

**Notes from Consultation Meetings with Parents/Carers, 3rd and 10th November, 2025**

*These Notes do not have the status of Minutes, as we were making notes while also answering questions but they give a clear idea of what was discussed on each occasion and reflect some of the queries that have come in so far to [www.mayfield-consultation.org.uk](http://www.mayfield-consultation.org.uk)*

*The online consultation closes at the end of Sunday 16th November, 2025*

*On 3rd November 2 parents attended; on Monday 10th some 20 parents and carers attended.*

**CONTEXT**

In September 2023, at the Briefing for Governors and Senior Leaders, by the Local Authority (LA), all schools within the jurisdiction of the LA were actively encouraged to research the local offer in terms of academy trusts. The government at that time had issued its intention that all schools should be part of an academy trust by 2030. Although the government has changed since then, there is no indication that academy trusts will not remain a main feature of school education across the UK. All the secondaries in Cambridgeshire are in academy trusts and many primaries too. Other local primaries are engaging in conversations about joining trusts.

In 2023 the LA was making a proposal of its own, namely that it was looking to provide a greater range of centralised services to its schools, with a view to becoming a large local academy trust. A pilot scheme in Essex was being put forward at the time. This was an attractive proposal to us but nothing materialised. Since then, the level of services provided by the LA has been considerably reduced and schools, including Mayfield, are required to pay for more out of their existing budgets. It has been well covered in the press that education spending has not kept pace with rapidly rising costs, such as fuel, IT, broadband, site services, food and transport, as well as pay rises for teaching and support staff, the costs of which have not been met in full by the government. This has meant an increasing pressure on limited resources and the school has now posted a deficit budget for two years. The LA has required us to put forward a three-year recovery plan but this is increasingly difficult to maintain, since additional costs are being incurred through the year and we are owed money for the provision of Education Health Care Plans.

In addition to this pressure on budget and the reduction of central services, the demands on schools are increasing. Legal challenges and compliance pressures on schools are growing and in a standalone primary school, even a fairly large one like Mayfield, all of these functions must be covered by a small Senior Management Team (Head, Deputy and School Business Manager at Mayfield) and a volunteer body of governors.

In 2023 a working party of governors had been set up by the Governing Body and researched several local academy trusts, ACES, DEMAT, CamTrust, Saffron Academy Trust (SAT) and Eastern Learning Alliance (ELA). At that time, the task was to keep a watching brief but no decision to academise was taken. In January 2025, after discussions with the Head, it was decided to approach three local trusts and set up meetings. After a conversation with CamTrust CEO, it became clear that they were merging with another trust and it might not be the best time for us to apply. Moreover, the CEO pointed out that all the primaries in the Trust at that time were feeders to the secondaries within the Trust. Saffron Academy Trust (SAT) made a visit to Mayfield and were impressed with the school and there was a clear alignment of educational values and approaches to education. However, we were subsequently informed that the SAT Trustees would currently not accept any schools running a deficit budget. Mayfield has run a deficit budget for two successive years and we could not guarantee that we would come out of deficit within a year or two. The ELA Trustees were open to our approach and on 23rd September 2025, after much discussion and further research, the Mayfield GB took the decision to join the ELA, subject to proper consultation and due diligence. The discussions of the Governing Body are minuted and available to read on the Mayfield School website.

**QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM ATTENDEES OF THE MEETINGS***1. What are the benefits of joining ELA for Mayfield?*

The shared resources of a mutually supportive group of local schools who will work together to guarantee the success of the Trust.

A dedicated Chief Executive and central team on whom the school could call for advice and support in regulatory compliance, preparation for Ofsted inspection, SEND, HR, finance and budget setting, curriculum support, legal advice, IT and much more. Location was an important criterion in our selection of trusts; effective sharing of resources is much easier in schools local to each other.

When we call for support it would be given by people who are employed in the schools in important roles in safeguarding etc

In joining ELA, the Governors believe we are securing a future for Mayfield where we will be supported to provide the best education that we can. It is in the interests of ELA to ensure the success of all its schools.

The values of ELA align very well with those of Mayfield and the schools of ELA all have their own individual character.

The benefits of through-school education are widely recognised; in providing sixth form options as well as admitting another primary into the Trust, ELA would be guaranteeing 4 - 18 educational provision, which is one of its guiding principles.

ELA has a good track record of school improvement and educational excellence. Chesterton CC is the principal feed school for Mayfield and we already enjoy a very good working relationship with Chesterton and to a lesser extent Impington VC, the destination school for some of our leavers.

*2. Things are often managed much more efficiently and economically in a smaller setting. There is an optimal size of organisation, large enough to be strong and sustainable but small enough to guarantee good systems, working relationships and productivity. A parallel example was drawn with healthcare settings. Joining the ELA would have a lot of benefits, so why would Mayfield not join?**3. Will the staff have the same employment conditions within the ELA?*

Yes; the ELA follow the same pay scales as Mayfield for both teaching and support staff (The Burgundy and Green Books, respectively). Staff contracts would be protected under the provisions of TUPE which would mean their pay and conditions were guaranteed unless they changed their role or took on new responsibilities once within the Trust.

As part of our due diligence, we have asked to see specimen ELA staff contracts.

*4. Is the ELA a charity?*

The ELA is not a registered charity but it has charitable status. The Articles of Association can be viewed on the Eastern Learning Alliance website: [www.tela.org.uk](http://www.tela.org.uk) under Information / Governance / Policies and Documents. These make clear that the Trust is obliged to apply its income for the pursuance of its educational objects alone. The Trustees are appointed to ensure that these objects are met across the Trust.

*5. It is a big change to transfer the land and buildings of the school to the Trustees of the ELA: what safeguards are there?*

The Mayfield land is protected under current legislation, passed to prevent the selling off of school playing fields. The duties of the Trustees are onerous; they are not remunerated; they are the governing body of the whole Trust and one Trustee has a primary school responsibility. Details of who the Trustees are can be found under Governance on the ELA website and the Articles of Association make the duties and checks and balances on the scope of the Trustees very clear. Ultimately an academy trust is responsible to the Department for Education, as the funding body.

*6. If both parties wish to go ahead, what is the process?*

At the outset, once a decision had been taken to open the consultation, Mayfield registered an interest with the Department for Education (DFE). This alerts the DFE to the need for a person at the department to be allocated should our application go ahead. Once the consultation period closes on Sunday 16th November, a report will be made on the results for the Governors and the

Mayfield GB will meet on Thursday 20th November. They will consider what has come out of the consultation and if they deem it right to proceed, a formal application will be made to the DFE. The DFE then sends the application forward to the Regional Headteacher Board, which performs the function of the former Regional Schools' Commissioner. If the application is approved by that Board, eg in the Spring Term, the two parties will work together on the agreements which will transfer Mayfield into the Trust.

*7. Would the transfer take place at the beginning of the new academic year?*

Ideally, yes, since that would make for a neat start to the new year but there are many factors which could slow the process. The transfer of land is a major issue and here we are reliant on the Local Authority for the provision of information. It is not certain when the Regional Headteacher Board will accommodate any application on their agenda. The process of due diligence is ongoing; indeed we have begun this already as there is so much to research and consider and it takes months to get all the documentation required. The DFE will ask for certain information at different times and they have the final say in whether or not this can go ahead. Moreover, If during this process, either Mayfield or ELA found something that would delay or cause them to leave the process, they could do so. The point from which neither party can recede is the granting of the order to academise by the DFE.

*8. Are there any lessons to be learned from the journey of Girton Glebe?*

We have had informal discussions with the Head and Chair of Governors at Girton Glebe and the Head there arranged for a group of our staff to go and talk to Girton Glebe staff about what it was like to work in an ELA primary. Girton Glebe is currently the only mainstream primary in the ELA. Both the Head and Chair of Governors were very positive and stated that there were no real down-sides for them. Prior to joining ELA, the school had a falling roll, was in deficit and was having to make cuts in its provision. The ELA has enabled them to retain a class-per-year structure, instead of having to merge year groups, and pupil numbers have risen and student outcomes are improving rapidly.

*9. What were the drivers in January 2025 to reopen the conversations about academisation?*

The timing has to some extent been driven by budget. Mayfield's deficit means that an effective plan for recovery would be set for the medium term, about three years. At present we have the option to choose and be considered seriously by a medium-sized, local academy trust. If our deficit were to grow and costs continue to rise, we would greatly reduce our scope for choice. Mayfield feels that it has been weathering adverse conditions of reduced funding, greater costs, loss of autonomy and reduction of support from the Local Authority for a few years now and that things will likely get worse. There is a draft government paper on SEND funding and provision but its publication has been delayed and there is no immediate prospect of a significant rise in school funding. It would be far better to join a family of local schools working together to achieve excellent outcomes across the Trust and provide the best education to our children.

*10. Does Mayfield not already have a supportive network of local schools? Would it still be able to work with these schools if it became part of ELA?*

Mayfield belongs to the CB4 Cluster of local schools and meetings take place with local Heads, subject leads and SEND specialists. This is helpful but takes time, particularly for the teaching staff. Girton Glebe is still a member of the Cluster and Mayfield would also remain so but the closer ties within an academy trust would mean that we would get much more of the support we need from within ELA and we would work closely with Girton Glebe.

*11. I understand that getting stronger support for Mayfield is a driver of the decision but why ELA? What support can it offer?*

See the answer to q. 1 above.

The close relationship between Chesterton CC and Mayfield is a very important factor. Chesterton has given us feedback on more than one occasion on how well rounded Mayfield leavers are and how well prepared for secondary school. Transition from primary to secondary would be enhanced and we will have the resources of secondary experts on occasions to provide enrichment opportunities for Mayfield children, including trips and visits. A couple of years ago a Deputy Head from Chesterton was seconded to work with Mayfield and to assist with transition. This was very helpful. We maintain a broad and balanced curriculum at Mayfield and this would remain the case, with wider opportunities in the arts and STEM subjects, as well as sport. We

have had access to the specially adapted Forest School at Girton Glebe and we are close to Impington VC, the Cavendish School, Chesterton CC and Girton Glebe, so that sharing resources creatively can really work. Our own staff have acquired considerable expertise in their fields, so there will be professional development and training opportunities for them within ELA.

*12. In your conversations so far with ELA, do you know what changes they will make?*

There is no doubt that changes will take place if we join ELA but the main changes will be felt at senior management/governance level. The governors will re-form as the Local Governing Body; each school has a LGB. There will be no reporting committees to the LGB as there are at present and the focus of the LGB will be on the educational provision at Mayfield and the outcomes for the pupils. The Trust Board has oversight of the whole trust and all its functions and the Scheme of Delegation is published under the Information/Governance page of the ELA website. Our senior management team would report to the Chief Executive. It is hoped that the changes would be felt least by the children and you, their parents. ELA is committed to delivering good education and it would promote and support the successful aspects of Mayfield, so that we continue to feed the secondaries of the Trust.

Due diligence is a long process and it is a mutual one. The Governors will advocate for the strengths of Mayfield and work to ensure that the changes are positive for us.

*13. If ELA agrees to absorb Mayfield's deficit, how will it do so without making cuts at Mayfield?*

The ELA would take a medium-term risk in admitting Mayfield with a deficit budget. The ELA would work with us, as they have with Girton Glebe, to put plans in place for a recovery from deficit over a period. The detail of those plans will have to be negotiated but one way in which the Trust helped Girton Glebe was not to top-slice its budget initially and gradually the deficit is reducing, with the support of the Trust's Finance Team and the provision of central services to the school. There are also economies of scale to be achieved through central purchasing and negotiation of contracts.

*14. The extended holidays will make a difference to parents, especially those with SEND children, since it can often be difficult to find holiday club places for the children and to have to find the extra dates will increase the problem. Will our holidays be longer if we join ELA?*

All schools within ELA follow the same term dates and this means an increase of holiday of five days a year. These are two additional days at autumn half term and three days at Christmas. ELA undertakes to provide Mayfield parents subsidised childcare/holiday places for the additional days of holiday. ELA has no admission criteria for holiday clubs and for children with specific SEND needs, they will be happy to liaise individually to support parents.

*15. It has been helpful to hear the discussion this evening. I feel that parents needed more information. We would appreciate regular communications on the academisation. What happens once the consultation closes? Could it be reopened?*

The consultation remains open online until the end of Sunday 16th November. It is an integral part of the process required by the DFE although there are no guidelines on how long the consultation should take or its exact form. We have already had a good number of responses from parents and staff and the Governors will take a view of the results at a meeting shortly after the closure of the consultation period. It is unlikely that we would reopen the consultation but we hope that communication between Mayfield and the parent body will continue throughout the process, if we decide to take it forward. Due diligence continues beyond the consultation period and there would still be opportunity for either party to withdraw if they felt thus necessary.

*16. What would cause governors to stop the process?*

If there were a substantial majority of staff and parents expressing dissatisfaction and objecting to the process on well-founded factual grounds, the Governors would be unlikely to continue. It is important to take the whole school with us on this journey. What makes the school, is the people in it and if numbers were to leave, that would change the school. This is a risk factor but we hope that people will embrace a positive change and work with us to ensure its success. The experience of Girton Glebe has been a positive one and we hope that parents will continue to support Mayfield into a new phase of its development.

Also it must not be forgotten that this is a two-way process; ELA's Trustees have agreed to take things forward with us but they too have to satisfy their own process of due diligence.

*17. The PTA has worked hard to revive a strong community spirit at Mayfield over recent years and it has succeeded through running many events and engaging a wide range of parents. If we join ELA, would the PTA still be able to decide its fundraising priorities for Mayfield or would ELA be able to influence them?*

It is very true that we have a very active and successful PTA at Mayfield which is raising money for a number of enhancements to the school which have been decided by the PTA in consultation with the school. It has raised an impressive sum already and, equally importantly, has created many social opportunities and fun events which engage the school and the wider community. The PTA helps Mayfield project a very positive image into the local community. ELA would not change this in any way. Each school within the Trust has its own PTA (sometimes called by another name, eg Friends of Girton Glebe, FOGG or Chesterton PTFA Parent Teachers and Friends Association). These organisations have an independent status and their funds are protected for the particular school only. Mayfield's PTA has charitable status and by definition can only raise money for Mayfield. The management of ELA could not influence this in any way and the Mayfield Head and staff would continue to negotiate over the best application of PTA funds to benefit the Mayfield children only.

If you look at the ELA website, there are a number of newsletters and these detail the many activities that go on in the different schools and you will see the different PTAs mentioned in connection with some of the events.

*18. Do you know of other local primaries who are considering joining an academy trust?*

We cannot really speak for other schools but another driver to reopen our conversations about academisation in January 2025 arose from a CB4 Cluster Heads' Meeting. It is clear that a number of local schools are experiencing increasing pressures and are in need of wider support.

*19. If we do not academise now, would we be losing an opportunity which might be seized by another school?*

That is possible. Too large a deficit is a threat to any school and an opportunity may be lost if we do not make the move soon.

*20. What are your two biggest concerns about making this move - as Head, as Governors?*

Head - once we make the move we cannot turn back; we would never be able to revert to our current status if we wanted to at some point in the future.

However thoroughly we carry out our due diligence, there can always be some change which we cannot foresee but we can only act on what we know at present and we must plan for the future.

Governors - there is a risk that some parents and some staff may not like the change and will leave but we would hope that they will have faith in us and stay with us to do the best we can for the school.

There will be a loss of autonomy, especially for the Governors but at present we have increasing external pressures on our decision making and our costs and budget are determined to a great extent by the Local Authority.

*21. Will you be telling the next cohort of prospective parents about this process; it may affect their decision to join the school.*

There are two Open Mornings coming up this week and next. The Head will certainly speak to attendees about this process and the point we have reached so far. She can encourage prospective parents to look at the Consultation website, the published Minutes of the Mayfield GB and to contact the Governors about the process if they have queries or comments.

Thank you to all parents and carers who attended and participated in such wide-ranging discussion.

Please keep your comments and questions coming on the consultation website:

**[www.mayfield-consultation.org.uk](http://www.mayfield-consultation.org.uk)**

