



Department  
for Education

Regional Schools Commissioner,  
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Email: [RSC.North@education.gov.uk](mailto:RSC.North@education.gov.uk)

5 December 2016

By email:

Dear Kevin

## **EASINGWOLD SCHOOL**

Thank you for your letter dated 21 November.

Like you and your constituents I share an absolute commitment to the young people of Easingwold to secure a viable and well managed school where they will succeed, and in which parents and the community can have pride and confidence.

Sadly this has not been the case at Easingwold for some considerable time.

Over a period of seven years, three successive OFSTED inspections deemed the school to 'Require Improvement', culminating most recently (September 2016) in a "Special Measures" judgement that the school is inadequate in all areas.

There is too a rapidly-growing revenue deficit - projected to reach £2.2m in five years – and a neglected building stock which could take at least £2m to rectify. Easingwold needs a strong sponsor with a track record of success and the capacity to impinge on both quality and infrastructure.

As RSC, my response in this situation is determined by legislation.

Under the Education and Adoption Act 2016, the Regional Schools Commissioner has a duty to make a directive academy order requiring a school placed in Special Measures to become an academy, and to identify a sponsor able to bring about rapid and sustainable improvement.

Responding to your specific questions:

1. What other options and which other multi academy trusts were also brought into consideration?

We explored the potential of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) in the region, considering:

- their capacity to deal with the scale and nature of financial and academic matters;
- their track-record of school improvement in comparable institutions.

We gave full consideration to each Trust: no local MATs met the criteria for success, while Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) was selected on the basis of its proven track-

record in delivering outstanding education, and their demonstrated ability to turn schools around quickly.

2. Were the specific local needs of the school taken into account when making the decision?

Yes. We understand the strength of feeling in Easingwold, and the place the school has in the community. OGAT already has an academy in Ripon, where it has both worked with the community and secured immediate improvements. We are equally confident in their ability to work here.

We also recognise that OGAT can't assume full and immediate responsibility: progress, particularly on the building work, will be made only with the full co-operation and involvement of North Yorkshire County Council as the Chair of Governors makes clear in the appended letter.

3. What consideration was given to potential accusations of a conflict of interest, given that Sir Michael Wilkins, Chief Executive of Outwood Academies, sits on the board responsible for this decision?

The DfE take potential conflicts of interest very seriously, with robust process to guard against them - as we made clear earlier to the local authority when they raised the same concern.

All conflicts of interest are identified at the beginning of every headteacher board meeting. Sir Michael did not attend the board meeting at which this issue was discussed, nor was he sent any relevant papers. (Minutes of the headteacher board will be published in due course).

4. I understand that Outwood Academies would formally take responsibility for the school in September 2017. If this is the case, why is it that new uniforms and changes to the ties and external signage are being made immediately?

Can I refer again to the attached letter from the Easingwold Chair of Governors - identifying the tone and warmth with which the school, OGAT and NYCC are working together, but also explaining the context and timescale against which decisions on integration are being phased in.

We will continue to work closely with all parties to support the school in its crucial journey of improvement.

We value your interest and engagement, and look forward to your continuing support in getting this right. With thanks and best regards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Renou'.

**Jan Renou**  
**Regional Schools Commissioner for the North**