



South Dartmoor Community College

Head of School | Paul Collins

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Dear Parents and Carers,

On Tuesday 18th June, myself and Angela Barry, who is currently Interim Executive Support at South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust and who will be Interim Chief Executive Officer from September, had a very positive meeting with a number of parents who are working together to support South Dartmoor Community College, ensuring we have a strong line of communication.

This meeting was extremely valuable as it allowed us all to discuss some of the most common questions being asked within the community. We wanted to share the questions the group asked, and also the answers we gave. These are below – myself and Angela hope you find these helpful.

What changes are happening as a result of the restructure?

The school day will be changing from six 50-minute lessons a day to five one-hour lessons a day, with the school moving to a two-week timetable.

Is the school reducing the arts and PE subjects?

No. The school values these subjects – students will still get the same amount of PE that they have currently and the creative arts subjects (drama, art and music) will be down by only 20 minutes, only because of the change from 50-minute to one-hour lessons. All teachers within the art, drama and music departments are remaining with the school.

Teachers from the geography, history, MFL, maths, English and science departments have left within year. Many schools will make reductions/changes to their staffing from year to year by not replacing staff in a department when they leave if the role is no longer needed, which is the case here.

Will the College be able to maintain their excellent reputation for safeguarding?

We are pleased that the changes will not have an impact on the level of teaching assistants, who we believe provide a vital role in supporting pupils learning and wellbeing. As the school has become smaller we have reduced the pastoral and admin functions of the school but are confident that the numbers in place from September will deliver effectively within these areas and we will still have student reception staffed full time by first aiders and admin staff, alongside the Heads of Houses who have their offices within this area. There will also be no changes to our full-time mental health and wellbeing provision (The Place).

Is the school closing the library?

No. The library is an important area of the school and one we are keen to maintain. We have reduced staffing but there will still be staff available to keep the library organised and advise the students on their book choices. The library will continue to be open throughout the school day. However, we are keen to get more members of our local community involved in the running of the library and if you know anyone who would be interested in volunteering for a few hours a week we would love to hear from them.



Is the sixth form closing?

No – we can reassure everyone that this option has not been discussed at all and there are absolutely no plans to close the sixth form. As with all sixth forms, very low sign-up for particular subjects may mean that they may not continue to be offered.

What is happening with regards to the leadership of the school?

Mr Collins has resigned and we wish him the very best. We are delighted to be able to welcome Mr Kevin Dyke as our interim Principal from September 1st. Mr Dyke will be writing to all parents when he takes up his new post and no doubt his letter will include a summary of his background and experience that he will be bringing to our lovely school. During the parents' meeting, questions were raised in relation to the progress of the post Ofsted action plan. We would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the Senior Leadership Team have been diligently working on evaluating the school and this information has been shared with the local governing body in great detail.

How can the Trust afford additional staff when they are making staff reductions?

This question was raised following the letter that introduced Angela Barry (Interim Executive Support and Interim CEO from September) and Lee Miller (Interim Chief Operating Officer). Mr Miller's role was already budgeted for as our Chief Finance Officer is currently on maternity leave and he is filling this role. This term, Angela Barry's role is not coming directly from any school but being supported by additional funding secured through a successful application for a school improvement grant through Ivybridge Teaching School.

What is happening with the merger?

The directors of the Trust have asked the Regional Schools Commissioner's office (part of the Department for Education) to help find a suitable partner for the schools within South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust.

As you may know, the Trust had initially consulted on a partnership with Education South West (ESW), however the board of directors will not be taking this forward. The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) has a good overview of all the Trusts across the south west and can assess who is performing well and will have the capacity to take on the schools within South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust. Trusts that would be suitable for our schools are being considered at the moment and it is expected a decision will be made in mid to late September with the aim of the Trust joining their new partner in January 2020. The Chairs of the Local Governing Bodies, alongside their Headteachers will meet next week with representatives of the RSC to discuss their views and hopes for the future. I will update you as further information regarding this becomes available.



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As I mentioned above, I hope this is a helpful update and gives an overview of the areas that were raised with myself and Angela at the meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Shaw
Chief Executive Officer
South Dartmoor Academy