



Master Collective Feedback from Parent Consultation Meetings March 2018

Together Learning Trust Honley High School Parent Consultation Meeting 14 March 6:30pm At Honley High School

In attendance from school:
X 2 Governors (VC + MC)
Chair and PG (DL, LW & GK)
27 parents

- Question** **If it does fall down would we be able to go back to co op trust?**
Answer We won't leave it until the status is confirmed as changed. Once we have converted we could not go back to a co-op trust.
- Question** **TLT if one doesn't go ahead does it all fall down**
Answer It could do yes but this would be dependent on many factors including timing, overall impact on education and finance and what the DfE view was.
- Question** **Where will the funding go? Central or Schools?**
Answer The funding can go straight to the centre or to the schools direct. We are developing a model whereby funding goes direct to the schools via the centre.
- Question** **What improvement will you make? It has to stay the "community is all"**
Answer Partnerships will continue as they are now however, the proposed MAT will be a formal relationship as we would all be within the same organisation. It is the formality of the relationship which provides the assurances leaders are looking for when it comes to delivering improvements, sharing best practice and developing our staff teams. All of which will have a benefit on our children and communities. The Governors have been considering options for over 2 years and have not made this decision lightly and feel strongly that this is the best option going forward to ensure 'community is all' for generations to come.
- Question** **Nice to hear you don't want to be a huge chain. What happens if a school wants to join or the DfE want to place a school in difficulty with you?**
Answer We see any future growth very much been at a local level and being managed very carefully. Our initial thinking is that we would not grow in year one but would consolidate our work together. In our initial planning we have suggested up to 12 schools who share our vision for learning. We hope that others will want to join us over time and we would welcome any interest. Schools in difficulty we would always want to support but equally recognise this will need to be carefully considered as it will have implications on resources. Any new school looking to join we would always conduct due diligence just like we are doing now on each other.



Question Is there another level to get to beyond the 3,000? Pressure to help others, is it there?

Answer No 3,000 is a magic number for access to capital monies directly. There is no immediate pressure to help others, but we do recognise as education professionals we do have a moral duty to help others should they require it.

Question Access to £25k, will it cost more? Are you worried it will eat into School's budget?

Answer We are confident the £25k grant will cover costs for conversion. Our finance working group are monitoring this expenditure as we do not want to use school funding to support the transition. When Ryburn converted in 2014 they confirmed it costed less than the £25k.

Question How does it change your responsibility for buildings?

Answer Honley are a foundation school now which means it has responsibility for the buildings alongside the PFI provider so for Honley its no change. For Meltham and Netherton the responsibility will move to the MAT directly as the Local Authority will transfer the land and buildings to the Trust as part of the conversion.

Question Are community days still going to be available? Sports access etc?

Answer Yes. These days link to the PFI arrangement for Honley and we envisage these continuing as they are now.

Question Are there new roles for Governance? How will it work? What is their tenure?

Answer There will still be a governing body in each school as there is now. There will be some small movement as we are proposing one governor will move on to the Trust Board and step down from the governing body. Succession planning will be considered and any vacancies advertised in due course. There will be a 4 year tenure.

Question Will the CEO ever be full time and not a Head?

Answer The CEO will be one of the existing 5 Headteachers and initially it will be a part-time role and they will sustain their Headship too. We are working with the working party which includes governor representation to look at the options and implications so that we can move forward with recruitment for the 2018/19 academic year.

Question You have experience of academies. Is Moor End an Academy/or a MAT? Interesting to look at other structures, don't always want to emulate? Parents need reassurance and reaffirm throughout process.

Answer Moor End is an Academy within a MAT called South Pennine Academies Trust. All schools proposing to join TLT have been on a journey for over two years conducting research to inform their decisions and recommendations. Governors will share minutes of meetings past and present with parents and will share useful communications including reading materials as we go through the process. Websites, facebook and twitter will be used alongside letters from school as required. A report from the consultation will be collated and shared with all stakeholders during May. Slides from the meetings are also uploaded on to the websites.



Question Can January 2019 change? Go back?
Answer Yes it can change. For now it is a marker in the sand for the applications which will be submitted. You can only convert on the 1st of a month and if January is not feasible we will look at what the best alternative would be.

Question If there was a lot of negativity, what is the tipping point?
Answer All schools are considering all options, this enables the schools to make progress. All feedback will be taken on board and will help inform future decisions and planning.

Question 2.5 years ago when you started looking what was the reason you started looking at the change?
Answer We started looking at the change following the production of the white paper which has since been withdrawn. This along with fair funding formula discussions meant we wanted to ensure we got the best deal going forward for the children and community of Honley.

Comment Its reassuring it is about our children and being proactive and not forced.

Question How did you decide which 5 schools? Did you talk to others, what did they say?
Answer Originally schools worked in their local partnerships and looked to develop options within their immediate localities however, quite quickly it became clear that a Trust which included our Church of England schools was not really an option as it had to be led by the Diocese. We were all keen to be founder schools and create a MAT, developing our own vision that meets the needs of our communities rather than join a MAT which would dictate a vision. Currently we feel incredibly comfortable with the 5 schools coming together.

**Together Learning Trust
 Meltham Moor Primary School Parent Consultation Meeting
 20 March 6:30pm
 At Meltham Moor**

In attendance:
 25 parents

Question Are schools in the MAT inspected by Ofsted separately?
Answer Yes

Question What happens if one school in the Trust fails eg financially?
Answer We would firstly hope that it would never happen! Collaboration and rigorous accountability across the schools will ensure that support was provided before that could happen. The MAT has overall accountability for all the schools within it and all finances and academies are not allowed to have deficit budgets. Any school facing



financial challenges we would work closely with them to look for the savings to ensure a balanced/surplus position.

- Question** **Where does the extra funding come from?**
Answer No additional funding comes direct to the schools the differences are the schools receive 100% of their allocation and nothing is retained by the LA and you can bid into many funding pots within the DfE, ESFA and RSC offices. We would hope to generate some efficiencies from working smarter together for example sharing schemes of work across the MAT, selling services externally. Money would be generated after the first year from supporting sponsored schools whether as an academy in the Trust or via a service level agreement.
- Comment** **Education policies and budgets vary so much. Moving all the land into Trust means there's no real accountability for Members. The government is taking the land away from public ownership – seems to be divide and conquer.**
Response That's exactly what we want to avoid and why schools are being proactive. It was reinforced the fact that the Executive Board was put in place as a process to avoid any CEO corruption. The TUPE process for staff at Honley High protected the staff and no-one was disadvantaged. The national funding formula will come into all schools in 2 years time and failing schools would be forced to academise anyway!
- Question** **Being the Devil's advocate, what are the cons of this option?**
Answer If we don't join, we stay the same but run the risk of becoming isolated and not moving on.
- Question** **Do you foresee a future where you will be able to provide this support yourselves?**
Answer Yes
- Question** **Are we effectively privatising our education system?**
Answer No we don't believe so. It is national policy and in the best interests of our children.
- Question** **Are MATs a target for PFI?**
Answer Both high schools are already a PFI. The process of due diligence and accounting were a necessary process for all the schools.
- Question** **Where does the money come from to run a MAT? Is there a business plan?**
Answer This is the start of the journey. The presentation and links will be available on the website for parents to read and research further. There is a 3 year budget plan for all of the schools and also a 5 year growth plan. The money to run the MAT comes from the ESFA in the form of the school budget shares.
- Question** **Are you going to be able to allow parents to feedback online? How much will you communicate with parents?**
Answer Yes. In the spirit of collaboration, Ryburn have an IT expert who can do that for us! Information from the meeting including the presentation, will be put on the website too.



- Question** **What’s the feeling of parents at Ryburn?**
Answer Ryburn had the same issues in their partnership of schools in Calderdale – many of them were church schools. We’re already aware of other schools who are interested to join us in the future. Parents know that the conversion to academy didn’t cause them any problems.
- Question** **Can you still become a MAT on your own?**
Answer It is extremely unlikely – there are already too many “empty MATs” and it is something the Regional Schools Commissioners do not support as a rule.
- Comment** **Making things work is about how you prioritise things – not just what’s on a piece of paper.**
Response But the MAT formalises these arrangements. High level governance makes sure that these things happen.
- Question** **Where are the firewalls to account for any extra money and how it is spent?**
Answer Evidence of how the money is going to be spent is required before the monies are draw down. Rigorous internal as well as external controls are in place. There are grant criteria, terms and conditions as well as audit checks. The CEO also acts as the Trust Accounting Officer and must account for all expenditure within the MAT.
- Question** **Who has the ability to decide how the money is spent?**
Answer The buildings pot of money will be spent on a priority basis, dependant on need. The Executive Board and Trustees would decide this based on the plans within an asset management strategy.
- Question** **Has this grant already been identified? (ie how the money will be spent?)**
Answer We have already submitted an application for school improvement funds for £150k. This was in line with the priorities within Kirklees based around the outcomes for disadvantaged children, especially in reading.
- Question** **How come so many MATs are mis-managed?**
Answer Schools are all in challenging financial circumstances. There has been proven mis-management of some earlier Trusts where one person has been running the show and the DfE ignored it. There are now more additional checks and scrutiny than ever before including ESFA audits, external and internal audits, clear whistleblowing procedures etc
- Question** **Inevitably, there are horror stories in the press – I would like to hear a story of a successful MAT.**
Answer I’m sure we can do that for you. We will share some useful stories / links on our websites.
- Question** **Where is the CEO going to come from?**
Answer One of the Headteachers from the forming schools. There will not be an executive salary. There will need to be some money for the backfill of staff but we would have used that to pay the LA for support anyway.



Question Does that remain in the Articles?
Answer Yes. It will maintain the continuity as Heads change over time and also hold the HTs to account.

We agree that there also needs to be a level of expertise at Headteacher level – we all trained as teachers, not accountants!

We are reassured that all Headteachers have that – our children at their core.

Question Will there be an opportunity for another parent meeting?
Answer If that’s what parents want - it might be on a one to one basis with the Headteacher or maybe in a small group if people want to share further concerns or ask more questions. Please let the Headteacher know.

Comment I think it is inevitable unfortunately with the drive for academisation of schools from the government

**Together Learning Trust
 Ryburn Valley High School Parent Consultation Meeting
 21 March 6pm
 At Ryburn Valley High School**

In attendance from school:
Governors
Heads: DL, PG, DB

4 parents

Question Are all the schools in the list ‘good’ schools or will there be some sponsored schools included in the MAT?

Answer All the foundation schools are good schools. These all have a lot of commonality – they have good relationships with their local family of schools (including some diocesan schools that are precluded from joining a non-Church MAT). During the last few months excellent relationships have been developed across all 5 schools and it is evident that we all have a similar ethos and values across both the school communities and the governing boards.

Question Can the expected savings be quantified and has a feasibility study been completed?

Answer The process of due diligence will help to answer this. No school will be put into financial difficulty as a result of joining the MAT



- Question** **How much control will the schools have of their own budget?**
- Answer** All foundation joiner schools will get complete control of their budget. This may be different for schools that the MAT is asked to sponsor at a later date – depending on the circumstances at the time
- Question** **What will be the maximum number of schools in the MAT – what if more want to join?**
- Answer** We are looking to be around 12 schools within the next 5 years. We are not looking to become massive – it needs to be manageable. We need to be sure the capacity is there to ensure good growth – we do not intend to sponsor struggling schools until the capacity is in place. All the schools want to continue serving their community schools – we are working together for mutual benefit
- Question** **What if central government change the goal posts again – as they did when this sort of exercise was carried out in the FE sector?**
- Answer** We are where we are – we have no influence over what central government might or might not do. We have to do the best for our students now. This is the only way forward to bet the benefits we have been describing. This way forward opens up choice to the schools in the MAT – we have to be pragmatic - meet the needs of the family of schools and maintain control over our own destiny
- Question** **Why is the MAT being formed across Calderdale and Kirklees?**
- Answer** Being in a MAT with schools in another authority removes any worry about possible competition affecting relationships with other local schools. Information and other skills can be shared freely. Cluster working in a local group does have some benefit, but this is sometimes clouded due to personalities involved.
- Comment** At the end of the meeting – I can now see the benefit of cross-border working as this will help to create more transparent working practices – there will be no negative competition between the schools.

Together Learning Trust
Netherton Infant and Nursery School Parent Consultation Meeting
22 March 6:30pm
At Netherton

4 Governors and the Chair of Governors
All heads and 3 staff from Bolton Brow
27 others (parents, carers, staff)

- Question** **Staff recruitment – regarding future recruitment processes would person specs be required at the same level of detail ie Qualified Teacher Status, Terms and Conditions etc?**



Answer Yes absolutely. We want to retain and recruit the very best staff to work with children and to do this we need to be a good employer. The Trust will have its own contracts of employment going forward but we are absolutely committed to ensuring teachers have QTS status, that T's and C's are the best they can be and follow School Teachers Pay and Conditions.

Question **What will happen to catering and caretaking staff?**

Answer Contractual arrangements will be as they are now. If they are employed by Kirklees Catering or Cleaning now they will be when the school becomes an academy. If we ever change catering provider those staff would be entitled to transfer under TUPE like all staff in the schools now.

Question **Would Honley be a feeder?**

Answer We need to consider admissions arrangements going forward as we could look to develop a scenario where children at schools within the MAT are part of the criteria going forwards. (eg those out of catchment at Netherton Infant and Nursery go to S Crossland etc) What we do know is we can't change things now as there is a minimum 2 year lead in time so this is something we can reflect on and consult with parents down the line.

Question **Who's in charge of the finance? Will you have to fight out schools corner?**

Answer The Board of Trustees are accountable for all Trust finances but delegate the responsibility of management to the Chief Financial Officer, CEO and Headteachers. There will be a scheme of delegation and clear financial regulations that provide clarity on financial detail including approval of levels of authority. Funding allocated to the schools is on a per pupil basis therefore it is clear where funds need to go.

Question **Can other schools join?**

Answer Yes they can but ultimately the decision would lie with the Board of Trustees. A governing body could ask to join and after due diligence (both ways) we may say yes and agree to move forwards together. The DfE can ask if we would like to sponsor a school which is struggling with performance issues (educational, financial or leadership wise) and we do have a choice as above if we are approached direct by another governing body.

Question **Is there a max number?**

Answer No maximum number but we are looking at a proposal of up to 12 over 5 years.

Question **As well as sharing best practice with staff, what about pupils?**

Answer Would be great to get older pupils working with younger ones. We have already had examples of pupils benefiting from joint working. Pupils from Ryburn joined a presentation at Honley only last week from Sir Ian McKellen something they wouldn't have seen/heard had we not been developing this partnership. Key stage 3 pupils from Honley were at Netherton recently delivering an assembly on fair trade.

Question **Grandson in school 6 months. Really happy at school and great to understand your proposal. In the letter you mention the Curriculum, you say you may try**



different things, it must be broad and balanced (what difficult things are you proposing)?

Answer It's about the flexibility. There are occasions when as leaders and teachers we would like to make adjustments to meet the needs of our children and this freedom gives us the authority and flexibility to do this. We will still be inspected the same way as we are now and children will still do SATs etc so we will always continue to use the national curriculum as the basis of our curriculum planning and work in school.

Question **Are we gaining or losing? How long will it last? Is it protected?**

Answer The reason we are considering this is because of the opportunities this affords us and it will be for the long term. It is protected via government documentation.

Question **Geographical difference, will you still be working with the LA's? What are the benefits? How will you work with two?**

Answer Yes we will still work with our respective LA's in fact we do work across the LA boundaries now for example Ryburn by Clerking services from Kirklees LA. There may be some challenges around areas such as policy and payroll but it is all manageable. The key point is no staff member will be at a detriment because of any changes. Anything which was proposed to be changed would be communicated before conversion and formation of the MAT.

Question **Flexibility of the curriculum is a great thing. How regulated is it? When it comes to move from one to the other? How often can curriculum change?**

Answer Same assessments and same OFSTED frameworks. If it's not broken, we must get on with it and continue to drive improvements in all areas. Curriculum is always evolving through this proposal we will have 2 other schools to call on for planning and preparation support for any changes which come in in the future.

Question **What does cost efficiencies mean in practice?**

Answer This is simply about ensuring as much money as possible stays in the classroom on resources and teachers as is possible. In practice it will mean saving money on joint procurement activities and sharing back office activities as well as bidding for funds to bring in additional income we otherwise would not have had access to.

Question **How do staff feel about it? How much Headteacher time does it take? Can we see the questions?**

Answer Staff are anxious. They have asked a lot of questions which we've tried to answer and will continue to do so as we go through this process. All questions asked as part of the consultation will be shared with all stakeholders in May once the final report is collated.

Question **There is a lot to do and you are paid to do. Do you have the capacity to do this and run this school?**

Answer It is hard and I must ask for help if I need it. Got experience within the schools and I call on that, I'm finding a balance and if required we will buy in expertise to support.

Question **Will parents be kept in the loop?**

Answer Absolutely. We will do this via regular communications on our website and meetings as required.



Question When you join the MAT can you leave it?
Answer Yes its possible but not easy. If you want to leave after 3 years it would have to be with mutual consent of both the school and MAT and subsequent agreement with the RSC. If no consent is reached there is a 7 year notice period within the Funding Agreement.

Question £25k grant to convert. How much does it cost?
Answer The DfE provide the £25k to cover the costs and previous conversions which have taken place at Ryburn and Bolton Brow would suggest it is possible to deliver the conversion within the budget. If it did go over the schools would need to fund the additional expense. The Finance working group are monitoring expenditure to ensure it comes within the grant allocation.

Together Learning Trust
Bolton Brow Academy Parent Consultation Meeting
22 March 3:30pm
At Bolton Brow

In attendance. Heads from Ryburn Valley High, Honley High, Meltham Moor Primary, Bolton Brow and the Chair of Governors at Bolton Brow

7 parents

Question If asked to be a sponsor MAT for a failing school - this could become very challenging would the parents still have a voice/consultation?

Answer If request by the commissioner to take on any school, it would still be the final decision of the governors of the MAT. The way the MAT being formed is to work in collaboration with each other no school will have its individuality diluted. No head is wishing to empire build and still wants the very best possible for their school and the others within the MAT. If heads/ governors did not feel the time and resources were available to support successfully then the request would be rejected.

Question Would teachers be taken away from classrooms for collaborative work across the schools?

Answer No plans to move teachers from school, but more opportunities for CPD. In the bigger picture plans would be to have same training days. Any specialist knowledge could be shared with other professionals within the MAT.

Question Bolton Brow worked hard to set and be stringent with budget, what about the others are they financially stable?

Answer One of the main reasons for forming MAT. Funding not increasing but on costs on salaries have increased resulting in 2 of the schools having to do some serious



staffing restructure last year to maintain the budgets. All schools are having to be savvy when planning the budgets. All are presently doing a due diligence exercise that will be audited independently to ensure there are no surprises and all is financially transparent prior to the formation of the MAT.

Question Will each school keep their own funding?

Answer That is the plan. Each school will contribute a % of their funding to the central fund of MAT.

Question Will there be a pre-nuptial?

Answer That's a new one! Sign up for 7 years- not sure that a request to leave a MAT has been tested? this is something to consider when legal team instructed to set up the MAT. Stressed that lots of thought gone into the decision to proceed with the proposal.

Question Will equipment & pupils be moved between schools?

Answer No plans to. Distance between the schools would make it time consuming & loss of learning time plus the schools have their own full timetables. Equipment will remain on its own premises schools will support each other but will continue to budget to replace / purchase equipment as in past.

Question Any plans to develop a through school?

Answer No, would need to be on same site, happy that the primary school feed the secondary.