



Tudor Grange Academy Redditch

Frequently asked questions from current and prospective parent meetings from the meetings of the 20th and 25th April 2016

Q The recent article indicated a financial shortfall, how exactly are you planning to meet the financial shortfall?

A The shortfall is largely generated because we want to maintain a wide and broad curriculum. The financial plans that we have produced include the following measures:

- Using a combination of prior year surpluses
- A break from generating in year surpluses
- Tudor Grange Academy Trust (TGAT) providing services at no cost
- Generating income through the selling of 'expertise' using excess staffing hours
- Continuing to find efficiencies and find value for money, for example, insurance costs, increasing centralised procurement for supplies
- TGAT to provide all capital development funding

Q Year 7 numbers are low, is the year 7 option viable. Can you guarantee a wide and varied curriculum for the students?

A Numbers are low, we planned on 24 and this is now 17. We will work with parents to understand their views. Conversations with several of the year 7 parents have made it clear that they are still committed to the group and that the small group size is seen as a benefit. We planned a wide and varied curriculum and this will be in place next year for all our students.

Q Will the year 7 definitely be going ahead?

A Yes, we have been overwhelmed by the strong support and commitment expressed by the prospective parents of year 7 students. We will proceed with our year 7 provision based on the numbers we have at present

Q Is the curriculum proposed for year 7 wide and varied?

A Yes it is. It focusses on all the core subjects as well as the humanities, languages, RE, PE, project learning, music, drama and art. We also provide students, through our SAS offer, the experiences of product design, computing, food technology and graphics.

Q Do you anticipate that the year 7 cohort will increase over time?

A Yes, it offers choice and over time we will be able to see that both 2 tier and 3 tier systems can be in place and offer parents and students choice.

Q How many classes will you run for the year 9 cohort?

A We will run 3 classes in the core subjects.

Q Will the year 9 students have a limited range of options?

A Each year our options change based on the needs of the cohort. This is usual practice. We will offer a wide range of quality options to enable our students to be successful.

Q What is the pastoral support in place to assist the transition process and reduce possible feelings of being overwhelmed?

A We provide pastoral support through our college structure. This structure is led by a deputy head teacher called a college leader, who is supported by a learning mentor, tutors and college administrator.

The year 7 students will be placed in 1 of 2 colleges and within only 2 -3 tutor groups across both colleges. We will aim to retain friendship groups. Their learning mentor will also be clearly identified and regular 'touch points' are built into the school calendar to ensure that our year 7 students are not only learning but are enjoying their experience. There will also be regular feedback to parents on progress.

Q How will you know friendship groups and when will students know which tutor they are in?

A We are planning a series of meetings with parents and students and will want to ascertain at these meetings who the friendship groups are. We will ensure that on the transition days students meet their college leader, learning mentor and are introduced to their tutors.

Q How will a small year 7 participate in 'Sport'?

A We are planning to run many non-contact team sports such as football, swimming, tag rugby, tennis, squash, gymnastics, trampolining, athletics, and basketball. We will also plan and co-ordinate fixtures such as 5 a side football and participate in under 13 events.

Q Will year 7 and 8 experience options earlier than year 9?

A They will experience some options through the SAS programme. They will not start their GCSE options before year 9.

Q Children entering year 7 will have a possible advantage, so will they be held back if new year 9 students have not covered the material that TGAR students have?

A We will support our year 9 students with the appropriate transition and keep encouraging all students to make rapid gains in their learning. The setting process will allow us to continue to enable students to learn at the pace which challenges them and meets their needs.

Q How is the impact of the current change and admission position being managed in a way that maintains staff and resources and does not harm our children's education?

A Our priority is always to provide a great educational experience which supports sound educational outcomes. We have been reviewing staffing structures since the Academy became part of the Trust, constantly looking for financial savings in relation to 'back office' functions. We have restructured staffing to ensure that they are clear on roles removing duplication of staffing, we have used capital investment to automate services and therefore change staff roles or not replace staff, and we have managed each and every staff replacement to ensure that staff are matched to the curriculum.

We check the quality of our learning and teaching every half term through a variety of processes that include staff from outside of the Academy. Assessment data each half term is reviewed and reported to both the Local Governors and the Trust Board Governors and the Principal of the Academy is held to account.

Q How are you going to retain the best of your staff in this scenario?

A One of the benefits of being part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is that we can share staff expertise and offer staff development opportunities. Our staff have a very active development programme and have the opportunity to work across sites for example, Mrs Dunn, an outstanding mathematics teacher, also works across the Trust which offers her promotion as well as development.

Q As a parent of a child who may be entering the Sixth Form for a two year course of study in September, can you categorically assure me that the courses she starts on in September will maintain the staff and resources to continue to be taught at the TGAR site for a full two years?

A We are committed to the education of all our students currently in and entering our Sixth Form. No school or college can guarantee the same people from year to year though we do guarantee the same levels of staffing for Sixth Form teaching over the next two years.

Q So what will happen if Sixth Form teachers leave and you can't recruit?

A The benefits of being part of an academy trust is that we can move staff around and share staff. Our intention would be to do this in order to maintain a quality provision. We know that we can successfully have teachers move between schools and that this enables us to provide excellent educational experiences.

Q You have discussed moving teachers around would you therefore also move students?

A We have moved students this year but this was a planned part of our curriculum offer. We would still allow and encourage students to access courses on other school sites if it was appropriate, though we have not planned to do so for our year 12 intake 2016.17.

Our greatest success has been with the movement of teaching staff between sites and we envisage this continuing for the future.

Q Who made the decision regarding the Age Range Change? And why did they not change the whole system at the same time as this would have prevented TGAR from being viewed so negatively.

A The business case was approved by the Regional Schools Commissioner. He cannot make a decision for the whole county but needs to consider how to improve educational outcomes and make decisions on this basis.

Q How many year 9 students are going to start in September 2016?

A We are expecting 58 students.

Q What do you think has had an impact on the uptake of year 9 places, as transition at year 9 is normal for this community?

A The Age Range change and continued feelings of anger have had the greatest impact. Some parents have stated that they want to come but want assurances that our results will continue to improve.

Q A lot of very positive things happen in the academy, what are you doing to promote the positivity of this school?

A We continue to advise the local press of the wide range of excellent activities and successes of our students. We also need parents and students to feel confident enough to let people know about the good things that happen here. We continue to work with local schools to show that we want to be part of the local community.

Q Who are the feeder schools?

A Our admission policy gives priority to students from the local middle and primary schools.

Q Do you regret the Age Range change?

A We regret the way that we handled the initial consultation and we are sorry for the upset and turmoil caused, there is no question about that. Our responsibility now is to manage the situation and protect and improve the education and care of our students and we will do everything within our power to do this.

Q The low numbers show you that Redditch does not want a year 7 choice. So why are you not discontinuing it?

A We still have a number of conversations with parents who do still want that choice and a number of first schools have shared their plans to become a primary school. The landscape is changing.

Q What figure did you plan for in the forthcoming budget?

A We planned for 45 in year 7 and 90 in year 9, but we also considered a number of other scenarios.

Q Can you now share your business case in full?

A The business case contains details relating to the Trust which are about strategic decisions and planning and cannot therefore be shared.

Q Does the Trust have a responsibility to produce a new business case showing how the situation will be managed?

A No we do not.

Q Do you have to account to the body that approved your business case on an ongoing basis?

A No, however, the Trust does have regular contact with the Regional Schools Commissioner to update him on the progress of all our schools.