

CHELMSFORD LEARNING PARTNERSHIP PRIMARY HUB

ACADEMY CONSULTATION

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM PARENTS MEETINGS

Introduction

Consultation meetings were held for parents and carers at each of the schools on the proposal to join the Chelmsford Learning Partnership. The meetings took place as detailed below:

Barnes Farm Schools (Infant & Junior); 5.00pm, Nov 1st

Perryfields Infant School; 2.15pm, Nov 1st

The Tyrrells School; 6.30pm, Nov 8th

The meetings were attended by the Headteachers, Chairs of Governors, Paul Banks, CEO, and Philip Cranwell from Cranwell Consultancy.

This document is a summary of the questions asked at the meetings and the answers given. Where helpful, additional information has been provided in response to the questions raised.

STRATEGY

Is it your hope that other schools will join? (P)

This group of four primary schools, Barnes Farm Infant, Barnes Farm Junior, Perryfields Infant and The Tyrrells School, joining The Boswells School will be the founding schools of Chelmsford Learning Partnership. Roding Valley High School was mentioned as another secondary school that hope to join CLP. Paul Banks explained the model of sponsorship and the new school, Beaulieu Park was discussed. Other local schools may be sponsored in the future, if there was a need. There are no plans to become a wider geographical partnership. At our heart, we are a community partnership.

Who decides if another school can join CLP? (TS)

Generally, the trustees, although the DfE may approach the trust to ask for educational or leadership support and this would be funded. No changes can be forced that would disadvantage the current schools.

What status do Beaulieu Park and Roding Valley schools have? (TS)

Beaulieu Park will be a sponsored school, meaning CLP would run them with their allocated funding which would come into the MAT. Beaulieu Park would probably have a Head of School instead of a Headteacher.

Roding Valley High School are looking to join CLP but will not be a founding member of the MAT. Roding Valley High School has already been receiving leadership support from Paul Banks in the role of Executive Headteacher.

Where do children living in Beaulieu go to school now? (TS)

There is no space at Boswells, so they are allocated to the nearest schools that have places.

Would it make sense to get the reasons why the other schools from STEP haven't decided to join the MAT? (BF)

The other STEP school have decided not to join the MAT but it was up to each school to make an informed decision. There was no obligation for the other schools to join, it came down to a matter of choice.

Why didn't Perryfields Junior school join in? (P)

Perryfields Junior School pulled out of the STEP partnership approximately 2 years ago. It subsequently chose to become a MAT on its own.

The geographical closeness but the closest school is Chancellor Park but why are they not joining? (BF)

The schools have all formed part of STEP and could continue to do so but they have opted not to be part of this formal approach. It was up to the governing body of each school to decide what was best for their school.

Why are the other local schools not included? (TS)

We still have cluster meetings with the original STEP group but Chancellor Park and Springfield Primary are not interested in converting at the moment although they may want to join later. The 5 schools involved want to keep the STEP ethos rather than splitting up into separate MATs. Perryfields Infants could join their Junior MAT but feel more supported by the schools in this group. The cross phase between primary and secondary would benefit children's transition.

You mentioned about geographical location, would we be expanding the MAT in future? (BF)

Roding Valley High School are hoping to join the Chelmsford Learning Partnership. There is the possibility of sponsoring other schools in the future, but only if it felt right and at no detriment to us. The LA could ask us to sponsor other schools but it would be up to the trustees to consider such requests and make a final decision.

Can Tyrrells remain as a single academy? (TS)

A government proposal that all schools compulsorily join MATs has been dropped, however any schools converting from local authority now have to become part of a MAT. Our auditors and solicitors have predicted that the SAT model is not sustainable in the long term. The LA is also looking at forming its own MAT.

Are there other MATs we could join? (TS)

All the other MATs that Perryfields Infants have looked at involved top slicing their budget and having little control or influence at trustee level, so CLP was considered the best option.

What are the negatives in this decision, I don't feel from tonight's presentation that any negatives have been discussed? The presentation is all very positive. (BF)

The governors have been researching this proposal for over a year and decided that the Chelmsford Learning Partnership works. They consider this to be the best option for their school. Parents are able to access the minutes of the GB meetings if they are interested in seeing more information on how this decision was reached. There is a risk associated with doing nothing and this could also have a potential impact on the school.

In the long term, once a school converts to academy status it cannot return to Local Authority maintained status. It is also quite hard to leave a multi academy trust once a school has joined, as it requires the consent of the Secretary of State for Education and the identification and consent of another multi academy trust. This is the key negative of the proposal, which is why the governing bodies have been considering the proposal so carefully. The aim is that everyone has a clear and consistent understanding of what being part of the proposed Chelmsford Learning Partnership will mean for each school before joining.

This seems too good to be true – is this a no brainer and this is why you are putting it to us? (BF)

It has been a long journey, taking over 6 years and the introduction through STEP, to reach this point. The STEP partnership had originally appeared strong, but movement of personnel showed that the structure wasn't as robust as had been hoped. This proposal allows us to put a stronger structure in place, with greater accountability and this will lead to greater levels of challenge and

support. This model will be the best for the future of Barnes Farm Infant School. The direction we are going in is only positive whereas by doing nothing there were many more uncertainties.

Are there any other concerns? (BF)

There were originally concerns about potential changes to conditions for teaching staff but the trust have reassured the staff that they will ensure job security. The school ethos will remain and headteachers will continue to run their own schools and make their own decisions. There will be a single tier of employment for staff within the trust to ensure fairness and equal rights.

Is this going to be a partnership of equals with Boswells being a much bigger school with bigger funds? Will the teachers get paid more? (BF)

This will be a partnership of equals and Boswells is one of five equal schools forming this trust. All the schools will continue to get all their money allocated to them by the government and money will not be transferred from one school to another. Each school looks after their own money.

The Chelmsford Learning Partnership cannot automatically adopt future national collective agreements on pay and conditions because it would not be represented at those national negotiations. It is, however, committed to adopting, as a minimum, the national and local agreements for annual pay awards agreed between unions and employers for teachers and support staff respectively.

The Chelmsford Learning Partnership will continue to have a mechanism to consult with staff, unions and professional associations on future pay awards and changes to other terms and conditions of employment.

Any potential savings made by the schools in joining the trust could potentially be used to fund pay rises for staff in the future.

There have been lots of changes in the infant school (BF)

The aim was to get the school as stable as possible in terms of the medium and long term future of the school. The school is now in a good position to move forward.

Secondary schools – is this going to affect our choices for choice of secondary school? (BF)

The Boswells School is going out to consultation on their new admissions policy. We believe that if BF is part of the trust the children in BF should have access to secondary schools within that trust. BF are out of catchment but for 2019 entry BF will be listed at some point on the application criteria to

Boswells. With regards to admissions, ECC will continue to administer admissions as before but the trust becomes the admission authority. The school governing body have to give permission to the trust before they give out an offer for a school place.

Would Boswells change their admissions criteria? (TS)

The north of their priority admissions area will eventually be taken by the Beaulieu school. They propose to name the MAT schools as feeders so, for example, a child attending Tyrrells but not in Boswells catchment would be granted a place. This could not start until September 2019 as the change in admission policy would need to be approved.

Beaulieu would eventually be a two-form entry for reception to year 6 then a six-form entry from year 7 and may take children from Broomfield and further towards Great Leighs.

What will be the impact of Boswells admissions criteria changes? (P)

Boswells admissions criteria will be adapting to the Beaulieu park development. Admissions area for Perryfields Junior will not be changed.

GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP

What is the role of the directors/trustees? (TS)

The MAT board would have to have the right skills to operate at a strategic level for all the schools, working with the heads. Each of the five founding schools would have a representative on the board although this cannot be legally written into the scheme of delegation as the trustees need to be chosen because of their skills. The trustees will be confirmed w/c 13th November.

What job do the members do and what is their term? (TS)

The 5 members are the named people who would be legally responsible for the trust. They are accountable to the DfE and only meet once or twice a year. They decide their own term of office.

Who are the trustees? (P)

A number of trustees are already serving on the trust board for the Boswells School and will be established trustees of the Chelmsford Learning Partnership. There is a meeting due to be held on 13th November to appoint wider trustees from the founding schools.

How is the board of trustees accountable are they accountable to us or the secretary of state? (BF)

The Trustees are accountable in four ways. First, to the Secretary of State who has the power to intervene in the Trust and/or terminate the Funding Agreement that allows the Trust to run schools. Second, to Ofsted which has the same rights of inspection. Third, the Trust is accountable under company law with responsibilities such as publishing audited accounts. Fourth, the Trustees are accountable under charity law.

Who will be the trustees for each school and how will they be chosen? (BF)

Each school has been putting forward their governor's names as potential trustees. They will be chosen on a skills basis, financial background, education background, HR background and those trustees will join the existing trustees. In terms of accountability, legally accountability sits with the board of trustees and the DFE. Each Headteacher and Governing Body is then accountable to the parents of his or her own school. The board of trustees will be decided in a couple of weeks and helps us keep what we think this partnership is special. The list of trustees is submitted to the DFE so they can see the skill set they have for them to agree.

FINANCE

Does all the funding still come from the Government? (P)

Funding will continue to come from the government. Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. The whole of the school budget would come directly to the MAT from central Government and then be distributed to the schools, allowing each school to control the whole of its spending.

Within the trust there is the possibility of saving money with single contracts for services such as HR. There will be opportunities for joint commissioning or resource sharing. Joint commissioning is when the MAT buys services on behalf of the schools. The MAT will be able to secure savings against schools buying services individually because it will be a single contract with a single point of contact.

How does funding & budget planning change? (TS)

These stay the same for the founding schools. There are changes coming with the National Funding Formula anyway to all schools regardless of whether they

are part of a MAT. Tyrrells' current good financial position can probably only be maintained for 3 or 4 years before cuts would need to be made if they remained as a single academy.

Will schools keep their own money? (TS)

Yes, there will be individual bank accounts.

Does sponsoring mean there is less money between each of the schools? (P)

Chelmsford Learning Partnership has received approval from the Department for Education (DfE) to support underperforming academies, as a sponsor. Sponsors work with the academies they support through the academy trust. Each school within the trust will be entitled to the same per pupil funding as they would as a LA maintained school. The whole of the school budget would come directly to the school allowing the school to control the whole of their spending. Each Headteacher will retain responsibility to develop their school budget, with oversight from the trust.

What happens if one school struggles financially? (TS)

All budget performance would be monitored by the trust and if mismanaged, the responsibility would be taken away. If there is a large unexpected cost, such as a premises matter, bids would be put in to the DfE to cover it.

Tyrrells' premises seems to be well maintained, how do we know what problems other schools may have? (TS)

Schools' 5 year asset management plans would be scrutinised during the second phase of due diligence along with the school Condition Surveys.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Will we have better access to support services? (TS)

As a MAT we may be able to attract a better choice of outside agencies. For example, at the moment it is difficult to source counselling for half a day per week, but together we could procure 2 days or even be able to employ our own counsellor.

What is best for the children? (TS)

Local authority support will no longer be available. It would be easier to find and fund services as a group.

Might there be more movement for the staff? (P)

There would be no immediate plans to move staff but it did open up the possibility of secondments and other opportunities, which could enhance retention of good staff.

Staff will normally have a contract of employment to work in their current school and this is protected through the transfer of employment, therefore staff will continue to work in their existing school.

However, there are three circumstances where staff may work in another trust school. First, is when a job at another Chelmsford Learning Partnership school is advertised and an employee applies for and is appointed to that role. Second, when a staff member voluntarily agrees to work within another school in the MAT. Third, there may be new posts created in the future that are trust-wide and any staff member appointed to such a post would be expected to work across schools.

Would Free School Meals change? (TS)

No, that remains an entitlement.

Are MAT schools inspected together? (TS)

No, the schools are registered with Ofsted individually.

Why has Tyrrells not been inspected since 2008? (TS)

Outstanding schools are not inspected regularly and some local academies have been even longer without inspection. We constantly assess ourselves and Ofsted monitor our data and any safeguarding concerns on an annual basis and could inspect at any time. Under the new framework, Tyrrells assess themselves as “good”. School led improvement is just as challenging but more supportive and regular than an Ofsted snapshot on a particular day. A MAT gives an extra layer of accountability to monitor each other. The cross phase aspect of peer monitoring has proved beneficial to all when schools have worked together in the past.

PROCESS

How much information and say do the parents have in the final decision? (BF)

The consultation period runs for four weeks and concludes on Friday, November 17th. How much say parents have will depend on how many parents complete and return the survey forms. Parents will need to complete a survey form to have their say on the proposal. Governors will review the survey responses and make a decision based on the level of support. Parents and staff will be given feedback on these.