Thank you to everyone who attended the staff and parent meetings on Monday. We set out below a series of answers to the questions posed at those meetings and to various others we have been asked this week.

We were grateful for the opportunity to outline the scale of the challenge ahead of us at the school and the need to take some important and difficult decisions in order to accelerate the progress that has already begun.

It was clear that the mood amongst parents is not supportive of the ongoing campaign to disrupt the school, that parents are tired of strike action and rhetoric and want a period of calm and stability to allow us to work alongside the leadership team to make a positive difference.

**Q: Is it certain that the school will join United Learning?**

Yes. The Secretary of State has made his final decision. It will not be reversed.

**Q: How can you reassure us that you will be able to turn the school around?**

We only go into schools where we feel we can help young people.

We are familiar with the challenges faced by The John Roan School. They are significant but can, and will, be overcome.

**Q: How long will it take for the school to be turned around?**

There is not a fixed timeframe for improvement. Every school is different. To enable a turnaround, however, you need the right staff, good behaviour across a school and the appropriate environment and culture.

At present, we know that many staff feel drained and oppressed by a culture of industrial action and negativity. Nobody enjoys working somewhere where they do not feel free to be positive about the future.

Likewise, there are some serious issues with pupil behaviour that, as parents have told us, need to be addressed quickly.

Change and improvement will begin immediately but to be sustainable, must be well-planned, well-explained and well-executed. We would expect to see a notable improvement at the school within a few months and would hope that the school will be considerably further on its way to becoming permanently ‘Good’ within a year.

**Q: What position are United Learning in to hit the ground running in September?**

Since the announcement was made, we have been working closely with Cath Smith and her team at the school to start making a positive difference.
There is a great deal to be done. The TUPE process for staff will take place during this half term ready for the school to join us formally on 1st September.

We are beginning work this week on the curriculum and looking at exactly where we are with staffing in the school.

A key priority this side of the summer holidays is to ensure that students going into Year 11 and Year 13 in September have access to the resources and teaching they need for the year ahead. We are currently putting our subject specialists in touch with the heads of each department so that they can look carefully at teaching and the curriculum. This has already happened in English, maths and science.

After Christmas, Year 11’s will take part in mock exams along with thousands of children from United Learning schools across the country. This will tell us where students are doing well and where they need to improve and also give parents a good idea of how their children are doing in a national context.

This term we will begin planning the changes needed to address low level behaviour at the school that disrupts lessons.

We will also begin working with the Head and leadership team to identify means of successfully resolving the school’s serious financial predicament.

**Q: What will you do about the school’s current deficit? Will restructuring take place?**

It is not unusual for schools to join United Learning whilst dealing with the problems of a deficit.

We do believe it is possible to balance a school’s budget by taking actions that will not negatively impact on children’s learning or extra-curricular provision at the school. It will be challenging, however, but ultimately possible.

We will conduct a thorough review of the school’s finances and work out where savings can be made. Because of our size, we have the capacity for economies of scale and to make savings for our schools on areas of expense such as IT equipment and energy provision.

Whilst we do not have yet any set restructuring plans for The John Roan, it is likely that staff savings will have to be made in some way – not because the school is changing its status but because the budget is so far from balanced. However, we hope it will be possible to get the staffing right without making any compulsory redundancies.

Issues such as the number of supply teachers, staff absences and days lost to industrial action all contribute to the costs of running a school. Likewise, the more children who attend a school, the higher the funding the school receives. The sooner The John Roan improves, the more popular it will be with local families and the greater the funding it will receive. This is unlikely to happen whilst the school is still subject to uncertainty, division and industrial action.

**Q. How can you prevent those campaigning against academisation from disrupting the school?**

Unfortunately, we cannot.
We can assure parents and staff that we will remain fully committed to supporting the Head and leadership team in doing what is right and necessary in order to resolve its current financial and staffing challenges and bring the outcomes its pupils receive up to acceptable levels.

The campaigners need to understand that they do not represent the school community and that their actions are directly and negatively impacting on the education the children receive.

**Q: What will be done about disruption caused by strikes?**

We can’t stop strike action from taking place – that is up to the unions. However, we work closely with the unions in schools across our Group and have always previously had a good working relationship with them.

We hope that we can build a positive relationship with the unions at The John Roan so that the children and their education are not negatively impacted any more.

**Q: How will you tackle poor behaviour at the school?**

In the long term, good behaviour is maintained through great teaching.

In order to create this culture of good behaviour we will assist the school in implementing a strict but fair behaviour system that is suitable for the students.

Parents and children will receive an explanation about behaviour policy and how students are expected to conduct themselves in the classroom and around school. If a student is displaying disruptive behaviour in lessons, they will be given two clear warnings. If the poor behaviour continues, they will be asked to leave the classroom. Students will go to a separate room supervised by a teacher, where they will do relevant curriculum-based work.

This behaviour system will take time to introduce – probably over a whole half term. In the early stages, the number of children who are sent out of lessons may be quite high. However, after a term this number will dramatically decrease. Those few children who continue to misbehave will receive more intense support. They will not be written off.

Our intention with this behaviour policy is not to stifle children or restrict their individuality. As any responsible parent or staff member will agree, the most important thing is to give teachers a non-disruptive environment where they can teach and students a safe environment where they can learn.

**Q: Do you have a policy of ‘rank order’?**

No. Publishing children’s rank order is not a Group policy – it is up to each Head as to whether they want to follow the practice.

Some of our schools have adopted it, others haven’t. We believe that Heads should run schools so it is always a decision made at school level.
In schools where the policy is implemented, however, it has been very successful. It is planned and introduced carefully and sensitively. Any parent who doesn’t want their child’s results listed on rank order can opt out but are still able to access the results privately.

**Q: Will SEND funding be cut by United Learning?**

No. SEND funding is completely ring-fenced and will continue to be spent on the children for whom it is intended.

We also have lots of Group resources that The John Roan will be able to access to aid SEND provision.

**Q: Will there be changes in the curriculum for Year 9 options?**

We hope not but are currently looking carefully at this with the leadership team. There are a couple of subjects for which we do not currently have teachers for next year. We are looking to address and remedy this situation as soon as possible. If there are any changes to options choices, the school will discuss this with parents and let them know as soon as possible.

**Q: What are your plans for the Sixth Form?**

We are of course carrying on the Sixth Form. The school may need to take some decisions about the curriculum provision due to the predicted size of the cohort. But, now there is certainty and stability within the school, it will be easier to attract Year 11s to join the Sixth Form.

**Q: Will United Learning hold heads of department accountable for poor results next year?**

We will not expect Heads of department to perform miracles within a year. Of course staff must be held accountable to some extent; however we will provide as much support to staff as necessary to ensure that they can provide high quality teaching and do their best for every child.

**Q: Will there be subject advisors across all subjects?**

Currently, we have subject advisors for a range of subjects but not every. We are continuing to grow our subject adviser team as we grow the Group, to increase subject coverage.

**Q: Will staff be divided between those on TUPE and those on United Learning contracts?**

Staff on TUPE contracts will not be treated differently from staff on United Learning contracts. Contrary to the misinformation that has been spread, neither set of staff will have longer contracted working weeks than the other. All will benefit from 3 extra INSET days.

**Q: If restructuring takes place, will staff on TUPE contracts have to switch to a United Learning contract?**

Staff on TUPE contracts can choose to take on a United Learning contract, as many do, but would only have to switch to a United Learning contract if they take on a different role.
Q: What are you doing about the staff recruitment/supply teacher problem at The John Roan?

As a result of the uncertainty over the past few months, it has been difficult for the school to recruit staff. Now that the school has become a part of United Learning, it should be easier to attract staff and we are working closely with the leadership team to get all vacancies filled by September.

Q: How will United Learning support teachers at the school?

This has been a very anxious period for staff and some are understandably worried about the transition process; however, in our experience, as the process goes on, staff will become less concerned about the change as they see how they are going to benefit from United Learning’s professional support.

The TUPE meetings we are holding for staff will help them to understand the changes and enable them to get answers to their questions. We hope NEU will now allow their members to start attending those meetings.

Bringing in systems to improve student behaviour and tackle low level disruption will also help teachers by giving them the opportunity to teach.

Q: Will funding for low income families continue?

Yes. No family will be out of pocket as a result of this change.

Q: Does United Learning support enrichment and extra-curricular activities?

Yes. A key component of our education model, the ‘Framework for Excellence’ is ‘Education with Character’. If you want to see examples of how our schools support this, go on Twitter and search #educationwithcharacter.

Q: What will happen to the school fields?

There will be no change. The fields will remain the property of The John Roan Foundation.

Q: What can parents do to support the transition?

We need a period of stability to get on with the improvement that is needed and which parents are rightly demanding and expecting.

Do what every good parent does - tell your children to work hard, behave well and be kind to one another!