



*Brightwell Academy Conversion Consultation Questions and Answers V4 – 22/9/2016*

**Q: I would like to know how the governors see the conversion being of benefit to the school.**

A: Please see the benefits set out in the consultation presentation

**Q: How would the management structure of the school change?**

A: One of the advantages of conversion is to secure long term leadership for the school. The plan for this academic year is that Mr Burrows will be Head Teacher up to Christmas, Mr Burrows and Mrs Lewis will be co-head teachers from then until Easter and then Mrs Lewis will be the head teacher 5 days per week from that point onwards. Governance issues are addressed below.

**Q: Is it anticipated that there would be a dedicated head teacher for the school? Or would there be a 'super head' shared between a number of schools? Essentially the question is how much time would the head teacher be spending in the school and dedicated to activities specifically benefiting Brightwell school?**

A: The school will have a head teacher 5 days per week throughout this academic year. Should Wallingford School Trust expand further in future, then there may be merit in alternative leadership arrangements. Wallingford School Trust have been very careful not to generate an adverse impact on either Wallingford or Brightwell pupils' education as we negotiate joining their Trust. We would anticipate the same degree of care being applied to current and future Trust schools should further primary schools join.

**Q: Would there be changes to the structure of the board of governors? Is there still a requirement for parent governors?**

A: There will be a Local Governing Board (LGB) for both schools. The LGB will be accountable to the Trust. The precise make-up of the LGB for Brightwell is to be discussed as part of the conversion process. The principle is that an effective LGB has as many powers as possible delegated to it whereas one that needs additional support may not be given so much discretion by the Trust. This is consistent with good practice in Multi-Academy Trusts across the country.

The Secretary of State for Education announced a reversal of policy on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The requirement to retain parent governors will remain.

**Q: How long is it anticipated that the process of becoming an academy should take? What does the process involve?**

A: Please see the timetable and process set out in the consultation presentation.



**Q: My understanding of an academy is that the funding still comes from the LEA, but that the academy has more autonomy as to how they spend that funding. Are there any proposals in place as to how the spending of the school budget might be changed?**

A: While it is correct that a Maintained School, as Brightwell is currently, is funded via the Local Authority (Oxfordshire County Council), this will not be the case after academy conversion. An arm of the Department for Education known as the Education Funding Agency (EFA) provides funding directly to the Trust. This means that the Local Authority does not get an opportunity to retain a percentage of the funds in order to provide central services to all schools in the county. These services typically include school improvement, HR and some larger scale maintenance works. Post conversion, the school will need to buy these services either from the County Council or elsewhere. Brightwell proposes to work with our partners in the Wallingford School Trust to secure best value for money in buying these services and will reinvest any savings in the education of the children at Brightwell.

**Q: Will the branding change? School Uniform?**

A: there are no plans to change the branding or the school uniform.

**Q: What can the DfE do to prevent change?**

A: The DfE actively supports academy conversion and have helped us get to this stage. While difficulties may arise, all parties are committed to identifying and overcoming any obstacles to conversion provided that we can reasonably do so.

**Q: Slade End development – is there still a new school in the pipeline? Will that affect numbers at Brightwell?**

A: The planning application for Slade End contains proposals to build a new 1 form of entry primary school on the development and states that the preferred option is to relocate St Nicholas' Infant School to that site. There is as yet, no committed timetable for the development of the housing or the construction of the new school. Once the proposals are clearer we would expect there to be a consultation on the redrawing of any designated (catchment) areas and a fuller understanding of the impact on pupil numbers at Brightwell.

**Q: What are the future plans to improve school facilities (IT, sports equipment, playground etc.) For instance, a new hall floor was installed last year, what are the other top priorities? How are these priorities decided?**

A: The academy conversion will not affect this process. Currently the leadership of the school identify the improvements that will have the greatest impact on teaching, learning and school performance. These are presented to governors as part of the annual budgeting process and governors challenge the school leadership on the improvements and the priorities.



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**Q: Do you envisage that CPD and leadership will be disseminated from Wallingford down to primary (or primaries)?**

A: The CPD for primary teachers and teaching assistants will be very different from that for secondary staff. The leadership of the primary school will be expected to identify appropriate CPD for their staff. However, there are elements of teaching and learning that apply equally to all stages of education and we will look for opportunities to link up with CPD at Wallingford School wherever possible. The same applies to leadership where skills of analysis, evaluation and planning are the same; there are advantages in widening the experience of staff from Brightwell through the new partnership.

**Q: Leadership is clearly excellent at Wallingford, as is subject knowledge. However, (e.g.) a secondary maths teacher may not be the most suitable person for delivering primary maths CPD. This might apply to leadership too.**

Please see the answers above about the identification of CPD and the acknowledged differences in leadership between primary and secondary.

**Q: Have we got “great” teachers - that would have been selected by Wallingford MAT – in place now? Parents are concerned about progress being made.**

Mr Burrows and Mrs Lewis are totally focussed on improving the progress made by pupils at Brightwell. They are working with the teaching staff to identify opportunities for improvement and ensuring that all staff have the appropriate support and training to deliver the best possible outcomes for our children. Governors regularly challenge school leaders about the progress being made and expect to see significant improvements in the end of year measures for academic year 2016-17.

**Q: We need better pupil recruitment. Local parents in catchment of over-subscribed schools don't come here instead. How can we change that?**

Governors and school leaders believe that this flows from improving the teaching in the school and improving the promotion of the school in the wider community. This is particularly the case as we approach the date for applications for Reception places in 2017. We firmly believe that this September brings a positive new beginning for Brightwell – if you agree, you can help us by spreading the word.

**Q: Has public school always been the choice for the village based on the figures that the school has 100 pupils and there are 100 other primary age children in the village who don't attend Brightwell?**

A: The proportion of children in the village who attend Brightwell School has undoubtedly reduced in recent years. One of the opportunities presented by converting to an academy is to raise the expectations that we all have of the school and challenge and support the school leaders to deliver better outcomes for our children. We believe that once Brightwell can be shown to consistently deliver to this high standard that it will become more attractive to parents within the village and from outside the catchment area.



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**Q: Will Brightwell remain a C of E School?**

A: Yes

**Q: Will we retain staff such as office staff?**

A: All staff retain their current contracts during the conversion.

**Q: Who owns the school after the conversion?**

A: The playing fields will continue to be owned by OCC and the building by the church. The premises are leased to the MAT.

**Q: How can we benchmark improvement after conversion and improve transparency about the school's development?**

A: We are working hard to develop the quality of teaching and learning at Brightwell and this process will continue after conversion – it is the main focus of all good schools and it a priority for Wallingford School also. In addition to our own evaluations, we will invite leaders from other schools to validate our judgements. The governors hold school leaders to account for the improvements. Ofsted is the ultimate external judge of quality.

We strongly believe that good quality teaching and learning will bring great results; the end of year achievement data will be the test of the improvement after conversion.

We have a school development plan that is updated annually and we can publish this on the website. But with a small school, we can make a difference quickly with the right team in place.

**Q: what would happen if there was a delay in the academisation?**

A: If the delay was an administrative delay, the plan for the change of Headteacher would continue. If there was a major change of policy, then Brightwell and the MAT would need to review their position.

**Q: Is there a “Grand Plan” for the future of the Wallingford School MAT?**

A: In the future, local primary schools may want to consider becoming part of the Wallingford MAT but that is a decision for individual primary school governing bodies. Wallingford are keen to get this partnership working well first before considering adding more schools to the MAT, but in the long term, the economies of scale will be truly realised when we grow the number of local schools in the MAT while working to maintain the identities of the individual schools.



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**Q: I understand the priority at the moment is to stabilise management and improve quality of learning at the school. In the longer term, what is the Academy Trust/governing body's vision for the school? Is there/will there be a development plan put in place? Where do the Academy Trust / governing body see the school in 5 years' time?**

A: The current development plan is a one-year document which focusses on improving leadership and teaching and learning at Brightwell School and we believe that the conversion will support that aim. A longer term plan will be the next step: we would want to gather the views of all stakeholders, including parents and children when drawing that together.

**Q: Do the Academy Trust/governing body intend to expand the school, and what would be their timescale for this? Is the plan to return to 5 classes, with a separate reception class, once numbers allow? (Or possibly more than 5 classes i.e. one class per year group?)**

A: Governors and school leaders acknowledge that many parents would prefer not to have split classes. However, the ability to do this is constrained by the school budget. Our aim is for our school to demonstrate that it can deliver a high standard of education and in doing so, become more attractive to parents. This will then raise pupil numbers, enhance the budget and enable the school to structure classes to best support the education of all of our pupils.