



Master Collective Feedback from Trade Union and Staff Consultation Meetings - March 2018 - Together Learning Trust

Rationale for conversion:

Honley

- The number of CofE
- Sustain partnerships
- Long term partners
- Work together to develop and improve

Bolton Brow

- Converted in 2011/had been standalone
- Good deal of research
- Decision has been in the pipeline for some time
- More formal collaboration and develop and share

Meltham Moor

- Discussions for some time, 12 months in the making
- Share similar ethos, want to make it our own
- Collaboration and formalisation

Ryburn Valley High School

- Converted 2014
- All have positives and negatives
- Want the support and challenge to this
- Worked really hard locally improving standards and outcomes. Want sustainability
- Improving life choices

Netherton Infant and Nursery School

- Discussions have been ongoing since June 2016
- Choice between Diocese/non-Diocese made by Governors
- Opportunities for staff development
- Formal collaboration between good schools

Key Dates

Will the academies all have to TUPE

Showed staff presentation and FAQ's



HR

Question Job security, HR work (in Kirklees) re pool of staff in LA if redundancies, would you still interview them etc. Does this exist in Calderdale?

Answer No not at the moment however, we do issue emails across all Calderdale schools. If any colleagues were at the risk of redundancy we would always look to support across the authority if possible.

Question In the FAQ's there could be confusion over continuous service. Will you be clear to staff during the consultation what this means in reality i.e. If you transfer from and academy back to an LA school?

Answer Yes absolutely we will. This could vary within Calderdale and Kirklees as well as across the region and nationally, so we will ensure this is clarified as and when the TUPE process commences.

Question One school needs staff, one has surplus, will we be forced to go work in another school?

Answer The simple answer is no you will not be forced. There may be opportunities for example professional development or career progression but no one will be forced.

Question Any repercussions if you say no?

Answer No

Question Does each school do their own recruiting or is it together?

Answer We hope each school will continue to do their own recruitment however there may be times going forward that we want to secure a position together whether across the Trust or between the secondary or primary schools. This would be made clear at recruitment stage.

Question Does 2 LA's pose difficulties? Eg payroll? MAT over 2 LA's and same benefits across the two? How did the connection between the schools come about? Concerns over geography Calderdale/Kirklees – how will this work? How will collaboration between schools work if geographically we are a long way away?

Answer 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. The connection between the schools has evolved due to the partnerships which exist between Honley and Ryburn and then at a local level within the schools respective clusters. There is a lot of synergy between the schools i.e. both in valleys, both have many Church of England primary schools etc. Geographically this will work by the leaders jointly planning, looking at opportunities for sharing CPD and joint activities that pupils can benefit from. This has already started happening and we hope will only grow.



- Question** **Pay and conditions – Will these stay the same? Will they always stay the same? What protection do we have from them being changed without consultation?**
- Answer** TUPE protects staff at the point of conversion and pay and conditions are protected until such a point you re consulted on any changes. We will be adhering to the School Teachers Terms and Conditions and the burgundy / green books and recognising unions.
- Question** **New staff (new teachers) how can future professionals be protected?**
- Answer** Staff were reassured at the meeting that this would not happen, not ethical or the ethos of any of the schools. The Headteachers want to work together as they all share the same values and wish to ensure we have the very best staff in school.
- Question** **How will current MS/UPS work in a MAT? And will pay progression be honoured?**
- Answer** As now so yes it will.
- Question** **What about sickness/maternity pay etc. care first/occupational health?**
- Answer** As now. We will have policies in place to support these areas and we will buy into the best services.
- Question** **Will support staff hours be protected?**
- Answer** Yes
- Question** **Could the working day/hours/holidays change?**
- Answer** No plans as part of the conversion process. Of course these things do change ins schools as they do now but any proposal to change would be communicated and consulted on.
- Question** **It says things will stay the same but what protection do we have that this will be the case?**
- Answer** Integrity is a key value and part of the ethos. What we do know is that we want the best staff and in order to ensure we recruit and retain the best we will need happy staff. We will adhere to STPCD too.
- Question** **Will the pay structure of all involved in the MAT be open and transparent?**
- Answer** Yes, the MAT will report annually and as it is one employer is likely to have one committee that reviews the matters collectively.
- Question** **Will all jobs be safe – eg. Support staff/lunchtime supervisors?**
- Answer** Yes, we are not planning to alter structures as a result of becoming an academy.
- Question** **Pay increases – will these be fair and transparent – how will we know?**
- Answer** Yes, will be reported on and passed down
- Question** **How long does TUPE stay with you? What type of things can change?**
- Answer** TUPE is the legislation that protects employees at the point of transfer. It has no prescribed time periods attached to it. As time (weeks, months and years) moves on the TUPE protection does reduce or disappear completely. Examples of this would include, changes to staffing terms & conditions, policies negotiated nationally and locally by Unions and the employer or you are successful in applying for a new job



within the school or Trust (if this were the case your TUPE entitlement would cease at the point you took on the new role).

Question **What if I don't want to travel to Halifax?**

Answer No one is asking any staff members to travel to Halifax or Huddersfield. Staff will stay in their substantive posts in their current school unless they choose to potentially apply for a new post in one of the schools in time to come.

Question **How can we collaborate when I'm a reception teacher?**

Answer Collaboration can come in many forms and during this consultation and transition phases we will start to explore the possibilities. For example, we would consider the opportunity of shared training days where reception teachers from 3 schools can come together to collaborate and share best practice. Rather than been a department of one staff member we hope that having other like-minded professionals to call on will be additional support and capacity.

Question **Will it be more costs staffing wise?**

Answer It is inevitable there will be some additional cost but we will endeavour to keep this to a minimum. We will need to appoint a Chief Executive Office and Chief Financial Officer but as highlighted during consultation we believe this can come from within the 5 schools so therefore an internal appointment. We are conducting some due diligence on each other shortly and will also try to determine if there is any additional capacity on the schools which could help generate efficiencies.

Question **Do you have a school councillor?**

Answer There is a strong local Additional Needs Partnership, led by Education Psychologists in Kirklees and we envisage this would continue. If there is a need across the 5 schools / MAT going forward we would explore the possibility of employing our own councillor/psychologist.

Question **Is the MAT Chief Executive Officer also by definition the TLT CEO? How is the TLT CEO selected? Do the academies have responsibility? Is the CEO a salaried position? If so, who pays and how is the level determined – process?**

Answer Yes they are. The Heads and representative Governors from each school have agreed there will be a process for appointing a CEO in the summer term. It is also likely that it will be an internal candidate. Yes the position will be salaried as they will also be a substantive Headteacher. The process for appointment will be determined by the Shadow Board.

Question **After transformation "employment terms remain the same" – is this also for support staff? Are pension entitlements for all staff (teaching and support) unaltered in any way?**

Answer Yes, terms and conditions remain the same for both teaching and support staff members. Pensions also remain the same TPS and WYPF.



- Question** **Can you guarantee that current staff keep their current positions and hours?**
Answer There are no plans as part of the conversion process to change structures, roles and contracted hours. Going forward we cannot guarantee things won't change just like we can't now. Change occurs due to different pressures for example curriculum policy changes or financial pressures. What we can guarantee is we want to employ and retain the very best staff.
- Question** **Will overtime be sanctioned (caretaker) and paid as it is now?**
Answer Existing school policies and procedures will transfer with employees on conversion unless we state differently in the formal TUPE process, this would include clarity on overtime payments.
- Question** **What will happen to the cleaning staff?**
Answer As above
- Question** **Can staff be asked/required to move schools?**
Answer No staff member will be forced to move schools. There may be opportunities over time for professional development via a secondment or a promotion but this would be discussed on a case by case basis.
- Question** **Burgundy Book, sick pay, dependants etc?**
Answer All these will transfer as part of your terms and conditions on transfer.
- Question** **Salaries/scales – will these remain the same? TLRs/UPS over the long term/new employees?**
Answer Yes we are not proposing any changes as a result of conversion.
- Question** **Will we benefit financially?**
Answer We don't envisage terms and conditions and contracts of employment will change as a result of proposed conversion, so this would mean salaries remain as they are now.
- Question** **Staff on temp/fixed term contracts/ Kirklees supply service – how would they be affected? If you're not permanent staff, what happens to your contract? Can it be made permanent before the MAT?**
Answer Staff who have a temporary or fixed term contract which is in place and goes beyond the conversion date will transfer under TUPE to the Academy Trust. Those whose contract expires prior to conversion will discuss with the Headteacher whether this is likely to be renewed at the point it is due to end. Kirklees Supply service staff will remain with the service and would not TUPE.
- Comment** **Fear that we may become run like a business about outcomes and finances and not kids and the community**



- Question** **Would new staff be on same terms and conditions or would they be different?**
Answer There would be a MAT contract of employment not a council contract so there would be some differences, but we will be adhering to STPCD, pay scales and national agreements.
- Question** **Would terms and conditions be set out officially in writing?**
Answer Prior to any transfer if we intend to change anything we must notify staff. We will write to all staff to confirm proposed arrangements for the academy trust post September 2018. Your contract of employment would remain and will set out the terms and conditions and on conversion you would receive a letter confirming your contract had transferred 'as is'.
- Question** **Specific roles, eg SENCO – would they change? le work across schools.**
Answer No there are no plans to change these roles.
- Question** **How do systems mesh together, eg ANP partnership, differences between Calderdale and Kirklees?**
Answer We are undertaking a due diligence exercise to establish what commonality may exist and what we may need to develop and discuss further. More detail will follow over coming months.
- Question** **How would the MAT impact on childcare vouchers?**
Answer We would hope that MAT will have a comparable scheme for employees going forward and are looking into this. We understand changes were due to take effect nationally in April but that this has been delayed. We will monitor the situation and come back to staff asap with further detail once it is known.
- Question** **Would we get new contracts?**
Answer No. You will receive a letter on conversion confirming your contract dated XX date has transferred to the new employer.
- Question** **Will we be forced to go to one of the other schools after school say for meetings and training as this is a concern?**
Answer No one will be forced to do anything and we are conscious of the time commitments already that staff have.
- Question** **What levels of flexibility will there be for staff i.e. sickness in a school or redeployment?**
Answer We want to give staff as many opportunities as possible within our Trust. This may mean covering sickness or redeployment but this would only ever be considered if it had been discussed and agreed with the staff member. No one will be forced to go work in another school if they don't wish to do so.
- Question** **Are pensions the same?**
Answer Yes



Question Is there an expectation for staff to work in the other schools? Will I be expected to travel over to Ryburn and teach in their Drama Department?

Answer No there is no expectation that this will be required. There may be opportunities for staff in different schools but that would be discussed on an individual basis and as needs, and opportunities arise. No one will be told they must go work and travel to another school.

Leadership & HR

Question Will each school have an SLT as current? Who decides who will make / comprise the SLT?

Answer Yes each school will have an SLT as it does now including a Headteacher in each school. The Head and governors decide on the composition of the SLT.

Governance and Leadership

Question Why are governors not at the presentation? All need to be more involved with the discussions.

Answer Governors have been represented at every meeting held as part of the consultation, with full attendance from Chair and Vice-Chair, and further attendance from two additional governors at the parents meeting. There have been a number of full governing board meetings to keep all informed. An outcome of this question being raised by staff has been that the governors have committed to a further meeting with staff following the publication of the report.

Question Will the Board structure reflect the togetherness?

Answer Yes we have developed a proposal which is representative of all our local communities whilst building additional capacity through adding independence. The structure has also focussed on the professional skills required to run a multi-million pound organisation which is what the proposed MAT would be if successful

Question Who will be the CEO?

Answer The CEO will be one of the existing Headteachers and we will have a transparent process of appointment we envisage in the summer term.



Question Is the growth plan part of the process? Will we be pushed to sponsor, is there a financial incentive?

Answer Growth is identified within our emerging applications but it must be managed. In year 1 we are looking to consolidate across the five schools with hopefully other good schools choosing to join us from year 2. We have proposed a MAT of up to 12 schools.

Question Who can remove Trustees?

Answer Only the Members or the secretary of state.

Question Governance – who are the members?

Answer We are currently recruiting to the five vacancies and making recommendations to the DfE as part of our applications. We will share the detail ad soon as we can.

Question Do you have to name the executive leadership

Answer Yes. This will be the five Headteachers and the Chief Financial Officer.

Question Are the governors making an informed decision? no-one on the governors has asked for our opinion? Why hasn't there been a consultation process? Should the governors or staff governor have held a meeting with us prior to this meeting?

Answer This is the start of the consultation process. Some do not decide to consult with stakeholders until much further into the process and this reflects our need to gauge opinion as early as possible. Governors have made a decision to apply for academy status, they will make a further decision after consultation.

Question What was the resolution made at GB?

Answer Governors resolved to apply to the DfE to become an Academy and to propose joining/forming Together Learning Trust as part of the same process.

Question Why might the DfE turn down our application?

Answer The DfE will look at each individual application and then our application to form a MAT and each will be evaluated on its own merit. They don't always get approved first time sometimes they seek clarity on proposals or defer decisions. Reasons they get turned down could include concerns over academic performance, financial position of the school or they believe the proposed schools forming the MAT are not strong enough.

Question Is Together Learning Trust an established organisation? If so, how large are they, how many schools do they have under their control/influence?

Answer No it is not yet established and is subject to the outcomes of the DfE application process.

Question What does (TLT) "devolve much of the (governance) responsibility to the individual academies" mean?

Answer There will be a Scheme of Delegation which will be developed by the 5 schools during the summer term. This document will articulate very clearly what duties are delegated to the Governors and leadership in each school. Most duties and decisions will continue to be made locally like they are now an example of where things may



be different is on areas such as finance. Currently governors will approve a draft budget for a school, in a MAT they recommend this to the Board for approval. This is because the MAT has to report as one organisation and must consolidate all (5 in this case) budgets into one approved budget for the MAT.

Question “Set the vision for this academy in line with the overall commitment of the Multi Academy Trust” – what does this mean?

Answer The MAT will have a vision for the overall organisation. Each academy will have a vision of its own which will also contribute to the delivery of the overall vision for the MAT.

Question “Why does our school have to join a MAT” – “because of the benefits this brings” – what does this vague statement mean?

Answer This was articulated at the parent and staff briefings and a copy of the presentations can be found in appendices 3 and 4.

Question What is the role of Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)?

Answer The RSC is appointed by the National Schools Commissioner on behalf of Central Government. Our region is covered by Lancashire & West Yorkshire and a lady called Vicky Beer is our RSC. Their role is:

- to take action where academies and free schools are underperforming
- intervening in academies where governance is inadequate
- deciding on applications from local-authority-maintained schools to convert to academy status
- improving underperforming-maintained schools by providing them with support from a strong sponsor
- encouraging and deciding on applications from sponsors to operate in a region
- taking action to improve poorly performing sponsors
- advising on proposals for new free schools
- advising on whether to cancel, defer or enter into funding agreements with free school projects
- deciding on applications to make significant changes to academies and free schools

Question What will the hierarchy look like? Trustees and governors from which schools?

Answer See appendices 3 and 4 parent and staff presentation.

Question What is the “size” of the transformational process to academy for Meltham Moor Primary School? How much potential distraction from the fundamental need to stimulate learning?

Answer The process is significant and Governors have recognised this. The Heads have distributed leadership for key areas of the conversion (e.g. finance, legal, governance) so we are not all duplicating effort and a Project Manager has been brought on board to ensure we have a clear timeline and plan of activity with roles and responsibilities articulated.



Question If the CEO is going to be one of the headteachers, how is it possible to do both jobs successfully?

Answer It is quite common albeit its success depends on many factors including the necessary capacity and expertise within the SLT. Training and support for the Head who becomes the CEO would be put in place to ensure a detailed understanding of the position and the differences between the two roles.

Education

Question Collaboration – exam boards. What will it do for the things like moderation?

Answer This proposal will only enhance collaboration and you will see an increase in opportunities due to the formalisation of our work. The fact none of our schools are in direct competition with each other we also think is a strong message.

Question Do you keep your own DfE no’s, or do they change?

Answer For the existing academies they stay the same for the new academies they will change.

Question What evidence is there that MATs improve educational standards?

Answer Whether a school is in a MAT or not Standards should be the best.

Question What about current whistleblowing / LADO (who will take this on)?

Answer These are statutory requirements and must exist in each school and so current arrangements for the LADO will remain. Whistleblowing will exist but it may be a slightly different policy and set of procedures. We need to first understand what exists and whether there are any gaps.

Question SEN support, LOCALA etc. will we buy into this? Who will support us with SEN and vulnerable children?

Answer The LA has a duty to support the school and children with SEND. A volunteer from LOCALA has been put forward as a named Trustee on the application too. It is extremely important to all schools that our most vulnerable learners are supported as best as we can and collectively we feel this MAT will strengthen this support.

Question Will the MAT improve outcomes for all pupils?

Answer Definitely cannot say it will but there is the will/the intention and the drive to improve outcomes for all. There are examples we can think of already where together we can make a real difference for example Honley supporting Ryburn in Maths and English to accelerate progress and improvements and a reciprocal arrangement in Science.



Question What is meant by “local schools will continue to work very closely together” – is this Meltham local (pyramid group?) of MAT/TLT group local? No “local” KS1/2 primary school in our group! Bolton Brow Primary Academy may need significant help? Did they receive an academy order?

Answer Yes, Local pyramids and partnerships will continue as they do now. The MAT / TLT will offer additionality to any local partnerships. Bolton Brow Academy are a good school and do not require an academy order as they are already an academy.

Question Is it mandatory to follow/comply with the National Curriculum? Would there still be compliance to the National Curriculum? What does “more freedom/different things” mean?! Do they (MATS) have to complete SAT tests/KS1 tests etc?

Answer It is not mandatory to follow the national curriculum and indeed most academies do follow it. It does however give you flexibility should you require it. Academies are assessed in exactly the same way in terms of Ofsted, SATs, GCSEs etc.

Question Why are (or is) the MAT working with the Local Authority? Is this an outsourced cost?

Answer Both Local Authorities do a lot of good work and we want this to continue, they also retain statutory duties for example around things like SEND. We want to ensure we access the very best provision and services and at best value. If an LA provides this, then we will but it!

Question If the DfE are progressively limiting funds to local authorities (hence driving/motivating schools to academies), yet the funding from DfE via EFA is calculated on a “like for like” basis to academies reference local authority schools, then the need to realise cost efficiencies from out sourcing becomes a progressively increasing crucial factor for financial viability – is this sustainable?

Answer The funding pressures on schools mean all schools irrespective of status are looking to make efficiencies. By working collaboratively it means the formation of the Trust will enable us to make changes without it being detrimental to the children and their learning.

Question “Assign SEND resources for pupils with rare conditions” funded by the local authority – what does rare condition mean and who decides what is rare?

Answer The LA’s have a process for determining whether a pupil can access an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and this clarifies the amount of resource required. Collectively with agency partners and parents/carers this is agreed.

Question Is it clear that the local authority pays for the statementing and assessment of SEND pupils? Ongoing term time costs for SEND pupils (resources) have to be met by the academy? – except for rare conditions?

Answer The LA retain statutory responsibility for SEND and this will continue.



Question "Inclusive education for all local children" – what does local mean? Same input area as now?

Answer The catchment area will be the same as it is now a local school for local children.

Question Does a MAT get inspected by OFSTED?

Answer At the moment no although we do think this is likely to change going forward.

Question Will there be opportunity for staff to have their say in how things will develop?

Answer Yes. We welcome the input of staff as we go on this journey.

Question Will we still do local cluster work?

Answer Yes. See previous responses above.

Question Will forming a MAT definitely improve the outcomes of all the students? How do we envisage primary and high schools working together, eg priorities?

Answer We cannot definitely say yes to this question, however, the will, intention and drive to improve outcomes for all the students is there and will continue to be a huge focus.

It shouldn't matter whether we are part of a MAT or not as our expectations as professionals should be the same excellent, high standards.

The funding received should only be seen as a strength and will help to build CPD which, in turn, will help improve and maintain outcomes.

As Meltham Moor feeds into Honley already, being part of a MAT will strengthen and increase the transition process.

The starting point of all the conversations for the Governing Body was always whether being part of a MAT would affect outcomes. The Governing Body has only agreed to the process so far because they believe that outcomes will improve. All the Governing Bodies of all the schools have met with each other and their priority is also to improve outcomes.

It is an opportunity for all schools to work together with colleagues across the board who want the same high standards for our students.

A lack of finance (if we remained as we are) could have a negative impact on outcomes.

At Ryburn our English results were not as favourable as those of Honley's, however our maths results were better. By having a formal agreement, we will be able to cross match our expertise much easier benefitting all our students.



Education, Governance & Leadership

Question Are we Ofsteded separately or all together? What happens if a school goes into an Ofsted category?

Answer Each school is Ofsteded individually like it is now, and it is the same framework. The MAT may be subject to inspections going forward, but this is not government policy yet. If any of the schools in the proposed MAT go into a category the first thing we will need to do is demonstrate capacity and expertise to support that school on its journey to improve standards and outcomes. The Regional Schools Commissioner determines if this is enough and will monitor improvements directly. If they don't believe the capacity exists they can look to remove a school from a Trust to another Trust if it deems appropriate.

Question What criteria is used when looking at becoming an academy?

Answer The criteria used is evolving as the DfE learns what is involved, but the DfE will look at school data and performance, governance proposals and finance (all 5 schools are in the black). There are two further steps following the consultation and a timeframe will be involved. The Funding Agreement has to be signed and in place by early December meaning a conversion date of January 2019 will be possible. It is important to note that at any point during the process any one of the partners involved can withdraw or delay their conversion.

Question Will each partner school be Ofsted inspected separately or together?

Answer Ofsted are currently looking at the criteria as to how to inspect a MAT. Currently, each school is inspected separately, but this is likely to change in the future. If one of the schools goes into Special Measures, there will have to be clear evidence from the Trust that there is capacity to address failings; if this is not possible, the school in Special Measures will be removed from the Trust. The whole process is about mutual support and trust. It is interesting to note that at the point of conversion for the current maintained schools, Ofsted will not visit until the third year.

Finance

Question Economies of scale, any suggestion of jobs losses?

Answer No. All schools are showing three year surplus. This is not about making staff cuts.

Question Can we afford it?

Answer Yes. The none academies can access the £25k grant which will cover their costs and for the schools who are already academies we hope to achieve the transition within the same grant. Going forward post conversion we have a surplus across the schools too.

Question Will we all need to work from the same systems eg finance/assessment etc

Answer Processes will be brought inline; there will be a procurement exercise to facilitate this.



- Question** **What will the cost of procurement be for financials services etc?**
- Answer** The Trust will need to appoint a Chief Financial Officer and we hope this will be an internal appointment made within the 5 schools. We will also need to use the same finance systems and we are looking to jointly procure this over the Spring/Summer so it can be ready for implementation in the autumn. A finance and business working party has been set up and they will be looking at all costs associated with conversion / set up and operation post conversion, these will become clearer over coming weeks.
- Question** **What will it cost us?**
- Answer** The schools who are not academies can access a grant of £25k to cover conversion costs. We are confident the costs will be met via this grant and not the school's day to day budget which is for the teaching and learning in the classroom.
- Question** **What “central services” will be shared? This might not be efficient with regards to services available responding to demand (supply – demand balance). Which authority prioritises supply? Provider – Trustees – CEO!!**
- Answer** We are working through this at the moment but envisage as a minimum things like shared financial management systems, auditors, clerking, HR services could all be centralised. More detail will follow once the work is nearing completion and we have a greater understanding of the options and any proposals.
- Question** **Do “other schools” break even? Very rare/impossible for organisations to break even – systems have to be “manipulated” to produce break even (creative accounting?!)**
- Answer** Academies cannot run deficit budgets and should always have a surplus position. Break even does happen but in few cases.
- Question** **Transformation costs are involved, £25,000 per academy given by the Government as contribution – what is remaining cost and who funds this?**
- 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.
- Question** **If your pension will remain with the same provider and your contributions will remain the same, however, the contribution from the employer may change will this have a negative effect on the final pension?**
- Answer** No it won't. The reason the employer contribution may change is because there has been a history over the last 8-10 years of there been a shortfall in the final pension fund. All employers have had contributions increase now as community schools however, it is very much dependent on the profile of staff in a school and whether they are in a pension scheme or not.



Question **How much will it cost the school?**
Answer Conversion costs will be covered by the £25k grant we receive once the application is approved. We do not envisage any additional monies been needed from the school budget.

Question **Why is conversion not at financial year end? Question Why January for conversion?**
Answer There is never a right time to convert. LA school’s financial year is April – March, Academies follow the academic year. We wanted to give ourselves enough time to do this thoroughly and properly giving due consideration to everything before we sign any Funding Agreements. January could move to March or April or beyond (but it must be on the 1st of a month).

Question **Any indication of the amount of funding we will get after top slicing and MAT charges? Concern over top slicing for CEO etc diluting school budgets further.**
Answer This has not been determined as yet. The finance working group are reviewing costs and preparing a proposal for governors and Heads to consider. WE do want to keep central costs to a minimum to invest as much back in each school and to the learners as possible.

Question **Is a MAT given additional funding or is it the same as it is now?**
Answer The schools in the MAT will receive the same funding per pupil as they do now, the difference for the non academies is they will receive 100% of their funding. The other positive aspect is as a MAT you can bid for funds that you can’t as maintained schools or single academies. We have already submitted one bid to the RSC for school improvement which may or may not be successful and we would envisage doing more of this going forward.

Finance & Education

Question **What services can the academy “buy back” from the local authority? This presumably assumes the academy has earlier sold services to the local authority?!! How do you buy back services to the local authority?**
Answer In the past Local Authorities have retained a small percentage of school budgets to pay for specific services. When a school becomes an academy it can then choose to buy back what services it wants from the LA. The key word is ‘choice’ if a service demonstrates best value an academy may wish to buy this and enter into a service level agreement.



Capital/Buildings

- Question** Who will be responsible for the upkeep of the building?
Answer The MAT will have the responsibility and apply for appropriate funding to support major capital projects.
- Question** Who will represent the staff if there is a problem/issue within school?
Answer This depends on the issue or problem raised but it could be it is via your line manager, Headteacher and / or staff governor.
- Question (HONLEY)** Can we get out of our PFI contract? 17 years into 34 year contract. If and when we become an academy, what will happen to the PFI contract?
Answer Unfortunately not. Honley are 17 years into a 34 year contract, Ryburn are 14 years into a 20 year contract. There is nothing we can do to exit these contracts earlier.
- Question (HONLEY)** How does support staffing work with PFI?
Answer Catering is delivered via Kirklees Catering and the cleaning is through the PFI Provider (a company called SPIE). The PFI provider determines the arrangements for cleaning and the school inputs into what is required as part of the contract delivery. All other support staff are employed directly by the school.
- Question** Is there a commitment to Kirklees Catering?
Answer Yes we have a contract for them to provide catering at the school and envisage this will transfer as part of the proposed conversion. The long term arrangements are always subject to change much like they are now and we will continue to ensure best value.
- Question** What if we need a large amount of money for big maintenance job? Where does this money come from?
Answer The MAT would receive central capital funds direct to facilitate maintenance works of course it would need to prioritise across the estate and develop an asset management strategy. In the case of emergencies there is funding we can access via the ESFA and insurance also sometimes covers big cost items/projects.
- Question** Would it be possible for the MAT to work on ECO improvements?
Answer Yes we would be delighted to look at opportunities in this area and if possible also link to the curriculum.
- Question (HONLEY)** Who currently employs catering, cleaning and associate staff?
Answer Cleaners and site maintenance are employed by SPIE and we have limited flexibility regarding these members of staff. We use Kirklees catering staff at the moment.
- Question (HONLEY)** Is there a commitment that Kirklees catering will still be used?
Answer In the short term, yes. Looking at the future, we will evaluate the best service provider to see who provides the best service and value at the time.



JWA concluded that the Governing Body were keen to continue the positive working relationships we currently have with all our partner schools including Meltham C of E, Helme etc. The forming of a MAT will not be a closed shop.

General

- Question** Can you be absorbed somewhere else in the future?
Answer Yes we could that is always a risk particularly for single academies.
- Question** Do other schools in the locality know?
Answer Yes. We have been researching options and having discussions for over 18months. Whatever happens as a result of this proposal we will continue to work as a partnership / cluster locally to benefit all children and families in our community.
- Question** What are the benefits of joining a MAT for our school?
Answer This was highlighted in each individual presentation given to staff and parents and a copy is attached in Appendices 3 and 4.
- Question** Will we still have a big enough voice being the smallest school in the MAT?
Answer Yes
- Question** Will this lead to a fragmented education without cohesion across the country? Will we still be able to uphold the values of our profession?
Answer The core purpose is to do the best for the children and as leaders we feel this is the best option.
- Question** In 2016 there was a U turn on all schools becoming academies by 2022 - outstanding and good schools do not need to be part of an academy trust. What are the benefits then ...why?
Answer There is an expectation that schools should convert but no hard deadline, it is now the Departments 'Goal'. The benefits were articulated as part of the presentations (see appendices 3 and 4).
- Question** Can you change your mind?
Answer The school can change its mind regarding conversion up until the point it signs the Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State.
- Question** On what basis were the other 4 schools selected? What does "like minded schools" mean? How many more may join?
Answer The schools are not selected, this is a natural progression of 2 years of dialogue with partnership schools and partners in neighbouring areas about academy status and MATs. Each school is a Good school and can choose what it does and its final proposals. Like minded means in areas such as our shared values and vision, our catchment areas and communities. For now we are proposing a group of 5 schools with a view over a 5 year period we may grow to a Trust of up to 12 schools.



Question Where do the “specialist project managers” come from? What kind/size/geographically located etc is TLT? Who financially supports these project managers/services provided?

Answer Project Managers are sometimes employed by Trusts to bring capacity and expertise which enables the leaders to focus on the education and ensuring all due processes and steps are followed for any conversion. The financial support comes from the DfE grants provided once the academy applications / orders are approved.

Question It would appear that only limited compliance to existing school rules and regulations is required by MATS – admissions, SEN/exclusions??

Answer All academies must follow the same rules and regulations linked to the National Admissions Code, SEND and exclusions policy.

Question Why are the proposed schools in the MAT geographically dispersed/remote?

Answer The schools are not that far away, the journey has taken 35/40mins and is on average 13 miles away. We see the small distance as a positive as the schools are not in direct competition with each other.

Comment The overarching concern is the possible/probable lack of disconnected autonomy (ie autonomy not affected by other members of the MAT/TLT) in relation to “how we do business” – culture, stimulation of interest in learning, behaviour/discipline, stimulation of staff and control of finance to make this happen!!

Question Why can we not remain with the LA? How will we benefit from being a MAT by comparison to the LA?

Answer This was answered as part of the staff presentation where governors articulated the reasons why they were proposing the change in status and creation of a new MAT.

Question Uniform, logos, names – could these be changed at a later date if out voted?

Answer Only if the school community wants it to change

Question Will we have chance to say what matters to us?

Answer Yes of course and this consultation is just the first stage of this process. During the summer term we will continue to engage with staff and talk through any points you wish.

Question How do we envisage sharing of good practice on such a scale? (geography). How will this work financially – eg time out?

Answer Sharing good practice physically we believe is manageable for example via shared training days / meetings and this will be planned in advance and within directed time.



Question As the LA would be in effect our landlord, what powers would they have?

Answer Powers are limited and limited mainly to those around land and buildings. So for example, if we wanted to develop the site in coming years we would need to seek approval of the LA as well as Secretary of State.

Question What happens if the government changes to Labour?

Answer We don't know. What we do know is academies were originally labour policy. To revert back to LA run schools would take the whole period of a 5 year government term of office and would mean significant investment back in LA's.

Question If we are going to do this, is it set in stone i.e. no going back? Why might we withdraw?

Answer Examples of why a school might withdraw include: risks to great, costs are too high, don't agree with the proposed levels of delegation.

Question Can schools be forced to join us?

Answer No schools cannot be forced to join us. We can be approached by the RSC or schools direct but we can say no if appropriate.

Question Are staff able to say No?

Answer Ultimately this is a decision made by the Governing Body but will always be made in the interests of pupils and staff. If staff feel strongly it shouldn't happen we would of course listen to this before making any final decision.

Question Are holidays the same or different?

Answer Same as they are now although we must stress even locally they are different. This is something we will need to monitor going forward.

Comment I thought the presentation was excellent – it busted a lot of myths regarding academies and answered all of the questions that I had prior to attending. Having read a lot of negative press regarding academies, I was not expecting to be convinced. However, the presentation changed my mind and I am now in favour of Honley joining the other schools in the MAT. I thought that there was a very positive atmosphere in the meeting and hope that this will continue if we do decide to join the MAT. I am particularly excited by the prospect of collaborating with other schools and the increased financial support that will come from joining the MAT. I also think that the conversion will provide exciting professional development opportunities, which is very important to me at this stage in my career.
