



Earley St. Peter's C.E. Primary School

GOVERNORS' MEETING

Thursday 5th January 2017 at 5.00pm in the school

Minutes

Present: C. Ferris, H. Hobday, J. Ince, A. Powley, J. Peters (Chair), G. Reddie, B. Williams, J. Williams, A. Leigh-Pollitt, A. Barlow, H. Wooller (Head)

In attendance: C. Perry (Clerk)

Apologies for absence: M. Bisset, H. Chaudhry, J.A. Woods

		Actions
1	Opening Prayer Meeting was opened with a prayer led by Andy Barlow	
2	Apologies for Absence Julie Anne Woods, Hafsa Chaudhry, Martyn Bisset	
3	J.P welcomed everyone to the special meeting to discuss the working party's proposal for Earley St Peter's C of E Primary school to convert to an Academy and to form a multi academy trust (MAT). She considered this to be a very exciting opportunity for the school, upon which she would welcome the views of all governors. Martyn Bisset was unable to be present as his wife had recently given birth. Governors conveyed congratulations and best wishes.	
4	Presentation H.W introduced a power point presentation explaining the work and recommendations of the working party. At their meeting of 21 June 2016 governors had agreed that in principle they wished to convert to an academy, to register an interest with the DfE, and to open discussions with potentially suitable schools with a view to leading a MAT. It had been stressed that the way forward would need to be based on a set of non-negotiables to preserve the ethos, character and heritage of Earley St Peter's. In particular it was essential <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to preserve the school's outstanding distinctiveness and effectiveness as a C of E school in partnership with the Church of England at Diocesan and Parish level• to be part of MAT initially comprising primary age range only• to secure and safeguard ESP's school leadership including current day to day teaching and learning practices and curriculum in order to	

continue the school improvement journey and become a centre of excellence serving the local community

- to retain a local governing body for each school within the MAT structure, with the majority of Foundation governors as in our current Instrument of Government and with participation by Earley St Peter's at Trustee Level.
- to work collaboratively and develop school to school support with other Church of England primary schools (VA/VC) respecting their uniqueness and local context
- not to become part of a large established MAT in which there would be the potential danger to lose control over the direction of school improvement, underlying values, philosophies, teaching methods and practices and local context such as uniform, term dates etc.

Vision

The vision was to create a community of highly successful Church schools providing excellent education for all while recognising that each academy within the MAT should retain its distinctiveness. Each Academy should become a centre of excellence and meet the needs of the community which it served. Within the MAT a broad, balanced and rich curriculum would be offered within national guidelines to inspire pupils to learn and progress. Those of all faiths and none would be welcome and the diversity within our schools celebrated.

Form and structure

The proposal was to form a MAT using the prescribed model agreed between the DfE and the Church of England. Technically this was a company limited by guarantee, a frequently used format for charities and not for profit organisations. A MAT took responsibility for a number of academies. While each Academy remained a separate school with its own Local Governing Body, a board of Trustees took responsibility for the MAT as a whole. Following this model, the MAT would be formed initially by the Members, primarily comprising the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) and some individual members of the ODBE. The Members would appoint the Trustees, with a majority of Foundation Trustees. They in turn would appoint the Local Governing Bodies of each school (to include staff and parent governors) with a majority of Foundation Governors nominated by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) relating to each school.

MEMBERS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES

In reply to B.W who asked whether the Board of Trustees' role was mainly financial, G.R confirmed that the Trustees entered into the Funding agreement with the government in relation to the whole MAT and were the employer of all staff. The Trustees would appoint senior staff and delegate

other powers to the local governing bodies.

A.L.P – asked whether the Board of Trustees could grow to a point where Earley St Peter’s would no longer be able to make all decisions and may instead have them imposed upon them. H.W / J.P confirmed that the maximum number of Trustees would be 12 and it was important to form an academy rather than join a large academy chain in which participation at Trustee level would not be practical. It was also important to seek partnership with like-minded schools.

B.W asked whether a MAT would need to impose a limit to the number of schools joining.

G.R said that that 1000 to 1200 pupils was considered to represent a “critical mass” in terms of viability. With over 500 pupils already on roll at Earley St Peter’s it was unlikely that the number of schools would exceed half a dozen but ultimately that would be a decision for the Trustees.

Why make the change?

H.W stressed that the working party considered that Academy status, with funding provided directly from the government, would provide more freedom and flexibility in terms of delivering the curriculum. Working with other schools in a MAT would also provide more opportunities for pupils in terms of different sites and settings. Within a MAT there would be greater scope for working with particular groups of pupils including SEN, EAL and G&T for instance. There would be scope for economies of scale across a MAT and also greater opportunities for staff development. The capacity of the LA to provide support was considered to be in decline and like other local authorities, it had been encouraging schools to consider their future and the possibility of academy conversion. The Government had made it clear that academy conversion remained its policy, although it felt this could be achieved without legislation. The working party considered that if the school did not take the lead, it would eventually be led. By taking a positive step the school would be in a stronger position to manage the future and control its own destiny.

In response to JI, J.P said she considered this move would allow greater freedom in commissioning services and economies of scale. This would be advantageous in the long run and give best value and service. More capacity of leadership would also offer opportunities for consultancy and other potential streams of income. Government funding for schools would undoubtedly reduce further and schools would need to find ways of generating additional income. Being part of a MAT would provide such opportunities as well, for instance, as facilitating training needs internally across the MAT .

A.B asked whether each school in a MAT would be financially independent.

G.R confirmed that the Trustees would have overall responsibility for funds.

H.W added that under a scheme of delegation responsibilities would be delegated to the Local Governing Body of each school according to numbers on roll and need. At present the LA retained a proportion of funds due to each school, whether or not services were required. This would no longer happen and the Trustees could be more responsive to each school’s needs.

Why now?

The working party believed that as the school had recently completed and had had very positive outcomes from OFSTED and SIAMS inspections, it demonstrated the ability and capacity in terms of leadership to plan for the future and move forward. With the level of LA support in question, the Diocese had increasing capacity and offered the prospect of a very sound level of support in the future. Conversion funding was likely to decrease and if conversion were to be delayed there could be an adverse impact on funding.

What impact would this have on Earley St Peter's C of E Primary School?

It was anticipated that this would have a very positive impact in developing working partnerships between schools and allowing financial and educational benefits to develop. Outwardly facing there would be little visible difference for the school. The employment of all staff would be protected and the school would retain its current uniform, admission arrangements, term dates, school times and name.

The Keys Academy Trust.

The working party had suggested this name for the proposed MAT. This reflected the school's current logo of the crossed keys, and its strap line 'Unlocking the Future' embodying the School's current philosophy of moving forward and serving its community.

During the Summer Term contact had been made with seven other local C of E schools. Five of the seven schools have entered into discussions and due diligence checks had been carried out. For some schools there were difficulties with timing as they were awaiting various inspections such as OFSTED. Currently one school had proposed joining the Keys Academy Trust if plans for the MAT went forward and others were giving consideration to joining. The Diocese had suggested that other schools could join at a later date.

A.L.P asked what would happen if no other schools wished to join.

G.R stressed that the school was already big enough to form a MAT and consider the possibility of other schools joining subsequently.

(C.F had to leave at this point but indicated that she was in favour of the proposal)

J.W asked whether the Diocese would actively support the Keys Academy and G.R gave assurance that from the outset the Diocese had been giving firm encouragement to proceed. The form and structure meant that the Keys Academy Trust would be within the family of the Diocese of Oxford the Trust in following Christian principles and in serving local communities

Principles into Practice.

H.W shared that the Diocese had asked for consideration to be given to the Keys Academy Trust agreeing to sponsor and support as part of the MAT a school that was currently in special measures. Apart from the desire to assist, there would be a number of positive benefits, including the size of the school as this would bring pupil numbers up to around 1200 and provide both the "critical mass" and a range of the opportunities identified earlier.

	<p>J.I asked whether there would be any funding incentives in taking on a school in this way and H.W confirmed that the Keys Academy Trust would be eligible to apply for a grant of up to £100,000.</p> <p>J.P urged governors, in making their decision, to consider the challenge it offered. It would reflect well on both the staff and management team. It would offer development opportunities for the staff and also continue to challenge and engage our leadership team. It would also facilitate the advantages for pupils and economies of scale referred to earlier.</p> <p>A.B and A.L.P sought assurances that the sponsorship of a school in special measures would not have a negative impact on Earley St Peter’s. H.W and J.P were both confident that there was no cause for concern and the process could be effectively managed.</p> <p>H.H in welcoming the proposal, suggested that this gave the school an opportunity to put its Christian values into practice.</p>	
5	<p>Following extensive discussion, and whilst recognising the need to be informed by consultation, governors agreed unanimously to -</p> <p>Proceed with conversion of Earley St Peter’s CE Primary School to an academy</p> <p>Proceed with forming a multi academy trust to be called The Keys Academy Trust</p> <p>Proceed with sponsoring a school in special measures and to admit it to The Keys Academy Trust.</p>	H.W
6	<p>Moving forward –</p> <p>The next step would be a public consultation lasting one month.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation had been prepared for staff. • There would be a meeting of the PCC on 9 January at which the Head and governors had been invited to speak about the school and the current proposals and to seek the PCC’s support. • A letter would be sent to parents setting out the proposals and giving information on how to submit views. • A specific email had been provided for feedback to governors. • Surgeries for parents, with three session times, would be held on 11 January. Representatives from the Diocese would be present to support and advise. 	<p>H.W, J.P, G.R</p> <p>H.W, J.P, G.R, H.H, A.P</p>
7	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting – 1st February at 7.30pm</u></p> <p>Governors were asked to check their school email accounts regularly for updates and the possibility of additional meetings being called.</p>	All Governors
	The meeting was closed with a prayer given by Hannah Hobday.	