

Dear Keith

I hope you had a relaxing Summer Break.

I was wondering if you have had time to read and respond to my email sent at the end of term. The reason I ask is we are due to have meetings with our parent group next week to discuss the detailed financial plan we have drawn up, and I know your letter will be used to raise points by them. We would like to be able to reflect your response to the points I made in my email in our answers to questions raised by the parents. Also it is important to be able to discuss your response with each Governing Body alongside your initial letter- to ensure each Governor has a full understanding of any funding implications.

Unfortunately over the Summer break the Labour Party and Anti Academy Alliance have been brought into the debate by the group of parents with whom you were in correspondence- so the debate has become very political and hit the local press.

Just for your background reference as a group of schools we did investigate the academy option, many months prior to the set up of the MAT steering group- visiting several successful MATs in Kent including TENAX, The Stour Academy Trust and PIEAT. From this we have been able to take away many of the lessons they have learnt, and aim to base our structure around these.

We are fully aware that by simply becoming a MAT any existing financial issues will not disappear, but there is clear evidence (such as the report from the Education Policy Institute) that with strong strategic planning, MATS can save money on backroom services and end up spending a higher percentage of their funding on Teaching and Support staff. Particularly when the schools are geographically close.

Clearly the financial aspect is only one of the reasons we are considering the MAT option- raised accountability for all of the schools, the sharing of good practice and specialising resources are key to me. We have also seen how our highly effective collaboration (as recognised by many of your colleagues) has been negatively impacted as several of the schools have been drawn into different alternatives structures, and are keen to maintain the collaboration with the 7 schools that remain.

The decision to seriously explore the academy option in no way reflects any on yourself or any of the other staff employed by KCC. However we are having to deal with a new educational landscape, in our unique community and collectively we need to make decisions that are right for the children of Deal.

I look forward to your response.