



## Your questions answered- staff

Answers to staff questions sent subsequent to the letter from the chair of governors on 28 September 2020.

**Q. Will the terms and conditions of teachers' pensions be protected?**

A. Yes - TUPE protects your terms and conditions.

**Q. Will there be a restructuring of support staff and, if so, might this result in redundancies or deployment?**

Joining EMET will have no negative effect on support staff. HR and finance will be affected and they will be involved in this conversation.

**Q. Will our learning support departments and teaching assistant provision continue in its current form if Highfields becomes an EMET school?**

A. Joining EMET will have no effect on learning support.

**Q. Can we have it in writing that our pay and conditions will not change? Can we have it in writing that we will not be made to work in a different school?**

A. Yes - TUPE protects your terms and conditions. This is provided in writing to the trade unions in what is called the 'measures letter'. This is written if formal consultation begins.

**Q. Can we hear first-hand accounts from teaching staff in other EMET schools regarding morale and wellbeing?**

A. Highfields staff have visited EMET schools and any requests to make contact with staff have been facilitated.

**Q. Do EMETs pay scales match our current ones?**

Yes for teachers.

For associate staff the pay points might be the same, but the scales might be different. EMET will move over all associate staff in a 'no detriment' manner meaning that staff move over to the higher pay point.

**Q. This isn't a consultation!**

A. Governors are making a proposal and seeking stakeholder views in line with DfE guidance. We feel that this is an appropriate consultative process which precedes any formal consultation, should we reach that stage.

**Q. Why are we doing this when the school is clearly on the up and improving massively? I don't see any benefit to the school to joining any academy or mainly any benefit to the students.**

A. The school is improving in terms of academic outcomes. It has never been above average in terms of progress 8.

**Q. DCC has already earmarked large sums of money to make improvements within the school why would we turn that down and hope that the EMET will match that?**

A. It is untrue that DCC has earmarked large sums of money to make improvements in the school. DCC has made no representations to governors asking them to remain with the local authority. This may be because they cannot match the spending of EMET. IF THE SCHOOL STAYS WITH THE LOCAL AUTHORITY THERE IS NO PLAN FOR SIGNIFICANT REPAIR, RENOVATION OR CAPITAL RE-DEVELOPMENT. This will affect the working conditions of staff, recruitment, retention and status within the community.



- Q. From what I understand Ripley have had no money spent on the fabric of the building, they just had money for uniforms.**
- A. Ripley had a performing arts/sports/assembly block provided by EMET at a cost of £4m.
- Q. Will we be having a vote on the proposal of joining EMET? If not why? If so will it be an open and honest process with independent moderators ie unions and not SLT (I'm not saying that SLT would not be honest, but it would go a long way if EMET was voted for, for the people that didn't vote for it to accept that the majority did).**
- A. This cannot depend on a staff vote because it affects students, families and future staff. However, all views will be taken into account.
- Q. Why are we going from paying DCC £100K to paying the trust £300k, were would these saving come from? More job losses? Reduced salaries? If it was YOUR job loss would you still be recommending it? Sorry but I cannot and will not support something that will cause people to lose their jobs.**
- A. The extra funds available to EMET and multi-academy trusts, along with economy of scale (HR and finance are centralised) account for the fact that EMET schools are better off now than they were previous to their joining (this is borne out by financial evidence). Since the late 1990s successive governments have incentivised schools to become academies. Academies and multi-academy trusts can bid for monies that LA schools cannot. Joining EMET will not cause job losses.
- Q. What happens to the IT budget as we are finally getting the money that we need to move forward?**
- A. Joining EMET does not affect IT provision although within EMET we could use our DFC funding for IT investment because EMET can fund our capital repairs.
- Q. I don't understand why this is progress for the school when we have showed, over the past 6 months, that we are a great school with great staff and have coped far better than any academy has.**
- A. We are a good school. This is a decision about how we *stay* good or even improve given the shrinking resources available from the local authority. It is also in response to the fact that Highfields School facilities and building require urgent and significant levels of investment.
- Q. What will happen to my local government pension? What will happen about my current terms and conditions and holiday entitlement?**
- A. TUPE protects your terms and conditions. Pensions remain the same.
- Q. How it will affect support staff?**
- A. Joining EMET will not affect support staff.
- Q. Changes to terms and conditions - particularly for staff who work non-standard hours. Salary protection.**
- A. TUPE protects your terms and conditions.
- Q. COVID regulations and how this would affect staff and students; would learning in specific classrooms still be allowed (so we do not limit the learning after missing so much e.g. practical skills), how would this affect staff travelling between sites etc. I am also interested to know how budgets would be decided; e.g. will more money go directly towards building regs or will departments still feel the benefit of the extra funds e.g. within DT and food? As there are many things that need updating not just in terms of buildings.**



A. Joining EMET will not affect support staff, commutes, departmental budgets, curriculum etc as the school remains under the leadership of the head and governors. Staff are not compelled to work in other EMET schools. Your normal place of employment will remain Highfields.

**Q. What is the position with regard to pensions? I am in the Teachers' Pension Scheme and wish to remain so until I retire. What guarantees are there?**

A. TUPE protects your terms and conditions. Pensions remain the same. This is all covered in the measures letter to trade unions.

**Q. How determined are the governors to join an academy group? If this particular option is rejected by staff will they just moved on to the next, less suitable, choice?**

A. Governors feel that the evidence strongly suggests that the school and its staff and students will be better served under EMET than with the local authority as we move forward. No other options other than EMET or DCC are on the table.

**Q. Why the sudden rush with this? Something smells wrong or covering something up hence pushing this through so quick. You never get anything for free in this world there is always a cost to pay in the end.**

**Why are we not looking at bringing the school onto a single site to reduce costs and give staff a better working environment?**

**Who will own the land after this is done? Will we still be getting what DCC has already put in the pipeline ie. all weather pitch or will all that funding be removed? what happens to the money from the sale of the land, for housing, now? Will that go to DCC the school or the trust?**

A. The letter and appendices explain how EMET has been selected. As soon as governors decided that EMET was potentially beneficial the decision was made to involve staff in the discussion. This was then delayed by lockdown. Staff and unions have been assured that there is no rush. All of the decisions to proceed lie with governors and the headteacher.

All weather pitch will not be affected by EMET.

Ben Riggott and the former chair of governors investigated fully the single site question and presented the case to governors who found it to be not viable due to complications in selling Starkholmes site. The LA remain the owner of the land, but the school will have a 125 year lease. Highfields could not sell the land nor can the trust.

**Q. Could staff be asked to teach outside of their subject?**

A. Not by EMET. The school is led by the headteacher. There is no change planned to teachers currently teaching more than one (or two subjects)



## Frequently asked questions (previously issued)

**Q. Why now? Surely the focus should be on recovering from this pandemic?**

A. The forming or joining of a multi academy trust was first raised in 2017 by the co-heads and governors at the time. We came back to this discussion in September 2019 and paused it in March 2020. We feel that delaying this discussion until Covid-19 is resolved is not an option. Governors have noted that successive headteachers over the last four years have reached the same conclusion: that Highfields needs to consider belonging to a medium sized collective of academies. Governors feel that this debate cannot be delayed further until the Covid-19 crisis is over, as there is no indication as to when this might be.

We are keen to explore involvement only with trusts, like EMET, whose ethos ('a willing partnership of proud, autonomous schools') reflects our preferences.

Governors have recently learnt that the Peak 11 (a longstanding consortium) is slowly disbanding and this is partly due to Peak 11 schools joining MATs.

We believe that EMET not expand beyond a certain number of schools and we do not want to delay to the point where this option is no longer open to us.

The consultation and possible conversion will NOT require significant amounts of staff time and will NOT be allowed to undermine staff wellbeing or work/life balance.

**Q. But surely Highfields is good and improving further - why does it need to consider this type of change?**

Yes, Highfields is good and improving further, mainly as a result of the exhaustive and (possibly) unsustainable efforts of its staff team. However, the headteacher and governing board believe that there is a ceiling to this improvement if we remain with our local authority. The school and its staff need significant investment of money and support. This is why we are entering formal consultation with a MAT.

Schools in MATs can access resources that local authority schools cannot. This has been made so by the government because they wish all schools to become academies. Whilst some educationalists have political reservations about this, the fact remains that our staff and students are being potentially disadvantaged as long as we do not belong to a MAT.

**Q. Which evidence suggests that EMET, in particular, might be considered as a positive alternative to the LA?**

A. The evidence can be summarised thus:

1. EMET has a track record of respecting schools' individual identities and offering a high level of autonomy; we would not lose the autonomy we have under the LA. The MAT also has a good reputation amongst teaching unions.
2. In recent times (2017-2020) EMET has invested an average of £1.3million per school into EMET schools which are most similar to Highfields. DCC is not offering anything like this level of investment.
3. EMET has a track record of moving forward building projects quickly. This is not the case for LA where much needed projects (e.g renovation of unhygienic Y11 toilets) can take many months or years to complete
4. EMET has a track record in its schools of offering bespoke school to school CPD / development / support which far outweighs anything offered by the LA. Because EMET has similar schools, Highfields is also well placed to provide our own expertise to other schools which is usually beneficial for both parties.
5. EMET schools are high performing as a group (lead school P8= +0.79) and so we can assume that some EMET leaders have experience in solving some problems that Highfields may still be facing.
6. EMET offers some excellent career development possibilities for staff looking for progression (Highfields staff turnover is low and so promotion opportunities can be limited).



7. Membership of EMET will exonerate us from inspections for three years. This will give us the space and time to focus on being the school we want to be without distraction.
8. All available evidence suggests that EMET consultancy, marketing and recruitment is more effective than that which we are currently offered. Highfields needs to attract and retain the best staff and be the first choice for families of Y7 children in our area and Y12 students more widely.

**Fig.2: Comparison of track record of funding for capital projects (surplus to DFC) since 2017**

EMET: Examples of capital spending projects include sixth form centre at Kimberley and Sports/Performance Block at Ripley. The average total spend on capital projects since 2017 for EMET schools of similar size to Highfields: £1.3m

School Information					School Condition Allocation				
School	Phase	GAG (19/20)	Pupil Nos	SCA as % of GAG	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21 (Proposed)	Total
JFC	Secondary	3,410,608	741	27%	292,478	229,784	134,547	249,547	906,356
TKS	Secondary	6,267,509	1301	24%	629,139	641,573	146,849	117,349	1,534,910
TRA	Secondary	3,467,953	690	15%	166,804	185,435	145,751	35,751	533,741
SWA	Secondary	3,844,944	834	28%	231,534	176,019	407,833	278,833	1,094,219
WBS	Secondary	7,741,431	1700	15%	388,172	220,704	172,553	412,553	1,193,982
JWS	Secondary	6,162,605	1308	20%	318,282	305,037	456,427	176,427	1,256,172

**DCC: Examples of capital spending projects**

Although there have been no projects on the scale of a sixth form block or sports centre it would be true to say that DCC funding has allowed a number of projects. These include:

- 2017/18 Student Access Initiative (this money ensures DDA compliance for individual disabled students): projects worth £65,000 for toilets and £22,500 for lifts.
- 2019 Catering upgrade (£129,512) as part of DCC catering renewing contract (all fixtures and equipment belong to DCC catering).
- 2020 Insurance maintenance premium: Door upgrade to meet fire regulations £45,000, start date unknown. Agreed expenditure
- 2020 Fire alarm c.£120K start date pending. Agreed expenditure
- 2020? Insurance maintenance premium: Sports corridor roof repair £42,000: bid pending.
- 2020? Joint match funded (Highfields pays half of cost): security fencing/gates £35,000. Start date unknown.

Estimated total spent by DCC on capital projects or similar at Highfields School 2017-2020= **£382,012**

**Q. What's in it for students?**

A. Students in EMET schools have better facilities. Their working environment is smart and well maintained. Renovation take place frequently and worn or damaged surfaces are replaced. At least two schools have had major new builds in the last three years. Teaching is supported by a wider team of professionals within EMET who collaborate professionally over resources and



practice. Achievement at EMET's lead school West Bridgford is truly outstanding (P8= +0.79) and other schools in the trust are approaching this level. Students in these schools wider/better options for post 16 and 18 study.

**Q. I have a year 6 child. How will potentially joining EMET affect admissions?**

A. It won't.

**Q. What are staff likely to gain?**

A. EMETs resources are pooled so that all leaders can choose to work as a collaborative unit. The senior teams regularly meet and combine their resources to solve common problems. Subject teams support and develop each other. Where individuals or departments find themselves with difficult to solve problems (perhaps there is a ceiling in GCSE subject) there is a pool of support to draw on - someone somewhere within EMET is likely to have solved that problem before. Excellent staff may look to develop their careers through progression routes offered by EMET (this would only be done where there was a net benefit to Highfields). Unlike Highfields under the local authority, EMET schools are regularly upgraded and repairs and renovations kept up to date creating a reasonable professional environment for its staff and students.

**Q. But surely the budget is looking more healthy at Highfields - we don't need extra resources any more do we...?**

A. All school budgets are looking more encouraging in 2020-21. The fact remains that local authority schools cannot bid into funds (including the condition improvement fund) in the same way as academies and therefore cannot expect the improvements to student and staff facilities that could be expected as part of EMET.

**Q. What will EMET expect from us?**

A. The MAT has a track record of autonomy. They are light touch if their schools are within budget and graded Ofsted good. Where schools meet these broad criteria the school the MAT expects that schools will oversee their own governance, uniform, ethos, teaching approach etc. Where schools struggle our investigations have revealed they have a strong record of offering bespoke support to support the school staff in improving things for students (for example at Ripley). Over time EMET schools are expected to offer to help other schools in the MAT. This is agreed between schools.

**Q. What will change as a result of being part of EMET?**

Staff at schools joining EMET have told us that many stakeholders notice no change as signage/uniform/name of school etc is unaffected. Changes will be made to roles involving finance and HR but this may be technical rather than substantial (finance and HR are centralised in most MATs). EMET schools are not expected to adopt new data systems, uniform, QA arrangements etc. EMET invited Highfields to join the MAT because they like what the school is doing and feel it is reflective of best practice.

**Q. Surely terms and conditions will change?**

A. Derbyshire Schools who have joined EMET have noted only small changes. One of these changes is time scales on some HR policies. This will be explored in the consultation.

**Q. Will EMET take our teachers?**

A. No. If teachers want to explore leadership or developmental roles across the MAT they would only be allowed to apply if it were clear that the net impact on Highfields students and staff was positive. Staff can, of course, choose to apply for jobs in other schools within EMET and Highfields will benefit from this 'pool' approach.



**Q. Why would we be exempt from Ofsted and is this a benefit?**

A. Any school who joins a trust is allowed this time for transition of a minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. Staff may feel that this is beneficial because it allows us to focus 100% on children rather than being unduly distracted by Ofsted schedules.

**Q. How would safeguarding/ early help of children be affected?**

A. Safeguarding arrangements will not be affected and neither would the early help offer to primary schools.

**Q. What are potential downsides of joining EMET?**

A. It's a one way process. If governors commit after formal consultation it is a binding arrangement. Staff morale may, in the short term, be affected by change. The 'top slice' is more than we give to LA (see below), however our expectation is that we would be a net beneficiary financially. Another downside is that it is often the case that headteachers within MATs can often be more quickly removed following dips in performance than their peers in local authority schools. A small number of roles around HR and finance will change over time in line with MAT policy. The people in these roles will be briefed throughout the process (and have been thus far) in order that they are able to make informed professional decisions. If the school dips below the performance criteria outlined above then EMET will intervene more. We have looked at a case study of how this was handled within EMET and feel satisfied that the response was supportive and positive.

**Q. The 'up front' top slice is about 2% (£100,000) per year. How can it be expected that 'Highfields' net financial position over time will be enhanced through membership of EMET?**

A. Discussions with schools, including former Derbyshire local authority schools, have revealed that joining EMET has been financially positive despite the top slice. This is partly because the capital monies that EMET has put into, for example, a sports block at Ripley or a sixth form block at Kimberley have far outweighed the top slice. But it is also because EMET, like most MATs, reduce costs by centralising (over time) services like HR and finance, by applying for funds only available to academies, by buying products and services in bulk thus reducing the overall cost and by sharing resources (for example TES advertising) across the trust.

**Q. Will this affect our membership of Peak 11?**

A. No...but as stated above, Peak 11 and other soft federations are being disbanded as schools become part of multi academy trusts.

**Q. Will staff be shunted between EMET schools?**

A. Absolutely NOT under any circumstances.

**Q. Is this a move to pre-empt forced academisation?**

A. In short, not really. We do not know how the Johnson government will move forward on this but it is widely accepted that academisation is here to stay and that the government would like to phase out local authority schools. However, this has not been our primary motivation for seeking to join a MAT. We are primarily interested in educational improvement and investment in our school buildings.

**Q. Other secondary schools in Derbyshire are staying with DCC and they are doing fine...why can't we?**

A. In fact Derbyshire, like most local authorities, has more and more schools joining MATs (Brookfield, Newbold, Tupton Hall) or planning to join (Hasland and others) for exactly the same reasons as Highfields is looking to join EMET: increased levels of support for students and staff.



**Q. Why bother consulting? Isn't this a done deal?**

A. It's true that we are seriously committed to exploring this option because we think it is likely to benefit students and staff. As we have explained in our letter, if formal consultation reveals that EMET cannot meet to our satisfactions the expectations we have outlined, we will pull out. EMET have made it clear for their part that they have only ever welcomed schools into the trust who are willing members. Should it become clear that there is significant and sustained union opposition to the joining of EMET then EMET itself will withdraw their invitation to join.

**Q. Does the headteacher or senior team have anything to gain if this conversion goes ahead?**

A. No; not beyond the advantages with regards to enhanced CPD, progression options and working environment on offer to other staff members. The status of the headteacher will remain the same and will not assume any 'executive' role as part of this conversion.

**Q. Some educationalists feel academy programme is flawed and educationally divisive: why are we supporting this strategy by considering the joining of EMET?**

A. Governors have a range of political views and these have been aired in discussions. Ultimately governors agree that Highfields students deserve the increased resource and support enjoyed by schools in EMET and this underpins our formal consultation regarding this matter.

**Q. What happens now?**

A. Families, students and staff will be consulted in various ways on their views. Staff will be given the opportunity through a range of socially distanced and online meetings to ask questions of Rob McDonough (chief executive officer) and other key members of the trust. These surveys and meetings will take place in September and early October. Depending on when this application reaches the regional headteacher board, the formal consultation with unions etc should last around two months. At its earliest, if the outcome of consultation were positive, the school would join the MAT in January 2021, latest September 2021.