

Irby Primary School Academy Conversion consultation Questions & Answers

Parent / Carers meeting, Tuesday 21st March 2023 at 5.15pm

Attendees:

Tony Lacey, CEO, Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust
Richard Dixon, Headteacher, Irby Primary School
Graham Barley, Chair of Governors, Irby Primary School
Samantha Douglas, Vice Chair of Governors
Louise Copland, Parent Governor
Victoria Inman, Parent Governor
Ann Wells, Co-opted Governor
Hardip Hayer, Senior Project Manager, AMF UK (Ltd)
Suzanne Rimmer, Project Support Manager, AMF UK (Ltd)
Parents x 3

QUESTION: How many schools do you want to take into the trust?

ANSWER: TL (CEO Oak Trees MAT) confirmed that once the number of schools in the trust reaches fourteen/fifteen then it will slow down the period of growth.

QUESTION: How will the staff be affected, could they be moved to other schools in the trust?

ANSWER: RD, Headteacher confirmed that this will not happen, the structure does not change, and the responsibility stays with him on a day to day basis. However, if a staff member wants to apply for a job within the trust for promotion or personal reasons then the opportunity is there. The Wirral pay scheme for teachers and support staff will stay the same, nothing changes. The opportunities for staff will be increased should they want to progress.

COMMENT: As a parent you do not want to see good teachers go.

COMMENT: The trust does not move staff to other schools, it is here to provide support and collaboration.

COMMENT: RD, Headteacher said that parents will not see any difference on a day to day basis. All they will see is the school go from strength to strength.

QUESTION: Will SEND funding stay the same?

ANSWER: RD Headteacher confirmed that this will not change if we become part of a trust.

QUESTION: Will there be access to more training with regards to SEND?

ANSWER: Oak Trees MAT have a SEN lead who provides training.

Parents/ Carers Feedback Received through Feedback Form or Email

QUESTION: Whilst I have no specific questions on the information provided to date, it is extremely disappointing that only one meeting is being held at a time difficult for most working parents.

In order to be as inclusive as possible, it would have been useful to have had an alternative date & time.

ANSWER: Thank you for getting in touch.

I appreciate your concerns and in order to ensure all stakeholders have access to the required information as part of a thorough consultation, we will be sending out the power point presentation and it is already on the school website.

Whilst we will struggle to hold multiple meetings, I am available to any parents who wish to ask questions either by catching myself at the gate at the start of the day or through making an appointment.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions.

Thank you for your continued support.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask a couple of questions as I couldn't attend the academy consultation this evening. I have received some feedback from parents who were in attendance and they provided some positive information regarding teachers T&C's and Mr Dixon involvement in decision making.

How much control does the academy have over making changes to the curriculum?

What would happen if the oak trees academy got into financial difficulties and couldn't provide the required funding to Irby Primary?

Could class sizes increase? And will the same entry requirements apply for new applications e.g. catchment, siblings?

ANSWER: Thank you for getting in touch.

We will forward the consultation presentation to parents and it will be available on the school website, which may help to address some of the points you have raised.

Whilst the MAT will provide support and challenge as we seek to achieve our aspirational targets, they do not dictate our curriculum and we will continue to develop it to meet the needs of the children at Irby Primary School.

Oak Trees MAT is regulated in a similar way to the local authority and has a well-established reputation for effective financial management and strategic financial planning. All MATs also have access through a bidding process to funding direct from the Department for Education (for building works and maintenance), which is not accessible to local authority maintained schools.

The admission requirements, provision for children with SEND, school uniform and most aspects of everyday school life will remain the same. The school will retain a very high degree of autonomy as Irby Primary's Governing Body will continue to delegate the day-to-day running of the school to the Headteacher.

I hope I have addressed any of the concerns you have raised and please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions.

Thank you for your continued support.

QUESTION: Firstly, I apologise for not making it to the meeting today. I was caught up in work.

However, I was keen to meet with you as I am concerned about the possibility of Irby joining a MAT.

I work for a local authority and have done for the last 10 years and I still can't see the appeal of the academy system.

I know joining forces can save you money from a procurement perspective but you do lose the support and services of the council. I'd be keen to know what impact this will have on the schools budget.

I've worked with academies (I work in PR and comms) and they're frequently experiencing financial problems. Mainly through mismanagement as a result of reduced links with the local authority. I'm not suggesting this would be the same for this MAT but it makes me nervous.

I'd also like to know how terms and conditions will be affected for staff? They don't deserve pay freezes or job losses further down the line. If you could clarify this too I'd be very grateful. I'd hate for staff to become unhappy.

And my last question is what do you see as the tangible benefits of joining the MAT? Specifically how will this improve things for the children and staff?

ANSWER: Thank you for raising your concerns.

There will be only positive impacts upon the school budget if the school decides to join any MAT.

Firstly, as you rightly identify, we can benefit from economies of scale in purchasing resources, training and technology of between 20-50%, which is currently unavailable to us.

Secondly, the funding provided does not change as the Department for Education will send our allotted funding to the MAT who take a small 'top-slice' the same as the Local Authority currently do.

Thirdly, Oak Trees MAT's capacity to provide quality training and challenge far exceeds the capacity of the local authority and this will help Irby Primary achieve its aspirational targets for children and their families.

There will be no changes in regard to staff pay and terms and conditions. The teachers' and local authority pay scales and terms and conditions will be adopted and the staffing structure of the school remains the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governing body of Irby Primary School.

You may find a little more information in the consultation presentation document but a summary of the key advantages of joining Oak Trees MAT can be found below:

- An ethos and values that mirrors that of Irby Primary School and continues to focus upon and prioritising strategic improvements, which ensure the best outcomes for pupils and families.
- The provision of a highly effective and structured approach to staff training, support and challenge, drawing upon the expertise of colleagues and schools across the MAT.

- Financial support and guidance, which includes but is not exclusive to savings through economies of scale (20-50% on purchasing) and the opportunity to apply for funding direct from the Department for Education to undertake maintenance works.
- A proven track record of effective strategic financial planning and school improvement work which improves the outcomes for children and families in all of the schools in the Oak Trees MAT.

I hope that I have answered all of the questions you raised but please do not hesitate to contact myself if you require further information on this important matter.

Thank you for your continued support.

Staff meeting, Tuesday 21st March at 4pm

Attendees:

Tony Lacey, CEO, Oak Trees Multi Academy Trust
 Richard Dixon, Headteacher, Irby Primary School
 Samantha Douglas, Vice Chair of Governors
 Victoria Inman, Parent Governor
 Ann Wells, Co-opted Governor
 Hardip Hayer, Senior Project Manager, AMF UK (Ltd)
 Suzanne Rimmer, Project Support Manager, AMF UK (Ltd)
 Staff x 14

QUESTION: If we have an Ofsted inspection prior to becoming an academy, will we be re inspected in the one-year window if we do convert?

ANSWER: RD, Headteacher confirmed that this will not happen. If school is inspected prior to becoming an academy, then it won't be reinspected again for four years.

COMMENT: Oak Trees MAT has received over seven million pounds in grants in 5 years for its schools.

COMMENT: SD (Vice Chair) when we met with the trust, we challenged on all of these areas and were really reassured.

COMMENT: TL (CEO Oak Trees) every community is different. The trust provides the support and collaboration to empower the school to be the best it can be. We don't take a corporate approach; we are here to provide support and challenge.

COMMENT: Staff referred to questions that had already been asked prior to the meeting which were answered in full.

Staff Feedback Received through Feedback Form or Email

QUESTION: Will my credit union still be taken directly from my wages?

ANSWER: This will continue as before. Payroll will set this up automatically.

QUESTION: Is there a possibility to be employed 36 hours in the future?

ANSWER: The management of staffing will remain the responsibility of the Governing Body of Irby Primary School, which is delegated to the Headteacher. Whilst there is no current plan to increase contracted hours, the staffing structure is constantly under review in order to best support the needs of all of the children.

COMMENT: I would also be really interested in meeting with another Admin Team within the Academy to see how it runs.