

## **Appendix 3c**

### **Sutton Benger CE Primary School Consultation Meetings**

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019**

Three meetings were held for parents. At each meeting there were the following presentations.

#### **James Passmore Joint Chair of Governors**

Explained that academies are government funded schools independent of the local authority. Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) are groups of academies with a central board of Directors. Despite some horror stories that appear in the press most MATs work well and there is now more accountability to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). In the SW 45% of primary schools and 80% of secondary schools are academies. Some local authorities like Bath have told schools to find a MAT to join. The Governing Body have been looking at the question for the last 4/5 years and gave a presentation to parents in November 2017. The advantages of joining a MAT are that it provides more support and security as local authority services contract owing to financial cuts. The governors have looked at a number of other MATs and believe that DBAT offers the best fit for the school. This is because of DBAT's record of providing support on school improvement, its emphasis on collaborative working. As a VA school DBAT's strong Christian ethos fits with Sutton Benger's (SB) If the school converts it will not change its name, uniform, the times of the day or its holidays. JP explained the process the Governing Body has gone through to decide it wished to become an academy and to join DBAT. Many meetings have taken place with DBAT staff. Teachers have visited DBAT schools with positive feedback. DBAT has already provided support. Support is needed especially after the OFSTED inspection

#### **Luke Madison Executive Headteacher (LM)**

Described his own school South Marston (SM) and why it joined the Trust. SM is a small village school on the outskirts of Swindon. He came to feel he had less and less in common with the large urban primary schools and more with the schools in DBAT. The first changes were largely back office. The real positive is the level of challenge. 3 core visits from the School Improvement Officer (SIO). They are full day visits, very detailed and intense which involve paired observation of lessons and the scrutiny of children's work. More detailed than local authority visits. Can request further visits at no cost. Wiltshire Council (WC) still provides some support but not to the same degree as it used to. Mutual support between schools and collaborative working is very strong. An example of a TA supporting a pupil in another school because of their specific skills. Some cost savings because of economies of scale. He organised joint staff training where a maths consultant was bought in for 4 schools at a small cost. An individual school could not have afforded it. Collaborative working is a requirement not an option. Joint training day for the Trust each year which brings the staff of all schools together.

#### **Alistair Pickering Chief Operating Officer for DBAT**

Explained geography and make-up of the Trust, number of schools. 11 primary schools with a new secondary school opening in September 2019 and 2 more new primary schools in the next 2 years. 2 clusters 3 large city schools in Bristol and the others smaller schools in North Wiltshire and Swindon. Exciting time for the Trust with a new dynamic CEO. DBAT's philosophy is about autonomy and identity. A family approach allowing each school to maintain its own identity and retain a lot of autonomy while getting the support to improve. The Trust is changing. It has a small central team but is improving the support it can offer and reducing costs. For example, it has procured a much better HR service at a reduced cost Funding is a challenge for all schools especially at the moment. It is easier to address this as a group where there is the flexibility to provide a safety net for individual schools within the Trust.

### **Jez Piper CEO of DBAT spoke at the last 2 meetings but not the first.**

The Trust is about being a family. Our schools are your children. It is important to keep that approach. The Directors want to know more from staff and parents in its academies about what they want as DBAT moves forward. It is a larger organisation with everyone working to the same aim. Jez has been in the school a lot working with staff. Ofsted has given an element of direction but where does the school want to go in the longer term? How can the Trust link these together and find the resources and support to make progress?

### **15.30 Parents' Meeting**

#### **Numbers attending**

1 teacher 1 parent 3 governors

#### **Questions**

##### **Would we still order things ourselves e.g. stationary?**

DBAT has delegated power. Schools have the autonomy to do their own ordering.

##### **Are all the schools in DBAT primaries?**

1 secondary school opening in September 2019.

##### **How big is DBAT? 2,800m pupils**

**Are numbers capped?** No. There is a balance to be struck between size that brings more resources and keeping the personal family approach.

##### **What are the disadvantages?**

LM there is only so much time. Does not see some other Swindon heads as much as before. But then he has less in common with them.

##### **Is funding more secure coming through the MAT than through the local authority?**

Not really and the Trust cannot influence government decision, but it can get the most out of the money focusing on using resources effectively.

**As a small Trust do you have as much bargaining power as a local authority?**

11 schools not so massive as a local authority but by using national frameworks the Trust has been able to secure efficiency and value for money.

**Is LEA funding reduced when a school joins a MAT?**

Yes, because there are fewer schools in it.

**Does employment of staff change?**

Yes, there is a TUPE transfer of staff to the Trust. But conditions of service and pensions are safeguarded.

**What's the feeling of the staff?**

A SB governor has been to visit a DBAT school. Teachers in the schools were happy with the arrangement.

Business Manger have the opportunity to meet together share expertise and develop specialisms DBAT's focus is on developing and retaining staff. Opportunities are much greater for career progression especially for middle leaders.

**Does Ofsted reduce inspections because some of the central functions being done by then Trust?**

No. Ofsted do not inspect finance and admin. Central support allows school leaders to focus on improving teaching and learning rather than being bogged down in finance and administration.

**Are there any Trusts that have failed?**

Yes, there are horrors stories in the media.

**What happens to the schools in a Trust that fails?**

Schools have to be rebrokered into another Trust but that takes a long time.

**Do schools get taken back under the control of the LA.**

No that does not happen.

There is much more scrutiny of Truss nowt which means failure is less likely to happen. Trusts are scrutinised financially as educationally in terms of results etc by the RSC.

**How does governance work?**

Some Trusts centralise everything but DBAT maintains a Local Board of governors in each academy. There is a scheme of delegation which defines powers of the Central Board and Local Board.

**Isn't it an odd situation when amateurs are interposed between employee and employer?**

Actually, Local Boards do lots of good service. DBAT is providing training for Local Board members e.g. on health and safety.

**When you send application to the RSC what do they look for? Do they turn schools down or tell them to go to different Trusts?**

Have to show what Trusts you have looked at and why you feel this is the right Trust. The Trust has to do the same. RSC will look at both and make a decision. Sometimes they will direct a school to join a different Trust to the one it wants. In this case RSC agreed that DBAT is the best Trust for SB.

**When is the start date for conversion? Is it 1st October?**

Yes, we are in the middle of the formal consultation. After this and TUPE it is for the governors to make a final decision. Actually, will be little change from 1<sup>st</sup> October.

**17.30 Meeting**

**Numbers attending**

2 teachers 4 parents 5 governors

**Questions asked**

**What is DBAT's underpinning education philosophy? Slightly fearful of the timing. Will it interfere with addressing the issues raised in Ofsted?**

Jez background school improvement and has been a headteacher. Ofsted Report gives priorities. DBAT has already begun to support the school with this. It will also support how the school will progress in the bigger picture. DBAT has a standard approach to assessment which means there is consistency. The school will not lose its individual character but will be helped to make the progress it needs to.

**Does the Trust have the capacity to support on maths?**

Yes, within the Trust and it can bring in additional resources

**Have the Trust helped its existing schools to improve?**

11 primaries 2 new so just inspected. 1 is good waiting for the report on the next one but expect it to be good. 3 Bristol schools 2 special measures. One now RI. Hopeful one will be good based on internal assessment. The Trust intends that all schools good within 3 years. 3 intensive school improvement visits each year help to bring about improvement.

**Is there support for teachers?**

Yes, huge amount of support. I person as the key contact with the school. They get to know all staff and are accessible to staff to provide support. They build relationship and build trust. Foster collaboration between schools. They link staff to people working in similar schools.

**Do you plan further expansion?**

SB would be 12<sup>th</sup>. The Deanery secondary academy will be 13th Talking to another school and have 2 new schools joining in the next 2 years. That will bring us to 16.

### **Do you have a figure or limit?**

No limit but there is a need to strike a balance. Bigger means more resources but it is important this does not make the Trust less personal. Constantly review. Aiming for 3,000. Trust developing a model around hubs. Bristol cluster of 3 big schools. N Wilts and Swindon Cluster. This approach can bring the Trust closer to tis schools. Work on school improvement and business teams. Also reviewing the structure to make sure it adapts to a changing picture.

### **Does DBAT provide capital?**

There is devolved formula capital which provides each school with a small amount of money. Schools can bid for government funding. Assessed on security and health and safety grounds. Within the next year the Trust will hit 3,000 pupils and will then get a capital allocation given to the Trust. Then there will be an internal bidding and assessment process.

### **Questioner was asking about VA funding**

This will stop once the school becomes an academy.

### **How much do schools have to contribute if they get government capital.**

LM's successful bid his school has contributed only 1K to a bid was for 60K. No strict guidance on level of contribution a school should make.

### **Do we cease being a VA school**

In terms of status and SIAMS remain VA. Governance structure is different. SB becomes an academy within the Trust.

### **What is the timing?**

Conversion date set for 1<sup>st</sup> October.

Now carrying out a formal consultation including due diligence and TUPE. Governors will make a decision at the last meeting of the summer term.

### **How will things feel like after 1<sup>st</sup> October?**

No real difference for parents and children. Behind the scenes more support for teachers and an improvement in teaching and learning. Structures behind change. Preparation has already begun so there will not be a big difference for the staff. Important it is not a big shock. Support for staff before conversion. More accountability and financial reporting after conversion. More support form officers who will be more visible.

### **How does it work with supporting he governors? This was mentioned the Ofsted Report**

DBAT will do an audit of governance and put together a programme of support based on their neds. Directors and officers attend governors' meetings. If needed the

Trust will put together a support plan to get governors back on track. Officers have the knowledge to support the Local Board.

## **19.00 Parents' Meeting**

### **Numbers attending**

Parents 9 Governors 3

### **Questions asked**

#### **How has it benefited children at SM, how would it benefit the children at SB?**

LM if you improve the teaching this will improve the learning of the children.

#### **Has it improved SM?**

Yes. The school was good before but is better now.

The Trust enables schools to develop the curriculum that suits them best. Not tied to National Curriculum and so can adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. Tadpole Farm (TF) has a different curriculum based on experiential learning. Huge gains in understanding and outcomes have proved this is a really good model.

#### **Does the Trust use that model in every school?**

No, the model does not fit in every single school.

#### **Because it does not fit the teachers?**

**My daughter is a school refuser. She does not want to come to school. I have been researching how you can bring this model into the school. Want to see it introduced in SB. Feels the current model is very much what the teachers want.**

Whole process of curriculum change is about what is best for the children. This model worked at TF where it started from a whole school approach in a new school. In a different school it needs to be introduced in a different way. It must be done so it meets the needs of the children.

#### **How do you choose which school to use this model in and which classroom? From September her daughter will be out of school. Should we reverse that situation?**

It is important to have a look at TF to see how the model works. but also see what works at SB. Most people want to use the most effective learning strategies so there is normally no need to compel them to. An example is the White Rose maths school. This has been trialled in some schools and is now being picked up across the Trust because it works. The Trust has been involved in whole process.

AP responding to the question how the children benefit from a business perspective. Funding a restructured business team across schools charged to maximise the level

or resource to go into the classroom benefits teaching and learning. Cutting costs as a Trust on admin and finance can free resources for learning.

### **How does it work? Do the funds get pooled?**

Money comes to Trust which takes a central contribution and pass it to the individual academies.

### **Is it more or less than from LA?**

Finance is similar. it is about providing better quality for what can be bought with it.

### **Does school keep its own put of money?**

Yes, DBAT is not centralised like some MATs. The Trusts Board has to sign off. budgets Schools retain autonomy, but the Trust brings more capacity and can act much more quickly than a local authority.

### **How is funding calculated?**

Stays the same based on pupil numbers. More challenging for smaller schools. Saving centrally is a benefit. A school in a Trust is part of a bigger organisation. The Trust can support fragility in an individual school. Provides a safety net. Helps with consistency. Schools across the Trust are using similar systems. This makes it easier to work together more efficiently.

There are opportunities for children to work together across the Trust. Inner city Bristol and Chippenham schools can visit each other. Combined residential can make them more affordable for smaller schools while offering pupils a wider experience.

### **If the consultation is successful. what are the plans for future leadership of the school?**

This is a difficult question to answer at this stage. Luke is contracted until end of August. The governors have not made the decision about what happens after that.

### **Do other schools have Exec Head or Head of school**

Bristol schools are larger have and have head of school. Small school tend to use executive heads.

### **Do they come from within Trust?**

Varies. The Trust has used different approaches to get the best person

### **Is Luke paid by DBAT or school**

There is a Service Level Agreement. 3 days at SM 2 days in SBN.

### **Can we spread the resource saved back into SB?**

The executive head role is flexible not set days but proportional to need. The Trust always back fill in the schools affected. Luke is an academy Principal for DBAT SB is a Wiltshire school. So, it has to be a temporary arrangement until that difference is resolved.

**If we do not join what is plan B?**

Plan B. in terms of school improvement

A return to Wiltshire Council is the fallback position because SB would be a maintained school. It would return to WC but look to outsource school improvement with DBAT.

**Why not do that anyway work in a joined-up way.**

The Hobbs Alliance was a loose partnership and when time pressures mount the working together gets lost. If collaboration is informal it tends to fall away and is harder to maintain. That is why the Trust is better because collaboration is an obligation.

**How long SM Been an academy?** Since Nov 2016.

**Is support still there?**

Yes, and has increased. Much more collaborative work now. At the start it was more in isolated pockets now there is much more collaborative work across the whole Trust.

**What is the Ofsted rating of the schools in DBAT?**

7 in N wilts good. 1 waiting judgement

3 schools in Bristol requires improvement. 1 confident will be good at the next inspection.

**How long have they been in the Trust?**

Bristol schools were forced to join because there were put into special measures. They are all on a journey from special measures. One joined in 2012 moved to goodish and back to RI. One joined in 2014 in significant special measures and is expected to be good at the next inspection. The final one joined in 2017 again in special measures.

**How is teacher turnover in those schools?**

As schools improve there is less turnover. Consistency of staffing helps improvement. Each school has a single point of contact from the Trust but also access to other members of the team. Need to know all the staff and to know pupils. The key is to build up trust. Have discussions about where they are. Make sure the key link knows everyone. Staff can email CEO and will get an answer. That would not happen with WC. Heads are also mutually supportive.

**What support has LM had from WC?**

2 weeks ago, just stated. Have an SIO. There has been a huge amount of support in the past much less so now due to lack of capacity. When Wiltshire were asked for help in appointing an executive head, they said good luck. The Trust immediately offered 3 potential candidates.

**Are you asking for support? Yes**

**Is it going to become very much more religious? Will RE take up more time?**

Nature of school will not change. Vision and values will not change.

It will remain a Church school as an academy or a maintained school.

**How does DBAT benefit from SB joining?**

SB does lots of good things. The Trust has the understanding and experience to support SB to develop best practice to model and use in other schools. Get to work with another school. Help another group to develop ideas and best practice. Big gain in this because DBAT's gain is SB's gain.

**What drives Jez?**

Finding the best quality education for all. All DBAT schools have a curriculum that meets needs of all children and is best suited to them, so they thrive within a strong Christian ethos. Serving communities is the key.

**Is DBAT run for profit?**

No reserves go back into education.

**How long will it take to improve SB?**

Some schools have taken a long journey.

On conversion look at 3-year journey. Once all the systems are in place journey should not take so long. The expectation is that SB's journey should not be too long.

**How will parents know?**

Trust looking to improve how it communicates with parents. Will hear from school should also hear from CEO who is able to put school within the Trust context. Can challenge governors. Data on results will also give evidence of progress. Trust's intention is to communicate on a fairly regular basis.

**Have there been previous discussions with teachers**

Teachers parents and governors have been involved and will continue to be involved. Teachers have been able to speak to governors about their views. The process has been going for 4 and 5 years. There have been lots of opportunities to look around and visit DBAT schools.

**Do we want very similar to what we have at SB?**

Want the feel of the school to stay the same but with improved outcomes and teaching and learning. Jez has spoken to staff without governors. He has had free and open conversations, and these will continue.