

Consultation for the Conversion of LSA High School to Become an Academy and Join a New Multi Academy Trust (MAT)

March 2024

Confidential

Audience: Governors of LSA High School
 Trustees of Lytham Learning Trust



Introduction

The decision was made by governors to explore the potential of joining a new Multi Academy trust consisting of Hodgson Academy, Blackpool Sixth Form, McKee College House, Chadwick High School and Lytham St Annes High School.

The opportunity arose thanks to the willingness of Hodgson Academy to convert from being a Single Academy trust to a Multi Academy trust. This has created a unique opportunity for a Local Authority school to be a founding partner in the new MAT.

The key aspects for LSA were:

- The ability to retain levels of earned autonomy
- The Opportunity to fill the void being created by a depleting LA
- The opportunity to work in collaboration with proven excellent schools
- Security against isolation (geographical and pedagogical)
- Professional Development opportunities
- Business and Finance rationalising

Agreement to Proceed

The governors of LSA and the Lytham Learning Trust both agreed to proceed. This was on the basis that no contract is binding, up until the point of signing a Supplementary Funding Agreement (about one month out from conversion)

The Consultation

A consultation was agreed and the following groups were asked:

- Parents
- Wider Community
- Professional Interests
- Staff

The consultation was produced using an online MS Form. This was publicised on the school website and in letters to parents, unions, school leaders etc. The engagement was as follows:

- Parents 37 responses
- Wider Community 1 response (Mark Menzies MP)
- Professional Interests 2 responses (Unison and Mayfield Primary)
- Staff 2 responses

The consultation had the following introduction and questions:

Over the past 18 months LSA has been considering the potential benefits to education in this area of converting to an Academy and become part of a multi academy trust (MAT). We want to join with other like-minded and high-quality local schools/college on a partnership of equals basis to form an organisation that will further develop and enhance the education and life chances of the students in this area. Other partners have accompanied us on this journey and the governing bodies of each of the schools are proud to present for consultation the formation of the Horizon Learning Trust – a group of five schools who wish to establish a MAT to serve the students, parents, employers and local communities of this area.

The founder establishments of the trust would be:

- Chadwick High School, Lancaster
- The Blackpool Sixth Form College, Blackpool

- *Hodgson Academy, Poulton-le-Fylde*
- *Lytham St Anne's High School, Lytham St Anne's*
- *McKee College House, Poulton-le-Fylde*

Each of these providers is strong in its own right and we would be coming together to create something greater than the sum of the parts. We truly believe that this trust can drive educational standards further and make this a truly amazing area in which to be educated.

The question fields were:

- Name
- Email for personal response
- Address for written response
- Text box to detail any questions or concerns

Responses from LSA to the Consultation

Agreed practice would be to collate the responses and respond initially where further information/understanding was needed. At the close of the process, the aim is to present all of the responses, but to also bring together themes. This will then allow the school to produce a one page response. All responses are included in this paper.

An initial thread emerged about the fact that the school had not pushed the advantages of joining the MAT, and therefore the benefits were not made obvious. We had also not laboured the genuine risks of NOT having a say on our own future. Therefore, when the consultees requested a response, it was supported by the following letter:

Dear **NAME**

FAO NAME in response to LSA MAT Consultation

Thank you for taking the time to complete the formal consultation. The governors are due to meet after half term to discuss the questions raised and a formal response to any generic themes will be published.

However, I am conscious that you have contacted the school and requested a personal response, so I hope that I can provide a little more information and clarity. It is clear that despite best efforts with the FAQs, there is information that parents are keen to know.

The key element when starting this process was to offer information that we felt would address some of the common myths and misconceptions around Academisation, many of which were formed in the early days of schools converting in challenging circumstances being “forced” to join MATs. As I hope we made clear, this is not the case with LSA and we are making a decision based on what we feel is the best for the children now and in the future.

The other generic reason for joining that we could not articulate clearly, was the challenge to schools where choices on their future were limited. The Academies structure was started many years ago as a Labour initiative and accelerated dramatically under the Conservatives. For secondary schools, this means that only 19% of schools are still under Local Authority control. Lancashire is one of the last LA's to adopt whole scale academisation. However, as this process now starts, LSA must look to ensure it can build strong, stable relationships with like minded partners. Geographically, we are isolated with Blackpool LA to the west where all

schools are academies and we have been unable to establish open and useful relationships across authority borders. Our next nearest schools are already on the journey of joining academy chains that suit their needs and ethos.

The advertised benefits of joining a MAT are multiplied by our ability to choose partners and control the process. The risk of not doing so would see changes to LSA beyond our control. The proposed model will enjoy the benefits (flexibility to improve and develop quickly in terms of staffing, curriculum and environment, strong local accountability) that suit OUR needs. It is difficult to put a price on earned autonomy and choice. This is secured in joining a MAT.

As part of the process, I have scanned the responses and hope that this email addresses you particular points. You commented that:

CONSULTEE COMMENT ADDED HERE

In response, I can share my own professional experience and opinion. This may differ from the final responses by our Governing Body, but I hope this helps. If not, you can email me directly and I may be able to offer reassurance and share the excitement!

RBA COMMENT ADDED HERE

Thank you again for taking the time to get in touch and I can assure you that the best interests of the children, families, staff and local community drive everything we do as a school and this will always be the case.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Baker

Responses were emailed to consultees on 13/2/23 at 15:50

Below are the points raised and the responses provide in the first instance by the school:

<p>Please use the space below to leave any questions, concerns, issue, thoughts or opinions in relation to the proposed conversion to an Academy or joining the proposed Multi Academy Trust?</p>	<p>RBA Response</p>
<p>My biggest question is would this offer my Son 6th Form education at LSA? I find ut incredible and frustrating he curreny would travel to Blackpool should he decide to follow this path?</p>	<p>Sadly, the decision to close the sixth form at LSA was taken due to financial reasons and the viability of such a small resource. However, that is the exciting thing about working with the outstanding Blackpool Sixth Form, that this will allow us to consider these types of opportunity again. As a Local Authority school, this would not be possible. However, one of the benefits of being an Academy is our ability work with partners like Blackpool Sixth Form and explore possible alternatives to sixth form provision in the area. This is not possible as a maintained school.</p> <p>I also note that you have asked for a posted response. At present, this is the only request so I am just checking that you still require this? If so, please can you confirm to my email address ray.baker@lythamhigh.lancs.sch.uk and I will arrange.</p>
<p>Uniform , if it is being changed should start from new year 7 September 2024 - and NOT be enforced for other years - ie current year 7 have paid out a lot of money for current branded uniform and potential to change is very expensive</p>	<p>There will be absolutely NO change to uniform. The school name, badge, logo, mission statement will stay in place. Any amendments to uniform over the years have always been done sensitively and fairly. For example, we have allowed year 11 to wear a different/new tie this year and will buy them for all students. This is one of the strengths of being able to choose our school partners and join a MAT with terms that allow LSA to retain this control.</p>

<p>I am completely opposed to this. Academy schools have less accountability, do not improve outcomes and schools should be in public hands with transparent accountability.</p>	<p>I understand fully the concern and held similar views myself initially. However, as a local authority, Lancashire is excellent but does not have the time or resources to hold LSA to account. We entrust the governors to do this, through the headteacher and senior team. This is then scrutinised by Ofsted. However, as a school we open ourselves to constant reflection and scrutiny in order to ensure we get the best for the children. There are reports of some academy chains operating in the way that you describe, but this is why it is important that we don't find ourselves part of one and we take this chance to found one.</p>
<p>Is this trust anything to do with the trust that runs Blackpool schools ie highfield, south shore, aspire? I would be very worried if this is the case and would have to consider moving my child.</p>	<p>No. Blackpool is an example where Multi Academy Trusts from outside of the area have not had the impact that many had hoped for. By forming our own MAT with strong partners, we will be able to ensure that start from a position of strength and do the best for the children at LSA.</p>
<p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Obviously after just completing a new state funded school build, the timing of this proposal couldn't be more controversial- I would welcome a detailed response on how the ownership of the site would be apportioned and whether the LA would be recompensed should assets be transferred to the proposed MAT.</p> <p>Furthermore on timing, I would welcome an explanation of this proposal ahead of the next General Election and the likelihood of a new government, which in turn may bring a very different approach to a very fragmented education system. It would seem far more sensible for these proposal to be delayed by at least 12-18 months.</p> <p>MATs have a poor record of inclusivity so I would welcome a response as to how the school would improve its inclusivity agenda.</p> <p>I would also welcome details of the staff conditions, and whether post Tupe, staff would have assurances on similar t&cs and salary increments as they would in a maintained school.</p> <p>As a vital player in the local community it is important for the school to be a fair and decent employer.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>The new build was funded directly by the Department for Education and did not involve the Local Authority. All work was left to the school to organise and work with, which is wonderful but exhausting. This is a good example of how the power and resources of Local Authorities have been eroded over time. The ownership of our land was transferred from the LA to the Lytham Learning Trust 15 years ago when we became a Foundation School. This land then transfers (in trust!) to the MAT. All the same laws and rules apply about selling, owning and developing the land apply.</p> <p>Academies were introduced by the Labour Government and then taken forward by the Conservatives. One of the reasons that LSA has not gone down this line before is that it did not fit "politically" with our views and beliefs as a community school. However, the tipping point has been reached and there are now more academies than LA schools. Both Conservatives and Labour will continue the Academies programme.</p> <p>LSA is proud of being a leading school in inclusivity in Lancashire. With the current national accountability system being on results, this is not always the easiest way to operate. However, our commitment to all children can't be questioned. This would not change. We would not join with schools that might think differently. As we are making the choice of who to work with, this is possible. If we are to be placed within a MAT, then our choice will be removed. As an academy we are held accountable for all of the same measures. If anything, the MAT will allow opportunities to develop extra strands within school which will only serve to make us more inclusive and serving of the local community needs.</p> <p>All Tc and Cs will follow across. Any new staff would be appointed on the same Tc and Cs. The only thing that may happen is that we are able to ensure the working conditions of colleagues are improved, but again, our aim is to provide the best education to the largest number of children. To do this, we need excellent colleagues. We have to ensure we stay as an highly regarded employer.</p>
<p>Less accountability to parents and surrounding community - parents struggle (in some cases) to get information from the school as it is, this will only get worse if the school moves to an academy school with less accountability to parents, with the main consideration being the bottom line.</p> <p>Less qualified teachers - there is already an issue in school with more and more supply / temp teachers being used, this will only increase if moved to an academy system. Money should be focused on those at the 'coal face' i.e. the teachers, not the bureaucrats at the top. I want my child taught by accredited teachers.</p> <p>It will be a very sad day if LSA is moved to a Academy.</p>	<p>One of the key principles of the founding members of the proposed Academy is that we improve and increase parental engagement and accountability. We advertise regularly for Parental Governors and operate a PTFA. We struggle for numbers. LSA would retain local boards of governors to hold the school to account, which is more scrutiny that the school currently enjoys under the LA. By being able to lead the move into a Multi Academy Trust, we can ensure that the culture and commitment to parents remains a massive priority.</p> <p>This is a two part answer. The issues around teacher recruitment are national and are a constant headache in schools. However, we only employ qualified teachers to lead and teach curriculum work. We operate with three Higher Level Teaching Assistants who support small group work, but are not accountable for the outcomes. Whilst I appreciate this may be a "freedom" for the Academy, it is not something I had even considered. Schools are about lessons, teachers and learning. That will not change.</p>

<p>The High School is a very big school and in my opinion should be managed on its own. I can't see what possible benefit there would be for schools in Poulton and Blackpool to be linked to the high school or what significance they have and what they could contribute. Why does a school need to become an Academy is the question ? Is it for monetary gain or funding? These questions should already be put forward in this proposal. Schools that have become Academies have failed around the country so i would say with my current knowledge i wouldn't want any change to the high school.</p>	<p>LSA is a large, but also highly respected and well regarded school. We currently support other schools throughout Lancashire to improve. Hodgson, Blackpool Sixth and McKee College all do the same. This is due to success built up over a number of years. The aim is that the coming together of strong, like minded schools will help to keep pushing our standards and expectations.</p> <p>We want to be an Academy because we get the chance to work with great schools closely, but also because the Local Authority is being constantly reduced in terms of it's ability to support or challenge secondary schools. The national system of Academies has meant that there are now more academies than LA schools. As other school around the country get swallowed up by chains and lose much of their uniqueness, agreeing to work with local schools in this way ensures that we keep everything that is good about LSA. Financially, there will be benefits, but these will not be as big as the chance to collaborate to improve.</p>
<p>The answer concerning curriculum changes in the FAQs is inadequate. Please state if you will continue teaching the National Curriculum and if not what changes you will make and in particular what is the review process for these changes. If you do change the curriculum how will you notify parents and if the curriculum is to be change who influences it</p>	<p>Sorry if this was not clear. The school will follow the National Curriculum. However, as with all good schools, we review and update the curriculum in all subjects every year. We try and marry up where the children come from and their skills on entry with our knowledge of examination subjects. We want children to excel, but also to develop a love and interest in their learning. This will not change and will a continuing focus to improve.</p> <p>Being an Academy allows the school some flexibility, but not much. We would still be accountable to the local governing board and would share developments, thoughts and intentions with families.</p>
<p>I am very concerned about lsa becoming an academy as i believe it affect the quality of teachers employed and I am very concerned as my son has an EHCP will this be affected if lsa becomes an academy as he is thriving at the moment and am worried this change will affect him deeply.</p>	<p>I can assure you that teaching quality will NOT be impacted as all staff are retained. We may even then be in a position to appoint further teachers.</p> <p>From an EHCP point of view, the experience your son receives now will only be improved. I am delighted that he is thriving as this is exactly what LSA is all about and what we want to safeguard.</p>
<p>Concern is that the ethos of the school will change maybe not straight away but in time the quality of lessons and lessons subjects taught will change and in time extra cost of new uniforms brought in like all academy schools seem to do ie all have to wear particular shoe or skirt etc also what will happen to the provisions of the school catering will this become even worse than it is now or will it go back to being run privately by the school and the offering go.back to being good quality there hasnt been alot of info with regards to this happening</p>	<p>You raise a few different points here and I can hopefully assure you on them all. The uniform is not changing. We amend and update uniform on a regular basis and do so with consultation and empathy for families. We have never "demanded" items that were not agreed when places were taken at LSA. This will not change.</p> <p>School Catering has been a managed service for a number of years. The current provider is Lancashire Catering and we would expect them to want to stay. Whilst school dinners are always something to create disagreement, our current providers are excellent. We would expect to hold them to account and ensure we provide the best service we can for our students.</p>
<p>I feel the school will not benefit becoming an academy, change is good but this step will be a big bit on school life, please leave it as it is</p>	<p>I understand that change can be overwhelming, but this is more about evolving and taking advantage of the opportunities that becoming an Academy will allow in the coming years. All of the things that make LSA a brilliant school will remain and joining a MAT is the best way to ensure this. Sadly, by ignoring the benefits, the school runs the risk of not developing or ever improving.</p> <p>I have noted that you have asked for a posted response as well. Please let me know if this is still the case by emailing me at ray.baker@lythamhigh.lancs.sch.uk.</p>
<p>I understand the financial benefits to the school to convert to a MAT, however I personally feel this will be detrimental to the students and in the long term the school. Some of the schools will be desperate for the support of LSA, especially the PRU schools, I can not see how they would be a benefit to LSA along with a struggling sixth form college.</p>	<p>The commitment of the school is to ensure we have the best school possible for all of the students in Lytham St Annes. Our location does not lend itself to obvious local schools, therefore we have to use the potential MAT partners to keep improving.</p> <p>The other schools are all strong and successful. Blackpool Sixth Form is one of the best in the entire country. We have lots to learn from each other, but essentially, all of this will ensure better quality in classrooms in Lytham.</p>

<p>1. Why the need to change exactly? 2. What will change exactly? 3. How will quality of education change/improve? 4. How will opportunities change/improve? Thank you.</p>	<p>I had hoped that the FAQ address these in different ways, but I understand the concerns. In short: 1. The academisation of schools in England has gathered significant pace. Schools are now encouraged to find like minded establishments and look for ways for create strong partnerships. Whilst this is happening, the power and resources of the Local Authority have been reduced. Therefore, the school is looking to safeguard its future, build excellent collaborative relationships and take advantage of any extra funding that is open to Academies. 2. Please see the FAQs as I know these are things that we covered and will read differently to each person. In short, very little would change for the students. Behind the scenes, we would be accessing high quality support, improve access to funds and generally ensure we take control of our own future. 3 and 4. The MAT would be used to ensure the highest level of education possible through collaboration with high quality partners with proven track records.</p>
<p>I was actually chatting to a chair of the governors of Lancaster Royal Grammar School Martin Alexander on Thursday (before your announcement) who are a state run school. He actually said the best thing the school did in 2017 was change from being County Council funded to becoming an Academy. I'm positive for this change, and Martin has left his details if anyone in school wants to contact him directly for his experience of their school change to an Academy.</p>	<p>Thank you for the offer. Moving to become an Academy used to be politically sensitive and there are certain pitfalls to avoid. Some schools are very outward facing and work to improve the system, others less so. Lancashire are a brilliant authority but unfortunately the speed of schools converting means that their influence and ability to support is diminishing quickly. I honestly believe that a strong partnership, based on strong practice and beliefs will serve LSA the best.</p>
<p>Who will be in control of the academy trust? What difference will this make to each individual learning establishment. Where will the executive heads be brought from? Will the personalized learning & contact remain for both the students and the parents? Will there be a central governing body or will each establish retain its own? Who will be answerable/Accountable for any patents query or concern? What will be the advantages of becoming a part of this 5 establishment academy? I look forward to hearing from you.</p>	<p>The Trustees of the MAT will be the highest form of governance. They will work with a senior team, contain a Trust Lead and a CFO. Beyond this, the trustees will then decide and appoint a structure internally that will ensure quality in each school. There are no plans to bring any people externally in to the trust, but the decision about the deployment of "Executive" Heads, supporting multiple schools will be taken once the MAT is agreed. This MAT is about ensuring the uniqueness, strength, autonomy and standards of each school, so Local Governing powers are essential to LSA. Our governors are excellent and will remain in their roles to ensure we really are achieving well. LSA is a busy school and our communication with parents as critical to this. This will continue as an Academy. I hope that between the FAQs and my answers above, you can see why we believe that LSA can thrive as part of the five school trust.</p>
<p>I have a few questions: My daughter will entering Y10 this year and studying towards her GCSE exams. Could this move have any detrimental impact on her GCSE outcomes, such as, - could the course content change halfway through? Will her GCSE exams be assessed/governed by the existing exam boards? If LSA moves to become an academy, does this mean our children could be taught by unqualified teachers? As am academy, what benchmarks, in terms of performance/outcomes, would be used to ensure that expected standards remain in line with other educational institutions within the area and the wider UK? Does an academy get reported within the league tables? You state that the intent is to continue to follow the national curriculum. What if this</p>	<p>The move will have absolutely no negative impact on students. If anything, the impact may be positive in terms of our learning so closely how other schools succeed in their subjects. Exam boards and course will remain exactly the same and will be decided at school level. School has always had the ability to employ and deploy unqualified teachers. However, as a rule LSA will always work with the best people and is well respected as a centre for developing teachers across Lancashire. Being part of the MAT is one way to ensure that we retain the very best teachers at a time of national shortage. As an Academy, LSA would be scrutinised more often than is current. We would be seen by Ofsted and have our results published annually. However, we would also work with or governors to ensure that we are transparent and accountable at local level, always. The school follows the national curriculum and as an Academy, has to follow something at <i>least</i> as broad as the national curriculum. In short, what we teach will continue to be reviewed and adapted to ensure that it is always the very best it can be. If we ever decide to change our curriculum approach, then we would consult parents and students.</p>

<p>changes in the future, will parents have any influence over this decision?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	
<p>I don't see any benefit in turning LSA into an academy. In your faq you say... ... The government wants all schools to be in trusts. -> There is no evidence that this benefits the children. Privatisation of education is a very dangerous thing, opening our future to benefit private businessmen or corporations for profit. It is also further dividing educational standards. Government doesn't always know what's best, see privatisation of the water system.</p> <p>... There is more buying/negotiating power as part of a trust. -> As part of a trust, you also have to bend to the majority which will not always be in your favour. It can backfire when you are a larger cohort as it means actions and changes are slower to be implemented.</p> <p>...this trust will allow you to maintain the best education for our children. -> But I can see no strong arguments/evidence for this in your FAQs.</p> <p>... education will improve through collaboration, accountability and development. -> I see no reason for this to be restricted to becoming an academy. Collaboration etc should be available between individual schools even without being in the same trust. You say so yourself, that collaboration between your school and others outside the trust would still work.</p> <p>...staff contracts will not change. But new recruiting is under no obligation to adhere to these standards. While it could mean that you have the possibility to pay more for better staff, it sadly very often rather results in less pay for lesser able staff.</p> <p>... Governance structure Adding another level above the school's already existing body will add complexity and siphoning money away as these trustees need to be compensated for their work.</p> <p>... Sponsor Although you say there will be no sponsor, this could happen in the future as an academy would have the option to do this. This could open the education to influence by the sponsor.</p> <p>... Things that would not change You make it sound as very little would change. As mentioned above, this doesn't guarantee there won't be changes in the</p>	<p>I agree totally. It isn't about pleasing the government, but it is about understanding the education landscape today. The vast majority of secondary schools are Academies. Many are part of groups that control large numbers. All political parties have committed to Academies and we are finding that funding opportunities are greater for Academies. We are also isolated, with our nearest schools likely to join different Trusts, for different reasons, leaving us isolated. This is not a risk I am prepared for LSA to take.</p> <p>I hope that the information above explains why collaboration as a MAT is so important. LSA had a tradition of not working beyond its boundaries until recently. Now we lead on teacher training, professional qualification and support other schools. This wont stop. However, with funding pressures we have to identify ways in which a MAT can help these to continue, where the LA cant.</p> <p>You are right that there could be different contracts, but if my aim is to get the best possible staff to work in the best possible environment, this would be a daft thing to do. Transparency, honesty and support have allowed us to recruit at a time of national shortage.</p> <p>The important thing for LSA is to ensure that we join a MAT where local boards are respected and a key part of the accountability process. Again, being a founder member of the MAT will ensure this.</p>

<p>future. And if there is so little change, why doing it at all?</p> <p>Questions that haven't been addressed: - How are the trustees appointed and what's their accountability? - What is the time frame for converting into an academy? - What is the reason behind these schools banding together? Poulton and Lancashire are not very closely located and probably face different challenges to Lytham St Annes. It also feels strange to have a Sixth Form in the trust.</p> <p>I'm sorry but I fail to see from your letter the advantages of becoming an academy. The only arguments are buying power and collaboration, both are not restricted to being an academy.</p>	
<p>I understand that nothing is changing so what are the benefits? Is it just government say you should change and or group purchase will result in lower unit prices? Why have you picked the schools colleges you have?</p>	<p>The benefits will be in our ability to plan, to safeguard our future and ensure that we have some control over decisions that impact our children locally. As most other schools are being taken into MATs, we will get to form a strong professional bond with excellent schools and make it work.</p> <p>The schools have been chosen because we are like minded and strong. We can focus on improvement, but also offer something more as a group.</p>
<p>My main concern re joining an academy would be the potential loss of any of our stronger teachers at LSA, if they were required to prop up areas/depts within the other educational establishments listed. I believe Mr Baker is a huge asset to LSA, having navigated many difficult issues in his reign as head and wouldn't want any major decisions about the schools future to be made without his involvement.</p>	<p>I can confirm that we will not "lose" teachers. If anything, the MAT allows us to support career pathways and opportunities. This allows us to secure the services of the very best for longer.</p> <p>I can promise that the school is in a strong position and I am just one part of a brilliant team of people. We have worked on this for a couple of years now because it is clear that if we do not act soon, we run the real risk of being isolated and left behind. LSA is one of the best schools around and a shining example of comprehensive, community education. My intention is to ensure this continues forever!</p>

<p>I can't see any evidence for the proposed benefits of moving into academy status. The FAQ is very vague, and makes statements about things not getting worse, but doesn't give any details about positive impacts. I really think parents need to know more before we proceed, as it feels like we're not being told the full story. Talking to people involved in other academies they have stories of senior leaders spending more time on academy business than the school - will this happen at LSA? How do the teachers and governors feel about the proposals? What will the impact be on funding? On diversity and inclusion? Do we have any statistics on what it might mean for learning outcomes? Until we can be presented with this type of information, I don't feel like a decision can be made, and I'm disappointed that we're being offered such a basic narrative for such a big decision.</p>	<p>The move to an Academy is as much about the positives as it is about the dangers of not doing it. I am sorry that you feel the FAQs are vague, but they are designed to give an overview of the generic concerns that have been expressed on other projects. It is also important that I did not engage in any form of sales pitch. In reality, the fact that we have got this far in the process shows that the governors and staff are confident of the move. It is also difficult to not be political!</p> <p>However, the landscape of schools has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. 80%+ of secondary schools are now academies. Lancashire is one of the last areas to follow this pattern, but the outcome of such a system is the weakening of local services to support schools. We have a brilliant relationship with the LA, but they are not the force that they once were. We have to look after the interests of children in Lytham St Annes first.</p> <p>We are already seeing the impact of poor partner "choices" in Academies in other areas. Schools thrive best when they collaborate, look outwards, invite challenge and work with their local community.</p> <p>This joining of like minded schools can only bring collective strength. There is no "lead" school, so the culture and standards can develop over time. Five well respected schools can invest energy in ensuring that we constantly rise to the highest level.</p> <p>There are functional benefits in terms of decision control, especially around HR, finance and recruitment. We can use the MAT to ensure we keep the best staff, at a time of a recruitment crisis. We can ensure that we spend our resources on the things that matter in school, teaching, learning, behaviour and experience.</p> <p>The issue around leadership in schools comes from examples of MATs that have got it wrong. Schools need high quality people to run them. They need a person who parents, staff and students can work with. The governors also have to ensure that the school is much more than the leadership and ensure that succession planning is in place for all eventualities. Recent research showed that 25% of headteachers do not last more than two years, so this is something we have to manage as a profession and a well run MAT can ensure this.</p> <p>LSA would continue to run as it does now, with a commitment to diversity and inclusion. This would not change.</p>
<p>I struggle to understand the strategy or purpose behind this move. On one hand you say it will benefit and on the other you say nothing will change. I'd hope that there would be a clear objective and aims for the MAT and this would drive the choice of organisations and the plan for its formation and realisation of any benefits. Currently there seems to be little to look forward to in the proposal.</p>	<p>I can assure you that this is something we have researched thoroughly. It is also something that we have debated and discussed at length. In reality, with 80%+ of secondary schools now being academies and out of direct LA control, the need is to ensure that LSA controls the next steps. We are seeing more and more schools being advised where to go (i.e. Carr Hill) and this would NOT be good.</p> <p>If and when the governors make the final decision to join this MAT, then there will be serious work to bring the collaborative commitment and strong visions and values of excellent schools into a coherent and driving mission. Immediate financial savings will be made in some areas, which will ensure the long term security of roles and the continually improving pupil teacher ratio.</p>
<p>Having read the letter and the FAQ I feel that it does not clearly identify the tangible benefits, it simply say there will be improvements. Countering this there are lots of references to what won't change. Therefore at this stage I am not convinced it is the right way forward. Simply I would be wanting hear about an improve quality in the level of teaching personnel either through training or attracting new teachers. Improved resources eg buildings and equipment and other teaching materiel. Improved support for all ranges of academic achievement, ie pulling up the lower end but also pushing those that can excel. This would also be extended to extra curricular activities.</p>	<p>I can only apologise that you felt the FAQs were not detailed enough. However, it was important at the consultation phase to not enter into a "sales" pitch as there are still strong feelings about the academisation of schools.</p> <p>The critical thing is that LSA is currently thriving and the key to joining a MAT is that we will be able to maintain these commitments, during a period when schools are struggling to recruit and some MATs are restricting curriculum breadth. Our route will ensure this does not happen.</p> <p>As for tangible benefits immediately, we know that there will be more money for maintenance, reduced costs for central services and collaboration opportunities to retain excellent staff. All of this ensures we can keep our focus on brilliant teaching and opportunities for children.</p>

<p>At the moment I feel that the school appear to be doing a lot towards all of these topics, so what would be the extra difference?</p>	
<p>https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/improving-schools-performance-are-multi-academy-trusts-the-answer/ https://neu.org.uk/advice/your-rights-work/academisation/neu-case-against-academisation The above links contain reasons why I do not support the move to an academy, less parent representation, less accountability, no requirement for qualified teaching staff, more pay for managers and support staff rather than teaching staff, no control over which MAT the school ultimately belongs to, poorer outcomes for less well resourced children, lower funding for SEN. Money is concentrated in academies funded by central government rather than local government. The Northwest already performs worse academically than the overly funded southeast. I think a parent, staff, union meeting should be held in the school to answer questions with sufficient time to respond fully to concerns. There was more information on the new school building than this change in management.</p>	<p>This consultee did not require a direct response. Many of the points made here are addressed in the responses sent to others.</p>
<p>My child needs extra support, how will he get this within a trust? If we're not happy with the school itself who's the reporting chain? Will you still get inspected? How will we get the support from the community when you're excluding it in a trust? Can there be some meetings for parents to understand it better? Will more money become available to get extra staffing to support kids who need extra support?</p>	<p>The aim of joining a MAT is to ensure that we can maintain the high standards that we have set in recent years. We feel that working directly with other schools is the right way to ensure this. Support for children can only improve as we will be able to fund and manage deployment in more effective ways.</p> <p>Although joining a MAT results in a change of governance structure, it still a school and legally bound by all statutory obligations. We will be inspected by Ofsted like all schools.</p> <p>We are a community comprehensive school and champion this all of the time. This will stay the same, thanks to a strong and involved Local Governance structure, focussing on what we do and how well we do it.</p> <p>The school will look to use the MAT status to access funding streams that are sadly only available to Academies. It will also streamline top level expenses to ensure that more money is invested in children, staff and learning.</p>
<p>My answer is: Never In A Million Years.</p>	<p>This consultee did not require a response</p>
<p>I 100% support the proposal of LSA highschool becoming an academy. I feel it will be a very positive and beneficial move for all involved especially the students.</p>	

Engagement with the Wider Community

The only two responses were positive. Our local MP, Mark Menzies supported our work. The head teacher [REDACTED] also wrote in to express his support.

Engagement with the Professional Associations

The unions were contacted directly and did not respond. Becky Smith then chased them for comment. The only response was the following from Unison, which does not require a direct response:

We believe that this Acadamisation will not work for the pupils at Lytham St Annes High , Hodson Academy or Blackpool 6th Form.

These are are good educational providers and bring a wealth of expertism to each educational setting and the Authority have in the past paid vast amounts of money for new buildings.

The other 2 the Mc Kee and Chadwick are both SEMH provisions and they are different kind of pupils and we feel as a union that they could become lost in the whole acadamisation as if its the plan to put them on vocational course once they fail in theses to provisions then this could have a bigger negative impact on their education which needs to be personalised around the pupil.

All schools are currently struggling with budges especially SEN so how would this be the best for pupils once the trust take their top slice from each provision which is anything from 5-10%

We also believe that all stakeholders could potentially lost a lot of staff as many staff do not want to work for an academy

This response does not make sense and is a poor representation of the member views as they have not engaged colleagues. The response is showing a lack of understanding about how schools operate and the wider collaborative potential.

Engagement with Staff

There were only two responses. Both focussed around the potential impact of the MAT on staffing opportunities and the associated financial risks. Both responses received full answers and no further requests for information have been received.

Staff responses:

Will there be training opportunities/conversations/support for staff affected by the proposed conversion if it goes ahead and their job roles e.g. HR/Finance/Clerking before the conversion taking place? **Yes. We will have more control over how we do things and ensure that we have the skills and ability.** The MAT replaces the LA services, not the services at school level. The school needs to be able to adapt and develop and we have a decent history in developing people.

Will there be new line managers for HR/Finance/Clerking? **People employed at LSA will be lined managed at LSA. Where we are accountable/reportable to the LA, this would now be someone on the MAT. However, whether this will be a HT (ie me!) or a CFO/COO has to be decided. Roles have to be put in place that allow the headteachers to focus on teaching, learning and students.**

Will there be new business and administration systems? **We will have a new finance system on start up, but everything else is to be decided. There will need to be new/adapted procedures based on reporting changes (monthly etc) but again, these will emerge as we know more.**

Where does the job role of the clerk and Head's PA fit into the Academy Conversion structure? **No JD will change, even though the naming convention of a governing body will change. We have been clear that we want to use Local Governing Bodies and believe in them fully. For them to be purposeful they need to be structured and managed well. This would stay the same. Each school will have a HT so they will then decide whether they require a HT PA. For me, if we have one now, they we should have one as an academy!! Again, some aspects may alter based on statutory responsibilities but essentially the role is needed!**

Pupil Numbers

LSA High School is currently in a strong financial position. The school is full and, looking at catchment areas and demographics, it is likely to remain so for at least the next 5 years. **LSA has not always been strong for numbers. We have increased our intake fby around 100 per year. Many issues stopped people applying and only hard work primary schools, parents and the community. We are all at the whim of parental choice...but we are lucky that children HAVE to go to high school!!**

Our partner establishments have far more risk associated with their pupil numbers. The extract below is from the financial

statements of Blackpool 6th Form showing a reduction of 175 students between this year and last year. Are we reassured that this is a short-term reduction and financially sustainable? *Yes. Please see the response below in more detail. More importantly, so are the DfE who have worked with us on forecasting.*

Future Prospects

The college's learner responsive funding for 2023/24 has been confirmed as £10.6m for 2,077 students compared to £11.1m for 2,252 students a decrease of 175 funded students. *Post 16 numbers are always a risk. There is no certainty and no law to force children to a sixth form. It may be that the numbers at BSFC are indicative of a need for a smaller provision in the future, or are a temporary issue. For them, it is a 2 year issue, as opposed to LSA, where a similar issue impacts for 5 years. BSF will always increase to meet need, as opposed to having a PAN.*

It is also important to note the BSF responded quickly to the issue and has not propped up in year deficit with money in the bank. They are going through redundancies now in order to address the issue. I see this as strong financial management and links to their outstanding rating with the ESFA. They could easily have lived off the reserves and stored the problem for further down the line.

National Pay Agreements

Within the FAQ's you state that 'the governors of the school and the Trust are committed to adhering to national agreements on pay and conditions and have no plans to alter term dates once the school has become an academy.'

The minute below from Blackpool 6th Form Administration & Finance Committee dated 3rd October 2023 would suggest that moving away from the National Pay Scale is a course of action that is open for consideration by at least one other partner.

'Directors were informed that as it stands the total operating costs for the year had reduced from a deficit of £1,210,000 to a surplus of £205,110.

It was noted staff costs had been updated, however, despite seeing a reduction they remain high, directors were informed that the pay award is still in negotiation and, therefore, is an estimate in the budget. The Principal talked about the option to move away from the national pay scale, however, pointed out that this could make the college less attractive to potential employees.

Directors were reassured that the SLT at a recent strategy day had come up with lots of cost-saving strategies which had been included in the financial plan, it was noted that they do not want to consider a redundancy situation unless necessary, it is about finding the balance and not losing staff prematurely especially with academisation taking place very shortly.' *This is an expected step prior to taking the ultimate decision to bring about redundancies. BSF would have to show in record that every possible way of saving money was explored. Ironically, LSA has only recently been taken back in line with national pay scales and the governors agrees to vary from them previously. Again, this was part of a cost saving exercise, stretching the costs to save money.*

I'm sure that as a Governing body you have carried out financial due diligence on our partner schools, but the points above coupled with uncertainties over the reserves policy, LGPS employer contributions and the elements making up the top slice, disturb me enough to submit this response *As I have said above, the choice for LSA is a known MAT with fixed idea, top slice amounts and procedures etc OR being part of something at the outset, with lots of unknowns but greater potential for autonomy and freedom. It has been incredibly difficult and relies on professional trust and due diligence that has no formal definition or description. The schools coming together have been open, transparent and shared everything. They are all in a strong position today, but the natural cycle of schools will see us all take turns at being below par or struggling with money.*

The Top Slice is likely to be minimal (1-2%) despite DfE assurances that the schools can and should look at 3-5%. However, we do not have a fixed model. We have strong establishments able to stand on their own two feet who will develop the opportunities associated with collaboration. Again, top slicing is a bit of an anathema as it is slicing trust money, to go back to the trust. The only funding figure that counts in the MAT balance. At the moment this is secured due to well run schools, but as you can imagine, I

have been sat in difficult meetings trying to explain a £400k in year deficit next year. I know some of this is staffing, I know some of it is cautious forecasting. Either way, I have had to answer for it.

The LGPS is a difficult one as we will always be a risk of variation in this, but in reality, it will be the MAT at risk, not LSA.

I believe the Trust as a whole can be successful however I am concerned that this success could be at the expense of current and future pupils of LSA High School.

There was a separate staff response raised outside of this process that I have included here for reference. I have added my responses in blue:

I have been thinking about the staff consultation and have a few questions/suggestions. I am not sure if any of them have answers yet, but maybe some of the points could be taken into consideration during MAT negotiations and when drawing up the scheme of delegation.

The tone of this is very much about one school and is missing the chance to see the school as part of something bigger. How many times do we worry about the “constraints” of the LA in our decision making? It is rare. I see this being the same in the future with the MAT. We have to think bigger than our school, in order to get the best for our school/children.

Also, there has to be an acknowledgement that the school has three choices: 1 Do nothing and risk the continued weakening of the LA. 2, Join an existing MAT on pre agreed terms and conditions, limit our autonomy BUT we would have answers to figures, numbers and details. The final option is be part of starting a MAT where we swim in a sea of grey unknowns, but can at least shape it. This is clearly what we are doing here. This means we may not have answers, but that we do have trust and faith in the people who have taken us this far, to ensure that the project can and will, be a success.

Reserves for LSA are currently very healthy – easily over £1 million. I understand these will be passed over to the Trust on conversion. Is there anyway we can protect or ringfence some of these funds for works that could take place this summer if conversion happens before September?

Yes, via an agreement and plan However, we need to be careful here as how we describe things. A school should not build up student money today for a project tomorrow. We haven't done that but we do have money in the bank. I would expect to present, as HT of LSA , a detailed plan of works on our site over the next 2-3 years and I would expect the MAT to deliver these. This is a form of ringfencing BUT with purpose and aim.

We will be unable to do much work over Easter due to the BJC event. The reserves are high due to maximising High Needs funding, delays to the new building preventing us from upgrading the older blocks, reviewing, and renegotiating SLA contracts to make savings, and ensuring we always obtain best value. It would seem a little unfair for LSA not to benefit in some way from this hard work over the last 2/3 years.

I don't fully agree about fairness. BSF and Hodgson sped their time and money on balancing their budgets, whilst we have a reserve that will essentially pay for our imbalance. We are joining a MAT in good faith and in belief in collaboration and working together for the good of ALL children.

The key will be for schools to articulate their spending plans and then money required will be allocated. The MAT will not stop this as the key is control at school level.

Income – We potentially could have around [REDACTED] in the Trust bank account and £250,000 due from the DfE for replacement windows. Can any of these funds be protected from top slicing? Could they be allocated directly to LSA?

This is different. The [REDACTED] is the LSF money and could/should have been drawn down immediately. We only left it there to avoid clawback etc.

The £250k for the windows will go into our vendor account which I would assume is school based, not trust based and will be an in/out transaction.

The golf money is different again. By virtue of our location we have worked on a legal agreement to lease our land. At the moment, this lease will be with LSA trustees as they hold the land in trust. If we convert before it is signed, then the agreement will be with the MAT so LSA would have no claim at all on it.

BSF have amounts bequeathed to them. These are reported in balance sheets but are ring fenced. If there is money in the trust, the trustees can create a covenant that gives some direction to the transfer of the funds (i.e children at LSA, sport, art, drama etc) This is common practice and would often involve a separate item on finance meeting is at MAT and school level to ensure the funds are being allocated the right way. Agreement to spend it would need to be sought.

Lytham Schools Foundation have supported us in the past. Will they continue to support us as a MAT as the charity is to benefit young people in Lytham St Annes. In addition, will any donations be top sliced?

Children at LSA would still be able to bid for this. If the school applied for future bids, they would come across with stipulations and covenants (as per above) Common practice re top slicing is only of the pupil funding (ie excluding HNB, PP etc)

How will orders and invoices be processed? Unlike Chadwick and McKee, we are a bank account school and do all our own processing. How will the central teams operate? Will LSA HR and Finance staff report into the central teams?

In reality, HR and finance at each school will be just one team. Like all teachers will work for the school BUT essentially all have the same employer. The work flows and processes are not known yet, but school teams will need to feed in to make sure there is a system that works. I know that there may be a requirement for electronic signatures etc to facilitate multi site working. However, again, we do not know for certain as we are founding a MAT, not joining an established one.

Top Slicing – How much will this be? Will it be taken from all our income - School Block, High Needs Block, PP, LAC income, donations etc. I would hope just schools block as the HNB, and LAC income for example is for specific children. What services/salaries will the top slice be used to pay? This is key with no in-year deficits being possible. Currently we are looking at around a £400,000 in-year deficit for 24-25 (this may change depending on the % pay rise for 24-25, current assumption is 4% for all staff) so further savings/cuts may be needed to recover this deficit and to pay the top slice.

Again, we can't say. We are going for a top slice model as this fits with the skills in each school. DfE have advised 3-5%, but initially, as we set up central functions and contracts, this is more likely to be 1-2%. There will be a need for a LOT of work about what this looks like and the services that re replaced as a result of leaving the LA. It is only the MAT that can't post in year deficits, but schools may well have to as part of a structured plan. However, strong knowledge and planning will stop this. Thinks like increased pension rates and pay awards become a central headache!

Will financial due diligence take place to make sure that all establishments can afford to join the MAT and to confirm the financial position of us all? Our income along with Hodgson is fairly stable, Blackpool 6th are seeing reducing student numbers and McKee and Chadwick must have income that can vary depending on the needs of the students.

All of this has been ongoing. We have met with the DfE and risk assessed all of our finances. The MAT is about trust. I would hope that you trusted my ability to work with the DfE and others to ensure the stability of the MAT...if not, we would not be here.

BSFC is outstanding in the way that it is run. Hodgson [REDACTED] k". McKee and Chadwick have a business model that usually returns [REDACTED] surplus per year (Alternative Provision places) As mentioned before, LSA is more of a risk to others.

Budgets – Will we set our own or will we have guidelines from the central team i.e., maximum % staff costs, guidance on forecast pay rises etc. What happens if the forecasts are wrong? If the pay rise is higher than forecast and this puts LSA in an in-year deficit will cuts have to be made immediately to recover to a balanced budget?

Of course there will be guidelines, as there are from the LA now. Any issues like unexpected pay rises etc will have to be managed by the central team first and decisions made to ensure we safeguard the education of children. Conversations will take place at school level, risk will be continually assessed but this is talking about balance at institution level, when we have to remember it is MAT level figures that count.

We should be entitled to extra capital if all five establishments convert. How will this be distributed? Will each establishment have to make a bid? Will it be the trustees who decide who has the greatest need?

Again, the new board of trustees and the central team will develop these approaches, but if we are joining a MAT, there has to be trust. Until the fifth school signs up, academies would be able to bid for CIF funding separately. However, on the joining of the fifth school, we would be allocated an amount based on the formula etc. The allocation of this need will be around the quality of work each school does to prioritise and plan I am guessing.

LGPS – the employer's pension contribution is currently 16.3%. This rate is based on the diversity and number of LCC employees. This rate will be reviewed March 2025. If you look at other MATs, the vast majority pay higher than this rate. I believe a large portion of our support staff are aged over 40 which won't help at our review, so it is something we will need to bear in mind as this could have a significant impact on our budget if the increase is high.

This is a risk, but it is a risk to the MAT, not LSA

Staff terms and conditions – these will be protected by TUPE, but for how long? I am not an expert in this area, but I think job roles and terms and conditions can be reviewed almost straight away once the conversion takes place. Are there any guarantees for staff that current terms and conditions will be retained and for how long?

Why would we change conditions? The aim of the MAT is to improve our working conditions etc to ensure I have the best staff, delivering for the children of the town. If a school is known as a bad employer, this becomes difficult. I would lose good staff. Again, this is a worst case scenario where relationships between employers and employees have broken down. Headteachers, business manager etc would not be able to operate in this environment.

Finally, all five schools/colleges have received £25,000 to help with the conversion. I am struggling to find what this can/should be used for. It does sound like we need to produce evidence of how it is spent to prevent clawback which we obviously don't want!

I will check this, but this is only an issue if we don't convert. Haven't we received the full amount already? I understand restrictions around marketing and branding etc, but the rest can be allocated to time etc.

Summary

It is possible to extrapolate the following questions and requested for further information in to the following broader sections.

1. Greater detail of the benefits, alongside the risks of inaction
2. Ensuring sustained strength of provision
3. Maintaining local links and strong local governance/accountability
4. Support for children with additional needs
5. Levels of Risk

Proposed generic responses:

Greater detail on the benefits and the risk of inaction

The national direction of travel is for all schools to academise and join MATS. Nationally, 80%+ of secondary schools have already done this. As a result, there is becoming less opportunity and resources for the traditional Local Authority to support, challenge and drive forward schools.

The school will benefit by being a close working partner of 4 other strong schools, with a vast range of experiences and expertise. Being part of a MAT at the founding stages allows LSA to be part of the process that creates the expectations and standards. If we know that starting our own MAT is not possible, then working with schools at the early stages is a brilliant alternative.

Benefits will always be seen initially in the business of the MAT (purchasing, contracts etc) but already there is a clear direction of meaningful work in school improvement, behaviour management and professional development. As the relationship develops, there will be opportunities to challenge and develop areas such as the curriculum. Each school has many strengths and this process allows us to pool them together for the good of all children.

Ensuring sustained strength of provision

LSA is a strong school. Results are good and the Ofsted inspection was excellent. Reputation is good and numbers coming through the school are healthy. We have a new building and things are feeling positive. The same can be said for all of the schools in this initial partnership. However, we know that in order to continue being good, we have to ensure challenge and rigorous review. LSA is relentless in its pursuit of providing excellent education to the children locally. The MAT will allow that to continue and will support strong local accountability, without centrally controlling the every day actions of a school. The MAT also allows us to keep strong leaders and develop others within the MAT environment. This can lead to excellent succession planning.

Maintaining local links and strong local governance/accountability

LSA is a proud community school. It has a strong history of local governance and a tradition of strong, committed people working for the good of children locally. This MAT opportunity secures this as we move forward. The Coastal Collaborative Trust places local governance at its core the schemes of delegation that schools agree to, ensure this. There will be an agreed structure that ensures the local team of governors can focus on demanding the best education possible for the children of Lytham St Annes, working alongside the leadership team.

Support for children with additional needs

A theme started to emerge around whether the move to an academy would impact the provision provided to individual students, with individual needs. This is not the case. As an academy, LSA would be under the same rules, statutory obligations and responsibilities. However, more importantly, LSA wants to provide the best experience for all children. We would look to the change in structure to allow us to safeguard the future of our excellent supportive provisions, which are constantly under threat during a time of reduced education funding.

Levels of Risk Associated across Multiple Schools

The movement into a MAT will involve a different way of working for the business and administration functions of school. The governors have tasked the various headteachers to work with the schools to ensure that all known, perceived and potential risks were discussed and shared. We have worked with the DfE to ensure financial viability. We will all be having building surveys completed prior to signing any agreement. There will always be an element of risk as the MAT fills the initial void left by the LA, but the size of our trust is big enough to access national funding and small enough to ensure we know the details of each school.

Process

At this stage, the school has committed to the process of converting to an academy and joining the Coastal Collaborative Trust. There is no need for a further affirmative vote due to the impact this may have on TUPE processes.

Therefore, the key thing for governors to achieve from the deep and detailed consultation process is that any questions they have around converting are identified and answers are either given or found. The governors will hold a final meeting, prior to the signing of the supplementary funding agreement.

At the consultation meeting one of the following motions should be proposed:

1. Following the consultation, the governors wish to continue the process of converting to an Academy and joining the Coastal Collaborative MAT. This is dependent on a final meeting prior to the signing of the supplementary funding agreement
2. Following the consultation, the governors are happy to proceed with the conversion to an academy and joining the Coastal Collaborative MAT, but require a further meeting to discuss: *(please insert)*
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. Following the consultation, the governors would like to stop the process of becoming an academy with the Coastal Collaborative Trust and remain a school managed by the Local Authority.

A date for bringing together and sharing any further information should be agreed to allow the process to continue moving forward if required.