



North Tyneside Council

Gill Alexander
**Strategic Director for Children, Young
People and Learning**
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Our Ref: GA/SPW/19.6.13.

Dear Parents/Carers and School Governors

Over recent weeks the Council has been contacted by many parents and carers about the proposal to merge Priory Primary School and Kings School to create an academy. The proposed academy, which would involve the merger of an independent school and a local authority maintained primary school (a state school), is the first of its kind. In view of this high level of interest it is considered appropriate to update you on the current situation and explain the Authority's stance.

As a local authority, we have a duty to all children in North Tyneside and are scrutinising the proposal due to concerns that if it is approved, it will be to the detriment of neighbouring schools. We are therefore carefully considering both the impact of the proposal and the decision-making processes followed by those involved.

Unfortunately, our assessment of the Kings Priory proposal is that it will have a major impact on school provision. The proposal will introduce new places into a school system that is already equipped to meet demand and will impact upon the funding for the local school system. As a result, if the proposal goes ahead the Authority would need to review the current school system and action may be required to reduce the substantial number of spare school places in the Borough that will be created.

We have persistently raised concerns about the consultation process, the accuracy of the financial information relied upon and the decision making exercise conducted by the Governing Body of Priory Primary School. In particular, the Authority considered that individual governors with pecuniary and conflicts of interest did not properly declare those interests and remove themselves from decision making in connection with the proposals. As the Governing Body disregarded the concerns raised by the Authority it was considered appropriate to formally set out the basis for a legal challenge in correspondence to the Governing Body. The Authority is pleased that in response the Governing Body has now agreed to reconsider its key decision in relation to pursuing academy status and that governors with conflicts of interest or pecuniary interests in relation to the decision will not participate in that meeting.

The final decision as to whether or not to approve the academy proposals rests with the Secretary of State for Education. The Authority will continue to press the Secretary of State to seek assurances that the full impact on other schools will be considered prior to determining whether to give final approval to the academy proposals.

The Authority recognises that the proposals have the support of many parents but we have also been contacted by parents and school representatives raising concerns. I hope this letter has clarified the issues involved and helped you to understand the approach taken by the Authority to date.

We have provided some answers to frequently asked questions on our website at www.northtyneside.gov.uk and we will continue to keep that updated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gill Alexander', written in a cursive style.

Gill Alexander
Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Learning