

Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School

Academy Conversion Engagement Questions & Answers

Parents/ Carers Meeting, Tuesday 8th March 2023, 5.00pm

Attendees:

Rhian Perry, Acting Headteacher, Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School
Lisa Rigby, Chair of Governors, Great Budworth CofE Primary School and Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School
Governors X3
Jane Evans, CFO, Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT)
Hardip Hayer, Project Manager, AMF (UK) Ltd
Emily Comyn, Project Support Officer, AMF (UK) Ltd
Parents X5

QUESTION: Why not convert at the start of the academic year?

ANSWER: Due to the length of time the process takes. 1st Sept conversions are hard as no one is available to sign legal paperwork over August.

QUESTION: How would the land and buildings ownership work?

ANSWER: For a VA school the buildings are usually owned by the Diocese and the playing fields are usually owned by the LA. At the beginning of the conversion process, the legal advisors would confirm ownership of the land and buildings. The buildings remain owned by the Diocese but with a statutory agreement that CDAT uses them to provide education – and the Academy Trust takes on all maintenance and building improvement. The LA usually grant a 125-year lease on the playing fields.

QUESTION: So, the benefits are felt in the background and nothing changes for the children?

ANSWER: Yes – the children won't be aware that anything is going on – nothing will change for them.

QUESTION: Is there a risk of staff being moved between schools?

ANSWER: Staff will stay on the same T&Cs and will be employed to work in both schools within the Federation as now; however, the trust can facilitate opportunities to move, if staff wish.

COMMENT: This sounds good to me – if staff are happy that it's the right thing, then I'm happy it's the right thing.

HT: staff and governors are happy and are behind this proposal.

Parent Feedback Received Through Feedback Form or Email:

QUESTION: My only comment is that for the lay parent I have no idea on how it will benefit the school really or be detrimental- be good to give clear examples of each...

ANSWER: No schools have been worse-off after joining the trust, and most have made savings because of the 'buying power' of being part of a group of schools rather than one school acting alone. Joining the trust won't impact on the school's planned structure. – a broad range of CPD opportunities with trust-wide training and training within local clusters – e.g. this year staff benefiting from subject networks, dedicated SENCO training, EYFS training and NPQs for middle/senior leaders among other things. Also benefits of sharing good practice across more schools, more school improvement support, responsive back-room support.

COMMENT: We would just like to ensure that the school remains the same size it is and will hold the same village values and place in the community that it currently does.

Joint Staff Meeting (Great Budworth and Antrobus St Mark's), Tuesday 7th March 2023, 4.00pm

Attendees:

Rachel Corradine, Headteacher, Great Budworth CofE Primary School

Lisa Rigby, Chair of Governors, Great Budworth CofE Primary School and Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School

Rhian Perry, Acting Headteacher, Antrobus St Mark's CofE Primary School
Governors X2

Jane Evans, CFO, Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT)

Hardip Hayer, Project Manager, AMF (UK) Ltd

David Edwards, Project Support Officer, AMF (UK) Ltd

QUESTION: What specific support and training to teachers and staff will be provided by CDAT?

ANSWER: There is a broad range of CPD opportunities with trust-wide training and training within local clusters – e.g. this year staff have benefited from subject networks, dedicated SEND training, an EYFS training programme and NPQs for middle/senior leaders. We have also held a CDAT writing conference (with 2 excellent external speakers) and some training shared between neighbouring schools in the trust. We have also started having some shared staff meetings – for example, staff in a group of 5 Cheshire East schools have started visiting each other's schools once a term to share ideas and resources.

QUESTION: What support is available for the admin side?

ANSWER: There is the CFO and School Business Support Officers at CDAT who would support the finance team.

QUESTION: Can you give examples of what CDAT have done with other schools to help increase pupil numbers?

ANSWER: CDAT have introduced nurseries and pre-schools to schools that did not previously have them and did not have the capacity to set them up. This has had a very positive impact on pupil numbers – e.g. at Astbury numbers have risen from around 50 to 80+. We also have supported schools with other forms of marketing with some success.

QUESTION: Is this something that the school still wants to go through considering the Schools Bill has been paused?

ANSWER: The LA have no infrastructure in place to provide the support the school requires and therefore moving to academy status is the better option.

QUESTION: What would the LGB look like as part of CDAT in terms of numbers?

ANSWER: It is usual on conversion for the current governing body to transfer over as they are and become the LGB. Our LGBs still all have parent and staff representatives, foundation governors and the headteacher – and have the possibility of having community/co-opted governors brought on to the LGB as well.

QUESTION: Is there a pot of money for continued professional development (CDP)?

ANSWER: Yes – as part of CDAT, schools have full, free access to all of the CPD that the trust runs.

QUESTION: Who owns the buildings?

ANSWER: For a VA school the buildings are usually owned by the Diocese and the playing fields are usually owned by the LA. At the beginning of the conversion process, the legal advisors would confirm ownership of the land and buildings. The buildings remain owned by the Diocese but with a statutory agreement that CDAT uses them to provide education – and the Academy Trust takes on all maintenance and building improvement. The LA usually grant a 125-year lease on the playing fields.

QUESTION: How long will current staff T&Cs be protected for?

ANSWER: Current teachers and staff employed by the Governing Body will be TUPE'd across under their existing T&Cs. As a trust, we always follow the STPCD (teachers' pay and conditions) and NJC (support staff pay and conditions) and have no plans to stop doing so.

QUESTION: What happens with pensions?

ANSWER: The pensions remain as they are for teachers (TPS) and support staff (LGPS).