

## The Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust; an ethical leadership model

Ian Courtney MBE, Chair of Trustees at Dartmoor MAT writes about how the trust determined its ethical leadership model from its inception to ensure the trusts ethos and values were maintained with growth.

The Trust (DMAT) came into being in January 2018 and comprises a group of 16 like-minded schools in West Devon; three Secondary and 13 Primary schools, some of which are very small.

All of our schools were previously either formal members of Co-Operative trusts or (as church schools) associated to a Co-Op Trust. As such, we all shared a common ethos and set of values. The Co-Operative principles to which we are all committed are:

- Self Help
- Self-Responsibility
- Democracy
- Equality
- Equity
- Solidarity

We believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Our leadership and governance structure was built to reflect and protect these values. As we worked to create DMAT, we met one early potential frustration to our wish to cast these values in stone to try to ensure that our successors in leadership continue to adhere to these principles. As a “mixed MAT” – in that we have church schools within our family – there was only one set of Articles of Association approved by the Department of Education that we could employ. Those articles cannot without difficulty and delay easily be added to or significantly amended to include the values we wished to enshrine within DMAT’s DNA.

A bit of lateral thinking produced the idea of a Statement of Intent which would sit alongside our Articles, Master Funding Agreement and Scheme of Delegation, would be published on all of our websites and included in all of our Admission Statements. It may not be legally binding, but we believe it is a very public declaration that would be “interesting” to move away from.

You can find our Statement of Intent here:

[https://www.dartmoormat.org.uk/uploads/8/0/6/1/80615962/statement\\_of\\_intent.pdf](https://www.dartmoormat.org.uk/uploads/8/0/6/1/80615962/statement_of_intent.pdf)

Prior to launch, our pre-MAT steering group confirmed that we would commit to continuing with all existing staff terms and conditions, then we sat down with all of our area Trades Union representatives and agreed to establish a Joint Consultative Committee from the outset. We worked very closely with our Union colleagues throughout the TUPE consultation process and found their input invaluable.

We hold regular staff conferences to ensure that we listen to the concerns of our people and where possible take them into account in all of our decisions and policies; our first round of conferences, all of which are held during the working day, was for support colleagues- an incredibly informative and positive experience.

We have established a Staff Well-Being committee which is jointly facilitated by a trustee and an Assistant Head Teacher; any and all colleagues are welcome to attend and all suggestions are given proper considerations by trustees.

We are of course still a young Trust, but we do take that word at face value; Trust.

Ian Courtney MBE, Chair of Trustees