



Additional questions and answers – Academisation Consultation

Why do you feel it is necessary to spend 5% of the school budget on more managers and not on my child's education? Especially given the lack of funds with no school trips in KS1, no reading books last year and asking parents to provide tissues because the school can't afford them.

As Governors, we take our duty to spend public money with integrity extremely seriously. In recent years, we have become increasingly concerned about ever tightening budgets and the difficulties for schools to provide everything that they would like. We have looked at the way Local Authority budgets work, alongside the operation of schools within Trusts and believe that by joining Red Kite, our funds will be managed more effectively, benefitting our pupils. Red Kite schools can draw on a wide bank of expertise, meaning that training and coaching are included within this 5%, as are many other services which are currently paid for separately. We believe that the economies of scale and sharing of resources will save Saltergate money, for example with regard to cleaning, caretaking, human resources and finance. All of these services are currently bought from the Local Authority and every year has seen their prices increase, whilst the service in many of these areas has reduced and been unsatisfactory. Managing finances more effectively will mean that the children have better learning opportunities.

As Governors, we would never make a decision that would be of detriment to our pupils - they are at the heart of everything we work to do. You mention the lack of funding and difficult decisions that the school has had to make in recent years - we agree that it has been extremely challenging for our school to work within financial constraints and this is a central part of our reasoning for joining Red Kite. As a side note, parents were invited to contribute tissues for their child's class - it was very clearly stated that this was not an expectation. Many parents and carers have expressed that they are more than happy to help with this.

We would like to emphasise that if we join Red Kite, we will not be spending money on more managers - it is a change of structure and leadership over the school, not an increase. We will simply have the support of the Red Kite Leaders, rather than the leaders within the Local Authority.

Why is it felt that joining an academy is necessary, when collaboration seems to be the only benefit and is happening already? What benefits, other than collaboration, does this have to my child?

Some collaboration has been established but the Trust offers increased opportunities. Working with other schools, both primaries and secondaries, brings a wealth of benefits. Local Authority schools have become more isolated in recent years and schools can feel that they stand alone, trying to manage a huge number of demands without support.

If we join the Red Kite Trust, we will have additional freedoms and opportunities. These will include more options for managing our finances and spending our money more effectively. We won't have to buy services from the Local Authority, which are under-funded and cannot provide what we need as a school.

Other benefits to the school include:

Teachers and leaders having more time to focus on children. Teachers would be able to work more effectively through sharing planning and preparation with colleagues across schools. For example, a subject leader can benefit from work done in another school, vastly reducing the time that they need to allocate to the writing of policies and procedures. Lesson plans and curriculum development documents can be shared, saving teachers in all schools carrying out the same pieces of work. This also applies to leaders, who currently have to spend considerable time writing policies and completing paperwork which doesn't directly benefit the children. All of this will release time for staff to give to pupils - which is what we all want.

Teachers will be properly supported with strong IT systems and their maintenance. This will make a huge impact upon the day to day teaching and learning.

Sharing of resources - schools across the Trust share resources such as class sets of books. This enables efficient spending and greater access to a wider range of quality resources. These simple steps would make a big difference to children.

Sharing of expertise benefitting children - within the Trust, schools have access to experts, such as specialist teachers at high schools. Our children would benefit from these staff giving input to them and also training their teachers. We want our staff to keep learning and growing, and they want this too. Training opportunities with the Local Authority have reduced over recent years and there is a danger that schools do not maintain their up to date knowledge. We want our staff to be at the forefront of new initiatives and also to have the time to make the most of these. These relate to curriculum, assessment and many other areas.

How will SEND support be impacted by this?

Meeting the needs of our pupils with SEND is very important to the Governors at Saltergate. Local Authority resources have diminished over recent years and some school SENDCOs have been left feeling isolated. The workload for a SENDCO is immense and the Local Authority is only able to provide minimal support, whilst places in specialist provision are inadequate. The Red Kite Trust has appointed a lead for SEND who is able to support SENDCOs with their work and to give regular training, input and advice. The Trust also has a SEND network, where SENDCOs can share ideas, plans and practical ways of helping children. This enables schools to be up to date with the best practice and the most effective strategies. In this area, as in many others, the Red Kite leaders have regular contact and communication with the Department of Education. This means that they are able to both represent the views of teachers and pupils, and also to share changes and initiatives with their schools. This communication is extremely valuable in a sector which changes rapidly as it tries to meet the needs of all pupils.