

Equals Trust Consultation Response

Thank you for your responses to the consultation which closed on 26 April. We received 3 emails asking a range of questions - please find the answers below.

Your question	Governors' response
Will joining a Trust change the priority from education to business?	No, the reason we have decided to join a Trust at this point is to improve the educational opportunities of our pupils and also to continue to build on our strengths. Our focus remains firmly on education and the Trust will support us in this.
Will there be compulsory branded uniforms?	No. Equals Trust (EQ) has no corporate branding - we will not change our name, our uniform or anything relating to our identity as Round Hill Primary School.
Will staff be paid less?	No. As now, we will still adhere to the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) recommendations.
Will land be sold off?	No. Although land and buildings will be transferred from the Local Authority (LA) to the MAT, they will be held in trust. MATs are bound by strict trust regulation to ensure that all decisions made are in the best interests of the schools which they serve.
How will the Head Teacher's time be divided when he is employed by the Trust and will hold a leadership position within it?	The Head Teacher will be working only for Round Hill, not for ET. His time will not be divided. He will not hold a leadership position within the Trust other than as the group of Heads, but will attend regular meetings with other Trust heads to discuss priorities and needs with the Executive. This ensures that Heads can influence how money is spent to meet their schools' priorities.
Can the Trust dismiss or control the Governing Body?	The Local Governing Body (LGB) will be a key part of the Trust's communication with the school, just as it currently is with the LA. We will continue to appoint our own governors with a mix of parents, staff and people from the local community. In extreme circumstances, the Trust could dismiss the LGB, but this power also rests with LAs.

We could lose SEND, School Improvement and Speech and Language support when we leave the LA.	This is one of the reasons we are recommending moving to ET. Over the last few years, as LA funding has been cut, good schools like ours have lost all of these services as LAs have had to focus on struggling schools. So there will be more support, not less - ET, for example, has recently employed a S&L therapist for its schools. They have a dedicated School Improvement Lead who is readily available and who supports the Trust schools very effectively.
What do staff think? Are they being consulted?	As required, we have consulted with all stakeholders, including staff.
Will pay and conditions be changed?	No. Staff contracts will move from LA to ET with a regulated TUPE transfer.
Why do this now, instead of waiting for a change of government and improved LA funding.	The drive towards academisation has been ongoing for many years and there is no suggestion that this will change. The majority of secondary schools and half of all primary schools are now in a MAT, so LA funding will continue to decline. We are recommending this change now, while we can control the process and make our own choice of MAT.
What is different now from the decision 4 years ago not to join a MAT?	The reasons for considering academisation have not changed, but the education landscape has changed considerably around us in the last 4 years. We have listened to parents' view, along with all other stakeholders, and it is clear that the decision is now very widely supported.
It's important to remain true to our values and identity and not just follow the majority.	We completely agree. ET aligns very closely with our values at Round Hill and our identity will remain distinct.
Open communication and discussion have not been enabled.	There were 2 meetings for parents, together with an online consultation which was well publicised and open for several weeks, so we are happy that there was ample opportunity for discussion.
There are already 12 schools in the Trust. Adding another will require more Trust staff.	The government recommendation for the size of trusts is 10,000 pupils. ET has clear plans in place to grow the Trust and its staff only with schools which identify with its core values in order to protect its unique identity.

<p>This will create too much admin for the Head and Governors.</p>	<p>The amount of admin will not change.</p>
<p>How will the 6.2% budget payment benefit the school? Why not continue managing school finances independently instead of paying this money to a Trust?</p>	<p>We already purchase services to run the school so this is simply making a different choice about where we purchase those services. Because ET Heads meet regularly with the Executive, we will actually have more influence over the services which are purchased, based on our needs.</p>
<p>The ET Board of Trustees is not elected by votes from schools, so trustees could be biased.</p>	<p>The appointment of a Board of Trustees is transparent and is governed by the Trust's articles of association which state how many trustees can be appointed within each category, based on their skills and experience. The Board will include governors from LGBs, is representative of the community of schools with the Trust and bound by the same rules of impartiality as LA governors.</p>