



Ambleside Primary School

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Head Teacher – Mrs Karen. L. Hannon

20th January 2012,

Dear Stakeholder,

ACADEMY CONSULTATION

The Full Governing Body met in the Autumn term to discuss if moving to Academy status would be in the best interests of Ambleside Primary School.

The Governing Body believes that becoming an academy may be in the best interests of the school. They wish to ensure that all stakeholders are consulted as part of this journey. To inform you, this document sets out the information and background for you to consider.

The governing body will not make any final decision until it has had the opportunity to consult with all stakeholders of Ambleside Primary School on this. The final decision will be made at a Full Governing Body meeting convened for 29th February 2012.

Stakeholders involved in this consultation include:

Carers	Ellis Guilford EIP Schools	Local Authority	Local Councillors
Governors	Campus Partners	Parents	Pupils
Staff	Unions & Professional Associations		

The closing date for consultation is Wednesday, 23rd February 2012. At the end of this document is a 'Consultation Response form'. We would greatly appreciate it if you could complete this and return to the school office before the closing date. Alternatively, the form can be accessed via our school website: www.amblesideprimaryschool.co.uk

We have set up an email account for you to send your comments and questions regarding the conversion to academy at the following address: consultation@ambleside.nottingham.sch.uk

In addition to this, you are invited to attend one of the following meetings where you will have the opportunity to share your views and ask questions:

6 th February 2012	1:00 p.m.	Governors
6 th February 2012	2:45 p.m.	Parents and Carers (A Creche will be provided, please book with the school office in advance of the meeting if you wish your child/children to use this)
6 th February 2012	5:30 p.m.	Parents, Carers and other stakeholders (A Creche will be provided, please book with the school office in advance of the meeting if you wish your child/children to use this)
7 th February 2012	3:30 p.m.	Staff and Union Representatives
Week commencing 6 th February 2012 School Council consultation (Class → Phase → Whole school)		

A consultation summary will be released after the final decision has been taken by the Full Governing Body on 29th February 2012

The Department for Education (DfE) has offered schools the opportunity to join the new academies programme. It says that in becoming an academy a school would 'benefit from greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards.'

Ambleside Primary School is currently classed as a Community school. This means it is a community school that is run by the Local Authority which is responsible for:

- Employing staff
- Owning the land and buildings
- Deciding upon which admissions criteria to use.

The criteria that the Department for Education uses for deciding upon which schools go freely decide to become academies or are forced is as follows:

1. The School's last OFSTED Report.
2. Two levels of National Curriculum Progress from Key Stage One to Key Stage Two.
3. The combined English and mathematics average over time.

Ambleside Primary School fully meets two of the three criteria. In its last OFSTED report, Ambleside Primary School was judged good with outstanding features. Results in 2011 demonstrated that our pupils were at least in line with National outcomes in the progress made from Key Stage one to Key Stage two. However, although the school has made considerable progress on the combined outcomes since it amalgamated, we are still below the National Floor targets.

Recently, we asked a professional association to scrutinise our school's latest data to ascertain how strong a case we have to resist having a model forced upon us. The findings concluded: *'On the face of it this appears to be an underperforming school. Attainment is clearly low, but has risen significantly in recent years and the improvement rate far outstrips the LA and national pictures.'* (NAHT)

With this in mind, as opposed to waiting for the decision to be made for us, the Governors have decided to explore the possibility of becoming an academy now and to commence a formal consultation with all stakeholders on the way forward. The rationale for this is to be proactive and shape the new academy programme to meet the needs of our school community.

There are a number of options facing the school in converting to academy status. These are:

- Become an academy in our own right - Because our combined English and mathematics results are below floor targets this option is probably not open to us.
- Become part of a multi academy chain - This could mean that our school would have to take on their stated vision, teaching models and operating procedures. They would 'top slice' the school budget in a similar way to what the Local Authority now does.
- Become part of an Umbrella Trust – Under this model the school would retain its own distinctive character and vision and would keep all of its budget devolved straight from the Government.

Under all three routes there would still be a level of challenge and expected outcomes, which is already the norm for our school.

Questions and answers to assist you in forming a view.

What is an academy?

An academy is essentially an independent school which is funded by the state. It is independent of the local authority and receives its funding direct from central government.

Under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are able to become academies. More information about academies can be found on the DfE website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

What are the benefits of being an academy?

In the school's opinion the benefits are numerous:

- Academies are independent of local authority control – this means that academies have more freedom about how they conduct themselves.
- Academies receive their funding direct from central government – this means that academies receive more funding because none is retained by the local authority for the provision of central services.
- Academies have more freedom over the curriculum taught – this means that academies do not need to teach parts of the National Curriculum which they do not consider are appropriate for their pupils.
- Academies have more freedom to undertake innovative projects – academies are companies and so have more freedom to undertake innovative projects, such as setting up and utilising trading subsidiaries.

Are there any disadvantages to becoming an academy?

- As an academy we will be directly liable for matters such as insurance, employment liabilities, pensions, health and safety, and, property maintenance. However, as mentioned above, academies receive more funding from central government to help them meet these additional costs.
- Once a school has changed its status from a Community School to an Academy it can't change back.

Will there be a disadvantage leaving the Local Authority as a Community School?

No. The Governing Body views the Academy programme as a new and exciting opportunity to work in partnership with the Local Authority. The Local Authority will still retain some important statutory responsibilities for a number of functions, for example, admissions and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Will we get more money?

No. If the school becomes part of a multi academy chain, it is highly likely that they would retain some of the monies devolved from the Government, for their operational costs and strategic planning.

Yes. If the school becomes part of an Umbrella trust, it will have its own funding agreement with the Government directly. This would allow the school to have greater freedom on how it uses its budget.

Will my child/children continue to be happy and remain safe?

Yes. The welfare of your child/ren is our number one priority and this will always be the case.

Will the school have to change its name?

Yes. If the school becomes part of a multi academy chain, there is a chance that this could change.

No. If the school becomes part of an Umbrella trust, it is less likely that there will be an obligation for it to change its name. The school would remain Ambleside Primary School and the uniform, logo, colours would remain the same.

Will the hours of the school day or the term dates change from the Local Authority dates?

Yes. If the school becomes part of a multi academy chain, there is a chance that this could change.

Maybe. If the school becomes part of an Umbrella trust, we would have a voice in deciding upon hours of the school day and term dates. Should the Umbrella Trust wish to deviate from Local Authority term dates in the future, it would undertake a full consultation process prior to any change.

Will the location change and there be a new building?

No. We already occupy a relatively new building, with plans to expand further due to demand for places.

Will parents and carers still have their voices heard?

Yes. Absolutely! Your views and support are extremely important to us and we value them highly. We will continue to consult with all stakeholders and welcome their input.

Will all the teachers and support staff stay the same?

Yes. It is our hope that our teaching staff will remain the same. We are a happy team here at Ambleside and we do not want to do anything to jeopardise that. There will, however, always be some staff who either retire, move out the area or who look for challenges elsewhere – so we can never promise that no staff will ever leave.

Will the admissions policy and catchment area be affected?

No. In the same way as Ambleside Primary currently operates, all academies are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the law and the National School Admissions Code. When a school converts to become an Academy, it will be the admission authority and is responsible for its own admission arrangements. Ambleside Primary School would continue to be bound by this code, and would continue to be part of the Local Authority's co-ordinated admissions approach and envisages no changes to the admission criteria.

Will the school decide to select pupils based on ability?

No, we will continue with our current admissions policy and are a fully inclusive school.

Will becoming an Academy change the relationship with other partners and the community?

No, our school will continue to be at the heart of the Aspley community, working together and sharing facilities and expertise with other partners and the wider community.

Will the school's responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities change?

No. Our responsibilities will be just the same as they are now.

Will becoming an Academy change the way in which exclusions are dealt with?

No. We currently follow the law and guidance on exclusions and will continue to do so.

Will Ambleside Primary become a new school with new results or do old results in league tables remain?

No. Becoming an academy does not mean that we simply wipe the slate clean in terms of our results. It is, however, a fantastic opportunity to continue to build on the progress that has been made over the last few years. However, Academy schools' results don't currently appear on national and local league tables.

Will the school cover the statutory National Curriculum?

Yes. We will continue to provide a broad, balanced and enriched curriculum that is based on the individual needs of our pupils. Becoming an academy would allow the school to have greater flexibility over the curriculum, designed to meet the specific needs and context of our pupils. However, please note that if the school becomes part of a multi academy chain decisions may be taken by the chain as to the curriculum that is taught.

Will the Governing Body take advantage of setting their own pay and conditions of service for our staff?

No. Although academies have the freedom to adopt their own pay and conditions of work for staff, the Governing Body is committed to retaining national pay and conditions for all our school staff.

Will the governance arrangements of the school change?

Yes. The academy governance model is more flexible than in a community school. Upon conversion the current governing body establishes what is known as an Academy Trust. This is a charitable company responsible for the strategic oversight of the academy with control over land and assets. It delegates management of the school to the governing body.

Will Ambleside Primary School change?

We want to continue to aspire to become an outstanding school. We therefore do not intend to change except in ways which we think will improve the school even more.

We would really appreciate your views and comments on this important issue and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Karen L.Hannon
Head Teacher

Paul Donovan
On behalf of Governing Body





Consultation Response Form

Name (Optional) _____

Please tick only one box for the following questions:

1. Please tick in what capacity you are responding as:

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Parents / Carers | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pupil | <input type="checkbox"/> | Campus Partners | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ellis Guilford EIP | <input type="checkbox"/> | Local Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> | Local Councillors | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School Governor | <input type="checkbox"/> | Staff Member | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Unions & Professional Association | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | |

2. Do you agree that Ambleside Primary School should explore becoming Academy, rather than wait to have this imposed upon us?

- Yes No No Preference

3. Which do you prefer as a possible academy solution, becoming an academy as:

- Part of a multi-academy chain
- Part of an Umbrella trust
- No Preference

4. Please write any other comments that you wish to make in relation to this in the box below:

Please return your completed response form to the school office by Wednesday, 23rd February. Alternatively, visit our school website and follow the link to the survey.

Additional Information Page for Staff and their Union Representatives:

- Academies are able to set their own pay and conditions for staff and therefore are not bound by the existing terms and conditions that are in place.
- This is obviously the key area of concern for many staff and for their representatives. Understandably unions and staff have concerns over this.
- However, even though Academies are free to set their own terms and conditions, at the point of change of status from a Community school to an Academy, TUPE arrangements and commitments are involved. **This means that staff have a legal right to maintain their existing terms and conditions.**
- TUPE is the process of transferring people from one employer to another employer. TUPE is about protecting the terms and conditions that staff have now and the new employer maintains.
- Whilst Academies have the freedom to change the pay and conditions of staff, they cannot change those conditions carried over under TUPE regulations.
- Therefore your present pay and conditions of service, whether you are a member of the teaching staff or the support staff, will remain the same so that your continuous service remains unchanged. Any entitlements or rights that are dependent on length of service remain unchanged.
- Arrangements will be made so that your membership of either the Local Government or Teachers' Pension Schemes will remain unchanged.
- The key question that unions and staff may ask is what happens after you are an Academy? Are there plans to use the freedom to change pay and conditions for new staff or for staff who change their contracts e.g. through an internal promotion?
- **There are no plans to alter anyone's pay and terms and conditions of service once we became an Academy.** However, the Governors would retain the freedom to do so in the future if they felt it was appropriate to do so. If this did happen then a full consultation would take place with staff and with their unions on any changes. *(Please note, this may be different if the school was part of a multi academy chain, as decisions would be made at a higher level.)*
- If, in the future, the school felt it was in the best interests of the pupils at Ambleside Primary School to change conditions of service in some way, then the existing conditions under the "Burgundy" book for teachers and the "Green" book for support staff would be seen as our starting point and we would look to better these rather than erode them.
- However, please do remember, that because of TUPE you would always have a choice to remain on those conditions you are now on.
- Union recognition: as now, we would continue to recognise all unions and staff representative associations.