

Cranbury College proposal to join a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)

Maiden Erlegh Trust

Update: June/July 2019

CONTEXT:

As you will know, the government is currently encouraging all schools to apply for Academy Status; this is also the clear direction from our local authority. Accordingly, the Management Committee are continuing to explore the advantages, disadvantages and ramifications of converting the status of Cranbury College from a RBC maintained school to an Alternative Provision Academy.

The Management Committee has recommended that we consult fully on a proposal to move to Single Academy Trust (SAT) status with the explicit intention of joining a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) shortly after conversion. When we are considering significant changes, we always take into account and consider carefully the views of all our stakeholders; this is what we are now in the process of doing.

Having initially pursued the idea of joining a Reading based MAT (The Reading Beacon of Education Trust), we have recently withdrawn our interest and participation in the formative discussions concerning the development of this project. The RBET proposal is still in its introductory phase and our decision was based on specific factors linked to the capacity and financial resilience of the MAT; both in terms of adapting to potential growth (E.G. Cranbury College @ Phoenix College recovery plan) and managing the unique conditions of our on-going commissioning agreement with the local authority. Running concurrently with this strategic adjustment, we have opened a dialogue with Maiden Erlegh Trust (MET) around their plans for expansion into the Alternative Provision (AP) sector. MET is comprised of a local cluster of schools, Secondary and Primary, currently operating in four neighbouring local authorities (South Oxfordshire, Reading, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham). There are many synergies between Cranbury College and MET, and our communication so far has revealed a mutual respect and understanding of the expertise and skills held within both organisations.

RATIONALE:

Converting to an academy will give Cranbury College far greater freedom for expansion and further opportunities for growth that cannot happen whilst we remain a maintained provision. This freedom includes any bids we might submit for capital funding and new school projects. Working with our partner schools in the Maiden Erlegh Trust will give us access to high quality Teaching and Learning (MET has Teaching School Accreditation) and enable transformational curriculum opportunities for our students to engage with. Our aspiration is to be a consistently outstanding provider of AP, with a relentless and committed focus on the quality of education for our young people. Joining MET can only support and strengthen our capacity to improve and achieve this aim. With our diverse outreach and training offer underpinned by well-established systems and sound financial reserves, we can provide essential support for our young people, our commissioning partners and our (prospective) colleagues within MET.

MAIDEN ERLEGH TRUST

OPPORTUNITIES:

Autonomy

Retention of Cranbury College identity and reputational standing within Berkshire

Collaboration with existing MET schools (700 staff currently employed within MET)

Joining a MAT with a 'Proven track record of excellence' (11.06.19)

Synergies

Value for money, efficiencies and economy of scale

Increased capacity

Curriculum opportunities, broaden access and subjects. STEAM, PE, Humanities.

Increased 6th Form opportunities (ME, MER from Sep 2020)

Continuous school improvement

Strategic support from experienced peers

Access to broader range of facilities

Opportunities to improve, share and create educational spaces

Access to caretaking and facilities staff

Access to Grants from Government and or the DfE

Opportunity to work with others on an equal footing

Sharing professional development opportunities and training

No restriction on the curriculum

Parity of status and esteem within MET (See - 'Equal Partners' 11.06.19)

'Unanimous support for AP expansion within MET' (11.06.19)

RISKS

Dilution of current staff expertise

Proposed 5% top slice (potentially negotiable 'not in tablets of stone' 11.06.19)

Maintaining the perceived integrity/fairness of and impartial access to Cranbury College provision and services whilst being part of well-established local MAT

Rapid expansion without necessary capacity

Changes to governance structure and oversight

