



BRIDLINGTON
SCHOOL



Stakeholder - Parent Frequently Asked Questions Document

Please note this document is a cumulative compilation of questions submitted as part of our stakeholder consultation on Academy Conversion. It will be updated regularly and available here on our website:

- 1. My older child already attends one of the Bridlington Schools, we are really happy with the provision and we want our youngest child to be offered a place. Will the academy conversion affect admissions?**

No. Every school including Academy's must abide by the National Admissions Code and engage in Fair Access Protocols which allow for example, young people who move into the area to receive a place at their local school. Morally and statutorily we must continue to engage in the normal round of admissions and use standard criteria for awarding places within our schools. In addition, we are clear that creating the Multi Academy Trust will enable us to make a better provision for the children and young people of Bridlington.

- 2. On conversion will we be changing uniforms?**

No. Our uniform is a key feature of our drive for equality amongst our young people, it establishes the school's identity and provides a sense of belonging and family for our young people. Though there are times when we will need to review the uniform and indeed current Government Guidance has recently been issued on this specific issue, we will always do this in consultation with our young people, parents and staff. A change of uniform is not a consequence of academy conversion.

- 3. Will my child be taught at another school in the new Multi Academy Trust?**

No. We have previously had a successful collaboration at Sixth Form level across both Bridlington and Headlands School Sixth Forms where students had the benefit of engaging in learning delivered by staff from both sites. However, though there will be many benefits of wider staff teams working together to improve practice across both schools, there will be no learner travel between the two sites on conversion.

- 4. My child has a special educational need; I am concerned that as an academy their Education Health Care Plan will be ignored.**

No. Ethically we have a duty of care which we take very seriously to provide the best care and provision for all our young people and nowhere is this truer than for our vulnerable learners. As an academy we have a statutory duty to engage with the home Local Authority of any SEND child to ensure their needs are met and they are making both personal and academic progress, including where their health needs are identified in their Education Health Care Plan. We will continue to work with other organisations including for example, the hearing impaired service and Physical Therapy teams. However, we anticipate being able to invest in further improvement to our provision and broker greater external support for our vulnerable learners.

5. Will you be selling off parts of the school sites for financial gain?

No. The Multi Academy Trust as part of our new funding agreement will be granted a 125-year lease from the land owners. This does not permit the Trustees of the new academy trust to sell the land or any aspect of the estate. If this was ever seen to be in the best interests of the academy trust an application would be required to the Secretary of State for Education for permission, these are very rarely granted.

6. Is this academy going to be exclusive to Bridlington and Headlands school or are both schools going to become part of an existing academy trust?

No. The Academy Trust would be an application to be a new Multi Academy Trust, the intention is not for the schools to join an existing organisation. Governors and School Leaders have conducted due diligence of the Academy Trusts who operate in our area and regionally and we do not feel that there is a good fit for the vision and values of either school, hence the decision to apply to become a new organisation. We have had early discussions with the Department for Education and they are initially positive about our strategic intent to develop a coastal centred Trust in the East Riding. However, the Government White Paper published in March 2022, highlights the priority for the Government of achieving a Trust led system and we will be expected and indeed want to talk to other schools who we have links with or who share our contextual challenges and opportunities to broaden the scope of our partnership working into Academy status.

7. Are the staff (including the SLT) feeling positive about this new venture or will there be a lot of staff moving on?

Yes. This is a very early stage of our discussion and consultation with all stakeholders and that includes our fabulous staffing teams. Initial conversations have been held with staff across both school, including representatives from their Trade Unions or Professional Associations and these have not raised any concerns thus far. Any concerns raised by staff will be considered in the final decision making. We are not aware at this time of any members of staff moving on as a direct consequence of the proposal to explore Academy status. However, in any large organisation there is always change and we are thrilled that as a result of the training and experiences we provide our staff often move on to further their own careers within promoted posts.

8. Will the schools retain their specialist school focus e.g. Bridlington School Sport & Art, Design and Technology and Headlands School Science?

Yes. We are very proud of the provision we make in these real areas of curriculum strength within both schools and we continue to believe they add to the learning and development experiences of our students. However, in reality the idea of a 'Specialism' for schools was formally removed under the 2011 coalition Government and the funding associated with their development became mainstreamed within the wider funding agreement from central government to all schools.

9. Is there to be consultation with future students of both schools as a parent's secondary school choices will become limited?

Yes. We have published the date of an open consultation event for the wider community to be held at North Bridlington Library on Saturday 9 July between 9.30 - 11.30am and we would encourage all future parents to come and speak to us. We do want to be clear that there will be no change to the number of places available at each school.

10. Will the students have mixed lessons across both schools?

No. This is not the intention initially, though we have previously at Post-16 level held mixed classes to broaden our curriculum offer and learning experience for young people in the 6th Form. Our priority is to keep our young people safe and maximise quality learning time, traveling between the two sites for shared learning would not realise this ambition. However, we would like to be in a position to provide planned enrichment opportunities to students across both schools in order to broaden their learning experience and enjoyment of learning.

11. In other areas of the country, academies are only just achieving positive OFSTED outcomes and are not providing well for young people making their school experience very challenging. What assurances are there that the schools have done their due diligence on becoming an academy?

Yes. It is clear that historically and in some cases there continues to be some organisations within the academy sector who do not behave with an ethical or moral purpose for the good of young people, these are often flagged in media articles or in programmes like Panorama for example. However, this is the case within any sector where there are multiple types of organisations not simply within education. As a team of school leaders and Governors we believe we are working with a range of people to support us to ensure that our purpose is clear and is one of the reasons why we are not seeking to join an established Multi Academy Trust. Our Governors who represent their local community, will be ensuring that any conversion to academy status enhances the life chances and school experience of all our young people both now and for the future.

12. Will my family continue to be eligible for Free School Meals and a Local Authority School Bus Pass?

Yes. The eligibility criteria to access this level of support with access to school and free school meals is Government set criteria and applies to all parents/carers and their children regardless of the status of the school the child attends. Attending an Academy does not change the ability of families to access this support from their home Local Authority. Indeed during lockdown periods for example, many academies were able to respond much more quickly to community issues and make provision for their learners and families before the Government or Local Authority.

13. Will the primary schools be included in the academy Trust or will they be left behind?

Yes. The special relationships we have with all our feeder primary schools and those within the wider coastal community are really special and we believe benefit both the quality of primary and secondary quality of education for children and young people. Exploring academisation or joining a MAT is the decision of each individual Governing Body however, the formalisation of partnerships through a Bridlington locality MAT is certainly a longer term possibility. In the interests of transparency, the Headteachers of the secondary schools have shared their plans with primary colleagues and Chairs of Governors and updates are continually being shared. Our long term plans, around for example Alternative Provision are a feature of our discussions, and have been as a collaborative of school leaders for some time, and this will definitely involve the primary schools regardless of their status.

14. The LA provide a framework for checking for services and contractors, as an academy isn't there a risk that this will pose a threat to private companies exploiting the school for their own economic benefit?

No. Historically, within the Academy sector there have been cases whereby for example Carpet Companies have sponsored the school and significant sums of

education funding have been spent with that company or cleaning companies who have then been the provider of a service for significant sums of money. These cases are and have been well publicised and are therefore public. However, though these cases are all true, they are from historic structures within the sector. In the last 5 years accountabilities and checks that have been placed on Multi Academy Trust (MATs) through the Academy Handbook are extensive and robust, the Government having recognised that these are 'companies' which need to be audited appropriately. The Academy Handbook identifies areas of audit around contracts, financial management, safeguarding and estates for example as well as educational quality. In addition MATs must have legal support in place to ensure that 'good' contractual management is adhered to from a legal perspective. In addition, there are a number of tender frameworks which can be used that ensure that appropriate market rate costings are provided for the detail of the service required.

15. Both schools in the same MAT will reduce competition in the town and therefore reduce the quality of education for the community?

No. The reality is that currently as two LA schools we share many of the same policies for example employee policies which dictate working practices and our Positive Discipline Policy, which has been adopted by many schools within the East Riding. It is misleading to think that competition improves the quality of education, pitting one school against another simply leads to a fragmented sector which benefits no one. The reality is that the schools work very closely together currently, never has this been truer than during and since the pandemic and the quality of education within both schools continues to improve as a result. Even within a MAT each school will have an opportunity to ensure that their unique identity, curriculum delivery and ethos remains. This is fundamental and as a consequence of the different leadership personalities, building structures and staff skills. In addition the longevity of Vision and Values is about more than just individual Headteachers and their personalities, these are set by the Governance of the MAT and the individual schools and the Governors represent the local community to each school.

16. Will each school keep its own Governors or will the MAT govern the schools?

Yes. The Government White Paper makes it very clear that local Governance is critical to the success of a school and its grounding within its community context. As school leaders and Governors we would whole heartedly agree and ethically we would be supporting this structure regardless of the content of the White Paper. In many very successful Trusts this structure is in place. There are additional benefits to local Governance for example the Trust Board requires skills which are related to business as well as education and are accountable for finance, estates, health and safety and Human Resources; this means that local Governors can focus on what really matters, the educational experience of children and young people within the school. In our experience this has shown that local Governors are easier to attract and retain as they are engaged in the things that matter most within their community.

17. If the Government are removing funding from September 2022 and your timeline says that you are not looking to become an Academy Trust until April 2023 at the earliest, will the schools run out of funding?

No. The element of schools funding that is ceasing is to support School Improvement not the central elements that comes to each school to enable it to run effectively, this remains unchanged. The consequence of this means that we will simply have to seek support from other sources to maintain our Improvement Agenda across both schools.

18. Could both schools join different MATs?

Yes. This is a very real possibility under the new Government White Paper. As school leaders and Governors we believe this would be a significant disadvantage to the town and would diminish the quality of education and opportunity for children, young people and families. This is why we are exploring this opportunity to ensure a long term sustainable solution that is local to Bridlington.

19. The idea about developing Alternative Provision for Bridlington children and young people is much needed, will this be open straight away?

No. Leaders across all schools in the area have recognised the challenges of limited availability of provision for those children that need it in our area. Some of the current challenges are not only lack of availability but distance to travel and sometimes the quality of the available provision. One of the strategic drivers for exploring academy conversion is to address this acute need. However, we must be realistic and recognise that for successful implementation of a high quality provision which meets the needs of our local community will take time. Although this element will be a significant part of our initial application, it may take between 5 and 8 years to be completed. This will meet the requirement for example of feasibility studies, potential planning and building applications, funding sources, staff recruitment and training and development of curriculum and processes for supporting those children and young people within the setting.

20. My children have said they have already seen Headlands staff at Bridlington School and vice versa, aren't the schools already in partnership?

Yes. We share many of the same core principles about support and challenge for our young people and are fortunate that we already have a strong collaborative approach to working for the benefit of all our stakeholders. The application to academy status is an opportunity to formalise this relationship to ensure it is protected for the long term beyond the tenure of individual Headteachers and Governing Bodies. It will also enable us to access funding streams from the Department for Education to build on our existing partnership for long term sustainable improvement and opportunity.