

Norley CE Primary School

Academy Conversion Consultation Questions & Answers

Parents/ Carers Meeting, Wednesday 22nd June 2022, 5.30pm

Attendees:

Neil Dixon, CEO, CDAT
Helen Kelly, Headteacher, Norley CE
Paul Corbishley, Chair of Governors, Norley CE
Hardip Hayer, Senior Project Manager, AMF UK (Ltd)
Parents X5

QUESTION: Are we joining different MATs? Can the school join more than 1 MAT?

ANSWER: There can be a single Academy Trust model or a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) which is responsible for more than one academy school. Norley CE Primary are considering joining CDAT which is a Multi Academy Trust and currently has eleven schools.

Norley CE Primary have to join a MAT where there are church majority papers. There are only two such MATs which Norley CE Primary could currently consider, and the school have looked at both of these MATs as possible options.

QUESTION: If the school were to join CDAT, could we still continue to work with Kingsley St John's and Crowton?

ANSWER: Helen Kelly (HK) as Headteacher at Norley CE Primary has a good working relationship with the Headteachers at Kingsley St John's and Crowton. As a Trust, CDAT always encourages its schools to continue working with other local schools, as well as with other schools in the Trust, so there is no reason why interaction locally should be limited.

QUESTION: Will Norley CE Primary always continue to have a local Governing Body (LGB) as now?

ANSWER: Yes. The CDAT Board of Trustees has responsibility for the effective running of the Trust and the individual academies within it. The Articles of Association specifies that all CDAT schools will have a Local Governing Body (LGB). On the ground, the LGB includes people who know the school best. The LGB play a very important part to ensure that the school runs smoothly.

The CDAT instrument of governance is determined by the Chester Diocese and always has been. There will continue to be a full local governing body and the responsibilities of the governors will remain the same within a multi-layered accountability structure.

QUESTION: One major concern is funding; will failing schools get better funding?

ANSWER: The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funds academies on the same basis as maintained schools. The school would receive the General Annual Grant (GAG) into the school's own bank account. CDAT does not divide the funds amongst other schools within the Trust. ND (CEO at CDAT) provided confirmation that the GAG funding for the school would remain with Norley CE Primary School.

CDAT retain 5% 'management fee' from a small school which is quite low compared with other schools and the LA; this is to allow the Trust to provide the school with high quality central services.

Any school reserves remain with the school and not the Trust. The LA take up to 16 weeks to refund the reserves. The LA will ensure that all liabilities have been met. After which point the reserves will transfer across to the school's bank account and not CDAT's bank account.

QUESTION: Is there an option for CDAT to address funding disparities?

ANSWER: The Trust does not GAG pool. The school would receive the General Annual Grant (GAG) into the school's own bank account. CDAT does not divide the funds amongst other schools within the Trust.

QUESTION: Is the GAG based on a set formula i.e. headcount?

ANSWER: Yes, there is a set formula for working out the GAG.

QUESTION: What is the performance of the 11 schools within CDAT?

ANSWER: There has been growth in schools in terms of Ofsted performance across the Trust. Phonics has improved over time. Maths scores have improved. Both have been focus areas that the Trust has worked on.

In terms of schools within CDAT, 8 schools are rated as good, 1 requires improvement, and 2 are in special measures of which 1 is waiting for an Ofsted inspection and is rapidly moving towards being rated as good. There is excellent practice shared across all CDAT schools.

CDAT are currently in the academy consultation phase with 5 schools of which 2 schools are rated as outstanding and 3 are rated as good. Both of the outstanding schools have now voted in favour of conversion and both schools have submitted a formal application.

QUESTION: What happens if a teacher goes off on long term sick within another CDAT school? Are the school's long term resources protected?

ANSWER: ND (CEO at CDAT) provided assurances that staff are not expected to move to other schools. The place of work for staff here is Norley CE Primary. If there are opportunities for secondment or if support is needed at other CDAT schools, staff will have a say as to whether they would like to take these opportunities.

Within CDAT schools, there is member of staff who has taken up a secondment opportunity for 2 days a week and another instance where a member of staff has taken a 1-year secondment opportunity at another CDAT school.

QUESTION: When is the Governing Body expected to make a decision on whether to convert and to join CDAT?

ANSWER: There is Governors meeting taking place on 20th July 2022 where the Governors will consider the feedback received during the consultation phase and make the final decision about whether to make a formal application to convert to academy status and join CDAT.

The Chair of Governors has a child who is currently a pupil at the school. The Governing Body is representative and is made up of a parent, staff and the church who all have a strong vested interest on what is best for the school and its pupils.

COMMENT: Feel reassured by what has been discussed in the consultation meeting today.

QUESTION: The white paper published wants all schools to join MATs by 2030. As Norley CE Primary only has 2 possible MATs it could join – how big will these MATs become?

ANSWER: There is a limit on how many schools CDAT will take. For example, there is currently one Diocesan Trust (Oxford) which currently has 40 schools which consists of 5 hubs, while Norwich has around 30 schools. We envisage CDAT growing like this over time. In Oxford and Norwich, to stop their trusts growing too big, the Diocese then set up second trusts – which may be an option Chester Diocese follow. There are advantages to being part of a large organisation where schools within the Trust can make savings in terms of economies of scale and can draw upon expertise, while also being able to work within smaller local clusters of schools in the Trust.

Other schools would have more options in terms of MATs they could also consider. Norley CE Primary have to join a MAT where there are church majority papers. There are only 2 such MATs which Norley CE could currently consider and the school have looked at both these MATs.

The schools commissioner regulate the trusts capacity to support schools and it is this body that determines the size of the trust and monitors it's growth. As the trust grows so will its structure to ensure it has the capacity to support each and every school within it.

CDAT has just added 2 new School Advisors to their school improvement team – both in initially part-time roles but with potential to grow. One will be an Early Years Advisor (as an Early Years specialist) while the other will support schools with teaching and learning/curriculum development. CDAT have recruited a team of 'Lead Teachers' who will support subject leaders across the trust: these are our excellent subject leads who have real specialist knowledge and a strong track record in their field.

QUESTION: Norley CE Primary is special because of its unique character and identity. What will happen in say 10 years' time? Will the school lose its identity as CDAT continues to grow with more schools coming on board?

ANSWER: Even if there are changes within CDAT in the future, the church ethos would remain absolutely fundamental. The church would ensure that Norley CE Primary retains its unique character and identity as a small village community church school.

QUESTION: If there is an extra pot of for Norley CE Primary, who makes a decision on how this money is spent?

ANSWER: The LGB make the decision on how the money is spent, however, have to go through the appropriate channels to have this agreed. The Scheme of Delegation sets out what the LGB can approve. Delegated authority is given to the LGB. As CEO, Neil Dixon would need to approve spend as the CDAT Board are held accountable as a charity. CDAT are audited once a year. Schools are audited every 4 years. Recently one of the CDAT schools has set up a new nursery, a decision, which the CDAT Board were happy to approve.

QUESTION: How do other Stakeholders feel?

ANSWER: Teachers feel excited about the prospect of converting and joining CDAT as there could be more opportunities for them to spread their wings should they wish to do so. There would be many opportunities for sharing good practice.

The Governing Body reiterated that staff retention is one of the main reasons they would like to join CDAT as there a number of staff who have ambitions and could have these being met by spending time at other CDAT schools.

Teachers said that they would like to continue to work with local schools and keep the same curriculum.

COMMENT: Norley CE Primary can turn to the expert subject leaders at CDAT if for example the school needed more support in science which would be advantageous.

RESPONSE: Norley CE would be able to approach the four expert lead teachers at CDAT, particularly in music, an area which the school currently requires support with.

QUESTION: If the school has any spare money would they consider buying in expertise where it was needed i.e. music?

ANSWER: The Governing Body would look at where it is best to use that funding to support the Headteacher.

QUESTION: Where do we go from here?

ANSWER: All key stakeholders have been provided with feedback forms which can also be found on the consultation website: <https://norleyce.academyconsultation.co.uk/>. The Governors will consider the feedback received during the consultation phase and make the final decision about whether to make a formal application to convert to academy status and join CDAT.

Parent Feedback Received Through Feedback Form or Email:

COMMENT: I note there is a meeting planned for parents on Wednesday 22nd June. Personally I have to say that I find it very disappointing that the school, and the governors, feel that giving only a weeks' notice on a meeting on something so important is adequate for parents.

As far as I am aware (and I could be wrong) but this is the first communication I have seen regarding your proposals. A weeks notice neither gives parents time to research the pros and cons on the proposed changes, or arrange that they can move work commitments to be able to attend this important meeting regarding the future of our children's school. If I was a cynic I would think this is fully intentional.

RESPONSE: Thank you for sharing your feelings with us. I am sorry the process has come across as being short notice, this has not been our intention at all.

Governors have been discussing possible options for the school for some time. This has culminated to a consultation with parents and other stakeholders. This consultation is conducted by a company, on behalf of us and CDAT, they organised the dates for the meeting, co-ordinating representatives from themselves, CDAT and us. The consultation process itself is 4 weeks, it is not a 'done deal', we want to hear from all stakeholders to make sure we have looked at all angles. The meeting is to hear what we have sent out verbally and to ask questions. If you are unable to make the meeting, the slides will be available afterwards and I am more than happy to ask questions on your behalf.

The reason we have chosen CDAT is because there will be no changes for parents and children directly. The staff will be better supported with quality training and have chances to work with other schools on a more formal basis. Collaboration and sharing good practice is so important in teaching. We don't want a prescribed curriculum or to given 'rules', but to carry on as we are with more support in the background, support from the local authority is minimal these days. We want to work more closely with the diocese because they have the same ethos as us.

Based on this feedback, we have also set up an informal drop-in session with Helen Kelly (Headteacher) on Thursday 30th June 2022 at 8.45am – 9.45am.

Section 5 of the Academies Act 2010 (the 'Act') requires the school's governing body to consult with "such persons as they think appropriate" about whether the school should convert into an academy.

The consultation specifics are for the Governing Body to decide. A formal consultation process is recommended, which provides key stakeholders with all necessary information about the proposal.

Information about the consultation, frequently asked questions and the feedback form can be found at <https://norleyce.academyconsultation.co.uk/> Any future information, feedback or responses can also be found on this website.

The requirement within the Act does not prescribe who should be consulted, or the length of consultation required but this should be long enough to allow interested groups to have a fair chance to respond and ask questions. The consultation meeting scheduled on 22nd June 2022, the informal drop- in session on 30th June 2022 and completed feedback forms will allow the Governing Body at Norley CE Primary to capture any comments and questions in regards to the proposal and consider these carefully before moving to the next stage of the process.

COMMENT: We would be interested in the other schools that are part of the CDAT.

COMMENT: Thank you for the presentation and opportunity to ask questions. It seems like a very positive move, with the right people for our school. Well done for being so proactive.

Staff Meeting, Wednesday 22nd June 2022, 4.00pm

Attendees:

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Neil Dixon, CEO, CDAT
Helen Kelly, Headteacher, Norley CE Primary
Paul Corbishley, Chair of Governors, Norley CE Primary
Hardip Hayer, Senior Project Manager, AMF UK (Ltd)
Staff X9

QUESTION: In the next general election the conservative party may not be in power. Is there a possibility of the Government agenda changing in terms of their vision for academisation?

ANSWER: Nationally, more than 50% of schools are now academies. For this reason it is highly unlikely any government would abandon this agenda. Local authorities are receiving significantly less funding and therefore less support to schools.

QUESTION: How will we receive additional support through an academy trust model such as CDAT? How has this been measured?

ANSWER: This is based on verbal feedback. HK, Headteacher and JW, Bursar have been to visit a CDAT school from an office point of view. Whilst visiting the school, HK was witness to a SEN incident where the Headteacher made direct contact with ND, CEO at CDAT for advice and guidance.

There are records kept of the visits made by CDAT, and the advice provided to schools.

QUESTION: Will our school lose its identity and what we stand for? This is so important to our parents.

ANSWER: All the CDAT schools are very different and unique and will continue to remain so.

QUESTION: Don't know what we can predict for the next 5 -10 years? Will the school become more corporate? What if the CEO changes?

ANSWER: The school's identity will remain protected. CDAT has been established by the Diocese of Chester. The Diocese set a very clear picture of what they want. The Diocese do not wish to see identical schools. If the CEO was to leave (which is not envisaged), the CDAT philosophy would not change. CDAT does not take a corporate approach and has no intention to change its approach.

QUESTION: Staff terms & conditions, pay and pensions – are these protected for 3 years?

ANSWER: CDAT is a church MAT. St Matthews came on board in 2014; terms & conditions, pay and pensions have all remained unchanged at St Matthew's. CDAT follow TPS and LGPS for pensions and continuous service stays as it is. CDAT use the national pay and conditions for teachers (STPCD) and support staff (NJC).

CDAT meets with Trade Unions on a regular basis and we have a Trade Union Recognition Agreement.

QUESTION: During the conversion process, where would HR support be supplied from?

ANSWER: An independent HR provider which CDAT works with.

Staff Feedback Received Through Feedback Form or Email:

COMMENT: We would be interested in the other schools that are part of the CDAT.