

## HOLMBUSH PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Primary academy developments: Outcome of consultation

#### Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to summarise the outcome of the consultation regarding the proposal that Holmbush Primary becomes an academy as part of the University of Brighton Academies Trust.

#### Background

2. There is a legal requirement for a school's governing body to undertake a consultation on whether the school should become an academy and, in the case of a sponsored academy arrangement, to invite views on the proposed arrangements. The consultation ran between Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2014 and Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and included a variety of activities, specifically:
  - A letter sent to the school's members of staff, parents/carers (and prospective parents/carers) of pupils, and members of the local community providing information regarding the consultation process;
  - The circulation of a hard copy consultation brochure to these groups, including a hard copy questionnaire inviting views on the proposals;
  - The publication of consultation information on the University of Brighton Academies Trust website (<http://www.brighton.ac.uk/academiestrust/consultation/holmbush-primary-school/index.aspx>) as well as on the school's website; this included access to an online questionnaire inviting views on the proposals;
  - An informal playground event with parents, which provided them with the opportunity to ask questions about the proposals (with participation from approximately 30 parents/carers), attended by representatives from the Trust on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014
  - Consultation meeting with members of staff from the school (attended by 14 members of staff) on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014;
  - A consultation meeting with parents/carers and members of the community of the school (attended by 20 parents/community members), held on the same date as the staff meeting;
  - Consultation activities with pupils in the school.

#### Outcomes of consultation activities

##### 3. *Hard copy and online questionnaires*

- (i) **15 hard copy questionnaires** were received:
  - **14 were from parents/carers** (including 4 who also have other children who are prospective pupils and 1 who is a member of staff);
  - **1 was from a member of staff** (including 1 who is also a parent/carer);

There were 11 online questionnaires, nine from parents/carers and two from members of staff.

There were no questionnaires received from pupils or members of the local community.

- (ii) The summary of the responses to the question 'Do you agree with the proposal that the school becomes an academy?' is:

Respondent	Yes	No	Undecided	No response	Total
Parents/carers	17 (74%)	1 (4%)	5 (22%)	0	23
Staff	2 (67%)	0	1 (33%)	0	3
Pupil	0	0	0	0	0
Community	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 (73%)</b>	<b>1 (4%)</b>	<b>6 (23%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26</b>

(iii) Comments explaining respondents' answers included:

<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p><i>Improved support/resources, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I feel at times this school struggles to cope financially and with support from education itself. Hopefully this will bring us more in line with other schools in the area."</li> <li>• "I think it is a positive step which will give the school better academic resources, whilst retaining identity."</li> </ul> <p><i>New opportunities/freedoms, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I feel the benefits of Holmbush Primary becoming an academy will enhance the growth / developments and resources plus give the school more freedom to how they invest the school funds accordingly to benefit all parties."</li> </ul> <p><i>School improvement, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I think the level of support created by becoming an academy can only be a positive."</li> <li>• "I think it's going to be of huge benefit to the school and to the education of my children. I would rather the school make this choice than OFSTED enforce in the future."</li> <li>• "It will be better for students".</li> <li>• "I feel really it effect the children's education and they will improve more. I feel it will be good for the children's future".</li> <li>• "I feel my child will be more confident in the future about getting a good job".</li> </ul> <p><i>Support for the University of Brighton Academies Trust, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Better support from UoB compared to WSCC."</li> <li>• "Having attended the meeting on the 19th November, I think that the proposed partnership would be hugely beneficial to all concerned. I can think of no better partnership for our children's school than a non-profit organisation with such a great record of providing excellent training in the field of education."</li> <li>• I believe local authority support for schools has changed a lot over the last 5 years, schools need support and can benefit from sharing resources and best practice. Brighton uni has an excellent reputation and I hope it will lead to the school becoming outstanding in its next ofsted and improvements in the standard of teaching and the curriculum offered."</li> <li>• "I think it is better to have choice with regards which Trust to choose rather and having less choice due to the fact we have waited too long."</li> </ul>
<p><b>No</b></p> <p><i>Perceived lack of benefit of academy status, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "There is no clear reason why the school has decided to look into becoming an academy, I'm wondering why? Would the school not continue to flourish in its current status?"</li> <li>• "I have seen no real benefits to the children at Holmbush School by becoming an academy".</li> </ul>
<p><b>Undecided</b></p> <p><i>Undecided about academy policy generally, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Not sure what changes for the good this will do for the children of Holmbush School."</li> <li>• "I am still unsure of benefits Brighton University hope to gain. Naturally, making a move into the (somewhat) unknown causes unrest. I am keen to hold on to the Holmbush identity and hope that the staff are able to work together to continue to develop our uniqueness within a National Framework that gives all children similar opportunities. Although the idea of curriculum freedom does hold an appeal, I do worry about the inconsistency that could occur for young people moving between schools who may have completely different curriculums."</li> <li>• "Not really had a chance to properly understand the pros and cons and why this is needed/necessary"</li> </ul>

- (iv) In response to questions asking respondents to identify the most important things that would make the academies good schools for pupils, staff and everyone, the following were identified as the most popular:

<b>Pupils (22 responses)</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Total Score<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Overall Rank</b>
Higher standards	95	1
Meeting individual pupils' needs	43	2
New curriculum freedoms	37	3
Better discipline	24	4
Other	14	5

<b>Staff (22 responses)</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Total Score<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Overall Rank</b>
Better opportunities for professional development	104	1
School improvement support from the Trust	103	2
Curriculum support from the University of Brighton	96	3
Opportunities to share good practice with other academies	71	4
Access to University of Brighton research	62	5
Other	26	6

<b>Everyone (22 responses)</b>		
<b>Item</b>	<b>Total Score<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Overall Rank</b>
Better support services	97	1
Better value for money	74	2
More community use	66	3
Closer links to secondary academies	61	4
Other	35	5

- (v) The summary of the responses to the question 'Would you like your child to come to the new academy?' (which was designed for parents/carers of a pupil who may be coming to the school) is:

	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
Yes	75%	9
No	8%	1
Undecided	17%	2

- (vi) The summary of the responses to the question 'Are you content with the proposed governing body arrangements?' is:

	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
Yes	56%	14
No	4%	1
Undecided	40%	10

- (vii) Other Comments

- I came away from the meeting with a very positive outlook on Holmbush partnering with the University of Brighton. For me, the most exciting and relevant aspect of the proposal is the fact that our children's education will be in the hands of experts whose only business is the pursuit of excellent learning experiences. This can only be better than involvement with companies motivated by profit or local government which looks increasingly unable to provide the necessary level of support and expertise.  
I'm sure that the new partnership will benefit both children and staff, and also the University - and

<sup>1</sup> Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.

that children's understanding of the basics will improve. I especially love the idea that there will be more freedom to include creative and practical activities in the curriculum, as I firmly believe that these are the things that children benefit most from during their school years.

- I would like to see a bigger focus on sport at Holmbush. The current provisions are very weak compared to other schools. I also think the school is carrying some staff that need greater access to development or they need to be moved on.  
Communication in general from the school is patchy, and is something a lot of parents find frustrating.  
The school needs to be better at dealing with challenges from parents, my experience of questioning anything is that you are usually met with a "this is the way it is" approach and it could be more consultative and engage parents a lot more.
- I was very impressed with the talks we have received from the Trust, giving their vision for the school and as a small school I believe it is the best way forward for us, sharing good practice and curriculum support from the University.
- I think this is an opportunity not to be missed for Holmbush pupils as they are the ones that count.

4. The full list of issues raised and responses provided during the formal consultation meetings held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014 are provided in Annex 1.

## Conclusion

5. The consultation process has indicated a positive degree of support overall for the proposal that Holmbush becomes an academy school. Specifically, 73% of responses to the consultation questionnaires agreed with the proposal to become an academy.
6. Across the full range of consultation activities, there is no strong evidence that there is significant disagreement with the proposal. Specifically, 4% of responses to the consultation questionnaires disagreed with the proposal to become an academy (with 23% of respondents undecided).

## **Annex 1 – Summary of formal consultation meetings**

### **1. Consultation meeting with staff (Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014, 3.30pm – 4.30pm)**

The issues and queries raised at the staff meeting (and the responses provided) were:

**Q1: Who is responsible for the land?**

A1: The local authority owns the land and leases it to the Trust for 125 years.

**Q2: Is it the Trust who decides what happens to the building?**

A2: Yes, but this will be in conjunction with the school.

**Q3: What happens to services which the school currently uses? Such as the NHS service for the school.**

A3: If the school converts to an academy, it will have the choice of which services it uses, and if necessary can look elsewhere than to the local authority for these services. They could be purchased at a cheaper rate or there may be services which the school needs that aren't provided by the local authority.

In Hastings one of the schools suggested using the Medical School at the University of Brighton to help the schools and give the teachers some additional training for SEN provision.

**Q4: Would the local authority still be responsible for admissions?**

A4: The Trust will become the admissions authority if the school becomes an academy.

**Q5: What about SEN admissions?**

A5: The local authority continues to be responsible for SEN pupils. The Trust would co-ordinate with the local authority but ultimately the Trust would have control over the admissions.

**Q6: Can you pick and choose which pupils to accept when you hold control regarding admissions?**

A6: We would keep the same admissions criteria as are already in place. However if the school is at capacity, the local authority would not be able to force the school to accept any more pupils. The Trust has to comply with the Fair Access Protocol regarding admissions, but the local authority would not be able to force the school to admit pupils.

**Q7: Holmbush already takes a lot of School of Education students from the University of Brighton. Would we still have a say in the students which we take?**

A7: Yes, of course. The success of Holmbush and the pupils are the biggest priority. The University of Brighton will respond to the needs of the school.

**Q8: What will the Trust gain from the school?**

A8: In the past, the School of Education has been inward facing. A decision was made to forge new partnerships which are mutually beneficial to the University and the schools they are working with. Things such as curriculum design and research can benefit both the University and teachers in general. To improve these, the University needs to work alongside teachers and learn from them, in the same way that teachers can learn from the educational improvements which come out of the University. The University will offer to help the teachers at the school and ask how they can help improve the school.

**Q9: How visible will the Trust be at the school?**

A9: We will be as visible as you want us to be. The Trust wants to help the school and will be constantly asking how we can.

At the informal meeting in the playground, one of the parents asked if the Trust intervenes at the school. We will offer challenge and support to the school.

**Q10: What happens to the staff's terms and conditions and pensions?**

A 10: When you TUPE transfer from the local authority to the Trust, you transfer on the same terms and conditions as you had before. The Trust may introduce new terms and conditions for new members of staff joining the academy, but current staff will not be affected. Your current pension arrangements will also transfer. The TPS is a national scheme. For support staff, you will continue with the local authority's pension scheme. There will be a separate TUPE consultation in January.

The Trust will always need to offer competitive terms and conditions to staff, especially as more academies open. We want to make sure we retain the best staff at the academy. In Hastings, the Trust has even provided accommodation for some new teachers. Within the Trust, there will also be additional opportunities for training and development, with opportunities for promotion within other Trust schools.

**Q11: What will happen to the school's performance management?**

A11: The Trust's policy follows national appraisal regulations for teachers and therefore performance management will be unchanged.

**Q12: What is the maximum number of academies which the Trust will take on?**

A12: In East Sussex, we currently we have two secondary academies and six primary academies, with another on its way. In West Sussex the schools will be grouped in hubs of around 3 to 5 schools, with a maximum of twenty schools. We want to keep all the schools local to the University.

**Q13: What will happen with Higher Level Teaching Assistants?**

A13: This will be a decision for the local governing body. The current staff structure will transfer to the academy. In our other academies, some of our HLTAs have wanted to become teachers which we have been able to support with.

**2. Public and Parent consultation meeting (Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November, 6.00pm – 7.45pm)**

The issues and queries raised at the meeting for parents/carers and members of the local community (and the responses provided) were:

**Q1: Can you confirm that you are a not for profit organisation? And why the school should join the University of Brighton Academies Trust?**

A1: The Trust is non profit. The Trust will provide some services to the academy but these will be at cost. The University of Brighton has drawn on its own resources to establish the Trust.

We believe the school should join the Trust because of the ways we can provide additional support to the school. John Smith's role is to relay what the schools need to the School of Education at the University of Brighton so that support plans can be put in place.

We want to sponsor Holmbush because it's a good school. The last Ofsted report highlighted the effectiveness of the school's teaching and learning. The University of Brighton has also been a partner of the school for a long time.

**Q2: How will the school link to other local schools if they are with different Trusts and how will you work with the secondary academy?**

A2: All the West Sussex schools are in groups. Holmbush has been part of the Adur schools group since 2008. We have always worked together and still do, even after some of the schools became academies with other Trusts. The schools are still in the same group and continue to work together. We also run forums which we all feed into. For example, we have a transition forum, mostly with the Shoreham Academy and Sir Robert Woodard Academy, but also with other schools, regardless of whether they are academies or local authority schools.

The University wants us to keep these relationships open.

The school is looking for support and challenge, we lost that from the local authority once we were judged as 'Good' by Ofsted.

**Q3: The school has been doing really well recently. Is it because of funding that you want to join the University of Brighton? What opportunities will there be?**

A3: The funding levels at the academy will be the same. However it is about the academy having choice as to where it buys its services from. This does not mean they will all come from the University of Brighton. If a member of staff finds a better value service, that academy can choose to purchase it.

**Q4: Would the school get more funding?**

A4: Only by a small margin, but this is because the local authority currently holds back a portion of the school's funding to provide services to the school. The academy will receive this funding but will also need to purchase the services the local authority would normally provide.

The Trust will provide the academy with its own improvement partner who will work with the staff to determine what the school needs.

To move from a 'Good' school to an 'Outstanding' school is achieved through the quality of teacher training and by recruiting the best trained teachers to the academy.

In Hastings we spoke to our headteachers and asked them what they needed. They told us that they needed improvements in Phonics and Numeracy. We took this request back to the University and they are now providing support to improve these areas. University of Brighton students also help in our academy classrooms. This helps our academies, as well as giving our students first-hand experience.

**Q5: Will the finding for Special Educational Needs change?**

A5: No, the local authority still has to give funding for SEN.

**Q6: Is there anything which the school loses from the local authority that the Trust can't provide?**

A6: The local authority support is currently very limited.

The University of Brighton Academies Trust has not been a sponsor for very long so we are continuing to learn and will keep tailoring ourselves to the needs of the school. As a Trust, we make sure each academy keeps its individual identity rather than forcing one particular way of working. We understand that parents send their children to the school because they like the school as it is; we want to maintain the school's ethos and values.

**Q7: I brought my child to Holmbush because I didn't want to send him to an academy. Academies seem to have gotten worse over time. If the school fails as an academy, what happens?**

A7: The same local people will be running the academy, but with the additional support of the University of Brighton. The proof will come at the next Ofsted inspection: the Trust will be heavily challenged by the DfE and the University has to protect its reputation. We will not do anything that will damage it.

The University wants to work with a small number of schools really well. We do our due diligence before making a decision about which schools to take on and in the past we have rejected schools. The DfE is now very strict over academies; some Trusts are no longer allowed to take on any more schools and the Trust must be within an hour's drive of the academy.

Part of the school's decision making process as to which Trust to join was to ask how many academies the Trust wants to take on. Some Trusts replied over 300. The school did not believe that these Trusts would be beneficial to the school.

**Q8: What has happened about the playing field?**

A8: The local authority has been contacted. A joint use agreement will be prepared as part of this process. The DfE are clear that this issue needs to be resolved.

**Q9: Have you thought about what you will do in the short term?**

A9: The Trust's Director of School Improvement is setting up a series of meetings with the SLT and the governing body to consider the Trust's quality framework. Our Director of Operational Services will also meet with the school to review which services the academy will buy. We have also started all the legal work associated with the academy transfer.

However at the moment we are in consultation so more detailed work will start after this.

**Q10: In terms of facilities management, who is responsible for the land and buildings?**

A10: The land is owned by the local authority but will be leased to the Trust for 125 years. The Trust will be responsible for the maintenance of the building and can choose where it buys services from.

The Trust will apply to the Education Funding Agency for funds if needed, however there will not be any building works as a result of the conversion process.

The University of Brighton has different departments that the school can utilise. In the past we have used the fashion department at the University to help design an academy's uniform as part of the conversion process. It was great for the children and allowed the students to put this into their university portfolio. The University also has purchase power because of its size and gets better rates for services than the school on its own.

**Q11: Will there be any curriculum changes?**

A11: Schools have to teach the core subjects but for the remainder the academy and the Governing Body can choose what they want to teach. The Trust will have a discussion with the school over the options and give advice.

The school has already done a lot of work on its curriculum and teaches some subjects which are not in the curriculum such as Personal, Social and Health Education. We teach what is needed for the pupils and the school is very excited at the prospect of being able to create its own curriculum.

**Q12: What made the Trust take on the Hastings schools that were in trouble?**

A12: The Vice Chancellor of the University of Brighton chaired the local regeneration committee in the town, whose aim was to make improvements in Hastings, which included sponsoring schools. The local authority asked the University to sponsor the schools.

One of the aspects which the school considered when meeting with sponsors is whether they had experience with primary schools. Some only had experience with secondary schools so the school decided to say no to these sponsors.

**Q13: Does this process include proposals for a pre-school?**

A13: Yes.

**Q14: Is there anything that stops this process going forward, and what happens if it is stopped?**

A14: The Department for Education could stop it; the consultation report has to go to the minister for approval.

**Q15: Do you foresee any problems?**

A15: Judging by the information we have received so far, the legal and site issues do not appear to be too complicated. This should make for a smooth transition to academy status. At the moment there is nothing to suggest the academy will not be able to go ahead.

**Q16: How does the staff feel about this process?**

A16: They are positive and excited about it.

**Q17: If the Government changed after the election, would we still need to convert to an academy?**

A17: Yes, due to the law, all schools are still on this academy path. It is not an option to send schools back to the local authority; they do not have the capacity to support the schools.

There is very little difference between the main political parties on this matter. The main difference would be that all teachers have to be qualified; this is something that the Trust holds as high importance anyway.

**Q18: How confident are you that you will meet the deadline for conversion?**

A18: We are very confident that everything will be in place before the Purdah.