



MAT Discussions

Extracts from Minutes of FGB Meeting on 4/7/2023

Q: The CEO notes that if one or two schools in the area were to join the ILT then these schools would form a Hub with schools to the west of the town. If there were 6 schools then a Bishop's Stortford Hub would be formed – what if there are three schools that wish to join?

A: This will be decided on the size and the strength of the schools that join. And we need to remember that other schools may follow us if we choose to join, making the formation of a local Hub easier.

Q: Why was the number of 6 schools chosen, was this due to financial considerations?

A: Again, this would depend on the size of the schools and the Trust would have to review the membership as a whole and assign schools to Hubs as appropriate.

Q: Who chose the phrases used to describe the benefits of joining the ILT?

A: This document was authored by the ILT, and it is their interpretation.

Q: Why would there be a different governance structure for a SAT joining the ILT compared with a maintained school joining the MAT?

A: We think this is incorrect, as all Governing Boards become Local Governing Boards (LGBs), which are sub-committees of the Trust Board. In general, these LGBs are considered very helpful to Trust Boards and provide reports on the local landscape.

Q: Would the school be assigned a new URN?

A: No, because we are already an Academy.

Q: Under the staffing section, would all staff contracts transfer to the ILT? Would staff be made to move to other schools in the MAT?

A: Staff contracts would transfer to the ILT and therefore staff would be employed by the Trust. Staff are only asked to transfer to other schools if they want to.

Q: What would the staff appraisal process be?

A: These are done by the schools, and the Headteacher's appraisal would be completed by the CEO of ILT and possibly with the LGB Chair.

Q: Would the ILT have the power to restructure the SLT at Windhill?

A: Yes technically, but in practice they would not do this, as they wish the school to retain control of its learning journey. The ILT would formally appoint the Headteacher of each school but would involve the local school in question in the appointment process.

Q: What if the management of the ILT changes, and subsequently the ethos of the Trust? Is there anything the school can do to protect against this?

A: Yes, this is a risk, and there is little that can be done to offset this. It is very difficult to leave a Trust once a school has joined. We need to remember there is a local risk if our current Headteacher was to leave alongside lead governors. The school would then be in a vulnerable position.

Q: If the school were to join the ILT, what would our legal status be?

A: The school would no longer be an entity in its own right, and our autonomy would only be retained with the permission of the Trust Board.

Q: So, it is possible that the ethos and management arrangements could cause major changes to our school?

A: Yes, but the CEO has expressed his views that the Trust Board are keen to retain the vision of each school and of the Trust. It is key to note that the Trust practices succession planning, and this is likely to mean that there will be continuity of vision across the Trust if leadership were to change.

The Chair of Governors reminded governors that the Regional Director would not permit ILT to expand if there were any concerns about the performance of the Trust. She explained that it was reassuring to hear the views of the Regional Director, who had acknowledged the positive financial position and the strong pupil outcomes achieved by the school.

Q: What concerns do you have as Headteacher about handing over the decision making within key areas to the ILT?

A: Premises decisions would probably take longer as the Board would need to approve expenditure. We need to remember that the funds are shared across all schools within the Trust (usually amounting to £10K of capital funding per school). The ILT will review any schools interested in joining to assess the quality of the buildings and whether the school represents an acceptable risk.

Q: How would the WSA funding that has been raised be managed?

A: These funds are for the benefit of the school, and the school has the authority to assign this funding. Also, the reserves that the school have accumulated year on year are kept in the school for this school's use.

The Chair of Governors reported that the impact on the school office team would need to be considered and that the school budget would need to be analysed to source the top slice of 6%, with the resulting economies that would be required.

Q: Will the school lose the school bank account?

A: Yes, the MAT is one entity.

Q: Taking a scenario, for example if the school recruited a DHT who was passionate about music and wanted to promote this across the curriculum, would the school need sign off from the Trust or would the Headteacher have authority to agree this change of approach?

A: The Trust would probably visit to check the quality of education and they would step in if necessary. The ILT delegate the responsibility for the curriculum to the Headteacher and they encourage innovation.

The Chair of Governors reported that the assessment systems across the schools were the same, and that PM was already using the same Headteacher report format as used in the ILT. Governors commented that the ILT policies were not consistently helpful or in line with the policies of Windhill School. They agreed that there could be need to re-write the MAT processes for the school.

The Executive Headteacher reported that there was a substantial overlap of curriculum strategies between ILT and Windhill21, with both organisations using RWI, the Write Stuff and Kapow.

Q: As the staff governor, do you have a feel for the biggest concerns that staff would have if the school were to join the ILT?

A: The biggest concern is likely to be that they would not be able to work at Windhill21.

Q: Is there job security for staff?

A: Their jobs will be as secure as they are now. We are not ready to discuss this with support staff yet, and we need to manage carefully the communication strategy with each stakeholder group.

The Executive Headteacher assured governors that no staff member would be forced to work in a setting without their consent. She explained that there was potential for job opportunities across the schools in the Trust and that staff would be made aware of these. Staff agreed that the local Hub arrangement was appealing as it would be easier for staff to support local settings with short travel times.

Q: The school uses Arbor as the MIS, would this be lost if the school were to join the ILT?

A: Losing Arbor would be a concern, but we believe that ILT will be moving to use Arbor.

Governors agreed to hold a closed vote.

The Governing Board voted (by majority) to apply to the Secretary of State (via the Regional Director) for approval for the Academy to join Ivy Learning Trust and to work in conjunction with Ivy Learning Trust to take the necessary steps to affect the transfer of the Academy, subject to completion of due diligence and engagement with our stakeholders.