

## **Black Horse Hill Junior School Academy Conversion Consultation Questions & Answers**

**Parents and Carers Meeting, Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 5.15pm**

### **Attendees:**

Tony Lacey – CEO Oak Trees MAT  
Paul Hindle – Headteacher  
Karen Ellson – Chair of Governors  
Governors X2  
Hardip Hayer – AMF (UK) Ltd  
Emily Comyn – AMF (UK) Ltd  
Parents 6

Question: Will the school be better off by being part of a MAT?

Answer: The school's budget is higher but the MAT takes top slice, but it's not a huge difference; however, the services and support on offer are much better than currently. Capital growth funding is available once a trust grows to over 3,000 children – Oak Trees MAT will be at that point in a year. The MAT's KS2 results last year were better than both the Wirral average and the national average.

Comment: We want to make sure teachers and children get the support they need.

Question: How long will it take to realise the benefits?

Answer: Six months to a year, on average – things need to settle down and it depends on when the conversion takes place. Some current SLAs take into account the likelihood of converting imminently, so the school isn't tied in for years. Schools on the whole are better off for joining the MAT taking into account the benefits.

Question: How will CIF funding differ

Answer: Currently the school receives £6,500, which hardly goes anywhere – MATs can access higher levels of funding.

Question: What will be taught differently to the National Curriculum?

Answer: Nothing. The National Curriculum is currently differentiated for different children and this will continue to be the case. The National Curriculum has never supported the 11+ exams and not all children will go to grammar schools, so the school doesn't focus on it.

Question: How will joining the MAT affect the relationship between the infant and junior schools, if the infant school doesn't join?

Answer: It shouldn't affect it at all – the two schools have worked together on the process so far, but have decided to opt for different approaches. There are two junior schools already in the trust, whose infant schools haven't joined.

Question: What are the best possible outcomes for the children?

Answer: For some it's academic success, for some it's musical, for others it's creative or sporting.

Question: How can you measure the success of joining a MAT?

Answer: The trust does a range of things, including annual feedback surveys. The trust wants staff to feel supported.

Comment – It's important to have metrics and KPIs in place to measure success and these should be public.

The governors will look at setting KPIs at the next governors' meeting. Anything like this is made public.

Question: How many schools can join a trust?

Answer: Theoretically, it's infinite but Oak Trees MAT wants to remain local and doesn't anticipate growing to more than about 12-15 schools in the next few years.

Question: Will trust capacity increase with the number of schools?

Answer: Yes.

Question: How will the trust help the head deal with HR issues?

Answer: The MAT uses an HR provider and is looking to recruit an HR specialist. Staffing generally is a matter for the Headteacher.

Question: Are trust finances transparent?

Answer: Yes – everything relating to governance and finance can be found on the trust's website: <https://www.oaktreesmat.co.uk/>

Question: Does cross-trust collaboration cover governors?

Answer: Yes – there are regular meetings and training for all governors.

Question: How does Hilbre fit into cross-trust collaboration?

Answer: They will provide support with things such as subject specialist training and our schools are able to use their facilities for sports and performances. We can tap into their resources.

Question: What is a sponsor school?

Answer: BHHJS is a converter school; an academy sponsor is an organisation or person who has received approval by DfE to support schools to join a MAT e.g. after underperforming.

Question: Would a 'requires improvement' school take up more of the MAT's time and resources?

Answer: Support is given to the MAT by DfE to help cover any additional input needed.

Question: Will the school holidays change?

Answer: No – the MAT follows the LA's holidays.

Question: How quickly can changes be made after becoming an academy, for example to the maths provision, if the school wants to?

Answer: Changes can happen however and whenever the school wants/feels it would be beneficial.

## **Parent/ Carer Feedback Received Through Feedback Form or Email**

Question: I attended last night and found the meeting very beneficial. I just thought of one question that I was meant to ask! My son is currently in year 1 so if all goes as plan and the school becomes an academy in January 2024 will that affect the transition from infants ( a non academy school) to the juniors at all? I'm assuming it won't but just wanted to check with one being in a LEA and the other being an academy? Will we see any difference?

Answer: Admissions and relationships with the infants will continue as before. Admissions are coordinated by Wirral LA in line with the Infant School are there is no difference as to how this is done now.

## **Staff Meeting, Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 4.00pm**

### **Attendees:**

Tony Lacey – CEO Oak Trees MAT  
Paul Hindle – Headteacher  
Karen Ellson – Chair of Governors  
Governors X2  
Hardip Hayer – AMF (UK) Ltd  
Emily Comyn – AMF (UK) Ltd  
11 Staff

Question: If policies are done by the trust, do they all need to be the same?

Answer: No. H&S etc is done by trust, but curriculum policies and the day-to-day things are done by the school

Question: What's the maximum number of schools that can join a trust?

Answer: There isn't a technical maximum, but Oak Trees MAT doesn't want to be too big – wants to stay local to Wirral

Question: Are teachers assessed by the trust on their performance?

Answer: No. The trust SIP Lead may come in, but in a collaborative capacity and he'll always support schools to prepare for inspections.

Question: Will the jobs of office staff increase?

Answer: Support is provided by the trust for things like finance, compliance, HR and facilities management. Speak to the admin team at Greasby Junior School – they've just converted and will be able to tell you what it's like. The trust offers significant support.

Question: Will the staff structure remain the same?

Answer: Yes. We don't force people to move or force redundancies – we want staff to be happy – values are very important to Oak Trees MAT. Staffing is an operational decision for the school.

Question: Will the school need to get authorisation from the trust before spending money?

Answer: No. The budget is held and controlled by the school and we recognise that different approaches to spending work in different schools.

Question: How often does the MAT inspect its schools?

Answer: Once per year there is a one-day inspection – but again, this more collaborative than dictatorial.

Question: How often do subject leader meetings take place?

Answer: Approximately twice a year, but there are additional meetings throughout the year, which cover things such as moderation. We sometimes use external companies for specialist training. There are two trust-wide inset days each year, the other three are for the school to decide.

Question: What are the negatives of joining a trust?

Answer: Joining a trust needs to take place for the right reasons – the values of the trust and the school need to align and it shouldn't be forced. Also, perhaps there is more accountability – schools are not left entirely to their own devices.

Question: Who makes employer's contributions to teachers' pensions?

Answer: Oak Trees MAT are members of the Teachers Pensions Scheme for teaching staff and LGPS for support staff. Pensions remain the same.

Question: Wirral has made mistakes with teachers' pensions – will these be rectified?

Answer: Yes – the trust will support with this.

Question: When is the financial year end?

Answer: The trust financial year runs from Sept-Aug – the reporting year end is 31<sup>st</sup> Dec and is done by the MAT.

Question: Will we move to four terms/year?

Answer: We have always said we wouldn't do it – we keep holidays consistent with LA holidays.

### **Staff Feedback Received Through Feedback Form or Email**

Question: Would any statement of particulars of employment e.g. Pension be the same pension company and pension (employees and employers) contribution?

Answer: Oak Trees MAT are members of the Teachers Pensions Scheme for teaching staff and LGPS for support staff. Pensions remain the same.

Question: Any pay (annual) amendments by the NJC Council and school workers be recognised by Oak Trees MAT?

Answer: Yes, we stick to all local and national pay scales

Question: Do pension schemes remain in place?

Answer: Oak Trees MAT are members of the Teachers Pensions Scheme for teaching staff and LGPS for support staff. Pensions remain the same.

Question: Union membership – is it the same?

Answer: Yes

Question: Changing hours? What could day look like?

Answer: No changes are planned.

Question: Type of inspections?

Answer: Ofsted inspection would continue as now. The trust SIP Lead may come in, but in a collaborative capacity and he'll always support schools to prepare for inspections

Question: Any training at WBC or is it only at Academy Schools?

Answer: Schools can access WBC training for a cost as well as the training provided by the MAT.