

Questions from Feedback Forms/E-mails and Consultation Meetings

- How is funding different?
- The way the school's funding is calculated is the same as it is now – the difference is that the budget currently goes to the local authority first before being delegated to the school, whereas in an academy it goes via the trust rather than the LA.
- Is the size of the back-room team going to increase as the trust grows?
- Yes. We try to keep our back-room team proportionate to the number of schools in the trust, to make sure that we have capacity to provide the services our schools need without being overstaffed. Because we have plenty of notice of when a school is going to join, we're able to plan our central staffing accordingly.
- What decisions will be made by LGB and by CDAT?
- This is all set out in the scheme of delegation, which is on the trust's website.
- Does CDAT pay the same amount into staff pensions as CWAC?
- Yes.
- When could changes be made to staff contracts?
- We have no plans to change contracts for existing staff – staff come across into the trust on their current pay and conditions under TUPE regulations.
- Working with cluster schools – which are our nearest schools?
- We are developing a Cheshire West cluster of schools, which at the moment includes Norley CE, Dodleston CE, St Oswald's Mollington CE, Utkinton CE and Huxley CE. Overleigh St Mary's CE is due to join in October. We try to make sure schools in a cluster are within about 25 minutes drive of each other – so that it's feasible to run after school events, training etc.
- You don't believe in change for the sake of it but if a scheme isn't working, such as phonics, can you force a change on a school?
- If something isn't working, we'll work with the school to put it right. We wouldn't look to impose a scheme, but could show school leaders different schemes working in different schools to identify which may be a better fit.
- Do you look at the 17 schools and see areas, such as SATs results, that are particularly good and look into it further?
- We know that all of our schools have strengths and weaknesses – obviously the balance is different in different schools. We look always to share the best practice that we see across the trust – which might be SATs results in some schools, part of the curriculum in another, EYFS in another and so on.
- How much do cluster schools work together now and how do you expect it to grow?
- This is developing at the moment. We have just run teaching assistant training across our four existing clusters; so far, clusters have also run shared staff meetings for teachers – where teachers can visit each other's schools to look at resources in different year groups. For pupils, we have had cluster-wide dance festivals, football tournaments, ethos council meetings and choir events.
- Have you highlighted areas that school will benefit from when joining CDAT?
- School leaders are really looking forward to having more opportunities for networking and sharing best practice, and to having access to support via CDAT's central team.
- Is the admission process still controlled by the local authority?
- Yes – all of our schools are still part of their local authority co-ordinated admissions process.
- You have talked about the pros, what are the cons as there must be some?

- School leaders and the School Business Manager will have to get used to a new finance system, which obviously will take some getting used to. Hopefully though this will be the only significant area that will take some getting used to – and support will be available.
- Is there a ceiling as to how big the trust could become?
- Our experience is that, nationally, Diocesan trusts (like CDAT) tend to grow to around 30 schools – e.g. Norwich, Oxford, Salisbury – and then often Dioceses set up a second trust. This sort of size brings benefits of scale but allows schools to also still work in smaller local clusters.
- Would the Educational Psychologist work with children or support staff? Would the Educational Psychologist only be for specific children?
- (These questions came up as part of a discussion about SEND within the trust – CDAT has a Specialist Advisor for SEND and our ambition is to employ a trust EP within the next 12 months or so). We'd like a trust EP to add value to the EP services schools get from their LA, and so envisage them supporting staff through training etc. to better support our SEND pupils.
- Is the funding going into staff training rather than playground equipment for example?
- Schools still have control of their budget, so can direct money to their priorities. Centrally, our funding is targeted at school improvement – such as staff training.
- Will the funding of school trips stay the same?
- Yes
- Will CDAT put an extra 'push' on faith, will school be expected to do more?
- No. As the Diocesan trust, CDAT clearly has a Christian ethos – as does Tarporley CE as a church school. Tarporley is a 'voluntary controlled' school – it has a religious character but church-appointed governors are in the minority: this stays the case after conversion.
- Do governors have any worries or concerns?
- Governors explained that they had been looking at academisation on and off for a number of years and had taken the view that they would move towards becoming an academy when the time is right. They feel this is now the right time. They conducted extensive due diligence, speaking to three different trusts that the school could join as a church school, and CDAT was the unanimous choice as being the trust that best matched the school's vision and ethos.
- Will there be more of a choice in what is taught in the curriculum and will there be changes to the curriculum?
- Academies have the ability to adapt their curriculum slightly more than maintained schools – for example, covering more locally relevant topics in history – but will mainly stick to the curriculum they have in place.
- Is there any room not to have to sit SATs?
- No – academies still have to sit statutory tests.
- Were there any concerns from staff?
- Staff have asked questions about contracts and conditions and have been reassured by the answers they've been given. Staff pay, conditions and pensions etc. are all protected and they won't be expected to move to work in a different school within the trust.
- How do new starter salaries compare to those of staff currently employed?
- The same. We follow School Teachers Pay & Conditions (STPCD) and the same NJC scales for support staff that the local authority uses.
- Can the Head or teachers be moved to other schools in the Trust?

- No – their place of work will remain as Tarporley CE. They'll be able to apply for other roles advertised across the trust, but will never be 'made' to move.
- Who governs CDAT?
- There are 2 levels of governance of the trust. There are 5 'members', whose role is largely 'eyes on, hands off'. They ensure that the board of trustees, who they appoint, are exercising their governance powers effectively and ensuring that the trust fulfils its charitable objectives. The board of trustees are very similar to the governors in a school – they appoint the senior leader (in a trust this is the CEO) and ensure that leaders run the trust effectively.
- What else can we do as parents to support the academisation process?
- Talk to anyone who wasn't at the meeting – hopefully answer any queries they may have. Mrs Forrester also reminded everyone about supporting the PTA!
- Will fundraising (PTA) continue?
- Yes – CDAT is delighted that most of its schools have active PTAs who support their schools.
- Will questions and answers be emailed to parents or just published on the school website?
- Mrs Forrester promised to upload them to the school website and to email parents when they were.
- If a child has deferred starting in Reception class, will they be allowed to stay in their year group, or be expected to join the 'corrected' age group (ie the year above)?
- We have a small number of children in the same situation in other CDAT schools, so this is not an unfamiliar question. We are happy for children to remain in the year group they joined school in, and where they have made friends, and see no need for them to move into the 'corrected' age group.
- Have you found that there have been staff changes following conversion, either an increase or decrease? Is it true that academies have higher staff turnover than other schools?
- This is an area that we keep an eye on, and we know that staff turnover at CDAT is no different to other schools nationally. We actually had fewer teaching vacancies for Early Career Teachers last year than we had anticipated. We're aware that research has shown that larger MATs, especially those that include secondary schools, have higher teacher turnover but we're pleased to say that this has not been an issue for CDAT.
- Is it true that academies are worse for children with SEND?
- All academy trusts are different, and this may be the case with some other trusts. However, we're confident that this is not true of CDAT. All academy schools are bound by the same SEND code of conduct as maintained schools, and all of our schools work closely with local authority SEND teams to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. 7 of the trust's schools were inspected by Ofsted last year, and SEND provision was commented on favourably in all 7 reports – for example: "Leaders swiftly identify pupils with SEND. They are supported well to access the same learning as their classmates." The trust also has a SEND Specialist Advisor in its central team – her role is to support our schools to ensure that their SEND provision is effective and our SEND pupils are getting a good deal.
- What happens about staff pensions?
- Teachers are still part of the Teachers Pension Scheme and support staff are still part of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) – so no change.

- How would moving to CDAT impact on the faith/religious teaching and faith in the wider school life? Would there be more of an expectation that school would become more religion focused? We like the current ethos and would not want this to change drastically.
- The school's Christian ethos would remain exactly as it is now – there would be no change if the school became part of CDAT. Tarporley is a 'Voluntary Controlled' school at the moment – a church school, but where church-appointed (foundation) governors are in a minority on the governing body and the RE curriculum is that of the local authority rather than the diocese. Although academies don't have a 'VC' (or 'Voluntary Aided') designation, their nature on conversion is retained as part of the conversion – so in other words, Tarporley would continue to follow the same rules around RE and so on as it does at the moment.
- Do academies lose the school's community feel and become more of a business?
- We don't think so! A key part of CDAT's ethos is our desire for all of our schools to retain their unique identity – and all of our schools retain a Local Governing Body whose role it is to ensure that the school is playing an active and effective role in its community. In terms of being a business – CDAT is a not-for-profit organisation, so while we will help to make sure the school's money is used well, please be assured that there is no question of having to 'make a profit' or anything like that.
- Will school clubs for children finish?
- No – our schools run a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities – from football and netball, choir and art to lego, coding and Quidditch! Some of our schools have also run some shared events (such as football tournaments and a dance showcase). They also run regular residential trips, school visits and so on.
- I'm worried that children will need lots of expensive uniform.
- We don't usually make any changes to school uniform, and a lot of our schools run their own pre-loved uniform shops (like Tarporley does) to keep uniform costs to an absolute minimum. There are no plans to change Tarporley's uniform.
- Would it mean changes to school dinners?
- Our schools are all free to choose their own preferred school meals supplier. However, we are currently doing a piece of work to look at school lunches across the trust, so there may be a trust-wide option for school meals that schools could choose to opt-in to.
- Does any money raised by the PTA still go directly to the school or is it given to CDAT to distribute?
- Any money raised by the school's PTA goes directly to the school – CDAT does not get involved.