

Questions from parents during the consultation period on school status in November 2014

Responses were written by the headteacher and approved by governors before publication

<p>What procedures and available reports will be put in place to replace the LA's procedures and reports that will demonstrate clearly detailed independent scrutiny and transparency on how finances are being spent?</p>	<p>The processes for academies are under regulatory framework as the Multi-Academy Trust is a private limited company. The Trust has to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare annual accounts (31 August) and submit these Submit to Companies House within 9 months (31 May) Comply with Companies Act and Charities SORP The maximum accounting period is 18 months (the usual period is 12 months) Must be audited by external auditors Required to complete an annual Return to Companies House <p>In many ways the finances of an academy are far more transparent and come under far greater scrutiny. The accounts would also be published to stakeholders via the website.</p>
<p>What possible impact will the parents' views during consultation have upon the consultation process?</p>	<p>Governors will view all feedback from parents, staff and other stakeholders in its original form and a working group will collate a summary for the full governing body. Recognising all the comments, questions and further queries there will be a full discussion before governors decide whether to proceed with a more detailed investigation of the potential partnership.</p>
<p>Would there be a possibility of extending the MAT to other strategic schools such as feeder schools to KEVI, since all schools appear to be heading for a more independent route?</p>	<p>Initial discussions by the governing body indicated that the setting up of an equal partnership Trust with another secondary school was the preferred first step. There would be a possibility for other schools to join the MAT in the future. The priority would be to set up a strong effective Trust before any further partners joined.</p>
<p>When you become a MAT you take over the financial obligations which are normally handled by County such as maternity pay and pensions. Is the school in full possession of all the facts regarding outstanding pension commitments? I am aware of other schools that have gone down this route and ended up with vast pension debts which have only been made apparent after the change of status to MAT when it is too late to do anything about it.</p>	<p>Considerations for schools changing status include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maternity pay Union Duties Maintenance Contracts Termination of employment costs School Admissions & Appeals Assess eligibility for free school meals School Improvement Licences & subscriptions

	<p>Data Storage Business Continuity Plan Pension liabilities for Local Government Pension Scheme</p> <p>Governors are aware that all these need to be carefully analysed and costed. If the governors agree to move forward following the initial consultation then this will be part of the process.</p>
<p>Students who have special educational needs and have (are covered by) a Statement of Educational Needs, which I do appreciate will change to Educational Health Care Plans</p> <p>Question: Will the proposed change have any impact on the funding and support these children receive, as any funding provided by the Department for Education, will be at the schools discretion for spending?</p>	<p>Any change of status would have no impact on the provision for funding or support for students who have special educational needs. The school remains responsible for provision and support and this is an area where the Local Authority continues to have responsibility for working with us on Educational Health Care Plans. Any additional funding would still be accessed via the Local Authority. The bullet points below cover some of the other responsibilities which the Local Authority retains.</p> <p>The local authority retains responsibility for :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home to school transport (including SEN) • Education psychology • SEN Statutory Assessments and Statements • Monitoring of SEN provision, parent partnership service, etc. • Prosecution of parents for non-attendance • Individually assigned SEN resources for pupils with rare conditions needing expensive tailored provision. • Provision of pupil referral units or education otherwise for a pupil who is no longer registered at an academy • Co-ordinating admission arrangements • We value the work which goes on to support all the students at King Edward VI School and our focus is on continuing to improve the provision wherever possible.
<p>The status of the Long Eaton School - King Edward VI is a highly regarded school in the local community and I am concerned that partnering with a school who seem to be in decline in terms of recent OFSTED inspections may be damaging for its reputation.</p>	<p>Both schools are 'Good' (as rated by Ofsted) school and both are highly regarded in their community. The criteria for schools to be rated Outstanding has changed quite significantly and whilst both schools are aiming for outstanding provision there is no evidence of decline for either school.</p> <p>The government's preferred measure and our current assessment focuses very much on progress. Our catchment in Lichfield generally includes a much smaller percentage of low attainers (as</p>

<p>Should King Edward not be seeking partnership with an Outstanding School in order to gain full benefit of any such partnership in terms of teaching and learning and management systems?</p>	<p>classified by the Department for Education) so we would expect our examination results to be high. Indeed we are working towards them improving year on year. Progress, in both schools, is strong and areas of strength in each school can be identified. There is scope for sharing good practice in teaching students at all levels for the benefit of both schools.</p> <p>Partnership with any school is a possibility. As a school seeking to retain its independence and a high level of autonomy, governors expressed a preference to explore the setting up of a Multi-Academy Trust as an equal partner. There is excellent capacity for further improvement in school and our initial findings were that a partnership with an Outstanding school, most of which locally are already academies, would be highly likely to reduce our autonomy or our impact on running of the Trust.</p>
<p>The distance between the two schools - is this really practical? In terms of cost /staff time implications would a school closer to home not be more beneficial? From a parental point of view there are already enough `cover` lessons in school. Would the distance be limiting in terms of what we can realistically `share` in terms of costs and services?</p>	<p>In setting up a partnership with a school at a distance, governors recognise that this sets certain parameters for joint working. We are keen to preserve the fundamental character of the school and ensure that both schools retain their independence. We would not ask staff to attend regular sessions in the other school and any activities would be calendared in the same way as all other professional development activities. Adding cover lessons unnecessarily would run contrary to raising achievement.</p> <p>Working together on quality assurance processes, new curriculum, new assessment models, leadership development and joint professional development opportunities are all things which can be built in over time. There are also a range of other aspects, such as the implementation of new legislation or national guidance where a joint approach can ensure greater confidence and effectiveness. Some services could be jointly sourced and being part of a Trust does add to the possibility of increased purchasing power.</p>
<p>How has the partnership with Long Eaton come about? Was the partnership a direct result of our last OFSTED Inspection (ie: did OFSTED suggest that we go and work with Long Eaton for specific reasons?)</p>	<p>During a period of transition and change across the leadership team and the school, a fixed term partnership with The Long Eaton School was considered. The link was suggested by one of our parent governors as Neil Calvert, Headteacher, was formerly Deputy Headteacher at King Edward VI School. We hadn't worked together previously but the Headteacher valued highly the additional capacity to manage change and to prepare effectively for Ofsted. Working with a new senior team it also gave wider opportunities for people to have support in their new roles. As a result, when Ofsted came in March 2014, we were able to secure a Good judgement having previously been rated as Satisfactory.</p>

	<p>We were also able to continue to develop through the summer term and we are now in a strong position to push further forward on our journey to outstanding provision. The link came to a formal end at the end of the summer term but by then both schools had thoughts about how it could continue.</p> <p>Our partnership developed as staff began link across the two schools in a number of areas including: Subject-to-subject links; subject-specific support for recruitment processes; reviewing quality assurance; HR links; links across senior staff responsibility areas; boys' achievement; literacy and a number of other areas.</p> <p>This was without a formal framework but operating on a high level of trust. In many ways, this has been a unique opportunity to trial a working relationship before either party considered it to be a possibility. For our school, knowing that we can continue to develop our ethos and retain our identity is fundamentally important.</p>
<p>Have King Edward ever worked with any other schools in this sort of capacity?</p> <p>Have we sought any other partnerships of this kind with schools more locally?</p> <p>Do we have to enter into a Multi Academy Trust to maintain this kind of relationship?</p> <p>Would we not be better off becoming a single school Academy but still maintaining good working relationships with Long Eaton School as well as others?</p>	<p>During my time at the school we have developed strong links across the district. For example, our timetables are aligned with the other Lichfield and Burntwood schools for post-16 provision. This will not change as a result of any change in status. We also work with John Taylor High School as part of the National Forest Teaching School Alliance.</p> <p>We have investigated other possibilities but governors decided that this opportunity presented the best opportunity to take forward for consultation.</p> <p>We are able to work with any school but the capacity for joint governance would only come through a formal arrangement.</p> <p>We would be unlikely to be approved as a single school Academy. We are relatively recently 'Good', our attainment needs to show strength over time and as the headteacher is new in post that also adds caution to any application. Perhaps more significantly, the next question for conversion would be which school we would work with or support. If we are seeking to strengthen achievement at our school as a priority, agreeing support for another school would be unwise in the early stages.</p>

<p>It would be good to assess early what liabilities, besides pension debts, you might end up sharing should you join them in a MAT, particularly related to the other school's PFI origins. PFIs have commonly been well designed, but poorly constructed projects with numerous cases that highlight onerous maintenance or rebuild requirements which could require numerous top-ups from the school to get essential work carried out.</p>	<p>The legal process would include a full assessment of liabilities and governors would need to reach an informed decision on all financial aspects before any funding agreement was signed with the Department for Education.</p>
<p><i>The questions below are from the parents' meeting on 19th November. The responses are not minutes but paraphrases of the responses. Comment/ discussions that took place at the close of the meeting have not been recorded but have been noted by the governors in attendance.</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a risk there could be less money available? • Long Eaton School is already an academy why does it now want to become a Multi Academy Trust? • Is it true that once you become an academy you cannot go back if it doesn't work? • Will funding be one allocation that is split between the two schools? • Long Eaton School results are not as strong and their Ofsted has gone from Outstanding to Good, why could King Edward VI School not match with a local outstanding school? 	<p>Analysis will be carried out to ensure this will not be the case. The school could not afford to be financially worse off.</p> <p>All academies are being encouraged to take on support for other schools or form/join a MAT. The setting up of a Multi Academy Trust with a strong partner adds further benefits. (see also above)</p> <p>It needs to work, staying with the local authority or other options may not work either. <i>(Another parent commented that there is no legislation stating that you cannot go back but this has not happened so far in England)</i></p> <p>Each school will receive its own funding based on their own local authority formula plus their Sixth Form funding from the Education Funding Agency. .</p> <p>As mentioned above, governors do not want to enter into any partnership as a junior partner and being able to set the tone for a partnership is a unique opportunity. Entering a partnership with a school from a neighbouring local authority brings benefits and richness built on a range of experiences. King Edward VI School's partnerships with other local schools are very good and we will continue to work with them where there are opportunities to do so.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The letter speaks of Foundation Status and a conduit to funding regarding the freehold of the land, please clarify? i.e. are you going to sell off all the land? • Will Long Eaton School's liabilities affect King Edward VI School? • Will Ofsted still continue to inspect the school if it becomes an academy? • Is there any evidence demonstrating the facts of successes and failures for Academies? • Will staff be TUPE'd across? • Will King Edward VI School be liable for all legal cost pertaining to industrial tribunals, etc.? • How do staff feel about it? • Would new staff be recruited on different terms and conditions? 	<p>Having the freehold gives more freedom to use the land more effectively, there are no plans to sell any land as the amount of open space available to students and other stakeholders is an asset we wish to keep.</p> <p>This is an area for the governors to further investigate as mentioned above.</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Success is not directly linked to a type of school. Some academies succeed and some fail, as do maintained schools. Each case is individual: strong governance, strong leadership and high quality teaching & learning are the keys to success.</p> <p>Yes from the Local Authority to the Trust on a new contract with the same terms and conditions.</p> <p>The school currently buys into a local authority service for HR and Legal advice, this could remain the same, we could develop in-house expertise or expertise across the trust and have an arrangement with an independent legal team for further advice.</p> <p>Governors are seeking their views and I am going to respond to staff questions in the same way. It is an open process without a timeline and if the governors do decide to progress further with exploring a partnership then there will need to be further TUPE consultation and regular updates for staff as answers to more detailed analysis emerge.</p> <p>King Edward VI School has no interest in inequality; staff are entitled to fair pay.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will King Edward VI School continue to employ qualified teachers as academies are not required to?• Could King Edward VI School produce a form of service level agreement on such things as the recruitment of qualified teachers and maintaining the same ethos to give stake holders confidence in the change? .• The governing body currently holds 4 parent governor positions, will this change?• Will King Edward VI School continue to maintain links with the community, the local authority and joint services?• A change of status is a huge task, are there enough governors to fulfil the role?• When will parents hear next? .	<p>The school will always want the best qualified teachers. We always appoint the best candidate for the job and obtaining qualified teacher status is a rigorous process. Currently, we rarely employ unqualified teachers and only for temporary vacancies where necessary. This would not change.</p> <p>Governors would discuss this across the two schools as part of the process. It is important that the Trust establishes a clear identity and ethos from the outset.</p> <p>Due to new legislation the governing body is required to amend its instrument of governors by September 2015 even if it stays as a maintained school. Early discussions about the potential MAT suggested at least one parent governor from each school at Trust level in addition to the representation at local governing body level.</p> <p>A love of music is very much part of the school ethos, it is valued and needed and there are currently no plans to change an arrangements, but best value will always be considered.</p> <p>There are enough governors with a very good skills base and they are up for the challenge.</p> <p>The governors will make the decision about whether or not to take the process further on 11th December 2014, the decision will be announced before Christmas</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will the £25K allocated to help with costs cover all the associated costs?• If King Edward VI School becomes an academy, what would we expect to see? . <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are Long Eaton School working on the same timescale as King Edward VI School?• Parents get anxious about being heard, would you consider a vote?• A local school produced a leaflet including a questionnaire, would King Edward VI School consider doing this? <i>Another parent stated that this process had not been a good process and may be best not to replicate.</i>	<p>Governors have started to analyse potential costs and the £25K should cover all costs.</p> <p>Confidence of further development in Learning and Teaching.</p> <p>Strengthening existing partnerships.</p> <p>Improved outcomes for students. This is not necessarily linked to status but a reflection of our direction of travel.</p> <p>Yes, they will hopefully reach a decision just after Christmas.</p> <p>A vote is not the normal procedure as it's very difficult to define what stakeholders are voting on.</p> <p>Governors are attending the schools events and are available and extremely willing to discuss the process.</p>
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