

The Ryedale Federation



Executive Headteacher: Mr Mark McCandless
Secondary Director: Ms Domenica Wilkinson

Chair of Governors: Mr David Dangerfield
Finance Director: Mrs Helen Coulthard

Primary Director: Mrs Gill Hardacre

The Ryedale Learning Trust Consultation Report January 22nd 2020

This report should be read in conjunction with the **letter to stakeholders** on 18th November 2019, and **consultation letter** on the 6th December.

The purpose of the consultation process was to assist the governing board in identifying and addressing legitimate concerns and questions that stakeholders (particularly staff and parents) may have rather than seeking a 'majority' verdict.

Consultation Responses (66 questionnaires returned and 5 emails received)						
	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DON'T KNOW	TOTALS
SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK						
Parent Responses	4	6	1	9	1	21
Staff Responses	13	18	2	8	3	44
Local Resident Responses				1		1
Employee of LA Responses						
TOTALS:	17	24	3	18	4	66
PARENT FEEDBACK						
Parent at Helmsley CP School	1					1
Parent at Kirkbymoorside CP School	3	2	1	1	1	8
Parent at Ryedale School		4		7		11
Parent at Sinnington CP School				1		1
TOTALS:	4	6	1	9	1	21
STAFF FEEDBACK						
Staff at Helmsley CP School		1				1
Staff at Kirkbymoorside CP School	2	4		7		13
Staff at Ryedale School	11	12	2	1	3	29
Staff at Sinnington CP School		1				1
TOTALS:	13	18	2	8	3	44
OVERALL RESPONSES: (41 Parents/Staff are in agreement; 20 Parents/Staff are not in agreement; 1 Local Resident not in agreement; 1 parent selected 'don't know' and 3 staff selected 'don't know')						

66 responses were received (see table above) and they show a majority who support the proposals. The majority of staff who completed the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals (the exception being in Kirkbymoorside which had a small majority of one, not in agreement). Parents who completed the questionnaire were equally split in their support of the proposals (parents at Kirkbymoorside had a majority in favour of the proposals while parents at Ryedale school had a majority against).

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Those who responded 'don't know' often asked open-ended questions for information, others expressed concerns about specific aspects of the proposals. Some respondents have clearly had a negative experience of academies or were concerned about the bad press received by some academy chains; others (including respondents who had worked in academies) had a much more positive view and felt that conversion would actually strengthen the work of the schools.

Overwhelmingly the respondents believed that the schools were exploring academy status for 'the right reasons', even if those who opposed them felt strongly about certain aspects: 'leaving' the local authority, the potential for 'added management layers'.

Twenty stakeholders, not including governors, attended the public consultation event on 15th January. This event included a presentation followed by a Q&A session. All staff as part of the consultation were given the same presentation and opportunity to ask questions both publicly or in private.

Attached to this letter is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document with the Steering Group's responses on behalf of the Governing Board. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to contribute to the consultation. The vast majority of the feedback was constructive and all stakeholders who put their name and contact details on their questionnaire response will be contacted individually with regard to their questions/concerns by a member of the Steering Group (if they were not addressed as part of the FAQs). However, a couple of respondents, both strongly against the proposals, who appeared to take this as an opportunity to be scathing of either individual schools or members of staff, did not leave their name or contact details. We welcome feedback and if any stakeholder has concerns or is unhappy with any aspect of our schools or their leadership then please do get in contact with us directly so we can address those concerns.

School leaders and the governing board are very well aware of the characteristics of academies and multi-academy trusts which have not been successful, and the features of the proposed Ryedale Learning Trust are designed to provide a strong platform for sustainability and improved outcomes for pupils and students. These features are:

- A 'high trust' partnership based on a proven track record of schools working together as part of the Ryedale Federation, and where schools retain their individuality, character and ethos
- A commitment to work with schools serving local communities and not over-stretching resources and capacity
- To strengthen accountability and governance arrangements by drawing on expertise from the local community and beyond to provide more effective challenge and support for schools
- To continue to provide more opportunities for staff across the partnership for professional development, access to a wider range of jobs and more protection against the risk of job losses
- To provide governance arrangements which allow schools to retain their ethos



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- To work closely with the local authority by retaining a range of services and good working relationships at the same time as having more local control over decision-making
- Using the advantages of working together as a larger organisation to achieve better value outcomes through joint procurement, shared services, collective grants and bids, thus enabling more funding to be focused on teaching and learning

In parallel with the consultation process, the Federation has been working with the DfE to ensure that the proposals have their approval too: any academy conversion has to be scrutinised by the DfE, the Regional Commissioner and a Headteacher Advisory Board to ensure that the proposals are robust and that there are rigorous arrangements in place to ensure strong accountability and governance arrangements. Our applications, to become a MAT and a sponsor, have been approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

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Frequently asked questions

What are the primary drivers behind this move to convert to Academy status and establish a Multi-Academy Trust?

Given the increasing number of schools that have already converted to academies, and the rising number of Multi-Academy Trusts, we believe there is now a clear direction. We are concerned that in the future, options for remaining LA maintained schools may be more limited. As our schools perform well we do not feel this is an imminent risk, however the criteria for establishing new MATs is already starting to change. We are concerned that in the future, remaining LA maintained schools may have little option but to convert to academies and, potentially, be placed as lesser partners in established Multi-Academy Trusts. We consider it imperative to have control over both the future of our current schools, and any future growth.

Furthermore, the system is now set up in favour of MATs. For example, if a school is judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted, it receives an 'academy order' and will be taken over by a MAT as a sponsored academy. Successful Federations are not eligible to sponsor schools in a category in this way. We want to be in a position, should a school in our community fall into a category, to at least be able to apply to be their sponsor.

Which schools can become academies?

In order to allow more schools to benefit from the increased autonomy afforded by academy status, the conversion programme was expanded to all good or better schools (from 7 April 2011) so long as they meet certain criteria. To be eligible to convert to academy status schools must meet the following criteria:

- Schools should have good 2019 performance (e.g. above national averages etc or with a clear strategy to address any recent dips in performance or areas of weakness);
- Schools should be Ofsted good or outstanding.
- Schools should have a healthy overall financial position and 3-year forecast.

Who decides which schools convert to an academy?

The decision for any school to apply to become an academy rests with its governing board. The Regional Schools Commissioner approves applicants.

What is the governance structure within a MAT?

The proposed structure of the MAT's governance follows a standard model recommended by the Department for Education and National Governors Association.

Within this structure, some decision-making powers will be delegated by the trustees to academy/cluster committees (local school governance) which will include parent and staff representation, much as it does now.

However, academy committees shall remain dependent on the trust board for any decision-making powers. The trustee board is the accountable body and the ultimate decision-making body.



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Are we going to be part of an academy chain?

No. We are forming our own Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

Each school will retain their individual ethos and character. We will work together broadly as we have been doing as a Federation but we will have the opportunity to sponsor other schools who receive an academy order or accept other converter schools (schools that wish to become an academy and join our Trust) into our MAT.

We will only work with schools in our community - we want our MAT to serve our local and wider community.

Are academies free from Ofsted inspection?

No. Academies are subject to the same inspection regulations as all maintained schools.

However, converter schools will not be inspected until the third year after converting.

Do academies have greater freedom over admissions?

Academies have to comply with the Schools Admissions Code and this does not, for instance, permit selection.

We intend, certainly initially, to keep with the current arrangements which are determined by the local authority.

Would there be any changes with regard to home to school transport?

The Local Authority would continue to be responsible for home to school transport, therefore there would be no change to the current arrangements.

Can the school have freedom to set its own curriculum?

Yes, but there would still be a proper obligation to provide a 'balanced and broadly-based curriculum' for all students.

This allows an academy the ability to develop a curriculum that meets the needs of its students as they face ever-changing demands and requirements.

Our schools will continue to teach a 'broad and balanced' curriculum that helps instil in children a 'lifelong love of learning'.

What would happen to special educational needs (SEN) support?

The Academies Act 2010 requires Academies to follow the same statutory framework for special needs as local authority schools.

For students with a statement of special needs the funding does not change and would come from the Local Authority, who currently retain the responsibility for the statutory provision. Where children have special needs, but do not have a statement, once again, academies are required to have regard for the Code of Practice on SEN, in exactly the same way as local authority schools. This means that in both types of school, children will be supported at school action or action plus, according to the level of need and involvement of external agencies. With academy status, the funding simply comes directly to the school.

Whether we convert or not, the recent changes to the funding schools receive for each SEN child necessitates a very flexible use of the resources to ensure we continue to support fully those children, whatever form the additional support needs to take.

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If there are extended services provided by an academy or on the same site, for example a Children's Centre or a Nursery, will these be affected by the change?

When a school becomes an academy, the council has to take a detailed look on how extended services are provided. These services will continue to be available for parents, pupils and the wider community but we need to ensure that they operate on the correct legal basis. Parents should be assured that academy status is not about removing important extended services that may be offered in your locality.

Will the school name or uniform change?

No. Each School will proudly keep their name and their current uniform. However, each school will refer to their membership of the Ryedale Learning Trust.

Will the term dates change?

No. There is no intention to alter the current arrangements. We will continue to set our term dates in line with those set by NYCC.

Will existing schools grow if we convert to become an academy?

Becoming an academy will not dictate whether our existing schools grow. The current position for each school is:

Ryedale School – almost at capacity and there is no intention to grow

Sinnington CP School – almost at capacity and there is no intention to grow

Helmsley CP School – pupil numbers are growing and there is capacity within the existing school to accommodate current projected future pupil numbers. There is no intention to increase the capacity of the school.

Kirkbymoorside CP School – pupil numbers are expected to increase due to the potential housing development adjacent to the school. Additional land and funding has been agreed as part of the planning approval to enable the school to grow, should this be required.

Who would take responsibility for teacher and support staff pay and conditions?

Our trust would become the employer as an academy rather than the local authority.

There would be no change to the pension entitlements of staff. Within the trust, academies would be registered with the Teachers' Pension Agency and the Local Government pension scheme.

We recognise that attracting and retaining good quality staff is essential to the well-being of our schools and would always seek to provide a caring environment where the welfare of staff and a good work-life balance are given the utmost importance. We believe many strides forward have been made in recent years with issues such as tasks teachers are expected to undertake and would expect to continue to work in this spirit, allowing teachers to focus on their work in the classroom.

We would recognise professional associations and trades unions, working with them in the spirit of collaboration and mutual interest.

We would continue to follow teachers' national pay and conditions, unless genuine improvements can be made. Should teachers' national pay and conditions cease to exist we would aim to offer at least better than average pay and conditions than can be found elsewhere.

TUPE [Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)] regulations would be fully respected and protect existing rights. Continuous service would be recognised for teaching and support staff which would maintain existing entitlements for occupational sick pay and maternity pay.

The trust would retain the current range of salary sacrifice schemes available to staff.



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We would operate a fair and transparent system for evaluating pay for support staff, taking independent advice as required. This would also apply to teachers if national pay and conditions cease to exist in the future.

Would our school's budget be used to bail out a new MAT member school if it was in financial trouble?

No. All schools within The Ryedale Learning Trust will have their own school budget. If another school joined the MAT then they would only do so if their financial position was strong or there was a clear plan in place to address any budget deficits.

How will the money raised by the PTA/Friends be used?

Each school will continue to have its own autonomous Parent Teacher Association (PTA), although they will be free to collaborate if they wish. The money raised by each school's PTA will only be used for its own school. PTAs, as currently, will continue to be independent of the school, raising money for agreed resources or projects that have been asked for by the school's leadership.

Will a parent's right to complain be affected?

No. If Academy conversion takes place there will be, as there is now, a complaints policy which gives an avenue for parents to complain. Every outside agency currently available to parents will remain unchanged.

What are the estimated costs of conversion?

The DfE pays a flat-rate grant of £25,000 to a school after an Academy Order has been issued to cover the cost of conversion.

Therefore, we will receive £100,000 in total for our four schools, we estimate that this sum will fully meet the costs of conversion, and economies of scale should mean there will be a small amount left over which we will be able to retain.

We intend to contract a third-party project manager who has in the recent past conducted multiple successful Academy conversions.

The Ryedale Learning MAT Steering Group, January 2020