



Balcombe CofE Primary School Hurst Education Trust (HET) FAQs Update

In all that we do we are guided by God

This document sets out responses to questions raised during the consultation process

- 1. Timing: what are the timescales and next steps? How does the process work - what happens after the consultation closes?**

In brief, the process of detailed due diligence will continue, and the legal process will start. The target date for conversion will be during the latter half of the summer term. The aim is to reduce the impact on the staff or leadership at the school and the Trust will complete most of the activities, keeping the community updated as required.

- 2. Staffing: Balcombe is known for its wonderful teachers and slow turnover of staff - but moving to academy status, with any new staff coming in on different (non-TUPE) terms and conditions, could create a two-tier system, and cause staff tensions. Could there be financial pressure from the trust to recruit cheaper, more inexperienced staff - in contrast to the school's current example? And would continuation of service be recognised for any teaching staff incoming from other trusts/LAs? And can we see the Trust's pay scales and how they compare the LA ones? I feel all this is vital in ensuring/recruiting experienced, skilled and happy school staff.**

The Trust absolutely agrees. There is no two-tier system, and all staff are on the same terms and conditions. Continuity of service is maintained for all new staff joining, and pay scales are the same as national (teachers) or West Sussex (support staff.) The priority when recruiting new staff will always be on selecting the strongest candidate.

- 3. The FAQs outline what the trust offers, but not the reasons for leaving the local authority - are there particular issues/problems in the services currently coming from the LA? What are these? The FAQs also mention that it could be cheaper to get these services from the Trust, despite the fee - but how much modelling has been done? Could it be/become more expensive, too? Can the trust increase its fee/charge additional costs to the school, down the line?**

Due to financial constraints the support the Local Authority is able to provide to schools is diminishing. This has impacted on the services including school improvement support, Continued Professional Development for staff and Human Resources. We strongly believe that joining HET will provide our staff and children with opportunities that are not currently available to us and are unlikely to be available in the future if we remain with the LA. Financial modelling has taken place comparing our current LA fees with the Trust fees. In the same way that the LA authority can increase its fees any trust can also increase theirs. Whilst the Local Authority charges are currently anticipated to increase at a higher rate than our core funding, the HET fee (being a fixed percentage of core funding) won't. HET are committed to maintaining their fee at 3%, any increase will be made in consultation with member schools and for the purpose of increasing the services provided.

- 4. I note there's no opportunity to demonstrate parent/carer support/show that we would not like this to go ahead, and we can only submit questions at this stage. Will there be any chance to share our overall opinion on conversion at any point?**

Yes, details will be circulated on 20th October.

5. What impact will there be on SEND pupils?

Please see paragraphs 11, 24 and 27 of the previous FAQ document