

When is it proposed that the school becomes an academy, if approved after the consultation period?

Thank you for your email regarding the proposed conversion to an academy within the Flying High Trust.

In answer to your question, the consultation period runs for eight weeks. During this period the school will gather feedback from all members of the school community to help inform our decision regarding academy status. If the decision is taken to proceed the aim would be for a conversion date of 1 September 2015. This timeframe would ensure sufficient time for full consultation and for the legal conversion process to be completed in a timely manner.

Whilst in principle I support the conversion, my main concern is with regard to what would happen to students should the school fall into special measures and in the worst case, be closed.

I would like to be made aware of how the school will avoid falling into the category of yet another failed academy school.

The school has my full support and I have great belief in the running and governance. I am sure that I am not the first or will be the last parent to have concerns re special measures and closure.

Thank you for your feedback on the proposal to join the Flying High Trust. As a school we really appreciate your comments regarding the running and governance of the school. We are also proud of our identity and vision and this is something we very much plan to retain and build on in the future.

The vision of the Flying High Trust is very much focused on autonomy of schools and school improvement through collaboration. The Trust currently consists of five primary schools, one of which is outstanding, three good with some outstanding features and one school requiring improvement having joined the Trust as a sponsored school due to its Ofsted grade. The Trust assess any schools wishing to join them in terms of the capacity of the Trust and member schools to support that school to ensure sustainable improvement not just for the new school but also in the capacity and expertise that the new school brings to the Trust.

As part of the consultation process the Flying High Trust has carried out a due diligence review, spending two days in the school meeting with parents, pupils, staff, the Senior Leadership Team, governors, teaching assistants and the Midday team. Based on this, and the longstanding relationship we have built through our involvement with the Candleby Lane Teaching School Alliance, the Trust recognise our strengths but also the areas in which we can improve and, most importantly, how this can be achieved. This longstanding relationship has also enabled the school to review what the Trust offer to ensure it is the right decision for Edwalton.

The school and governors feel that the Flying High Trust have an ethos and vision that very much reflects our own and that working with the Trust will bring the capacity for improvement and enhance the experience for our children, staff and wider school community.

In terms of what would happen if an academy enters into special measures the procedure is largely the same as for a Local Authority school. The school would be subject to monitoring visits to assess the progress and capacity of the academy to become a good academy. Should the monitoring visits provide reassurance that the academy is improving and the inspection confirms that the improvement has been made then the academy would continue to focus on improvement, remaining with the multi academy trust (MAT). Should there be concerns regarding the progress of the school to move out of special measures the Department for Education could decide that in the interests of the development of the academy they need to move to a more successful multi academy trust and would oversee this move.

It is very much the focus of Edwalton and the Trust to bring about improvement but we fully appreciate the need to understand all possible implications of academy conversion – it is something we have also explored to have a complete awareness of what becoming an academy can entail.

Just to reiterate the Flying High Trust are committed to school improvement and will provide a full overview of their vision and what this would mean for Edwalton at the consultation meeting which we very much hope you are able to attend. If you are unable to attend please let the school know of any comments or questions you would like to be addressed at the meeting and we will ensure these are discussed as part of the agenda.

You mention as a benefit of becoming an academy, freedom over the curriculum. Can you provide examples of what might change?

In the short term we do not envisage any significant changes to our rich and broad curriculum which already reflects many elements of the National Curriculum. In the longer term we have the freedom to omit some aspects in order to focus to a greater depth on areas more relevant to the children in the context of the school. A practical example of this has been seen at Candleby Lane School where to support the development of aspiration and individual confidence the school hold “Candleby Life” on a Monday afternoon where all children engage in work – applying and interviewing for jobs within the school and spending a half term in that particular role with a project to deliver on in the context of work.

Not so long ago, the school said it had no intention of converting. What's changed?

As a school and governing body we continue to review the best options to ensure the continued improvement of the school and the experiences we provide our children. The governing body has attended conferences, carried out visits to schools and academies, reviewed remaining within the Local Authority, converting as a stand-alone academy and joining a Multi Academy Trust. The changing educational landscape and the value Edwalton places on effective partnership (such as we currently are part of through a Teaching School Alliance) and the benefits this can bring have led the governors to make the recommendation that the school become an academy within the Flying High Trust. The diminishing capacity of the Local Authority to provide support has also been a key factor in this recommendation. To drive the school forward partnership will bring support, challenge and accountability something that is now lacking from the Local Authority.

Do you foresee any disadvantages of becoming an academy?

The governors have identified risks but are confident that the mitigation of these risks ensures academy conversion remains the recommendation. Potential risks include the increased responsibility the school will have with regards to wider business services including HR and procurement. There will also be an increased workload for the school office in terms of the business management and financial responsibilities. As part of a Multi-Academy Trust the risk of isolation and lack of support is effectively mitigated by the core services the Trust themselves are able to offer as well as the support and collaboration with other schools within the Trust. The other area of risk when exploring options was the level of input in decision making at Trust level however this is mitigated by the school being represented on the Trust Board of Directors to influence the growth and development of the overall Trust. This puts the school in a stronger position to influence decision making than within the current Local Authority model.

What do you see as the disadvantages of remaining under LA control?

The main disadvantage is the diminishing support for school improvement provided by the Local Authority. As the physical resources reduces so does the impact and benefit we see in school. At the heart of our decision making at all times is the impact this will have on our children and hence has been a driver in our research into options to secure a sustainable future for the school based on continual development, support and accountability. Secondly, there is a remoteness between the school and the decision making of the Local Authority – within the context of a Multi Academy Trust the school has a much greater say in the development of the school and overall Trust.

Have you got a list of services, including costs, that Edwalton Primary will receive from the Trust?

Core services offer for 2015/16 (copy attached) which includes cost.

Developed through the Strategic Heads Group, where all schools in the Trust are represented by their Headteacher and this offer was developed through this group and the Finance, Personnel and Resources working group where Chairs of Governors contribute to decision making and shaping the offer – the offer is very much shaped by what schools need.

Cost of the core offer is set for 15/16 at 4.5% of EFA notified allocation (formula GAG & additional ESG) – est. for Edwalton is c. £64k.

This cost includes services that the school are currently already paying for e.g. Headteacher Performance Management, Teaching School Alliance membership, Annual Inset, Finance support and those that are held back in LA central top slice e.g. school improvement support.

As the Trust grows so will the offer, and cost would expect to decrease due to economies of scale.

What new services will Edwalton Primary need to purchase themselves as a result of becoming an academy (eg accountancy services)?

Accountancy services, internal audit and new financial software, which is included as part of the cost of core offer above.

The school will still need to purchase other existing services e.g. HR / Payroll, Insurance as they currently do. Being part of the Trust has enabled schools to secure savings in these areas vs. LA maintained school through group purchasing.

Again, I appreciate the short notice but can you provide me with the following info?

2015/16 School budget (funding) statement?

LA copy attached.

EFA funding statement for 15/16 has not yet been received.

The school will be funded on local funding formula but will receive an additional £9.30 per pupil for items de-delegated by the LA (for TUF, FSM administration, amalgamation support, A&E service) = + £3,774.

Additional ESG services grant £87 per pupil = +£35,322.

The latest Financial Year-end (Governors) Statement?

I have attached a copy of the 14/15 governors statement recently approved – though the annual financial summary for parents will be included in the next newsletter and posted to the website in the next week or so.

The trust is already working with the school to look at sustainable medium term budget planning.

Thank you for your reply and providing the information I requested and apologies for not replying sooner!

I must say that I left the meeting feeling positive about the conversion with The Flying High Trust. There was considerable insight that gave me real comfort in **supporting your proposal for Edwalton Primary to convert to an academy with the Flying High Trust**, none more so than what you and Brian said about the journey that Edwalton have been on before making this decision and in particular:

- Hearing how you have been considering the options for 2 years.
- Turning down less suitable Trust's that didn't fit with Edwalton's future vision and ethos.
- Since deciding on the Flying High Trust being the preferred Trust, the two way diligence carried out to ensure that it really is the right Trust for Edwalton.
- The relationship that Edwalton already has with the Trust including Brian's relationship with Chris Wheatley.

I thought Chris Wheatley spoke passionately and enthusiastically, along with his team, about the Trust's vision and how Edwalton would be a part of it and how the Trust will work with Edwalton to move it forward.

My position within the Trust I work for is of a financial nature so I was particularly interested in the financial aspects. The 4.5% charge for the core offer looks very good value for the services Edwalton will receive.

Are there any significant conversion costs that Edwalton will need to pay and have they been factored into the budget eg ICT infrastructure and/or equipment? I don't want to know figures, just to know that you are aware of all the costs. –

The school receives a conversion grant of £25,000 towards the legal and practical costs of conversion. Legal fees are usually in the region of £8,500 (though each conversion can vary depending on complexity) with the remainder to support the school in conversion be that re-branding, re-naming, uniform etc (this will not be the case at Edwalton) and to support any changes to infrastructure, systems and training. The Trust have an ICT Systems Manager and his services are included within the core services offer of the Trust (although additional support or projects would be charged in addition to the basic core offer).

What are FHT's internal audit arrangements?

FHT contract out their internal audit. Each school then receives a termly audit, feeding in to the overall FHT audit and this is then reported to Local Governing Bodies and the overall Trust Board of Directors. Currently the Trust review the tender on an annual basis.

If you wish to retain "full control" of the future direction of the school, why are you handing significant decision making powers to a trust made up of people who have no direct interest in the school in its current form?

- **What delegated powers will the local governing body retain?**
- **What will be the representation of the Edwalton governing body on the MAT?**

FHT is a local Trust not geographically removed from its schools and is absolutely committed to school improvement and all schools achieving their very best. The Trust operates a policy of earned autonomy so good and outstanding schools have greater powers delegated through the Scheme of Delegation. The Trust is in a position to be more locally responsive to schools than the Local Authority and provides the school with greater influence over not just the school but the overall running and development of the Trust. As a good school Edwalton will be represented on the Trust Board by the Chair of Governors to contribute to and influence decision making in a way that is not possible within the LA. The Board meet three times per year and the Chair of Governors for

Edwalton will also attend working groups focussing on Finance, Personnel and Resources and also Pupils, Standards and School Development. Brian as Headteacher will also sit on the Trust Strategic Heads Group which meets every three weeks to focus on strategic development, operational issues, support and sharing of practice and opportunities. What has been clear from the very start is that the Trust value our uniqueness and that the ethos and values of Edwalton are very much reflected in those of the Trust. This came through strongly in the two-way due diligence that was carried out in identifying the alignment of ethos, values and principles. In terms of the powers delegated, as a good school Edwalton will continue to be responsible and accountable for the appointment of Headteacher and staff, setting and reviewing the curriculum, site and premises, ethos and values and support and challenge of the school through the Local Governing Body. The governing body has these powers delegated through the Scheme of Delegation and the governors have had the opportunity to review and suggest amends prior to the signing of this document. The governing body is content with the delegated powers and influence on school and Trust development and feel that this places us in a stronger position than is currently the case within the LA.

Is representation on the MAT reliant upon OFSTED category ?

Edwalton as a good school would be represented on the Trust Board. Should the school not retain a good or outstanding status the representation on the Board could be removed but is not an automatic action.

Can you provide recent examples of situations in which Nottinghamshire County Council have directed the school to act against the interests of, or overrule the decision making powers of the governing body?

The school does not have any examples of this and the proposed conversion is about capacity for school improvement.

What guarantees will the Flying High Trust make that the governing body will be free to retain “full control” over the future direction of the school?

The powers delegated to the Local Governing Body are established through the Scheme of Delegation and the governors have had the opportunity to review and suggest amends to this document. The governing body is content with the delegated powers and influence on school and Trust development and feel that this places Edwalton in a stronger position than is currently the case with the LA. The Trust wants to provide schools with as much autonomy as possible and for us to influence the development of the Trust. As with any partnership this does not always represent “full control”.

Exactly what additional autonomy will academy status bring and how does the governing body envisage using it to enhance the provision or secure the ethos of the school?

Can the governing body or Flying High Trust explain why freedom from the LA will enhance the ability for innovation? What are the barriers currently preventing this from occurring?

What innovation does the governing body wish to pursue that it is currently hampered in achieving?

The Local Authority does not necessarily hamper innovation however it does not have the capacity to drive innovation due to its reduced resource and focus on schools in categories. The additional autonomy does however bring with it the potential to mould and shape the curriculum to best meet the needs of our children. Working with the Flying High Trust enables closer working through the Strategic Heads Group across all member schools to provide greater opportunity for our children such as joining initiatives like the Trust Children’s Parliament. The Trust provides a more powerful group of partners for innovation and opportunity for collaboration, creativity and action enabling Edwalton to work within a more proactive group of like-minded schools sharing and developing innovative practice.

Given that the school is currently a member of the Teaching School Alliance that underpins the MAT, what added value in terms of innovative practice and staff development will membership of the MAT realistically bring?

The key to development here is partnership and the capacity and opportunity this brings. As a small partnership of schools we are able to develop a depth of support, not possible within a LA or teaching school alliance.

As a member of a Trust we can address collective priorities together. The partnership plan currently being developed within the Trust includes:

- Addressing school improvement priorities in partnership. This will allow schools to work together on common school improvement priorities, through joint practice development, joint staff meetings, school visits etc.
- Recruitment, retention and talent management. Key to any school and including some really focused activity only possible within a tight and accountable partnership.
- Building a culture of partnership and connection as a Trust (including induction, social opportunities and communication)
- Embedding the Trust principles across the partnership
- Improving the process and functioning of the central Trust team
- The opportunity, over time, to make joint appointments, i.e. lead practitioners, behaviour specialists, Ed psych as a resource that Edwalton can develop and access.

The second key consideration is capacity:

- The Director of school improvement supports a maximum of 8 schools at any one time, this means that he will be able to guarantee a minimum of 2 days support each month. As a LA school, you are likely to see a LA advisor 2 or 3 times within a year.
- Central team capacity to support other areas, including business management, finance, project management, estates etc.
- Capacity of the board of directors and in particular the National Leader of Governance to support governance.
- Capacity of CEO, to provide genuine accountability, challenge and support to the Head teacher, through formal performance management processes working with the Local Governing Body
- This capacity is complemented by the resources of the teaching school, consisting of in excess of 200 CPD opportunities

Quality Assurance and Accountability:

- Due diligence process – a two-way process
- Annual Health Check/ Mocksted. With the LA schools will only receive a QA visit every 3 years and this process is generally focused on data.
- Risk register, reviewed on a half termly basis by the central team.
- Individual school improvement support plan consisting of activity actioned by the Director of School Improvement, and complemented by activity from across the teaching school, i.e. SLE support
- Support of a trained and active Ofsted inspector

Have you considered, approached or discussed converting with any other MAT or academy sponsor? Is so who? And if no, why not?

Yes – the governing body has assessed all opportunities including remaining within the LA, becoming a standalone academy, joining an umbrella trust and Multi Academy Trusts through both Flying High Trust and the Rushcliffe Academy. In terms of capacity for improvement, recognition and the desire to develop our USP and the alignment of vision, ethos and values, the Flying High Trust delivers on the expectations of the governing body.

Whilst staff will transfer under TUPE – will new staff be appointed on different contracts? Will there be MAT contracts which allow for staff to be deployed across the MAT?

New staff will be employed directly by the Trust. The contracts will allow for staff to work across the Trust but this is ONLY with the agreement of the member of staff and is included to provide opportunity for staff who wish to develop across a range of schools.

The MAT currently only contains one none good or outstanding school out of five – clearly it will be expected to increase its sponsorship capacity and take on more failing schools given the policy of the current government – what impact might this have on the resources (financial and human) of the remaining partner schools in the Trust and within the salaried staff of the Trust itself – e.g. will it need to recruit more staff?

The Trust is absolutely committed to only taking on schools where they have the capacity to support them without this becoming a risk to the Trust or other schools within the Trust. Any growth is subject to agreement both within Strategic Heads Group and also approval by the Board of Directors. The Trust have to date turned down schools due to either capacity or because the school did not share the same ethos and values. Any planned growth would bring additional resource and therefore the Trust could look to bring services in-house such as HR but also look at school based roles including behaviour specialists and educational psychologists. All of which would be approved through Heads Group and the Board.

How will parent complaints be handled? What are the implications of independence from the Local Authority for parents in terms of any concerns they may have about school policy or practice – e.g. SEN, attendance, exclusions, admissions?

The complaints procedure would continue as is currently the case in terms of initial complaints handled via the school and through the governing body. Should a parent not be satisfied with the outcome they could then escalate the complaint to the Trust, and on to the Secretary of State if appropriate. Policies in relation to attendance, exclusions, SEN and admissions would remain in line with LA policy.

Has the governing body discussed its intentions with the Local Authority – either with officers or councillors? Has it sought the views of the LA and addressed concerns about the current status of the school to enable them to make a response?

We have not expressly discussed our views with the Local Authority about the proposal to convert to an academy.

Thank you for your comprehensive response to my questions. Thank you also for enabling the meeting on Wednesday evening to run its natural course and for sufficient time to be made for all of the questions to be asked from the floor. Your willingness to allow this process to be subject to challenge and scrutiny is really valued and appreciated.

I recognise and fully understand the concerns that Brian and the governing body feel regarding the issues relating to the availability of access to school improvement support and the capacity of the LA to provide this. I'd want to reflect back that I was disappointed that both Chris and Brian at times during the meeting chose to lay the responsibility for this deficit at the LA's door rather than identifying that this is a direct result of Michael Gove's explicit removal of LA responsibility and of course funding (and by extension the new Government's further centralisation of education policy in the forthcoming Education Bill, which goes even further in locating even more power in Whitehall) However, I'm not naive enough to realise that such distinctions are of no real interest to the majority of parents - and that my own political and professional concerns are not what arguments are won or lost on!

I would, however, say that in terms of your response to my questions I am disappointed that the governing body has not spoken directly to the LA about its concerns regarding the lack of support it feels it has, and to alert them to their intention to consider conversion. In my role for the City Council I have attended a number of meetings of governing bodies to discuss their concerns and to identify how additional support could be brokered in order to avoid the drift towards conversion. In the city we have recently re-invested heavily in our capacity to support maintained schools. We are recruiting a number of experienced school improvement consultants (including Phil Unsworth who was mentioned on Wednesday night) to ensure that the LA in conjunction with the 2 city based primary TSA's, the Nottingham Learning Trust (a 60 strong primary strong alliance) and any MAT's that wish to engage, that we have a core school improvement offer for all schools in addition to targeted additional support for schools in a category or RI. Clearly I don't know if my colleagues in the County Council are able to offer any reassurance along the lines that we in the City are trying to provide - but I suppose I'd have been happier to know that the question has been asked.

As a key element of my role is working directly with the DfE Academy conversion broker, the Regional Commissioner and the EFA I remain sceptical that the Flying High Trust will be able to successfully resist future pressure to not take on a greater responsibility for sponsorship of failing (or coasting) schools. Lord Nash has made it clear that he wants to see more "local" solutions in terms of academy chains (which is a start at least), but I know from recent discussions that there are concerns about the current capacity of the locally "sponsoring" MATS. Therefore as soon as the next tranche of local "costing or failing" schools emerge I think there will be lots of pressure brought to bear on all local MATS to sponsor more schools. Whilst I would applaud the model of managed growth, building in of capacity by the careful selection of "good" partner schools and strict QA to ensure admittance of only schools sharing the "ethos" articulated by Chris Wheatley, with 1000's of potential further sponsored conversions in the pipeline I fail to see how there won't be significant pressure exerted on the Trust to step up to the plate significantly more than it appears to have done so to date.

So whilst I'm grateful that you have clearly done a very thorough job in undertaking due diligence and partnering the school with a Trust that does articulate a set of values and ethos and current success that is appealing, I remain sceptical about the future. I worry that increased competition between Trusts leads to instability - e.g. key staff being poached with better salaries. I worry that in the rather ego driven world of school and academy leadership (!) the lack of real local accountability leads to poor behaviour and decision making going unchecked. I worry about the financial viability of trusts - whatever the government suggests real budgets are getting squeezed and for all of the talk of economies of scale and smarter procurement, MAT salaries usually appear to be generous when set against the levels of responsibility or at least scale. There are a lot of MAT Chief Executives pulling down salaries akin (or often significantly more) to a Director of Education but who are responsible for only a handful or two of schools.

So in summary, I totally understand why the staff (who I have huge admiration for - and all of those who have had an input into my daughter's education so far have been wonderful) would feel very supported by the Trust and want to be part of it. I, however, would suggest that other means and methods of securing the support that the school requires could be sought in order to avoid committing ourselves to an uncertain future, with a small organisation that will face both significant political and market pressures. Whilst Chris and Brian can, and will, present this as a choice about pedagogy and outcomes for children there is also a political big picture driving all of this agenda which is driven by ideology and privatisation of public services. I, personally, don't really want my children's education to be part of that.

Again, thank you for the obvious commitment and time you are putting into this process. Whilst ultimately we may disagree about the decision, I am grateful for all that you do in a voluntary capacity for the school and totally respect and recognise the obvious integrity that you bring in your role as Chair. I know that it is a challenging role that you obviously manage skilfully.

Thank you for your kind, courteous and honest email and for attending the parent consultation meeting. As Chair of Governors I will ensure that your feedback is reviewed by the full governing body and considered alongside the comments and queries raised throughout the consultation period.

I can appreciate your point of view in terms of the political direction of travel and the impact this then has on Local Authorities. As discussed at the meeting, the proposal of the governing body is based on several factors (please refer to the school website where the discussion points and questions raised at the parent meeting have been summarised) and the decrease in the capacity of the LA is one of the considerations. Our research and the developing relationship with the Flying High Trust has highlighted the ways in which we wish to safeguard the future of the school but also draw on the collective resource of the Trust to drive school improvement and ensure ongoing support, challenge and collective accountability. As a school represented on the Board this enables Edwalton to influence decision making in a way that is not possible within the Local Authority.

In terms of resisting the pressure for taking on failing or coasting schools the Trust have provided examples where they have resisted such pressure based on capacity and sharing of the ethos. At the same time the Trust are clear that they accept a collective responsibility for supporting failing schools but only within their capacity. Any decision to approve new schools into the Trust has to be approved both by the Strategic Heads Group (with Edwalton to be represented by Brian) and via the Board of Directors where I will represent Edwalton and contribute to decision making. In terms of financial capacity and salary scales the Trust commits to the living wage and reflecting the terms and conditions of the STPC and wish to reflect the contributions of staff to ensure Edwalton continues to attract the best teachers for our children.

Thank you again for your contribution and ongoing commitment to help ensure the best possible future for the children and staff of Edwalton.

What is the timetable for conversion to an academy and when do you think the consultation would start?

We are required to hold an 8 week period of consultation for parents. This will include a open forum meeting for parents/carers to attend and raise questions for staff, governors and academy representatives to answer. There will also be information on the website including frequently asked questions and links to anti-academy information to ensure we provide a balanced point of view.

Why risk a botched conversion?

This consultation ends on July 14th. The next governing body meeting is scheduled for June 10th. Therefore a special governing body meeting will be required to consider any proposal to convert the school into an academy. Leaving one week to allow time for the governors to consider all the inputs from the end of the consultation process, this leaves 21st July as the earliest date a such a meeting could be held. However if, as proposed, academy status is to start in September, this leaves only the month of August to conduct all the necessary legal and financial work, conduct negotiations with Flying High Trust, Nottinghamshire County Council, submit an application to the Department for Education and receive their authorization to proceed, complete the negotiations on the acquisition of our assets, and secure agreement to amend the employment contracts of all our staff. August is a notoriously difficult month to pursue complex business deals. There is huge risk in attempting such a complex transaction under severe time pressure, including the high possibility of mistakes, the lack of availability of staff, and civil servants at the County Council and in Whitehall, and the huge uncertainty for staff and parents of not knowing if the acquisition will complete on time. I'm sure you have not had the chance to do substantial work ahead or during this consultation as this would render the whole consultation process as invalid. Generally available

advice is that conversion to academy status takes about 3 months from the date that the decision is taken to proceed.

I would like to suggest that the governing body, at the June 10th meeting, consider a proposal to hold the special governing body meeting in September, where the question of becoming an academy is considered for a start date in January 2016. This then leaves three full working months for the conversion process, if agreed, where a full, thorough and secure contracts can be drawn up and transfer of assets and employment can occur in an orderly manner.

The governing body is responsible for the strategic development of the school and for planning for its future and as such we have spent several months discussing what are the best strategic partnerships for the school going forward. The governing body has investigated the implications of becoming an academy including being part of a multi-academy trust.

- The investigation and discussions have been thorough and rigorous and have been recorded as confidential minutes of the governing body.
- Governors are of the unanimous opinion that the school should become an academy within the Flying High Trust.
- As a result, governors have started an eight week consultation process with parents, staff and key groups in the local community associated with the school
- At the same time, the governors have applied to the Secretary of State for approval to commence the conversion process which is being undertaken in a timely and thorough way with no undue rush or pressure on timelines.
- Once the consultation process ends, the governors will review the outcomes of consultation and either decide to proceed with conversion or to halt the process.
- The school only becomes an academy once the school, the Flying High Trust and the Secretary of State sign the Funding Agreement at the final stage of the process.

There doesn't seem to be any evidence about the investigation that has been conducted. Please can you supply parents/carers with the supporting documents.

In terms of the investigation and research carried out by the governors this includes:

- a. Having a standard agenda item at the Finance & Personnel governor committee meetings over the past few years, at least. This included considering other options, not just FHT, together with attending conferences about academy conversion. A special full governors meeting was held on 23 February 2015 to agree whether to move forward with FHT.
- b. A visit in December 2014 to Candleby Lane School to meet both the Trust and founding member school, staff, children and governors.
- c. Meetings with FHT.
- d. Due diligence review which enabled the Trust to understand our strengths and areas for development, and the capacity of the Trust and existing schools to provide this support as well as the opportunities and capacity for support which Edwalton would bring to the Trust. The due diligence process also enabled governors to assess the ability and workings of the Trust to assess the school.
- e. As part of these investigations and meetings the school was keen to understand the Trust strategy for school improvement, values, finance, support, governance, staff development and wellbeing as well as looking to build on the existing partnership through the Teaching School Alliance.

Please supply a reference to the relevant legislation for keeping your minutes confidential.

The confidentiality of the minutes was based on the governors assessment of how best to manage the development of the school. A summary of these meetings and the reasons for proceeding with the process are noted in question above.

There doesn't seem to be any record of a vote to support this claim. Please can you supply evidence that the governors are unanimous in their opinion.

Governors recorded a unanimous vote to proceed with the application to become an academy as part of their meeting on 23 February 2015.

Can you provide a "project plan" for conversion or evidence that supports the claim that conversion can safely be achieved during only the month of August.

In terms of the timeframes the 1 September provides sufficient time for the conversion process. Once the academy application is submitted and the academy order granted the process runs parallel in terms of consultation and legal proceedings. The school, Trust and solicitors work together on key documents including the Commercial Transfer Agreement (personnel and resources), the Lease, Funding Agreement and Scheme of Delegation. At the same time the consultation process runs over an eight week period to enable the school to meet with and receive comments and questions from staff, children, parents and relevant members of the school community. Following the conclusion of the consultation period, the governing body will review the feedback, suggestions, concerns, support and queries in making a final decision as to whether to continue or halt the conversion process. Up until the time the Secretary of State signs the final Funding Agreement the school can halt the process at any stage. This enables progress to be made but for the school to consult and take on board the feedback from all groups within the consultation. The governors have scheduled meetings and working groups to ensure that the legal process and documentation can be generated, reviewed, amended and signed-off in a timely manner.

There doesn't appear to be any process by which governing bodies can halt the Secretary of State once an application has been made. Please supply details of the legislation or government procedure which enables you to stop the process.

Please refer to the comments above – once the application has been submitted and approved the school can opt to halt the process at any stage until the final Funding Agreement is signed by the Secretary of State.

The governing body now has no longer any role in this process once the application for conversion is made (see points above). Please supply details of what legally enforceable rights the governing body has from now on. Please refer to the comments above. Should the school proceed and complete the conversion process the Local Governing Body retains the responsibility for the management and performance of the school within the powers delegated by the Trust.

Comments from parents and the community

Thank you very much for your email. I fully appreciate that the school and governors do not enter this change lightly and that every aspect has been examined and considered. Following your letter and communications with Brian, I give my full and confident support to our beloved Edwalton becoming part of the Flying High Trust.

As a parent I'm enormously grateful that the staff and governors of my daughter's school are so dedicated. Edwalton is a very, very fine school and has helped to shape my daughter into the well rounded person that she has become: I am sure that she will always remember her primary school with affection and pride, like thousands before her.

Thank you for involving parents in this consultation. My comment is that I think we are incredibly fortunate to have such a great head teacher, senior management team and strong governing body. I trust them all wholeheartedly to make the right decision for the school.