



PROPOSED NEWHAM COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TRUST & ACADEMY CONVERSION OF LISTER, ROKEBY AND SARAH BONNELL SCHOOLS REPORT ON CONSULTATION

Background

The Governing Bodies of Lister, Rokeby and Sarah Bonnell schools agreed in February 2015 to consult upon the proposal for their schools to convert to academy status and to jointly establish the Newham Community Schools Trust. This decision came after consideration of a report by a working group of Governors that had investigated, between November 2014 and January 2015, the benefits, implications and risks of multi academy trust status.

The Academies Act 2010 requires each Governing Body to carry out a formal consultation on this proposal. This report describes the consultation activities undertaken by each Governing Body, the feedback from this activity and makes a recommendation about the outcome of consultation.

Purpose of Consultation

It is recognised by the Secretary of State and the Department for Education (DfE) that the Governing Body and leadership team of a school is best placed to assess the benefits of academy status and to decide whether it is appropriate for their school. Therefore the purpose of consultation is for the Governing Body to present the proposal to stakeholders, to gather feedback on the proposal and to understand the level of stakeholder interest, support and objection. The Governing Body can then determine whether there is such objection to Academy status among stakeholders that would cause them to reconsider the proposal.

The Academies Act 2010 sets out clearly the duty to consult with 'appropriate stakeholders' and the three Governing Bodies took their responsibility to consult extensively very seriously. This consultation is separate from the statutory TUPE consultation to be led by Newham Council as the current employer of staff.

Consultation proposal

For Lister, Rokeby and Sarah Bonnell schools each to convert to academy status and jointly establish the Newham Community Schools Trust.

Consultation Process

Consultation Planning and Information

The Governing Bodies agreed to run a coordinated consultation programme, which ran from Thursday, February 5th to Wednesday, March 25th, a period of seven weeks. A consultation plan was drawn up that identified the different stakeholders, how those stakeholders would be consulted and how the consultation would be managed (see appendix A).

Stakeholders identified included;

- Parents and carers of students at each of the schools
- Staff working at each of the schools
- Unions and professional associations
- Local Authority
- Other Newham schools

A range of consultation materials was published during the consultation period, including;

- Parent/Carer letter informing of the Governing Body decision to consult on the proposal
- Staff letter informing of the Governing Body decision to consult on the proposal
- Parent/carers letter inviting them to attend consultation meetings at their child's school
- Staff letter inviting them to attend consultation meetings at their school

- Staff document of Frequently Asked Questions about the proposal (also available to parents/carers via school websites)
- Union and professional association letter informing representatives of the Governing Bodies' decision and inviting them to both a specific union consultation meeting and to attend the staff consultation meetings in each school
- Parent/carer consultation meeting presentation
- Parent/carer consultation meeting summary of Questions & Answers
- Staff consultation meeting summary of Questions & Answers
- Union consultation meeting summary of Questions & Answers
- Draft of the Trust Vision and Founding Principles

The parent/carer materials were published on each school's website as part of a consultation section along with the two key documents prepared for Governing Body consideration of the proposal: the working group presentation from February 4th and a Governor briefing document.

Consultation context

It should be noted that the formal academy consultation was preceded by a period of information sharing with staff and their unions and professional associations between November 2014 and January 2015.

Following the Governing Bodies' decision in November 2015 to investigate the proposal to establish a formal partnership in the form of a multi academy trust (later given the working title, *Newham Community Schools Trust*), staff were informed of the investigation, timetable and next steps. A series of staff briefings in each school were then run during early January 2015.

In parallel, National Union of Teachers (NUT) officers met with Headteachers and Governors several times to discuss the proposal to establish a multi academy trust and the consequent change of employer. The NUT balloted their members on industrial action on the change of employer and this was carried in January 2015. Subsequent negotiation between NUT, the Headteachers and the Local Authority led to agreement on a joint resolution statement including steps to avoid industrial action. These steps are outside the scope of this consultation programme but it should be noted that at the joint Governing Body meeting on April 22nd, further information will be provided for consideration:

- Union and professional association presentation.
- Report from the independent Chair of the joint parent consultation meeting held March 24th with a panel of union and school representatives.
- Report from unions on the independent ballot of staff, conducted by the Electoral Reform Society, on the acceptance of a change of employer.

Consultation meetings

A programme of consultation meetings was completed as per the table below.

Audience	Date	Time	School	Attendees
Staff	Wednesday, February 25 th	3.45pm	Lister	~75
	Thursday, February 26 th	3.45pm	Sarah Bonnell	~45
	Friday, February 27 th	3.15pm	Rokeby	~ 55
Parents & Carers	Tuesday, March 3 rd	6.00pm	Lister	8
	Wednesday, March 4 th	6.00pm	Rokeby	25
	Thursday, March 5 th	6.00pm	Sarah Bonnell	14

Staff Meetings

Each of the three staff meetings was of a similar format, recognising that staff had been given presentations on the proposal at the January 2015 information sharing meetings.

Each meeting was hosted by a panel of Governors, Headteacher and Philip Cranwell, project manager. The panel gave a brief reminder of the proposal and the consultation process. Staff were given the opportunity to ask questions of the panel from the floor, before moving into small groups to discuss the proposal and ask further questions.

The schools published, on March 9th, a summary of the questions and associated answers from the staff meetings and this is included as appendix B.

Staff were also invited to have separate 1-to-1 meetings with the Headteachers to discuss any individual concerns.

Parent/carer meetings

Each of the three parent/carers meetings also had a similar format and each was hosted by a panel of Governors, Headteacher and project manager. The panel gave a short presentation on the proposal and parents and carers were invited to ask questions.

The schools published, on March 12th, a summary of the questions and associated answers from the parent/carer meetings and this is included as appendix C.

Union and professional association meetings

Representatives of unions and professional associations were invited to a first consultation meeting on March 6th with the Headteachers, which was also attended by Chris French, HR Manager for Newham Partnership Working (NPW) as the current employer's representative and project manager.

A summary of this meeting is attached as appendix D. It was agreed to hold a further meeting on March 19th and the minutes of this meeting are also attached as appendix E.

A formal response to the proposal has been received from the NUT only and this is attached as appendix F.

Consultation survey

A survey of parents/ carers and staff was also conducted as part of the consultation using the questionnaire attached as appendix G. The Academies Act 2010 requires that "*The consultation must be on the question of whether the school should be converted into an Academy.*" Therefore within the questionnaire was the specific question:

"Do you support the proposal for your school to convert to academy status and Lister, Rokeby and Sarah Bonnell to form the Newham Community Schools Trust?"

The questionnaire was mailed out on March 16th to the parents or carers of students attending the three schools and to all staff employed in each of the three schools. It was felt that mailing out the questionnaire after all the consultation meetings and publication of meeting summaries would enable respondents to make a fully informed decision about the proposal. Each questionnaire was uniquely coded so that responses could be verified but remain anonymous.

Responses were collected via secure survey boxes in each school. The count was carried out at the offices of NPW and verified by NPW Head of Governor Services, Paul Baglee.

Consultation survey

Results

The results of the survey are shown in the table below.

LISTER	YES	MAYBE	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	YES	MAYBE	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
PARENTS & CARERS	4	4	5	3	16	25%	25%	31%	19%	100%
	<i>Responses as % of all 1,339 Parents/Carers</i>					0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	1%
STAFF	20	3	6	8	37	54%	8%	16%	22%	100%
	<i>Responses as % of all 182 Staff</i>					11.0%	1.6%	3.3%	4.4%	20%

ROKEBY	YES	MAYBE	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	YES	MAYBE	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
PARENTS & CARERS	52	16	20	15	103	50%	16%	19%	15%	100%
	<i>Responses as % of all 768 Parents/Carers</i>					6.8%	2.1%	2.6%	2.0%	13%
STAFF	22	4	8	3	37	59%	11%	22%	8%	100%
	<i>Responses as % of all 100 Staff</i>					22.0%	4.0%	8.0%	3.0%	37%

SARAH BONNELL	YES	MAYBE	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL	YES	MAYBE	NO	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL
PARENTS & CARERS	14	2	17	2	35	40%	6%	49%	6%	100%
	<i>Responses as % of all 1,179 Parents/Carers</i>					1.2%	0.2%	1.4%	0.2%	3%
STAFF	6	0	7	1	14	43%	0%	50%	7%	100%
	<i>Responses as % of all 179 Staff</i>					3.4%	0.0%	3.9%	0.6%	8%

Lister Parent/Carer Response Analysis

- The parent/carer response rate of 1 % is notably lower than is usual for secondary schools.
- The YES and NO responses are in similar proportion indicating equal respondent support for and objection to the proposal.
- The NO responses are equivalent to 0.4% of all parents and carers and therefore an almost negligible level of objection to the proposal.

Lister Staff Response Analysis

- The staff response rate of 20% is lower than is usual for secondary schools and is lower than might be expected for this consultation e.g. 37 responses compared to 32 NUT members that voted in the ballot on industrial action
- The YES responses (54%) are more than 3 times the NO responses (16%) indicating greater respondent support than objection to the proposal.
- The NO responses are equivalent to 3% of all staff and therefore a very small level of objection to the proposal.

Rokeby Parent/Carer Response Analysis

- The parent/carers response rate of 13% is higher than is usual for secondary schools.
- The YES responses (50%) are 2.5 times the NO responses (19%) indicating greater respondent support than objection to the proposal.
- The NO responses are equivalent to 2.6% of all parents and carers and therefore a very small level of objection to the proposal.

Rokeby Staff Response Analysis

- The staff response rate of 37% is a little lower than is usual for secondary schools.
- The YES responses (59%) are nearly 3 times the NO responses (22%) indicating greater respondent support than objection to the proposal.
- The NO responses are equivalent to 8% of all staff and therefore a small level of objection to the proposal.

Sarah Bonnell Parent/Carer Response Analysis

- The parent/carers response rate of 3% is lower than is usual for secondary schools
- The NO responses (49%) are about 1.2 times higher than the YES responses (40%) indicating greater respondent objection than support for the proposal
- The NO responses are equivalent to 1.4% of all parents and carers and therefore a very small level of objection to the proposal

Sarah Bonnell Staff Response Analysis

- The staff response rate of 8% is significantly lower than is usual for secondary schools and is lower than might be expected for this consultation e.g. 14 responses compared with the 21 NUT members that voted in the ballot on industrial action.
- The YES and NO responses are similar proportions indicating equal respondent support for and objection to the proposal.
- The NO responses are equivalent to 4% of all staff and therefore a very small level of objection to the proposal.

NB: There were 13 spoilt questionnaires and two duplicated questionnaires that have been excluded from these results.

Other consultation feedback

Although formal consultation with students is not necessary or appropriate, Headteachers did discuss the proposal with their Student Councils. Members were given the opportunity to ask questions, which were particularly focused on the benefits for students.

The proposal was also discussed with the Newham Association of Secondary Heads and feedback invited but no formal responses were received.

The Local Authority has been fully informed of the proposal and no objection has been received in line with their official policy position of neutrality. The Director of Children's Services, James Thomas, did provide the following comment for inclusion in this report.

"I am confident that the proposed change in status would not detract from the positive working relationships that both I and my team have with you both individually and collectively. I am certain that you each and collectively share the highest aspirations for our children in Newham, and that we share a commitment to ensure that our children make higher progress and achieve higher attainment year on year. I look forward to working with you as we look at ways to make more use of our school leaders to drive the school improvement agenda in Newham."

Summary and recommendation

The consultation programme has been comprehensive giving stakeholders, especially staff and parents/carers, the opportunity to gather information, ask questions and ultimately indicate their views on the proposal via the survey.

One of the challenges of any academy consultation to generate high levels of response to proposals and this consultation has been no exception. Therefore each Governing Body must use its judgement on the merits of the proposal and determine whether there is such objection that would cause them to reconsider the proposal.

However, it is reasonable to draw the following conclusions from the consultation survey:

Lister: staff respondents are in favour of the proposal while parents/carer respondent are balanced between support for and against the proposal. Overall levels of objection are almost negligible.

Rokeby: both staff and parent/carer respondents are in favour of the proposal. Overall levels of objection are very low.

Sarah Bonnell: Staff and parent/carer respondents are balanced between support for and against the proposal. Overall levels of objection are very low.

Governors should also note the objection of NUT to the proposal and in particular, the associated change of employer.

Given the relative balance of responses between support for and against the proposal and the very low overall levels of objection, the recommendation of this report is that the Governing Bodies may continue with the proposal to convert their schools to academy status and jointly establish the Newham Community Schools Trust.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Consultation Plan

APPENDIX B: Staff Consultation Meeting Summary of Q&A

APPENDIX C: Parent/Carer Consultation Meeting Summary of Q&A

APPENDIX D: Union Consultation Meeting Summary March 6th

APPENDIX E: Union/Consultation Meeting Summary March 19th

APPENDIX F: NUT Response to proposal

APPENDIX G: Consultation Questionnaire

The appendices can be accessed using the link below:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4zkycaz36gnyknw/AAAST4-4XjbBp9EPBBnwZjZKa?dl=0>