

9 December 2016

Dear Parent/Carer

As we approach the Christmas break, we wanted to let you know how the South Bank Multi Academy Trust (MAT) has been developing over the past term.

### **Education**

The three schools have continued to work together to deliver our key goals: to provide the best possible education, to continually challenge ourselves to improve, and to make more money available to spend on teaching. The headteachers meet weekly to ensure that everything we do draws on the best practices across our schools. Teachers at the two primary schools have held a number of joint staff meetings, focussing on how to tailor each school's curriculum to meet the needs and expectations of its pupils. Staff from all three schools have shared resources in areas including modern languages and teaching analysis, while also working to improve the transition between primary and secondary school. Our finance team have continued to find ways of saving money as a MAT that allow us to spend more on front-line education.

### **Expansion**

The Board has spent a lot of time considering the opportunities and risks of bringing more schools into the MAT. Our priority will always be safeguarding standards in our existing schools. However, a larger MAT presents greater scope for achieving our key educational goals by giving us more avenues for collaboration, access to more expertise and even greater economies of scale.

More and more schools are considering becoming academies. This term, eight schools in York have started consulting with parents on academisation, and more will probably follow. Acomb and Woodthorpe primary schools have already expressed their interest in joining our MAT, and other schools are likely to do so in future.

Our MAT was founded on principles of openness and collaboration, and we are delighted that other schools see us as a strong potential partner. We will assess each case on its merits, but we welcome the opportunity to work more closely with local schools that share our ethos and vision. We're confident that we can expand the MAT while still maintaining – and improving – standards in our schools.

## Governance

The Department for Education (DfE) has recently put in place new recommendations for the good governance of MATs. These say that there should be clear separation between the different levels of governance (Members, Trustees and School Governors) so that each level is properly accountable. In particular, the DfE strongly recommend that Trustees and Members should not be local School Governors, and that headteachers should not serve as Trustees. MATs which do not meet these criteria will not be allowed to admit more schools.

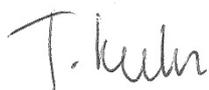
To comply with these recommendations, we are making some changes to our governance. You may recall that Trustees have responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the Trust, while Members sit above them to ensure they act appropriately and according to our principles. As the three Chairs of Governors of the founding schools, we were all appointed as Members and remained as active Governors. Now that we are unable to do both, we have chosen to step down as Members in order to continue to serve as Governors in our respective schools.

To replace us as Members, we are delighted to have appointed three excellent candidates drawn from the schools and the local community. Shauna Finch is a lawyer, tribunal judge and parent who has had children at Knavesmire, Scarcroft, and now Millthorpe. She served eleven years as a Governor at Scarcroft Primary School. Edwin Thomas has two sons at Knavesmire and was Vice Chair of Knavesmire's Governing Body until last month. He is also the current Chair of the MAT Board of Trustees. Dr Alison Birkinshaw OBE is the Principal of York College, and will serve an important role as external Member, bringing an outside perspective and expertise. All three have demonstrated long-term commitments to improving education, good governance and upholding our values.

The three headteachers have stood down as Trustees, bringing us into line with standard practice in the charity sector. They will however continue to attend Board meetings, and will play an essential role in setting the Board's agenda. The three Governor trustees (Nicki Mitchell, Helen Priestley and Edwin Thomas) have stepped down as Local Governors but will continue to have close links with the three founding schools.

It has been a busy term. We wish you all a very Happy Christmas, and a successful and fulfilling 2017.

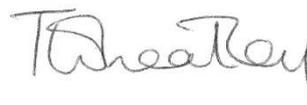
Yours faithfully



**Tracy Kuhn**  
Chair of Governors  
Scarcroft School



**Bob Sydes**  
Chair of Governors 2010-16  
Millthorpe School



**Tanya Wheatley**  
Chair of Governors  
Knavesmire School