



25TH JUNE 2020

**PROPOSED TUPE TRANSFER OF DEARHAM AND FLIMBY SCHOOLS
TO WEST LAKES MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST**

This document was produced as a response to questions from our previous TUPE transfer employees from Thornhill and Arlecdon Primary Schools.

The questions and responses provide useful information about the Trust's position in relation to the proposed TUPE transfer of Dearham and Flimby Schools to WLMAT on 1st September 2020.

Most of the questions address queries from transferring employees however the information will also be relevant to existing staff of the Trust.

Consultation with the Trust's recognised Trade Unions has commenced and in addition to this we are issuing every existing member of staff with a separate response sheet to provide any feedback about the proposed transfer or to lodge any questions that are not contained in this Q&A document.

At the time of writing (25.06.2020) these are the most accurate positioning statements however over time they may change as practice informs policy.

Glossary

Owners = Members (note the capital M) – the Members represent the interests of the Owners of the Company i.e. Sellafield Ltd. (SL), Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), University of Central Lancashire (UCLan).

Anywhere else the word members is used (without the capital M) it is defined as a person who sits on a particular group, be it Trust Board (TB) or Local Governing Board (LGB).

WLMAT = West Lakes Multi-Academy Trust
WL TSA = West Lakes Teaching School Alliance
WLA = West Lakes Academy
CEO = Chief Executive Officer
FD = Finance Director
OD = Operations Director
PIP = Primary Improvement Partner
TSD = Teaching School Director
GAG = General Annual Grant
CIF = Condition Improvement Fund

Vision and Leadership

What does the Trust Board look like?

The Trust Board comprises 9 members. They are appointed by the Owners i.e. Members in multiples of three i.e. one each/two each/three each. Initially, because the only academy in the WLMAT is WLA, the LGB has been split; three of the members of the LGB are now on the TB with the remaining governors on the WLA LGB.

This has changed – they are now

1. *Adrian Thompson – Sponsor Sellafield Ltd. - HR*
2. *Michelle Pearse – Sponsor NDA - Operations*
3. *Dr Rick Wyle – Sponsor UCLan - Policy*
4. *Jackie Oakes – Co-opted Sellafield Ltd. – HR and Primary Governor*
5. *Stephen Asquith – Sponsor NDA - Accountant*
6. *Professor Mick Waters – Co-opted – Education and Policy*
7. *Professor St. John Crean – Sponsor UCLan – Education and Policy*
8. *Nicole Nicholson – Co-opted – LLWR - Legal*
9. *Peter Oldfield – Sponsor Sellafield Ltd. – Health and Safety*

How will the Principals of Dearham or Flimby have a say?

The Chair(s) of the LGB(s) and the Principal(s) of any academy(ies) discuss matters with the CEO's team (CEO, FD, OD, and PIP) in the first instance. The CEO reports this to the TB for approval. Where there are matters that require representation, such as appointing a new Principal, the Chair of the LGB would attend the TB alongside the CEO to present the business case.

The Executive Team comprises CEO, OD, FD, PIP, Principals and TSD.

Will there be the opportunity for the Chairs of the LGBs to sit on the TB?

Yes, but in time as part of succession planning. On the same principle basis that the CEO will not be a Trustee, neither can a Chair of an LGB.

It should be pointed out that a Chair of an LGB can be a Trustee but they must resign as a Chair of LGB – I think the previous statements are confusing – one cannot occupy both spaces to avoid conflicts of interest. One is either Trustee or LGB Chair.

Will there be a representative with Primary School experience on the TB?

Yes. One of the positions allocated in the application was a Primary School specialist. This gives greater scrutiny to the performance of the Primary Provision and the PIP is accountable through the CEO for the support of all Primary Schools.

How will the Heads of any future schools joining the MAT have a say?

In the same way as those described in answer to question 2.

Will there be opportunity for career progression?

Yes. The specific nature of the progression would depend on the size and scope of the MAT as it grows but it must also be noted that within the MAT there is a Teaching School (WLTSA)

and a Research School which can provide additional opportunities. All vacancies will be advertised internally first.

What will be the position of the MAT should they be approached by a failing school either Primary or Secondary? Would they be accepted by the MAT?

If we were approached by such a school we would discuss as a Trust whether in principle it should move forward to due diligence. We would also seek the views of the Principals and Chairs of LGBs in the locality for intelligence.

How would governance improve under the new MAT for each school?

On the basis that any school governance needed improving? It would depend if governance was an identified barrier to improvement.

How will students benefit from being part of a MAT?

Fundamentally the students must gain through improved outcomes and improvements in all the factors that contribute to them. There are many reasons but not all are necessarily immediately obvious to the students. I hope they will see an improvement in the quality of their learning, the availability of resources and the access to opportunities they didn't have before. For example:

- *Teachers spend more time teaching*

WLMAT's board is responsible for running the business and administration of its academies. As well as teaching professionals, the board will include professional people with the commercial experience required to deal with what is essentially a multi-million-pound enterprise. This, of course, frees teaching staff from the business aspects of school leadership and allows them to dedicate all their time to educating the students.

- *Shared resources and best practice*

Academies within WLMAT are encouraged to retain their own identity, as well as a governing board. However, it is the Trust that sets the strategy and establishes a shared vision and set of values. This means standards are established across all schools within the MAT, based on achieving the best possible outcomes (not only results) for the students, a focus on learning/teaching and staff development. Teaching staff can learn from their peers within the Trust, helping raise standards and students benefit from access to resources in sister academies; for example, it is very easy for primary school students to visit the Trust's secondary schools and take advantage of the facilities there, such as science labs and sports facilities.

- *Support and Challenge for all Schools*

WLMAT's CEO is not only responsible for supporting the performance of all the academies within the MAT, but also, for holding schools to account. The CEO is also accountable. No academy gets left behind. The sharing of facilities and experience inevitably means that all academies within WLMAT improve to the level of the strongest, driven by the vision and values set by the Trust. New academies partner with academies that have already successfully established themselves within the Trust structure. In this way, it is not just the educational standard within an individual academy that improves but that across the whole community.

- *Increased financial strength*

The ability to negotiate better deals from suppliers as a result of increased buying-power, allows more of the academies' money to be invested in the education of students. Centralised resources, such as HR, building services and purchasing, can also bring significant savings for schools and dramatically reduce administration. On a grander scale, WLMAT can secure funding from the Department for Education to build and run new academies, further enhancing education within the local community.

- *Professional Development and Retention of Staff*

WLMAT will build on the outstanding CPD opportunities given to WLA staff by dramatically improving opportunities for teachers. Staff can develop their careers and improve their skills by moving to other positions within the Trust rather than having to move on. This also means that the Trust can retain the best teaching talent and build succession plans, so that teaching standards are maintained over the long term and staff are put into the right roles rather than just the role that exists. At the same time, potential future leaders can be identified and supported in their development. Equally, non-teaching staff also have an enhanced ability for career progression as opportunities to work across academies, or within hubs of academies, become increasingly available.

How will the MAT deliver improved educational experiences, improved outcomes, improved pastoral care, improved access to services, improved resources? What are the targets for each of these areas? How will success be measured?

The answer to the last question and indeed every question is our success will be determined by the level of improved student outcomes and progress at all levels for all groups. This requires capacity to deliver the required transformational change and the WLTSA will be a key component of this.

The targets are simple; remove any and every barrier to maximising the value of each £1 in providing world class outcomes for students.

Some of the other questions are answered above but additionally:

Increasingly, schools are grouping together and although there are other legal vehicles, the most common legal structure for a group is the Multi-Academy Trust.

A MAT is not a panacea for all things good or bad. It is simply a legal vehicle. It provides the legal basis for schools to group together in strong and sustainable structures. A system in which groups of schools work collectively in deep collaborations to improve outcomes for students.

The position outlined in *Multi-academy trusts: Good practice guidance and expectations for growth* is: "There are, of course, many different and vital forms of partnerships that support school improvement, including teaching school alliances. These can complement and enhance the benefits of multi-academy trusts, but they are not a substitute for them. When weak schools join MATs it is not just a matter of drawing on the expert support to help them improve, but rather the trust's leaders are responsible and accountable for whether they do, in fact, improve."

The Multi-Academy Trust is 'hard' governance in the sense that schools join the legal entity that is the Trust. The Trust itself holds the authority, makes the decisions and is ultimately accountable for the improvement.

The Multi-Academy Trust is therefore the **driver** of improvement for the academies in its group.

Teaching schools and teaching school alliances are key **enablers** of improvement. They can bring additional capacity to support the academy leader to execute their improvement strategy more effectively in their academy or Trust. But they do more than this.

Currently, the remit of teaching schools is three-fold:

- School-led Initial Teacher Training;
- Professional and leadership development; and
- School-to-school support.

WLTSA also more widely captures the role of academies and the Trust to provide education and training to future and current teachers. Drawing on a teaching 'hospital', we aim to use WLMAT's link with UCLan and other HEIs to work closely with prospective teachers throughout their degrees and through their ITT and induction years. We are considering whether we want WLMAT to offer graduate education and specialist residency programmes. In this way, WLMAT becomes the strategic driver of teacher education, at the meso-level.

- *How could this all fit together?*

There are three parts of the 'triangle' of WLMAT to be held in careful alignment in order that the system is strong and resilient. The inspection and the intervention elements are the **forces for improvement**, without seeing themselves as improvement agencies. Our MAT leaders are the **drivers of improvement** and the WLTSA is the **enabler of improvement**, providing much-needed capacity.

At the meso-level place-based improvement will be a strategic driver if it offers robust evidence-informed analyses to reach aggregate solutions that will have a sustainable effect on improvement to student outcomes.

Good governance of the system at Trustee level depends on the inspection and intervention of authorities making valid and reliable decisions in the Trust's interest, supported by sound frameworks. Both inspection and intervention authorities are crucial in WLMAT's self-improving system as a guard against self-interest and a response to failure.

Each part of the triangle will be independent of the other in terms of their role and focus in order to have integrity against challenges and work effectively together as a whole.

Will the schools be able to work within existing school clusters?

Provided those clusters do not present a conflict of interest, access to new developments and information increases our access to available intelligence for the benefit of our academies.

Staff and Other Stakeholders

What are the views of the WLA Stakeholders i.e. Staff on the proposed MAT with Primary Schools?

They see the opportunities to develop our collective understanding of both phases as being of immense potential benefit to the education of all our students. They recognise the value of having a Director of Primary Education who will oversee this aspect of the MAT.

What is WLMAT's system for Staff Appraisal?

Since we adopt National Pay and Conditions for Teachers and observe ACAS practices, as advised by our solicitors and HR provider, we are confident that what we ask of staff is not unreasonable. There is the normal annual cycle of appraisals held early autumn for all staff and a mid-year performance review to establish whether staff are on track to meet their targets, if there are any barriers to success and what the academy can further do to support them achieve their targets.

Individual Principals will be accountable for appraisal in their academy as they will be accountable for the performance of their academy. The moderation of appraisals will be centralised to ensure consistency of expectation and practice across WLMAT.

In terms of 'new' CPD opportunities being available, anything that is observed to have a tangible impact on student outcomes, rooted in hard evidence of impact, will be a focus for academy improvement and with it, staff CPD. Naturally, having a number of academies will open up alternative opportunities for CPD, working across academies or in another academy within the Trust when a position/opportunity becomes available. This will help secure staff retention as already mentioned. All staff will benefit from this approach.

A number of staff at both schools are through other contracts e.g. Catering – how will these contracts be affected by the MAT? TUPE?

TUPE won't apply unless their employer changes. We are not their employer. We only have a contract with their employer. If the MAT decides to change its contract i.e. switch supplier of catering for example, then TUPE would apply to those staff since their employer is changing because of a decision to change the contractor.

What is the MAT's view of sharing resources such as sports, music lessons, teaching expertise? Would this be shared between schools? Would the expertise of staff be shared for the development of the MAT as a whole?

I think this is answered above. Sharing resources is one of the key benefits of being in a MAT. Subject to capacity and availability of a specific resource at a specific point in time. However, it should be pointed out that if there is a limited resource it will be for the MAT to decide where the priority sits in terms of the deployment of that resource.

Will the primary schools within the MAT be able to utilise WLA facilities?

Yes, depending on availability as we host 1250 students in a very tightly packed building.

Staff contracts – TUPE or new contract? Will the MAT offer Teacher's Terms and Conditions? What will non-teaching staff's terms and conditions look like?

At the point of transfer, terms and conditions of transferring staff will remain as they were in their previous employment. WLMAT policies and procedures will apply as it is not possible for WLMAT to apply those of a different MAT. We are confident our policies represent best practice in the academies sector and these have been agreed with the Trade Unions representing Cumbria schools and academies.

There are plans for the Trust to review the terms and conditions of support staff particularly pay to ensure there is consistency and pay alignment across the Trust. This will be done through consultation with a view to reaching agreement.

Is a staffing structure envisaged? When is it likely that a staffing structure will take place?

I can't answer that question until we've started TUPE based upon the full staffing compliment you have versus the budget you have and the expected numbers of children coming in to the school. As each new school joins the MAT we would review our structures based upon available capacity and potential areas of growth.

Remember who our sponsors are and that we wouldn't do anything that could be reputational damaging for them either! If you take that to its natural conclusion, you have the same number of children with the same needs on the day you join as the day before...therefore the staff are needed?!

Is it anticipated that school term dates will follow the current LA term dates?

Yes, unless they change them, at which point we would consult on the proposed LA changes as an entire Trust and establish what we want to do.

Will the Principal be involved in all decisions relating to staff matters within their school?

Not all. Since the HR function will be centralised there will be some elements that are MAT-based. However, day to day it is reasonable that the Principal will be making decisions regarding staffing matters. This will be further clarified in the Scheme of Delegation.

Will the Principal sit on the interview panel for any staffing vacancies within their school?

It will depend on the size of the school but in the case of a small school it would be reasonable to assume so unless the vacancy can be filled by a deployment from the right existing member of MAT staff. Remember though that nobody will be directed to work in a specific place – any opportunity that arises will be offered across the MAT first. That said, if we were ever to be in a redundancy situation because of, say, falling rolls then if there's a vacancy in one school it might be that it has to be offered to a member of staff in another school who may be at risk of redundancy. This is normal.

Will staff be issued with new job descriptions? How will the content of the job descriptions be decided?

A job description represents the key elements of an employee's role it is not a definitive document containing every task and responsibility. Previous job descriptions will transfer and will be applied as far as is reasonably possible e.g. for Admin and Business staff there will be a need to work in conjunction with the MAT central systems therefore this will entail certain changes to how these staff will need to operate when they transfer. Any training required will be provided. We want transferring employees to feel part of our MAT family and to feel comfortable in the roles they fulfil and the contribution they make.

Will staff have responsibilities across the MAT or will responsibilities be school-specific?

This will depend on the nature of the roles they occupy. It could be that a business manager in one schools serves a number of others and in this case I would judge it is a MAT-wide role. However a teacher in one school is school-specific because they are responsible for educating their class. I encourage cross-school learning and development which may mean at the right time some staff will wish to work across the MAT, perhaps in another school, to share and learn from other practices.

Will the school's local governing body have any influence over staffing matters?

It depends how one defines 'influence' and at what level. Structural change/creation of new roles etc. sits at Trust Board level but this is by recommendation from the CEO. The CEO would receive a recommendation from the Principal and Chair of the Local Governing Board that a specific role is required. For example, if a new student had specific and complex needs requiring an additional LSA then their case is made on that basis to the CEO. If a leaving Vice Principal created an opportunity for the academy to replace it does not follow that the Trust would sanction a like for like replacement without first considering the MAT-wide staffing structure. However in all cases, the Principal and Chair of Governors would make recommendation to the CEO.

What would be the MAT's arrangements for SEND?

Some small schools may not be able to employ their own SENCo. Our aim though is to have one in each academy where possible. In WLMAT, our academies could share that resource, which gives our students access to high quality, specialist support that they would not otherwise have had. We coordinate project and topic work. This means our students have an opportunity to work with other students from outside of their own academy and further develop their teamwork and collaboration skills. This enriches their learning experience.

The Principals will meet regularly to jointly plan responses to the challenges being faced by our academies, to share best practice, review data, support each other and set strategies for academy SEND improvement.

Support from the county would still be available, as it is the case for WLA, since they have the statutory responsibility for SEND student education. Internal needs would fall to the individual school under the guidance of their SENCo.

Pupil Premium funding would, like the core funding, be at MAT level and a sum would be delegated to schools to support those students. At WLA a proportion of the funding is ring-fenced for the benefit of those children. This principle would be applied to all our academies unless they were in deficit.

Financial Considerations

What would be the financial arrangements for the schools in the MAT?

The Master Funding Agreement brings all funding in to WLMAT. The Supplemental Funding Agreements set out the funding arrangements for the individual academies. The application to be a MAT was based upon GAG-pooling. Therefore a sum would be delegated to each academy for spending on classroom-focused resources.

The National Funding Formula and increases in staff costs have been considered and this again supports GAG-pooling so that individual academies don't have to be concerned with this burden. For example, employer contributions for pensions are rising each year – I think it's reasonable to leave that burden to us.

A member of the Trust Board will be a qualified accountant and through the CEO's team to the LGBs, within which there will be a separate Finance role, all expenditure will be monitored for its impact on student outcomes.

The size and scope of a joining school budget together with its operating balance and opportunities for efficiencies will determine how much is managed locally.

How much would be top-sliced? What would this money be used for? How would the individual schools benefit?

There is a 6% top slice. It will be used to pay for all the central services which provide economies to reinvest the savings in resources for children and share resources across the MAT so that all children in all the academies benefit.

As for the budget being used to support another academy in the MAT with greater need, the answer is yes. It is for the benefit of all children in the MAT if WLMAT can support every child in every academy.

Any ring-fenced funds allocated for specific purposes cannot be reallocated.

What is the anticipated saving to primary schools within the MAT from centralisation of back-office support? How much of these savings will be translated in to spend per pupil?

This is undeterminable at this stage. It will depend upon the size of a joining school, the functions that can be centralised (the school in question may retain all its current functions to act as a hub for a smaller function), and the cost of contracts for the current services. Due Diligence will unpick this and even then not all the money saved will be translated in to a £1 for £1 basis in to the classroom because centralising the systems will require a bigger team which will still cost, even though it will be less than a school currently pays.

Clarification is sought on T&Cs for staff – TUPE'd over?

I've answered this earlier. Due Diligence will allow for sight of contracts etc. – it will depend on how deep a search one commissions but it is not something we would withhold as we want people to be satisfied they will be well-treated and valued.

Both schools have a number of contracts in place that still have time to run i.e. catering, HR/Payroll, IT. How are these contracts to be handled if the MAT proceeds – will the contract run to expiry or will they terminate and be replaced by a central contract with the MAT? If the contracts are cancelled who pays the fees?

It will be on an individual contract basis, weighing up the termination fee against the cost of running to expiry and the saving of bringing centrally from the day of conversion. The fees are paid by the MAT.

Is WLA planning to apply for capital investment funds when proceeding with MAT application?

I presume you mean Condition Improvement Fund and, depending on what Due Diligence shows about the condition of the buildings and assets, we will judge what to bid for. Essentially, if anything needs repairing/replacing in capital terms then, yes, we will apply though one is not guaranteed of success. All academies in the MAT will have access to the fund but again, it's not guaranteed that we'd be successful.

SEND, Pupil Premium and Sport funding – how would this be managed by the MAT? Would the individual schools still receive the funding or will it be top sliced and allocated to the relevant school or distributed between the schools within the MAT?

All the money is MAT money and comes in centrally as the GAG is pooled. Any ring-fenced funds allocated for specific purposes cannot be reallocated. These monies follow the child for which they are intended. That said, as in all schools, there is an element used for managing the funds and paying salaries of people associated with their delivery. Despite this, the amount delegated to each school can be greater than they currently receive on the basis of economy

of scale. There cannot be a deficit situation by being part of the MAT for the vulnerable groups and those with additional needs.

Small rural primaries often struggle with resource – what plans do WLA have in place to support such schools?

Academies in WLMAT provide a vast array of benefits for small rural schools that address the following key issues:

- Isolation – rural primary academies can be geographically isolated and joining a MAT mitigates for this through groups of similar schools working closely together.
- Rapid change – there is so much change that it can be too much for Principals to do alone so working as part of WLMAT enables Principals to work closely together to minimise this workload.
- Financial pressures – economies of scale ease the pressure on an individual school's budget.
- Recruitment pressures - being part of a MAT helps Principals attract new staff and retain existing staff as there are more training, CPD, career and leadership opportunities.

I very firmly believe that where possible, rural secondary schools have a duty to support their small feeder primary schools and our experiences to date show that the relationships that we have formed and the speed at which we can bring about school improvement is mutually beneficial to all of us.

Would WLA support future initiatives such as wrap around care in primaries in the MAT with the supply/assistance with resource to enable this to occur i.e. breakfast clubs and after-school clubs?

WLA will not as it is but one academy in the MAT. WLMAT is the source of that support and resource. The answer is yes though it will have to be viable and meet the needs of the widest possible community. We want to remove any barrier to achieving the greatest possible outcomes for all children in the MAT.

How would WLA support small schools in maintaining or improving pupil numbers on roll in order to assist in long term viability of the school?

The simple answer to this is that WLMAT must ensure that WLA maintains its Outstanding position with world-class outcomes and being the highest performing academy in the region. It is hoped that, through the DOP, WLMAT's involvement in primary academies will also secure additional pupil numbers. The best way to market each school in the MAT is through OFSTED judgements and outstanding outcomes that feed an outstanding secondary academy that itself has world-class outcomes. This will be delivered through releasing efficiencies in spend to front-line resources bearing in mind, as already mentioned, it's not a £1 for £1 situation since even the back office load needs paying for.

Community Considerations

How will the communities benefit from their local school joining the MAT?

The previous answer would give assurance that children who attend their local primary will be part of the MAT and therefore our collective investment in improving outcomes for the children

will further improve the reputation of the schools and, by association, the community they serve. WLMAT would also look, as it does through WLA, to provide community opportunities outside of academy hours provided they are viable.

What are WLA plans to sell the MAT to communities? Do WLA realise that there are two separate communities within Dearham and Flimby each with their own issues regarding a MAT? How will the opportunities for the children be expressed to the communities?

We are prepared to speak to any community groups when the primary schools indicate to their communities that they are embarking on a consultation process to join.

We realise that the location and make up of each community is different and this will bring different perspectives on joining, particularly for those who may be closer to alternative secondary schools. We are aware that the approach will need to be different but there is some responsibility for the primary schools to support us. If the primary schools are embarking on a consultation to join there has to be an acceptance in the community that the two schools are interested. It isn't one-way traffic of interest and the communities need to see that we are working together even if the outcome is to reject the proposals.

We will rely on your knowledge of the parents, the children and their concerns to tailor what we say to assure them of the opportunities for their children.

How will the MAT communicate with the community now and in the future?

We will not be faceless. One of the key strengths primary schools have over secondary is the depth of their integration in to the communities they serve. We do not want to change this but learn from it for the benefit of all our academies.

Presentation on MAT for parents when approaching the communities? What is the strategy for ensuring parents and staff are engaged with the idea of joining a MAT?

The consultation will rely on full engagement of all stakeholders with meetings and presentations to those groups. Again we will rely on your help to get the messages right but the formal consultation process is standard once you engage a solicitor to embark on the due diligence etc.

Will WLA expect children from the schools who to attend WLA or will they still have a choice of secondary school?

The admissions code prevents this but our belief is parental choice is appropriate and therefore it is not a requirement for children who attend a WLMAT primary academy to attend WLA. It doesn't seem in any way practical that children from Dearham or Flimby should attend WLA and in any case our over-subscription criteria would probably mean they wouldn't get in. That said, if we were to sponsor the catchment secondary school then naturally they would be encouraged on the basis of the work we do together and the retention of our standards but we will not demand allegiance as it were. It has to be earned.

Will WLA consider giving schools in the MAT a "preferred" status for application in their Admissions Policy?

The Admission Policy was approved by the Local Governing Board with the changes you were aware of.

Will the curriculum focus change to support Year 7 Transition? How will this affect students not joining WLA?

This is one of the key strengths of the work. We will learn from each other and blend the provision to be a continuum through years 5, 6, 7 and 8. We would like to believe that this curriculum will enhance the outcomes of children in year 6 as well as year 11 so even if a child leaves year 6 to attend another secondary school, their individual outcomes will still be world-class and therefore have the best start to their secondary school life.

Will each school be allowed to keep their own identity i.e. uniform, website, branding etc.?

Schools should reflect the communities they serve and therefore I envisage no change to uniform unless, as we've previously discussed, schools see it as an opportunity to change if they want to. Website hosting may change if it produces a lower cost. Branding will remain the same even though we will probably add "part of WLMAT" (or words to that effect). Any costs associated with this must be at worst neutral.

Are there any expectations of co-locating the schools within the MAT?

I don't see how your two schools makes that possible? If you are suggesting we move Dearham and Flimby on to WLA's site then this is not feasible. Again, primary schools serve communities in a more intimate way than secondary by nature of their size. Conversely locating some secondary provision in a primary school has all sorts of implications and we have not considered this either.

Assets and Buildings

What are WLA's plans for assets and buildings maintenance?

We would bring the same exceptionally high standards to maintenance that are evident at WLA. That is not to say those don't exist elsewhere and where they exceed ours it is a further opportunity for us to learn. In terms of staffing, I have no knowledge of your staffing structure and will only know this going through Due Diligence.

Part of the economy of scale is to ensure that we have funds available to support works needed.

The liability of the buildings falls to WLMAT and it is a key component of impact on student outcomes therefore we will aim to ensure reserves are built to accommodate ageing buildings and assets.

Both Dearham and Flimby have old buildings – how does this fit with any asset management plan?

I presume your AMP is fit for purpose so through due diligence, or prior should you wish, we can work through this together to understand where the risks are.

How will maintenance and asset care budgets work across the MAT?

I think I've answered that above. The decisions on which academy gets what will be a decision for the Trust Board, based upon recommendations from the CEO's team. There will always be priorities that need careful balancing and anything that cannot be funded out of asset management reserves may require a CIF application, which will require patience.

Other Topics/Issues

Concerns regarding WLA supporting a failing secondary school and the impact this might have on capacity at all levels i.e. governance, leadership, staffing, financial resource and CPD opportunities etc.

As already outlined all school improvement work is delivered through the WLTA and it is our view that this will be a separate company within the MAT to provide the school to school support. We are not the preferred sponsor of any secondary school and even if we were, our capacity will be derived from the funding the WLTA receives. WLA cannot be distracted from the core purpose of changing lives through learning to achieve world-class outcomes. This sentiment envelopes primary school children.

Do you have any concerns about the proposal for the schools to join to WLMAT at this stage: Maybe. Why are we taking on board schools that are very low in student numbers and are running at a deficit? What benefit is this to the academy trust? Will this venture result in funds being taken away from the academy itself? Why are schools being looked at that are not part of our catchment area at all and whose students will not be interested in attending the academy?

Thank you for your question and for sharing your concerns. Pupil numbers will always be the biggest factor in the viability of any school but our schools are viable. When we were just West Lakes Academy there were always departments or budget holders that were overspent because they wanted or needed to do things that took them over their budget and that money had to come from somewhere in order to prop them up. This is the same with the Trust across all its schools.

The impact on curriculum, assessment, teaching etc. across the trust will be enriched by our growing family of schools, enabling staff to collaborate together to share ideas and best practice across all of the schools whilst not removing or reducing resources from one particular school. Each school receives its own funding allocation, we work with the all the Principals to set their budgets for the year ahead by aligning expenditure to income and in the same way they've always done, they make changes as required to balance the budget.

With regard to out of catchment schools joining our Trust we have always said that we would support any school if we could to help them become outstanding places of education, whilst Dearham and Flimby are not in our catchment area they are part of our Trust vision to provide outstanding education through various education providers i.e. residential, alternative provision, rural etc. across the west coast of Cumbria.