



Queensmill School

Section 10 Final Consultation report

November 2019



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Appendix 1 – Queensmill Academy Consultation FAQ

Appendix 2 – Queensmill Academy Consultation Presentation

Appendix 3 – Queensmill Consultation Questions and Answers

1. Introduction

Project Title: Conversion of Queensmill School

Queensmill School is a coeducational special school for autistic children operating in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. Queensmill School provides an outstanding education for children and young people with autism in a caring environment where staff respect and value children for who they are and help them to understand the world around them. The school teaches children and young people the skills to manage their autistic behaviours, gain the skills and competencies needed to gain independence and, in the long-term, work towards employment.

The school has been rated Outstanding by Ofsted at full inspections in 2007, 2010, 2014 and most recently at a short inspection in 2018. .

For a number of years, the Governors of Queensmill School have been investigating the benefits of Academy status for their school, pupils and staff.

Queensmill and Cambridge Schools have collaborated in the past and have agreed that there are shared benefits in working together more closely for the future. The Schools believe that the time is now right to convert to Academies and form a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in order to take their collaborative work to the next level for the benefit of pupils and staff. The two schools' specialisms are different and would complement each other in a special school MAT.

Establishing a MAT will allow the Trust to open a new Free School – known as Barlby School. The Department for Education has approved The Trust as a sponsor for the new purpose-built, 80 Place Special School in Kensington and Chelsea.

Plans were initially drawn up to complete the conversion by 1st February 2020. These plans included a consultation exercise with staff, parents and the wider community.

This report sets out the results of the consultation exercise commissioned by the Governors of Queensmill School to listen to the views of stakeholders.

A subsequent meeting of the Governing Body will consider the findings of this report, together with other factors that Governors must include, and decide whether to proceed with the conversion and formation of the MAT.

2. Scope and timing of Stakeholder Consultation

The Governors and Headteacher devised and implemented a consultation exercise, supported by Premier Advisory Group, which sought the views of parents, staff and the wider community on whether the School should become an Academy and form a new MAT with Cambridge School to form a new MAT.

The consultation period opened on 30th September 2019 and closed on 4th November 2019.

3. Methodology

The Governors and Headteacher developed a consultation plan and brochure, which identified all of the School's stakeholders to contact at the start of the exercise and provided them with background information on Academies and the planned MAT in order to inform the debate.

The Headteacher issued a letter to all parents and staff to start the consultation exercise, inviting them to attend meetings in school and directing them to download the Consultation Leaflet on the School's website.

Staff and parents were invited to attend consultation meetings at the School to find out more about the proposed conversion to an Academy and formation of a MAT.

Emails were also sent to both officer and elected representatives of London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham Council, local MPs, neighbouring schools and partners, to make them aware of the proposal and consultation.

The Consultation Leaflet produced by Governors is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

3. Consultation Meeting Chronology

The letters to parents and staff invited them to attend the appropriate consultation meetings scheduled below:

Staff - **8th Oct 2019** 4-5pm

Parent - **9th Oct 2019** 10:30-11:30am

At the meetings, staff and parents received an introductory welcome from the Headteacher who explained how this proposal will strengthen the School and allow it to retain its individuality.

They were reassured that their school's good relationship with Hammersmith and Fulham Council would continue and that the Local Authority will remain responsible for admissions for all pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP).

The Headteacher pointed out that if the conversion proceeded, there will be no changes to the School name, uniform, staff terms and conditions, or location which goes into making Queensmill the School it is now.

The vision of the MAT is to be a leading centre for research and development into the education of children with special educational needs within London, where every pupil has access to bespoke tailored support, advice and guidance that will enable them to progress to a meaningful pathway.

The Project Manager explained to the staff that this is a stakeholder consultation, and if the report is approved by Governors a further TUPE consultation will follow with Unions and staff which will ensure that employees transfer on their existing terms and conditions without measures.

Conversion work has commenced in preparation for the School to join the MAT on 1st February 2020, if agreed by all parties.

Attendees at both Staff and Parents meetings were then given an opportunity to ask any questions they might have.

Attendance

- The Staff meeting was attended by 66 members of staff; and
- The Public meeting was attended by 13 parents.

The Headteachers from both schools and the Project Manager also attended both of the above events. All attendees were asked to introduce themselves to staff and parents.

The presentation given at the above meetings are included as **Appendix 2** to this report.

The questions asked and answers provided at the above meetings are included as **Appendix 3**.

4. Consultation Questionnaires

The Frequently Asked Questions Consultation Leaflet contained a questionnaire which parents and staff were encouraged to complete and return. Letters sent to parents and staff at the outset of the Consultation exercise directed them to the Schools website to download the Consultation Leaflet.

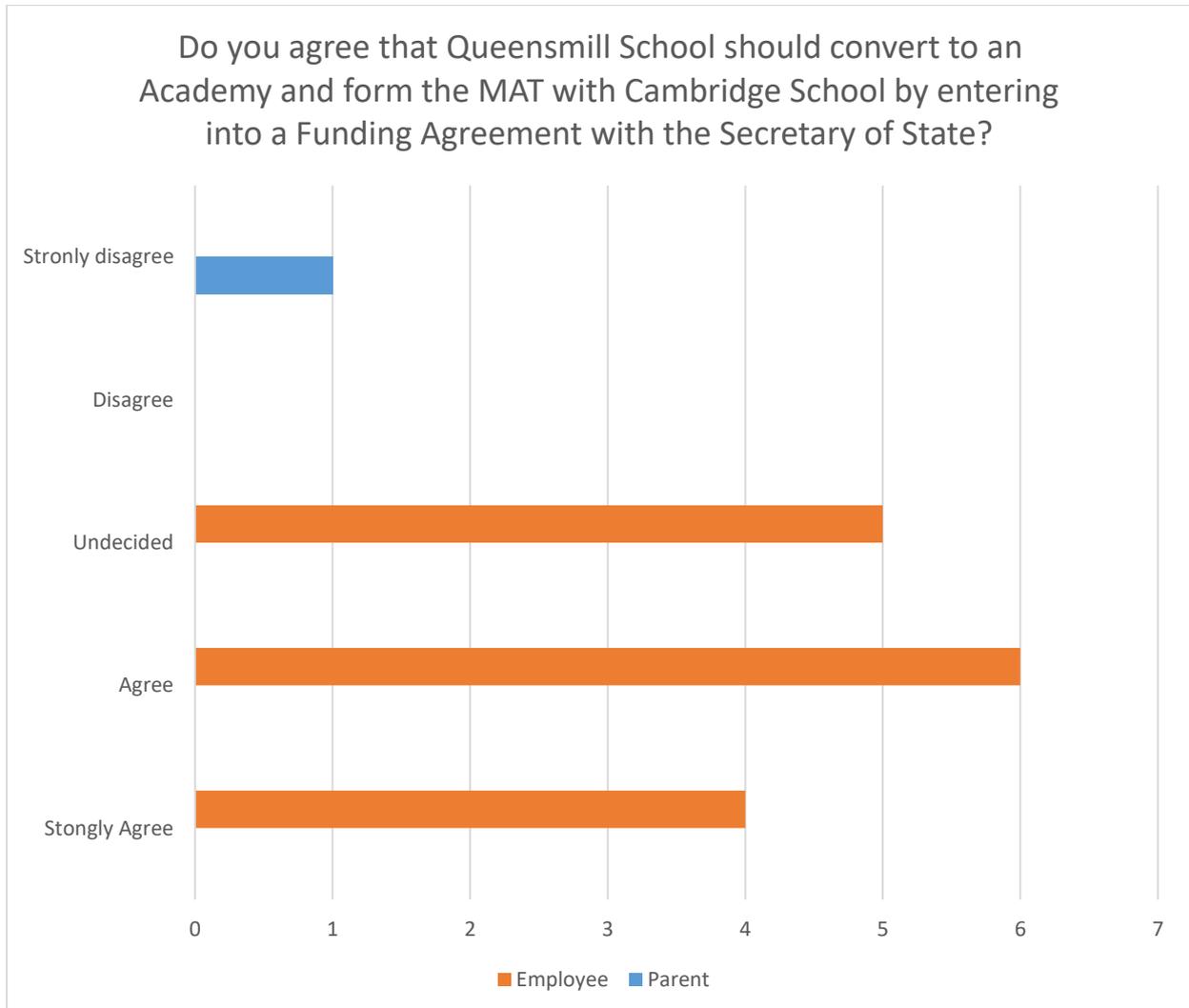
Reminders were sent to parents and staff asking them to contribute their views prior to the closing date.

In total 16 consultation forms were returned; 15 by staff, 1 by parents.

- 4 respondents (25%) Strongly Agreed with the proposal
- 6 respondents (37.5%) Agreed with the proposal;
- 5 respondents (31.25%) were Undecided; and

- 1 respondent (6.25%) Strongly Disagreed with the proposal.

The graph below shows an analysis of the responses.



A summary of the comments from the response forms is set out below;

Members of Staff

4 members of staff were strongly in favour of the proposal stating that:

- “We will learn a lot from the other school and gain good experience”;

- “It seems that this conversion would be in the best interests of the pupils in expanding the service and in meeting their future needs more fully”; and
- “I feel this is the best decision taken by the headteacher and the governors to ensure that the best teaching, support and care continues to be given to the students and families of Queensmill at the highest levels that they have come to know and depend on.”

6 member of staff agreed with the proposal. They commented:

- “The reasons for moving to a MAT in the staff consultation meeting seem to make good sense, especially, better control of finances and budgeting; and better control over admissions”;
- “It is important that many features will stay the same, e.g. staff holding the same rights and pay as before and the ethos of the school (and service to the children) remaining unchanged”;
- “It seems that funds will increase (i.e for training and more staff). More students will benefit (i.e. Barbly School). It is a step forward and there will be more career opportunities for employees”;
- “I believe families that are not able to fund their children’s special needs schools should be helped by the statement as these children might and can develop into more independent adults with professional help and support and that it should not be taken away neither from them or their families due to financial circumstances”; and
- One member of staff, who strongly agreed with the proposal, quoted, “thank you for the excellent presentation, which covered all aspects of the process of becoming an academy and so enabled me to make an informed response and point of view on this subject.”

Of the staff who were undecided about the proposal, comments included:

- “As long as nothing changes with out contracts and conditions of employment”;

- “I believe it is a positive outcome for the school. However, I am unsure due to my own working platform, (I wonder) how things might change;” and
- “I understood that the school will receive more funding, however, I believe in state education and I think it's better when decisions are taken from the government.”

Parents

Only one parent responded to the consultation and they strongly disagreed with the proposal. The reason they gave was;

“1) a lot of pressure on the Headteachers dealing with two special schools 2) children will not receive as much attention as they should”.

One parent of a pupil at Queensmill School emailed a response to the consultation. Overall, the parent felt that the Governors from both schools were keen to form the MAT. The email suggested that the respondent could see the benefits for individuals in management and leadership roles, however, felt these were less clear for parents and staff and therefore sought clarification for a number of points presented at the consultation event. A summary of this can be seen below:

The parent asked questions regarding the consultation process and whether this would stop the formation of the MAT if both staff and parents were strongly against the proposal. The parent also asked about specific benefits to pupils and parents and what issues the MAT formation could solve, that the Queensmill School might be currently facing.

The email asked for more detail on specific terms used in the presentation such as ‘locally-based leadership’ and sought clarification for what the school currently had and what changes the MAT could deliver. The parent also sought clarification and evidence on the benefits of forming the MAT such as greater resilience, shared services, procurement of goods, teacher recruitment and retention and funding. Finally, the parent asked for specifics on how the MAT would be formed and managed to mitigate against risks.

The parent who raised the above concern was invited to meet with the Deputy Headteacher and staff Governor to discuss the school's reasons for wanting to convert and benefits in greater depth. The discussion resulted in a greater appreciation of schools motivations

5. Summary

This report summarises the findings of the genuine, open and honest consultation exercise undertaken by Governors to ascertain the views of parents, staff and other stakeholders on the conversion of Queensmill School and the formation of a new MAT.

This report evidences the comprehensive approach taken to raise awareness of the consultation exercise in the community, to provide background information on the issues and to host staff and parents' meetings to allow stakeholders to find out about the MAT first hand and to ask questions.

A small number of responses were returned by parents. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons including the normalisation of schools converting to Academies, the wide-ranging efforts of Governors in researching, evaluating and communicating the idea to convert to academy status over a period of time. It can also be attributed to the faith that staff and parents have in the leadership and decision making of the Headteacher and Governors.

The range of questions asked at the meetings and listed in Appendix 2 highlights the issues discussed and illustrates the willingness of attendees to engage with Governors and the proposed MAT colleagues on this matter.

Furthermore, no member of staff spoke out in opposition to the proposal, and the responses given to the questions appeared to re-assured consultees.

Taking all of this into account, the consultation exercise did not identify any significant objections to the proposal that would require further planning or response on behalf of Governors.

6. Acknowledgements

The Governors and Headteacher of Queensmill School and Premier Advisory Groups would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to the staff, and parents, who attended the consultation meetings, listened to the explanations, asked clarification questions and contributed their views.

7. Recommendations

Premier Advisory Group recommends that;

- The Governors of Queensmill School proceed with their plans to convert the School to an Academy and form the Trust; having fulfilled their duty to undertake a Statutory Section 10 stakeholder consultation exercise, and having identified no significant objections to their proposals;
- Continue to communicate the reasons for its decision to staff and parents and provide further information as it becomes available to inform those consultees who are currently undecided; and
- Publish this report on the School's website as a record of the consultation and feedback to parents, staff and wider stakeholders.