



DARELL PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

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

As part of the consultation process, there were a number of unanswered questions that were included in the due diligence process. Here are the answers to those questions for parent information.

ACADEMY CONVERSION PROCESS

83. What would the likely costs be in terms of lawyers and consultants to leave Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust?

This is difficult to answer with any certainty since this will be dependent upon the timing and the reason for leaving the Trust. As an example, DfE provides a grant of £25,000 to cover the costs of joining.

84. What does the Regional Schools Commissioner do? Has a representative from Darell met with the RSC this year to discuss the process?

Regional schools commissioners (RSCs) act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and are accountable to the National Schools Commissioner.

Each RSC is supported by a headteacher board (HTB). HTBs are made up of experienced academy headteachers and other sector leaders who advise and challenge RSCs on the decisions they make. For more information, please read here (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/south-east-england-and-south-london-headteacher-board>). They also work with Local Authorities and Ofsted.

RSCs main responsibilities include:

- taking 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

No-one has met with the Regional Schools Commissioner and there is no requirement to do so at this stage. We have been working closely with the DfE and the school has a dedicated project lead, who provides advice and guidance on the academy conversion process.

85. What exactly are the risks of not joining the trust? Has a risk assessment been undertaken looking at staying as we are as an alternative to changing. If so, can it be shared?

A detailed risk assessment was completed in March 2017 and the output was used to formulate the next stage of the due diligence activity. It has now been updated to include the findings from the due diligence process.

The key risks for staying as a maintained school are:

- *Lack of expertise to support school improvement.* AfC have notified all schools of significant staffing changes that will reduce their capability to support school improvement. This is a recent change and therefore, the specific impacts have yet to be assessed.
- *Financial uncertainty associated with lack of clarity around long-term budgets;* irrespective of this proposal, there is general uncertainty about how much funding the school will receive in the future, particularly remaining as a small standalone primary school
- *Potential for forced academisation:* If the school does not choose to become an academy, there remains a risk that conversion will be forced upon us by DfE. In this case, the school will have less influence on the choice of MAT.

The key risks/uncertainties identified for joining the Trust are:

- *Financial uncertainty associated with lack of clarity around long-term budgets;* whilst this is a risk for joining the MAT, there is general uncertainty about how much funding the school will receive in the future.
- *The sustainability of leadership within the Trust at executive and trustee level;* there are no specific mitigations of this risk other than the commitment within the Trust Board that it will seek to ensure that it has Trustees with the necessary skills to ensure that the Trust meets its commitments as outlined in its vision statement.
- *Lack of primary expertise to support school improvement.* The Trust Board now has two representatives with a primary background. In addition to Jane Spencer, who has many years' experience as a primary school governor and Chair of Governors, Elaine England has joined as a Trustee. Elaine has many years' experience as a successful primary school head in Richmond and was an interim head at Darell during 2014-15 and 2016.
- *Being the first primary in an all-secondary MAT and the potential that no other primaries join;* as outlined above, the Trust now has the foundations to support primary schools. It cannot be stated at this time is and when other primary schools will join but the first step to ensure that the Trust has the capacity to support such school is well-developed.
- *Loss of identity and/or autonomy from joining the Trust;* loss of autonomy is a potential risk for schools in MATS which are judged to be below "Good" by Ofsted; this enables the MAT to ensure that the changes needed to improve educational

outcome are quickly secured. By joining ECEDAT at this stage, Darell is we are aiming to retain our Good Ofsted rating and continue to work towards Outstanding. Loss of identity is felt to be a lesser risk as the two schools currently within the MAT have retained their own distinct characters

ACADEMY TRUST STRUCTURE

86. Will the trust communicate direct with parents or will communicate come only from the school?

The primary communications will remain between the school and the parent. There may be times when the Trust wish to communicate with all parents, however, this will likely be via the normal school communication channels.

A Trust website has been set up: <http://everychildeverydayacademytrust.org/> which provides an information route for parents.

ACADEMY GOVERNANCE

87. Will ECEDAT publish the minutes of its governing decisions? What other information will the Trust make public?

The Trust will publish all statutory information, including financial statements and funding arrangements.

88. Who are the trustees and who are the members of Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust? What is their expertise in education/the business of running a school?

Information about the trustees and members of the Trust is available on their website: <http://everychildeverydayacademytrust.org/staff/trust-leaders/> .

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

89. How will the Trust improve the SEN capability at Darell?

Every Child, Every Day support will encompass improving outcomes for all pupil, including those with SEN. Grey Court has similar number of children with SEN as Darell and has developed a comprehensive structure to support these children, including a Deputy Head for Inclusion, a SENCO, a Specialist SEN Teacher & Assessor and a Speech and Language Therapist. As part of the Trust, we would have access to this specialist expertise.

WORKING FOR AN ACADEMY

90. What is the Trust policy for hiring new staff and their pay and conditions?

It is Trust policy to adhere to the Department for Education's School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document.

91. Do we have a clear commitment from Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust to retaining the leadership in the school and the trust and in supporting and training teachers?

Representatives from Hollyfield and Grey Court have been working closely with Darell's leadership team during this academic year, including two Teaching and Learning Reviews conducted with the Local Authority. There is no intention on the part of the Trust to make any changes to the leadership of Darell.

Grey Court school is a Teaching School and as such, is a centre of excellence, taking a more focused role that prioritises:

- co-ordinating and delivering high quality school-based Initial Teacher Training
- providing high quality school-to-school support to spread excellent practice, particularly to schools that need it most;
- providing evidence-based professional and leadership development for teachers and leaders across their network.

As a member of the MAT, our staff would have the opportunity to participate in the professional and leadership development courses.

SCHOOL FINANCES**92. Has a detailed review of the Trust's financial position been completed?**

A detailed review of the Trust's financial position has been completed by the Local Authority's school's accountant and the key issues identified were:

- *Top-slice*. The MAT will charge 3-5% for the following central services: school improvement, human resources, and financial services. The equivalent cost from the Local Authority is likely to be 1.5-2%. This has not yet been confirmed formally by the Local Authority owing to the complexity of school finance and the National Funding Formula changes; however, it is the current best view. On this basis, the transition to a MAT may increase our top-slice costs, however, these should be offset by an improved service and overall school improvement.
- *Budget Allocation*. The Trust have confirmed that funding allocation will be on the basis of our funding agreement less the 3-5% 'top-slice' for central services.
- *Pension Deficit*. The MAT policy is that any LGPS Pension Deficits recognised in our Accounts sit with the individual academy to which they relate. An agreement should be in place to pay back the liability over a set period of time and therefore the value of the liability and the terms of agreement will be reflected in the forward financial planning and budget setting process of the academy. If the school progress to the next phase of conversion then this is something we would work on to ensure that the school had a clear understanding of this liability.
- *Systems*. There is likely to be a one-off cost to the school during the first year for purchase and implementation of new financial and other management reporting systems. In addition, the ongoing maintenance costs are likely to be higher than the Local Authority.

- *Finance support.* The financial cycle for the MAT is September to September which means that the school will incur additional costs due to needing staff support during school holidays.

93. Does Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust have a funding pot in place for Darell to make up the shortfall? What funds would be committed to Darell in the short- and long-term?

Funding for Darell is set by the Education Funding agreement. There is no additional funding already identified by the Trust to support Darell. However, additional funding from grants or fund-raising activities, would be shared across the Trust as appropriate.

94. Which services were previously provided by the LA and which ones will be the MAT now be providing?

Services expected to be provided from the outset are HR, payroll, procurement and audit. This will be charged at 3-5% of the school budget, which is comparable with other MATs. In year 1 it is envisaged that the following services will be provided under a common contract:

- Payroll
- Gas, Electricity & Water
- Auditors

School improvement services are already being provided by the Trust and will continue.

95. Will more costs be passed onto parents in an effort to save money, e.g. school meals or FitForSport? Is there a policy regarding additional costs for parents from ECEDAT?

There is no overarching policy from the Trust at this point for charging but each school has its own policy, which takes a similar approach:

- Activities relating to National Curriculum are provided free of charge
- Optional activities will be charged at cost and provision will be made to support families that are eligible for Free School Meals.

Further information regarding Darell's policy is available in the Charging and Remission Policy - <http://www.darell.richmond.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1674&type=pdf>.

96. What is the financial oversight of the Trust?

The Trust Finance procedures can be found at: <http://everychildeverydayacademytrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ECEDAT-Finance-Procedures.pdf>. They are compliant with all necessary legislation, of which the principal requirements are set out in the Academies Financial Handbook.