe and stimulating environment where children are encouraged to reach their full potential.
Has the decision to convert to an Academy already been made?	No. Until the consultation has been completed and everyone's views have been obtained, a decision will not be made. The governing board must weigh up the pros and cons of academy conversion.
What is in it for our children?	Children have been at the centre of our discussions when considering joining a multi-academy trust. We will continue to offer our children the best possible teaching and learning and are committed to providing a wider offer of opportunities for our children.
What is in it for the staff?	Embark Federation is committed to its staff and has recently been chosen to showcase this for a national case study on staff workload and well-being. Staff will have opportunities to develop their careers within the trust rather than having to seek promotions elsewhere. Working together as a group of schools mean that we can provide even better quality professional development for staff. Terms and conditions remain the same and indeed we will be looking to enhance these for staff when possible.
Would the name of the school change?	No. The school has a unique identity within the community and the trust will not enforce a change to the school name or uniform.
Will the curriculum change?	All the schools within the trust will continue to provide a balanced curriculum and will be judged against national standards, which to a large extent, are based on the National Curriculum. We will have the freedoms to continue to deliver personalised curriculums for our children where appropriate and valuable.
Will children with additional funding for SEND be affected by the proposed changes	No. EHCP and other SEND funding follows pupils and children with additional or special needs, so they will continue to receive the same levels of support as they do now. High needs funding will still be provided by the local authority even if we are an academy. Our view is that we will be able to enhance provision for all groups of students as the trust will be able to develop its own structures to support more effectively
How will this affect the relationships between local schools?	The schools have strong collaborative working relationships within their clusters and this will continue. We will work together with local schools and Embark will work closely with other trusts sharing ideas and best practice.
Will Ofsted inspections continue?	The position is the same whether schools are academies and inspections will continue in the same way
What is the legal status of the land the school occupies?	The land will be leased from the local authority for 125 years initially. The land stays in public ownership and is subject to the same protections.

<p>Would there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?</p>	<p>Schools will still be obliged to adhere to the Admissions Code and any changes would have to comply. The local authority administers this and would still have overall authority to ensure schools are complying with the code.</p>
<p>Will the final decision be taken by the governors?</p>	<p>The governors have the final say but will consult with parents and carers, staff and the LA. The governors' role is to act in the best interests of their school, children and community</p>
<p>Who employs the staff in an academy?</p>	<p>The trust itself is the employer, not the local authority as it is currently.</p>
<p>Will terms and conditions for staff change? Are their jobs secure?</p>	<p>At no point has the governing board considered that varying any staff contract would be in the interests of the school. No changes are envisaged; the nationally agreed teachers' pay settlement would continue to be applied and local government support staff agreements would be honoured in the same way.</p> <p>Embark Federation wishes to become an employer of choice and enhance terms and conditions for staff.</p> <p>The school recognises the importance of all staff to the life and ethos of the school. Staff are valued, their opinions are important and good employee relationships are the bedrock to the continuing improvement of outcomes for children.</p>
<p>Can we afford the set up costs of becoming an academy?</p>	<p>Yes. Each school is awarded a £25,000 by the Department for Education to cover the costs of setting up. The governors have carefully assessed the costs and concluded that the transfer can be met without using any of its current budget for running the school.</p>
<p>How is an academy funded?</p>	<p>Academies are funded directly by the Department for Education.</p> <p>This means that each school will receive 100% of their grant rather than some of this being diverted to the local authority.</p>