

Questions and Answers from the Parents' consultation, Wednesday 20 January 2016

Q) Would there need to be a large groundswell of parents in opposition in order to halt the process?

A) Yes. It would have to be significant, though, as most stakeholders so far have supported the Governors decision.

Q) Wouldn't it be more expensive to be an academy?

A) Not at present. However, the Government's spending review indicated the grant that Local Authorities have (that would be passed on to academies on conversion) is being phased out from 2017. ALL schools would then have fewer services, not just academies. Economies of scale by grouping schools into multi-academies might ameliorate this.

Q) Why not just wait for 2 years?

A) We would potentially lose prospective partners to other schools and maybe have to convert with loss of co-operative values. Also, the rate of change across the SW region (52% of secondary schools were Academies in September; 65% are now academies) would leave us isolated.

Q) If the partner school(s) we convert with under a MAT don't prove to be as easy to work with as was anticipated, what happens?

A) We will choose our partners carefully. The co-operative ethos and values should minimise risk.

Q) Is this meeting the end of the consultancy phase of the process?

A) No. You can continue to have a dialogue but an academy order will be pursued as soon as partners are found. This will be in a matter of weeks and the announcement will be made on the website.

Q) What might the timescales for conversion be?

A) As soon as possible. Conversion is always on the first of the month. We are aiming for May but it is likely to be July or even September.

Q) Will you liaise with other successful academies to gain expert advice?

A) Of course, however we have staff at the college that have completed this previously so do have internal experience of successful conversion.

Q) In the short term is Tavistock College confident of finding a partner school?

A) Yes.

Q) Can partner schools be located in other Local Authorities?

A) Yes. There will be opportunities for mutually beneficial school improvement work. Economies of scale. The intention is to work with co-operative schools on a formal basis.

Q) Will we leave our Co-operative trust to form a new one?

A) We will need to leave the Trust as Tavistock College, foundation school and then re-join as Tavistock College (MAT).

Q) Will the MAT still work closely with our primaries?

A) Of course, we will continue to improve our relationship with our primary schools.

Q) What services would we share with the other schools?

A) Payroll, equipment, legal services, teaching staff and expertise.

Q) Could students move schools for 6th form activities?

A) Yes, this could happen whether or not we are an academy, we will be offering more choice.

Q) Are there any specific local schools we would partner with?

A) No, but they would have to be co-operative schools or academies.

Q) If as an academy the school fails, what happens?

A) The same for any school whether or not we are in an academy - we would be sponsored by a MAT, charity or other school chosen by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC).

Q) Why does the DfE want all schools to be academies?

A) It is a government decision, based on one particular ideology. The spending review of 2015 makes this direction of travel clear.

Q) What would happen if our feeder primary schools do not join our MAT?

A) Nothing needs to change. The primary schools can make their own choice.

Q) I have once heard that it was very difficult for a co-operative trust school to be forced to be an academy – what has changed?

A) There has been a change in government.

Q) Could parents meet with others who have become Co-operative MATs?

A) There are hardly any, but the closest is in South Gloucester. Sarah Jones will investigate.

Q) What was the view of the staff?

A) Generally positive, they wanted reassurance of pay and conditions. Also there was concern about the ethos of the school. It is in the best interests of the school to protect the staff.

Q) Who would be accountable for example over admissions and complaints?

A) The Academy Trust and the RSC.

Q) How many children are there currently in the college? (1260) and in the co-operative trust? (approximately 1850).