



PROPOSED MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

ACADEMY CONSULTATION

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM PARENT & CARER MEETINGS

Introduction

The seven schools proposing to establish a multi academy trust ran a coordinated programme of parent consultation meetings as follows;

Monday, April 18 th	6pm	Robert Miles Junior School (RM)
Tuesday, April 19 th	6pm	Burton Joyce Primary School (BJ)
Wednesday, April 20 th	2pm	Cropwell Bishop Primary School (CB)
Wednesday, April 20 th	6pm	Heymann Primary School (H)
Thursday, April 21 st	2pm	Keyworth Primary School (K)
Thursday, April 21 st	6pm	Tollerton Primary School (T)

This document is a summary of the questions asked at those meetings, the answers given and where helpful further answers have been added. The acronyms after the question indicate at which meeting a question was asked. The questions have been collated into themed sections.

A. STRATEGY & PLANNING

1. How did the seven schools come together? (RM, BJ)

The Headteachers of the seven schools have been working together for a number of years on various projects through local partnerships such as Rushcliffe Learning Alliance and Toot Hill Teaching Schools Alliance. The Headteachers felt that their schools shared similar vision, ethos, values and approach to education and started discussions about a multi academy trust at least twelve months ago.

2. Why can't the benefits of partnership be achieved without creating a MAT? (BJ)

There are three advantages of a MAT over informal partnerships. First, all Headteachers and staff will be working for the same organisation and therefore have a shared responsibility for outcomes for all schools and children. This strengthens mutual accountability, support and challenge. Second, the MAT will be smaller than existing partnerships and so can make decisions and implement plans more quickly while having sufficient size for economies of scale. Third, the MAT will be a single legal entity making it possible to enter into commercial agreements with other organisations to secure efficiencies.

3. Did you consider joining other MATs for example with a mix of secondary and primary schools? (T)

The schools individually and collectively did consider and investigate other existing multi academy trusts. The Headteachers and Governing Bodies believe first establishing their own MAT would ensure that the Trust's ethos and values were more closely aligned to those of the seven schools, second that being a primary only MAT would have greater benefit for the schools and third that the governance could be designed to meet the schools requirements for balanced autonomy.

4. Have you spoken to other MATs about their experiences and advice? (K)

The investigation and consideration of other MATs gave the Headteachers a clear sense of the different ways a MAT could be established and what would be appropriate for the seven schools. The schools also chose to appoint an experienced project manager that had been involved in establishing many MATs and could therefore share good practice and options for the schools to consider.

5. Will the MAT expand to include other schools? (RM, H, K)

The schools expect it will take at least a year for the Trust to settle down. So new schools are unlikely to join until the second year. There is an expectation from the DfE that the Trust will take another schools and support under-performing schools. However, that will be a decision for the Trust Directors and will be based on compatibility of vision, ethos, values and approach and the capacity and capability of the Trust to support other schools.

6. Have other schools been identified to join the MAT? (H)

No.

7. Why hasn't Willowbrook joined? (K)

Keyworth, Crossdale Drive and Willowbrook had initial discussions about a local Keyworth village partnership in 2015. It was amicably agreed that the schools would explore their own options.

8. What are the disadvantages of the proposal? (K)

The main disadvantage is that once a maintained school becomes an academy it cannot revert to being a Local Authority maintained school.

If the school were unhappy within the MAT, it could seek to join another a MAT if the Secretary of State consented. That is why the governing bodies of the seven schools are carefully considering the proposal and why there is much detailed planning about the MAT governance, leadership and management before any final decision.

9. How do Burton Joyce/Cropwell Bishop Federation Parent Governors feel about the proposal? (BJ)

Initially, the parent governors were concerned about the impact of further change given that the two schools had federated and come together under an Executive Headteacher and single Governing Body. The priority is that the schools retain their community ethos and values and child-centered approach. Having considered the proposal they are confident this will be retained. They can also see the benefits for teachers that may be the only teacher of a year group in a small school, having the chance to work with colleagues from other schools to share ideas and best practice and provide mutual support. *(Note this is based on the response of the two parent governors at the meeting.)*

10. What happens if one school decides not to proceed? (T)

It is highly probable that the MAT would still go ahead. Not going ahead would still leave that school with the challenge of responding to Government policy that all schools should become academies by 2022.

11. How will the next steps and possible implementation be announced? (H)

The schools will publish a summary of the questions and answers from all six parent consultation meetings on Friday, April 29th. Similarly, a summary of the two staff consultation meetings will also be published.

Once Governing Bodies have considered and approved the consultation report at their meetings on May 16th the reports will also be published by each school, probably with an announcement of the Governing Body decisions.

The working group will consider how best to communicate further decisions and progress to all stakeholders

B. TEACHING, LEARNING & SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

12. Will schools still follow the National Curriculum? (H, K)

The schools will still be judged on pupil outcomes and overall performance. So, the curriculum will continue to be broad, balanced, appropriate to each school. It will continue to be closely aligned to the National Curriculum but not restrictively so.

13. Will the schools still be inspected by Ofsted? (T)

Academies are inspected in the same way as maintained schools. The Secretary of State has announced that schools and academies judged to be '*Outstanding*' will no longer be subject to routine school inspection. The performance of all schools will continue to be monitored and if there are signs of deterioration, or other factors are a cause for concern, these could trigger an inspection. There are plans for MATs to be inspected but it is not clear whether this means all schools are inspected at the same time.

Current policy is that academies are not inspected for the first two years after conversion unless there are causes for concern.

14. How will staff find the time to collaborate? (T)

Those staff that have been collaborating already, for example between Burton Joyce and Cropwell Bishop and Keyworth and Crossdale Drive, have found it spreads the preparation workload and actually saves time in the long run. This preparation is already done outside classroom teaching and contact time so greater partnership working should reduce the burden and pressure on staff.

15. What will the impact of the MAT be on specialist subjects, extra-curricular activities and pupil support? (T)

The schools have already seen how they can jointly commission support for curriculum areas such as PE. This could easily be extended to other subjects such as languages or music and after school clubs. As a MAT of seven schools they will be able to offer greater volume of work, which will more attractive to freelance and supply staff.

The schools are particularly interested in securing high-quality support for a range of pupil support across the SEN spectrum such areas such as speech and language therapy and support for pupils with behavioural problems.

16. How will the MAT protect schools from the deluge of daily Government announcements and policy changes? (H)

As a group of seven schools the MAT will be able to coordinate and share responsibility to respond to policy, saving time and effort.

C. GOVERNANCE

17. How will Members and Directors be appointed? (H) How many Directors will there be? (K)

The working group of Governors and Headteachers from the seven schools has already agreed that the Trust Board of Directors should have the right blend of expertise and skills across education, child well-being, finance, HR, property, legal affairs and strategy. Subject to Governing Bodies approval there will be a total of eleven (11) Directors, ten (10) appointed by the Members and the CEO.

Existing Governors have been invited to self-nominate to be either or Member or Director. A short-list will be agreed by the working group and presented to Governing Bodies for approval at a joint meeting on May 16th.

The Members are not actively involved in the day-to-day running of the Trust but have an important role as guardians of the Trust vision, ethos and values. They can appoint and remove Directors and only they can agree changes to legal documents such as the Articles of Association. Therefore, the working group will consider very carefully who the Members are and will seek people with a track record of involvement in school governance and community-led values.

18. Could the number of Members be increased from five to seven as there are seven schools? (K)

DfE guidance is that there should be no more than five (5) Members but this will be considered further by the working group.

19. What happens if a Director resigns? How will they be replaced? (K)

The remaining Directors will consider the skills and expertise that need to be replaced and invite nominations from Governing Bodies. Nominations could be for people not currently involved in any of the schools. The Directors will then make a recommendation to the Members to appoint.

20. Are Members & Directors paid? (H, T)

No with the exception of the CEO who will be an employee of the Trust as Headteacher and CEO.

21. Who is the Trust accountable to? (H)

The Trust is accountable to the Secretary of State for Education for the performance of the Trust and its member schools. The schools will still be subject to inspection by Ofsted. As Accounting Officer, the CEO has *'a personal responsibility to Parliament and the EFA's Accounting Officer for the financial resources under the Trust's control and must be able to assure Parliament and the public of high standards of probity in the management of public funds..'* (Academies Finance Handbook 2015)

22. Will there still be Parent Governors? If, so how many? Will there be LA Governors? (K)

Although the recent White Paper suggest that MATs will be given the freedom not to have parent governors, the recommendation to the working group will be that each Local Governing Body has at least two Parent Governors. If the working group agrees then this proposal will be presented to Governing Bodies for approval on May 16th.

There are no longer LA Governors as the Local Authority won't have the right to appoint Governors. However, those people serving as LA Governors will be invited to continue as community governors (officially terms Trust Governors)

23. Will business interests that might want to influence the schools be involved in the Trust (K)?

No.

24. Will the minutes of the Trust Board be published? (H)

The working group will consider this question carefully although there is no legal or regulatory obligation to do so.

25. What do parents do if they are unhappy with a school within the Trust? (H)

Parents would first use the Trust complaints procedure. If at the end of this process, they were still unhappy they could contact Ofsted or the Department for Education.

D. LEADERSHIP

26. Who will be the CEO? Will the Trust have an all powerful Executive Headteacher in charge of all schools? (RM, BJ, H, T)

No. The Trust is very much based on all Headteachers being equal and retaining responsibility to run their schools. The Headteachers will form a Trust Leadership Group to plan and manage the programmes to raise standards. The Trust will, however, be appointing one of the Headteachers as Trust CEO to manage its day-to-day operation. This will be part-time role for a fixed term alongside the appointee's current Headteacher role with appropriate support to ensure their school is supported.

27. How will Headteacher be recruited should one Head leave? (H, K)

It will be proposed to the working group and Governing Bodies that the Local Governing Body will establish an appointment panel with a mix of that school's Governors, Trust Directors and Headteachers. The appointment panel would oversee the appointment process and make a recommendation to the Board for approval.

28. How will the MAT affect the relationship between Robert Miles Junior School and the Infants? (RM)

The Junior and Infants School will continue to work in partnership as they have done, particularly on transition of pupils between Years 2 and 3. Joining the MAT will not make any difference.

29. Will the leadership structure in Burton Joyce change? (BJ)

No. Burton Joyce and Cropwell Bishop will continue to each have a Head of School

E. FINANCE & PROPERTY

30. How will the school's finances be affected? (RM) How are conversion costs being met?

The schools will each receive £25k conversion grant to cover those costs. The schools will also receive a one-off grant of £95k to support the establishment of the Trust. After conversion the MAT will receive an Education Services Grant of £77 per pupil to cover the new costs of running the Trust. Overall, the schools will be marginally better off as academies although still subject to the ongoing squeeze on budgets.

31. How will the Trust finances be managed? (CB)

The Trust will have a Finance & Audit Committee with a responsibility to make sure the Trust finances are run effectively, efficiently and compliantly. They will organise for the Trust and school accounts to be independently audited and the Trustees Report and Financial Statements to be published. They will also oversee an internal audit programme to ensure schools comply with the Trust's financial regulations. The CEO will be the Trust Accounting Officer with a specific responsibility to oversee the appropriate use of public funds and write an annual statement confirming this is the case. The Trust will appoint a Trust Finance Manager who will manage the Trust finances day-to-day working with finance staff from each of the schools.

32. How will school budgets be set? (H)

Each Headteacher will retain responsibility to develop their school budget. They will consult with colleague Headteachers to identify opportunities for joint commissioning or resource sharing if appropriate. The budget will then be reviewed by the Local Governing Body and proposed to the Finance & Audit Committee.

The Finance & Audit Committee will then review all the school budgets as part of a consolidated Trust budget. They will then recommend the Trust budget to the Board for approval.

33. What is joint commissioning? Will the schools still buy services from the Local Authority? (K)

Joint commissioning is when the MAT buys services on behalf of the schools. The MAT will be able to secure savings against seven schools buying individually because it will be a single contract with a single point of contact.

34. What happens if a school has a deficit? Will funds be diverted from other schools? (T)

One of the principles that the working group and Governing Bodies will be asked to consider is that 1) each school is responsible for setting and managing a balanced budget and 2) no funds are diverted between schools.

35. Who owns the school land? (H)

School land will continue to be owned by Nottinghamshire County Council. The Trust will enter into a 125 year lease with a peppercorn rent, which contains obligations for the Trust to maintain the estate.

36. How will SEN funding be affected? (T)

No change from maintained school SEN funding.

F. STAFF & EMPLOYMENT

37. How do the staff feel? (BJ, H, K) Is there a risk staff might leave the schools as a result? (T)

The staff are being consulted in parallel with parents and carers so it is too early to say definitively what their views are. The proposals have been discussed by Headteachers and staff for some time already and so far the staff seem cautiously supportive. No staff have indicated they will leave as result of establishing the MAT.

38. Will staff pay be affected by conversion? (BJ)

No. Staff terms and conditions are protected at the point of transfer of employment from the Local Authority to the Trust. The schools have committed that in the future MAT staff would have pay, terms and conditions on par with employees of maintained schools.

39. Will teachers move between schools? (RM, BJ, H, T)

Teachers and other staff will continue to work in the school they currently do and their contract of employment naming the school will transfer across.

However, there are three circumstances where staff may work in another school. First, is when a job at another Trust school is advertised and an employee applies for and is appointed to that role. Second, when a staff member voluntarily agrees to a secondment or temporary placement. Third, there may be new posts created in the future that are Trust-wide and any staff member appointed to such a post would be expected to work across schools.

40. Can the CEO move people around? (H)

No.

41. Will the Trust change staff terms & conditions? (H)

Staff have already seen their pay, terms and conditions change as employees of the Local Authority.

When a school becomes an academy, staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions. Like any employer, the Trust could propose to change terms and conditions in the future. As now, there are clear policies on consultation with staff on any proposed changes and rules on salary protection. Because the staff will transfer under TUPE they have the protection that their terms and conditions may never be changed to their detriment if the main reason for the change is the TUPE transfer itself.

However, the Trust will seek to adopt the national and local agreements for annual pay awards agreed between unions and employers for teachers and support staff respectively, and will continue to recognise and consult with Trade Unions on pay and conditions.

42. Will there be development opportunities for support staff? (T)

Yes. Already the MAT is planning to create a new part-time Trust Finance Manager, subject to agreement by the working group and Governing Bodies. If agreed current finance staff will be invited to apply and that group are pleased that this new opportunity is available to them. Further support and development opportunities will be put in place

G. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

43. How will admissions be affected? (BJ, H)

The current admissions policies continue although the Trust becomes the admissions authority instead of the Local Authority. The Local Authority will still coordinate the admissions process to primary schools and parents and carers will still apply via the Local Authority.

The Trust has the same responsibilities to comply with the admissions code and any future changes to a school's admissions policy would need to be consulted upon. The Local Authority changed the admissions policy for September 2016 to remove siblings as an over-subscription criteria, which has meant some

parents have not been able to send their children to the same school. This is one change the Trust might consider but would only come into effect for September 2018 entry.

44. How will school holidays be affected? (K,H)

Each school will continue to plan its holidays within the Local Authority recommended parameters. There may be slight variations between schools due to local arrangements between families of schools.