

## Academy Conversion and joining Bridgnorth Area Schools Trust

At its meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> March the Governing body agreed to seek Academy status and to join BAST. This approval was conditional upon the outcome of statutory consultation with staff, parents and the wider community. Consultation has now taken place and no objections were received. A variety of questions and comments were raised by parents and staff, either through meetings held or submitted via the comments form. These questions and answers can be seen below and the Consultation presentation (without the commentary) can be seen on the website.

The Governing Body met this week, on the 13<sup>th</sup> June, and discussed the outcomes at length. No issues were raised to cause any concern. It was therefore concluded that the proposals would go ahead and an application has been submitted to the DfE for conversion to become an Academy and to join BAST.

We would like to thank all parents, and staff, for their valuable contributions to the consultation. We will continue to keep you updated as to our progress.

### **Academy consultation meetings 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2017 -questions and answers**

**Q. What would happen if the school was placed in special measures by Ofsted at some stage in the future? Would the Trust take over the running of the school?**

A. No, there are special procedures which apply to all schools. The school would move into low delegation.

**Q. Is there a higher risk?**

A. No

**Q. Is there any support to be offered to staff during the transition?**

A. New systems will mainly affect the Administration staff such as finance systems and changes in the budget process. Full training will be given. Ongoing support is being given to the Head by the Trust in the conversion process.

**Q. Can we be ensured that funds received will be protected to use on our school?**

A. Yes. A percentage will be retained by the Trust for support service provision. HR and payroll services will still be provided through Shropshire Council. We may wish to pool resources in future with other schools in the Trust eg for a specific joint project.

**Q. What is going to happen with conditions of service/pensions/terms and conditions?**

A. There has to be meaningful consultation with staff.

The TUPE process will preserve continuity of employment and terms and conditions. Transfer will be automatic.

There will be no new contracts, just transfer across as part of the TUPE transfer.

Trade Unions will still be recognized.

There is protection against dismissal.

Staff employer will be BAST

If staff do not want to transfer, it is deemed as 'resigned'.

Pensions - all staff stay in existing pension schemes.

Pay day could change, but staff would be notified.

Shropshire Council operate childcare vouchers with its staff. BAST have a similar scheme but staff would be unable to carry on with existing scheme.

**Q. It has been heard that Academies do not like Support Staff? Is this true?**

A. No, the school values its Support Staff and this will continue. The school will continue to manage its own Support Staff. There will new opportunities through the Trust for our teaching and support staff to enhance their CPD.

**Q. We have listened to the advantages, what are the disadvantages of joining the Trust?**

A. There would be disadvantages if we did not become an Academy and join the Trust.

The advantages of joining BAST outweigh the advantages of joining the other Trusts that the school has considered.eg BAET.

There are great opportunities for the school if we join the Trust, but we must seize those opportunities. Otherwise if we just sit back after joining, the school will not benefit.

**Q. What will happen to future admissions?**

A. The Trust will have its own admissions policy but has to follow statutory guidance. The Local Authority system will still be used and parents will only have to complete one application. With SEND pupils, the Local Authority still retains a duty.

**Q. How many people sit on the Trust Board?**

A. 9 at present, to be increased to 11 with a representative from both St Leonard's CE and Castlefields Primary School joining the Board. The Board Members have a range of specialist expertise – finance, HR, education.

Our school will still have its own Governing Body.

**Q. Will the school change its name?**

A. No. it will stay the same. There will be no change to the name, logo, uniform etc.

**Q. Will we alter holiday dates?**

A. No

**Q. Will we still have Ofsted Inspections?**

A. Yes, but not for 3 years after joining the Trust as Ofsted will wait for new data over that period.

**Q. Could the Trust change the selection process?**

A. There would need to be a consultation process and our school is protected by Church status and this would have to be subject to Diocese approval.

**Q. Will the conversion and joining BAST affect our relationship with other schools particularly BES?**

A. Not at all – we will still continue collaborating with all of our local schools. There will be no bias to either secondary school. Again admissions procedures will be followed as they are now.

**Q. What happens to the school's budget?**

A. The whole of the allocated budget for our school comes to us and then we pay the Trust between 3% and 5% for services. We will be a high delegation school, which means we will have control over most of the budget. There will be some services held centrally that we will have to buy into – as we do now with the Local Authority.

**Q. Does there need to be any short term/one off investment to manage the change?**

A. The Government currently gives each converting school an amount of money to manage the change. As a result our budget should not be affected.

**Q. Will senior managers be spread thinly across the Trust?**

A. No – each school will retain its own Head Teacher, Deputy and Assistant Heads, at their own schools. Expertise may be shared – as in knowledge - and there will be opportunities, hopefully for staff, for advancement within the Trust should they want this. There will still be official recruitment and appointment procedures however.

**Q. Is there a particularly good model that has been researched which we our conversion and Trust is being modelled this on?**

A. The Shropshire Gateway Educational Trust is being used as a model for our 'mixed' Multi Academy Trust - yes. A 'mixed' MAT consists of Church schools and Non-Church Schools. Within SGET there are Lacon Childe Secondary School, Cleobury Mortimer Primary, Clee Hill Community Academy and Stottesden CE Primary.

**Q. What are the main challenges with the transition?**

A. Initially our Head's workload will increase (eg more meetings) and office staff will need to be retrained on new systems.

Our Governing Body will have new reporting procedures, answerable to the Trust as opposed to the LA.

The children will not be affected by the transition, nor will the Teaching Staff and the other Support Staff.

**Q. How will it affect the curriculum?**

A. The Governing Body and Diocese would not wish to change the curriculum.

**Q. What are the options if the Academy doesn't work out for the school in future?**

A. We would be unable to revert back to Local Authority control.

We would have to be in a Trust for 6 years (we believe) before we were able to join another Trust, and that would require the consent from the Diocese.

**Q. Timescales for becoming an Academy?**

A. Originally hoped to be September 2017 but because of the forthcoming General Election, and the Purdah period, it is now hoped to be October/November.

**Q. Would other schools be able to join the Trust?**

A. Yes. The Trust foresee future potential growth for up to around 6/7 schools.

**Q. What would be our responsibility be for other schools on the Trust that may fail Ofsted in future, or if the Trust grows too large?**

A. A failing school would go into high support by the Trust (in the same way Alveley School has)

The opportunities to support each other through eg sharing data, moderation would minimize that risk.

**Q. What is the Trust's vision?**

A. The existing vision can be seen on the Trust's website. This vision is in its infancy and will be developed at future meetings of the Trust's management team (the school Heads).

**Q. Who sits on the Board?**

A. Specialists such as ex Local Authority school improvement advisors, financial officers, educationalists.

**Q. Are the Board Directors paid?**

A. No

**Q. Who holds the Board Directors to account?**

A. The Trust Members and the DfE