

Dales Academies Trust (DAT): Stakeholder consultation – Interim Feedback

Parents Carers and Community Members, 19.6.17 – 14.7.17

The questions and answers below are a summary of the feedback to date on all parent/carer and community members meetings conducted between 19.6 and the 14.7.17. They include response to emailed queries but do NOT include online feedback at this stage. A full report and findings will be distributed at the end of consultation in September 2017.

Richmond CE Primary and Nursery School, 3.7.17

Question: Is the new CEO from the secondary School?

Answer: No, Damian Chubb currently works in Wakefield for a Trust and will be joining DAT in September on a part-time basis.

Question: Are all these schools part of the Swaledale Alliance? Will it split on Trust formation?

Answer: No, all schools who are members of the alliance will continue to be so because this is an important aspect of our work.

Question: Have any other non-faith schools expressed an interest in joining DAT?

Answer: Yes, some have but this needs to be managed carefully so we grow in a sustainable way. Our funding agreement allows both church and non-church schools to join DAT.

Question: Will the Trust bring in cheaper supply teachers to save money?

Answer: No, this would not bring the high standards that we are looking for and that our vision states. Supply teachers also cost more to the school so it wouldn't make sense educationally or financially.

Question: Are the academies currently in North Yorkshire a mixture of primary and secondary?

Answer: Yes, and special and alternative provision.

Question: We understand there will be one Head teacher here but will we still have our own governing body?

Answer: Yes – there will still be a governing body for this school and all DAT schools will continue with their governance arrangements as they are now.

Question: Where will the names of Members and Trustees be shown, on the Trust website or on the school website?

Answer: At the moment only on the schools' websites. As the Trust develops it will have its own website where this detail will also be shared. A copy of the biographies of proposed Members and Trustees will also be uploaded on to the school's websites before the summer break.

Question: Do staff terms and conditions remain the same for a fixed period only?

Answer: No, this is indefinite as far as TUPE is concerned but terms and conditions change locally and nationally regularly and these changes may apply.

Question: If one school is running a deficit budget and another a surplus might it be moved between schools?

Answer: No. Schools can be in deficit with a plan to move to a balanced position. Trust finances are consolidated so some schools can be in deficit and others surplus but the Trust cannot be in deficit overall. This is why it's important for DAT to have a large school in the Trust to maintain financial viability and sustainability.

Question: I understand that the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) is based on the number of pupils per school, will this apply to us as an academy?

Answer: There are different funds and guidance for each. Yes, the schools will each receive devolved formula capital funding as part of their annual grants. They will then have the opportunity to bid into a national CIF pot which aims to deal with poor building condition and in some case school expansion needs. The schools and Trust will need an Asset Management Strategy which will determine the priorities and where this money is spent as part of an annual plan.

Question: What is the Local Authority top-slice and what will be the Trust top-slice?

Answer: LA top-slice is approximately 3% and the Trust top-slice is 4.5% however they are not comparable because the Trust will provide more than schools currently pay for from the LA in addition to the top-slice.

Comment: We are concerned that the decision has been made for this school when we don't know what all the costs are.

Response: For Richmond Primary, the decision has been made. Due to the Ofsted status an Academy Order was issued in 2016 which follows government policy and direction. Work is ongoing with regards to financial due diligence and planning and this is regularly updated and reviewed by all schools.

Comment: What status does this consultation have: Can we for example change the uniform as part of this consultation?

Answer: The consultation is a formal process but not a statutory process. If parents said they wanted the uniform changing then the school would arrange for a more

detailed exploration of this proposal to take place. This consultation would be the start of this process not the end.

Question: The evidence from tonight is that there are few parents here to inform the decision. How can we improve the response from parents?

Answer: We will continue to engage with all parents through as many media as possible. For example, we will give out questionnaires at Sports Day.

Question: Why is there a question in the survey asking if we agree with the conversion to academy status for this school because we don't have a choice?

Answer: This is wrong, the question should not be there – we will make sure this is changed as soon as possible.

Question: Will our Ofsted status change in the near future?

Answer: The Ofsted category is cancelled at conversion and within 3 years the school is inspected again as an academy.

Comment: But this will disadvantage our school because we won't be able to prove ourselves for three years.

Response: For this reason, governors and senior managers want to re-brand the school and give it a new start so that there are few links to the school's difficult past.

Comment: But any re-branding and change of uniform for example may cost too much for parents. Also, the name of the school is important to us and important to children currently in the school.

Response: We understand this and that is why we will continue to talk to parents and explore carefully all the options and how we manage any change.

Question: Can we put something into the school newsletter about this?

Answer: Yes definitely, we need to inform people what the options are and how to make their voices heard.

Comment: We must make sure that the integrity of the process is addressed. For example, the wrong question in the survey doesn't help and also there has been nothing about any potential change of uniform and possible change of name.

Response: We will address the issue of the wrong question and will make sure that everyone knows what are the proposals and can have their say before anything is finalised.

Question: Are there any of these proposals that can be made public at the moment?

Answer: Governors will need to make the decision about what will be communicated and when and this is currently being planned.

Comment: 'Church of England' is an important part of the school's name and we wouldn't want to lose this.

Comment: The Diocesan Board of Education may need to be consulted too.

Response: We will put information together with the Chair of Governors, Senior Leadership Team and DBE and circulate it to all parents in parallel with this consultation regarding the potential change of name and uniform.

Comment: Local experience tells us that any change of name will not be adopted anyway.

Question: Will there be more meetings to make our views heard?

Answer: There will be further opportunities for parents to contribute their views.

Question: When will the new revised-worded survey be available?

Answer: Tomorrow the new link will be sent to the school and then the school will get the new link onto the website as soon as possible.

Question: Will the Parent/Teachers Association be combined or changed?

Answer: No, this will also transfer 'as is' and intact.

Comment: Thank you to all the teaching and administrative staff for everything they have done and all their hard work through a very difficult time for the school.

Below are the specific queries raised at all other parent/carer and community consultation meetings. Where questions were identical or similar we have combined the questions to provide one answer.

South Otterington, - Parents Questions, 6.7.17

Question: If any funding is left from the set up/conversion grants how will this be spent?

Answer: This will be determined by the Headteachers and CEO. It could be off set against year 1 costs for set up and therefore reduces the percentage top slice or it could be re-distributed to the schools or used for school improvement activities across the Trust.

Question: Why risk academy status now. As an outstanding school can't we wait 2 or 3 years?

Answer: We could wait however, we feel now is the right time. If we wait we won't have the opportunities we do now to help inform the set up, propose Trustees

etc. It could also be that the Trust would not be open to taking new schools in 2 or 3 years if it has reached capacity and we do not want to be in a position where there is limited or no choice.

Question: What have we learnt from other CofE MAT's?

Answer: Currently we are in a relatively unique position of having two diocese represented within the MAT. We are working alongside Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT) who are an established and growing MAT. BDAT are providing leadership, financial and procurement expertise to help inform our emerging plans.

Question: What is Swaledale Alliances role?

Answer: The schools who are currently part of the Alliance will remain so even if they are academies. The Alliance is now very large and has a specific focus around school improvement which is invaluable to school leaders. It doesn't however deliver the volume of what we when we need it and the structures are not as formal as what they would be in a MAT.

Question: Is more funding available to support the need for additional classroom space?

Answer: We will have access to capital funding within our annual grants and also as a Trust we will be able to bid for condition improvement funds which can support such things as improving building condition and possible expansion to support growth and/or lack of space. This is a competitive process.

Comment: Concerns were raised about the quality of communication regarding academisation and whether the process was thought through and robust.

Response: This is something governors have been researching and considering for some time and we wanted to be able to share some robust proposals as far as possible at this stage. We appreciate that we did not arrange a specific parents meeting for the school at the start of the process however, we responded quickly to requests by putting this meeting on this evening.

Question: Will the new CEO communicate with the schools?

Answer: Yes absolutely. Damian takes up post in September and will visit each of the schools and arrange to meet with parents too.

Question: I understand governors' roles in the decision making what do staff think?

Answer: (answer was provided by two staff members present) Once staff were aware of the detail behind the proposals and had clarity provided about their own personal terms and conditions they are very excited by the opportunities academy status can bring. The Church values and ethos are key, this proposal protects and strengthens that, plus also the opportunity to work with other colleagues is an exciting one.

Question: What services will stay with NYCC?

Answer: We are currently analysing what services all schools currently purchase from NYCC and it varies across the piece. In the main we envisage we will stick with many of their services particularly if it provides good quality and is best value. We may be able to buy collectively some of the services which may reduce costs and this is to be determined in the coming weeks. A recommendation has also been made to move payroll services from NYCC where we have had some quality issues within the schools.

Question: Why do the timescales seem to be so quick for the MAT set up?

Answer: It hasn't been quick and a lot of work and time has been incurred already. The 1st November is a realistic timeframe and one which we believe is achievable. Schools can join the MAT on a 1st of a month and whilst South Otterington is proposed to go in November should it take a month or two longer that is not a problem.

Question: Is there a difference in funding per pupil for academies?

Answer: No, per pupil funding is the same as it is now as a maintained school.

Question: Will we still get pupil premium funding?

Answer: Yes, pupil premium funding follows the child and is the same amount per pupil as is now.

Question: At what point can we not go back on our decision?

Answer: At the point the funding agreement and commercial transfer agreement are signed. If converting in November this would be the beginning of October.

Question: Will there be more money in the MAT? EG, if 12 schools save £30k on services does that come back in to the schools? Would an underperforming school get more?

Answer: We would hope to secure best value and efficiencies particularly in back office services so we can invest further in the classroom. If funding is saved this will mean more money in our budgets to spend on teaching and learning activities/resources. An underperforming school doesn't normally get any more money than another school and in some cases, pays more to central costs.

Question: Can the MAT divert money from our school to another within the MAT?

Answer: Ultimately yes it can but this would require agreement of others within the MAY if such a need arose.

Question: How were members of the Board chosen?

Answer: The Church agrees the model legal documentation at a national level and this includes the governance model. The Articles of Association state the number of members and that they will be representative of the two diocese. All five individuals were nominated by Leeds and York Diocese respectively and agreed to fulfil the role as Members for DAT.

Question: Have we approached other local schools about possibly joining our MAT?

Answer: Yes, we have. Information has been circulated to schools (Church of England and non-faith based schools).

Question: Will there be more responsibility on the outstanding schools to support those who need help?

Answer: There will be a collective responsibility amongst the schools and that was one of the initial drivers for exploring academy status. The proposed MAT has 3 outstanding schools within it and 8 Good schools. We will determine needs and priorities across all of the schools and look at what support can be provided, by whom and when.

Question: Will staff be expected to move around?

Answer: No. Staff have contracts to work in a specific school and that will continue to be the case. Going forward we may decided to appoint to some roles jointly

who may work across a group of schools but this would be made clear at a recruitment stage.

Question: Down the line if we needed to cost save could we find ourselves with no Headteacher but an Executive Head?

Answer: We would hope not particularly as you have a new Head starting in September.

Question: How many primaries in the MAT feed in to their local secondary schools?

Answer: We are unsure of the answer and will endeavour to capture the detail asked and share in due course.

Question: Will there be another meeting/update in September?

Answer: If parents will find that useful then governors would be happy to hold another meeting to provide an update.

Ravensthorpe Parents, 11.7.17

Question: Why would you not follow the national curriculum?

Answer: There are reasons some schools will choose to deviate away from the national curriculum even if just in one area. What academy status gives a school is flexibility should we need it. Assessments and monitoring by Ofsted will still be exactly as it is now so our pupils are secondary ready when they leave in year 6. We are proposing to stick with the national curriculum though – because it works for our children.

Question: How are academies held to account?

Answer: They are held to account in a variety of ways; via the Education Skills Funding Agency, by external auditors, by Trustees, governors and by each other. Complaints and Whistle Blowing procedures are in place within MATs and every year a MAT must report back on education and financial performance. All documents are publicly available including annual accounts and minutes of meetings.

Question: Do Ofsted inspect all schools in the MAT?

Answer: Yes. Inspections carry on as they are now on the same framework.

Question: Will there be internal and external moderation?

Answer: Yes. Some of this will be MAT wide, some via Swaledale Alliance and some from outside of the MAT so we have all checks and balances in place.

Question: Does our opinion matter?

Answer: Yes of course. This is why we are asking for your ideas, questions and contributions. Everything will be captured and reported in our consultation report which will subsequently be shared and presented with governors and with you our parents and community.

Question: Will the Headteacher still have the same autonomy?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Will we still manage things locally or will the MAT tell us what to do?

Answer: The majority of activities will be managed locally with some direction from the MAT particularly linked to finance and reporting.

Question: Who decides if another school can join the MAT?

Answer: The Board of Trustees

Question: This seems like it could be a government fad. Will policy change?

Answer: Academies have been in existence for over 12 years and under two political parties and we do not see this going away. The resource invested centrally would suggest academies are very much on the agenda.

Question: Do we have finance expertise on our governing body?

Answer: Yes.

Question: How will you meet the needs of our children with all this work?

Answer: This is why we have additional support provided by Gail as our project manager and by BDAT as an experienced Diocese led MAT. By investing in support there it means all the communication and co-ordination is done collectively and it is one conversation rather than 3 or 4 or perhaps even more.

Question: How does the role of the ESFA work? Can they take money off us?

Answer: The ESFA are the funding body for all academies nationally. They are there to ensure adherence with the academies financial handbook and ensure all academies report in a timely and accurate manner.

Ultimately, they can take money off the MAT if it deems necessary but this only happens in extreme circumstances and also in a situation where perhaps a school has been paid more than it should have been for example you were funded for 210 pupils in the school but the census suggests there is only 197 pupils on roll, they would claw back funding retrospectively.

Question: Who do I go to if I have concerns and the governors are not responding?

Answer: You can go to the Board of Trustees. There will be a MAT complaints and whistle blowing policy which will articulate the procedures to follow.

Question: Are staff more accountable? Will the same national pay cap be in place within the MAT?

Answer: Accountabilities are the same however the pay cap will not be in place for MATs unless in its policies it decides to mirror the national position.

Question: Do Free School Meals continue in the MAT?

Answer: Yes

Question: Will the MAT employ unqualified teachers?

Answer: No

Croft: 10.7.17

Question: Will there be a change of teaching staff?

Answer: No, the staff complement will transfer 'as is' as part of the TUPE process.

Question: Is there a limit to the extent of growth so that the organisation does not grow too fast and too big?

Answer: No, however we are very aware that bigger organisations lose some of the central oversight so if we grow it will be carefully.

Question: How does the funding work?

Answer: The General Annual Grant (GAG) is granted from the Education and Skills Funding Agency to the Trust like it currently is granted to the LA. The Trust, like the LA takes a top-slice and then passes on the majority of the grant to the schools according to an agreed formula.

Question: Where is All Saints Secondary School?

Answer: It is in Stockton but is in the Diocese of York, as other schools are in the proposed Dales Academies Trust.

Question: As an independent school can we seek sponsorship eg Coca Cola?

Answer: Yes, however we would want any sponsor to be signed up to our ethos which is to promote good education and good health!

Question: What is the name of the new CEO?

Answer: Damian Chubb and he is currently working in Wakefield. He has a primary and secondary background and has worked in two Trusts as a School Improvement Specialist and most recently a CEO.

Question: What is the view of the governing body?

Answer: Historically the governing body has been thinking about this for years but the time has not felt right before. We could not become a stand-alone academy because of our internal capacity and finances. The model we are currently exploring was presented with support of the Diocese and we feel that this is something we should seriously explore now. There has been an enormous amount of discussion about this and a key for us retaining the uniqueness of the school and being part of shaping the organisation at the beginning. If we were to join later on then we may need to adapt some things that are important to us. We have looked at lots of different MATs and approaches. We have gained as much knowledge and factual information as we can before deciding to explore this option.

Question: Are there similar groups of schools that have set up as a Trust that we can talk to?

Answer: Yes, there are and we will be (and we are) talking to them about their experiences. We are currently working alongside another MAT within the Leeds Diocese (BDAT) who are providing lots of support and guidance during this phase of the process.

Question: How does SEN funding work in Multi Academy Trusts?

Answer: The LA continues to hold the statutory duties for SEN and the budgets and will make sure that children with additional needs receive the support they are entitled to.

Question: Do you see advantages to buying in additional SEN support services?

Answer: Yes, and this is something we can choose to do as a Trust.

Question: Who makes the final decision?

Answer: The local governing body will make the decision and we are clear that all our decisions must be made with the best interests of the children.

Ainderby Steeple and Kirkby Fleetham parents, 11.7.17

Question: How many pupils will there be in total within the MAT?

Answer: Approximately 1650

Question: What does PFI stand for?

Answer: Private Finance Initiative

Question: What happens if you change the curriculum and performance dips?

Answer: School leaders adapt the curriculum regularly to reflect the needs of learners whilst still following the national curriculum and we envisage this would continue to be the case as an academy. The responsibility is on school leaders and governors to ensure performance remains high and continues to improve and they will need to monitor impact throughout. They will report to the Board of Trustees who are accountable for the schools performance and at any level colleagues can challenge performance ensuring they are satisfied with measures that are in place to secure and improve high performance and outcomes for all pupils.

Question: What delegations will a Headteacher and governors have?

Answer: Pretty much the same as they have now. The heads have been developing a Scheme of Delegation which will be the Trusts compliance document that delegates authority to Heads, Governors and Trustees. This is in draft form and when complete will be available on all the schools websites.

Question: What do we do when contracts/SLAs end?

Answer: We evaluate all contracts on an ongoing basis for best value and this will continue as an academy. We may decide to buy collective SLAs as it should generate efficiencies and equally there may be contracts we enter into that are just for our school. Procurement policies and procedures would need to be followed in line with the scheme of delegation and levels of authority agreed.

Question: Is there flexibility in a MAT to manage deficit budgets?

Answer: There is some flexibility to manage a deficit budget but it is not best practice and there would have to be a justifiable and agreed reason for such a position.

Question: Where does the friends funds go?

Answer: Funds raised from friends groups or PTAs will remain with the respective schools.

Question: Will SEN be assessed as it is now?

Answer: Yes this will remain exactly as is with the LA.

Bolton on Swale and East Cowton – Parents Questions, 12.7.17

Question: What happens to the grants received to support conversion and set up?

Answer: These have been pooled together initially to support conversion costs and year 1 set up costs. Once the MAT is formed it would go in to a MAT bank account where all funds would be audited and accounted for in line with the grant guidance.

Question: What was the process for appointing the proposed Trustees/Members?

Answer: Members are appointed by the respective Diocese following the agreed Church Model Articles of Association which are negotiated and agreed nationally on behalf of all Church MATs. For Trustees we sought volunteers from across the schools governing bodies and the Diocese nominated some positions.

Question: How long does TUPE last?

Answer: TUPE has no prescribed time period that it lasts. Until such a point contracts are renegotiated or a staff members role changes TUPE will remain with the staff member.

Question: How are / will governors be selected?

Answer: Governors at a local level have what's called an Instrument of Government and this outlines the structure of a local governing body and its membership. Moving forward academies have something similar whilst also looking at a complimentary skill set across the body. For elected posts such as parents and staff they will continue to be elected. Other positions are advertised on school's websites, through networking meetings, public forums, the LA and word of mouth.

Question: What is the process for whistle blowing?

Answer: The Trust will create a Whistle Blowing policy in due course.

Question: Will all staff have qualified teacher status?

Answer: Yes.

Question: What does it cost for a school to become an academy?

i. Are you been asked to make savings?
Answer: There are costs a school incurs as part of becoming an academy for example legal fees, licenses for new finance systems, project management costs etc. The figures vary by school dependent on the level of complexity for example a school that may have a shared site with other providers can sometimes incur addition expense on legal fees. The DfE grant of £25k should cover the costs for conversion with the average cost been approximately £21k.

As part of this process we are not been asked to make savings but we all recognise that funding is tight so when savings and efficiencies can be made we will look at this in detail as it means longer term there would be more money to invest in teaching and learning in the classroom.

Question: Can you close a school as a result of it becoming an academy?

Answer: Unfortunately, schools in some parts of the country including here in North Yorkshire have closed for many reasons eg; financial viability, small or falling numbers, poor leadership and governance. There are no plans to close any school proposed to join the Trust in fact one of the reasons this is being explored is to strengthen and secure the long-term future of all our schools – we believe we are stronger together.

Question: What's in it for the schools?

Answer: We believe there are many advantages to considering academy status at this stage in the MATs development and these include:

- Increased opportunities for pupils through greater collaboration. Joint learning and sporting activities as well as development of best practice in the classroom.
- Opportunity to influence policy and procedure and the way the organisation is set up
- Increased emphasis and focus on professional development of all staff

Question: How many posts will there be above the schools/in the Trust centre?

Answer: At the moment we have identified a need for 3 posts.

Question: What are the salaries of proposed central staff i.e. CEO, FD and Finance Manager?

Answer: The CEO has been appointed on a 0.6 contract with a salary of approximately £45k to DAT. The Finance Director and Manager have yet to be appointed and their salaries will be set at rates which align with national benchmarks.

Question: What is the proposed top slice contribution from the schools?

Answer: The contribution for Bolton on Swale and East Cowton will be 4.5%.

Question: Is there a cooling off period if a school is not happy in the MAT?

Answer: No. At the point the funding agreements are signed a school is in the MAT and it is only via mutual consent that a school can leave a Trust.

Question: Are any of the schools proposed to join the Trust in a deficit position?

Answer: All schools proposing to join DAT have produced a 3 year balanced budget.

Question: Are there regulations on how you can spend capital funds which may go to the Trust or an academy?

Answer: Yes. Guidance is provided on how capital funds can/should be spent and you cannot move capital grants in to revenue budgets. Capital is accounted for separate to revenue budgets in all schools whether an academy or not.

Question: What is different about the Swaledale Alliance to the MAT?

Answer: Swaledale Alliance has grown significantly within the last few years and is there to support the development of teaching and learning. These are formal partnerships but nothing legally binding between the schools. There is so much more a school needs including additional moderation and benchmarking as well as external challenge. Swaledale does not offer back office support to the headteachers which the MAT will meaning that Heads can focus on teaching and learning much more.

Question: Will staff be prioritised within a MAT or within a school?

Answer: Staff will be prioritised within the schools. Staff will not be expected to work in different schools unless they have contracts to do so i.e. a contract to work across a federation of schools like some do already.

Question: What are the opportunities for children?

Answer: The opportunities are/could be:

- Access to a richer learning experience due to the opportunities for staff to work together and share best practice as well as children having new experiences working with other children in the MAT.
- More finance to invest into the classroom due to savings made.
- Improved outcomes for all schools/children

Question: We are happy with what the school does, will it change when part of a MAT?

Answer: At the front end of the schools i.e. in the classroom nobody will see any change. The same staff, the same curriculum offer and same school day/year. There will be some operational changes within the administration to account for changes needed to manage finance and the organisational elements that a MAT requires.

Question: If Richmond CE Primary are in an Ofsted category will our school resources be moved to support this school?

Answer: No. We would like to stress that although Richmond CE Primary is in a category it is a vastly improved school from that early in 2016. Its results have had two years of improvements and this summers were better than many of the other schools proposing to join DAT. Under new leadership the school has moved forward significantly.

Comment: There is a worry this is politically driven and as a parent I worry about the long term. It is evident to see the positives now but what about in years to come?

Response: It is hard to second guess what may or may not happen in 2, 5 or even 10 years' time however, after much research we believe that this proposal is in the best interests of securing success for our children's future. Both main political parties have had academies central to their agenda and it would take significant physical and financial resource to unravel what has been set up. Together we believe we can be better prepared to respond to the political landscape/policy.

Comment: We don't want to lose this good school

Response: We don't and you won't. We want to ensure all schools become and remain outstanding and achieve the very best for pupils now and for decades to come.

Comment: I am reassured that Headteachers and staff are so positive. I was unsure when I arrived.

Comment: I would like clear evidence on the positives of joining a MAT and would like governors to make a fact based decision not hypothetical.

Barton CE Primary School, 13.7.17

Question: How does governance work?

Answer: This is covered on a later slide. The slide includes the names of all these people who have been chosen for their expertise and commitments to children and education. The Diocese has chosen the Members and the Trustees have been chosen in consultation with the Diocese, the governing bodies and Headteachers.

Question: How does the Finance work?

Answer: The General Annual Grant (GAG) is granted from the Education and Skills Funding Agency to the Trust like it currently is granted to the LA. The Trust, like the LA takes a top-slice and then passes on the majority of the grant to the schools according to an agreed formula. The Trust cannot be in deficit and since the schools' budgets are consolidated if there are schools individually with a deficit, this needs to be balanced by school with a surplus. However, this does not mean that money can be moved from one school to another. Schools in deficit have to have an agreed plan to get back into a balanced budget position and schools with a surplus can keep their surplus for their school.

Question: Who pays for GKA Project Management?

Answer: This cost is covered in the pre-opening grant of £25k that is provided from the DfE to all schools who are converting to academies.

Question: What is involved in the due diligence?

Answer: All the potential risks are explored including educational, financial, legal, HR, Buildings, land and Property. If the liabilities are too great then conversion can be delayed or stopped.

Question: Can the current supportive networks and arrangements between schools continue after conversion?

Answer: Yes definitely. We want these relationships to grow because we all benefit from the close working arrangements we have and we don't want this to change at all.

Question: Where is All Saints School and why is it joining DAT?

Answer: It is in Stockton which is a different LA area however, it is in the Diocese of York and is a Church school and wanted to join DAT rather than another MAT which didn't share its vision, values and ethos.

Question: Of the 43 academies that have already converted, which MATs are they part of?

Answer: Not sure but we can find out!

Question: Who is the CEO and how were they appointed?

Answer: Damian Chubb and he is currently working in Wakefield. He has a primary and secondary background and has worked in two Trusts as a School Improvement Specialist and most recently as a CEO. He will be employed 3 days per week for DAT and 2 days a week for another Trust.

Eppleby Forcett and Middleton Tyas (takes place 19.7.17, data to follow)

Questions raised via email 23.6.17

Question: Am I correct in understanding that the Trustees on the board will be voluntary posts?

Answer: Yes, all bar the CEO Damian Chubb, this role will be paid.

Question: How many Trustees will be on the board? 9

Answers: How will they be selected? They have been nominated by the Diocese or the local governing bodies
Who will they be? This will be shared at the consultation meetings and a copy of the slides are on the school website along with the biographies of both Members and Trustees.

Question: Can we be assured that the CEO of the new DAT will be paid a sensible salary?

Answers: Who will he/she be? Where will the CEO be recruited from and how? Will they have local knowledge?

The CEO has been appointed on a part time basis with another MAT and will dedicate 3 days a week to Dales. The salary will be pro-rata'd accordingly and the salary is benchmarked against other similar posts nationally. The CEO is Damian Chubb, a qualified teacher with school leadership and MAT leadership experience. He lives in North Yorkshire and currently works in Wakefield for another MAT.

Question: Can you guarantee that they will have no bias towards any particular Primary in the MAT?

Answer: Yes. All schools will be treated fairly and equally across the organisation.

Comment: There has been a lot of media coverage with regards to financial mismanagement of Academy Trusts and the exorbitant salaries paid to CEOs.

Response: Strict compliance and audit checks will be in place and scrutiny will take place at all levels of the MAT. Public reporting will take place annually on accounts and financial management.

Question: How many of the schools in the proposed DAT are in favour?

Answer: All schools have voted in favour of the proposals at this stage and to move forward to the next stage which is consultation and development of financial and legal due diligence.

Question: Referring to the letter: which LA services will be "re-created" by the MAT?

Answer: Many schools buy back additional business management capacity from the LA and this would not be required by the MAT as it would have qualified central capacity to support the schools.

Question: What guarantees are in place that financial efficiencies will be generated and put back into the classrooms to the benefit of teachers and pupils?

Answer: Financial due diligence is ongoing and significant work is underway. A paper will be shared with governors in September on the progress around finance. We have identified areas of savings already and this will feed in to the paper and final review.

Question: How will the DAT and individual schools guarantee that the £25,000 academy conversion grant will be spent wisely and that there will be no overspend?

Answer: We have an experienced MAT finance lead managing this for us at the moment and they are formally procuring all services needed and reporting back to us for decisions and approvals. The Heads and Board of Trustees will determine how any funds remaining from the grants will be spent.

Question: The letter states that legal advisers and project managers have been appointed already - so can we assume this is a done deal?

Answer: No. We need this expertise to ensure we don't miss anything and that all questions are answered along the way. It is also important that as far as possible the Headteachers can remain focused on the day to day running of the schools not on all the detail required to plan a project of this scale.

Question: Who are the accountants, legal advisers and project managers? Do they have a track record of Academy conversion work?

Answer: Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust are providing the finance capacity and expertise. Lupton Fawcett are the appointed legal practice and they manage a number of academy conversions and MAT set ups nationally and have done for over 10 years. Gail Khan Associates are the appointed Project Management company, they have worked with schools and academies on conversions and MAT formations for over 12 years and bring a wealth of academies experience.

Question: Surely, if they are working with 12 schools at once, they do not require the full £300,000 (£25k x 12 schools) for this project. Where will any surplus go?

Answer: It is 11 x £25k = £275k as one of the schools is already an academy and therefore cannot access the grant for a second time. The Heads and Board of Trustees will determine how any surplus funds remaining from the grants will be spent.

Question: How does becoming a MAT implicitly improve the classroom experience and outcomes for the pupils?

Answer: There will be increased opportunities for pupils through greater collaboration. Joint learning and sporting activities as well as development of best practice in the classroom.

Increased emphasis and focus on professional development of all staff. There will be greater focus on moderation of data and pupil assessment to ensure we are providing stretch and challenge to the most able, meeting the needs of our most disadvantaged learners and that we are accurate with our data. We would hope further funds would then be available due to efficiencies in the back office function of the MAT to invest more in pupils and staff in the classroom.

Question: The individual spending plans and school improvement plans (written by school governors) have to be approved by the Trustees and CEO of the DAT - is this not just another level of bureaucracy and taking autonomy away from the Head Teachers and Governing Bodies? How can an individual school's ethos and identity be protected under such a scheme?

Answer: The Trustees are ultimately accountable for the educational and financial performance of the MAT and its Member schools. The MAT has to report as one company which is why it must have that knowledge and understanding of school improvement and finance. The individual ethos and identity is protected within the Articles of Association objects and also the Trusts scheme of delegation.

Question: How much influence has the Diocese had in the Federation's decision to convert to Academy status?

Answer: The Diocese has met the governors as part of the process to date but have not instructed the schools they must become academies as part of DAT. It is local choice.

Question: Is the DAT a done deal? Is it a case of if we don't jump we'll be pushed? There was no mention of the Government's commitment in the Queen's speech to press ahead with full conversion to Academy status of every school.

Answer: The Department for Education have approved the proposal for DAT to be created and for the 12 schools who have applied they have permission to join DAT. The requirement government had for all schools to become academies has disappeared and it is now their 'goal' for all schools to become academies.

Good and Outstanding schools which are sustainable will not be forced to become academies but are asked to explore the option of seeking academy status. There is a worry in years to come that a school may be pushed and subsequently that there may not be a choice in which MAT it joined.

Question: Our Federation is rated Good so we are not obliged to convert, unlike Richmond CofE which is in Special Measures. If the Federation and other schools face opposition and choose not to become part of the DAT - where does that leave the school?

Answer: The school would be where it is now but with many neighbouring church schools in a MAT.

Question: Will any local schools still be under the LA?

Answer: The number of academies in the County is growing by 48% in the next 6 months with more academies on the horizon in the area. Currently there are 43 with 40 more approved to move forward and this is likely to increase. Schools choose for various reasons to seek academy status and whilst many may become academies we believe that some may decide to stay with the LA.

Question: There is a lot of talk by Government about schools with Academy status having more autonomy - how will being part of the new DAT allow our schools to have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum when there is 1. so much pressure by Government on outcomes/SATs, and performance related pay and 2. with the very real and looming Schools Funding Crisis under the proposed new Funding Formula?

Answer: Curriculum flexibility is very much down to a local level within each school and any decisions to adapt or change a curriculum can be proposed for many reasons. It is up to the Leaders and Governors to ensure any change will have a positive impact and that impact would be measured regularly so that performance and outcomes were not compromised.

At the moment, we are in a state of the unknown with regards the National Funding Formula, only this week we have been advised this could now be scrapped altogether. What we do know is the funding guarantees we do have now and would have as academies expenditure would be planned and prioritised with schools and across the MAT to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.

Question: It says in the letter that we will have a similar budget - please elaborate.

Answer: The per pupil funding for academies is the same as it is for maintained schools. Academies receive 100% of their grant allocation whereas maintained schools may have a percentage held back to pay for services in the LA, schools then often buy further services back from the LA in addition to what is retained. Academies contribute to the centre but what you receive in return will be

different and much greater than what the schools currently receive from the LA

Comment: This is the first time the parents of the Federation have learnt of the proposed change of name. I presume that the recent logo change cost money (certainly parents have had to pay for new uniform - where they may have handed down uniform from siblings in the past) and another change will incur further costs.

Response: We are aware this is a concern and will listen to these concerns before any final decisions are made to change anything. If things are to change we would want no one to be out of pocket and would look to ensure it was a phased change.

Question: What are the implied costs in changing the name/logo once again and so soon?

Answer: This is to be determined if it is what we choose to do.

Question: What official partnership do we now have with Richmond C of E other than sharing an Executive Head from September? Are there proposals to officially Federate with Richmond CofE?

Answer: Under the MAT proposals yes you will share one Headteacher but you will retain your governing body. There are no further proposals for federation as within a MAT you are all within the same Trust.

All Saints Academy, 12.7.17

Question: As the only secondary school in the MAT will All Saints end up financially supporting other schools?

Answer: No. All schools will continue to have their own budgets and will manage them locally as they do now. We will contribute a top slice to the centre to pay for some central costs other than that the budget sits with the academy.

Questions: The concerns/queries I would have regarding the MAT proposal centres around expanding with other schools and the implications this could have on the future of All Saints which is outstanding and highly regarded in the local community, ie spreading skills/knowledge thinly across many schools which is great for numbers, but not for outcomes. I also look for reassurance regarding school admissions. I know some academy chains encourage parents to apply for secondary school places within the same chain. Would this be the case with the MAT as it could impact on the number of secondary school places available in Ingleby Barwick? Does the MAT propose any changes to its admission policy? What expansion plans does the MAT have for All Saints?

Answer: Stakeholders were reassured that plans for All Saints remained re: expanding admissions, the leisure centre and physical expansion of the school. It was highly unlikely that the primaries in the MAT would consider All Saints a school for their children to come to given geographic distances involved and there are no plans to change the admissions criteria.