

PARENTS' CONSULTATION MEETING 14TH MARCH 2017.

Question asked by parents:

1. What are the curriculum freedoms?

Academies don't have to follow the national curriculum however there are common core skills, knowledge we need to teach in order to prepare children for life, SATs and other exams.

2. Taking over syndrome; how do you prioritise funding for such a broad spectrum of children?

The headteacher board will be meeting regularly to shape provision, make decisions that affect all of our schools and ensure there is fair treatment and equality. We are a small family joining a big family. We are stronger together. Each school will continue to set their own budget in line with their own school priorities.

3. What will the children notice on the first day?

Initially they won't notice anything but in time, we will be able to provide greater opportunities for extra curricular entitlement, sharing expertise and training for staff which will impact on pupil outcomes, learning experiences at other schools, etc.

4. The headteacher's time is already limited. How will the headteacher manage this?

All the heads will meet weekly to shape the direction of the trust moving forward which is really important in order to have control of it. It is anticipated that with access to improved services, less time will be waiting for 'things to happen' and with site support, less time will be spent on grounds management/health and safety, etc .

5. The presentation describes education for 0-19 but there is little mention of preschools.

The collaboration includes the work of the two pre schools in our proposed MAT both of which are managed by the schools. There will be opportunities to work together and to strengthen community links.

6. Is it policy for some trustees to be members?

The DFE agree that less than half can be both but there does need to be a line of sight from the trustee board to the members to provide continuity and clear communication. There was a rigorous selection and interview process for the governance group and we are satisfied the MAT has drawn people from a wealth of experience, backgrounds and skills. There is a great energy and optimism within the group.

7. Where does financial liability sit?

The financial liability sits with the trustees. Accounts will be audited and published. There is a finance handbook that academies must follow. Each school must set a budget and operate financially within its means. It is not expected that schools with surpluses should 'bail out' those with deficit budgets.

8. What would happen to any financial surplus?

It is clear that schools should not hold onto large surpluses and the money should be spent on the children in the school at that time. All schools are able to retain any surplus going forward but hypothetically in the future, questions would be asked of schools which are still carrying over large surpluses. It is anticipated that due to funding cuts, any surplus will deplete rapidly.

9. What's your biggest fear?

St Mary's initial fear was for the school to be perceived as being 'swallowed up' by a larger school and lose its identity. The PSIB have worked very hard to change mind sets and we are working hard to show that SAST is the organising company rather than being perceived as the Gryphon. It is separate from the secondary school. We are all equal partners. Funding is another concern, we have big dreams but require the funding to enable them to materialise.

9. Are there other trusts you are working with?

Yes the PSIB has strong links with other MATS and executive heads and we are able to see what does and doesn't work. We have built a bespoke model MAT that suits our local needs.

10. Why do you not want a new logo?

We are a successful school in our own right. We wish to retain our identity and autonomy and will not be rebranding as there is no need. Parents may see the SAST logo on letterheads but it's doubtful they will see it anywhere else. The headteacher has talked to the children about the MAT and some of the opportunities it will offer as they are the most important part of this.

11. What will SAST buy from the LA?

The LA will still be responsible for SEND and transport. SAST will buy in admissions and payroll and other good quality services that we need. If they're not good, we won't buy them. There are no plans to change the admissions criteria.