



Millthorpe
school

MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST PROPOSAL

Drop-in Sessions

These are the questions posed by staff, parents/carers and students at the informal drop-in sessions

There were two consultation questions:

1. What questions would you like answering?
2. What issues would you like governors to consider?

STAFF DROP-IN SESSIONS

1. What questions would you like answering?

- Q Will current working hours be changed? - we are against this. Will we be working with other school site staff on an equal footing?**
- A Working hours would remain the same should we convert to an academy. Whether we do or do not convert, it is possible working hours could be changed in the future after a consultation on the issue. I am not sure what is meant by an equal footing, but site staff should currently be on the same job description and pay grades across all York schools, and there are no plans for any change here.
- Q Could other schools pay for our services hence putting money into Millthorpe budget if their site staff lack skills? Site staff member pay scale issue (less than at other schools)**
- A Yes, this is possible. As above, site staff should be on the same job description and pay grades across all York schools: if you have further concerns in this area, I would be happy to talk it through if you could explain it in person.
- Q Governor's plan for site staff, merger, shift pattern for 3 schools, one overall premises manager?**
- A There is no plan for a merger of site staff across schools at present. It is possible that such a proposal could make sense, particularly in terms of sharing of skills and keeping costs down, but it would require a fully worked out plan. We currently value the excellent work of our site staff and would not want to jeopardize that by any hasty changes.
- Q Whole or separate budget for each school?**
- A Separate. The Trust can keep back some money for expenditure across the Trust e.g. the contract to manage IT, but this would be done on an individual case basis.
- Q New primary on our site - who will maintain it?**
- A Any new primary school is a matter for the local authority. A new school would have to be an academy and would be maintained by itself. The local authority has not yet proposed this, and even if they did, Millthorpe Governors would have to approve it, and there would need to be clear benefits to Millthorpe pupils from such a proposal. This could go ahead whether or not Millthorpe becomes an academy.
- Q Staff and parents to get a vote - concerned: Governors elected need to be more 'holistic'**
- A Governors have explained the reasons behind not voting, but your concern is noted and will be passed to Governors.
- Q Concern that one Governor involved in attempt to set up a free school. Has he dropped this idea? Is there a risk in the future? What is the genesis of this? LA is shrinking but there is strength in numbers for now.**
- A The Governing Body acts as a whole, and one person cannot direct it. As far as I understand, it is not possible for a local authority school or an academy to convert to a Free School. The local

authority does have good strengths and should we convert, the proposal makes clear how we will continue a strong link with York.

Q Accusation that Governors have already decided.

A It is not true that the Governors have already decided. Governors have been present at both of the formal presentations evenings, and at six of the seven drop-ins for staff and parents. They have each promised to read all the comments made by every person. Their actions suggest that they are keen to hear all that stakeholders wish to say before they begin the decision-making process.

Q Who will be responsible for the financial management of the MAT?

A The Trust Board. They also appoint an Accounting Officer to take personal responsibility. In the initial application that person was Trevor Burton, though this could change.

Q Pension concern - directed to fact sheet and Trevor's presentation.

A I am unsure of the concern. Both teachers and support staff will have full access to their existing teachers and local government pension scheme.

Q Older member of staff - no LGPS so will have to work to state pension age. Do I have job security?

A Job security will be unaffected by academy conversion. Reductions in real-terms funding over the next five years means it is impossible to guarantee that all jobs are secure, but this is an issue for local authority schools and academies alike.

Q Is there any chance of there being a vote for staff?

A The working group on academisation was asked and decided not to do this.

Q Could we have a clear statement of benefits of academisation?

A See the documents on the website, including the formal presentation.

2. What would you like Governors to consider?

A commitment to mirror national standards for pay and conditions to allay fears. Watertight job security guarantee in short to medium term.

85% of costs go on salaries. Is this a sustainable model for a private business.

If staff (and parents) have a vote, people would contribute more in future to school development. If parents were asked to vote, many of them may be positive as a ballot would allow people to give their views rather than be browbeaten by more vocal people.

There is no means by which staff can give their views regarding the academy. At the moment we are only asking for questions and problems.

Concern about management of the finances? Can we utilise the firms within York to find extra money or sponsorship?

How do we ensure against external takeover?

How ensure some subjects are maintained in cash poor times e.g. Music, Technology, Drama, SEN which might be thought peripheral in league tables. i.e. ones we think are valuable despite league tables.

Can we ensure there will still be enough time to simply run Millthorpe well (rather than shift focus to the MAT)? Currently an SLT of 6, 2 of whom are young and inexperienced and are suffering from ill health. Is this strong enough to manage minutiae of school plus MAT? There has been a drop in SLT presence, on the floor, around school.

PARENT/CARER DROP-IN SESSIONS

1. What questions would you like answering?

Q (1) What will admissions policy be?

(2) Admissions policy - will this change?

A Governors have committed to this being kept the same as the City of York one. In any case all academies are bound by the School Admissions Code, a national requirement.

Q Who are the governors?

A This information is on our website.

Q What type of things will schools look to invest in? (Grants).

A The grants that may be available are likely to be for capital and not for such things as staffing or teaching resources. Capital grants can be given for building of new resources, refurbishment of existing buildings. With respect to this type of expenditure, the main priorities for Millthorpe are improving the buildings and developing sports facilities, particularly the playing fields which are small by comparison with our school population.

Q Have there been any peer studies done, either regionally or nationally? Are they positive or negative?

A There is research on how academy chains perform academically in relation to local authorities. There is wide variation among both types of grouping, with no clear performance difference.

Q Will mainly cheaper staff be employed when vacancies arise?

A This is already necessary if Millthorpe is to balance its budget. Almost all schools are already considering this on recruitment.

Q What are the immediate priorities for any grants received (25k + 100k)

A Legal advice relating to the decision making process. Should the decision be to convert, the preparation of the required documents, and then, the setting up of financial software, new financial procedures, establishment of Trust governance procedures, and the beginning of procuring best-value services across the whole Trust.

- Q Cluster issues - Dringhouses not in the mix, would we be expanded?**
- A If a MAT is formed it is open to expansion, but the first priority would be to establish stable working procedures.
- Q Primary/feeder transition - what happens with primary not in MAT? It works at the moment so why change it?**
- A There will be no change to this.
- Q LA safeguard standards so what happens when that link is broken?**
- A The local authority does not always safeguard standards: consider the recent closure of Burnholme Community College for example. In the MAT, the Trust Board would replace the local authority in its role of safeguarding standards.
- Q State of buildings now and for the future - danger of seeking sponsorship from unethical businesses. Also fears of selling land.**
- A An academy sponsor does not provide money, but instead takes control of the academy. We would not need nor seek a sponsor. The land is owned by City of York and only they could sell it. If a MAT were established, York would lease the land to the MAT and retain ownership.
- Q Why do all the governors think this is a good idea?**
- A The governors have yet to declare whether they support this idea or not, what they have done is to approve that it be investigated. There are now 4,500 academies in England and 60% of secondary schools are academies. Given that the last government and this new one are both committed to academies governors have a duty to ensure the status is explored.
- Q The 80k expected next year, is that expected every year?**
- A No, it has fallen each year as the amounts to local authorities not for use by schools directly has fallen. The per-pupil amounts of the extra-funding are available online. For the past 3 years, the amount per pupil has changed from £150 (2013-14), to £140 (2014-15) to £87 (2015-16). There has been no announcement yet about the rate for 2016-17 (this year's funding level was announced in July 2014).
- Q Will specialist care, i.e. small classes with specialist, continue as it is?**
- A Yes.
- Q What is the time scale, what happens now?**
- A Consultation closes on June 19. Governors will meet in the week beginning June 29 to receive all the consultation responses, and a second meeting is planned in July for a possible decision. If that decision is to become an academy, the date of conversion could not be before 1 November 2015 and is more likely to be 1 January 2016.
- Q Would Millthorpe become an academy by itself?**
- A That is one of the things Governors would have to decide, but the main benefits of the proposal lie in collaborative working.

Q Concerns about the staffing structure/pay and conditions/quality of staff superb - could this change?

A Governors have made it clear that Millthorpe's success is based around the high quality of its staff and their performance. The protection of the staff's ability to continue delivering a high quality of education is a very high priority for Governors. Whether Millthorpe becomes an academy or not, there are very difficult budget pressures going ahead, including uncertainty about the national pay and conditions (see the latest Schoolteacher Pay and Conditions document for details).

Q Last set of reports didn't have a parent comment - why has this changed?

A This is not related to academisation. We were concerned that some reply slips did not arrive back in school. Reports now come with a compliments slip with an email address for feedback (reports@millthorpeschool.co.uk) which comes directly to a senior leader who can then ensure we act on it. Parents are also welcome to telephone if they have any concerns on receiving a report.

2. What would you like Governors to consider?

Sponsors - what happens if there is a major capital cost - would you seek help from big company sponsors?

Alternative models - could you consider what else might be possible?

Guarantees set out by Governors. How will we enshrine these?

What are the risks how might these be considered?

If Headteacher (or other SLT member) went off sick, how would MAT manage this? Lots of support from LA when this happened before?

What checks and balances are there to prevent Headteacher becoming too powerful and leading school in direction not desired or enshrined in articles of association?

How would MAT manage exclusions?

How would support across York schools be retained - sense of community which currently exists?

How is the centrally held pot of money that MAT can bid for competitively structured and managed.

Worried about unqualified teachers.

STUDENT DROP-IN SESSIONS

1. What questions would you like answering?

Q If we become an academy would any of the teacher's wages drop?

A No. This would not be allowed anyway on conversion. Governors know that Millthorpe does well because its teachers perform well, and would not want them to be disadvantaged through lower pay.

Q Do you have any plans to change the Millthorpe building and if so would it be affected by becoming an academy?

A We cannot make plans currently as we have no money for large building projects. It is possible that becoming an academy would give us the chance to get more money, but we would have to make a bid for it and we may be unsuccessful.

Q If we become an academy would our timetables change?

A We change timetables each year as we try to improve the courses on offer. There are no changes planned to the subjects taught or the timetable structure. This applies whether or not Millthorpe becomes an academy.

Q Who would teach us if Millthorpe teachers went to primaries to work with them?

A This already happens, particularly in the summer term. We would arrange the meetings at times when the teachers are not teaching, or if this is not possible use one of the supply teachers familiar with Millthorpe.

2. What would you like Governors to consider?

I'm not sure it is a good idea because we're good already so we don't need it. But if it helps keep things the same such as Child Development GCSE it will be worth it.

I'm worried it will be too hard for the school to do.