

Questions and Answers From Parent Consultation Meeting and Emails

Q. What do you envisage in future in terms of the number of North Kent schools which will be part of the MAT?

A. We do not have a definitive figure, however advice from other Multi Academy Trusts is that for MATs to work efficiently, the optimum number is 10 schools.

Q. Evidence suggests that some of the negative impacts of MATs in terms of progress and attainment arise most in MATs which include a large number of schools.

A. Recent evidence that is discussed in the White Paper released in March 22 shows that schools that work collaboratively can increase pupil performance. The Inspire Academy Movement will continue to have pupil progress at the heart of what we do and will therefore continue to strive for the best outcomes for all pupils in every school. With increased funding coming back to the schools, we will be able to focus spending on quality of education, therefore having a direct impact on pupil progress and attainment.

Quality of education is of the utmost importance to all leaders within the Inspire Federation and this will continue if we become a MAT. As CEO, I would never compromise on this.

Q. This is a big step and arguably key stakeholders such as parents, staff and the wider community, ought to be given the chance to vote on the proposal after hearing reasons for and against academisation.

A. All stakeholders are given their say, which is why the governing body of the Inspire Federation are holding the consultation. All views are noted and taken into consideration when governors are making the final decision. We urge all stakeholders to have complete the consultation survey.

Q. In the letter, it states academies have the power to vary the curriculum and length of day, that it's not intended to change these at this stage, and consultation would take place if such changes were considered in future. I'd like clarification about exactly what changes an academy can make to the curriculum. What aspects can be changed?

A. There will be NO changes to the curriculum. All schools in the Trust will adhere to the National Curriculum. Academies can only choose not to teach to the National Curriculum if they can prove they are able to provide a broad and balanced curriculum that is better. The National Curriculum is a document intended to be built upon and each school develops a curriculum built upon this. The schools within the Inspire Federation use A Curriculum to Inspire which was written using the National Curriculum, however develops each subject beyond the aims and objectives within. The leaders within Inspire continually strive to develop the curriculum in order to provide the best

outcomes for all pupils.

Q. I'm concerned about the repeated mention of church schools and the diocese of Rochester in the information provided. I absolutely would not choose to send my children to a faith-based school. Faith being a basis, or even contributing factor, to decision making at Maypole school is something which causes me serious concern. It is my belief that children should be taught the basic facts about all religions but that the focus should be on understanding that there are many beliefs, all of which we should respect, and that difference is to be celebrated. I am absolutely not comfortable with my children receiving an education based on Christianity, or any other religion. Can you please explain the extent of influence having a church school within the academy and having the diocese of Rochester involved in the academy will have on the decision-making process and the education offered to our children?

A. The non faith schools within Inspire will continue to follow the RE curriculum as they do now. They will not be converting to a faith school, nor will they be expected to follow the diocesan of Rochester RE curriculum. All schools will however follow a set of values that are important for both faith and non faith schools.

Q. Will the Trust be for faith schools only and will the non faith schools change from community to faith?

A. The Trust will be a faith MAT to allow other faith schools to join. Currently faith schools are only permitted to join faith MATs, whereas non-faith schools can choose to join any MAT. All non faith schools will remain as community schools.

Q. Will the Trust employ unqualified teachers?

A. The Inspire Academy Movement would not employ unqualified teachers unless forced to do so. For example, recruitment of teachers is at an all-time low and it is difficult for all schools to recruit quality teachers. To reiterate, we would only recruit an unqualified teacher if there were no applicants for the position and the unqualified teacher in question was able to fulfil the role.

Q. Will the Trust pay teachers less than maintained schools?

A. The Trust would continue to follow Kent guidelines on pay. The Trust would however be able to offer more for teachers which would aid recruitment and retention. We would not pay less for staff.

Q. Will the Trust buy into services that are not as good as those provided for by Kent? For example, SEND external support?

A. While academies are free to find services beyond those stated by Kent, we will continue to buy into these services. We will only move away from these if a better option that was quality assured was offered. Having more funding put back to the schools will enable us to pay more for better services if they were presented to us.

Q. Would we join with other faith schools in Sevenoaks such as St John's and if not why not?

A. When the governing body of a school is ready to convert to academy (which all schools will do at some point), they will complete their due diligence and look into possible MATs. Faith schools can only join a faith MAT and therefore Inspire would be one of three possible MATs. Of course, non faith schools would also be free to look into the possibility of joining Inspire.

Q. Would the other MATs make big decisions for Seal?

A. If we were to join a different MAT, yes the Trust would make strategic decisions on behalf of the school. This is the main reason for creating our own MAT, allowing our schools to retain autonomy.

Q. Would parents have a say if it turned out to be a bad idea? Should we wait until the next general election in case MATs are no longer compulsory?

A. Academisation will remain on the agenda with or without a change of government. Other major political parties are in favour of the academisation policy.

If the schools within the Inspire MAT began to fail, it is down to the leadership of the Trust to deal with. Like at the moment, the Executive Headteacher has overall accountability and ensures standards remain high, this will remain the same and any issues will be dealt with by the CEO.

Q. How is the decision made which schools Seal would join with – how much interaction would the children have?

A. Due diligence would be carried out by both sides. The CEO, along with members of the Board of Trustees, would ensure that any school wishing to join share the Trust's ethos and values, along with a list of other assurances.

In regards to what interaction would the children have? This would depend on the distance of school and the purpose. For example, Rights Respecting Ambassadors sometimes have collaborative meetings held via Teams. Sometimes we have inter-school sporting events. This would continue, depending on the schools.

Q. Would my child's teacher spend time away helping other schools and if so, who would teach her?

A. If the teacher in question held a post of responsibility that meant part of their role was to support teachers from other schools, the Trust would use their own cover teacher to do so.

However, the Trust will be employing a Director of School Improvement who is responsible for the development of staff across the Trust. This would mean, unless it is part of their job description, teachers will be in their own classes teaching.