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*Cockington – Case Study*

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**What was the main attraction to joining Coast?**

The Governors and I understood that there was a real need to be part of a Multi Academy Trust and there was a lot of initial discussion surrounding who would be the best fit for Cockington. Whoever we collaboratively joined with, we needed to feel that they shared the same moral purpose as Cockington. Coast Academies definitely have a strong moral purpose and share the belief of offering more, for more children and meeting differing children's needs. We didn't want to be part of a MAT that had structures for structures' sake. It needed to be a MAT with the same beliefs, processes and the key vision to improve the life chances of the children within all the schools. It was imperative that the schools did not compete with one another but supported and nurtured to ensure continued growth and sustainability.

**Were there many barriers that you had to overcome to get your teams on-board?**

There were 3 main groups that needed to be considered in the decision making process.

1. The Local Governing Body (LGB)
2. Staff Members
3. Parents

The LGB needed to understand the benefits of joining a multi academy trust, encompassing the unique selling point of Coast Academies, whereby schools are committed to achieving excellence together. The LGB were made very aware that moving forward with MAT growth, Cockington would be heavily involved in the decision making processes.

Staff needed knowledge of Coast Academies' moral vision, what joining would mean to them and what the additional opportunities it would open to them. It was key to them, and this became very clear during the due diligence process, that successful school retained their own strong identity within the MAT – earned autonomy.

With parents, we entered in to a consultation period to learn more about their views about Cockington joining Coast Academies. We held meetings to explain Coast Academies vision, allowing parents to ask questions and learn what joining a MAT encompasses. Cockington were joining as a successful school, with continued autonomy which eased parents, especially as Coast Academies already shared the same holistic approach to children's learning.

**During the transition process do you feel you were supported and guided with the changes?**

Cockington joined as an equal partnership which led to an organic transition into joining Coast Academies. Its enabled all three schools to develop processes and support one another throughout. In particular, we have steered one another through the decision making processes, and now feel very able to support any other schools who might wish to join with this process.



### **Are your teams seeing the benefits of working together – especially with Joint Professional Development?**

Our staff teams are absolutely benefitting from working together, especially the newly formed Strategic Education Team (comprising our Assistant and Deputy Heads) joining forces to improve and develop teaching standards across the MAT, enabling them to lead and develop from the front. As a result, there have been positive changes across all three schools, having a big impact on Standards and Progress. Being able to speak and share best practice has empowered our staff and has been really successful; it's not been forced, as staff across Coast Academies share the same basic principles. Communication between the schools and sharing best practice has been free flowing, aided by the fact that we are welcome in, and regular visitors to, one another's schools.

As a School Leader I have never felt so supported in both positive and negative scenarios. We continue, as professionals, to ask one another challenging questions, which are posed to ensure children are supported in the right way.

### **How would you drive the MAT forward?**

I acknowledge that we need to grow Coast Academies -we are at the start of an exciting journey. It would be beneficial to be of a size where we can expand central services so that teachers and leaders can concentrate on what matters – improving the life chances of children in all our schools. Ideal expansion would be 10-15 schools all within a geographical location of no more than one hour's drive from our current positions.

We need to be working alongside likeminded schools, not schools that are huge business focused entities. Supporting schools on a brokered basis to help them develop in delivering what they need to achieve could also be an avenue to explore.

Ultimately, we need to work with likeminded people who share the same vision and values, with a commitment to achieving the best for all pupils including the most vulnerable.