

Waddington All Saints Academisation Consultation Report

It is recognised by the Secretary of State and the Department for Education that the governors and leadership team of successful schools are best placed to assess the benefits of academy status and to decide whether it is appropriate for their school. The purpose of consultation is therefore for the governors and leadership team to present their reasons for considering conversion and to establish whether there are any significant objections to academy status.

The consultation ran from - 15th September to 13th October 2017.

All parents and staff at the school were written to about the consultation and meetings were held for the two groups on 3rd October. The staff meeting was attended by all staff. The parent meeting was attended by 13 parents plus 9 Governors (6 of whom are also parents).

All unions that represent staff at the school were informed along with all schools in a 5-mile radius. In addition the Station Commander at RAF Waddington, The Parish Council and the Local Authority were written to. Information was made more widely available via the school website, which had a dedicated page. This page was used to collate all questions alongside the answers given based upon the best information available to us.

1) Consultation Feedback:

Governors received one letter, 15 parental emails and one email from another school.

Of the 16 emails received:

- 1 was from a Headteacher of a local school wishing us well.
- 2 of the parent emails expressed direct support for the school.
- 1 email sought reassurance in relation to the changes to the uniform.
- 1 email was an enquiry about the services currently provided by the Local Authority.
- 2 of the emails sought assurance that the Service Premium would be secured for the pupils at this school.
- 9 emails were from the parents of one child. One of whom expressed a perception that the Governor's decision to Academise was not in the best interests of the school. They expressed discontent about the consultation process being too short and communicated that they had set up a Facebook page as a parental forum to discuss it.

A letter was received from Waddington Parish Council. Academisation has been discussed by the Councillors at length at their meeting. The Council agreed that they accept and support the governor's decision to become an academy.

Questions within the emails and raised at the meeting were responded to and answers were made publically available on the dedicated page on the school website.

2) The questions discussed within the consultation were as follows:

2a) Questions from The Consultation Meeting:

Q. Will we be better off as a school?

Not necessarily in purely financial terms, but we are unlikely to be worse off. The financial benefits are a better quality of service, support, economies of scale, infrastructure and greater financial stability for the future as a result of not being a stand-alone school.

Q. Can you explain the difference between local authority and academy funding?

LCC top slice and then send the funding out to schools. The amount of money schools is receiving is reducing and the services offered by LCC have also reduced to a very low level. In a Multi Academy Trust - the government send the money to L.E.A.D., L.E.A.D. retains a small percentage for services (around 5%), the trust has smaller management of 21 schools compared to LCC. The remainder of the money allocated to an individual school then goes into schools. L.E.A.D.'s sole purpose is the education of children.

Q. Is the cost of services the same as the local authority?

There is no quality in the service provided by LCC and their processes are not clear and targeted at supporting schools such as this. The MAT (multi academy trust) is about an organisation working together for success, so more support is provided. L.E.A.D. check financial details and balances to ensure that school manage budgets well.

Q. Will All Saints be asked to give up resources/ teaching staff?

No. If another school requires support this will be brokered through the Headteacher, it is the Headteacher's decision. This will not destabilise our decision but strengthen it as school to school support is already happened in school - it is part of what makes us outstanding.

Q. Will financial decisions still be made in house?

Yes, L.E.A.D. will check our accounts more frequently and provide quality assurance on the school's financial decisions.

Q. What if L.E.A.D. make a financial mistake?

This is unlikely to happen as accounts are tracked monthly, there is a clear budget and 3 year plan in place this allows errors to present themselves quickly, so again it shouldn't happen.

Q. Is there a cap on the number of schools joining L.E.A.D.?

21 schools are currently in the MAT, however growth of the MAT has been progressive, as L.E.A.D. have wanted to ensure that they have the infrastructures in place to service all of the schools appropriately. For example, the MAT started in 2013 and 12 schools joined very quickly, in then stopped growing for 2 years so that the infrastructure could catch up. The growth strategy over the next few years is to 'grow' a Lincoln hub of approximately 10 schools.

Q. Is the decision irreversible once we are in?

It is a 7-year process to decouple from an academy trust, but we would always be an academy after conversion. If we had a rarity, such as a sharp decline in results then the Government (Regional Schools Commissioner) could intervene; this would mean there would be a possibility that we would be brokered out from L.E.A.D., again this is very unlikely to happen.

Q. As an outstanding school within the trust would we still get support?

Yes, the Trust carry out desk top checks (patterns in results etc) similarly to OFSTED, termly checks also take place and any support requirements are identified and met.

Q. Waddington village is in a period of growth, under L.E.A.D. is there capacity to expand the school?

Yes, this is much easier than if we were a local authority school, as the local authority will not build schools if other schools close by have places. L.E.A.D. receive a 7 figure capital budget annually which is used for building works within its schools.

Q. Will the badge be compulsory on the uniform?

There would just be inclusion of the L.E.A.D. logo onto school uniform, but this would be phased in over time with no immediate change in policy.

Q. I would like to ask if, from September 2018, the academy logo on school uniform will remain optional, giving parents opportunity to purchase non-branded uniform that would be in keeping with the current school uniform policy?

The school currently already insists upon uniform, but we do not take issue if some children wear a red cardigan without a logo. It is the logo that will be changing not the expectations in relation to uniform. However, whether we academise or not, long term decisions about uniform expectations cannot be guaranteed.

Q. What are the downsides?

There is no guarantee in an uncertain world, whichever way the school decide is the right way forward is still a judgement call and a leap of faith.

Q. Who found who?

The school found L.E.A.D. There is cohesion between the principles of L.E.A.D. and the school's values and ethos, the principles of the trust are strong as are the school's principles. The school sees L.E.A.D. as a positive partner.

Q. Is the school tied into contracts through L.E.A.D.?

For larger projects, yes, for example if the path was damaged - L.E.A.D. would negotiate with building companies. Health and Safety of site is always the highest priority. However, if school needed a plumber for an emergency job we would organise this ourselves like we do now.

Q. How does the trust ensure value added for all pupils?

School will use L.E.A.D.'s assessment tool which monitors progress and attainment year on year within school.

Q. Will the national curriculum still be followed?

Yes, it would be a brave school to deviate from the national curriculum when this is what our pupils are tested against at age 11. L.E.A.D. provides courses and support to enable its schools to deliver a high quality curriculum that is based on the needs of the children.

Q. If the Leadership of the school wanted to take the school in a different direction could L.E.A.D. step in?

The success of L.E.A.D. schools is based on the strong Leadership from within. L.E.A.D. will intervene if there are any issues identified; however, this is not how they generally manage schools.

Q. Are there any other schools in Lincolnshire currently?

2 outstanding schools are considering joining L.E.A.D., if successful this will be the start of the hub.

Q. Have other schools dipped since joining L.E.A.D.?

No. Good schools have maintained at least good and a school identified as requires improvement have moved to good. All L.E.A.D. schools have termly checks; these checks ensure that schools are running well.

Q. What is the background of the people carrying out the checks?

They are highly qualified heads who have worked in outstanding schools and have other high levels of professional development such as trained OFSTED inspectors. The termly checks are written to the OFSTED framework with supporting evidence. The system is tight; there should be no surprises.

Q. How is the length of the consultation decided?

L.E.A.D. has advised the school about the legal expectations and the process of Academising. This is a process that they have managed many times.

Q. Apart from staff and parents, who else has been consulted?

Letters/emails were sent to: the schools that our children move on to and other schools within the local area, all relevant Trade Unions, the Local Authority and major local organisations with a connection to the school.

2b) Additional questions received by email:

Q. What are the perceived risks and problems that you see in managing Waddington All Saints over the next (few) years?

Waddington All Saints is currently in a very strong position. The school has above average results both locally and nationally. There is a very strong and talented staff and leadership team. The building is in a good state of repair and is well resourced. We need to

plan to sustain this success into the future. It would be easy to suggest that when things are so good there is no need for change, but the governors believe this would be short sighted given the changes at a national and local level. There are very few options for the school in the medium term. The future as a Local Authority school is uncertain as the Local Authority already offers very little in terms of its role and support for successful schools. The option for the school to become a single academy was removed by a change in government policy eighteen months ago (explained further below) and there are continuing reductions in funding for schools from central Government.

Academy Schools have grown in number under successive governments of all parties. Although there is no formal expectation that all schools will eventually become Academies, this remains the political intention. This can be seen within the sudden and increasing growth of Multi Academy Trusts across the country and the increasing role and influence of Regional Schools Commissioners on behalf of the DfE.

Q. What would your remedial (or improvement) plan be if you remained under LEA control?

In the opinion of the Governors there is only a limited future in remaining in the Local Authority as it has already outsourced its services to schools. Lincolnshire schools have suffered over the past twenty-nine months as a result of the well-publicised issues with the move of Local Authority services to Serco. As an example, All Saints, like many other Schools, has had its telephones cut off several times due to no fault of the school, because the Local Authority did not pay the bills. Staff have also had their pay disrupted for many months which is particularly difficult for the more junior members of our team. These are some of the many examples of late payments and issues with the Financial and HR services and the poor quality of information from the contractor's 'Agresso' finance system, and communication from the Local Authorities Contractor Serco. While the situation has slowly improved from its worst point, it is still well below an acceptable level. The administration and leadership time lost to monitoring and responding to these issues over the past three years has been unacceptable, problematic and costly.

Q. What benefits could be achieved solely by switching to academy status?

Becoming a single academy is no longer an option for this school. Since April 2016 Academies are only approved where there are a minimum of 1,200 pupils involved. As a consequence, lots of single academies are now having to consider and look for a move to a Multi Academy Trust. While an alternative would be to try and group together with other local schools and form a new Trust this is exceptionally hard to achieve for a collection of small primary school who would have to start from scratch in contracting services.

Q. What are the drawbacks of switching to academy status?

The Governors do not perceive any drawbacks from becoming an Academy as part of the L.E.A.D Multi-Academy Trust. The trust is a not-for-profit charity Trust that places improving education and outcomes for children at the heart of its philosophy (for more details on the trust we invite you to review their website: www.leadacademytrust.co.uk or follow the specific links below). The trust is big enough to provide security to the school and cost effective services. It's proposed Lincolnshire 'hub' however will ensure that the school will remain close to local needs and parents.

Q. What other changes will result from switching to academy status?

A major factor in the choice to look towards joining L.E.A.D is that the education that this school provides and its relationship with the local community will remain unchanged. The biggest change would be that the school would have access to increased levels of support, improved financial systems and the opportunity to be part of the growth of a very successful Multi Academy Trust in this area. This will enable this school to concentrate upon sustaining its success and impact in future.

Q. What risks/areas remain unknown regarding the switch to academy status?

Political uncertainty in relation to school funding and the agenda for Academisation in the long term.

Q. What benefits would be achieved solely by switching to academy status under the affiliation with LEAD? What other changes will result from switching to academy status under the affiliation with LEAD?

Three very successful local schools are looking to join L.E.A.D in January. We hope that this could be the beginning of an exceptionally strong local hub of this outstanding Multi Academy Trust in Lincolnshire. Using our experience and expertise as a National Support School in helping other schools to improve for the benefit of Lincolnshire children. A major factor in the choice to look towards joining L.E.A.D is that the education that this school provides and its relationship with the local community will remain unchanged. The biggest change would be that the school would have access to increased levels of support, improved financial systems and the opportunity to be part of the growth of a very successful Multi Academy Trust in this area. This will enable this school to concentrate upon sustaining its success and impact in future.

Q. Have you considered any other affiliations? And if so, why have they been discounted?

There are a number of emerging, but unproven Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) developing in the area. The main reason for choosing L.E.A.D is that as a successful school we currently have a choice and do not need to find a MAT with the capacity to improve us. Our strength as a school means that we feel we would be best suited to playing a leading role in the further development of a very successful and proven MAT in this area, rather than simply joining up with schools with no proven track record of success.

Q. Please could you confirm if the service pupil premium will still go directly to the school for the benefit of All Saints pupils or if it will be subsumed into the wider academy budget and distributed across the federation?

We have been assured that all funding for pupils at our school will go to this school. The school will simply pay a proportion of budget to LEAD on an annual basis to cover services and infrastructure.

Recommendation

On the basis that no significant objections to the proposals were identified and with the support of the staff, stakeholders and over 99% of the pupil's parents, it is recommended that the content of this consultation report is noted and that the Governors' continue their plans for the conversion of the School.

Appendix 1

Waddington All Saints L.E.A.D. Academisation consultation meeting for Parents 3rd October 2017 at 5pm

13 parents attended the meeting.

Governors Present: Julia Vause (Chair), Paul Yates, Chas Gimenez-Codd, Andy Canavan, Andrea Smith, Matt Gilbert, Graham Cavill, Laura Rushton,
Paul Martin (Headteacher)
Neil Spencelayh (L.E.A.D.)

1. Mrs Vause introduced and welcomed Neil from L.E.A.D. and gave a brief introduction about the intent of tonight's meeting. The meeting is part of the consultation on the governor's decision to move towards academisation with L.E.A.D. This process is to provide opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions and contribute opinions about the decision before it should be signed off and become legally binding. Nothing has been signed yet.

2. Mr Martin outlined the timelines for the conversion process with the likely start date of 1st January 2018.

September 2017

- ☑ Formal Consultation Period
- ☑ Begin works on staffing contracts
- ☑ Negotiate and agree land transfer in readiness for conversion

October 2017

- ☑ To review list of contracts and assets for inclusion in the Commercial Transfer Agreement
- ☑ Review Consultation and report

November 2017

- ☑ To prepare and initiate school financial year-end close down and procedures

December 2017

- ☑ Send letter to suppliers to confirm new change of academy name and school status
- ☑ Financial transfers

January 2018

- ☑ Open as an Academy with LEAD

3. Mrs Vause presented the reasons why the Governors felt that joining L.E.A.D. was the right decision for the school and the children that come here.

- ☑ Uncertain political future
- ☑ Shrinking budget for schools
- ☑ Control of own budget
- ☑ Virtually no LCC support for maintained schools now and have to purchase from elsewhere
- ☑ L.E.A.D. would give us a proven level of support and access to financial expertise and staff and leadership development programmes for building our future.
- ☑ We feed to 7 schools and would not wish to put preference in one by joining their own MAT. L.E.A.D are independent of our High Schools.

For questions and answers see main report.

Appendix 2

Waddington All Saints L.E.A.D. Academisation consultation meeting for Staff 3rd October 2017 at 3:30pm

All Staff were invited to attend.

In attendance: Neil Spencelayh L.E.A.D, Julia Vause (Chair of Governors), Graham Cavill (parent Governor), Paul Martin (Headteacher)

1. Introduction by Paul Martin

Mr Martin introduced Neil from L.E.A.D, he then went on to explain to staff that this was an informal meeting where staff had the chance to ask questions and have their say.

A brief history of the 18-month process of how we have reached this point was shared. This included our uncertain future if we remained an LCC school, and the fact that the governors wanted something that would support this school and maintain its strength. We like to view ourselves as a cutting edge school, we wanted to join an organisation that would allow us to maintain our ethos and principles, we did not want to join a dictating powerful organisation.

In L.E.A.D we have chosen an organisation that is like minded and supportive of what we believe in.

2. Julia Vause

Mrs Vause supported the journey by commenting that we are a village school for our children and we want to continue to grow in the future. Joining secondary schools is not an option as we feed into 7 different schools and did not want to be seen in favouring one in particular.

Curriculum and Provision

Q. There has been a huge reduction in SEN support. Do LEAD have a bank of specialist services that we can access?

As a LEAD school we would still access local specialist services. However, LEAD are looking into specialist services as a priority this year and this may come in house in the future.

Q. We currently use our school budget to pay for specialist services. Will LEAD contribute to these costs?

As a LEAD school our academy GAG would come straight into school and we would then buy back the services we need. Under LEAD we become one legal entity, LEAD will agree then monitor our budget, any changes to spending will have to be agreed by LEAD, this ensures that the school remains financially viable.

Q. Would we retain our identity?

Yes, our values and ethos would remain. We would adopt the LEAD academy logo, assessment and finance reporting systems. Nothing directly linked to teaching and learning or the curriculum will change, however LEAD have some medium term plans that can be used but these are not imposed.

School to school support

Q. How would we get paid when working with other schools within LEAD?

Intercompany trading, we would buy/sell services and this would be brokered between heads.

Q. Where would we be able to travel to?

No travel involved if you don't want to, however the professional development opportunities of working in other, contrasting schools could be an option. The LEAD Lincoln hub is hoping to grow to 10 schools, this will provide further opportunities.

Q. If there is a school in the MAT that is in financial difficulty would we be expected to support?

LEAD have tight controls in place, this would be very rare. However, we do have schools coming in, in a difficult financial position. The trust would bail it out and the school would be expected to pay that money back over time. We might have a conversation to borrow money from another school but this generally doesn't happen. LEAD have a reserve to support these situations. It is always a transparent process.

Services/Policies

Q. With services coming in house would this include admissions?

No, admission would still be through LCC.

Q. Will we follow LEAD policies?

Statutory Policies – Yes

Non Statutory Policies- No but LEAD models are available

Community Links

Q. We have a lot of opportunity to work with secondary schools, would this change under LEAD?

It shouldn't make any difference, there are no political grips. It should be 'business as usual'.

Q. Will our ties with the RAF base change?

No, our community links remain the same.

Contracts, pay & conditions

Q. Nottinghamshire have 2 weeks' holiday. Can we still mirror LCC holiday times?

Yes, no common pattern amongst LEAD schools.

Q. How will TUPE affect staff?

All contracts will remain the same, this includes terms and conditions, pensions and pay. New contracts will have a slight change in T & Cs. Local government pensions will remain with Lincolnshire.

Q. If I moved jobs within school what would change?

If you were appointed to a 'new role' then you would be employed under LEAD, however your length of service would still be recognised.

Q. As a 1:1 if I moved to another 1:1 post would my pay change?

Difficult question to answer, however it would be unreasonable to drop someone's pay again.

Q. Will we be any worse off with pay?

No, never worse off within the trust-paid at least as well.

Q. Will payday change?

Payday will be 22nd of the month.

Q. Will we need to cancel and reapply for childcare vouchers? If so which scheme do LEAD use?

Information emailed to staff on 4/10/17.

Q. Will NQT contracts, that have not yet arrived in school, still be subject to TUPE?

Yes

Uniform

Q. Will school uniform change?

Yes, the LEAD logo will be added, as we are a single legal entity within the trust.

Q. Would football kits need the new logo?

Yes, there may be some grant money left over to support this change.