



Stakeholder Consultation Process Summary

Please see below a summary of the consultation period and process, in response to questions posed to us from staff, parents and carers for openness and transparency.

Thank you for your support, as well as challenge, and for ensuring that we continue to improve and serve your children

Dan Morrow
Trust Leader & Chief Executive Officer

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1. Introduction

I have written what follows to clarify some key points from the recent staff consultation process and answer directly a list of questions that have been sent to us, collated by Isabella Peck on behalf of members of the DMAT Independent Voice group.

I want to begin by acknowledging the strength of feeling amongst the wider community and apologise for the hurt and anxiety this has caused to some of you. This was never our intention at all and yet our approach to this has not helped enough to give assurance and answers that could, and should, have reduced this feeling. I am sorry that the work we have undertaken, which is genuinely critical to the success of our schools now and in the future, has not been communicated in a more frank and humane way. Hindsight is always a wonderful thing, but it is clear that our language and approach was at times too formal and legalistic. The reasons for this were genuinely around respecting what is an internal employment process and no disrespect was meant to any of you as key partners and stakeholders. Nevertheless, I can see why it has made what was always going to be a challenging situation for all more difficult.

As with all aspects of life, be they professional or personal, we live and we learn. I and the whole team have truly taken on board wider comments and feedback and have genuinely appreciated the correspondence from so many of you, passionate and deeply committed to our schools, that have helped to mean the final proposal was a better version than our original intentions. What unites us all is that desire to see our children have the absolute best education and experience within our schools and for the deep interconnectedness of our schools and communities to be a source of both strength and pride.

Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust (DMAT) was formed, unusually compared to almost any other Multi-Academy trust, through the positive choice of all schools involved. DMAT did not “take over” any schools, it came into existence because everyone of our schools recognised the benefits of working together and of forming a group that would be stronger as a result. Fundamentally, this means that each and every school is the Trust and the Trust is the school, there is no separation. Living up to the ideals of this choice and ensuring that we are genuinely stronger as we take our next steps is the basis of how we work, and why we do what we do. That does not mean that we aren't learning how to make that better understood, and more authentically felt, by all we serve.

What has become clear is that the work we do and how we do it is not fully understood and there have been some clear examples of both misunderstanding and misinformation. That is not said as a criticism, nor defensively, since it is our responsibility to ensure that the original ambition for the Trust's creation is clear and valued. I hope that the answers to the specific questions asked will help to start us more genuinely on that journey together.

The formation of the Facebook group and also the many conversations and communications from other parents and carers can be a force for good. Bringing us all together to work with a positive and proactive approach has to be the way forward, to honour our commitment to you and your children, to ensure that our schools are truly excellent and inclusive for all. We do already have a group of highly committed local parents and community members who are part of our Local Stakeholder Boards as well as a number of parents on our Trust Board; I genuinely encourage more of you to take these opportunities to be part of the solution. Equally, I believe we need to provide more opportunities for parents and carers to be able to tell us what we need



to be thinking about, working on and to ensure our decision-making is based strongly on this. I have had discussions with a number of parents about strengthening our parent forums to act as a sounding board for our formal governance as well as looking at increasing our focus on parents and carers being in schools on open mornings, visits and as volunteers. We need for parents and carers to engage fully with these opportunities.

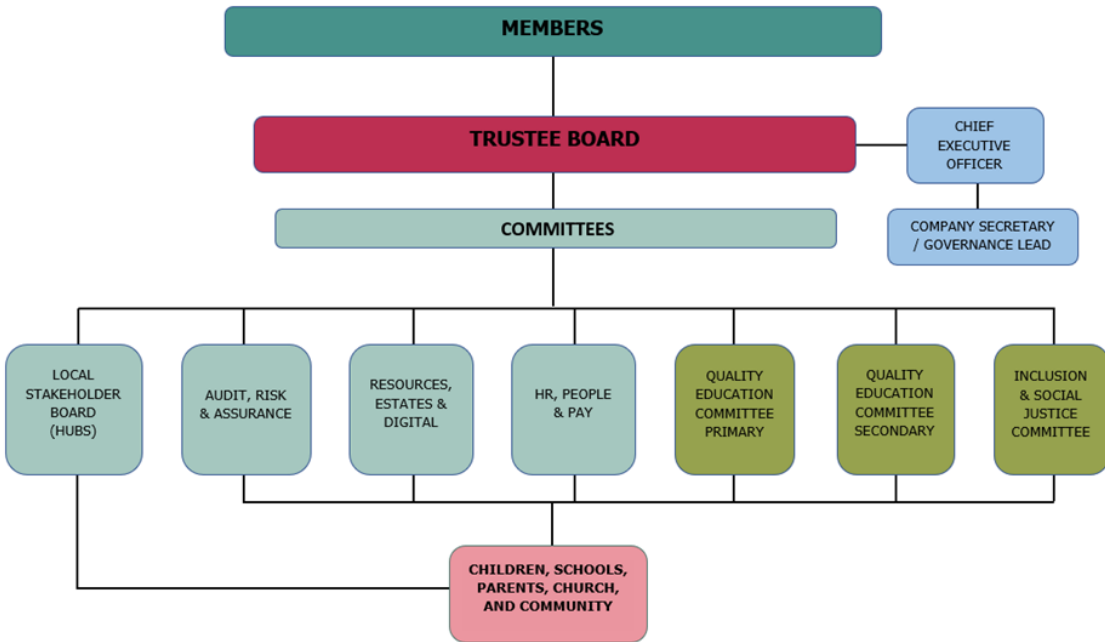
I want this to be a moment where we can draw a line in the sand, learn lessons and move forward together with purpose. Working with the interests of our children being at the heart of how we approach each other and ensuring we are acting in a way that models reasonable discussion, collaboration and respect is also key. I think we also need to agree together that we need to engage in a way that doesn't "name and shame" individual staff or seek to attack, but instead to understand and build back better for all. Personal attacks, threats and harassment are not part of a reasonable dialogue or engagement; nor are they an example we would want any of our children to follow. That does not take away from the strength of feeling that has been clear, but I ask that it is channelled as a force for good. I also appreciate that this point is only relevant to a very small number and that the vast majority of you have acted in good faith on behalf of your children and grandchildren.

2. Responses to questions raised

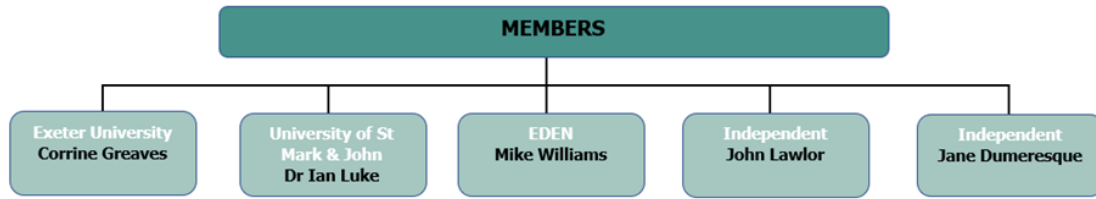
a. Trust structure

Can you explain the structure of the Trust and detail who the leadership team and Trustees are accountable to?

Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust is a legal entity that governs a group of 18 schools through a single set of trustees.



All academy trusts are set up as charitable companies which requires them to have Members. We have 5 Members within the Trust. The members of an academy trust are the guardians of the governance of the Trust.



*EDEN- The Exeter Diocese Education Network; a foundation seat to represent the Church of England schools within the Trust.

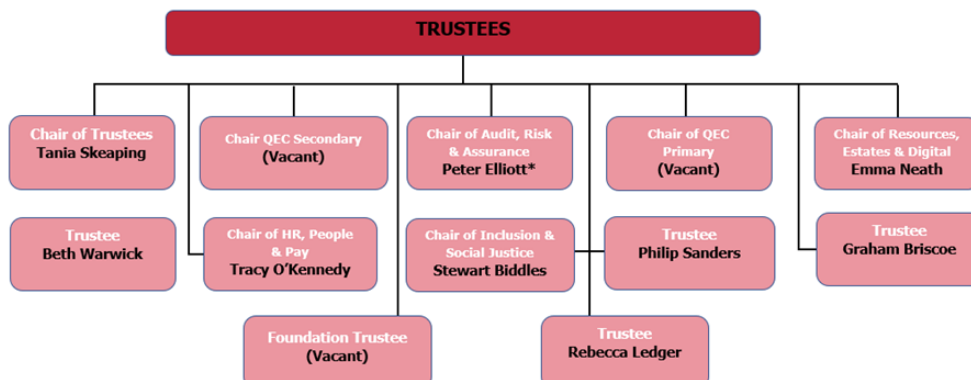
Members have a limited and distinct role with responsibilities that include signing off the annual accounts, appointing the auditors and agreeing the [articles of association](#) which include the Trust's charitable objects (section 4):

- a. To advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by establishing, maintaining, carrying on, managing and developing academies which shall offer a broad and balanced curriculum and which:
 - Shall include Church of England academies
 - May include other academies with or without a designated religious character
- b. Promote the benefit of the inhabitants of Tavistock and the surrounding area the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, financial hardship or social and economic circumstances, or for the public at large in the interests of social welfare and the object of improving the condition of life of the said inhabitants

To be clear, all Trustees and Members are volunteers and receive no pay or expenses for their work; it is time given freely to serve.

Members hold the Trust Board to account for the effective governance of the Trust but have a minimal role in the actual running of the Trust. It is the Trust Board, not the Members, who are the organisation's key decision makers.

The Trust Board are responsible for the same three core governance functions performed by the governing body in a maintained school: setting the direction, holding the headteacher/principal to account and ensuring financial probity. As charity trustees, they must also ensure that they are following charity law requirements. As academy trusts are charitable companies, the trustees are company directors and must follow company law requirements.



* Foundation Trustee



The Trust Board are accountable for all the schools within the Trust. The trustee role includes:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding the CEO and Executive Team to account for the educational performance of the academies and their pupils, and the performance management of staff
- Overseeing financial performance, including the submission of annual accounts and returns to [Companies House](#) and the [Education Funding Agency](#)
- Ensuring the Trust is compliant with its charitable objectives, as well as company law that covers all aspects of employment law
- All governance competencies outlined in [the Competency Framework for Governance](#), including educational improvement, data analysis and performance management
- Holding the local layer of governance to account as outlined in the Scheme of Delegation.
- All [trustee responsibilities for trustees in England and Wales](#), including reducing risk, creating public benefit and 'acting with reasonable skill and care'
- All [the general duties of a UK company director](#), including using independent judgement, avoiding conflict of interest and protecting company property

Trustees can delegate some responsibilities as part of the [Scheme of Delegation](#) to the local layer of governance.

The ultimate responsibility of the local layer of governance is to focus on evidencing and assuring the lived experience through observation, conversation and listening to stakeholders and to share their findings with the Trust Board to ensure they are aware of any concerns, common themes and to provide assurances where required for issues / actions delegated from other committees / Executive Team. The local tier forms the bridge between the Trust Board and its schools and is hugely important.

In terms of wider accountability, schools and trusts exist within a robust and often complex system of accountability.

b. Further accountability

Trusts are under scrutiny by the Department of Education (DFE), the Regional Director (RD), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and also Ofsted. Each of these bodies has a slightly different role within the accountability system.

Each year across our schools we have published performance data that is used by the DFE and the RD to assess school effectiveness. The assessment points for this are:

- Reception year- Percentage of children assessed as being at a Good Level of Development (GLD)
- Year 1 - Phonics Screen Check (Percentage of children assessed as having a secure level of early reading skills)
- Year 2 - Key Stage 1 SATS in reading, writing and mathematics
- Year 4 – Times table check (Percentage of children assessed as secure in mathematical fundamentals)
- Year 6 - Key Stage 2 SATs in reading, grammar, writing and mathematics



- Year 11 - GCSE and BTEC Examinations where the Attainment 8 (Highest score in 8 subjects taken) and Progress 8 (Highest progress in 8 subjects using Key Stage 2 scores)
- Year 13 - A Level and BTEC Examinations for attainment and progress.

These are statutory assessments, and the information is shared on a yearly basis with the DFE and used to hold schools to account on an ongoing basis.

The ESFA receive a significant amount of information from both internal and external audit to verify the operational effectiveness of trusts.

Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. Ofsted use a published framework to assess schools for overall effectiveness. In addition to overall effectiveness, Ofsted also make judgements against four key categories. These are the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management.

There has been an extremely high level of Ofsted inspections of the Trust in the last 14 months. This is due to a number of reasons:

1. The impact of lockdown meant that the regularity of inspection had been interrupted and so there was a need to "catch up" with the process.
2. The formation of the Trust meant that all schools, having chosen to join at the same time, had come into the window for inspection.
3. Previous dispensations for outstanding schools, meaning they were not subject to Ofsted inspections under earlier frameworks, had been removed.

Primary Inspection

In our Primary phase we are very proud of a very strong record of inspection showing that the schools have performed very well, and it was noted in a large number that this was partly due to the support and operation of the Trust overall.

Name of School	Date of inspection	Current grade and report link	Historic grade / date
Boasley Cross	10 May 2022	Good - Report	January 2014 - Good
Bradford	14/15 June 2022	Good - Report	December 2016 - Requires Improvement
Bridestowe	26/27 April 2022	Good - Report	January 2014 - Good
Bridgerule	17 May 2022	Good - Report	January 2017 - Good
Chagford	8/9 June 2022	Good - Report	February 2016 - Good
Exbourne	30 March 2022	Good - Report	January 2014 - Good
Lydford	4 May 2022	Good - Report	January 2014 - Good
Northlew & Ashbury	8 June 2022	Good - Report	May 2013 - Good
North Tawton	23/24 June 2022	Good - Report	October 2014 - Good
Okehampton Primary	25/26 May 2022	Good - Report	July 2013 - Good
South Tawton	28/29 June 2022	Good - Report	September 2014 - Good
Black Torrington	Awaiting inspection	-	October 2011 - Outstanding
St James CoE	24/25 January 2023	Good - Report	N/A
Highampton	Awaiting inspection	-	September 2012 - Outstanding



The Promise School	New schools that opened after September 2020 will be inspected at the end of the third academic year of opening.
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c. Performance & behaviour of secondary schools

There has been a lot of concern about the performance of and behaviour at our secondary schools. Please can you explain what you are doing to make sure these schools are safe and happy places for learning excellence?

Secondary Inspection

In our Secondary phase, we have had mixed outcomes in inspection. Both Tavistock College and Okehampton college had not been inspected for a significant amount of time and it is clear that both standards and performance had declined in these two schools both prior to the pandemic and then became embedded as a result of it. The lack of oversight by Ofsted in these two schools in particular had allowed weaknesses in provision to continue unchallenged and leaders had not been effective in improving standards. Changes in leadership and in our way of working have ensured that we are now improving, but the speed and pace of this was hampered by the ongoing effects of the lockdown. We absolutely agree that the pace of improvement needs to quicken, and our internal reviews have shown that this has certainly been the case for both since September 2022.

It is of course disappointing that Tavistock was judged to have serious weaknesses and robust changes were enacted to strengthen the leadership and provision of the school. This was recognised in the most recent Ofsted monitoring visit, and we are confident that with imminent reinspection, the school will once again be judged to be offering a good standard of education.

Okehampton College has recently had an Ofsted inspection and the report should be available before the summer holidays. We are not allowed to give details of the judgement but can say it was a challenging, but fair process and recognised the work we have done to address historic decline, whilst also being clear there is still significant work to be done.

Name of School	Date of inspection	Current grade and report link	Historic grade / date
Holsworthy Community College	15 June 2022	Good Report	January 2014 Good
Tavistock College	17 March 2023 25/26 May 2022	Taking effective action Report Serious weaknesses Report	November 2013 Good
Okehampton College	15/16 May 2023	Awaiting Report	January 2014 Outstanding

Internal and external review shows that behaviour is improving across our Secondary schools, evidenced through a significant amount of information. Historic declines in the standards of behaviour and conduct have been addressed through both raised expectations and training staff to be more effective in relational practise; treating all of our young people as individuals whilst having high expectations of conduct and compliance with instructions given by adults.

Our curriculum work has also meant that we have significantly increased the number of vocational subjects open to our students, as we strongly believe that they need to have the choices and agencies to pursue subjects which both interest and inspire them. This also



addresses specific criticisms of the legacy curriculums that were operating at Tavistock College prior to the pandemic.

d. Restructure plans

Can you outline how the restructure plans were created and who was involved in creating them?

In spring 2020, the Board of Trustees commissioned an external review of the Trust's structure. This was partly in response to concerns raised by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) about the long-term viability of our small schools (defined by Government as having fewer than 150 pupils) and partly because we wanted the Trust to work together better as one organisation. When the Trust had originally formed in January 2018 it was under the principle of 'earned autonomy' meaning schools largely carried on as before as single entities, sharing some resources, but without contributing significantly to the health of the organisation as a whole. After two years it was clear that this approach was not having the sustainable impact we expected in enabling all our children and young people to flourish; in fact those with special educational needs and those in receipt of pupil premium were falling even further behind their peers. Furthermore the Trust Board were aware that the Trust's structure was not enabling staff to work together across schools to further opportunities for their own professional development.

In the summer of 2020 the executive team started to implement some of the changes recommended in the review, namely centralising services such as estates and human resources, however the considerable time and energy diverted into leading schools through the ongoing pandemic meant that progress stalled, and by the time I joined in January 2021 the nation was entering another lockdown partially closing schools for the spring term. By September 2022 our schools were starting to return to normal operations, albeit with considerable challenges still facing our communities as I have outlined throughout this document. This coupled with the staggering rise in energy costs, partially funded pay rises, and fewer children returning to schools after the pandemic meant that those mid and long term cost savings became imperative and the phased approach we were anticipating to the restructure was no longer viable.

We are not alone in facing these sudden financial challenges after the anticipated wider funding to help with post-Covid recovery did not materialise. The Government appointed an Education Recovery Tsar who then resigned, stating that funding allocations were not sufficient to address the deficit in education caused by the lockdown period.

- [Sir Kevan Collings: Education recovery commissioner quits as catch-up tsar | Evening Standard](#)
- [Ex-tsar angry at neglect of pupils in England left behind in pandemic | Tutoring | The Guardian](#)
- [School catch-up tsar resigns over lack of funding - BBC News](#)

Several different proposals were constructed with different models to ensure the sustainability of all of our Primary schools as well as maintaining and improving provision; most especially for pupils with identified additional needs.

The options were discussed and presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration and then for wider consultation with our staff and colleagues (process detailed elsewhere). The process of consultation has been robust and whilst errors and issues have occurred, we are pleased that the plans were significantly revised because of feedback from staff at all levels and a significantly better energy and utility deal negotiated.

Much had been made that the process was a "done deal" but this is clearly not the case as changes have been made in a significant number of areas.



e. Consultation process

Can you explain what consultation you did during the proposal process and what changes you made as a result?

During the restructure process we invited all staff at risk of redundancy or change to an individual meeting. It is important to note that for the vast majority of colleagues the discussion was focused on change (of role, location or how duties are undertaken) and that redundancy discussions were a much smaller minority. This meeting was the opportunity for colleagues to share their thoughts on the proposal put forward and clarify what it could mean for them as an individual. A large majority of staff in scope took the opportunity to have a meeting and share their thinking.

The meetings were professional, engaging and thought-provoking, indeed these meetings informed some of the alterations made to the final proposals.

In addition, the savings found from a renegotiated energy deal (benefitting from the size and scale of the Trust which would not be available to individual schools) allowed us to look again at our overall approach. It should be noted that the Trust has not had a £3 million deficit but had this projected for the next financial year if actions were not taken on both utility costs and efficient structures.

As a result of the feedback and questions raised during the consultation period, several changes were made to the proposal. These included:

- **Finance administration staff** – one post to be kept working across the three secondary schools.
 - responsible for the financial compliance and operation of secondary schools, to safeguard the effectiveness and efficiency of our financial operations.
- **Teaching assistants** – increased number of TAs being kept within the schools, resulting in support in mixed ages classes (Years 3 – 6) in the morning sessions. Along with classes with over 32 pupils in them will have allocated TA support in the morning sessions.
 - The average class size at Key Stage 2 across the Trust for classes without a dedicated TA is 21 pupils and represents a low pupil to adult contact ratio when referenced to both local and national comparisons. (National average primary class size 27)
- **Assistant SENDCOs** – the introduction of an assistant SENDCO post working across the Ruby Hub.
 - This means that there are now two assistant SENDCOs working across the Ruby hub, based on the number of children with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCPs) within this hub this give equality for these children.
 - The added focus of this role is to ensure excellence of provision for all children with identified additional needs and to give a better deal to those children who have Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- **Hub principals** – a reduction in the number of hub principals, with only one hub principal now covering the Three Hare's hub (renamed to the Foundry hub to account for the addition of Exbourne Primary school).
 - Based on the feedback received, this means a reduction in the number of leaders within this hub. Feedback highlighted concerns over the number of leaders within the hub and it was felt that it was too top-heavy.



- **Principals** – a change from associate principals covering the Three Hare's schools to principals and therefore a reduction in their teaching expectations.
 - This was introduced to recognise the reduction in the number of hub principals.
- **Associate principals** - a change to one associate principal working across Okehampton Primary School and an associate principal working in Bridgerule C of E Primary School.
 - Based on feedback received it was felt that two lead teachers would be more beneficial for the school, enabling them to both specialise in different phases of the school (Infants and Juniors)
- **Lead teachers** - A change to two lead teachers working in Okehampton Primary School.
 - See above.
- **Secondary school technicians** - science technicians to remain in post, food technicians to remain in post and technology technicians to remain in post.
 - Based on feedback received within the consultation and concerns highlighted about the reduction in numbers for these posts we have adapted the model. Moreover, given the specialist nature of the role and how it is integrated within specific guidance and provision needs it was felt a change to the proposal was needed.

Following the Trustees' decision to take forward a new structure for September, staff completed a selection matrix, based on their performance, knowledge, skills, experience, qualifications, and attendance. These were then independently scored by staff with no involvement in the process. This process was carried out anonymously with no names or information on individual colleagues. The aim of this was to ensure there was no bias in the process, as the managers had no idea who they were scoring.

Staff were then matched to roles based on the scores they had achieved. It is important to acknowledge that this process took longer than we had originally expected when we put the timeline together due to the changes made as a result of the consultation process. This meant that there was a small delay in telling staff the outcome of the process. However, it was important that the time was taken to undertake this exercise and that the process was not rushed. All staff who were in work were told the outcome of the exercise by the end of the 26 May 2023. Other staff who were not in work were sent letters in the post and where possible were contacted by phone.

The overall restructure process has resulted in some redundancies. As stated in the original proposal, the Trust looked to voluntary redundancy requests and reduction in hours requests as a way to mitigate the number of compulsory redundancies. The final impact on staff resulted in the following outcomes:

- Three Trust Improvement posts have been deleted from the structure.
- Three finance and administration posts have been deleted from the structure.
- Ten support staff posts have been deleted from the structure, across all schools.

Overall, the process has led to a reduction in staffing of **1.4%** of our headcount.

It is important to note that we are working closely with the staff impacted by the redundancies and are aiming to secure alternative employment within our secondary schools or the Promise School. Three impacted HLTAs / Teaching Assistants have already been offered alternative roles.



f. Budget pressures

Please explain why the Trust is in deficit, by how much and what is being done to ensure our schools are protected from further cuts?

Funding has been a challenge to schools across the sector and many are facing exceedingly difficult choices as a result of cost pressures being significantly higher than increases in funding.

- [Schools in England face funding crisis as costs soar, study warns | Education | The Guardian](#)
- [March 2023 | Not enough good news for schools from spring budget - National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](#)
- [Funding crisis: 13 things school leaders may be forced to cut \(headteacher-update.com\)](#)

Utility costs across the Trust have been a challenge for us, with unexpected increases seen in 2022/23, due to market conditions because of the Ukrainian war which started in February 2022. Whilst it was clear that there would be increases, the scale and impact of these were higher than anyone in the sector had expected. To a degree, we were unlucky that our own deal ended just at the point where the rates were at their highest and we simply had no choice other than to then pay the increases noted below. None of us wanted to see this increase take such a large level of pupil funding and the effect was to a degree softened by the fact that we have spent years improving our boilers, installing green energy solutions, strengthening insulation and replacing windows and doors across our school estate.

- [How will the energy crisis affect schools? | Teach First](#)
- [This is how the energy price cap will affect British schools | The Independent](#)
- [Schools face bankruptcy as energy bills jump 300% during cost of living crisis \(inews.co.uk\)](#)

The Trust was in a two-year energy contract from 1 October 2020 – 30 September 2022. When we came out of the contract, it was impossible to secure another contract at a competitive rate. The impact of this was we are paying an exceedingly high amount from 1 October 2022 – 30 September 2023.

This table illustrates the rise in utility costs across our schools since 2020.

Year	Amount	New Amount
2020 - 2021	£310,271.00	
2021 - 2022	£486,196.00	
2022 - 2023	£1,508,075.00	
2023 - 2024	£1,592,424.00	£639,619.00

As a Trust we have been fortunate that our Estates team have been able to watch the energy markets over the last six months and have now secured a new contract for all our family of schools, resulting in a saving of over £950,000.00 for the year 2023/24.

Quite rightly, staff had pay rises awarded in 2022/23. These were however not fully funded by the Department for Education and the cost had to be found within our current allocation of funds received to run the schools. In 2022/23, teachers received a 5.4 % (on average) pay rise, with non-teaching staff receiving a 3.88 % (on average) pay rise. We also saw an increase in non-teaching staff pension contributions; increasing from 17.6 % to 21.9 %, again with no specific funding given to meet this. The impact of this was the money to pay these needed to be covered from within the Trust’s current reserves. Currently the pay rises for the year 2023/24 are yet to be agreed by unions, with the current offers from the government being 4.5 % (on



average) for teachers and 3.88 % (on average) for non-teaching staff. We also saw an increase in non-teaching staff pension contributions; increasing from 21.9 % to 22.9 %.

What we do know is that the Government are saying that there are no additional funds being paid to schools to cover the pay awards and that schools will need to fund them from their existing funding allocation.

This means that our expenditure is rising much faster than our income and we do not have the funds available to run as we were. Despite continued pressure on not only ourselves but the whole education sector the government hold firm on their statement that no additional funding is needed within the school sector and that schools must cover the additional expense within their current funding envelope.

As a result of the work undertaken within this restructure and with the utility costs being reduced significantly, we are now forecasting a small and manageable deficit for the year 2023 – 2024 which can be covered from our reserves and then we are then forecasting balanced budgets for the years that follow.

g. KS2 Teaching Assistants

Please can you explain how KS2 pupils and staff will be supported after the removal of Teaching Assistants in their classrooms?

Nine of our fourteen primary schools teach in mixed age classes where Key Stage 2 children are taught together. Following the consultation, we are committed to ensuring that all classes where years 3 to 6 are taught together have an additional adult in the classroom for the morning session when English and maths are typically taught. The average class size of our year 3 to 6 mixed classes is 14 pupils, which means that in the afternoons, the adult to pupil ratio still enables a high level of support for individual pupils and their learning. More than two thirds of the Key Stage 2 mixed age classes will also have an additional adult to support the needs of one or more specific learners in addition to any class TAs and we are confident that our teachers will be able to meet needs and deliver the curriculum effectively.

In single age classes at Key Stage 2, the average class size is 21 pupils (compared to over 27 nationally), and more than half of these classes will have an additional adult to support the needs of one or more specific learners. Where classes have 32 or more pupils (3 classes across the Trust), feedback from the consultation means that there will be a teaching assistant supporting teachers of these classes every morning in addition to any one-to-one teaching assistants already deployed in that class. Prior to the consultation, Key Stage 2 class teaching assistants were not necessarily the norm in several schools as additional support has been prioritised in younger year groups and so this does not represent a notable change in experience for pupils and teachers. This is common practice both locally and nationally.

The most impactful way that we can support learners to be successful is through high-quality teaching and we will continue to prioritise the training and development of teachers through weekly professional development and collaborative working across the Trust. Key to meeting the needs of different pupils is effective planning and we have aligned the curriculum in several subjects, so teachers have strong plans as a starting point which they can then adapt for their classes. Teachers also engage in regular collaborative planning with other teachers where they focus on how they adapt planning for specific pupils and where our most experienced teachers share their expertise with others.

Teachers will continue to be supported in their classrooms by school leaders where support is needed or asked for. Many teachers, including all teachers in the first two years of the profession,



have weekly coaching and mentoring to help develop their practice and support with specific concerns. We are committed to ensuring that all teachers have the skills to be highly effective and to meet the needs of the pupils in their classes.

The introduction of Assistant SENDCOs has significantly increased our ability to ensure that we are meeting the individual needs of pupils through support, adapted provision and also better liaison with parents and carers. Additionally, within each Hub we have allocated a member of staff to cover where necessary and to undertake interventions with pupils at Key Stage 2 to ensure that they can catch up and keep up with their peers.

h. Clarification of School leadership

One of the key new roles in the new structure is the role of Lead Teacher at each school. This role has formalised work already being undertaken in all our schools by experienced teachers and middle leaders so that they are now properly recognised for their responsibility for the smooth running of the school. With the challenges of recruitment and retention of great teachers nationally, roles such as lead teacher are also an important way for us to develop and keep great teachers and leaders in our schools and to help in succession planning. Each lead teacher has at least one or two days out of class (depending on the size of the school) and that time will be used to support and develop teachers, work with parents and the community, support pupil progress and manage the operational running of the school alongside the principal. This is significant additional leadership capacity which will be used directly with staff and pupils in each school whether that means more leadership presence at the school gate or more opportunities to meet with leaders to discuss the issues which are most important to you.

Our SENDCOs will continue to work within and across schools but will now also have more support and capacity from the Assistant SENDCO role. This capacity will also be used working directly with young people and their families to ensure their needs are met. As with the lead teacher role, the assistant SENDCO position also offers an important opportunity for us to develop the next generation of specialist SEND practitioners which benefits schools but also helps with retention and succession-planning at a time when this is a significant challenge nationally for all schools and Trusts.

Hub principals will work across schools and enable hubs to collaborate and work together really effectively. This will mean teachers and children working together more and feeling a sense of belonging to more than just their school. Much of their time will be spent in their schools and you can expect to see them regularly on the gate and they will know your children and community well. They will not be remote and disconnected from the schools and children in any way. Working across a group of schools will mean that they can find more effective and rapid solutions for individual schools' problems through the hub. It also means that challenges which are common to groups of schools can be addressed collaboratively so we harness the power of being a family of schools. Our hub principals all have significant experience and expertise in key areas and you can expect them to be coaching and developing leaders and teachers so that our schools continue to improve.

i. SEND & Safeguarding work

What impact work has been done around SEND and Safeguarding?

We recognise that, nationally and within Devon there is a there is an elevated level of concern regarding the increasing numbers of children and young people with special educational needs.



We also know that many children and young people have increasingly complex or significant levels of need.

Devon data – (21/22) – 5.2% EHCP, SEN Support 14.2%
National data (21/22) – 4% EHCP (355,566 children), SEN Support 12.6% (1,129,843 children)
(EHCP- Educational Health Care Plan)

As an area, Devon has higher levels of need than nationally. The Ofsted and CQC inspection found that Devon had not made progress on the areas of significant weakness that had been previously found. [10226565 Devon 80461 Final PDF_2203833.pdf \(govdelivery.com\)](https://govdelivery.com/10226565-Devon-80461-Final-PDF-2203833.pdf) There is an accelerated progress plan in place now to address these issues. As a Trust we are engaged with the local authority and partners on how we can work better together to meet children and family's needs and what needs to be done to bring about sustainable improvements. Recently we have strengthened and expanded our work with other schools, both within Devon and beyond, as well as with other partners such as health (GP, school nurse, speech and language therapy) to learn and share from best practice. This will form a crucial part of our work to strengthen our provision and practice for pupils with SEND and additional needs. It is important that we have the capacity within our schools to meet the increased levels of need. This is particularly important as we know that access to support from some other teams such as educational psychology (EP), speech and language therapy (SALT), autism assessment team and CAMHS is very difficult. All of these Local Authority teams are facing significant challenges with recruitment, capacity and have significant back-logs in casework. Educational Psychologists, in particular, have had their capacity to support schools severely restricted since last September and can only support as part of an EHC needs assessment. We know that other advisory teams do not have the capacity to fill the gap. As a family of schools, we are committed to improving and developing our own in-house expertise and knowledge so we can best support our children.

Next academic year, using the schools' review of how they manage and evaluate the effectiveness of their support for pupils with SEND we will strengthen the support for teachers and teaching staff to ensure they are clear and confident about meeting individual needs within the classroom and school environment.

We have a focus to ensure that the curriculum is designed and implemented in a way that meets pupils' needs and on developing and strengthening quality first teaching. This will make sure that teachers and staff in the classroom have the skills, understanding, confidence and resources to meet the needs of their class.

We will continue to develop our ability to identify needs early on. We have introduced a robust and clear approach to support the development of reading across all age ranges, this includes being able to unpick where pupils are struggling to read, the potential reasons for this and how we can help to address those barriers.

We know that many children can have difficulties with language, either using spoken language or in understanding language, and that this is not always easy to identify. We have supported key staff to develop their understanding of speech and language and we have developed our provision in this area by employing a part-time speech and language therapist. This helps us to understand children's needs more quickly and access advice on how to support needs in the classroom. We will continue to train staff to ensure everyone understands the impact of speech and language needs and can adapt their teaching appropriately.

Since the end of Covid-19 lockdown in July 2021 the rates of social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) concerns being logged by our staff have increased across all settings and naturally spiked in 2021/22. Given the enormous pressures being faced by primary mental health care, as



a Trust we have taken a number of steps to train our staff so that they can deliver mental health support, identify children and young people who need external support and to signpost families to appropriate sources of support. In order to develop mentally healthy settings, the Trust has also introduced training in trauma and relational practice.

A member of Trust staff is a trained trauma practitioner with extensive voluntary sector and clinical expertise. They lead this work and engage with all settings. Two of the three secondary settings have had direct input from Devon local authority since 2020/21 and been participants in the "Timpson Project", an intervention led by the local authority Educational Psychology team that develops staff awareness and practice in trauma informed relational practice. More specifically, all secondary settings and each primary hub has a Senior Mental Health Lead and this individual has completed accredited training under the auspices of a programme implemented and funded by the DfE. Each school has at least one children's mental health first aider and the investment in this area has been critical to ensure that we have expertise to meet the increasing needs presented.

In larger settings there are multiple such personnel and SEND leaders have accessed SEND specific training in social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) identification and support. All schools include elements on mental health and well-being in their Personal, Social, Health, Relationships and Sex Education programmes with our primary settings drawing materials from the nationally accredited SCARF programme and children's mental health week being marked. The Trust employs a youth work professional, part of whose focus is supporting pupil well-being and ensuring that they are being included in provision both emotionally and academically. At a Trust strategic level, there has been a substantial piece of work done with local NHS leaders which has led directly to the commissioning of additional mental health training opportunities which have been offered to all staff. Trust leaders regularly meet with colleagues from local NHS primary care networks and there is also a Trust based steering group of colleagues driving mental health policy, practice and provision across the organisation.

There is no default to complacency in relation to our safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding is very squarely everybody's proactive responsibility. There is an extensive induction and training expectation for all staff and a face-to-face annual update keeping all colleagues abreast of changes to national guidance and expectation. All schools have appropriately trained and experienced safeguarding lead personnel whose work is quality assured regularly. Safeguarding leads also deliver ongoing training to their teams via a "drip feed" approach for which there is a monthly calendared prompt and resources provided. Safeguarding leads provide regular updates to local stakeholder boards via standing agenda items and submit an annual report to these bodies. Safeguarding lead governors meet regularly to review systems, processes and impact. In addition, the local authority requires every setting to complete and submit an annual audit (\$175) to identify any gaps and action plan accordingly. The Trust safeguarding lead provides safeguarding leadership to another local academy trust on a part time basis.

In the last two years (October 2021 to present) all schools have had an independent safeguarding review conducted by the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) and by one reviewer, which ensured that observations, views and opinions were balanced and moderated. These reviews were overwhelmingly positive but where actions were recommended, attention was paid to these recommendations especially in relation to site security. Two settings have also had both local authority reviews and follow up reviews from the NSPCC. One setting has had intensive ongoing support from the local authority. Schools are internally reviewed annually and this process is further quality assured by the Trust Board through the activity of a safeguarding trustee. You will also be aware that one of the Ofsted judgements relates to safeguarding. All reviewing activity includes gathering and evaluating pupil voice.



Over the last two academic years we have focused on making our sites secure from a safeguarding and security aspect. At the start of this process only two of our schools had fully safe sites, with secure perimeter fencing. By the end of this academic year, work will be completed across all our sites, resulting in the knowledge that wherever possible entry to our schools is not achievable without reporting to a site leader first.

j. SENDCO Role

We know that having a lead in schools who has a strong knowledge and understanding of a wide range of SEND needs is vital in helping staff plan lessons and to teach in a way, and in an environment that helps children to learn. The strengthening of SENDCO roles and introduction of Assistant SENDCO roles means that teachers and adults in classrooms will be better supported, through coaching, modelling, and joint planning to meet children's needs. We will be using evidence-based research on what works to ensure that curriculum, planning, and delivery is fine-tuned to individual needs. We will be working with our staff teams to strengthen and develop the quality of our ordinarily available provision. This will mean that most children will be able to have their needs met in the classroom, working alongside their peers. High quality additional interventions will be used when needed, in a timed and targeted way, to support learning and development. These will often be led by a teacher.

A crucial part of meeting children's additional needs is working with parents and families and other agencies. In many of our schools we do this well. Moving forward we will be able to work well with families and others across *all* of our schools.

k. Administrator role

Can you please let us know how the admin structure will work and how daily tasks, such as answering phones etc. within our schools will be carried out?

The admin structure means that there will be dedicated administration staff allocated to each hub and they will be deployed by the hub principals across schools.

We are introducing new telephonic systems that will not only reduce cost but allow calls to be taken both onsite and remotely; with clear protocols in place for how information will be relayed to leaders and class-based staff. A centralised administration team, made up of current staff, will oversee data entry, system administration, communication and support with call handling and issue processing. Each member will take on a specific responsibility to increase expertise in specific areas and support the wider work of the schools.

The operation of the new administration structures will be closely monitored upon implementation in September and we will be surveying parents and carers to check that the provision is meeting both expectations and needs.

Staff will be available on every school site to welcome and deal with visitors.

l. Technicians within secondary schools

Given the specialist nature of the role and how it is integrated within specific guidance and provision needs, we have adapted our model based on the consultation. Our science technicians will have additional duties to include science cover lesson delivery when needed and we have therefore reduced our wider provision for cover due to this increased capacity.

Food technicians are reinstated and will have other duties to include food technology cover lesson delivery when required and we have therefore reduced our wider provision for cover due



to this increased capacity. Technology technicians at Tavistock College and Okehampton College will not see an overall reduction in hours, the rest of their hours will support the estates teams and we have therefore taken a cost saving on previously bought in health and safety services and wider support.

Creative Arts, Media and Art technicians have been removed from Tavistock College in line with the other secondary schools.

	Current Model	Original Proposal	Revised Structure	Actual Reduction/ (increase)
Technicians Secondary Schools	12.12 FTE	4.33 FTE	10.42 FTE	1.70 FTE

m. Strengthening relationships moving forward

We exist as an organisation to serve; the children and young people in our care, the parents and carers who entrust their children to us and the wider communities that wrap around us all. The strength of feeling that this period has highlighted is now the basis for repair, reconciliation and reconnection.

The world is not the same as it was prior to the pandemic and lockdown, and perhaps will never be the same again. What we can do is to build a Trust, a family of schools, that is a source of pride and connection.

We have done a significant amount already, much of it "behind the scenes"- whether through our work with NHS providers, our strong partnership work with the Local Authority, our work with food banks and charitable organisations. All of this work is done to strengthen the fabric of our communities and ensure that those who are most vulnerable can access services and feel a stronger sense of belonging. Our belief in schools as the "anchor institution" especially for our smaller villages; we are seeing our post-offices, shops and critical infrastructure continuing to disappear. We are here to stay. We need to ensure that we work in genuine partnership

To recognise and build this connection, I understand we need to fundamentally open up to the feedback and views of those we serve. We will be significantly increasing the number of open mornings and opportunities to come into the schools and for you to see for yourselves the work we are doing and the positive impact it has upon the happiness, safety, wellbeing and achievement for your children. In addition we will be forming parent council meetings on a regular basis as well as increasing the depth and frequency of surveys we undertake.

When we talk about "Everyone in our Trust" it needs to truly mean everyone.

It will and it must.