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Parent and Carer Consultation Concerning the Option for Tidemill School to Convert to an Academy.

Tell us your views

The Department for Education (DfE) has offered schools in England and Wales the opportunity to apply to become academies. It says that becoming an Academy would "...give schools the freedoms and flexibilities to continue to drive up standards". As an outstanding school (OFTSED Inspection 2008), Tidemills' application has been pre-approved by the DfE. The Governors of Tidemill School now have to decide if it is in the best interests of the school, its children and the local community, for Tidemill to become an Academy School.

To help them make the decision, the Governors want to hear your opinion. To help you to decide what you think is best for the school, we have tried to answer some of the most common questions about what becoming an Academy means. The answers we have provided should be the facts. We do not want to influence you one way or the other, but we do want to hear your opinions after you have read the questions and answers. If you do have questions that are not answered here, then please ask. There will be a box in the school office where you will be able to leave your questions. There will also be a second parent's consultation meeting on Thursday 21 October at 7pm where you may wish to ask some of your questions in public.

We want to hear your views on the possibility that Tidemill School could become an Academy School. If you need any help in translating or understanding this document then please contact the office where we will make arrangements to help you.

Please hand your written responses in at the office and mark them as "Private & Confidential - for the Chair of Governors". The last date that the office will accept your responses is Monday 15 November 2010.

French

SVP contacter l'office Si vous avez des difficultes a comprendre se document or vous voulez une traduction.

Arabic

الرجاء لانتظار الإجابة في أوقاتكم هذا ملءة نؤاوترتتجة

Somali

Fadlan laxidhiidh ofiska hidad u baahatahayi in lagu turjumon war qadan

Vietnamese

Nếu mà bạn cần thiết giúp đỡ để dịch là
thứ này. Xin hãy liên lạc với văn phòng nhà
trường

Spanish

Por favor contacte la oficina en caso de necesitar ayuda en la traducción ó interpretación de esta carta

Turkish

Turkce tercumana ihtiyaciniz varsa lütfen ofise basvurun

This consultation document has been prepared by School Governors to help you to form an opinion on whether you would like Tidemill School to become an Academy. We have organised it under the topics that we think should be the most important factors in helping you to form your opinion. The topics are:

- Finance
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Admissions and Term Dates
- Governance
- New Building + Emergency Contingency Plans

At the end of the consultation document is an appendix of questions and answers provided by the Government's DfE. These provide greater detail on some of the issues raised in the Governors consultation document.

Finance.

What happens now?

Central Government, through the DfE provides Local Authorities (LA) with a sum of money each year known as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The LA uses this grant to:

- Fund nursery provision in their area
- Fund individual school budgets
- Provide a range of services for schools such as free school meals entitlement, education welfare services and special educational needs services.

The LA also tops up the funding for its centrally provided services through the Council Tax.

The LA is responsible for setting its own formula for determining each school's fair share of the total money delegated to schools.

After the LA has taken some of the money, the remainder is given to the school to be spent on things such as:

- Computers and Interactive Whiteboards.
- Books.
- Heating and Light.
- Office staff, teaching assistants.
- Building maintenance and cleaning.

The DfE also provides a range of grants to LA's, some of which are for the LA to spend on services that support education and some of which are to be passed on to schools for them decide how best to spend it. The two most important grants for schools are known as the Schools Standards Grants and the Schools Development Grants.

The LA funds the additional support required for children with statements of special educational need. The LA owns all of the schools buildings.

The money paid to the school is accounted for in a set of accounts prepared by office staff. A special committee of the Board of Governors called the Finance Committee, is accountable for how the money is spent and for making sure that the accounts are accurate. The schools' accounts can be inspected by the LA at any time. The last time they were reviewed was June 2010 and the LA inspectors left happy that the accounts were true and accurate.

Tidemill School raises additional money through its work as a National Teaching School and a National Support School (NSS). This money is used to improve the quality of its teaching staff and to provide a better education for its pupils.

What would happen if Tidemill were to become an Academy ?

Academies are funded by the DfE through the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA). If Tidemill were to become an Academy, the YPLA would provide it with a General Allocation Grant (GAG) made up of two components:

- Core funding which is exactly the same as the school would have received from the LA using its funding formula.
- Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) which would be Tidemills' share of the money, based on pupil numbers, which the LA currently spends centrally on those services that the Academy would now be responsible for.

The LACSEG is the additional money that Tidemill would receive in comparison to an LA maintained school. On receipt of this money, Tidemill would need to decide how and where to buy the services that it needs and which are currently supplied by the LA. The school may be able to get those services less expensively than the LA currently charge, or it may have to pay more for them. Because the school would be buying services directly, the quality of the services it receives could improve.

Using the DfE calculator on the internet

(<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/xls/a/academy%20recoupment%20calculator.xls>), the school has calculated that it would receive approximately £229,000 each year in LACSEG funding if it becomes an Academy. Although this is a substantial amount of money, it should not be the only factor considered when making the judgement on whether or not Tidemill should convert.

The Academy would receive School Standards Grants and School Development Grant in the same way as a maintained school.

The LA would continue to commission nursery places and so would fund primary school attached nurseries. The LA also continues to fund support for children with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The work that Tidemill currently does as a National Teaching School (NTS) and a National Support School (NSS) would continue. This work could even expand to raise more money to be used for the benefit of the school, its pupils and its teaching and support staff.

The LA would no longer have the right to inspect the schools accounts at any time. Instead, the school would need to have its accounts audited by a firm of accountants at least yearly.

If Tidemill becomes an Academy, the governing body would undertake to ensure that the terms and conditions for all existing staff remain at least as good as those for staff in equivalent posts in schools which are still bound by national and local agreements.

If Tidemill becomes an Academy, the school buildings and equipment would be owned by a special type of charity called a Trust. A Trust is described in the Governance section of this document.

Things to think about.

- Does it concern me that the LA would have less money to spend on providing shared services to a smaller number of schools in the borough ?
- Do I Trust the Finance Committee to continue to look after the schools money and to make sure that it is used for the benefit of the children if Tidemill becomes an Academy ?
- Is the school big enough to be able to work economically as an Academy and to get good value services for the money it spends ?
- When Tidemill moves into the new school, would it be able to get more money for the benefit of the children, by renting out premises to the community ?

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

What happens now?

The LA has responsibility for assessing pupils and maintaining their statements of SEN. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) of the school has a responsibility to identify pupils that might need additional help and then work with a range of school staff and outside agencies to develop an individual education programme that will help.

The LA has responsibility for pupils with statements. They have to:

- ensure that pupils are appropriately assessed and statemented where necessary;
- fund any individually assigned SEN resources;
- monitor arrangements for SEN pupils in academies, and
- conduct reviews of the statements of children in Academies at least annually.

The school has to comply with the Admissions code and any SEN obligations set by the LA.

What would happen if Tidemill were to become an Academy?

The school would still have to comply with the Admissions Code and any SEN obligations.

The LA would retain responsibility for pupils with statements in an Academy on the same basis as for statemented pupils in maintained schools. They would still have to:

- Ensure that Academy pupils are appropriately assessed and statemented where necessary;
- Consider parents' representations for an Academy to be named on a statement and act reasonably in considering those representations;
- Fund any individually assigned SEN resources;
- Monitor arrangements for SEN pupils in academies, and
- Conduct reviews of the statements of children in Academies at least annually.
- Provide home to school transport (including SEN)
- Monitor SEN provision and educational psychology services in the school.
- Fund pupil referral units
- Fund education out of schools
- Fund education for excluded pupils

If it converted into an Academy, Tidemill would receive a share of funding for other provision in relation to SEN including behaviour support services; licences and subscriptions (for instance for software); therapies and other health related services and education and welfare services.

There are obligations on outstanding schools which convert to academies which are the equivalent to those placed on maintained schools. In practical terms this would require new Academies to:

- Inform parents that their child has SEN and the special educational provision being made;
- An unqualified obligation to admit a child to the school if the school is named in the statement; and
- Appoint a qualified teacher as SEN coordinator (SENCO) and ensure that any new SENCOs would undertake prescribed training.

Existing educational local SEN provision such as the Speech, Language and Communication Unit in the school, would transfer to the Academy subject to LA agreement and TUPE negotiations (this relates to staff transfers).

As Academies are classed as state-funded independent schools. The LA should consider representations to attend the school from parents/carers of SEN children, just as it would for any other independent school.

Academies are required by their funding agreements to consent to being named in a child's statement unless they can demonstrate that admitting the child would be incompatible with the efficient education of other children and that there are no reasonable steps they could take, together with the LA, to prevent the incompatibility.

If Tidemill becomes an Academy, the governing body would retain the ethos of inclusion through which there is a commitment to providing the best possible education for young people of all abilities and backgrounds from our community.

Things to think about.

- Do I believe that if Tidemill converts to an Academy, it would continue to provide SEN services for the community?

Admissions and Term Dates.

What happens now?

Admissions criteria and catchment areas are set by the LA. The Lewisham criteria for allocating school places where there are more applicants than places available in a school are:

1. Children in Public Care
2. In exceptional circumstances there is discretion to admit children on the grounds of their or their family's acute medical or social need for that particular school.
3. Children whose brother or sister is on roll of the school on the closing date for applications
4. Children living nearest to the school.

Term dates are set centrally by the LA. Schools have little or no discretion in changing those dates.

What would happen if Tidemill were to become an Academy?

Admission criteria would continue to be set by the LA using the criteria applied to LA schools. The catchment area of the school would remain the same but the school could extend its catchment area if it felt the need to do so.

The Academy would have the power to set its own term dates if it chose to do so.

Things to think about:

- Would I be inconvenienced if the Academy had different term dates to other local schools?
- Would my children and I be happy to have longer (or shorter) holidays than at present?

Governance.

Governance is about how the school operates and ensures a good quality of education for all its pupils, including those with special needs.

What happens now?

School Governors bring a range of experience and interests from many walks of life. They work closely with others to make good decisions about school aims and policies. Governors work as a team of volunteers who are responsible for making sure the school provides a good quality of education. They do this together with the head teacher, who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school.

Every school has a Governing Body. It should include:

- Parents elected by other parents in the school
- Staff Governors elected by the teaching and non-teaching staff
- Local Authority Governors
- Community Governors appointed by other members of the Governing Body and the head teacher

The number of Governors may vary depending on the school's type or size. Governor appointments are for up to four years.

What would happen if Tidemill were to become an Academy?

The Governing Body would be responsible for establishing an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) would then enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the Academy. The Academy Trust has a strategic role in running the Academy and would be responsible for appointing the Governors to the Governing Body.

The key responsibilities are to:

- Ensure the quality of educational provision
- Challenge and monitor the performance of the Academy
- Manage the Academy Trust's finances and property
- Employ staff

It would be for the members of the Governing Body of the school to decide and agree, in discussion with the Secretary of State, who among them would wish to be members of the Academy Trust and which of them would wish to be Governors of the Academy Trust. It is possible to be both a member and a Governor.

Things to think about:

- Academy governing bodies become the direct employers of staff, have direct health and safety responsibilities, are the school's admission authority and are responsible for ensuring that the school undergoes an external financial audit.
- The DfE model Articles of Association have set a minimum of 3 Governors, but not a maximum, appointed by the Academy Trust. The basic governance model envisioned by the DfE includes 1 Local Authority Governor, a minimum of 2 elected parent Governors, optional staff Governors appointed by the Academy Trust, head teachers. There may also be up to three co-opted Governors appointed by the Governing Body. The Secretary of State may also appoint additional Governors in certain circumstances.
- There is no requirement for Academy schools to have an external sponsor e.g. from outside business, but this is a possibility. Where this is the case, the DfE expect the majority of Governors to be appointed by the sponsor.
- It is likely that the make-up of the Governing Body would be different once converted to Academy status. It may be that many of the same people would be members of the Academy Governing Body. The make-up of the Governing Body of an Academy is determined by its Articles of Association. Model articles can be downloaded to view from DfE Articles of Association.
- As the Academy Trust is a charitable company, the Governors would also be directors and charitable Trustees, and would therefore need to comply with obligations under company and charity law.

New building and Emergency Contingency Plans

What effects would Tidemill becoming an Academy have on the new building?

If Tidemill becomes an Academy, when the new school building is completed it would be handed over to the Academy Trust. The Academy Trust would ask its lawyers to draw up a lease which agrees how the land leases should be divided between the Academy, the Access Point, the Library and the residential accommodation.

What happens if something happens to the building if we become an Academy?

There would be a General Annual Grant that would be paid by the Government to the Academy Trust. This would cover the normal running costs of the Academy including:

- Repairs
- Servicing and maintenance of buildings (including redecoration, heating, plumbing, lighting etc)
- Maintenance of grounds (including boundary fences and walls)
- Cleaning materials and contract cleaning
- Water and sewage
- Fuel and light (including fuel oil, solid and other fuel, electricity and gas)
- Rents

- Rates
- Purchase, maintenance, repairs and replacement of furniture and fittings
- Insurance

If the Academy building suffers damage which means that it cannot be used as a school, the LA would be required to provide facilities for the children to continue their education. This is the same requirement that the LA currently has because its duty is to provide for the children and not the Academy Trust.

Would there be a specific insurance grant to cover for emergencies?

Academies are required to cover insurance at specified minimum levels of cover. They are also eligible to seek an Earmarked Annual Grant from the YPLA (Young People's Learning Agency) for emergencies, in the same way that an LA can pay a maintained school a contingency payment.

PARENTS AND CARERS FEEDBACK FORM

Please let us know your views regarding the possibility that Tidemill School could become an Academy School. If you need to use more than one piece of paper, please ensure that you join them together.

Your written responses should be handed in at the office and marked as "Private & Confidential. For the Chair of Governors".

Please note that the last date the office will accept your responses is Monday 15 November 2010.

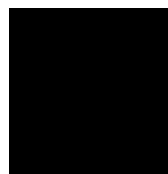
You do not need to tell us your name when providing feedback, but if you do we may contact you to discuss your concerns. To help us to verify that we have representative responses from stakeholders in the community and from staff, parents/carers and other interested parties, please indicate your perspective by ticking the box or boxes that apply, below.

Community

Staff

Parent/Carer

Other



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amends:_resources:Parent and Carer Academy Consultation.doc

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