

Parent consultation meetings 2.30pm and 4.30pm Monday 28th April 2025 for joining Dudley Academies Trust.

Attendees:

Jo Higgins CEO DAT

Kevin Tranter COO DAT

Laura Round Head of HR DAT

Sam Darby Headteacher

Emma Kilbride COG

Jo Higgins and Kevin Tranter presented to parents.

Questions asked by parents.

The trust strategy is for 3 years, what is the significance of 3 years? This is the DfE timeline.

What is the timescale of the consultation? Mr Darby confirmed a code was sent out on ParentMail to add any questions to a form. This can be completed, or parents can approach him directly. It is a 4 week period. Contextual letter and informal consult in playground has been done. QR code for those that prefer to ask in writing.

How does the trust operate financially? The trust does not GAG pool. Each school has the funding for their school using the national funding formula. Reserves are looked at transparently, and the interest earned is invested back into the schools. The trust also gets school conditioning capital funding. Services tend to be cheaper than buying back from the LA. Any reserves or capital funding spend is agreed with Headteachers and goes to the trust board for approval. DGFL is going in August, all schools will have IT investment. Estates investment is on a 3-year cycle.

Does the Ofsted process change for a trust? It's the same whether an LA school or a trust school. The central team will support inspections, and the report does comment on the role the trust plays. Trusts are not judged separately at this point.

Can schools apply to use reserves? Capital funding and IT are centrally agreed. For other needs and projects headteachers ask for investment. The trust is keen to spend reserves and invest. The trust will also look at grant options. The Resources committee (Heads) decide how they would like to spend reserves, and this then goes to the Business and Audit Committee. There are 20 projects currently on the list. These are prioritised then presented to the business and audit committee.

Will school have autonomy over the curriculum? Yes, schools can do what they wish, Kate's Hill and Blowers Green do not always use the same. There is no trust curriculum.

What are the negatives of joining DAT? It's an open-door policy, colleagues and governors have visited other trust schools and have had the opportunity to talk to staff at the schools.

Mrs Kilbride explained the process that school had been through when looking at trusts and ensuring that school looked to join a trust that met schools needs. DAT has a financial strategy and an infrastructure for growth. School needs to make the move to an academy whilst still in an attractive position. Greenfield is a good school with talented teachers but there is no more money. School's PAN does not help our financial situation.

Emma Kilbride explained that the nursery is not school led and is a private agreement with the LA directly. This may require legal support to ensure the right outcome happens.

On behalf of parents who could not attend Emma Kilbride advised she had a question regarding a particular member of the trust board and asked DAT their views.

A parent presented shared information around a Trust member; Ian Austin how can Greenfield ethically join the trust with Ian Austin as a trust member?

Jo Higgins confirmed she cannot comment on specific members.

Jo Higgins explained how the trust board works. School has a LAC (Local Advisory Committee), the LAC views are feed into the trust board who shape the strategic priorities and hold responsibility for KPI's. The main power is with the trust board. Above the trust board there are three oversight members to have oversight of the board and ensure governance adhered to. The three members do not determine the strategic direction. They meet twice a year. Ian Austin is the corporate representative nominated by Dudley College.

Jo Higgins thanked the parent for raising this concern. Jo confirmed this will be taken seriously and raised with the chair of their board and committed to feeding back to Emma Kilbride who will respond to parents regarding Dudley College and DAT's stance on this issue.

In the presentation it mentioned that Greenfield was a capacity giver, how does this work? This would only happen if a teacher wanted to become a director. This would also not happen until a quality teacher has been found to permanently backfill any role. This is not determined its just an example of what could happen.

Greenfield has a lot of UPS teachers; would you replace as equals or look for cheaper alternatives? Backfill would also be of a similar standard.

The 40 PAN creates an issue, but school does not have room for 45 children per year group. Emma Kilbride confirmed that school had previously requested to the LA to go to 45 but this was declined based on impact to other local schools. If school reduced to 30 this would eventually have a financial benefit but would take too long to be seen. Jo Higgins confirmed that the LA currently controls the PANs.

What does financial security mean? School will have its allocation calculated by the national funding formula. The trust will top slice but not to the detriment of school and will work towards getting school back to a balanced budget position. The Trust has reserves of around 2.5 million that can be reinvested back in, for example IT. Capital funding is a central pot that is invested in the estates. All interest goes to the trust, currently the LA get this, and school do not benefit from this.

When will school be at a positive cash position? This is hard to determine as teachers pay review has not yet been agreed and there will be no grants to cover this. The trust would supply efficient/cost effective central services to help provide savings to school.

Funds come in, core services are provided, what are the key benefits, do the savings go into the school? Reserves are pooled to cover any deficits. Collective decision with Headteachers on how to spend funds. There are also some other elements that are also beneficial to being in an academy.

How does SEN top up funding work? It works the same, legal aspects are being used to challenge the LA.

Would FROG still remain? Yes as this is run by parents.

How would the SEND provision change? For individual learners where funding not sufficient the trust will support the challenge to the LA. SEN network meetings take place across schools. Collaboration is key.

Will the split year system remain? Mr Darby confirmed this is unlikely to change. There is no reason to change this and children learn well.

