



MILLTHORPE SCHOOL

**Minutes of the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Board of Governors
Held at the School on Tuesday 3rd March 2015 at 7.00pm**

Present:

Mr Trevor Burton (Headteacher)	Cllr Dave Merrett
Mrs Naomi Heaton	Ms Nicola Mitchell
Mr Don Henson	Mr Tim Moat
Mr Tim Hooper	Mr Richard Newton
Mrs Katie Hurrell	Mr Bob Sydes (Chair)
Ms Jenny Kent	Mrs Jane Terrett
Mrs Gillian Markland-Zuiderwijk	Ms Helen Thomas

In Attendance:

Mr Scott Butterworth (Deputy Headteacher)
 Mr Alex Collins (Business Manager)
 Mr Tim Gillbanks (Deputy Headteacher)
 Mrs Barbara Kybett (Clerk)

		Action
1	<p>Apologies, Welcome & Introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed governors and thanked them for their attendance at the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Helen Ainsworth and Mr Martyn Pysanczyn. Bill Schofield and Eileen Robertson did not attend.</p>	
2	<p>Conversion to Academy</p> <p>The Chair explained to governors that this meeting was a formal opportunity for the Full Governing Body to be updated on the issue of conversion to academy status and that there would be a vote on whether to take this forward to the next stage.</p> <p>The Headteacher gave a powerpoint presentation which outlined the facts and figures surrounding conversion to academy status as well as some advantages and disadvantages. He noted that conversion to academy status had been considered in 2012 and had been rejected at that time due to worries about the school's financial situation and standards of achievement. He believed that the current environment was completely different and more favourable. He explained that he would want the school to be part of a Multi-Academy Trust with a governing body under which strong partnerships could be formed with at least two and possibly three local primaries, where each school would have a strong degree of autonomy.</p> <p>The Headteacher moved to the slide entitled "Why Academise?" which summarised the advantages. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an academy funding element of £87 per pupil which would result in an additional £85000 income per annum for the school, of which the Headteacher envisaged most being spent on additional expenses, leaving £30-40K as a surplus • access to capital funding for which there was a bidding process. The Headteacher noted however that, although it might be easier to obtain capital funding as an academy than through the local authority, this fund was still four times oversubscribed. <p>A governor said that she could see the financial advantages for conversion but asked about the advantages to teaching and learning and also about the consequences of the school being transferred from local to central control. The Headteacher felt that "control" was too strong a term in the circumstances and that if the school kept its "good" OfSTED rating, it would be left alone whether as an academy or not.</p> <p>After a summary of the possible disadvantages of conversion, a governor asked if being in a multi-academy trust (MAT) with two other local primaries would affect the working relationship with the other primaries in the cluster. The Headteacher responded that he thought not, as working relationships were strong with all the feeder primaries. He noted that Millthorpe could not be in a MAT with a faith school. He expressed the opinion that he would not want the school to convert as a single academy but only as part of a MAT which he envisaged would provide more professional challenge. He highlighted the opportunities within a MAT for sharing information and good practice with the primaries, the greater capacity for self-improvement and better staff recruitment, professional development and succession planning. A governor asked why all these</p>	

benefits were not achievable within the current structure. The Headteacher responded that they were more likely to be achieved within a MAT structure but emphasised that governing bodies within the MAT structure would be able to retain autonomy. He confirmed that a MAT could be set up so that all power was delegated to the governing bodies, and none remained with the Trustees. A governor asked what the distribution of power would be between the trustees and the governing body should the school convert to academy status. The Headteacher replied that he would not envisage any changes to the current governing body and that maximum amount of power would be delegated to it.

Following the Headteacher's presentation, governors discussed the issue of academy conversion in detail and the following questions were asked:

Q: What would happen if in future the headteachers of the schools in the MAT failed to agree?

A: The Trust could be set up so that in these circumstances the Trustees could take back control.

Q: What sort of people are the Trustees?

A: The schools forming the MAT decide on who to appoint as Trustees. A possible Trustee could be the Chair of the current governing body. The DfE recommends the appointment of highly skilled Trustees.

The Headteacher suggested that the school should apply to become an academy before a consultation process was initiated so as to take advantage of the £25000 which was currently being offered by the DfE to cover conversion costs. There was no guarantee that this money would be available after the general election. If the school decided not to academise after consultation, only money which had not been spent thus far would need to be paid back. The Chair emphasised that applying for academy status did not mean that the school was committed to the process. The Headteacher confirmed that if the school were to become an academy, staff pay and conditions would remain the same.

Q: What is the process for replacing the members of the Trust? What is their function?

A: The members are a legal requirement.

A governor expressed concern that the members might be subject to undue external influences to the detriment of the schools in the MAT. A governor answered that checks and balances would need to be written into the legal agreement so that this would not be possible. Another governor noted that the Trust could have charitable status and thus, in extreme circumstances, the Charity Commission could step in.

Q: Will children attending primaries within the MAT automatically transfer to Millthorpe School at the end of Year 6?

A: No, admissions to Millthorpe would continue to be dealt with by the LA.

The Headteacher informed governors that a grant of £100k was currently available to MATs with more primary than secondary schools. There was no guarantee, however, that this money would be available after the general election. The deadline for applications to convert to academy status was 12 March 2015. The application would be considered by the DfE in the light of the current position of the school and the reasons behind the application.

Q: Would the school's current deficit be carried forward if the school converted to academy status?

A: Yes but the expectation would be that the school would use any extra funding received from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) to reduce the deficit.

The Headteacher expressed the opinion that the extra funding that the school would receive as a result of becoming an academy was not reason enough to choose to convert. He noted that the earliest date for conversion would be 1st September 2015.

Q: How would extraordinary expenses be covered if the school was no longer funded by the LA?

A: The school could build up a surplus or take out insurance.

Q: Who would bear the cost of the possible forthcoming redundancy?

A: The Headteacher felt that currently a business case could be made to the LA for it to cover the cost although there was a time limit of September 2015 to claim any redundancy costs. If the school were part of a MAT, then the MAT would bear the cost. The funding for academies came from the EFA and it would not be in their interests to see a school fail as a result of financial problems.

A governor commented that the current deficit constituted a very small percentage of the school's income and expenditure.

Q: Did the Headteacher have any personal experience of a MAT, whether positive or negative?

A: Yes, the Headteacher knew of a MAT formed from two strong primaries taking on two weaker primaries which had worked very well. Similarly, a successful MAT had been formed in Leeds of a secondary school with local primaries after a very thorough consultation process. However, he was also aware of a MAT which was currently experiencing difficulties.

Q: Would becoming a MAT with local primaries negatively affect the relationship with York High School?

A: This was unlikely. York High School was seeking a partnership arrangement with York College.

Q: What would happen if no action was taken towards conversion?

A: The current partnership arrangement with the local primaries would continue.

Q: If Millthorpe School decided not to convert, would these primaries look for another secondary partner to form a MAT?

A: That would be a risk.

A governor expressed her opinion that this was an opportunity for the school to exert some influence in a fast-changing environment in partnership with others.

Q: Would the three primaries vote for academisation?

A: It was hard to say.

Q: Was the assumption that LA Education Departments would disappear completely due to lack of funding?

A: Local Authorities were in a difficult position with funding being reduced but still having the responsibility for their schools.

Q: Was there a time limit on using the grant of £25k for conversion costs?

A: Not specifically but it would need to be used, or paid back, within a reasonable time limit, for example, 6 months.

Q: Would being a MAT have any influence if a new primary school was built locally to accommodate the growing numbers of children in the area?

A: The most likely option currently for this would be to expand Scarcroft Primary school using Millthorpe School land. In this model, the LA would not need to purchase land and Millthorpe would probably receive some sort of recompense. If the school were part of a MAT, this model would not apply but it was likely that the LA would still work with the school towards a satisfactory solution for all.

A governor said that it was not clear to him how much difference becoming an academy would really make, apart from a small amount of extra funding, and expressed concern that if there were a change of headteacher in one or more of the MAT schools, this could have a very negative impact. It was noted that as each governing body appointed the headteacher, a situation such as this should be easy to avoid and that the MAT would have defined procedures in place for resolving these kinds of issues.

Q: What was the advantage of a MAT for the primaries involved in it?

A: The sharing of resources and planning for progression.

A governor commented on the need to make a decision quickly as the deadline for applications was approaching and the money currently available for conversion might not be on offer after the general election. There could still be a proper consultation process after the application was made. The Headteacher clarified that the sum of £25k was funding for the conversion process and if the decision was made after consultation not to convert, then any money not spent would need to be paid back. The £100k grant was for MATs that were already formed. This funding might not be available after the Election.

Q: How did staff feel about the possibility of academy conversion?

A: Staff present at the meeting felt that there were no strong opinions either way amongst the staff.

Q: Would there be any difference in staff pay and conditions between the schools in the MAT?

A: All the schools were still using national guidelines for staff pay and conditions.

Q: What was the timescale for completing the consultation process?

A: There was no set timescale but the Headteacher would hope for no longer than 6 weeks, with the

	<p>consultation starting in mid-May after the general election.</p> <p>A governor expressed the opinion that the consultation process should take place before the application to become an academy was made.</p> <p>A governor commented that the school could still form a MAT even if the primaries voted not to join.</p> <p>The Headteacher expressed his view that forming a MAT with the local primaries would provide the best possible education from 4 to 16 years for the children of South Bank.</p> <p>Q: Would the MAT be forced to take on a failing school? A: No, as Millthorpe was not currently a teaching school.</p> <p>Jane Terrett shared her experience of working in a school which had converted to academy status. She said that staff saw no difference other than that the increase in funding led to better conditions within school. In her opinion, there were no disadvantages,</p> <p><u>Vote for the proposal</u></p> <p>Following the discussion, governors voted on the proposal to proceed to the next stage of applying to convert to a Multi Academy Trust:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">For: 13 Against: 0 Abstained: 1</p>	
3	<p>Redundancy</p> <p>The Headteacher outlined the current budget situation with reference to the paper entitled “Redundancy Proposal” (<i>previously distributed</i>). He reported that cuts in expenditure had already been made but that staffing costs were high due to the age and experience of many of the staff. Small steps had been made in reducing the staffing budget and that, as a consequence, some staff were decreasing their hours and some would be asked to teach outside their main subject specialism next year.</p> <p>However, a further reduction in staffing was necessary. The PE department had been identified as having surplus hours and the Headteacher asked governors for approval to consult with PE staff over the redundancy of 1 FTE member of this department. As staff holding TLRs could not be made redundant, only two members of staff could be considered. If neither of these members of staff volunteered for redundancy, the selection would be made according to criteria already established by the Governing Body.</p> <p>A governor asked how much work each member of staff did outside of normal school hours. The Headteacher responded that whilst these PE teachers did not have the marking commitment of staff in some other departments, it might be the case that some out of school clubs would cease to run. Tim Gillbanks commented that sports clubs did not have to be organised by PE staff: other staff might be prepared to take them on.</p> <p>A governor asked how much of the deficit would remain once the redundancy had been effected. The Headteacher explained that, under the licensed deficit arrangement, the school would repay the deficit completely by April 2018. (Clarification after the meeting – including all the items listed in the proposal including the redundancy, the budget comes into balance by April 2017).</p> <p>With reference to Appendix 1 of the “Redundancy Proposal” document, Tim Gillbanks explained that the figures in the “Hours” column did not take into account teaching hours where staff were teaching outside their main curriculum area, eg History teachers covering English lessons.</p> <p>A governor asked how much the redundancy would cost. The Headteacher replied that the payment was 1 week of salary for every year of service but that, as discussed under Item 2, he was hopeful that the LA would cover the cost.</p> <p>The Headteacher concluded the discussion by highlighting the deadline involved: the redundancy notice had to be served by 31 May 2015 to take effect from 31 August 2015 and therefore if selection criteria needed to be applied, these would need to be considered by the relevant committee by April.</p> <p><u>Vote for the proposal</u></p>	

