



DARELL PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Supplementary Q&A for Parent/Community Consultation on Academy Conversion

This is the final Q&A from the Consultation process. It is not possible to answer all the questions at this stage, since some relate to detailed and/or complex issues that are still under review. However, all questions and comments will be shared with the Governing Body and all questions will be used as part of the due diligence process to ensure that the decision is being made with a complete set of information. At the end of this document is a list of question topics that have not been addressed but are part of the due diligence process.

ACADEMY CONVERSION PROCESS

50. Why make the change now?

The Governing Body have been reviewing options since 2014 and in June 2016, agreed that joining Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust would be the best option to achieve continued school improvement. If this is the right option, then there is little benefit in delaying this change for another year.

51. When consulting with families at Darell, has the key information been translated for EAL families?

The school's policy is to arrange for translation upon request, due to the wide range of languages spoken by parents and carers. No translation requests have been made by any EAL families.

In addition to this written information there have also been opportunities to talk with Governors either on a one-to-one basis on Friday mornings or at the consultation meetings.

52. Is the school keeping track of families that have asked questions? Why isn't it compulsory for parents to submit consultation feedback?

The website gave the facility to submit comments and questions anonymously, therefore, it is not possible to track who has commented. Normal consultation practice is that feedback is voluntary and there is no requirement that everyone should provide an opinion.

53. What will happen if the Governing Body don't vote in favour of converting?

If the Governing Body decide not to convert, then there will be no change to the current arrangements and the school will remain a maintained Local Authority school. The Governing may decide to review other options in the future.

54. No other primaries in the borough have converted to an academy. Which schools can tell us about this process and support us?

The process of conversion is no different for a primary or secondary school. Grey Court and Hollyfield have both converted to an academy so they will be able to provide support. We also receive support from the Department for Education, who provide a dedicated project leader for each conversion and Achieving for Children who have committed to supporting all local schools interested in converting to academy status.

55. Is academisation reversible? Can we go back to being a maintained school if this doesn't work?

Converting to an academy is not reversible and a school cannot return to being a maintained school. However, a school can move between academy trusts with the agreement of the Department for Education and the relevant trusts.

56. What are the pros and cons of joining a local primary federation?

A federation is a grouping of schools under a single Governing Body. The schools remain separate with respect to funding. The arrangement is not formal and there is no shared accountability for school performance.

The pros and cons arise from the informality of the arrangement. On the positive side, it can be a simple way to share best practice while retaining independence and it is easier to leave if the arrangement doesn't work.

However, this is also the biggest downside to the arrangement. The agreements between schools are voluntary and therefore may not survive difficult periods in a school, such as a poor Ofsted result.

The Local Authority has supported the schools joining together in localities, where best practice can be shared. There has been little interest in the local school community to forming federations since much of the work done within the school locality programme is similar to the activities of a federation.

There are three federations in the borough and they are all between schools who are already in close proximity and have complementary school phases, e.g. infant and junior schools.

The Governing Body do not believe that the current locality arrangements or a local federation will fully meet the objectives of:

- School improvement (best possible teaching and educational outcomes for each child)
- Attracting, retaining and developing staff, and developing robust middle and senior leadership
- Best possible value for money in the face of shrinking budgets

If the school joined Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust, the school would still continue to access local collaborations within the borough, as Grey Court already does. However, these collaborations alone will not provide the types of robust support programmes with measurable impact which are needed for Darell's future.

57. Has sharing resources and cooperating with Windham Nursery and Children's Centres been considered?

This has been considered but would not meet the objectives that the Governing Body set at the beginning of the process.

ACADEMY TRUST STRUCTURE**58. Did the Governing Body consider being the second or third primary school to join Every Child, Every Day instead of the first? What happens if no primary schools join after us or if a group of them decide to form their own MAT? We may regret being proactive and wish we had formed a MAT with them.**

The benefits of joining early and possibly first, is that the school will have an opportunity to influence the scheme of delegation in a more significant way at the outset rather than when it has already been developed for other primary schools. It may be that other primary schools don't join but there will still be benefits to us in working with the Trust as a single primary school.

The scenario outlined above may happen but at the moment, there is no suggestion that a primary MAT is going to develop within the local schools. However, if it did and the Governing Body felt

that this was an improved option, the school can transfer between MATs provided it is agreed between the relevant academy trusts and the Department for Education.

59. What is Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust's experience in primary school education?

The Trust is looking to grow and eventually, include up to 5 primaries and therefore, it is a key element of their plans for the future. As part of the due diligence process, the Governing Body will be looking closely at the current level of expertise and their development plans. The GB will be seeking assurance from the Trust to have sufficient primary expertise in place from the time that we might join.

60. Which decisions will the Trust make which were previously made by staff at Achieving for Children?

There are no decisions that are transferred from Achieving for Children (AfC) to the Trust. AfC provides school improvement services to the school and these may be transferred to other providers if they offer better value. The Local Authority have a number of statutory duties executed by AfC which it will retain, e.g. school place planning.

61. If the MAT started in September 2016, how can there be a proven track record that the MAT is a success?

Hollyfield and Grey Court started to work together under the same leadership in June 2014 when Maggie Bailey became Head Teacher at Hollyfield. Within two years, the school had moved from Requires Improvement to Good in its Ofsted inspections. Before September 2016, Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust was responsible for only Grey Court. Hollyfield and Grey Court joined together to form a Multi-Academy Trust in 2016.

ACADEMY GOVERNANCE

62. What is the Scheme of Delegation? Is it publicly available?

The Scheme of Delegation is the document that formally agrees the relationship between the school and the Academy Trust. It details what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to the school and which are retained by the Trust. It is reviewed every year. The current year's document is available and is added to the school website. It is important to note that the current year is a scheme for two secondary schools only and does not include any changes that would be required to incorporate any primary school into the Trust. The Governing Body will be making a significant contribution to the proposed scheme of delegation in September 2017 should we decide to convert.

63. What will a Local Governing Body look like?

The constitution of the local governing body would be agreed by Darell and its duties will be set out within the Scheme of Delegation. There will still be elected representation from staff and parents.

64. What happens if Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust is under-performing?

Trust performance will be monitored by the Department for Education. In the event that the MAT consistently under-performs, then the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) will work with the MAT on an improvement plan. In the worst case, the RSC will work with the school and the Trust to identify a new trust for the school to join.

65. How are the local authority monitoring the performance of academies?

The Local Authority conduct statutory monitoring of all local schools whether they are maintained or academies in order to maintain the high standard of all schools in the borough.

66. What will be the process for complaints?

There is an Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust complaints policy, which has the following stages:

Stage 1: Complaint heard by a member of staff

Stage 2: Complaint heard by appropriate senior member of staff appointed by the Headteacher

If not satisfied with the school's processes, then a complaint can be made to Ofsted or the Department for Education.

This is no different to the stages in the current Darell procedure.

67. What would the trust be free to change about Darell without consultation, i.e. its name, its uniform or its staffing?

There is no difference in the requirements for consultation between a maintained school and an academy. Significant changes, such as those to uniform, school day length and admissions, are expected to be subject to consultation in line with government guidelines. Under the proposed Scheme of Delegation, the school's Headteacher remains responsible for staff recruitment and management.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

68. Nelson Primary School joined a MAT with Waldegrave School following an Ofsted inspection in 2013 where it was rated as inadequate but has just been rated inadequate again by Ofsted. This MAT has clearly not helped Nelson to improve so what is the rationale for Darell joining the Every Child Every Day Academy Trust?

Our proposal to join Every Child Every Day is a proactive move unlike the arrangement with Nelson and Waldegrave. It is based firmly on the opportunities provided within the Trust to improve teaching and learning and outcomes for our children. By doing this to we also aim to improve the standing of the school in the local community and fill the school to capacity. There are many positive examples of primary/secondary collaborations throughout the country where there has been a significant positive impact in primary education. Grey Court has a track record of supporting both primary and secondary schools in the area and has demonstrated positive outcomes for staff and children in both settings. We have already seen commitments from the Trust to provide hands-on support. Currently, Every Child Every Day is committed providing specialist support to Darell in this academic year in the following areas:

- English and Maths teaching in Year 6
- Access to Grey Court's professional development programme for Middle Leadership staff
- Training for staff on Restorative Justice techniques to help children to resolve conflict independently of adults
- Ofsted preparation support from an Assistant Head who is currently an Ofsted Inspector.

This support has been provided as part of our long-term relationship with Grey Court and is provided on a voluntary basis at this time. The support provided indicates Every Child, Every Day's commitment and capability in supporting Darell to improve standards in teaching and learning. As we move into the due diligence phase, the Governing Body will be looking in detail at formalising the support, governance structure and accountabilities between the school and the Trust through the Scheme of Delegation.

If we choose not to join the Trust but other primary schools do, then the Trust will need to prioritise the needs of Trust schools first.

68. The Teaching and Learning review was positive, why do we need to improve the school?

The Governing Body, together with the school senior leadership team, are responsible for the continued improvement of the school. There were many positive elements from the Teaching and Learning review and there were also recommendations for improvement. The school is working to implement the recommendations to provide the best possible education for all our children.

69. How can the school raise standards and remain inclusive?

Darell School has always had an inclusive ethos and this will remain at the heart of the school's vision. This means that admissions will be open to all and that we will have policies that ensure all children can access a high quality education in a supportive environment.

Closing the gap in attainment for disadvantaged children is an essential part of the school's objectives. The government provides additional funding to support disadvantaged children, which is known as the Pupil Premium Grant. This is intended to provide the additional teaching resources to support good progress and achievement.

70. How quickly would we expect to see improvement?

The school would expect to see improvement from the first term onwards. A lot of these improvements may not be readily observable to parents since they might relate to internal school processes and teaching practices. Many of the changes would be gradual to ensure that they are well embedded and sustainable.

SCHOOL POLICIES

71. Why won't Darell children be prioritised for admissions to Grey Court?

This is not currently part of the Trust policy as there are currently no primary schools within the MAT so the issue has not arisen. The Governing Body can request that this is considered as part of joining the Trust. However, it would also need to be reviewed by the PAN London Admissions process and be consulted upon. It is not something that the Trust can decide without wider agreement and would not be possible to implement before 2019/2020.

72. What are the options for going back to a single form for each year? Wouldn't this help with our funding issues?

School place planning is coordinated by AfC and a change in our admissions numbers would need to be agreed within the wider Richmond admissions processes. The school is consulted as part of this process but it is not something that the school can control.

While reducing the number of classes would reduce the number of staff required, it does not reduce the fixed costs of running the school, e.g. building maintenance, energy costs, etc. It is likely that this would not significantly improve the overall budget balance in the long-term.

WORKING FOR AN ACADEMY

73. Could Darell teachers and support staff be expected to start work earlier or leave later?

No - current staff terms and conditions are not changed when transferred to a new employer.

74. Would the Trust be entitled to move children and staff between the schools to improve its figures?

No - children have a place at a particular school and are only moved at parental request or where it is in the best interests of the child's development after serious consideration and discussion with the child's parents or carers, i.e. for enhanced SEN support.

Staff terms and conditions are not changed when an employee is transferred under TUPE. However, an individual may choose to work in a different location either for professional development or in agreement with the local leadership. The Trust could employ peripatetic teachers and specialists who work across a range of schools but this would be agreed as part of their contract upon employment.

SCHOOL FINANCES

75. Could converting to an academy put off prospective parents?

We don't believe so - providing the school improves outcomes for its children. Grey Court is an oversubscribed school and has been an academy since 2012. Darell would retain its own identity and ethos as part of the Trust and it is this which generally attracts parents to the school.

School improvement and promoting positive opinions of the school in the local community will have more impact on admissions than academy status. Darell is not currently filling all its available places. For September 2016 Reception intake, we received 23 first choice applications, of which 14 were siblings.

76. What services do we get free or discounted access to as a Local Authority school? Will this change if the school becomes an academy?

The Local Authority have confirmed that there is no differentiation in charging maintained schools and academies.

77. Who will own the school lands and buildings if the school converts to an academy? Will the academy trust have the right to use the school assets for any other purpose?

The Local Authority will continue to own the land and school buildings. It will be leased to the Academy Trust, who will pay a nominal rent to the Local Authority and will be responsible of the upkeep of the school buildings. The terms of the lease will outline what the land can be used for and this cannot be changed without the agreement of the Local Authority.

78. Does the council foresee that services provided by Achieving for Children and the local authority will not exist in the future?

The continued reduction in budgets means that services provided from the Local Authority are likely to change or even reduce over time. It is not possible to provide a detailed description of which services will be affected.

79. Are the governing Body aware of the issues which make people choose a different school and can they explain these? How do these issues link to the school's improvement plan?

The school and Local Authority makes every effort to understand why people choose schools. The school tracks leavers in order to understand where they go and if possible, the reasons for leaving the school. It is not always possible to determine why families don't choose the school, however, this is something we continue to work on.

80. What is the plan to improve Darell's reputation in the community? If it one based purely on results then isn't that a little risky since there is no guarantee that results will improve?

While results are an important factor, there are many other reasons why a family might choose Darell. As well as improving results, the school is always looking for opportunities to advertise the other exciting aspects of school life. The school also attends community events such as singing in the Richmond Music Festival or participating in school sports events.

Securing staff development and training and developing leadership is a key aim of this proposal. Dedicated staff and strong leadership are things which parents often look for when choosing their child's school.

Collaborating with other schools in the MAT will allow us to offer both curriculum-based and other enriching activities for the best possible value. Grey Court and Hollyfield have large and varied facilities in areas such as music, sport and natural sciences. Giving our pupils access to such facilities would be beneficial and something we can use in our communications with potential parents.

81. Who will be responsible for the school finances? Will they have the expertise to do this?

Spending decisions are already made by the Governing Body with the support of the School Business Manager. This will not change when converting to an academy.

These topics raised by parents are still under review by the Governing Body and will be considered as part of the due diligence process prior to taking a final decision. This is not a complete list of areas being reviewed.

- SEN provision - is there sufficient SEN provision in the school? How will the SEN provision be improved by joining Every Child, Every Day? How will SEN processes work with an additional organisation included in the processes?
- Teacher development - commitment regarding teacher CPD, how will this work?
- Completion of staff consultation and consideration of feedback
- Employment of new teachers and other staff - with what T&Cs? and what are the qualification requirements? What is the Trust's policy on unqualified teaching staff?
- Communications from Trust to parents
- Accountability - clear understanding of accountabilities between school and trust
- Risk assessment - have the GB fully considered the risks associated with this change and also with staying with Local Authority
- Detailed review of financial position of Trust
- Detailed review of central services offered by Trust and comparison with AfC services
- Financial oversight of Trust - who will do this and how does it work?