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Principal: John Fryer

14<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

Dear Parent/Carer,

We held the first of our Parent MAT Consultations on Monday morning and evening. We have our final opportunity of engaging with you on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> March at 10-11am. It is important that you try and attend if you have any questions or concerns about our intention to become part of the Cockburn Academy Multi Academy Trust. However, I do appreciate not everyone is able to get to the meetings so you can contact Naomi Hammill or Sharon Crowther directly at the school by phone, post or email.

I thought it would be useful to share with you some of the concerns and questions raised in the meetings to date and our response as this may go some way to further informing you and allaying any unnecessary fears.

Some parents have had experiences of a local primary or high school being 'taken over' by another school in the academy process resulting in many changes and disruptions. This tends to be the case with a primary to a primary or a secondary to a secondary school and is often due to a Government order when one of the schools is 'failing' and the other school is strong and can offer support and direction. This is not the case here. We are a 'Good' school and not requiring any help or support. We are also working with secondary and primary schools in the proposed MAT so they would not have the 'expertise' to take over our school even if that happened to be the case.

There was a concern that we might lose our good teachers to support other schools to the detriment of our pupils. Again, we would not be required to do this in this case. We might take the opportunity of developing staff skills and training across schools and sharing expertise in special needs or specialist subjects – but we would not expect changes to our staffing as there would be no other special school in the MAT and therefore we would be the most experienced to work with our pupils.

Another worry was over leadership and governance. To all intents and purposes most people would not see a difference. We will retain our own leadership and our own budget and our own governing body. However, there would be an experienced layer above this with Dave Gurney (a National Leader of Education and Head of a successful school in South Leeds) as CEO and a Trust Governing Body containing a representative from our school plus the ex-Director of Education Leeds and an ex-primary Head from Leeds to oversee matters at a strategic level and offer expert advice and guidance. The Local Authority is shrinking in size and effectiveness due to the on-going Government cuts so Local Councils resulting in services being reduced and less effective and economical. The Trust will become a form of 'mini LA'.



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Money was another issue. We will still be funded as normal by the Government for our pupils so our school budget will not change or be affected in that respect. However there will be opportunities to make savings in pooling costs between the MAT schools for things such as HR Support, Insurance, Utilities, Resources and ICT support. The two Human Resources advisers employed by the Trust formerly worked for the LA and supported our school so know us and our staff very well already.

Transport was raised by another parent. However, transport is not run by Broomfield but by the Council, so would remain the same whether we were in the MAT or not. However, again by pooling resources, it might be possible for the MAT schools to combine their minibuses to create our own transport before and after school and save on Council costs and the proposed changes they are currently making to our Post-16 arrangements.

There was a concern over the timing of the process. This has been unfortunate and to some extent out of our control. We submitted our application in July 2017 but did not get verification from the DfE until late January 2018. In order to do the required consultations and allow a 13 week period for TUPE of staff, we are left with a fairly tight schedule to get things in place for September.

We do not want to cause any undue worry to pupils – so we will retain the Broomfield name and uniform and site and staff so pupils will not see a difference on the surface. We will not be called Cockburn or change our uniform badge.

One parent was concerned that Broomfield might become a 'dumping ground' for MAT SEN pupils. This would not be the case. We would maintain LA admission procedures and there is already a huge over demand for places here. However as part of a group of schools working in harmony, it could not be ruled out that some pupils might move sites or spend time on other sites if staff and parents felt that was the most appropriate place for their child – but this is not 'dumping'. Cockburn have an excellent exclusion and inclusion record and have a high percentage of SEN pupils that they already care for successfully and have no intention of 'ditching' these pupils. However, they would appreciate any training, help or advice we can give them just as we would with their specialist facilities, resources and teacher subject knowledge.

Would our existing Partnerships at Windmill and Rodillian continue? We would hope they would as we have excellent relationships with the schools and our pupils are doing really well there. Losing them would not be part of a MAT process. However, both Windmill and Rodillian are very popular schools and there is a demand on mainstream places. We have a rolling 12 month Agreement with them and they could give notice at any time. If the



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unfortunate happened hopefully we could find replacement (or additional) future placements within the MAT to compensate the loss.

A further question was raised about the Curriculum at Broomfield and if becoming a MAT would put more pressure on academic results. Our curriculum would remain the same – it is Government led and we make appropriate changes where we feel necessary. We would still retain our emphasis on PHSE, Communication, Independence and Life Skills.

Parents wanted guarantees and were concerned about the upcoming changes in leadership at Broomfield. I assured them that although I could not predict the future or make any guarantees, I did feel that this was the right move for us at this time and that the potential benefits of working in harmony with other schools in our community would outweigh the possible negatives. The Government has an agenda for Academies and the LA is shrinking. By taking this step we will be in control of our destiny and we would be at the starting point of a new MAT and have a seat on the Board. If we did nothing there could always be the potential of another school being asked to take over us or for us to be made to join a MAT and then it would be done to us and we would have little influence on matters.

I hope this sums up what has been said so far and helps inform you and allay any fears. Please do come to the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March or contact Sharon or Naomi ([governors@broomfieldschool.org.uk](mailto:governors@broomfieldschool.org.uk)) if you have any further questions.

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