

Deal Parochial Church of England (Aided) Primary School

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Dear parents / carers

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Following a strategy team governing body meeting I am pleased to outline the outcomes from the Multi Academy Trust consultation that we carried out.

OUTCOMES as collated on 05-06-18

YES	NO	NOT SURE	I DON'T MIND EITHER WAY
13	7	2	4

Total parent responses - 26.

Set out below are comments from parents as they were hand written in the box on the response form. We hope parents will recognise their own words and comments.

Governors have agreed the comments outlined below, taking advice from Adrian Smith our DEALT project manager. We will hold onto your comments as we continue to balance our thoughts towards any decisions.

I don't disagree with this as long as things stay more or less as they are.

This is a lovely school and I hope this doesn't change the ethos

I think the way the school projects such religious influence is brilliant and I worry that the change to Academy would change this

The core principle in establishing DEALT is to improve opportunities through collaboration whilst supporting and celebrating each school's individual character and ethos. Parents and children will see very little visible change when we convert, but opportunities for staff to work more closely together will provide support for continued improvement in all schools – and therefore in outcomes for children.

The Deal Learning Alliance has provided opportunities for shared working and for joint activities and all schools have seen benefits from working together. But we have reached the limit of the work we are able to do without making a more structural change. Forming a multi academy trust provides the opportunity to use our funding more effectively whether by seeking alternative providers, by appointing our own staff to lead particular areas and by securing economies of scale in back office purchases so that we can protect funding for teaching and learning. Funding can also be targeted



to provide the specialist support for the families of Deal.

The structure proposed for DEALT, with the Diocese providing a majority of the members is designed specifically to protect the religious character of Church schools, whilst respecting and sustaining the community character of other schools. The legal documents setting up the Academy will ensure that we continue to follow the same requirements for RE and collective worship, and for that to permeate all that we do just as it does now.

Other Trusts in the area have failed so what makes you think this trust is any different and won't go down the same path?

What steps are being put in place to prevent the Trust from failing?

What happens to schools if the Trust fails?

Our proposal builds on an existing relationship between schools. We know each other well and know our strengths and areas for support. We work effectively together and therefore have a secure foundation for moving forward. We are clear about what we want to achieve by establishing DEALY which will give us the opportunity to use our funding more effectively. All schools are facing financial challenge as income remains broadly static and costs increase – and that may have been a factor in the challenges faced by other schools. We are being careful in the commitments we are making and taking a detailed look at financial issues to ensure that we remain sustainable – as is the case with very many academies. A successful bid to the DfE for additional grant funding to help establish the Trust is an indication of their support for DEALT.

We are not therefore contemplating failure. If the Trust was not successful – as a whole or in the support it provided to an individual school – the Government, through the Regional Schools Commissioner would decide how to respond. He may seek an alternative arrangement which would probably mean that individual schools transferred to other Academy Trusts. But those decisions would be based very clearly on the circumstances that arose. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Church of England and the Secretary of State means that if any of the Church schools were failing and the RSC decided it need to be moved to another academy trust, it would have to be a Church Majority Trust.

Lack of choice

Each of the schools within DEALT remains an individual school responsible for its own character and ethos. Parents continue to be able to express a preference for any school within the MAT and each will be different.

Potential loss of subjects from the curriculum

There are no plans to reduce the broad range of our curriculum. Academies are required



to provide a broad and balanced curriculum.

Loss of Council oversight/ experience

I cannot see any benefits in breaking away with the local authority that we do not already enjoy. I am concerned that we will be worse off financially and there are more opportunities for corruption in an academy system.

Potential for financial mismanagement/ loss of staff

Local authority funding has been reduced significantly in recent years and therefore their capacity to provide oversight and support has been reduced. Their focus is on schools requiring support, which means that good schools are left much to their own devices. The opportunity to develop our working relationship with other good schools and to share good practice with them is a stronger option in the circumstances.

Whilst there are some examples of poor practice which attract headlines, the majority of Multi Academy Trusts are well run, locally based and designed to work for the benefit of local children. DEALT will be accountable to the Secretary of State for outcomes and will be monitored by the Regional Schools Commissioner. Schools will continue to be inspected by OfSTED. Each school will continue have elected parent governors – and decisions about how each school is run will be taken at local level. Parents have exactly the same opportunity to engage with the schools as they do now about the education of their child. Audited annual accounts will be published.

We have been able to identify two qualified and experienced accountants to serve as Trustees and they will help us to ensure that financial controls are effective.

What are the costs and why is the need for an academy so urgent

There is a clear process that has to be followed when making an application for an Academy Order and the involvement of stakeholders is around the time that the Academy Order is issued. Prior to this the schools have had to undertake due diligence in terms of their own finances, standards and potential legal matters. The Church schools have also had to make a joint application to the Diocese of Canterbury and seek approval from the Diocesan Board of Education. Only when approval was given did the Governors feel that they had a proposal to put to the parent community, which was when parent consultation started.

Research into set-up costs and on-going costs for the academy has been undertaken through discussions with a range of successful academy leaders. In the first year these initial costs will be off-set against a small contribution from each school, the conversion grant (£25,000 per school) and an additional £100,000 grant, we have secured from a successful bid to the Department for Education. For future years detailed budget planning is currently being undertaken to ensure that the additional costs of the MAT are being more than offset with the savings that can be made in terms of shared specialist support and economies of scale. This plan needs to be in place before the Diocese and each schools'



Governing Body will give final consent to convert.

All questions were answered at the meeting at school last week. I know that the Governors and Ms Brown and the team will endeavour to keep Parochial as unique and special as it is now.

Parent consultation very informative

Working with an Alliance in a secondary setting has been of great benefit for training (CPD) – I believe this will offer more and allow the fantastic staff at DP to share their skills.

Thank you for your support. We are committed to keeping Parochial just as it is now, but benefiting from even closer working with other local schools so that our staff can share their skills, but also learn from the great practice in other primary schools in Deal.

As we move forward to the next phase of exploring and developing ways of providing a solid and robust multi academy Trust, we would like to thank you for your considerations, challenge and positive comments that help us to construct our planning and decision-making towards the right pathways for the future of our young children and families.

The governors at Deal Parochial School unanimously believe that the formal and legal bond provides strength and protection for our Deal community identify, values and requirements. We applaud the opportunity to benefit from the increased capacity of educational expertise whilst protecting and nurturing the individual ethos, character and parent choice that lends itself to forming *this style* of academy structure.

We are committed to seeking the best for our school. We will make all reasonable effort to continue to keep you informed of how this process is developing.

We are currently continuing to move forward towards becoming a Multi Academy Trust – DEALT which stands for Deal Education Academy Learning Trust.

Please refer to our school webs site www.deal-parochial.kent.sch.uk

You will find more information stored under the “ABOUT” tab and this is the place we will continue to publish any minutes of the steering committee.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

J Brown – head teacher

M Heard – Chair of governors.

