

Edenham School;

Frequently Asked Questions – Parents’ Questionnaire, Consultation on proposal to convert to academy status

<p>1. We would like a meeting to discuss it further / an open evening to discuss proposal</p>	<p>We held a parent consultation and information meeting on Thursday 5th May. Ours was extremely well attended in comparison – 13 parents, one parent governor and our Bishops Visitor. Steve said his record for other schools within the LAAT has been 3 parents. Those who attended reported that they felt reassured, that it was interesting and had their questions answered as far as was possible.</p> <p>Two families expressed their wish for an evening meeting instead but unfortunately due to the need to combine time of the Head, Governors, Bishop’s Visitor, Assistant director and HR representative of the LAAT, we had to go with whichever time those people could be available together.</p> <p>We hope that the fact that the Head and governors are always available to answer questions via phone, email, parentmail or letter has meant that anyone wishing to ask a question, has been able to.</p>
<p>2. I don't want the education system to become privatised and fear this is one step closer along that road. I believe the nature of suggested academies, where decision making is handed to central government, leads to decisions being made that are generalised rather than focusing on the needs of local (and particularly small) village schools.</p>	<p>We completely agree with this view – in the past this was our reason for not proposing to convert.</p> <p>Now however, the climate has changed significantly, as has the infrastructure surrounding maintained schools. Almost all areas of aspects that are central to school life are changing or have already – most significant for the pupils are the changes around the new national curriculum, assessment and the frequent changes to how schools are held externally accountable. Many of these aspects remain uncertain. We intend that some greater control over our curriculum, for example, will ensure that we can continue to meet local needs even in the face of continuing assessment and inspection pressures.</p> <p>We are already experiencing the consequences of the move to remove control from local authorities and the massive cuts in funding.</p>
<p>3. It is inevitable therefore they really isn't a day in matter. That said it's probably best that we act sooner by selecting suitable trust to take over.</p> <p>I do also think it's for the best as the school will receive more funding therefore I hope benefit more from gaining Academy status. (How will it affect the fund the school receives?)</p>	<p>We have concluded that it is now longer possible to ‘sit’ on the fence’ and agree that we feel now is the time to make an informed choice about our future rather than leaving ourselves vulnerable to less (or no) choice in the future.</p> <p>Whilst it is possible the school will receive ‘more’ funding, this will not be ‘new’ funding to our budget – more costs will be the direct responsibility of the school whereas before, some of our budget was top-sliced in order to pay for the same services provided by the local authority. We benefitted from some good cost savings through the benefits of scale achieved by the local authority. However, as many of the larger schools (with larger budgets, and therefore a larger ‘top-slice’) have already academised, a significant reduction in funding to the local authority has already happened. This has meant serious reductions in services and the quality of services offered.</p> <p>The LAAT will facilitate group purchasing etc. as the LA do now.</p>

<p>4. I feel that the school should do whatever it takes to be able to support itself and continue to develop, and I have no doubt that the quality of teaching and learning will not be affected - however my hesitation is that we chose Edenham for two primary reasons - its Church of England status and its unwavering "village school" atmosphere - unchanged since I was a pupil myself! I wouldn't like to see that change.</p>	<p>We feel very strongly about this too – and again, this is why we wish to take more control over our curriculum. We will be accountable for standards in English and Maths of course, as every other school, but we will have significantly more freedom to tailor the content of the rest of the curriculum.</p> <p>The quality of our teaching will not change as a result of this and we will continue to make sure our teachers are ready and prepared to make sure your children have the best quality available.</p> <p>Our C of E status will not change – the LAAT is the academy trust directly linked with the Diocese of Lincoln. We would not be permitted to join a MAT that was not predominantly CE in character, and non-CE schools are also able to join the LAAT.</p>
<p>5. Will CE faith school be impacted?</p>	<p>Our C of E status will not change – the LAAT is the academy trust directly linked with the Diocese of Lincoln. We would not be permitted to join a MAT that was not predominantly CE in character, and non-CE schools are also able to join the LAAT.</p>
<p>6. Advantages and disadvantages Short and long term risks Current council involvement Local case study of any schools converted to academy status Key short term focus areas</p>	<p>There is a mass of considerations in these questions – it is not possible to summarise here, and we can reassure you that the Governors and staff have held ongoing discussion and debate about this possibility for a number of years now.</p> <p>Case studies are available – some of which appear the press for all the wrong reasons. We do now however, have the weight of years’ worth of experience from many schools both locally and nationally.</p> <p>Key short term focus areas would include the need to ensure that throughout the process, our school will be able to protect and maintain its distinctive character, that pupils will continue to be able to learn really well and enjoy the vast majority of their time in school, and that staff enjoy fair and legal protection in the transition process.</p>
<p>7. More about the academy chain that the school is proposing to join. i.e. what school is the lead school what rating does the lead academy have, who is on the board, do parents have representation on the board if so how are they appointed, how are they constituted, what is in their constitution, what autonomy will each school have, are there any safeguards i.e. what exit arrangements would apply.</p>	<p>The LAAT website is available to see including links to existing schools.</p> <p>However, the LAAT is now changing and developing as more schools join. There are other groups of school currently under discussion to join, in addition to our Pathfinder Group. The structure of the LAAT management will adjust according to numbers involved – to begin with, all Heads and Chairs to the Governing Body for each school will participate in local Hub meetings. Eventually, it is likely that the Hubs will elect representatives as it won't be possible for, for example, 40 heads and chairs to meet and have meaningful discussion.</p> <p>The parent body and wider school community will maintain a voice through our governing body – we have no intention to reduce the number of governors for our school and Parent Governors will continue to be part of that constitution.</p> <p>Exit arrangements – Steve Stafford (Assistant Director, LAAT) used the analogy of a marriage (you enter it with hope,</p>

	<p>confidence and aspirations but still, a certain amount of uncertainty, but you don't generally go into it planning for a later separation).</p> <p>This to the greatest extent is accurate – however, there are exit procedures that we could explore in the future if necessary. These are nationally published and have clear legal requirements.</p>
<p>8. Will the school maintain IPR for property/ curriculum ideas/ resources etc.?</p>	<p>(Intellectual property rights?) – all resources etc. purchased by the school and owned by the school will continue to be owned by the school. Each school will continue to be responsible for its own curriculum/ how it plans/ what it plans/ when it is planned for etc.</p> <p>If this was your question – please do get in touch if we have misinterpreted the question and you would like some further clarification.</p>
<p>9. What happens to the other schools if a school or the lead school are rated 'requiring improvement'.</p>	<p>There will be no 'lead' school – all members will be equal members. There has to be provision within the MAT for schools that become more vulnerable for any reason – this will include professional development, financial guidance, staffing support etc. as required. These services have historically been provided by the Local Authority but are limited already.</p> <p>The vast majority of schools already support each other and actively seek to share expertise/ resources or whatever if another school is in difficulties. We will not allow 'every school and island' to be the outcome – we believe in a shared responsibility for the successful education of all children in the primary system – not just our own.</p>
<p>10. Ultimately will it affect the teaching in school? If there are no obvious changes then I cannot see a problem, many schools have academy status but it would be disappointing to gain academy status and lose funding or lose the identity of the school being a Church of England School which for us was an important decision is choosing a school for our daughters. It would also be a shame to change the status quo if it is not needed, there have been some reports where there seems to be some backtracking about moving schools to academy status. However, we are not against changes.</p>	<p>Thank you for your feedback. We hope the answers above and below will answer the question of identity for you and the question of maintaining the status quo.</p> <p>The government have had to publically backtrack on its commitment to ALL schools being required to convert to academy status, however – in reality, this is still becoming an increasingly unlikely prospect for many schools (see answer to 2).</p> <p>We do not disagree that external accountability is very important – but we are dealing with regular changes to the inspection (Ofsted) regime and that, combined with a lot of uncertainty about the new achievement and progress measures (SATs data/ new curriculum etc.) could mean that the outcome in some school inspections has become harder to predict. We hope this effect will be short term if things begin to stabilise but again – this is uncertain. There is still a huge amount of debate and campaigning going on for amendments and adjustments, and even wholesale 'chucking out of' some of the changes underway.</p>
<p>11. What changes it would make to the children's experience of school.</p>	<p>It won't make immediate changes to the children's experience of school as a direct impact – however, we fully intend that the curriculum will become more relevant to our pupils and that we can manage limited teaching time more</p>

	<p>effectively because of this (a case of less is more, with time to really embed learning and explore in more depth wherever we can).</p> <p>Long-term, we hope that shared provision for SEN services and Mental Health services for example, may again become more accessible.</p>
<p>12. Why are we not joining a group with more local schools?</p>	<p>We are joining with a group of local schools – the Pathfinder Partnership (Edenham, Horbling, Morton and Pointon) are converting together as a minihub within the LAAT. Each school will remain individual and distinct from each other. We established the Pathfinder group a number of years ago and through it we run sports events, curriculum events and visits, professional development for staff, peer review (helping each other evaluate strengths and areas for development in our schools) etc.</p> <p>We cannot afford to establish our own MAT just with these schools – we do not have enough pupils, enough staff and therefore enough funding to ensure it would be successful.</p> <p>For further info – Edenham School is also; - a strategic partner within the Keystone Learning Partnership (the Teaching School Alliance based at Bourne Westfield) - a member of the South Lincs Learning Partnership</p> <p>Kris is a registered LLE (Local Leader of Education) and works to support other schools in more challenging circumstances when required.</p> <p>We also have informal working links with Witham Hall School (Forest School) and in the recent past, Copthill (Forest School).</p>
<p>13. An open evening to discuss the for and against of becoming an academy. Only if we as parents have a say in whether we want it or not. There is no point if it is going to go ahead anyway.</p>	<p>We hope these questions have been answered above and below.</p>
<p>14. Michael Rosen's blog has listed things that I would like to see discussed: http://michaelrosenblog.blogspot.co.uk/2016/04/10-points-for-you-to-use-for-meeting-on.html?spref=tw&m=1</p>	<p>Michael Rosen is a great writer and poet, and is publishing some great articles in the press at the moment about his views on SATs (funny and often sad but true!) and academies. He is well worth a read, but, Kris would say that whilst idealistically we can't disagree – the realism of the situation is far from ideal.</p>
<p>15. Will you be able to ensure school hours, term times etc. will remain the same.</p>	<p>Yes – locally schools generally have worked together to ensure that term dates and school times remain pretty much in</p>

	<p>line with each other.</p> <p>However – if anyone can figure out a way of squeezing enough time in to a four-day week to allow a 3 day weekend we would be very happy to hear about it!</p>
<p>16. Will Academy status mean the school will have higher numbers in class?</p> <p>If class numbers increase in size will the school then have separate classes for each year?</p> <p>Which trusts are being considered and why?</p> <p>How will school be managed by head?</p>	<p>No – still national requirements (KS1 – no more than 30 in a class). There are no limits for KS2, however, there will be no requirements by the LAAT that will impact on this issue.</p> <p>We would love to expand the school but physically and practically, not possible. We generally operate at maximum numbers, with the occasional lull every few years. We are in a ‘lull’ period now, but have been there before and numbers increase rapidly again, quickly. The impact of the Elsea Park opening may play a part in the future but we don’t yet know. We are a very different school providing a different choice for parents, of which we are proud.</p> <p>Trusts – many trusts exist but not necessarily in this area. We have sought one to which we feel the strongest alliance in moral and strategic terms, and we also feel that geography is really important. Some local schools are part of trust which require staff to travel to Northampton or further afield for ‘local cluster meetings’. This is not practical or desirable. We also want a trust that is less about the ‘gloss’ of publicity and celebrity and more about the quality of interaction between schools, the directors and the school communities.</p> <p>School Leadership will continue to be as it is now – the schools will continue to have a Head Teacher, and vitally, this is a role that will continue to be shared with leadership teams (senior teachers/ subject teachers/ class teachers/ governors etc.). Any legal requirements on Head teachers’/ Governing Bodies will remain the same.</p>
<p>17. Are all staff on board?!</p>	<p>We are really proud that the staff at Edenham School play a really significant part in discussions about the school, how we work etc.</p> <p>Staff have been aware that this was a possibility for a long time and informal conversation has been had fairly frequently. Formally, the staff have had the same consultation period as the rest of the school community; however they were aware a number of weeks before it began. Feedback to us from staff is very much along the lines of the answers to question 2 and others above. In recent years, all staff have also experienced the impact of reducing services for SEN for example, and the financial impact of sweeping cuts on the school – including a totally inadequate financial management system (see local news – Serco).</p> <p>To date, when significant decisions have had to be made in school, the whole staff have been involved. Unions have been contacted, and given opportunities to respond and that would continue through the Tupe process.</p>

Abbreviations;

LA – Local Authority

LAAT – Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust

SEN – Special Educational Needs

CE – Church of England