

# **Mottram CE Primary School**

## **Academy Consultation Report**

### **Summary**

The following report details the academy consultation process undertaken by Mottram CE Primary School and responses to that consultation. Its purpose is to support the school's governors as they look to confirm their decision to apply to become an academy and join CDAT.

### **The Consultation**

The consultation followed an initial vote by the school's governors that (a) they believed that this was now an appropriate time for the school to formally begin the process of moving Mottram CE from maintained to academy status and that (b) Chester Diocesan Academies Trust ("CDAT") was the multi-academy trust ("MAT") that they would wish the school to join. The process ran during January and February 2025, and consisted of a number of elements, including:

- Provision of information about academisation, CDAT and the consultation process on the school website and in paper form for parents and staff;
- Formal consultation meetings for parents (and carers) and staff – in-person meetings for staff and parents were held in school and a further on-line meeting was held for parents;
- Provision of a Frequently Asked Questions ("FAQ") document following the consultation meetings, which detailed questions and answers from the meetings and to written consultation responses received by the school.

Staff and parents were encouraged to raise questions and offer views/comments at the consultation meetings, via email or in writing – a box for written responses being provided in the school foyer.

### **Responses**

- 26 feedback forms were received (see Appendix A for comments/questions);
- A number of staff attended consultation meetings;
- 8 parents/carers attended the 2 meetings – 6 in person and 2 online

As a percentage of the parent and staff bodies, the attendances at the consultation meetings were very much in line with CDAT's experience of other consultations – and the percentage of written comments received was, if anything, slightly higher than has been the case in many consultations.

## Summary of Responses

The mood of both parental meetings and the meeting with staff were positive. The staff were already well informed – they already had some knowledge about working in a MAT – and discussions with the staff were largely confined to factual information about pay, conditions and CDAT’s approach. Neil Dixon (CEO) had already visited school a couple of times and had met staff, and so had already had the chance to chat informally about the trust and the process.

The parents seemed to be reassured by what they heard at the meetings and expressed their thanks for the information given and the openness of the project. Many of their questions were seeking reassurance that there wouldn’t be unnecessary changes and there were a number of positive comments.

In terms of the feedback forms, on which respondents were asked to identify if they were in support of the governors’ decision for Mottram CE to academise and join CDAT, the majority said that they were in favour, while only 3 (11.5%) were against the idea – see chart below.



An FAQs document (Appendix B) was prepared to respond to the questions that came out of the written feedback forms, and this was posted on the school website. No further questions/comments were reported.

## Conclusion

The consultation was well supported and positive comments were received both in the face-to-face and online meetings and in feedback forms. Only 3 parents expressed a view that the school should not convert – and none of these gave any clarification as to

why this was their view. There is nothing in the consultation that would suggest any significant level of worry among staff or parents about the governors' decision to start the academisation process and seek to join CDAT. The number of concerns as a percentage of the total parent/carer group is very small. Furthermore, the mood of the meetings and the questions/feedback received suggests that there is clear support among the wider school community – based on a clear trust in governors and school leaders, recognising that decisions made have been made with the best interests and future of the school in mind.

### **Next Steps**

The next step is for the governors of Mottram CE to confirm their desire to continue with the academisation process and to work through the conversion process with CDAT and DfE colleagues.

## Appendix A – Written Feedback Comments & Questions

Number of YES = 14

Comments:

- I think this will be a positive move for the school
- With obvious funding challenges it would seek to be the most sensible option. Our hope is that the moral standards are maintained, and that improved support will directly enhance academic standards.
- Will Mottram still be a C of E school under Academy status?
- Lovely school, long may it continue
- It would be brilliant to see the school receive more support, if this means moving to CDAT, we support this. We don't want to disrupt children's learning and are assuming there won't be a huge change to the children and this is dealt with in house.

Number of NO = 3

No comments

Number of DON'T KNOW = 9

Comments:

- What are the benefits for our children, the school becoming an Academy?
- I would like to know more about this before making a decision either way. The local 'Academy' schools I've heard about recently have a very poor reputation which I would hate that for our lovely school.
- What are the benefits for the children, when the school becomes an Academy?
- We have only been given the pros to join the Academy. Once we have been given the cons, then I will decide.
- This is a tick box exercise; the decision has already been made. It is irrelevant the opinions from any parent or carer. I think the timing of this is very poor. The families, children and staff at Mottram have gone through a lot over the last 12 months, and although that may have highlighted vulnerability and issues in the school, you are asking/doing something based with a head who hasn't been in the school very long, who is stated as 'interim'. It is a big decision to be made with a head who I feel hasn't shown anything yet as they have been in position a short time. I am very mixed about the decisions made and my concerns surround leadership, SEN support, staff and ultimately the children. I am not entirely negative; I believe there will be positives at becoming an Academy under the right leadership and for Mottram to carry on with the 'feel' it has always had.

## Appendix B – FAQs Document



### Academy Consultation FAQs

Thank you to everyone who came to the in-person or online consultation meetings, or who responded in writing. We've been really pleased with the number of positive comments that have been received, and I hope that we managed to answer people's questions at the meetings. Below are answers to questions that were raised in written responses to the consultation.

**Q: Will Mottram still be a C of E school under Academy status?**

A: Yes – the school remains a C of E school and is still part of the Diocese of Chester family of schools; CDAT is the trust that was set up by the Diocese and so has a strong Christian ethos. All of our schools' SIAMS inspections (which are the inspections of C of E schools) have been really positive, which we think shows that the schools' C of E status has been maintained, or even enhanced through being part of the trust.

**Q: It would be brilliant to see the school receive more support, and if this means moving to CDAT, we support this. We don't want to disrupt children's learning and are assuming there won't be a huge change for the children?**

A: Our approach is very much "If it isn't broken, it doesn't need fixing," so change is kept to a minimum in schools like Mottram that are performing well. The children will benefit from being involved in projects with other local CDAT schools – e.g. 3 of our Stockport/Tameside schools have just taken part in an RE-focused spirituality day, and we have sports events coming up – and will also benefit from staff having greater access to training and networking events.

**Q: What are the benefits for our children, the school becoming an Academy?**

A: As above – children will benefit indirectly from the training and networking that staff receive, and will be able to take part in local and trust-wide events. There are also examples in the trust of schools being able to share teaching resources – for example, we work with The Ogden Trust who provide science resources and training to clusters of schools. Lots of our children also take part in the Archbishop's Young Leaders Award – we have a trust-wide celebration event planned for the end of the year.

**Q: The local 'Academy' schools I've heard about recently have a poor reputation and I would hate that for our lovely school.**

A: We believe that CDAT has a good reputation across the schools who are already in the trust, and school leaders and governors have been careful to do their due diligence on the trust and its record.

**Q: We have only been given the pros to join the Academy. What are the cons?**

A: We think the pros far outweigh any cons with coming into the trust. In terms of possible cons, we know that there will initially be work for the Headteacher and School Business Manager in particular – getting used to new systems and so on (although training and support will be provided). We also know that governors will need to adapt to working in a different structure (as set out in the scheme of delegation). From the point of view of staff and pupils though, we hope that they will see minimal change on conversion and will begin to enjoy the benefits mentioned above.

**Q: Isn't this just a tick box exercise: the decision has already been made? It is irrelevant the opinions from any parent or carer.**

A: Not at all. The overwhelming majority of schools do proceed with conversion after consultation, but we have had two schools who have chosen not to because, after the consultation, they felt that the timing wasn't right for their school. Both were in areas where they wouldn't have had many other CDAT schools nearby, so questions were raised about networking and so on – and so the schools decided to wait until other local schools joined CDAT or there was a better local option. This obviously isn't the case with Mottram – as there are already 4 local schools in CDAT and 2 more have applied to join – but it does show that consultation isn't just a 'tick box exercise'.

**Q: I have concerns around SEN support and the staff – and ultimately the children.**

A: First of all, please be assured that the staff are protected under TUPE legislation and would transfer (on conversion) to the trust's employment on their current terms and conditions, pension arrangements etc. The trust works well with union partners and follows the same national agreements for teachers and support staff as local authority-maintained schools. Staff also stay working in their own school – we don't redeploy staff across different schools in the trust – so children would still be working with the Mottram staff that they know and love. We think a key benefit to staff of being part of the trust is the chance they get to access training and networking opportunities – sharing best practice and learning from each other.

In terms of SEND, the local authority retains the statutory duty re. SEND in terms of statutory assessments and Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs). As a trust, we have our own SENCO network to support our SEND co-ordinators, and we also have a CDAT SEND Lead who can provide additional support to schools where needed.

Overall, we think that the additional support that we can provide for staff, and around SEND, has a positive impact on children in CDAT schools.

Neil Dixon (CEO, CDAT)