

Dales Academies Trust (DAT): Stakeholder consultation

Parents, Carers and Community Members

The comments, questions and answers below are a summary of the feedback received from all parent/carer and community members 19.6.17 and 8.9.17. They include response to emailed queries, questions raised at meetings and submitted in suggestions boxes. Questions raised by parents, carers and community members via our online survey are recorded within appendix 9.

Ravensworth Parents, 11.7.17

Question: Why would you not follow the national curriculum?

Answer: There are reasons some schools will choose to deviate away from the national curriculum even if just in one area. What academy status gives a school is flexibility should we need it. Assessments and monitoring by Ofsted will still be exactly as it is now so our pupils are secondary ready when they leave in year 6. We are proposing to stick with the national curriculum though – because it works for our children.

Question: How are academies held to account?

Answer: They are held to account in a variety of ways; via the Education Skills Funding Agency, by external auditors, by Trustees, governors and by each other. Complaints and Whistle Blowing procedures are in place within MATs and every year a MAT must report back on education and financial performance. All documents are publicly available including annual accounts and minutes of meetings.

Question: Do Ofsted inspect all schools in the MAT?

Answer: Yes. Inspections carry on as they are now on the same framework.

Question: Will there be internal and external moderation?

Answer: Yes. Some of this will be MAT wide, some via Swaledale Alliance and some from outside of the MAT so we have all checks and balances in place.

Question: Does our opinion matter?

Answer: Yes of course. This is why we are asking for your ideas, questions and contributions. Everything will be captured and reported in our consultation report which will subsequently be shared and presented with governors and with you our parents and community.

Question: Will the Headteacher still have the same autonomy?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Will we still manage things locally or will the MAT tell us what to do?

Answer: The majority of activities will be managed locally with some direction from the MAT particularly linked to finance and reporting.

Question: Who decides if another school can join the MAT?

Answer: The Board of Trustees

Question: This seems like it could be a government fad. Will policy change?

Answer: Academies have been in existence for over 12 years and under two political parties and we do not see this going away. The resource invested centrally would suggest academies are very much on the agenda.

Question: Do we have finance expertise on our governing body?

Answer: Yes.

Question: How will you meet the needs of our children with all this work?

Answer: This is why we have additional support provided by Gail as our project manager and by BDAT as an experienced Diocese led MAT. By investing in support there it means all the communication and co-ordination is done collectively and it is one conversation rather than 3 or 4 or perhaps even more.

Question: How does the role of the ESFA work? Can they take money off us?

Answer: The ESFA are the funding body for all academies nationally. They are there to ensure adherence with the academies financial handbook and ensure all academies report in a timely and accurate manner.

Ultimately, they can take money off the MAT if it deems necessary but this only happens in extreme circumstances and also in a situation where perhaps a school has been paid more than it should have been for example you were funded for 210 pupils in the school but the census suggests there is only 197 pupils on roll, they would claw back funding retrospectively.

Question: Who do I go to if I have concerns and the governors are not responding?

Answer: You can go to the Board of Trustees. There will be a MAT complaints and whistle blowing policy which will articulate the procedures to follow.

Question: Are staff more accountable? Will the same national pay cap be in place within the MAT?

Answer: Accountabilities are the same however the pay cap will not be in place for MATs unless in its policies it decides to mirror the national position.

Question: Do Free School Meals continue in the MAT?

Answer: Yes

Question: Will the MAT employ unqualified teachers?

Answer: No
