

26th November 2018

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing to update you on the issues concerning the re-brokerage of Seva School with a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

You will recall that the Trust made detailed representations to the DfE, asking the DfE to re-consider the re-brokerage to an alternative MAT.

The Regional School's Commissioner (RSC) responded to the Trust's representations by letter dated 9 November 2018 with the decision to proceed with the re-brokerage to Nishkam Schools Trust, and notice was given that the termination of the Trust's funding agreement would take effect on 1 January 2019.

The reaction to the proposed re-brokerage from parents, staff, local and national Sikh faith bodies has been very significant and we have had an overwhelming response against the DfE's proposal to re-broker the school to Nishkam, for the reasons set out below.

As would be expected in respect of any dedicated faith school, Seva School's faith is a fundamental part of its vision and values and when it opened in 2014, the community expected that its designation would be properly protected. The parents and community had a legitimate expectation that Seva School would be a Sikh faith school in every sense, not a multi faith school. Changes to Seva School's ethos would cause significant disruption and unrest both for the school and amongst the wider community and represent a very definite departure from the Sikh faith academy we promised.

The Trust accepts that Seva School should be re-brokered to a multi-academy trust to ensure effective improvement and the best outcomes for the pupils. However, it has yet to see any evidence as to why the placement with Nishkam is the sole way of achieving this. The Trust is aware that there are other Sikh faith multi academy trusts which would be capable of bringing about rapid improvement, without detriment to the school's faith and ethos and that of its key stakeholders. By way of example, The Khalsa Academies Trust ("KAT") has a religious ethos and values which are closely aligned with Seva School, and would seem an obvious better fit for the purposes of maintaining and developing the positive aspects of this ethos. KAT has significant experience and a strong track record in successfully turning around inadequate schools, and has both the capacity and capability to take on a school in special measures. KAT has already engaged with Seva School, including attending a public meeting regarding the re-brokerage.

Notwithstanding the above, the RSC has provided no evidence that KAT has even been considered as an option for re-brokerage and no reasons have been given for the RSC's refusal to engage with KAT, nor any other multi-academy trust, despite the clear preference for KAT as a sponsor shown by the Trust, staff, parents and Sikh faith bodies.

In the absence of proper consideration of Seva School's Sikh designation and a failure to provide any clear explanation as to why KAT has not been considered as a sponsor, the Trust and the Parents of Seva School Action Group are in legal correspondence with the DfE and have asked the DfE to pause the process of re-brokerage to Nishkam, pending further consideration of the issues.

The Trust has reiterated to the DfE that it is keen to be co-operative with all stakeholders and will take such further steps as required in the best interests of pupils.

We are very proud of the way SEVA school welcomes and educates pupils of all backgrounds, different faiths and no faith. We are a fully inclusive school and we support all of the fundamental British values of democracy, tolerance, rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith. This was verified by OfSTED.

'Pupils welcome those pupils who have joined the school as a result of exclusion or managed moves from other schools. Pupils whose families do not practice the Sikh faith said they are fully accepted and equally valued by staff and other pupils. The school's core 'Seva' (selfless service) values are at the heart of the life of the school.' (OfSTED November 2017)

We will write to you again with developments.

In the meantime, we can assure you that our focus remains on providing the highest level of education to all the pupils and for this very reason, we have asked the DfE and Nishkam to pause the takeover process until DfE have considered the alternative proposals we have put forward, namely a re-brokerage to KAT.

Yours faithfully

Board of Trustees
Sevak Education Trust