

Following the Multi Academy Trust presentation meetings a number of frequently asked questions have arisen.

1. Why is the process to convert happening so quickly?

I understand that parents may feel that this is happening very quickly. However, this is just one part of the process. The senior leadership team and the governing body have taken great care to make sure that this proposal has been carefully thought through. Should the governors decide to convert to an academy, there will be lots more work to do on making sure that the 'Articles of Association' and the 'Scheme of Delegation' ensure the ethos of both schools is safeguarded and that there is proper representation for all stakeholders. There is some time pressure on the school as Lambeth has asked to be informed by October of the school's pupil numbers for September 2017 when we would like to take a bulge class.

2. What are the financial challenges facing Rosendale?

After many years of suitable funding, schools across the country are finding themselves having to deal with the austerity measures. There has been no increase to school funding for the last three years, which represents a cut in real terms as schools have had to fund the annual increments in staff wages without any increase in budget to fund it. The increase in employer national insurance contributions has also taken a substantial amount of money out of the budget, as has the loss of the bulge class. The consultation on the National Funding Formula could see a further 11% cut in school funding in London.

3. Are there alternative sources of funding?

The only secure way to increase funding is to increase income and the only way to do this is to increase pupil numbers.

4. What are the alternatives to the academy model? And have these options been considered? (i.e. the Lambeth Schools Partnership?)

The governing body looked very carefully at whether or not they should make cuts to staffing in order to balance the budget rather than becoming an academy. However, they were very reluctant to do this. Lambeth local education authority are very keen on the federation model but from Rosendale's own experience, we know that in this model one school is dominated by and takes on the identity of the other school. Neither Rosendale nor Elmgreen are interested in this model.

The Lambeth Schools Partnership is a proposed organisation that doesn't actually exist yet. The local authority is considering launching an organisation which would possibly combine the 'traded services' arm of the local authority along with some of its school improvement work. Schools would be asked to pay to join the organisation and there may be the possibility in the future of the Partnership sponsoring academies. It is difficult to give much more information than this as the Lambeth Schools Partnership doesn't exist yet and when it does some of its functions may be different to those stated.

5. How would you preserve the current identity and ethos of Rosendale?

The identity and ethos of Rosendale would be written in to the 'Scheme of Delegation'. Other multi academy trusts have kind enough to share their documentation with us so that we can see examples of good practice and learn from others. Also, importantly, one of the reasons for wanting to form a multi academy trust with the Elmgreen School is that both

schools have a very similar ethos and both schools want to help each other protect our identities and to work collaboratively to improve how we work with children.

6. What are the drivers for The Elmgreen School to become an academy?

Elmgreen's consultation paper can be found at <http://fluencycontent2-schoolwebsite.netdna-ssl.com/FileCluster/Elmgreen/Mainfolder/Families/Elmgreen-Consultation-v6-Final.pdf>

7. What are the consequences if we don't convert?

It is impossible to say what the long term consequences of not converting would be. In the short term, the school would find itself in a difficult financial situation and would have to make cuts in staffing. It may also make the school vulnerable to having to join an existing academy trust in the future which it has not been instrumental in setting up.

8. Is there a 3 to 5 year business plan?

The governors and the senior leadership team had not yet started work on this, deciding to wait until the result of the consultation period. However, following parents' requests to see this documentation, it will be available for discussion with parents at the start of the Autumn term.

9. What will happen to services currently provided by the LEA, i.e. music and swimming, SEND?

The local authority do NOT provide swimming or music. All of this is provided out of the school budget and of course would become vulnerable if the school finds itself having to make cuts.

The local authority will keep its responsibility for SEND. The school could, however, apply for capital funding so that it could complete its proposal to have a fit for purpose SEND resource base.

10. Why is it necessary for Rosendale to offer a bulge class when there is no longer a shortage of school places in the Borough?

There is a significant shortage of places in Rosendale's local community. The school has received a petition signed by 160 parents and sent to Helen Hayes MP and Lambeth local authority asking for Rosendale to take a bulge class as their children will have to catch a bus to the primary school to which they have been allocated. Although places have been provided in other parts of the borough, Rosendale remains the most over subscribed school in the borough and its local children cannot secure a place here.

11. Will there be a cap on pupil numbers in the school?

Primary schools only take 30 children per class, so the numbers of children in the school is dependent on the number of classes.

12. What are the risks of becoming an academy?

The governors believe that there are very few risks to becoming an academy. In fact, the risks that have been identified would still remain if Rosendale remained as a local authority school. Most of those risks are around what would happen if the leadership of the school changes. Whenever that happens and whether or not Rosendale is an academy, the

school population would need to rely on their representatives in the governing body to make a wise decision.

There are horror stories in the press of corruption in some academies but it is important to point out that this is the same of locally maintained schools. What needs to be put in place are proper procedures and as a charity the multi academy trust would be accountable to the charities commission and the accounts would be published in company house.

13. If the decision is taken to convert to an academy is there any turning back?

Once a school has become an academy it must stay as an academy

14. How is the decision taken to allow other schools to join the MAT?

The decision would be taken by the governing bodies and the board of trustees. It would be sensible to have a set of criteria that schools would need to meet in order to join the MAT.

15. Is there a limit on the number of school that can enter the proposed MAT?

There is no limit but there are sensible recommendations about how many schools should enter a MAT. The current thinking is about 5 or 6 schools maximum, however, it is recommended to also take into account pupil numbers.

16. Can MATs be taken over?

If the MAT performs well, the Trust stays autonomous and is able to set its own strategy and direction. If the Trust performs poorly, then it may become vulnerable to re-brokering by the Regional Commissioner of Schools.

17. Have you spoken to other schools about joining the MAT?

The headteacher has had a number of initial conversations with other schools explaining the school's vision for the MAT. Many schools in the local authority are considering their futures.

18. Can parents view the draft documents constituting the new arrangement?

The governors intend to share documentation with parents at the start of the Autumn term. It is likely that governors will ask interested parents to join a 'working party' so that constructive and useful conversations can be held.

19. Can parents input into the articles of association and structure of the Board?

Rosendale's parent governors will be thoroughly involved in the 'Articles of Association' and the structure of the board of trustees. The governors may well canvas for parents with expertise in certain areas to join the board.

20. Should the Steering Board not contain representation from parents?

Absolutely. The board of trustees will have parent representation as will the local governing bodies.

21. Will the governing body consider creating a risk register that they share with parents?

The governors already have plans in place to do this and the documentation will be available for parents at the start of the Autumn term.

22. Have any consultants been employed to advice on the academy conversion process?

Rosendale has been working with Marc Rowland, Deputy Director of the National Education Trust, for the last 3 years. Marc has been project manager for the ReflectED research project (funded by the Education Endowment Foundation) and the Connecting Knowledge research project (funded by the London Schools Excellence Fund). Marc is working with Sheffield local authority, helping them to support their schools to convert to multi academy trusts. He has been able to provide useful support and information on the conversion process.

23. In the proposed structure what protection is there for the existing premises land and playing fields? What is there to prevent a MAT from selling off land to developers for non-educational purposes?

The school land will not be able to be sold off for any purposes, educational and non-educational. The school does not own the playing fields. They are owned by Dulwich Estates and are leased to Lambeth local authority.

24. What has been the reaction of Rosendale Staff been to the proposal.

The Rosendale staff are being fully consulted. The senior team and the Phase Leaders all support the proposal. It would not be appropriate to speak on behalf of the staff without their permission.

25. Will the governing body publish a response following the consultation?

Yes.

26. What is the timescale for governors making a decision and for going forward from there?

The governors have a meeting scheduled for 20th September 2016 when they will make their decision about conversion. It will then be 5 or 6 months before the conversion process is finalised if they decide to go ahead. Following the governing body decision a timeline will be drawn up.