

SOUTH CUMBRIA MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

NEWBARNES PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL PROPOSAL TO JOIN SCMAT



RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING 07/3/23

Below are questions that were submitted as part of the consultation process and responded to by Newbarnes School Headteacher Gary Birkett, SCMAT CEO & Executive Headteacher Andrew Wren and SCMAT school member headteachers Steve Jefferson (Chetwynde) and David Holmes (Vickerstown) as part of the public meeting on March 7th 2023.

Submitted questions

Q: As the large majority of children at Newbarnes transfer to Furness Academy for secondary, why does it make sense to join a different Trust?

A: Gary Birkett/Andrew Wren

- The Trust that a school belongs to is not the important factor, what is important is the relationship between schools - regardless of whether they're in a different MAT or indeed in a MAT at all.
- There is a strong connection with Newbarnes and Furness Academy staff and this will remain as we are aware that is the first-choice secondary provision for many of our parents and pupils.
- Newbarnes School is not currently in Furness Education Trust and the links as a feeder school currently work well so the situation will remain the same.
- The SCMAT enables schools to make a choice of Trust that they think fits best with the ethos of their own schools. Ultimately, parents/pupils make their own choice for secondary school destinations.

Q: Furness Academy is oversubscribed each year. Primary schools in the other Trust are guaranteed a secondary place. As a parent of a reception starter in 2023, it's making me think twice about which primary school I should send my child to.

A: Gary Birkett/Andrew Wren

- The points above also relate to this question. It is the relationship between schools that matters, rather than the Trust they are in.
- No school or Trust can guarantee a place for its pupils but they can, through consultation, amend their admissions policies to add a criterion to prioritise children within the Trust.
- The same point could be said of Newton and Lindal schools, which have joined FET, with regards to Dowdales School, which they feed.
- We all want the best outcomes for our pupils and will continue to work collaboratively to ensure this happens. Trusts are not in competition; they are designed to support schools, and pupils, to achieve excellence in education for all.
- All parents have a choice of where they want their children to be educated and this remains the case.
- In September 2023, our understanding is that 100% of children at Newbarnes who chose Furness Academy were awarded a place.

Q: Will parents get a vote on whether the school should join this Trust? Most children follow on to Furness Academy so why aren't you joining with them?

A: Andrew Wren

- The public consultation process is the mechanism designed to give us an indication of support from all our stakeholders – parents, staff and wider community – for joining SCMAT.
- The Governors have carefully considered the best options for the school and decided for the reasons already mentioned, that SCMAT was the right fit and we've held Q&A sessions with staff.
- We've invited all parents along to give their views tonight.
- *Second part of question is answered above*

Q. When we are a major feeder school to Furness Academy why aren't we joining in partnership with them? The school should consider what's best for the school community in the long term. Headteachers will be different in ten years' time and they should consider what's best for the children of the school. The school is a major feeder to Furness Academy and therefore should be working alongside this school in the best interests of the children.

A: Gary Birkett

- Newbarns School gives parents and pupils a range of information, opportunities for taster days and other events so they can apply to secondary schools that they feel are best for them. It is so important our pupils and parents know what is available to them and I hope this choice will continue for a long time after my tenure as headteacher.
- Our pupils visit Furness Academy and have always had a great experience. This year, our Year 5s have also been invited into UVHS for a taster event. As that's beneficial to them to explore that as an option and to see the differences, we have supported them to make it happen to help them make an informed choice.
- We have always had a strong and effective relationship with Furness Academy and we hope this will continue, regardless of which Trust our school belongs to, because collaboration across the education community is right for our pupils.

Q: How does Furness College compete with a sponsor? FET has in BAE Systems.

A: Andrew Wren

Furness College has a really good relationship with BAE Systems and we are both sponsors of academies as we want to further improve education in the communities we serve. We are not competing but we both have a lot of expertise to offer.

Q: Do you feel academizing has been more benefit to 11-16-year-olds rather than primary?

A: Chetwynde Headteacher Steve Jefferson

- It has benefited both primary and senior.
- We spoke to staff when I took on the headship and they felt there was a bit of separation between senior and primary and that, in the past, the senior school had been favoured. Moving into the Trust, that is no longer there. We've worked with the primary to really develop the curriculum in the primary and worked on ways to ensure we are an all through school.
- AW – Change has come from the teacher and support staff to improve communication and connection across the school.

Q: Can you see any of the senior schools in the area joining?

A: Andrew Wren

- Furness Academy and Walney School are in Trusts and St Bernard's is in the Catholic Trust.
- That leaves Dowdales and UVHS, who will make their own decisions when they are ready.
- They are aware of what we offer and we are open to conversations with any school that wishes to find out more about joining SCMAT

Q: Funding is your responsibility; how do you manage if one school is struggling?

A: Andrew Wren/Steve Jefferson

It's important to note that it's not just local authority schools that must submit a balanced budget each year, MAT schools do too. Some will have more reserves and some will be marginal. There is no cap on the amount of money a school can retain if there is a surplus. The Trust is not allowed to move funding from one school into another.

SJ – Financially the MAT has improved our position because we had an Ofsted Notice to Improve and we are now in a surplus position that is projected for the next 3 years.

Q: Will any of the teachers be drafted over to other schools?

A: Gary Birkett/Steve Jefferson

GB – I am not losing any good teachers; we will retain staff but there will be opportunities for them to progress if they want to.

SJ – In my experience it is really not that culture. We do look to strengthen opportunities for members of staff and see how we can develop them to improve education for our pupils.

Q: If any staff do need to be made redundant in the future, do you offer redeployment within the MAT?

A: Andrew Wren

Yes, the MAT is the employer.

Q: Sometimes in your personal life, you need to modify your working hours, as a MAT will you accommodate that?

A: Andrew Wren

The MAT has a flexible working request that anybody can apply for. It mirrors the college's policy. We always try to honour flexible working requests.

Q: Will we get the same pupil funding through SCMAT but it will cost us less?

A: Andrew Wren

It is more complex than that with various factors but any surplus will be reinvested back into schools and facilities. We have an Operations Manager who can get better contract deals through economies of scale for renewing services such as IT, for example, and MAT schools can apply for funding that is not otherwise available. Chetwynde has had around £2million in funding so far.

Q: What percentage is the top slice?

A: Andrew Wren

It is six percent in the first year of joining and can go down. Maintained schools currently pay a flat rate of six per cent top slice to the council and has no say over how this is spent.

Q: Can we still use childcare vouchers for wraparound care?

A: Andrew Wren

Yes it will stay the same. Your term dates will also be aligned with the local authority dates as usual.

Q: Does each school have its own insurance or is that paid by the Trust?

A: Andrew Wren

Each Trust school pays its part through the joint national Risk Protection Arrangement for schools.

Q: Can parents become Trustees?

A: Andrew Wren

It is possible but not required. Through the articles of association, each school must have two parent governors and if they don't, then there should be representation on the Trust Board.