



Friday 28th January 2022.

Dear Parents and Families

Thank you to those of you who have contributed to our consultation, attended the Drop-In sessions in school, asked us questions, shared support - and challenged us. We are an 'Everybody' school and we value all your feedback.

Please find the answers to all the questions so far raised by yourselves as parents, and others' as part of our agreed consultation process update.

Our consultation, ends at midnight, Monday 7th February, so please do continue to talk to us in school, ask questions to Governors via consultation@stockbridgevillageprimary.co.uk or share any concerns with us. Governors and school leaders are reviewing this email account daily for questions and feedback.

A Full Governors Meeting will take place on Tuesday 8th February, as previously shared, to discuss the consultation, review any final feedback, and vote on the proposal to academise or remain with the Local Authority.

If Governors vote to move forwards with conversion, this is still subject to an application and agreement from the DfE, and then from the Regional Schools' Commissioner.

Andrea Curran
Head Teacher

Sue Dunphy
Chair of Governors

Bill Weightman
Vice Chair of Governors

**Below are Parent Responses and answers provided to date:
My comments**

What changes may happen due to moving to an academy?

Most of the changes will not be noticed by children and our families as the Trust we have chosen believes in local solutions for local schools. There will be administrative changes to our financial systems, which we see as a great benefit for running our school better.

We will add the CAT logo to our school website, on our letter head etc so that people understand we are part of a Trust; Mrs Curran may become known as the 'Principal' rather than the label "head teacher" but nothing else about the leadership role or pay will change – this will be decided by school Governors and the Trust in partnership.

We are not planning any changes to :

- **Our Uniform**
- **Our SVP Name**

- **The Length / times of the school day**
- **How we organise term times**
- **Day to day running of our school from a parental perspective**
- **Our core practices and vision**
- **Our curriculum design**

My comments

I think it would be a really good thing for our children's school to go into academy.

What will be the pros and cons of joining as an academy trust?

Will it benefit our children?

Yes – we have carefully selected a Trust that is highly child-centred and works hard to develop great teachers. This includes opportunities for teachers across their schools to work in hubs and learn from each other. This means our staff will always be learning, reflecting and improving – and we know from research that this is the fastest and best way to improve schools for the benefit of children.

We anticipate doing joint projects together, and visiting schools with children as two of the CAT schools have fabulous outdoor spaces which includes fully developed Forest School.

Will the SEN funding be affected?

No – provision for children with SEND in schools is funded by a national formula in the same way it is now. This gives us a 'notional SEND' budget but not based on individual children. For children with higher level needs, there is a High Needs block that all Councils receive from the DfE as they remain statutorily responsible for children on an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Will it be a positive for our school? Teachers ? And children? –

We have looked extensively at the benefits of joining a Trust – and choosing our own – and undertaken due diligence when we look in detail at a vast range of information. We believe that on balance, the education of our children, now and in the future, is best served by joining with a group of schools who work together like a strong family to support each other over time.

Will the children's interests, individual talents be encouraged and more focus out on different subjects less target focused?

As an academy, we can choose whether we teach the National Curriculum. However, as we still have to undertake national assessments (SATs), we will need to teach much of the content of the NC. But, we can choose aspects to privilege over others.

As you know, we believe as a school that 'character' is as important as mastering knowledge and skills and producing high quality work, in all our lives – so we will ensure that our curriculum ensures that our vision is not led by external pressures, such as Ofsted inspection framework or the National Curriculum, supported by a Trust with the same beliefs.

Will it enable more experiences and in practical skills not just academic ?

Yes. We are continuously reviewing our curriculum and will keep creating opportunities for varied experiences and to develop skills. Some of this will be helped by working closely with other great schools – which the schools in CAT certainly are too.

Will parents local community still have a voice?

Yes – CAT enables a great deal of decision making to be delegated to the 'local Governing board', which would be made up from parents, community members and staff – as it is now as a Governing Body.

Be fully included in school community?

Yes – CAT believes in local solutions for local schools and is a very inclusive, community minded Trust.

What are the reasons for changing and joining to an academy?

Academisation has been supported by both Labour and Conservative governments.

The current Education White Paper and Secretary of State for Education has made the direction of travel for all schools to be in a Trust, in the near future, very clear, and has told Local Authorities to expect this.

The Governors at SVP wish to make our own, robust choice about conversion, especially as the Arch Diocese of Liverpool have established their own MAT for some Catholic schools and many Knowsley Borough Catholic schools are in the Arch Diocese of Liverpool. As the only school on Stockbridge Village not in the Arch Diocese, the Governors have taken a balanced and bold decision to positively design the school's next steps.

There are many other reasons, so we will share the most interesting and hopefully relevant for families:

- To improve the quality of school improvement in all areas and in terms of both support and challenge, so that our children receive an exceptional education.
- To improve the quality of school to school collaboration and systems thinking at both strategic and teacher level.
- To have direct involvement in the design of school reform systems across the Trust that supports us improving.
- To improve the quality and quantity of Governor CPD and support and challenge.
- To develop an approach to the reporting and practice of data collection and collation that not only evaluates impact but develops child-engaged assessment models and contributes to our school improvement.
- To design improved practice for teacher standardisation exercises and moderation for national standards in Reading, Writing and Maths. Research strongly indicates this impacts directly on teacher expectations and subject knowledge. Done well, in small learning networks, it can also improve teaching practice as teacher to teacher knowledge is most effective in this context.
- To improve the quality of school evaluation – how we judge ourselves accurately so that we never become .
- To work with schools aligned to the vision and values at SVP and learn from their strengths
- To work with a range of schools from differing and similar communities, designing in social equity factors into all aspects of school development at SVP – social equity is a core purpose of our curriculum and vision
- SVP Governors have a number of long-term development plans, for the benefit of the school's community (details of which we are currently unable to share more widely). The governing body do not feel they are fully able to support/challenge/deliver these projects without additional input

My Comments

I agree with Staff's point of view.

My Comment

If the staff and school feel that changing to academy is the best thing then I will go with this as I feel the staff know what's best for the children and school.

My Comment

I agree with the staff's point of view.

My Comment

I am just wondering what would be the key differences in the curriculum and how will this impact the children? What other changes may happen with in the school once joining Cheshire academy if any?

One of the reasons we have chosen this MAT is because they do not dictate to the schools in their trust how their curriculum should look. They really like our curriculum model and are looking forward to working with us. We are looking forward to developing more opportunities for our children by working with them to learn more about how they use their Forest School provision and to be able to visit and use it, we are also excited to learn more about a programme they use called Opal to support play opportunities for younger children. We did a lot of work before selecting CAT to make sure that we had shared values and ideas around curriculum so there should not be any noticeable changes for your children. In terms of other changes, CAT do not dictate on the operational aspects of the school so uniform will remain as it is, our website and app and use of Seesaw will remain as it is.

My Comment

I would like to say I agree with what the school and governors are proposing with the approach towards becoming a academy. I think the school should have more say with regards to curriculum and funding plus the added bonus of joining with other schools who have done the same process and seem to be thriving and sharing resources. I believe the school have the best interests of the children at heart and this decision is the right one for our children.

My Comment

After reading the letter I have no concerns or queries. I fully trust Mrs Curran and the school governors in their decisions and believe any decisions made will be in the best interests of everyone. The benefits of being in a academy listed on the letter seem really positive and again I trust the school leadership to do what they feel is best

What influence or involvement with governors and Head at SVP have if other schools wanted to join CAT?

CAT organise their Trust structures based on local decisions for local schools, so the local governing board and Head at SVP maintain high levels of decision making and can therefore influence the impact on our school. We have checked the Growth Plan of CAT, and had their finances checked by an external auditor and we are assured that any growth will be slow, small and always in the interests of their Trust schools.

If CAT grow too big, what impact would that have on our children's learning and experiences?

We have carefully checked CATs growth strategy and plans and feel confident they do not intend to be a large MAT. They have a plan to grow slowly to approximately 15 schools in hubs. We have also chosen a smaller, primary only MAT so that the uniqueness of primary education does not get lost within a secondary led MAT. And we have chosen a smaller MAT so that we can influence all future decision-making.

My child has access to one to one support, would the funding for this be affected?

No. Children with SEND are currently supported within the school budget and this will continue. Children with an EHCP are funded by something called the High Needs Block which come to the LA from the DfE directly; and the LA have statutory responsibility for children with an EHCP, whether they are in an Academy or LA maintained school.

Will school meals be improved to ensure a healthy food promoted at all times?

Our school meals are in fact, really great – balanced and healthy with fresh fruit, salad, vegetables daily. Our kitchen staff are really quite wonderful and we review quality regularly. Children can also bring their own healthy packed lunch.

Would children still have access to the local library and pools as they do now through school?

Absolutely yes. No change with any experiences such as this for the children.

Will there be more options to look at outside learning provision for the children – due to the limited outdoor area – will there be fund available to enhance learning in such spaces?

CAT have a very good track record at securing enhancement bids which we currently cannot access as a LA school. We are hopeful that in the future, we can greatly improve our yard and play space with grants.

What will happen to the current governing body if school agree to join CAT?

The current Governors remain the same. The only Governors post that is not transferred is the Local Authority representative on the local governing body of an Academy. However, CAT recommend that this Governor role is transferred to a Co-opted Governor and remains on the local Governing Board.

Will staff at school remain the same or will they move to other schools?

They will remain the same – CAT do not force staff to move between schools

Example Staff Responses:

'I, as a member of staff, am excited by a future for SVP working with and collaborating on projects under the guidance of CAT. The schools I have visited, who are part of the trust, have been hubs of learning, very child centred and open and welcoming to SVP.

I don't feel the unions have been impartial and listened to staff at all, rather than be helpful and supportive they have been intimidating and divisive.'

'I talk to parents every day on the classroom door and those I have spoken with fully support the school and trust the staff to make the right decisions for the future. It is comforting to know staff have the parents support.'

'I think this is an excellent proposal and completely trust the governor and staff working party. I have completed my own research into the academy and been fortunate to visit two of their schools. I think this is an excellent academy that aligns with our vision for continuous school improvement. I firmly believe this will only have a positive impact on our children and community and believe their ethos aligns with our own. I love working at SVP, I am passionate about our children and securing the best opportunities for them. I believe an academy could offer us support in doing this, not all academies, but I feel CAT does.'

Local Councillor Consultation Questions and Governors Answers:

Could information be shared regarding the work undertaken by staff and governors to determine the advantages of a MAT for local children, families and staff? Particularly how this is different to the valued support provided to date by the LA.

Academisation has been supported by both Labour and Conservative governments. The current White Paper and Secretary of State for Education has made the direction of travel for all schools to be in a Trust in the near future, very clear. The Governors at SVP wish to make our own, robust choice about conversion, especially as the Arch Diocese of Liverpool have established a MAT for some of their schools and many schools in Knowsley are Arch Diocesan of Liverpool schools. As the only school on Stockbridge Village not in the Arch Diocese, the Governors have taken a balanced and bold decision to positively design the school's next steps.

- To improve the quality of school improvement in all areas and in terms of both support and challenge.
- To improve the quality of school to school collaboration and systems thinking at both strategic and teacher level.
- To have direct involvement in the design of school reform systems across the Trust.

- To improve the quality and quantity of Governor CPD and support and challenge.
- To develop an approach to the reporting and practice of data collection and collation that not only evaluates impact but develops child engaged assessment models and contributes to our school improvement.
- To design improved practice models for teacher standardisation exercises and moderation for national standards. Research strongly indicates this impacts directly on teacher expectations and subject knowledge. Done well, in small learning networks, it can also improve teaching practice as teacher to teacher knowledge is most effective in this context.
- To improve the quality of school evaluation.
- To work with schools aligned to the vision and values at SVP and learn from their strengths
- To work with a range of schools from differing and similar communities, designing in social equity factors into all aspects of school development at SVP – social equity is a core purpose of our curriculum and vision
- CAT's financial framework and systems will provide SVP Governors and staff with detailed, 'live', financial data and forecasts, that are not available to us via local authority systems. This means that the governing body will have a level of in-sight and accuracy to support decision making and budget setting in a way they do not currently. This increased level of control will support governors in providing deeper critical strategic challenge, to SVP's short- and longer-term spending plans.
- This also relates to the balance of direct control over strategic decisions taken at Trust level, with consultation at local board level vis-à-vis a Schools Forum annual questionnaire and de-delegated budget which is at the behest of the collective of 60+ schools.
- In terms of capital funding, we will be able to apply to the EFA for ensuring our building continues to be well maintained and potentially rectify some long standing latent defects in the building from 10 years ago.
- Teacher development as part of the CAT Hub Groups and access to the CLTA – Cheshire Learning and Teaching Alliance - CAT Teaching School.
- Governance development with the support of a professional clerk and CPD from the Chair of CAT Trustees who is a regional and national NLG trainer
- VFM – relates to our experience of cost versus effectiveness and quality of service across a range of SLA's we currently utilise. Not all consideration is about 'saving' money, but rather developing good financial probity and VFM, balancing cost vis-à-vis quality of service.
- Benefits from working directly with an experienced Director of Operations and Finance. Improved financial systems using live data, non-cheque book, support and challenge.

Could some information be shared about how CAT were selected and what specifically about them led to this arrangement?

Our Process for coming to the proposal and consultation is as follows -

In January 2021, the Governors decided to explore the potential and opportunity of joining a MAT.

This is not the first time the school has considered this option, and indeed has explored forming a new Trust in the past under previous leadership.

However, the educational landscape is very different now and joining an established MAT is lower risk than creating a new Trust.

Phase 1

Openly and transparently, staff were informed in January 2021 of the Governors intent to informally explore options and all staff members were invited to participate in the process. 14 staff members volunteered to join a joint Governor and Staff Working Party when this was offered. Every type of role in SVP was represented, with 5 staff members included.

A desktop analysis was undertaken by leaders in the school, using the following high level criteria:

- Reading, Writing, Maths outcomes at KS2 at Trust level nationally – DfE data with at least 2/3 above national outcomes.
- Cultural Alignment to SVP from vision, values & purpose statements on websites
- Contextual information such as schemes of delegation to local board
- UTS %
- Primary-only MAT preferred

This established a working 'long list' of 46 Trusts, including all local Trusts operating in Knowsley.

The Joint Working Party reduced this long list to a short list of 9, then 3 after reviewing Trust papers, websites and schemes of delegation. From this group of three shortlisted Trusts, the working party selected two to explore further. This involved visiting 9 schools across two Trusts and two presentations to the working party from Trust leaders.

Phase 2

In Sept 2021, the Working Party made their collective and unanimous recommendations to Governors who took the decision to move to Phase 2 and undertake due diligence on a preferred Trust.

CAT was selected after the working party visited all their schools, talking with staff, attending staff hub meetings, and at all times, verifying their stated vision: *"To grow our community of unique academies in order to deliver collaborative approaches to school improvement while providing rich, creative experiences for children to enjoy and remember"* by triangulating their core practices, CAT commitment, evidence of impact within their schools and asking questions.

Consultation phase

At the end of due diligence, and following a risk and mitigation exercise, the Governors made the decision to start a formal consultation process, assured that benefits to SVP joining CAT are real and actionable

How will CAT understand our local context and the needs of Stockbridge children. Looking on their website their schools have a very different population to ours, lots of schools have low free school meal and SEND populations. What due diligence have Governors done to be confident that they will understand and prioritise the needs of some of our most vulnerable children?

We understand there have been questions raised regarding the 'demographic suitability' of CAT vis-à-vis SVP. We find this concern problematic on many levels. **Our children are no less than any other children – anywhere.**

However, the Working Party sought very early on in our process, the assurance that CAT Trustees and CEO understand school context, deprivation factors and the potential impact of disadvantage on children – and the context for staff in terms of judgements about performance and challenges.

CAT is aware that the challenges are varied and there is no "one size fits all" for any school, anywhere. We are all mindful and agreed that a child on PPG may not be disadvantaged, and a disadvantaged child may not be experiencing poverty. We strive to know our children well, to make connections through our relationships and meet their needs – this is aligned with CAT values and practices. CAT's PPG 'diminishing the difference' performance is variable, as it Knowsley's schools 4 year trend within EYFS-KS2, compared to national from 2016-19.

We also interrogated understanding of SEND as part of due diligence. One CAT school has **more** children than SVP with an Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP) and one school in the Trust is in Quintile 1 for Pupil Premium, well above the national average **and** the same quintile nationally as SVP. We believe that working in partnership with the quintile 1 school and others' in the Trust, that we can all benefit from our own and others' expertise.

For information, social equity is the key premise of our curriculum design and our vision. We use EEF, Visible Learning research and Unity School Partnership research to tackle disadvantage systemically. All this research is clear that social disadvantage is tackled most effectively with a mastery approach and marshalling the 'peer effect' – i.e. ensuring children from a range of demographics mix, enrich each other's

perspective and create peer influence, academically. The peer effect also raises teacher expectations, as reported for decades in research. We are also committed to sharing exemplars across CAT schools to enable our children and staff to have a vision of progress, excellence and support school development to achieve higher % for Greater Depth in attainment terms.

Many CAT staff have also worked in innumerable schools and therefore have a diverse experience of working to tackle disadvantage.

As part of due diligence, the Trust are clear that as a school, we privilege disadvantage in everything we do and organise our whole school structures and budget to optimise educational equity.

The Trust looks like it has grown in recent times, what due diligence have governors done to be confident they are ready for a new and very different school?

As part of our due diligence, and following a risk and mitigation exercise, the Governors are assured that the CAT Trust Growth Plan is both viable and credible, with the Trust's financial context verified by an external auditor for SVP Governors. CAT have an 'intentional growth' plan and are growing slowly compared to many other sponsor Trusts, potentially converting two schools in Merseyside this year.

What do you see the benefits for Stockbridge children of the direct control over funding you talk about in the letter and how is this different from how you manage your budget now? Is there a danger that the Trust takes away local control of funding? Is there a cost to joining the Trust, a top slice if so what is this?

No. The Scheme of Delegation at CAT is very local school biased, with most decision making taken at Local Governing Board level.

In terms of budget:

CAT's financial framework and systems will provide SVP Governors and staff with detailed, 'live', financial data and forecasts, that are not available to us via local authority systems. This means that the governing body will have a level of in-sight and accuracy to support decision making and budget setting in a way they do not currently. This increased level of control will support governors in providing deeper critical strategic challenge, to SVP's short- and longer-term spending plans.

For the past two financial years, the LA system has resulted in substantial errors in our outturn budgets, (at LA end) requiring weeks of investigation by our school business manager to rectify, and could have resulted in the loss of £62.5k in our school budget; for our children.

In terms of capital funding, we will be able to apply to the EFA for ensuring our building continues to be well maintained and potentially rectify some long standing latent defects in the building from 10 years ago.

This also relates to the balance of direct control over strategic decisions taken at Trust level, with consultation at local board level vis-à-vis a Schools Forum annual questionnaire and de-delegated budget which is at the behest of the collective of 60+ schools.

What role will Governors have in future decisions for the school and what will local representation look like on the new board? How will the needs of local children and families be protected?

CATs Scheme of Delegation is a 'low central control / high local school' delegation scheme. Local Governors will remain the same at SVP, so local children and our families will be strongly represented, as they are now. This was one of our key criteria for selecting CAT as a Trust.

What are the benefits of the entrepreneurial projects and the use of trading subsidiaries for the children at the school and what does this mean and how is it different from what you can do now

SVP Governors have a number of long-term development plans, for the benefit of the school and the wider community (details of which we are currently unable to share more widely). The governing body do not feel they are fully able to support/challenge/deliver these projects without additional

input. It is clear through CAT's collaboration structures, historical and current developments in their existing academies, that this is an area in which they can support SVP and its governing body.

Can I be provided with some examples of how the conversion will give better value for money for the children at the school and how will staff, children and families be protected in this?

The Central Services provided by CAT are:

- school improvement programme.
- safeguarding programme including CPOMs systems
- training programme for school leaders and governors (School Improvement, Governance, Financial Management, Ofsted Preparation, GDPR etc)
- financial leadership,
- financial administration and support including payroll and pension administration,
- HR administration and support,
- Civica HR system
- support with organisational change management,
- provision of clerking services/governance professional,
- provision of HR and Legal Business Partner,
- Data Protection Officer and framework for meeting GDPR requirements (including training for staff and governors)
- support with capital improvement including estates management and capital bids
- provision of systems including accounting and budgeting software,
- annual internal and external audit via reputable audit firms
- annual attendance at Inspiring Leadership Conference for SLT members
- business use insurance for staff travelling on school business

The central services offer from CAT is not directly comparable to services SVP receives currently from the LA. Local Authority quality of services across a range of our school development work is highly variable from SVP experience and perspective, so value for money: quality of service is a key consideration for Governors.

Governors have considered the total cost of services from the LA and the cost of the services provided by CAT, as part of the due diligence process. Currently CAT charges 5.5% of GAG, per annum, to its academies. Due to the increased amount of funding SVP receives via deprivation factors in the formula, CAT recognises that a flat rate charge would unfairly increase the cost of being a CAT member to SVP, in comparison to its existing academies. CAT has confirmed that it will introduce a 'cost per pupil cap' at its next revision of its UTS (Summer 2022) to ensure central charges are met equitably across all of its academies. Based on the current SVP budget, the current UTS charge and estimated 'cap' reduction. SVP would expect to see a saving of £2-4k per annum, by joining CAT.

	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
CAT UTS Cost	44,850	44,850	44,850
Less SLA Charges	34,986	35,511	36,043
Less Expenditure Reduction	12,646	13,009	13,378
Total Saving as CAT Academy	- 2,782	- 3,670	- 4,571

Current Budget Forecast SVP Primary	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Delegated Budget	1,072,322	1,088,086	1,088,086
Pupil Premium	156,870	156,870	156,870
Other Income	198,161	168,161	168,161
TOTAL INCOME	1,427,353	1,413,117	1,413,117
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,433,093	1,409,659	1,414,743

In-year deficit	-5,740	3,458	-1,626
Cumulative Balance brought Forward	9,705	3,965	7,423
Total Cumulative balance	3,965	7,423	5,797

CAT Budget Forecast SVP Primary	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
GAG	1,075,868	1,091,575	1,091,206
Pupil Premium	156,870	156,870	156,870
Other Income	198,161	168,161	168,161
TOTAL INCOME	1,430,899	1,416,606	1,416,237
Original Forecast Expenditure	1,433,093	1,409,659	1,414,743
Net CAT Saving	-2,782	-3,670	-4,571
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,430,311	1,405,989	1,410,172
In-year deficit	588	10,617	6,066
Cumulative Balance brought Forward	9,705	3,965	7,423
Total Cumulative balance	10,293	14,582	13,489
<i>Variance to original balance b/fwd</i>	6,328	7,159	7,692

Really positive to see partnership with local schools continue but what about the LA and elected members, what will that relationship look like after conversion?

We will continue to work in partnership with both the LA and our collaborative of Central schools– as several other primary and secondary academies do now, including Knowsley Lane as our closest Academy school.

We would continue to positively interact with any elected members.

What SLA arrangements that are currently with the Council might the school keep, thinking about the impact of employment for local people?

Kitchen staff and cleaning SLA's – we greatly value the local people who work in our school under Knowsley contracts. However, like every school we review all SLA's annually as school budgets are tight,

There are a range of other SLA's that we have reviewed since 2018, when the current school leadership team started with an inherited deficit budget and some of these were not good quality LA services, and therefore not value for money for our school when spending on our children is the priority.

Financial probity for the future is a priority for the school and many aspects of the school's practice has, and will continue to be reviewed with a view to ensuring the on-going good leadership of the school's budget in the future.

Academy trusts are not businesses, but must run on business lines. This doesn't mean that the objective is to maximise financial surpluses. Financial performance is simply an enabler of the prime objective: the excellent education of young people. However, poor financial health inevitably results in a reduced ability to produce that outcome. In particular, successive deficit budgets will eventually produce a situation where unpleasant choices must be made.

The expertise of working alongside a dedicated Director of Finance and Operations in the Trust is viewed by Governors as a mitigation against risk.

Could some information be shared on the changes 'behind the scenes' and some examples of what they mean for children and staff at the school?

Changes that effect school will be administrative in terms of management systems and systems which CAT need for consistency in reporting e.g. attainment, reports for governors.

We are not changing the following:

- Our school name
- Our Uniform
- The Length, times of the school day
- How we currently organise school terms and holidays
- Our core practices and vision
- Our curriculum design

In terms of staff:

Under the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment) regulations, SVP staff are entitled to the same terms and conditions as they had before the transfer. A new employer may propose taking 'measures' as part of the TUPE process, which would change existing work practices. This could include terms of employment, policies and procedures, pay rates, job descriptions, hours of work etc.

CAT is not proposing to take any measures during the TUPE process and intends to maintain all local arrangements.

It is not unusual for staff to request measures as part of the TUPE consultation. An example of this in previous CAT conversions, is teaching staff requesting a change to their pay arrangements – that when a pay day fell on a weekend or bank holiday, they would be paid on the last working day before, rather than the last working day after. In this case, CAT consulted with staff, who requested this change unanimously, and took this as a measure as part of TUPE. Should staff at SVP wish to consult on changes throughout the TUPE consultation CAT will listen to and consider all requests.

It is CAT's intention to maintain local arrangements, including current terms and conditions, for employees appointed **after** the conversion date and not to impose any alternative arrangements.

On the date of conversion, all CAT policies and procedures will be applicable at SVP, providing there are no material differences. Where policies and procedures are materially different, current SVP policies will remain in place by way of local agreement and form part of the on-going policy consultation process in place in CAT.

This will be agreed in consultation with school leaders, the governing body, Professional associations and Knowsley HR officers, as part of the conversion process.

Will unions be consulted and how will their views shape the decision?

Yes, they are being consulted.

No, their views do not directly shape the decision.

However, the views of their members, our staff, have shaped and will continue to shape this diligent process of decision making, which has been open, transparent and consultative with them since informally started in January 2021. We also informed the LA when the informal phase became an agreed part of our school improvement strategy in September.

What will happen if parents and staff oppose the decision to join this MAT?

This is a consultation process.

As you are aware, the over-whelming majority of staff at SVP support the conversion, subject to the Governor decision and TUPE consultation.

The staff at SVP issued their own independent letter and self-signed, to the community of our families after the TU's misrepresented them in wording shared in the public domain on their JTU leaflets as having 'grave concerns' about the proposed conversion – and on the Joint Trade Union Unions Petition quoting 'parents and staff'.

This has then been widely shared by political groups linked to the TU's on Stockbridge Village social media. This is viewed as grossly misleading and potentially illegal representation, and needs to be carefully reflected upon by anyone associated with it.

In short, the activity of the Joint Unions Union has caused great rancour from the staff they are supposed to represent. Governors & leaders have asked directly what the 'grave concerns' are that 'staff' have shared with the TUs, and the number of staff to understand proportionality, so that these concerns can be addressed. The TU's have not shared this information as part of the consultation to date.

There are 12, highly respected, long term SVP staff members who live within the Stockbridge Village community.

The Governors have also been made aware by school leadership team, that many parents have complained, feeling very upset with the joint TU presence on the school gate over two days last week - feeling pressured to take their highly politicised leaflets and calming worried and frightened children.

We have asked that the TU Reps involved reflect on this, and desist from being there in the future. Their own TU views can be shared more constructively and less divisively.

Unison members have received an apology from Unison for their behaviour verbally.

Our parents are still participating in our consultation – but current assessment from all our communication channels is that of support and trust.

Additional Current Evidence supporting becoming an Academy in a Multi-Academy Trust

This up-to-date evidence may be of interest to you as families.

The Department of Education's ambition, outlined by the Secretary of State in his speech to the Confederation of School Trusts last year, and the Government White Paper is 'for every school to be part of a family of schools in a strong multi-academy trust'.

Some of the up-to-date evidence-base around the benefits of working as part of a multi-academy trust, is outlined below.

The benefits of Multi-Academy Trusts

The DfE sees strong multi-academy trusts as the most powerful vehicle for securing sustained school improvement for all schools. A 2019 analysis of Ofsted inspection outcomes found that more than 7 out of 10 sponsored academies are now rated good or outstanding compared to about 1 in 10 of the LA schools that they replaced. MAT performance data shows our best trusts consistently improve the schools they take on, both in terms of Ofsted and educational attainment, including in areas of entrenched underperformance.

Where a school is high-performing, joining a multi-academy trust allows this school to consolidate its success and disseminate its vision, leadership and excellent practice to a greater number of pupils. To use the jargon, these schools can give 'capacity' to other schools within a trust. The multi-academy trust structure is the best vehicle for this, as the single governance structure of a trust facilitates the sharing of good practice and subject and curriculum expertise and is specifically designed to allow our best school leaders to focus on improving outcomes for as many pupils as possible.

The DfE's Academy Trust Survey 2017 shows that 82% of MATs felt the creation of new opportunities to collaborate contributed to the decision of their schools to become academies, while half of the MATs reported that a shared vision and ethos was the main reason academies joined their trust. Virtually all MATs (96%) with two or more academies believe their structure has facilitated collaboration, and most also have formal relationships with schools outside their trust.

In addition, multi-academy trusts tend to accelerate the careers of their staff: evidence indicates that 'teachers and middle leaders tend to achieve promotions younger in large academy trusts than elsewhere'

([Ambition Institute, 2019](#)); and multi-academy trusts provide aspiring senior leaders with growth routes beyond the role of Headteacher and into executive and system leadership.

Where a school needs to improve, the internal school improvement structures of a trust effectively facilitate school improvement by offering meaningful advice and support that is tailored towards the specific needs of each individual school. Ofsted's recent report, '[Flight or flight? How 'stuck' schools are overcoming isolation](#)', found that the majority of 'unstuck' schools that were part of a trust considered the influence of the trust as intrinsic to their recent success. They cited the trust's role in raising expectations and providing challenge where needed, developing curriculum subject expertise and the scale and management of the trust as crucial to this success.

Whilst the performance of academies varies, like that of all schools and Local Authorities, our strongest trusts consistently improve the schools they take on, both in terms of Ofsted and educational attainment. DfE's [multi academy trust performance measures](#) show that the very best trusts consistently perform well above the national average in Progress 8 and other accountability measures. Careful matching of each annual cohort of sponsored academies with otherwise similar LA schools shows sponsored academies are closing the performance gap with similar schools and sometimes overtaking them.

The Trust model also allows trusts to achieve economies of scale. The single Governance and executive structure of a Trust means that administrative functions can be supported by a central team, and this centralised support for finance, administration and HR allows schools to focus on great teaching, curriculum and support for pupils. Accordingly, the 2020 Kreston Academies Benchmark Report found that MATs had the most improved financial performance before the COVID-19 pandemic, that MATs had an average surplus nearly 3 times more per school than a LA school to invest in their pupils in the short and long term, and that centralisation of functions in MATs 'suggests economies of scale are increasingly being realised'.

The benefits of the multi-academy trust model were evident before the pandemic, but the last two years have emphasised further the unique strength of this structure. Following their autumn 2020 school visits, Ofsted reported ([The trust in testing time: the role of multi-academy trusts during the pandemic](#)) that many schools in trusts had found the support provided by their trust had been crucial in relation to safeguarding, interpreting Covid-19 guidelines, and developing remote learning and integrating this into the curriculum. Furthermore, The Confederation of School also published a report in April presenting evidence on the resilience and significant benefits of the academy trust model during the pandemic ([New University of Nottingham Report shows Trusts are 'robust structures'](#) (cstuk.org.uk)).

The benefits of the multi-academy trust model are clear and the DfE is clear in its strategic intent that joining a Trust will benefit all schools, irrespective of their current performance or circumstances