



**Questions Answered During Spinney Parent Consultations Meetings
Wednesday February 7th 2018**

- **QUESTION: If Mrs. Snape is being referred to already as CEO Designate of the Innovation Trust is the MAT a 'fait accompli'?**
RESPONSES: No there is not fait accompli – we are currently working through a due diligence template covering various aspects of school such as finance, governance, H&S, premises and cultural/reputation. All 3 schools are completing this document. Each aspect of the document will be considered and if there are any areas of concern, in any of the areas, any school can still withdraw from the process.
Mrs Snape is referred to as CEO designate. When completing the academy application forms to send to the DfE we were asked to name a proposed CEO. It was important to make it clear to any schools considering joining the iTrust academy that this is the role she will take on.
We have received an academy order which means we can begin the checks and balance process. This is a theoretical approval to go ahead but we cannot proceed until we have completed the various consultation processes with parents, staff and other stakeholders and completed the due diligence process.
We are keeping The Spinney as our priority throughout the process. Governors keep double checking on whether this is good for The Spinney. There are many legal implications in what is a long and thorough process. We ensured that we shared the same ethos with the other schools wishing to convert with us.
- **QUESTION: Leadership. How do you envisage the leadership structure of the schools to develop and change, especially as the MAT grows? As CEO, will Mrs Snape have less time in The Spinney? If Mrs. Snape is the CEO who is going to be Head of the Spinney? Who will cover her headship jobs and responsibilities when she's not physically present at the school? Do you expect there eventually to be an overall executive head for the MAT and if so, how will their time be spread over the different schools and what will the individual SLTs look like in each school?**
RESPONSES: This has been discussed at length. We want a scenario where The Spinney will continue to work in the same excellent way. This has included discussions at Senior Leadership Team level and in particular with Mr Mawson. But the decision still needs to go through The Spinney Governors and also the iTrust steering group. It is proposed that Mr Mawson would take on the role of 'Head of School' initially be for one day per week. This would take him out of class for one day per week. Mr Mawson already takes on similar duties when Mrs Snape is out of school undertaking National Leader of Education (NLE) functions. It is a little early to provide the detail of this proposal but we aim to reduce the impact on The Spinney as much as possible. As and when it becomes necessary to appoint a permanent Headteacher of The Spinney the position will be advertised externally.

- QUESTION: What is the planned timeframe for Mrs Snape's move from Headteacher of Spinney to CEO of the MAT?**

RESPONSES: We are initially creating a MAT consisting of 3 local Primary Schools. The immediate aim and priority is to harmonise and bed that down. We wish to perform at an optimal level and there is no rush to move forward. We want to get this right. But nothing to stop us looking into the future and this will be considered at the appropriate time.
- And would the plan be to recruit a replacement head for the Spinney or to change the structure of management across the 3 schools potentially sharing Head teacher and/or leadership teams?**

RESPONSES: See response re Mr Mawson above. We currently have no plans to change the structure of the individual schools. We want schools to retain their uniqueness and are not looking to make them all identical just because we are in the same academy.
- QUESTION: With Mrs Snape being nominated as CEO of the potential future MAT, could we understand how her time would be physically split between this demanding role, and her first retained responsibility of headship at the Spinney School?**

RESPONSES: As indicated above, we anticipate that initially Mrs Snape will be performing the CEO role one day per week but the size of the role is unknown at this point in time.
- QUESTION: What are your medium to long term plans once the trust is established - do you plan to attract more schools to join the trust in future?**

RESPONSES: In the medium term we will be bedding down policies and developing and building relationships between the three schools. We will be embedding structures and developing a firm foundation, just joining a trust can take a full year. More long term plans would be for other schools to join us, ideally becoming a MAT of 6 schools as this will make the MAT more financially viable. These are only estimates – things change. Our aim is to drive up standards. We may be asked to take on struggling schools. Q; Could we be forced to take on a school that doesn't fit? The Regional School Commissioner has had to change position on forced academisation. This didn't work. The change means that directors must agree to take on another school for which additional funding would be received. However, growing too quickly could jeopardise the vision. The school that 'requires improvement' may have a good staff base that does fit, it is all about choice.
- QUESTION: Are there other additional roles as well as CEO that will be needed to support the MAT?**

There are additional statutory roles within all academies. One is the CEO role and another is that of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The CFO will be looking at efficiencies, centralising roles and contracts. Other specialist roles may develop perhaps a Dyslexia specialist or an SEND specialist. More and more responsibility has been passed down to the regional schools commissioner. We are looking to share the burden of writing and then reviewing a multitude of policies – why not generate a set of policies that work across the schools? We could have a shared portal of policies. This would initially be a lot of work, but a time saving efficiency for the future. As we progress we may find that other roles are needed. It is all a little unknown at present.
- QUESTION: How will the impact of the additional roles on the payroll budget for the schools be managed?**

RESPONSES: Budgets will still be set at school level. Core functions will be centralised such as HR/Payroll management and Property support. If the MAT grows the top slice grows. Parents will be aware that it is harder and harder to recruit and retain teachers, particularly in Cambridge because of affordability. We hope to create incentives, such as good pay and teacher friendly terms and conditions. The Spinney is a great place to work with compassion at our core. We are aware of teacher workload and have job share positions to give intelligent and talented staff the opportunity to return to work when starting a family. We cannot give them much more money,

but hope to give them wellbeing, job flexibility and a welcoming and warm working environment. We concentrate on the importance of work life balance.

- **QUESTION: I personally would like to be made aware of all potential real risks facing our children, staff and the school, no matter how confident the school might be in its ability to deal with and mitigate these risks. Is there a risk register, and can this be shared with those interested to peruse it?**

RESPONSES: The same risks exist whether running an academy or running a Primary School. We have risk assessments regarding a whole range of activities including fire, pupils in the playground and education visits. This will not change. The risk and audit group of directors will centralise risks and work on them collectively. We are mindful of risks and part of the due diligence process is checking that everything is secure. School finances are evaluated by the DfE. Similarly there are other risks in not converting as well as risks in converting. 40% of Primary Schools are converting and by converting now we can choose our partners and not be swallowed up by a larger, less dynamic academy. We do have a risk register, but we cannot comment on whether this is a public document. We will investigate and advise. We wanted to be a Primary trust with a focus on primary education and not a feeder school to a partner secondary school. We may consider a secondary school in the future but we need to establish this hub first. We will not be paying the CEO and CFO 'Fat cat salaries' Articles of association are at heart of MAT. We will always use out integrity and probity. We have the best interest of all children at all times. We are not looking to make a profit – any that we do make will go back into schools. The due diligence process is in fact a Risk Register covering Finance, premises, health & Safety, governance, performance and assessment and cultural and reputation. We are still highly accountable and will be fixing and capping salaries across the schools. Wages will be scrutinised, it is not a free for all to pay staff whatever we wish. Given the size of our three schools combined we are not in a position to pay exorbitant salaries. The new Cambridgeshire Regional Schools Commissioner comes from a financial background, and not from education.

- **QUESTION: We understand that academies have more flexibility about curriculum and other elements of school life - what are the plans for how you will use this additional flexibility?**
QUESTION: Curriculum. How will the curriculum change as a result of the Trust? Presumably the aim will be to have all schools running the same curriculum so as to optimise staff training opportunities and use of resources?

RESPONSES: We will be able to be more flexible with our curriculum. The National Curriculum outlines specific areas of learning in certain subjects such as history and geography. There may be other areas that we could teach that are equally important and interesting. Teaching staff will be able to investigate alternative methods of teaching and to create partnerships with outside agencies to enrich and develop the curriculum such as ARM or Launchpad. Pupils are more able and capable in creativity and design and technology than previously. We have the opportunity to develop these skills across all subjects. There is huge potential. The curriculum will not change immediately but as we move forward things may change. Such changes will be considered at trust level not always at school level.

QUESTION: Will all schools have to work using the same methods, for example Singapore Maths?

Teachers will try something to see what works. Once we have built stronger relationships between staff we can build trust and teachers will naturally take on new methods. It may be possible to share the skills of specialist teachers who could move between schools, perhaps a dyslexia specialist for example. There are no plans to change the length or timings of the school day. Any changes will not be made without consultation with relevant stakeholders.

- QUESTION: Which independent body will the school be accountable to once it is no longer under the control of the local authority? Will this be local?**

RESPONSES: Individual Schools will be accountable to the MAT directors, as well as the DfE and Ofsted. The National Schools Commissioner and Regional Schools Commissioners work with school leaders to take action in underperforming schools. Half of the directors are from local schools so have recognised accountability. Schools will be accountable to the directors.
- QUESTION: The role of the director is an unpaid position but will be tackling some of the role of the LA, but we paid the Local Authority. Do Mrs Snape and other leaders feel this is fair?**

RESPONSES: Directors knew that this was a voluntary role before the applied. The priority was always to invest in the MAT and to appoint directors with the right skills and expertise. Directors are aware of their legal liabilities; they need to have a passion for education and equality for all children. Whether it is fair was not a consideration.
- QUESTION: Please can we have clarification on how funding will work, and how funds will be allocated to the individual schools? Will there be any additional funding to recruit more TAs?**

RESPONSES: We are currently working with solicitors regarding funding streams. Schools will pay a 3% central contribution to the MAT so that new centralised functions such as the CEO role can exist. This is a similar amount that we currently pay to the local authority. The funding will be the same budget funding as currently. The 3% allows for economies of scale. The other schools are larger than us. All schools struggling financially and creating the Mat will not suddenly give us better finances. We are not expecting a windfall. There are no immediate plans to make staff changes.
- QUESTION: What will happen to wrap around care?**

RESPONSES: There will be no change to this provision.
- QUESTION: Administration. You say that there will be 'centralised administration'. Does this mean support staff will be shared between the schools? What effect will that have on the day to day administrative running of each school?**

RESPONSES: There will be centralised administration, mainly around finances. Office staff will remain the same. The CEO and CFO are additional positions.
- QUESTION: Curriculum. How will the curriculum change as a result of the Trust? Presumably the aim will be to have all schools running the same curriculum so as to optimise staff training opportunities and use of resources?**

RESPONSES: See response above
- QUESTION: Contracts. Will the existing staff be guaranteed the same contracts as they currently have?**

RESPONSES: All staff will be TUPE'd over to new contract with the MAT. All terms and conditions will remain the same. Staff will not be asked to move between schools but contracts for new members of staff will have a mobility clause incorporated within.
- QUESTION: What will happen if in the future a new government changes their ideas on academies and revert back to more traditional school/LA set up? Can we pull out if in a few years this doesn't work?**

RESPONSES: It has been identified that academies have been a hot topic for some time now. Governors considered The Spinney converting to an academy 5 year ago, but decided that the time was not right. It was felt that it was unlikely to change now with all secondary schools in Cambridgeshire and 40% of Primary Schools converting to date. However, if this were to happen it is probable that schools would then be given an alternative option by the DfE. Schools can move from one MAT to another but cannot stop being an academy. This is an opportunity for us to

choose to convert with partner schools of our choosing rather than be chosen and swallowed up. This way we can keep the Spinney way of working.

- **QUESTION: Will parents/children see any tangible differences?**

RESPONSES: No not really. We will be sharing expertise from staff across the schools. Over time parents and children will see some wonderful opportunities for exciting adventures. As part of the Kite Teaching School we have been able to take part in some exciting events such as The STEAM festival and The Big Read & Write. These will continue and will create a better sense of a larger community. There are many strengths within each school.