



## **The MAST Academy Trust**

# **Academy Consultation Report 29<sup>th</sup> February – 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Prepared for: The Governing Bodies  
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## **1. Introduction to the consultation:**

**1.1.** This report outlines the reason for the consultations undertaken and summarises key findings. Information is presented under the following headings:

- The Aims of the Consultation
- Consultation Materials
- Consultation Audience, Events and Timeline
- Key Outcomes
- Conclusions and Recommendations

**1.2.** Key stakeholders have been consulted on the proposal for the potential conversion to Academy status for Kirkburton and Scissett Middle Schools, Birdledge and Shelley First Schools alongside the creation of a new Multi Academy Trust (MAT). The consultation period commenced on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and concluded on the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016.

**1.3.** The findings included in this report are based on comments and suggestions made and questions raised during a series of consultation events.

**1.4.** Copies of all answers to questions raised in the meetings are included in the appendices.

## **2. Aims of the consultation:**

**2.1.** The consultation exercise had a number of strategic aims:

- To inform stakeholders of the scope of the proposal and provide information on both short and long-term implications, risks and opportunities
- To ensure that a wide range of stakeholders were able to contribute their views and ideas and ask questions
- To collate and analyse the views put forward to inform consideration by the Governing Bodies

## **3. Consultation materials:**

**3.1.** PowerPoint presentations:

A series of PowerPoint presentations were developed for each audience to give all stakeholders consistent and relevant information as a starting point to inform the discussions.

Staff and Trade Unions had an additional focus on staffing/HR issues and implications for them whereas the parents' consultation focused more on



what it could mean for pupils as well as providing more information on Academy status.

Key areas covered in the presentations were:

- The rationale for conversion and the local proposal
- Background from the Department for Education and what are the key requirements to convert and the benefits and opportunities of converting to an Academy.
- Governance structure
- Curriculum opportunities
- Staffing implications
- Financial considerations
- Legal implications for land, buildings, staff and governors
- What happens next
- Questions & Answers

A copy of all the presentations can be found between appendix 3a,4, 6b and 8.

### 3.2. Parents/Carers Letter:

To support the parental consultation, a letter for all parents/carers was developed and posted out direct to homes. The aim of the letter was to allow parents the opportunity of giving their thoughts about the school converting to Academy status and to raise any concerns they had.

Parents/Carers were given the opportunity of sending in feedback either by phone, email, online or in writing. Response to the letter directly was minimal however parents have contributed to the consultation via attending meetings, email and online.

A copy of the letter can be found in appendix 6a.

### 3.3. Stakeholder FAQ's:

A frequently asked questions document (see appendix 2) was prepared for the parents/community consultation events. The aim was to give as much information as possible about all the practical things parents could want to know, ranging from whether there would be new uniforms to what it could mean for the pupils' learning experience. This document complemented with the presentation and question and answer session gave parents a thorough understanding of what an academy is and what it could mean for all Schools.

### 3.4. Online Survey

Survey Monkey was used as an online vehicle to gauge reaction to a set of questions linked to the proposal for the four schools to become academies and to create a new MAT. A set of 6 questions were posed



to stakeholders with an opportunity to respond anonymously. There was a further space in addition to the questions for additional comments. Should anyone request a specific response to a question they were asked to provide a contact email address.

#### 4. Consultation events, audience and timeline:

Tool	Target Audience	Dates
Staff presentation(s) / meeting(s)	School staff (unions in attendance)	2 <sup>nd</sup> March (SMS) 3 <sup>rd</sup> March (KMS) 20 <sup>th</sup> April (SFS/BFS)
Governor meetings	Governors	15 <sup>th</sup> March (SMS) 21 <sup>st</sup> March (KMS)
Letter to parents/carers	Parents/carers	29 <sup>th</sup> February 2016 (SFS/KMS/SMS) 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2016 (BFS)
Parent/carers & Community meetings	Parents/carers and community	8 <sup>th</sup> March (KMS) 9 <sup>th</sup> March (SMS) 18 <sup>th</sup> April (BFS) 20 <sup>th</sup> April (SFS/BFS)
Pupil Consultation meetings	Pupils	7 <sup>th</sup> March (KMS/SMS) w/c 9.5.16 (BFS/SFS)
Pupil questionnaires	Pupils	7 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> March (KMS/SMS)
Online survey	All stakeholders	29.2.16 – 10.5.16

#### 5. Key outcomes:

5.1. There were a number of consultation events which took place over the 10 week consultation period and as a result a robust amount of data has been captured and collated for review and consideration. A copy of all the questions raised are included in the relevant appendices enclosed with this report and the outcomes below aim to give you an overview of the key outcomes for consideration by governors to help your planning going forward.

##### 5.2. Staff

Staff received a formal presentation from the respective Chair of Governors and Gail Khan (see appendix 4). This highlighted the rationale



for academy status, the proposal, the emerging vision for the Trust as well as the detail on the academy process including what it means for staff and pupils. A lead representative from the LA’s HR team was also present at the staff meeting in a supportive role as the current employer.

Staff reaction to the proposals was generally positive with a number of queries raised. Questions were asked at the consultation events and these were mainly around continuous service, pensions, terms and conditions and governance. All questions raised were then added to the master list which can be seen in appendix 5.

45% of the 103 respondents to the online survey were staff members.

Some staff at Birdsedge First School have expressed specific concerns linked to financial viability and whether academy status is in the schools interest as well as wanting more time to discuss and reflect on the proposals being presented at this stage.

In the main, staff could see the benefits academy status would give to pupils for the curriculum and how it would benefit the schools in the longer term. Some were concerned about leaving the LA and what it meant for their roles in the short and long term.

Staff were comfortable about responses given regarding pensions and trade union recognition by the trust.

### 5.3. Trade Unions

Trade unions were made aware of the proposal for academy conversion and invited to observe the staff consultation meetings. Representatives were present from Unison, ATL and the NASUWT at all events.

### 5.4. Pupils

Pupils in the middle schools participated in the consultation by attending an assembly and also completing a questionnaire. A combination of different communications were used, for example at Scissett the Headteacher and GKA presented at an assembly and answered questions before children went back to their forms and discussed further and completed the questionnaire. At Kirkburton the Headteacher presented to pupils in an assembly before questionnaires were completed.

The middle school feedback was as follows:

#### 1. Do pupils agree with the proposals to become an academy?

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
KMS	78%	4%	18%
SMS	60%	6%	34%



2. Should the school uniform be changed?

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
KMS	21%	62%	17%
SMS	35%	45%	20%

3. Should we keep the name of the school the same?

	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
KMS	60%	20%	20%
SMS	60%	17%	23%

4. What should be the new name for the MAT?

	<b>KMS</b>	<b>SMS</b>	<b>SFS</b>
Yorkshire Pennines Academy Trust	47		34
The Rose of Yorkshire Academy Trust	99	2 <sup>nd</sup>	54
Huddersfield Academy Trust	212	1 <sup>st</sup>	61
The Valley Academy Trust	20		8
Pinnacle Academy Trust	46		4
The Viaduct Academy Trust	9		9

For the first schools the Heads met with school council representatives and pupils were asked specific questions linked to the name and uniform. Feedback included:

- Should the name of the school stay the same?

Yes 158

No 16

- Should the uniform stay the same?

Yes 121

No 45

Don't mind 2

- Should the school logo stay the same?

Yes 128

No 45

Name preferences are highlighted in the table above.

Further questions raised by the pupils / points to note (including ideas for names for the MAT) can be found in appendix 3c.

### 5.5. Parents/Carers & the Community

There was an opportunity for parents/carers and the community to meet with the Headteachers and members of the Governing Bodies on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> March and 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April. 31 parents/carers in total attended.



Contributions from these parents/carers was significant (see appendix 6c for the feedback). At Birdledge we also spoke to 18 parents during a pre-scheduled parents evening.

A letter and frequently asked questions paper had already been sent out to parents and carers and this was posted on the schools websites and copies were made available on the evenings.

One parent who could not attend the consultation meetings emailed a set of questions which we responded to via letter directly. (this is included in appendix 6c)

A colleague from the external out of school childcare provider (which is based on the school site) at Shelley First School also attended this meeting to hear more and ask questions.

Overall, feedback was constructive and positive with some parents seeing more benefits than barriers to the proposed conversions. Some key areas of concern were around decision-making responsibilities, maintaining already high standards and the ability to influence change and make decisions. Other key areas for Governors to consider included:

- If the schools did not follow the National Curriculum how would/could this impact on education at the first and high schools?
- How will the school support the more vulnerable schools? Do they have to bail them out financially if required?
- Will the schools remain part of the local pyramid?
- Could the school continue to grow and increase standards if it did not become an Academy?
- How will the schools be held to account as academies?
- Who is paying for this to happen? Is it affordable?
- Will converting to an academy protect middle school status?
- Will this be forced on us? How much time to set up?
- How would this impact the pre school/wrap around care within the grounds at SFS?

Overall the feedback was very constructive with one parent highlighting the need to keep up with the good communication as this was working and well received.

## 5.6. Governors

Governors at all schools have been represented on a 'Next Steps' working group for the academy transition and have been kept regularly updated by those working group members. For this reason we decided to approach the consultation in 3 parts:



1. Feedback on consultation to date
2. Legal
3. Next steps and questions

Questions and feedback included:

Even though there had been a low turnout at parents meetings that was seen as a positive in that parents / carers must feel they have enough detail and were happy with the way information was been distributed and the frequency.

Questions included:

- How does anyone who may be interested register their interest in becoming a Member or Trustee?
- Should all schools forming and joining the MAT convert at the same time?
- Who will be the Chief Executive and how will this be decided?
- Do all schools feel like equals as this is evolving?
- Do we have any non-negotiables?
- When will the scheme of delegation be ready?

Further consultation and conversations will take place at all governing body meetings in the summer term where this report will be feedback and questions answered and actions agreed.

Governors also noted that the Next Steps group had now reformed into 3 sub groups focussing on:

- I. Project / Legal and Governance
- II. Finance/Business and Staffing
- III. Education / Communication and Consultation

All groups have representative members from each school and each has a terms of reference. Gail Khan will attend future governor meetings at the first schools in the summer term.

### 5.7. Online Survey

Feedback can be found in appendix 7. In total 103 responses were received by the 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016. A breakdown of the status of the respondents was:

23% Parent/Carer  
1% Pupil  
45% Staff  
9% Governor  
20% Community  
1% Other



## 6. Conclusion and recommendations:

During the consultation, there were no outright challenges to the proposal to convert to academy status, stakeholders highlighted the point it would be good if more schools were to join the MAT (particularly first schools) and that regular and transparent communications were required. One area which was

raised during the middle schools consultation was the desire for all schools to convert together rather than two in September and two in December. The working party agreed and all schools agreed to convert at the same time of the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

All these questions are included in Appendix 8a for Governors to read.

In conclusion, recommendations to be considered by Governors if you decide to progress with the conversion are:

- Ensure all stakeholders are kept up-to-date on a regular basis so that they are kept fully informed.
- Keep communication regular, using letters and the school website as a constant means of communication.
- Consult throughout your conversion ensuring regular updates to key groups are received/delivered.
- To review the governance model and share proposals as they are ready.
- Prepare a thorough financial due diligence exercise to ensure income and expenditure for the individual schools and Trust wide is known prior to conversion.

**Prepared by Gail Khan, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

### **Appendices** (see separate files):

1. Staff frequently asked questions
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