

Questions from Parents

Will there be money available for building improvements and repairs to this school if needed?

Eko Trust has been successful in securing capital funds to improve its member schools and if there is a clear need for building improvement it is hoped this track record of success will continue. A number of building improvements funded by the Local Authority will be agreed before the conversion.

Why a London trust when there are plenty of trusts locally?

The Governing Body has been considering very carefully the future strategy for the school, actively exploring different options, including;

- remaining as a stand-alone community school within the Local Authority,
- co-founding a new multi academy trust, and
- joining an existing local multi academy trust.

None of these options felt right for the Governing Body. However, a new way forward presented itself in late 2019.

Eko Trust, a successful East London based multi academy trust, was commissioned by Suffolk County Council to provide school improvement support to a number of Ipswich primary schools. Not only was this support very helpful for Rushmere Hall, it also gave the Headteacher and staff the unique opportunity to work with and get to know colleagues from Eko Trust.

It became apparent very quickly that Rushmere Hall and Eko Trust shared a similar vision, ethos and values.

Why isn't the school collaborating with local schools already?

The school does work with local schools already. These schools are already part of academy chains / trusts and therefore, their capacity to collaborate with us is reduced as they are working between their trust schools.

How will the school collaborate with schools who are based in London?

The current Covid crisis has forced Eko schools and their staff to work together in new ways, using video conferencing and collaborative software, even when only a few minutes apart. This approach is likely to continue and so enables Rushmere Hall to work closely with other schools. As the Suffolk hub grows there will be additional opportunities to collaborate more locally.

What plans do the trust have for Rushmere?

Rushmere Hall is a school doing well and Eko Trust will support the Headteacher, staff and Governors in sustaining and maintaining the quality of education it provides. If the school is facing challenges then the role of Eko Trust is to support the school in addressing them in the most effective way possible.

Will the ethos and caring nature of the school change?

No. Eko Trust prides itself on each member school retaining its own ethos, culture and atmosphere. It is a caring culture that all Eko Trust member schools share in.

Will the school continue to deliver a broad curriculum or is it all about results?

Schools are judged by the outcomes their pupils achieve and so understandably Eko Trust expects its member schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for all their pupils. However, the Trust believes it is important for children to develop socially, emotionally

physically and creatively and all its member schools offer a broad curriculum that meets their needs.

The Eko Trust is comprised of 1/3 Special Needs schools, which often require larger amounts of funding in order to support the complex needs of their pupils. Will this have a disproportionate effect on any funding that Rushmere will receive?

No. Each school receives all the funding it is allocated by the Department for Education, less the agreed *Trust Central Charge*.

How much are the trustees paid? The reason for asking, previous academies have been left in disrepair while the trustees have still be paid a great deal of money?

Trustees are volunteers and they do not receive payment.

What is the problem of scrutiny? Don't we need this to ensure we are delivering an excellent standard?

Scrutiny is a fundamental part of school management and leadership. Effective scrutiny enables schools to sustain and improve performance and pupil outcomes because it provides ideas, resources, expertise and capacity to do so.

How does being part of a trust help "take the pressure off"?

The Governing Body is absolutely determined that the school should offer the very best quality of education. Yet this ambition is becoming harder to achieve in an increasingly challenging educational landscape of tightening budgets, greater scrutiny of school performance and pupil outcomes and the need to meet wider needs of children and their families.

Challenge 1: Sustaining and raising school performance and pupil outcomes

Schools face much greater external scrutiny of their performance and pupil outcomes. This places increased pressure on Headteachers, teachers and teaching staff. In the past Suffolk County Council has provided excellent support for its schools. However, through no fault of its own, it now has less funding and resources, which it has to target at the weakest schools. This means we receive much less support for school improvement.

Challenge 2: Retaining the best staff team

At the heart of every good school is a strong team of leaders, teachers, teaching staff and support staff who work together to help and develop every child, so they flourish. As a school, we receive a diminishing amount of Local Authority support and the opportunities for professional development, career progression and mutual support and challenge are reduced. We need to retain, develop and recruit the very best staff team to achieve the best outcomes for the children. We also need to help staff achieve a better work/life balance.

Challenge 3: Coping with financial pressures

The fact is that pupil funding is not keeping up with the range of cost increases, which means each year we have to find more savings from an ever-tighter budget. We are concerned that these cutbacks will strip back the breadth of learning beyond the core curriculum that we can offer our pupils. It will also mean reducing the wider support we offer our children and families.

Being part of Eko Trust will enable Rushmere Hall to cope with these challenges more effectively.

What happens if parents don't want this?

It will depend on the proportion and numbers of parents that object alongside the views of staff. If there is a significant objection from all parts of the school community

then the Governing Body would need to consider this versus what they believe is the right strategic direction for the school. It is worth bearing in mind that there are parent governors on the Governing Body that have been involved in the strategic planning. The governors have decided to present this option to the parents and the community because it is a credible opportunity. The due diligence process was extremely thorough and the checks carried out prior to sharing this with the governors has been extremely thorough.

What is the appeal process?

There is no appeal process as such. The Governing Body has both the responsibility and authority to make decisions about the school's future.

If Rushmere enters into the Eko Trust, will the entry level requirements for teaching staff remain the same? E.g. will it still be a requirement for teaching staff to hold a relevant and appropriate degree before appointment?

The vast majority of teachers will continue to have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

How will the survey be managed?

The survey is online and anonymous. The results of the survey will be shared with Governors who will consider them before making a final decision.