



Frequently Asked Questions and Answers from the Dane Bank Parent Consultation about joining the Changing Lives in Collaboration Cooperative Trust and becoming an Academy

The Consultation Meetings were held on Thursday 8th November at Dane Bank School. The first meeting was attended by 2 people and the second meeting by 15 people.

Below are some of the questions asked by people attending the meeting, questions you have raised during part of the consultation process or questions and responses Governors felt would be helpful to our stakeholders in understanding the school's position. At the end of the document are some of the Risks to Conversion the Governing Board of Dane Bank Primary have been considering.

Academies, Trusts and Cooperative Trusts

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A Multi Academy Trust [MAT] is where a number of schools join together and form a single Trust with a Board of Directors answerable to the Trust's members. The members of the Trust are responsible for the strategic oversight of the academy. They are the conscience of the Trust, ensuring that the objectives are upheld.

They appoint most of the Trust's directors who determine the policies of the Trust, monitor the effectiveness of individual academies, manage central services and report to the Secretary of State. They work with their academies to ensure they are performing to their best ability and that they get the support they require.

The Trust is the legal entity and it has one set of Articles that govern all the academies within it. The Trust has a Master Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State and each academy also has a Supplemental Funding Agreement. Each of the academies in the Trust has its own local governing body that deals with local issues.

The Trust is accountable for all its academies. However, before any agreements are signed, the Trust will work with schools to agree those matters that will be handled centrally and those that will remain the responsibility of the individual academy local governing bodies. This agreement will be encapsulated in the Scheme of Delegation.

Why would our school want to join the Changing Lives in Collaboration Multi Academy Trust?

One of the key strengths of the Changing Lives in Collaboration Cooperative Multi Academy Trust is the flexibility to manage resources and expertise. Funding will be allocated on an individual academy basis, but there will be shared support services (e.g. HR, business support, etc.) through a central pool. It's also easier to share expertise, as all staff in the Trust are employed by the same employer and so can transfer more easily or work across more than one academy. This presents positive opportunities for staff development.

The Trust is accountable for all its member academies and is expected to provide effective support for any school in the Trust that is underperforming or has additional needs.

CLIC Cooperative Trust is special and unique because:

- First and foremost, this is a Trust that will build on existing strengths and has the potential to strengthen schools' values.
- The Trust takes the view that everyone is on a shared journey, being there for each other and not feeling isolated; everyone has something to offer.
- The Trust will operate with transparency and openness.
- It can be the glue in difficult times.
- There will be a focus on achievement and not just attainment. There will be a focus on ensuring the children and families that schools work with receive the best possible support rather than simply a focus on Ofsted and league tables.
- It will provide small schools with greater security and flexibility in organisation and structure but also take away some of the risks of going it alone.
- The Trust will be part of the wider local arrangements for school-to-school support and not a competitor. The Trust will have accountability for its academies, it can be a strong voice in the 'system leadership' structure.

Why can't we be an academy on our own and not joining the CLIC Trust

Becoming a single school academy would mean that we would get none of the benefits of collaboration and support which we see as being so important for our children and staff, whilst continuing to leave us exposed to the increasing financial pressures facing all schools, but particularly those that are single form entry, such as Dane Bank. It is for these reasons, the Department for Education no longer supports single form entry schools (or indeed single schools) becoming academies.

What are the different types of academy?

There are two types of academies:

- Sponsored academies are those normally falling into the Ofsted 'inadequate' category. They require the maximum support within the Trust family and conversion to an academy can be the most appropriate solution as part of a suite of measurements to improve educational standards.
- Converter academies are successful schools that have chosen to convert to academies in order to benefit from the increased autonomy academy status brings, having decided that becoming an academy is the best route for the school. Dane Bank would be a converter academy.

What is a Cooperative Multi Academy Trust?

A Co-operative MAT is a group of schools who want to use their freedoms from local authority control for the benefit of the education of the children but who want to retain accountability to the local school community in their governance and in their vision. The CLIC Trust schools have adopted Cooperative Articles of Association to ensure the Co-operative values are embedded in the way the schools are run. See the Schools Co-operative Society website for more information:

http://www.co-operativeschools.coop/message/co-operative_academies

Co-op status ensures that the schools continue to be run for the benefit of the children of each local community. Co-op values would be present in the way the schools are run, which includes providing a voice for the children - and in the curriculum and in the potential for partnerships with other children in Co-op schools.

Governance, Values and Structure

What does the conversion process involve and how long does it take?

Anyone can register an interest in their school becoming an academy but the school must have received agreement from their governing body before it can apply.

The basic start-up grant of £25,000 is paid to all converters when they are approved in principle to become an academy and can be used to support the process. The key steps a school must take are all explained in the DfE's conversion guide.

Dane Bank's aim has been to ensure the consultation process has been as inclusive as possible. Whilst there is no specified length of time for the consultation, it usually takes about a month but in order to ensure as wide a consultation as possible, the school has earmarked a 6-week period, which ends on 30 November 2018.

The conversion process has a number of stages but it is hoped that if the go ahead is given, Dane Bank will become an academy from April 2019.

If our school becomes an academy, how will this affect the governing body structure?

The principles and expectations of governance are the same in academies as in maintained schools. The Local Governing Body will operate in a similar way to the current Dane Bank Governing Body. Dane Bank Governors would take an active role in the work of the CLIC Cooperative Trust's governance, joining the Trust's Finance and Resources Committee and the Board of Directors.

Dane Bank will still have a local governing body with parent and staff representation. There will be up to four chairs of the local governing bodies within the Trust who will also be directors of the Trust. Those elected members would ensure that the views of the school community are taken into account in any decisions taken.

The local governing body manages the academy on behalf of the Trust in line with the Scheme of Delegation approved for each individual academy. The flexibility of the academy governance model will allow, in most cases, schools entering the Trust to replicate their existing governing body if they wish to do so.

The centralisation of a range of services will enable governors to concentrate on those aspects of their role that make a positive difference to learning and teaching in their own schools. Governors will still be expected to ensure that delegated spending is used prudently for the purposes intended.

How will we know what responsibilities we will have as a Governing Body?

The directors hold accountability for the performance of the academies to the Secretary of State. Local governing bodies are effectively committees of the Trust with delegated powers given to them by the directors through a Scheme of Delegation.

The Trust promotes the principle of 'supported autonomy' and the Scheme of Delegation reflects the level of support each academy will receive from the directors and the Trust. It also outlines the delegated powers given to them by the directors of the Trust.

Broadly speaking a school that is good or outstanding will see little change.

How will school improvement be managed and standards monitored?

Most academies will be expected to operate as now, looking to ensure there is peer-to-peer support and using local networks. Likewise, academies requiring support will access it in this way.

Where academies require intensive support for which there is additional funding or where the academy budget is used, this will be brokered by the Trust through agreements with other schools and academies.

The Trust will co-ordinate some central school effectiveness provision to monitor academy performance/ achievement and ensure support is provided and matched to need, mainly as brokerage, within the system leadership structure. This will be funded within the retention. Local governing bodies will be responsible for standards in their academies in line with the Scheme of Delegation and will report to the directors of the Trust.

How could one of the schools in the Trust have a negative impact on Dane Bank?

The governors feel the support from CLIC Trust will support Dane Bank in its progress. The Governing Board of Dane Bank have carried out a thorough due diligence process on the Trust, attending governor meetings and closely examined processes for school improvement. The Dane Bank Governing Board are satisfied there are sufficient safeguards in place to ensure Dane Bank continues to improve and is not negatively impacted by any other school in the CLIC. The

Governing Board feels the Trust can also provide the financial support it requires as a single form entry school and that Dane Bank's financial position is essential to its continued progress.

The Governing Board accepts that becoming an academy doesn't solve all problems and don't want to give this false impression, however the benefits of being in a Trust is that you can increase the level of support and challenge compared to that of the Local Authority.

Is the future a landscape of academies and is the decision being made for you?

The Governing Board agree the political landscape in education has changed and will continue to, we believe we can use this opportunity to change the status of the school for the benefit of Dane Bank's children and its future children. By joining a new and emerging Trust, Dane Bank have an opportunity to get involved at Board and Trust level and help shape the Trust by strongly representing Dane Bank.

Would the CLIC Cooperative Trust continue to grow beyond Dane Bank?

The MAT structure would allow more schools to join. A process of 'due diligence' would be carried out before any school joined, to ensure that it is the right partnership for the school and the Trust and its existing schools. The CLIC's growth plan is to gradually expand to six schools in order to deliver on our aim to provide economies of scale.

What is the desired relationship with the rest of the schools and organisations in the local area and the wider county?

Academies will be working in a family framework with other academies, within the Trust, that value the same core principles.

As well as this it is expected that links with other local networks won't change, rather that these to grow and develop. It will be important to recognise that the Trust intends to work with local schools and collaborative arrangements and not impose structures and support from outside like some other academy chains.

What opportunities are parents given to engage in the decision for the school to become part of the Trust?

All schools are required to carry out a consultation process. Typically, that will include staff, parents, the local community, and the local authorities. The methods can vary from newsletters, questionnaires, features or adverts in local papers, and meetings. The Trust has produced a detailed template for consultation that schools will use.

How will governors decide on whether to convert to academy status and join CLIC Trust?

Governors are due to meet in December and consider the outcomes of the consultation process and research and discussion the governors have had. Governors will take a vote at the end of this process as to whether to convert and join the CLIC Trust. To progress to the next stage there will have to be a majority vote in favour.

What plans does the school or Trust have to expand to two form entry?

There are currently no plans to change from one form entry. We don't know what will happen in future but our aspiration is to stay one form entry.

Is the school currently meeting the needs of the local community in Tameside or does it face more towards Stockport?

The school currently works with all the neighbouring local authorities to meet the needs of the community and feel it views the community with a 360° approach in its intake and engagement. Governors feel they want to engage better with the local community and the consultation meetings are a good starting point with a range of the community represented, not just parents.

What is the long term vision for the school land?

Governors have no long term vision to either extend the school or sell its existing land and understand the need to keep the wider community informed of their view points on this issue.

By holding a 125-year lease of the land the school will have far greater control in its own future.

How would you view an opportunity to bid jointly with a local sports organisation regarding the use of land at the back of the school?

The Trust has previously submitted bids to improve facilities for extended school services and the governors would always be happy to explore mutually beneficial projects with local community organisations.

Curriculum Standards and Children

What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies have to provide?

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools.

Academies will still have to take part in national tests and in teacher assessments of pupils' performance as they apply to maintained schools. The results are reported in performance tables in the same way as they are now, i.e. against the school where tests were conducted.

What will happen to the Nursery the school runs?

Academies are able to run their own early years provision.

The Early Years Free Entitlement continues to be paid by the local authority for 3 and 4 year olds.

Will the school have to follow the national curriculum?

There is greater freedom for schools in a MAT to adapt the curriculum to suit the needs of the children in their schools. Schools would still be expected to provide what the DfE calls a 'broad and balanced curriculum', so it could not become too narrow and children would still have to sit standardised tests (SATs) as they do in maintained schools.

A broad and balanced is one that includes English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education and promotes the moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Within the Trust individual academies will be responsible for their own curriculum development in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and in line with expressed aims and values of the Trust.

The Trust will co-ordinate and promote its academies to work together more closely to encourage curriculum innovation and sharing of good practise. There will be a curriculum working group of school leaders that will commission and co-ordinate specific curriculum development work across all academies in the Trust.

If a school has resourced SEN provision, will it be expected to continue to provide that service if it becomes an academy?

The schools would receive the same amount of funding for children with Special Educational Needs as they do now.

There would be potential to develop resources for children with Special Educational Needs by pooling funds from the schools in the Trust and further developing expertise across schools.

It is the DfE's expectation that existing educational provision in the school will transfer to the academy. The local authority (LA) will need to agree the transfer of land and assets (if applicable, for example in the case of separate SEN Units) with the school. The LA will therefore be part of the conversion process and will have the ability to influence the outcome of that process.

As an accountable body, the Trust will have more power to advocate on behalf of its academies. Some school collaboratives are looking to employ their own SEN support, e.g. speech therapy, and this is something the Trust could facilitate on behalf of its academies.

How will the uniqueness of each school be preserved?

The Trust is about creating a vision and ethos as a framework in which academies can work together to support each other and celebrate their individuality. It is not about making all academies the same. Whilst there will be some things that will be delivered from the centre, most academies will be able to operate as they currently do. There is the potential for additional freedoms that will support and enable schools to further develop their uniqueness eg uniforms.

Will it affect class sizes?

We have no intention of increasing class sizes as all the available evidence is that this is not conducive to supporting the development of the children or the staff.

Finance and Operations

What happens to positive and negative balances and what financial benefit will academies get?

Through the supplementary funding agreement, schools budget allocations will be ring-fenced.

Positive balances remain with the school though the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) currently limit the level of balance a school can hold. We would expect the Trust to do the same but, because there is one Funding Agreement, there can be more flexibility in how this is achieved.

Those schools with a deficit budget will need to demonstrate that they have a robust plan to reduce their deficit. It is hoped that the economies of scale that the Trust can generate will help, as will the potential to introduce more flexible staffing arrangements.

It is expected that the amount retained from schools' budgets to manage the Trust and deliver services would be less than the cost of activities currently purchased. The Trust will look to procure value for money services through various routes and is currently undertaking a series of consultation workshops with schools to scope the central service provision.

The Trust will fully involve staff in undertaking an ongoing systematic review of all services post conversion, looking at, amongst other things, quality of service delivery.

Will money be solely spent on the school or will it be split across the academy?

Dane Bank's budget is protected for Dane Bank's pupils as the General Annual Grant goes directly to the school.

If our school converts to an academy, will the ownership of the land transfer over, or would the Trust lease the land from the LA?

the MAT will lease the public land from the freeholder (usually the local authority) on a long lease (125 years).

What Capital Funding do Academies have access to?

Academies will continue to receive their Devolved Formula Capital (DFC), which is allocated on the same basis as for maintained schools, and which academies normally decide to use for capital maintenance of their buildings and ICT.

The Academy Capital Maintenance Fund is administered by the Education Skills Funding Agency and is calculated on the same basis as funding available to maintained schools. Funding

is available for expansion and high value repairs. The Trust supports individual academies within the Trust will be able to apply for the grant and they have secured around £700,000 in the last year and are preparing 2 more bids; one for 600,000 and another for just less than £3,000,000.

How does the admissions process work for academies?

Under the academy system, schools, rather than the Local Authority, become responsible for administering the admissions process. The governors are not proposing to change the existing rules on admissions.

As publicly-funded schools, academies must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. The CLIC Trust admissions arrangements follow the relevant Local Authority admission arrangements.

Academies, as their own admission authorities, must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Academies are required to undertake periodic consultation on their admission arrangements, regularly publish their admission arrangements, and conduct the admission process as part of a wider local authority process.

Academies are required to comply with the Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes of Practice as if they were maintained schools. They are also required to participate in local authority co-ordination of admissions processes and the local authority's Fair Access Protocol. The Trust is responsible for setting up Independent Appeal Panels.

Academies are required to comply with any Direction from the Secretary of State to admit a pupil to the academy, or to amend their admission arrangements if they fail to comply with the Admissions Code.

Academies retain the admission arrangements they had as maintained schools when they become academies. They can only change their admission arrangements following the procedures set out in the Admissions Code. Academies are required to provide education for pupils wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated. Academies are not allowed to charge for admission.

Coordination is the process for allocating school places to children. Because admissions are centrally coordinated by the LA, parents/carers only need to complete one application form (but they can name several schools on it) and, because a single place is offered, places are not tied up by parents holding on to more than one offer. Academies remain part of this process.

What will happen to high school transition?

There will be no change to the current process.

What role will PTA's play within the school after conversion into an academy?

The Trust recognises that PTA's have an important role to play within the context of support to the school and it anticipated that they continue to provide support post conversion.

How will transport be affected?

There should be no change to school transport provision since it remains a statutory duty on local authorities to make suitable home to school travel arrangements for eligible children in their area.

Staff

What happens to pay and conditions including pensions?

Rules for conversion to academy status mean that Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations apply and all staff will transfer on existing terms and conditions to the Trust as the employer.

Academies are not bound by the Standard Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document therefore the Trust is responsible for setting the pay and conditions of its staff.

The Trust will be honouring the national teachers' pay and conditions and Teachers' Pensions Scheme arrangements for as long as they continue to exist and will also ensure that the Local Government Pension Scheme arrangements stay in place for non-teaching staff. As part of the conversion process, the LGPS scheme's administrators will undertake an actuarial assessment to determine how much the Trust will need to contribute.

There are currently no plans for systematic change / re-negotiation of contracts and conditions for staff who TUPE across however it may be necessary to iron out anomalies and promote equality. The Trust approach to this will be based on its underlying values. The Trust is committed to doing everything it can to retain and reward good staff.

Full union recognition agreement and acknowledgement of union duties and reasonable time off for trade union duties will be given.

How secure is my job?

Local governing bodies will be responsible, according to their Scheme of Delegation, for appointing staff to their academy and for deciding the staffing structure that best meets the needs of the academy within available budgets.

One employer across a family of academies can allow for more effective use of staffing. There may be opportunities for excellent staff to gain more experience by supporting another academy or clusters of academies, for which additional funding would be available, for example.

New teaching and teaching assistant staff could be re-deployed to another setting. This might be because of school organisation or redundancy issues, in which case local governing bodies will be involved in the process and will be consulted, but the final decision is with the directors.

What are the statutory requirements with regard to the TUPE process?

There is no statutory obligation for the governing body to consult unless it is planning to make changes to working conditions or staffing before the transfer. However, even if the statutory obligation does not apply, it is best practice to consult staff and their representatives and to allow 30 days for this consultation.

In all cases there is a statutory obligation on the current employer to inform employee representatives (i.e. the recognised union or if there isn't one, elected representatives) of certain matters in writing. These are:

- the fact that the transfer is to take place;
- the date of the transfer and the reasons for it; and
- the legal, economic and social implications of the transfer for any affected employees and the measures which the employer envisages it will, in connection with the transfer, take in relation to any affected employees or, if it envisages that no measures will be so taken, that fact.

Schools will be supported with this process by the Trust.

How will it work for new staff?

New staff will be employed by the Trust and therefore could work at more than one academy. It will be clear at appointment where the main base or bases will be e.g. a group of academies may choose to employ a SENCO across establishments or employ a counsellor.

How might INSET Change?

Some joint INSETs are arranged so that specialist teams can meet up for joint professional development and collaboration, this would include teaching teams, teaching assistants, SEND specialists, administrative staff.

What are the Professional Development Opportunities?

The Trust funds a number of collaborative projects that increase professional development opportunities, for example the CLIC Fellowship funds long term project work so that individuals can carry out deeper research and plan sustained introduction of new initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Schools would use this funding to free up individuals to carry out this work. These opportunities would not be limited teaching staff.

What are the risks of conversion?

The governing body needs to have the capacity to cope with further demands?

We already have very skilled and committed governors, but we would recruit additional parent and community governors who are passionate about education and who have the right skills to lead the Trust.

There may be an initial increase in costs of buying in services to support the conversion

Dane Bank would be given a grant of £25,000 from the Department for Education to cover the costs of joining the CLIC Trust.

Governors will have additional legal responsibilities

Governors are taking advice from education lawyers to make sure that they understand the legal responsibilities. Trustees are scrutinised by the Department for Education to make sure that they are fit to take on the responsibility.

The school needs to have the capacity to manage financial change

We will have the support of the CLIC Cooperative Trust's Finance Team, that includes a AAT accounting technician and a School Business Manager in school. We have access to the services of the business manager for the Trust with a wide range of skills and systems to support Dane Bank. This team have the skill and capacity to manage financial change. As well as the accountancy expertise we have within the governing body, we would buy in additional accountancy support as required.

Some staff and parents might not support the conversion

We want to ensure that we have addressed in detail all the concerns that staff and parents have before making a decision. The decision will be based on whether this is the right step to ensure a great education for the children of the schools and we want staff and parents to be confident that it is.

We might become isolated from other schools

Had we been proposing this step several years ago, this may have been a risk. However, as was outlined above, the schools already work in partnership with many Tameside schools, some of which are academies, some of which are maintained, and this would continue and develop should we become a Cooperative Trust.

The freedoms of academy status might be abused

Academies have some freedoms, mainly around financial decision-making, that maintained schools do not. Academies have to present their accounts to the Education Skills Funding Agency and to publish their accounts annually for parents and the school community. As a Cooperative Trust, our schools would need to be even more transparent about its financial and other decision-making. On other freedoms, see questions on staffing, admissions and SEN.

Accountability to parents

Maintained schools are run by Local Authorities who are made up partly of representatives elected by the local community.

While academies have to be transparent about their work (they publish financial reports) they do not have to involve their 'stakeholders' (parents, staff and community partners) in their decision-making. The model we are proposing ensures that there are representatives elected by parents and staff at each level of governance and that the Trust is accountable both to the Department for Education and to our local communities.