



# EGGBUCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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29<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Dear Colleague

Every day it is a privilege to see the commitment, drive and professionalism of staff at ECC and AFA. It is clear we are all working together to offer a truly outstanding education to our students and community. It makes us burst with pride and we are full of admiration for each one of you.

Despite this energy and commitment, the last two years of change and upheaval has taught us that we are increasingly swimming against the tide: small academies lose out. We are sure that you all recognise the need for any institution to flourish, it is important to adapt and adjust as the educational and political landscape changes. To ensure ECC and AFA get stronger and stronger, Trustees are proposing a merger between ECCAT with an equally ambitious MAT, the Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST).

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, staff were invited to a meeting with WeST. We heard from Wendy Cavell (Chair of Trustees) about the rationale for this merger (reinforced below) and we put our questions to Rob Haring (CEO of WeST).

Following the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, Trustees voted unanimously to accelerate the progress for a formal merger.

## **Rationale for the proposed merger between Eggbuckland Community College Community Trust (ECCAT) and the Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST)**

- We have understood for many years that ECCAT (consisting of one primary and one secondary) is not the ideal model for school improvement. Austin Farm Academy (AFA) needs specialist primary support and Eggbuckland Community College (ECC) needs specialist secondary. WeST offers us a huge range of opportunities to ensure the very highest quality of teaching and learning, a broad and engaging curriculum offer, staff development and the recruitment/retention of outstanding staff.
- WeST has a similar ethos and ambition to ECCAT and is based locally. It understands the importance of the community we serve and the strengths and needs of our students.
- As part of WeST, ECC and AFA will benefit from and contribute to a close collaboration of like-minded schools whilst retaining our character and our place in the local community.
- WeST schools (7 secondary and 15 primary) have developed outstanding practice in the areas ECCAT is committed to make improvements. WeST has a very experienced and highly successful School Improvement Team which will offer us the high level challenge and bespoke support to ensure rapid improvements are made.
- Trustees have ensured that WeST is well aligned to our vision, values and ethos. It is also a local MAT with a regional and national influence. The Regional Schools Commissioner has supported a merger, judging WeST to have the capacity, expertise and proven track record to offer outstanding support to ECC and AFA.

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**THE PERFECT ENVIRONMENT**

Eggbuckland Community College Academy Trust is an exempt charity and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with Company Number 8603078 and has a registered office at Westcott Close, Eggbuckland, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 5YB



Austin Farm  
Academy



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- ECC and AFA will be able to secure better value for money and free up resources to benefit our students and for our priorities.
- We are always looking to improve the facilities we offer our students and as a small Academy we are rarely successful accessing funds to support this. WeST offers us the potential to access these annual funding streams.
- By merging with WeST the school's admission policy will not change. ECC and AFA will receive the same level of pupil funding and all staff will transfer, (via TUPE) to WeST, retaining their current pay grade and conditions.
- All employees working in ECCAT immediately before the transfer would transfer to be employed by WeST on their existing terms and conditions of employment with full continuity of service (Tupe).
- The employer would be the Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST) and accordingly salaries will be paid by WeST.
- The due diligence process has already started and any proposed measures (i.e. potential changes arising in connection with the transfer) will be notified to staff and unions as soon as possible. No measures are envisaged by ECCAT and no measures have been declared by WeST as at the time of writing.

More information about Westcountry Schools Trust can be accessed through the WeST website link: [www.westst.org.uk](http://www.westst.org.uk) or by visiting the websites of their Secondary schools which include Ivybridge, Coombe Dean, Plymstock and Hele's, and Primary schools that include Boringdon, Dunstone, Glen Park, Plympton St Maurice and Woodford.

From today, Trustees are starting a three week period of consultation for staff at ECCAT (this date may be extended in the event of WeST declaring measures for consultation purposes). Please use this link <https://www.egguckland.org.uk/westconsultation> to give you access to a) the PowerPoint used on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, b) a selection of WeST policies and key documents, c) the PowerPoint and a recording of the meeting with union representatives held on the 27<sup>th</sup> April, and d) a document that you can use to present your questions / concerns / perceptions of this proposed merger. This latter document is titled 'WeST Consultation - Staff'.

The closing date for completing this consultation document is **10am on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May**. After this date, Trustees will ensure they take note of all staff comments and respond accordingly. Please also refer to the proposed timeline enclosed with this letter.

Should the decision be made by Trustees to agree a merger between ECCAT and WeST, we intend to have this completed by 1st July 2021. Whatever the decision, it is clear that exciting times are ahead.

As usual, the staff and Trustees extend their warm wishes to you and thank you for your ongoing commitment and dedication. We never take this for granted!

Your sincerely

  
**Matthew Corrigan**  
 CEO/Principal

  
**Wendy Cavell**  
 Chair of Trustees

  
**Colin Randall**  
 Headteacher, Austin Farm Academy

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