**Cockwood Primary School – Academy Consultation Report; Questions & Governor Replies**

In January this year, we began a period of formal consultation about our aim to become a member of the Teignmouth Learning Trust.

We held a series of open meetings for parents/carers, Cockwood staff and members of the local community. There was (and remains) the opportunity for questions to be posed to the governors about the MAT, which I have collated and reproduced below with the responses from the governing body.

There have been continual discussions and meetings held with the current and prospective members of the Teignmouth Learning Trust. As you will be aware, the initial date was set for March 2018, however requests from the Department for Education and further legal discussions (not involving Cockwood School) have pushed the prospective joining date back to October 2018.

Additionally, Teignmouth Community School have seen a change in their Principal, with a new Principal having been recruited and due to start in January 2019. We were in the fortunate position of having Lorraine Curry being invited to sit on the interview panel for the recruitment process.

Following are a series of points raised and questions asked, both at the scheduled meetings and submitted by email/writing during the consultation period.

**Parent/Carer Meetings**

There was a pleasing turnout for both of the scheduled meetings and there was an air of positivity about the joining of the Teignmouth Learning Trust (TLT). At the second meeting, we were joined by Tony Gray (CEO of TLT) and Katy Quinn (Principal of Teignmouth Community School, Mill Lane).

There were questions raised and these were able to be answered at the time.

* Will Cockwood School have to change its name?
  + No, Cockwood Primary School will not be changing to Cockwood Academy or anything similar. Any additions to the name will be limited to a strapline, such as “a member of Teignmouth Learning Trust”.
* Will Cockwood have to change their uniform or colour scheme?
  + No Cockwood will keep their uniform and the colour scheme. There will be no requirement for the schools in TLT to align their uniform.
* Will the Cockwood website be amalgamated into a TLT website?
  + No, Cockwood will retain their website and the control of it. There will be a link added to the website that will allow access to the TLT website and vice versa.
* Will it be expected that children leaving Year 6 will go to Teignmouth Community School?
  + No, as now, all parents will have the choice of secondary school that their children progress to. Cockwood School (and the majority of the pupils) are in the catchment area for Dawlish College. However, a large proportion of parents/carers have selected Teignmouth Community School as their first choice, in the last couple of years. Teignmouth Community School have been in the position to accommodate them all. It must be remembered that all schools have to adhere to the Local Authority’s admissions policy.

**Questions and Views with Governor Responses**

There were several questions and views submitted outside of the meetings and I have summarised and added the governor answers to them here.

* A parent submitted an email that contained a well-constructed argument against the implementation of Multi-Academy Trusts across the whole education system and stated their opposition to Cockwood School joining an Academy. They raised a number of interesting points that were discussed and considered by the governing body. The parent also included in their email their support for the staff and governors of Cockwood and was sure that they “… have the very best interests of the school at heart and that they care deeply for its well-being.”
  + I responded personally back to this parent and explained the reasoning behind the decisions that the governing body had made and thanked them for their support.
* “Subject to parental choice, will children whose primary school is part of the MAT but not in the geographical catchment area have priority of admission to TCS over children from other primary schools who are also not in the geographical catchment area?”
  + In short, no. All schools regardless of their Academy status must adhere to the Local Authority’s admissions policy. TCS have accommodated all children whose first choice was TCS over the last couple of years. As an academy, TCS has more control over their ability to expand with additional classes, than most.
* “When Inverteign Primary School became part of Teignmouth Community School, the Head’s job was said to be secure. This was not to be the case and was replaced by a member of staff from the secondary school. Mrs Curry is an excellent Head and school leader. Will her position as Head be guaranteed?”
  + The Governing Body agree that Mrs Curry is an excellent Head and School Leader and have no desire to see her replaced. The governing body have been forceful in their demands to insist that there will always be a Head Teacher for Cockwood School, based at Cockwood School. The governing body have also insisted that they will be an integral part of the recruitment process for a Head Teacher if the need ever arose. The governing body have had to look at these potential issues without looking at the personality of those currently in post, as personnel inevitably change over 10, 15, 20 years and we have had to look at how we can ensure the longevity of Cockwood in its current guise.
* “The curriculum at Cockwood appears to be varied and inclusive for all children. Art and music still play an important part, as do productions, educational trips and various enterprises such as the Farmer’s Market. Will this breadth of experiences continue? While accepting that literacy and numeracy are vital for children’s, Learning for life, there must be continuation of the less ‘testable’ subjects. Primary schools should be about inspiration and excitement for experiencing new things and Cockwood seem to do this well.”
  + The governing body completely agree with this and therefore as part of the negotiations, we insisted that Cockwood staff continue to set their own curriculum. It was agreed across all the representatives of the different schools that there would not be a single curriculum that all would follow. Each school will formulate their own curriculum, enabling the other schools to add ideas to their own curriculum when required.
* “Who will be responsible for setting the curriculum? Will Cockwood be able to make its own choices? Will the staff have a voice in deciding any changes from the current curriculum? It needs to continue to be child centred and not biased towards SATs results.”
  + As mentioned above and as happens now, the Head Teacher along with the teaching staff of Cockwood will continue to create, set and deliver the curriculum for Cockwood School. The benefit of being able to see other school’s curriculums will mean that the best ideas can be incorporated into our own, under the Head Teacher’s supervision.
* “Admission arrangements. Your letter states that TLT will be responsible for putting admission arrangements in place. What does this mean? Who exactly makes the arrangements and will Cockwood be represented and consulted? Who makes up the management side of TLT?”
  + The Governing Body have been involved in the scheme of delegation for the MAT, from the outset. To answer these in order, there will be a MAT wide admission policy, very similar to what we have now from the Local Authority. It is mandatory for all schools to have a policy of this kind. As I mentioned previously, every school will have to adhere to the Local Authority’s admission policy. The management side of TLT will be made up from 3 separate tiers. Representatives in the top tier are called ‘Members’ and will have to answer directly to the Department for Education. They will include people with the right skills to manage the Trust effectively. Rather than each school have their own representatives, the ‘Members’ are made up from professionals that have the whole Trust in their minds. Cockwood is fortunate to have had an ex-Governor accepted as a ‘Member’. The second tier are ‘Directors’. Each ‘Director’ will have a portfolio to work on across the MAT. The ‘Directors’ will be made up from representatives of all the schools, as well as the CEO (Tony Gray) and a Chairs’ representative (a Chair from one of the three Governing Bodies will be selected to sit as a ‘Director’). The third tier will be made up from local Governing Bodies. Cockwood will have their group of Governors; Kenn & Kenton will have theirs and Teignmouth Community School will have theirs (the primary school and the secondary school will be one entity within the MAT).
* “Will the role of governors remain the same? Will there be a board of Governors overseeing the small schools governors and if so, will Cockwood have a representative?”
  + Hopefully I’ve explained the hierarchy above. The role of the school governor will change, as they will have more time to concentrate on the Financial and Teaching and Learning aspects of the school and not be bogged down by bureaucracy, as that will be centralised within the MAT.

Even though the Consultation period has finished, I and the other governors would be happy to answer any of your questions. If, having read this document you would like to become more involved in the running of your school, by becoming a governor, then please do speak to me, Judith (vice-Chair) or Mrs Curry and we will be happy to tell you more.

Many thanks to you all for your interest and your questions.

Most importantly, thank you for your continued support. Cockwood School is very fortunate to have a wonderful reputation, excellent staff and an involved parent/carer network. These all add up to enable us to give the primary school experience that our children deserve.

Have a great Summer break.

Nick Tallamy

Chair of governors