

lead to improved standards in the schools involved, as is evidenced by the RAISE on-line data. Unfortunately this informal collaboration came to an end when Abbey Park First School federated with Abbey Park Middle School. Cherry Orchard and Norton Juxta-Kempsey wanted to continue to collaborate, and potentially form a MAT, but felt that they needed a third partner, hence they approached Inkberrow First School. Inkberrow First School had already approached Pershore High School at that time, and therefore all four schools agreed to enter into discussions.

Q2: Abbey Park First School was part of the “Can Do” Collaboration. Why weren’t we, and the Middle School with whom we are federated, invited to participate in these MAT discussions?

As you are aware, the LA held a number of meetings with all schools within the County over the last one to two years in order to ensure all schools are aware of the different governance options that are available. All schools are free to follow the route that they deem most appropriate to their circumstances, and many schools within the pyramid are currently in discussions, or consultation, regarding different MAT options eg the Diocesan MAT.

The four schools here today have pro-actively chosen to work together. Other schools could have approached any of the four schools here to enter into discussions, but they have not chosen to do so to date. All schools involved in this MAT proposal are keen to start small, joining together with schools of their choice that are geographically close, and which share the same ethos and vision. All four schools involved in this proposal want to remain at the heart of their local community and meet the needs of their local community.

If the proposed MAT proceeds, we envision that it may expand over time, and other schools would we welcome to approach us for discussions. Any decision regarding other schools joining the MAT would be the responsibility of MAT members and trustees, who would ensure that incoming schools share the same ethos, vision and values whilst recognising that for a school to join there must be a benefit to the schools, and importantly the children at those schools, in the current MAT.

Q3: Within your response to FAQ Q13 it states that the four schools involved in this MAT proposal all have “a long term vision that moving to a two tier structure would be of educational benefit to the children in the schools”. This makes the proposal feel like “d  j  -vue” back to the change of age proposal two years ago which, if they had proceeded, would have starved the Middle Schools of intake.

This consultation is about forming a MAT, not change of age. A change of age range for one or all of the schools in the proposed MAT would be an issue which would require a separate consultation process. One or more of the schools may begin the change of age process in due course, irrespective of whether the MAT proposal proceeds or not.

Q4: PHS is not the same school that it was pre-academisation – its ethos has changed. Whether this is due to becoming an academy and becoming more business orientated or just due to different priorities is unclear, but it does not feel the same.

Pershore High School is happy to discuss any concerns that you have and invites you to attend a meeting with the Head (Clive Corbett) at your convenience. It is important that everyone is aware that all schools are operating in increasingly challenging financial times and that schools are having to adapt to these new, and continually changing, circumstances.

Q5: The National Union of Teachers (NUT) have fears regarding the security of teachers’ pay and conditions, and are concerned that teacher’s worries about this matter may impact negatively upon their performance. What implications will there be for staff from this MAT proposal?

Our intent is for the Terms and Conditions for teachers and teaching assistants to be unchanged. The Terms and Conditions for teachers and teaching staff at Pershore High School did not change as a result of academisation.

Q6: If the proposed MAT were to proceed then the educational pathway for pupils would be from a First School in this MAT, to a Middle School outside this MAT and then on to High School in this MAT. Could this not cause issues? Will the schools still have links with the Middle Schools?

The formation of a MAT would change the governance arrangements, organisation and administration of the schools involved, but it would not change the educational pathway for pupils. Parents will still be able to choose the educational pathway (First School/Middle School/High School) that they believe best suits their child.

All schools within the Pershore Pyramid, regardless of their governance arrangements (MAT; Diocesan MAT; Maintained School etc) will continue to work closely together to ensure a smooth transition for pupils, share best practice etc.

Q7: Why was reference made to change of age within the FAQs if this is not part of this consultation?

It is the long term vision of the MAT to provide a two-tier education for pupils from age 3 through to 19, and we thought it appropriate to clearly state this within the consultation document in order to ensure transparency. Any such change would be subject to a separate consultation however, which would be undertaken at an appropriate time for each individual school within the MAT.

Q8: I applaud your aspirations regarding improving standards, but knowing the unrest that was created in Pershore when the change of age proposals were put forward, would it not have been wise to include a middle school in your proposal? If the Middle Schools are not part of the MAT the Middle School staff will feel that they have been sidelined and squeezed out.

The Middle Schools were invited to the same meetings with the Local Authority, the Department for Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner as all schools within the Pershore Pyramid to review and discuss options. As far as we are aware the Middle Schools are currently considering, and progressing, different paths of their choosing, as is their right. Two of the Middle Schools are, we believe, currently consulting regarding joining the Diocesan MAT.

Q9: Will the standards for pupils with Special Educational and Disability Needs (SEND) be maintained in the MAT?

The Special Educational and Disability Needs (SEND) arrangements currently in place in each school will stay the same, however each school within the MAT will also be able to call upon the SEND experience available in the other schools. It is envisaged that over time each school will learn from each other, and that "best practice" will be adopted throughout all the schools within the MAT where applicable.

If the proposed MAT were to proceed then the LA will still retain its statutory responsibility for SEND, and SEND funding will continue to come from the LA. The MAT would have greater choice over SEND providers however, and it is possible that, going forwards, the MAT could procure specialist SEND services (eg speech and language specialists) whose services could be made available to all applicable pupils within the MAT. The MAT believes passionately in the SEND provision for its pupils and would not do anything to undermine that provision.

Q10: It is unfortunate that this MAT proposal is for Pershore High School and 3 first schools and no Middle Schools. Would it not have been good to include Middle Schools?

The Middle Schools were invited to the same meetings with the Local Authority, the Department for Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner as all schools within the Pershore Pyramid to review and discuss options. As far as we are aware the Middle Schools are currently considering, and progressing, different paths of their choosing, as is their right, just as the four schools here tonight have chosen to pro-actively work together to develop a MAT proposal with neighbouring schools of our choice who share the same ethos and vision.

Q11: Is there a vision to go Two-Tier?

It is the long term vision of the MAT to provide a two-tier education for pupils from age 3 through to 19. Any such change would be subject to a separate consultation however, which would be undertaken at an appropriate time for each individual school within the MAT. One or more of the schools may begin this process in due course irrespective of whether the MAT proposal proceeds or not.

Q12: If the Middle Schools were to be involved in this MAT and then schools in the MAT were to progress a change of age to become Two-Tier, then the Middle School Staff in that MAT would have better protection than they will have if they are outside this MAT.

The only thing that is certain is that the educational landscape is rapidly changing, and that all schools, regardless of whether they are MATs or not, will have to adapt to this changing environment. For example:

- several schools in Redditch have converted to Primary and Secondary Schools, and this, along with the Two-Tier system already in place in Warwickshire, is having an effect on neighbouring schools such as Inkberrow First School.
- significant housing developments are being progressed, such as the development close to Norton Juxta-Kempsey, which schools need to take account of within their plans in order to ensure that they can continue to meet the needs of their local community.

The schools involved in this MAT have all decided that they want to be pro-active in determining their future however, and believe that joining together will be in the best interests of all pupils. We believe that the formation of this MAT is an exciting opportunity for all the schools and their pupils and staff.

Q13: Would each school individually undertake a change of age consultation if they wanted to go down that route, or would the MAT issue one consultation on behalf of all schools in it?

If any school within the MAT wanted to progress a change of age then they would, as an individual school, undertake a change of age consultation at a time that was an appropriate for that school. If the school were to decide to progress with a change of age application following such a consultation, this application would need to be approved by the relevant body (Local Authority for a maintained school; Regional Schools Commissioner for a MAT).

Q14: The driver for becoming a MAT for the three first schools seems to be survival. Why do these schools need to involve PHS?

Key drivers being this MAT proposal are the desire to improve standards and the need to seek support from other schools now that support from the Local Authority has significantly decreased. All four schools involved in this MAT proposal believe that by joining together they will be able to work together and learn from one another to improve the outcomes for all pupils, as well as being able to provide one another with support.

The three first schools involved in this proposal are all small schools, whose small makes it impractical and unfeasible for them to take on all the business aspects involved with a MAT. Pershore High School is already established as an Academy however, and they already have a business manager and the required back-office systems and processes in place that will be required by all the schools in the MAT.

Q15: If the MAT proposal was to proceed would you invite the Trade Unions to negotiate a recognition agreement between the MAT and the Trade Unions?

If the MAT proposal were to proceed the MAT would hold a TUPE consultation with the Unions.

Q16: Will the introduction of an extra layer of bureaucracy add anything over and above the informal arrangements currently in place?

The MAT is proposing to create a “Raising Achievement Board” where the Heads and staff would work together and learn from each other to raise standards across the board for the benefit of all pupils.

Q17: How would the MAT respond if one of the partners feel into financial difficulties as appears to be the situation in Redditch? The obvious choices would be to lose staff or to expand the school in order to increase income.

If this proposal were to proceed then each school will still have, and be responsible for, its own budget, and will have to work within their budget as they do today. The MAT Board would have oversight of each school’s financial position however, and would have a responsibility to ensure that all schools remain solvent. Due diligence is being undertaken by all schools involved in this proposal. The MAT is looking to implement a truly collaborative model that will bolster the budget available to each school via making economies of scale.

Q18: What economies of scale are you talking about, as you seem to be talking about creating new MAT positions (part-time “Chief Executive”) which will increase costs?

We are considering appointing a part-time MAT employee in a Chief Executive Office/Accounting Officer role. This person would take on a role akin to that of the School Improvement Advisor that we currently procure, and would be re-numerated in line with the re-numeration currently given to our School Improvement Advisor.

We envisage that we will be able to make economies of scale via joint procurement activity, sharing training costs and resources and so forth. Any such economies of scale that can be achieved will lead to increased funds being available to spend on the teaching and learning opportunities for all pupils.

Conclusion

The MAT representatives thanked everyone for attending and advised that the questions raised during this meeting will be added to the Frequently Asked Questions document and be made available to all via the school websites.

If attendees had any further questions they were invited to contact the Head, Clive Corbett, or to email any further questions through to consultation@pershore.worcs.sch.uk prior to the 14th of October.