

Proposed OWN Trust

ACADEMY CONSULTATION

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM PARENTS MEETINGS

Introduction

Consultation meetings were held for parents and carers at each of the schools on the proposal to join the OWN Trust. The meetings took place as detailed below:

- Woodston; 2pm & 6pm, February 26th
- Nene Valley; 2pm & 6pm, February 27th
- Orton Wistow; 2pm & 6pm, February 28th

The meetings were attended by the Headteachers, Chairs of Governors and project manager Philip Cranwell.

This document is a summary of the questions asked at the meetings and the answers given. Where helpful, additional information has been provided in response to the questions raised.

STRATEGY

1. Will each school keep its own identity? (OW)

The OWN Trust have specified that this trust will protect and develop each school's unique ethos, values and culture.

2. Why are there no secondary schools in the proposed trust? (NV)

Most secondary schools in Peterborough are either already in a multi-academy trust or are unable to join due to their religious denomination.

3. We can see the benefit to the other 2 schools, but what is the benefit to ours? (NV)

All three schools will benefit from each other but sometimes in different ways. There is a wide range of experience, expertise and resources in each school that each of the others can draw upon.

4. What are the potential challenges, risks or downsides? (OW)

The governors have been researching this proposal carefully and decided that the OWN Trust will help the schools deal with a challenging, fast-changing educational landscape. They consider the greatest risks to be the consequences of doing nothing.

Regarding the risks of the proposal, once a school converts to academy status it cannot return to Local Authority maintained status. It is also quite hard to leave a multi academy trust once a school has joined, as it requires the consent of the Secretary of State for Education and the identification and consent of another multi academy trust. This is the key negative of the proposal, which is why the governing bodies have been considering the proposal so carefully. The aim is that everyone has a clear and consistent understanding of what being part of the proposed OWN Trust will mean for each school before joining.

5. What is the concept of a MAT? Will this change in the future? (W)

Originally the Labour Government introduced academies in the 2000s as a way of improving schools that had been under-performing for many years. In 2010 the Coalition Government passed the Academies Act that enable schools performing well to convert to academy status. The philosophy under-pinning the broader academisation is that effective schools are best placed to support other schools in achieving and sustaining high standards of education. At the most recent election all parties remained committed to the academy programme within different models of oversight.

6. What are the success criteria for the performance of the MAT and what baseline have these been based on? It is very business based at the moment but what will be the benefit to the children? (NV)

Each school has its own Development Plan, with targets that are specific to the needs of each individual school. These include success criteria and are updated in line with each school's monitoring cycles (often 3 year). School Development Plans are closely linked to the needs of the children and their academic performance. The progress of each plan is monitored by each Governing Body and this will continue to happen following the conversion.

The leadership group of Headteachers and senior leaders will agree those priorities where a Trust-wide focus and plan will enable faster and more sustained improvement than one school on its own. These priorities will have targets and plans that Trustees will monitor.

7. When will our children see a benefit? (OW)

After conversion the children will still wear the same uniforms as before and will be taught in in the same classrooms by the same teaching staff. So they won't notice any immediate difference.

However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, mostly as a result of new training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the children's education. In particular, they the children will benefit from the sharing of excellent and innovative practice in teaching and learning between the partner schools. They will also have wider opportunities to learn new skills and experience new activities.

8. Is there any data on the impact on outcomes for the children? (W)

Pupil outcomes will continue to be measured at individual school level. It is worth noting that every year group is different and the progress of each child from Reception to Year 6 varies. So the outcomes for each school will change each year and depending on the cohort. The Headteachers and staff also believe the performance of a school or child is not just about academic measures such as progress and attainments. These 'softer' outcomes are harder to measure but as important.

9. Is there a future plan for the vision/monitoring of the Trust? (NV)

The vision for OWN Trust was set out in the Consultation Document. *Fundamental to our work, is the belief is that by collaboration with a common purpose, each school will be enhanced from sharing experiences and resources. By combining the unique character of each school, we will work innovatively, share best practice and be accountable for positive outcomes for all learners. This aspiration to achieve excellence will underpin all that we do.*

10. Catchment – if children can't get in to one school in the MAT, will they be offered a place at the other 2 schools? (NV) How do you apply to this MAT? Is the catchment area still the same? (W)

The admissions policy for each school and catchment area remains the same. With regards to admissions, PCC will continue to administer admissions as before but the trust becomes the admission authority. The school governing body have to give permission to the Local Authority before they give out an offer for a school place. There will be no automatic allocation of places in this way as parents retain their right to express a preference.

11. How will the expansion of Woodston impact on the MAT? Will it still be funded? (NV)

As it is planned growth, the expansion will continue to be funded by the Local Authority. There is unlikely to be any significant impact, just increased income and resources and a wider pool of staff/expertise.

12. What if a school decides it's not working for them and they want to withdraw from the Trust? (NV) Once we become a MAT, can we come out? (OW) Is it a one way ticket? (W)

Schools cannot return to Local Authority control, but can move to another multi academy trust. We have spent so long working on the proposal are confident that this Trust will be a success. We as a school would have to give 7 years notice if we did decide to leave the Trust.

13. When the schools are run as a company/business, what is there to stop some other trust taking it over? (OW)

The MAT cannot be taken over and as long as the schools are performing well they are protected. The aim of the MAT is to enable schools to sustain their performance. However, if a school started to under-perform then the DfE would ask the MAT to present an improvement plan and would monitor progress. If a school was judged by Ofsted as *Inadequate*, then it is possible that the DfE would take the school out of the MAT and place it in another MAT.

14. Can other schools join in the future? (NV) Can other schools join the MAT? (OW) Would there be another school involved, primary or secondary? (W)

The schools forming the Trust have no plans for immediate growth but recognise that, if successful, other schools may wish to join. They also recognise that, if the Trust grows, the central costs will be shared among a larger pool and there will be greater opportunity to secure efficiencies. It should be noted that it is DfE policy that successful MATs should support under-performing schools, which is a moral purpose that the schools support. It is not unheard of that primary schools go under secondary or primary lead MATS. There are different formats e.g. not just one primary and one secondary schools. The trust could bid to run new schools in the future.

15. Will decisions be made in favour of the largest schools, leaving the smallest school losing out? (NV)

The principle of the MAT is that all schools are equal members, regardless of their size and that the Trustees are accountable for all of the schools within the MAT.

16. Do you have to be a sponsored school if you aren't rated outstanding? (OW)

No

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

17. If our headteacher becomes the CEO how will the school run in his absence? (NV)

All schools have a distributed leadership structure, where senior leadership retain the capacity for the school to operate effectively. The CEO would not necessarily be absent from the school, just focusing on different aspects of the running of the MAT.

18. Is there any risk in not having a permanent CEO? (NV)

No. All three Headteachers feel they have the skills to be the CEO but are happy for any of their colleagues to fill the post from day one. An interim appointment gives the MAT much greater flexibility to respond to changes over the first couple of years.

19. You mentioned first amongst equals, what happens after the first 18 months? (OW)

The model of parity between Headteachers would continue.

FINANCE

20. How much money will the school receive? (OW) With regards to funding, does the school still get its own money? (W)

Funding will continue to come from the government. Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. The whole of the school budget would come directly to the MAT from central Government and then be distributed to the schools, allowing each school to control the whole of its spending.

We will still get our money straight from Government not by LA. We will pay a small percentage into a central pot, but we maintain our own money - savings etc. LA has a small 'top slice' we would not pay this. Schools would continue to do their own fund raising.

21. Will our money (particularly PTA money) stay ring fenced? (NV) Will PTFA / fund raising for schools remain separate? (W)

Yes. We are all individual schools and fund raising will continue on this basis.

22. Who will fund the CEO? (NV)

This will come from central running costs, which will be generated from a proportion of each school's budget, which it is planned would be offset by efficiency savings through joint commissioning and procurement.

23. Who sets the salaries for the Trustees? (OW)

The Trustees do not receive a salary for their role.

24. Is there a 3-5 year business plan available to look at? (NV)

School budgets are not given far enough in advance to work in this way. Most schools have a forecast for the next 2-3 years, but it is only a forecast as finances are based on a range of changing factors. All schools are checked and audited before conversion to ensure that the financial stability that is needed is there.

25. Where are the monies coming from to pay for the academy costs? Where are the savings? (NV)

The money will come from a proportion of each school's current budget. Savings will come over time from re-aligning service level agreements and seeking greater benefits through economies of scale, thus reducing external charges.

26. Finances are already stretched, does the school lose a lot of money in the first year? (W)

Funding comes directly to the schools and the LA will no longer take a 'top slice'. In the first year of becoming an academy, small percentage of the school budget will be paid out to get the trust up and running, but this would come from reserves and would be off-set in future years. Academies can then save money by having for example: a 'Super SENCO' and our own supply teachers etc. We already pay for children's different needs and by buying in services as a trust we can get a better deal on these services.

27. Can you explain a bit more about the charges? What are they? (NV)

The incremental costs of running the Trust have been estimated by the working group. In Year 1 schools will be required to make a modest contribution called the *Trust Central Charge*, which represents a very small percentage of their current budget. The plan is that savings and efficiencies, achieved through joint commissioning and procurement of services that the schools currently purchase individually, will make the Trust self-funding in Year 2 or 3. Each of the schools has budgeted its forecast contribution. All schools will pay the same percentage of core school funding (excluding SEN and pupil premium funding).

28. Is there more funding for a MAT? (OW)

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. They also receive additional funding in the form of the Education Services Grant to cover the responsibilities of the MAT, in place of Local Authority, and to cover the additional costs of academy status.

29. Do you get extra funds for going through the process? (OW)

Once academy applications are submitted and approved, the schools will each receive a £25,000 conversion grant, which will more than cover the costs of the conversion process, including the investment to date. Each school will contribute the same amount to the conversion process.

30. Will FOWS be used to pay for the academisation costs? (OW)

No. The conversion grant will be used to cover academisation costs.

31. What do you expect to be the payback to be in 3 years? (NV)

By year 3 we would expect the Trust Central Charge to be more than off-set by efficiencies secured through joint commissioning and procurement.

32. What would happen if one school had a deficit budget? (OW)

All budget performance would be monitored by the trust and if mismanaged, the responsibility would be taken away from the Local Governing Body. If there is a large unexpected cost, such as a premises matter, bids would be put in to the DfE to cover it.

33. What if one school fails with money? (W)

We have to submit monthly budgets. If a school starts to fail, the trust would take over the finances - and payment plan would be put into place. The school would not have control. We would not direct money from other schools.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

34. Are regular meetings prepared for across the schools? Will teachers have to give more time after school? Has this been discussed? (W)

Teachers already have meeting and planning time and they would be encouraged to work with teachers from other schools during this time. We believe they will quickly see the benefits of collaborative working including saving time and effort. However, no one will be forced. The Trust is will have some common INSET days across the schools for joint professional development.

35. There are concerns that Trusts can employ Unqualified Teachers. Will this happen? (NV) (W)

Schools that are not academies can already employ Unqualified Teachers. Schools will appoint the best person for the job through normal recruitment processes so that the best outcomes can be achieved. We welcome NQTs, but we generally don't get unqualified teachers applying for jobs.

36. Does the Trust have the power to set different term dates? (NV) Does becoming an academy give you free reign over term dates? (OW) Would the term times stay the same? (W)

Technically, any academy can change their holiday dates, but most do not as it creates chaos with other schools and parents work commitments. The schools are likely to continue align dates with their local secondary school to help families plan childcare and holiday arrangements. We wouldn't deviate from LA too much. We also have to think about child care issues for own staff too.

37. Will teachers from our school be used to cover absence in other Trust schools? (NV)

Staff will normally have a contract of employment to work in their current school and this is protected through the transfer of employment, therefore staff will continue to work in their existing school.

However, there are three circumstances where staff may work in another trust school. First, is when a job at another OWN Trust school is advertised and an employee applies for and is appointed to that role. Second, when a staff member voluntarily agrees to work within another school in the MAT. 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. It is highly unlikely that staff in one school would be used to cover short-term absence in another Trust school.

38. Will future recruitment be through the school or the MAT? (OW)

The Headteacher will continue to appoint teaching and support staff for their school, with oversight from the LGB and Trust CEO for the school's overall staff structure and complement.

39. How will a new headteacher be recruited? (OW)

The Governing Bodies have agreed a Scheme of Delegation, which sets out that the appointment of a school Headteacher will be led by a panel comprising governors from the school that requires a new Headteacher,

CEO/Headteachers and Trustees. The panel will have delegated authority to make a recommendation to the Trustees who will have final approval as required by the Trust Articles of Association.

40. What happens if one headteacher retires and the new one has different ideas etc? (W)

The board of trustees and other headteachers in the MAT would be responsible for employing a new headteacher for a school as necessary and would ensure the philosophy of the Trust was maintained for each individual school and that the right appointment was made for that school.

41. If the curriculum becomes more flexible, how do we stay in line with other schools? (OW) Are you planning on changing the curriculum? (OW) Myths? (W) Do you have to follow the National curriculum? (NV) Do we have to follow all the curriculum? (OW)

Each school will remain autonomous and follow its own curriculum but will benefit from MAT-wide initiatives. Although MATs do not have to follow the National Curriculum, they are still measured by results obtained at the end of KS1 and KS2, so most MAT's stick quite closely to it. We have always taught in a fun exciting way to engage our children.

42. Would there be any other subjects taught? (W)

We already have 12 subjects and this is challenging to fit in to the school day. We have introduced music teachers and enhanced sports provision. We as a primary school are here to equip children ready for the next stage in life. Secondary school can offer different subject specialisms.

43. Will any resources be shared? (NV)

OWN Trust intends to develop collaboration between colleagues in the different schools at all levels; this could take the format of regular subject/phase meetings and joint staff training opportunities to enable expertise and resources to be shared.

By joining together, it is possible to generate shared resources that each school could not afford if working individually.

44. You mention FS teachers getting together, does this mean you won't be looking outside the MAT for support and ideas? (OW)

The schools firmly believe that the Trust should not become inward looking. The schools already work with other schools in different partnerships. This would continue so that fresh ideas and best practice are constantly being brought into the Trust.

45. Do Ofsted check schools in the same way? (W)

The trust would have overall accountability to the Department for Education (DfE) but each school would be subject to individual Ofsted inspection.

46. What if one of the MAT schools drops in Ofsted inspection?(W)

If the Trust is required to provide support to an under-performing school, the CEO will lead the coordination of resources to deliver the improvement plan, working with the other Headteachers. They would ensure that the existing schools would not be adversely affected by deployment of resources. Although, it is worth noting that there is wide evidence that supporting an under-performing school is a highly effective form of professional development that enhances the skills and expertise of teachers or members of staff. This benefits their home school as they apply newly learned insight and good practice Schools would be proactive in ensuring that if there was a dip in their results, they asked for help from the MAT before it reached this stage.

47. Will it impact on clubs (less on offer or more combined ones on offer)? (NV)

There should be no detriment to the number of clubs provided. It is possible that clubs that are not viable due to small numbers, could be offered across the MAT.

48. If the Trust goes ahead, could we use Woodston's swimming pool? (NV)

That would need to be agreed by the Local Governing Body and the Trustees, but it is evidence of a possible sharing of resources.

49. Another school in the proposed Trust gives a lot of homework to their children. Will we be doing the same? (NV)

Each school will retain the autonomy to provide for the children in its care in the way that suits that school's needs. This is not a 'one size fits all' approach.

50. Will there be an impact on the access to the Headteacher who becomes the CEO? (NV)

There is unlikely to be any significant impact.

51. In the presentation more provision for SEN is mentioned, what will that be? (OW)

The Trust will be able to bring together the SEN staff from the schools to share best practice, experience of different needs and ideas. That way the staff in each school will be better equipped to meet the needs of every child in their school.

52. The school currently has a lot of interaction with Ormiston Bushfield Academy will this continue? (OW)

Yes. The smooth transition from primary to secondary school is important to all three schools and each will continue partnership working with their secondary school(s).

53. Can the school choose to have a specialism? (OW)

That is option for secondary schools only.

54. Can we change the SATs? (OW)

No. They are a national test for primary school pupils in Years 2 and 6.

PROCESS

55. Will additional documents (survey, presentation) go to all parents? (NV)

The survey will be distributed along with this document. The consultation letters, proposal and presentation are available on each of the schools' websites.

56. What if the feedback to the proposal is negative? (NV)

The results of the survey will be an important part of the consultation report that Governing Bodies will consider before making a decision. Governing Bodies will use their judgement to decide whether there is evidence of a substantial objection to the proposal.

57. Has a conversion ever been stopped due to opposition? (NV)

There have been a few examples of schools not converting to academy status but over 7,000 schools have following consultation.

58. When does the final decision get made? (OW)

The consultation period runs for four weeks and concludes on Friday, March 16th. How much say parents have will depend on how many parents complete and return the survey forms. Parents will need to complete a survey form to have their say on the proposal. Governors will review the survey responses and make a decision based on the level of support. Parents and staff will be given feedback on these.

59. When will the children be told and how? (OW)

There is no formal requirement to consult with pupils at the school, unless changes are made to the school name or uniform. Neither of these changes are happening at the schools joining OWN Trust. An assembly will be held by the Headteacher at each school to explain what is going on (tbc).