



# Consultation Report Together Learning Trust

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May 2018



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## 1. Introduction

In the autumn and spring terms Governing Bodies of 3 maintained schools in Kirklees and Trustees of 2 single academy trusts passed resolutions to commence exploring academy status (which includes submitting applications to the Department for Education) and a proposal to move towards forming a new Multi-Academy Trust which would be called Together Learning Trust. The proposed strapline being:

### *Standing Out Standing Together*

The schools involved as part of the consultation were:

1. Bolton Brow Academy
2. Honley High School
3. Meltham Moor Primary School
4. Netherton Infant & Nursery School
5. Ryburn Valley High School (currently an Academy)

These decisions followed a period of up to two years of research which had been conducted by the respective bodies to help inform their final decisions and recommendations which informed this consultation. Consideration was given to what was in the best interests of learners now and in the future as well as what the implications of the options would be for staff, parents and the wider communities that the schools serve.

Applications were submitted to the DfE on the 29<sup>th</sup> March for the following:

- I. X3 applications for maintained schools to become academies
- II. One application to form a new multi-academy trust
- III. One application to be a sponsor

A working party has been established and they developed the proposals for consultation alongside preparing the applications. The working party has representation from each school's leadership and governing body and together they have overseen the processes and outcomes to date.

Consultation commenced Monday 5<sup>th</sup> March and concluded on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2018.

### **1.1 Geographic distribution of the proposed TLT Schools**

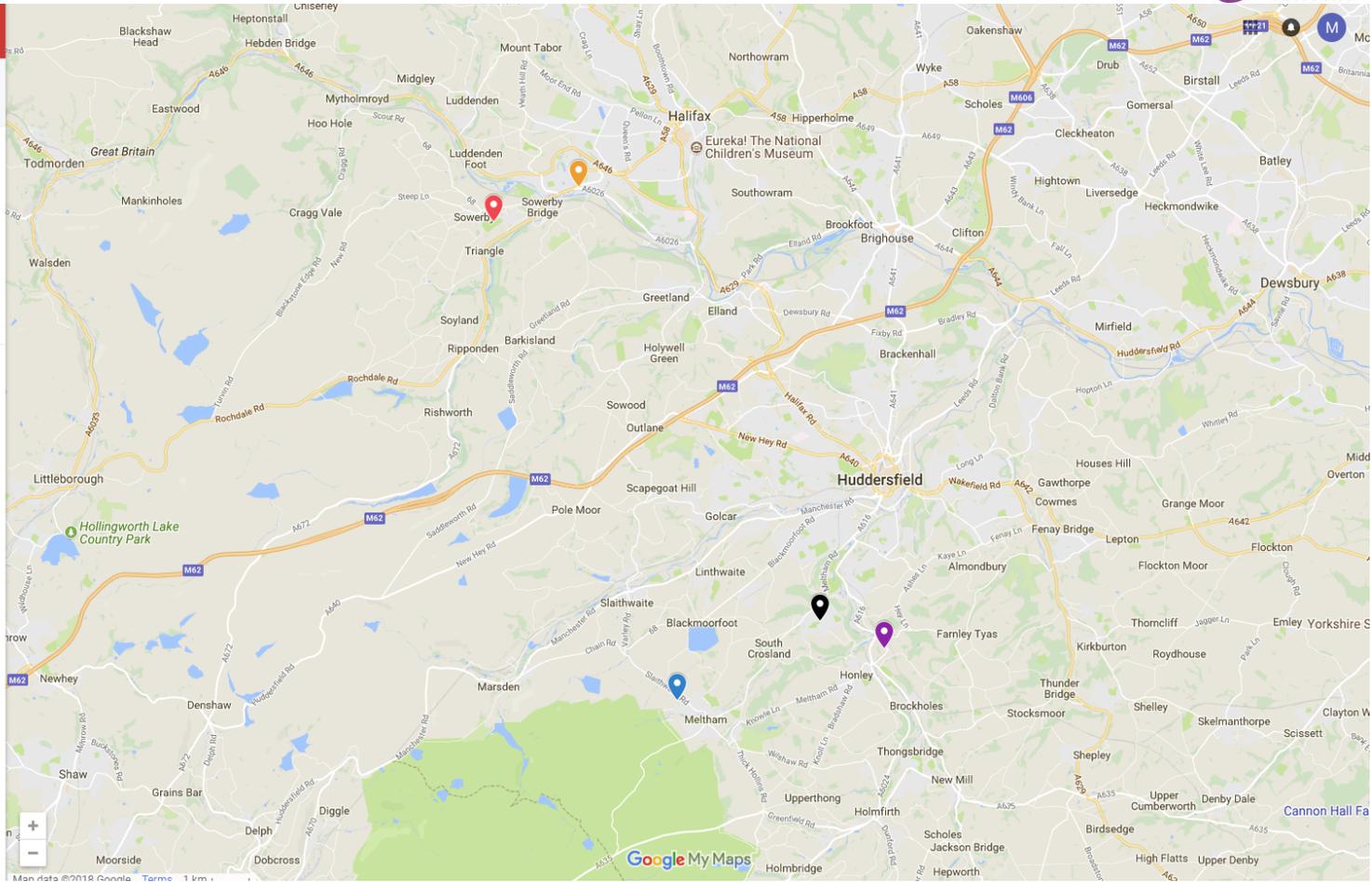
The map on the next page shows where the schools proposing to join TLT are located. Their proximity will significantly aid joint working.

Together Learning Trust

1 view

SHARE EDIT

- Schools in the Trust
- Ryburn Valley High School
  - Bolton Brow Primary School
  - Meltham Moor Primary School
  - Honley High School
  - Netherton Infant and Nursery School



## 2. Consultation Methodology

The overall aim of the consultation process was to ensure that everyone who has a stake in the decision of each of the schools to become an Academy and create the MAT had the opportunity to hear about the proposals and to make their views known about the plans.

The objectives of the process were to:

- Provide relevant background information for stakeholders
- Explain the reasons for the proposal
- Outline the pros and cons for the proposal
- Set out the stages in the process for each school to become an Academy and form the MAT and the associated timelines

The principles laid down by the project team for the consultation were that it should be:

- An open and transparent process
- Accessible to all stakeholders in terms of:
  - The times of the events
  - The language used (jargon-free wherever possible and acronyms fully explained)
  - Well-publicised and advertised
  - The venues being DDA compliant

A variety of media were used to consult including:

- Direct letters
- Text messaging
- Publicised meetings involving presentations and questions and answer sessions
- Frequently asked questions and comments slips
- Suggestions/comments box placed in school receptions for questions and comments

### 2.1 Direct letters

Letters/emails introducing the consultation were sent electronically to the following groups and are included at Appendix 1:

- Parents/community members
- School staff and Trades Unions
- Local schools
- Local Authorities

### 2.2 Publicised meetings

The following timetable of events was communicated to stakeholders and carried out during the consultation period:

Date	Time	Event	Venue
5.3.18	2:15pm	Trade Union Meeting	Ryburn Valley High School
5.3.18	3:30pm	Ryburn Staff Consultation Meeting	Ryburn Valley High School
6.3.18	2:45pm	Netherton Staff Consultation Meeting	Netherton Infant and Nursery School
7.3.18	3:15pm	Honley Staff Consultation Meeting	Honley High School
8.3.18	3:30pm	Meltham Moor Staff Consultation Meeting	Meltham Moor Primary School
13.3.18	3:30pm	Bolton Brow Staff Consultation Meeting	Bolton Brow Academy
14.3.18	6:30pm	Honley Parent Consultation Meeting	Honley High School
20.3.18	6:30pm	Meltham Moor Parent Consultation Meeting	Meltham Moor Primary School
21.3.18	6:00pm	Ryburn Parent Consultation Meeting	Ryburn Valley High School
22.3.18	3:30pm	Bolton Brow Parent Consultation Meeting	Bolton Brow Academy
22.3.18	6:30pm	Netherton Parent Consultation Meeting	Netherton Infant and Nursery School

### 3.3 Frequently asked questions (FAQs) and comments slips

At Appendix 2 is the FAQ sheet that was distributed to parents/carers and staff in each of the schools.

### 3.4 School reception comments / post boxes

In some school's reception a comments box with a posting slot was placed to enable anyone who wished to post a question or comment. Where there was no comments / post box stakeholders were also invited to the school office to share their feedback. At the end of the consultation period these questions and comments were collected to be responded to as appropriate.

## 4. Overview of the Feedback received

Appendix 5 and 6 contains all the questions, comments and feedback received from stakeholders from the various media used throughout the consultation period. Numbers of participants in meetings and surveys are below.

#### 4.1 Attendance at Consultation Meetings

Date	Event	Venue	Number in attendance
5.3.18	Trade Union Meeting	Ryburn Valley High School	11
5.3.18	Ryburn Staff Consultation Meeting	Ryburn Valley High School	39
6.3.18	Netherton Staff Consultation Meeting	Netherton Infant and Nursery School	36
7.3.18	Honley Staff Consultation Meeting	Honley High School	34
8.3.18	Meltham Moor Staff Consultation Meeting	Meltham Moor Primary School	23
13.3.18	Bolton Brow Staff Consultation Meeting	Bolton Brow Academy	24
14.3.18	Honley Parent Consultation Meeting	Honley High School	27
20.3.18	Meltham Moor Parent Consultation Meeting	Meltham Moor Primary School	25
21.3.18	Ryburn Parent Consultation Meeting	Ryburn Valley High School	4
22.3.18	Bolton Brow Parent Consultation Meeting	Bolton Brow Academy	7
22.3.18	Netherton Parent Consultation Meeting	Netherton Infant and Nursery School	27

A summary of all the responses, themes and the messages contained therein, is provided below:

#### 4.2 Themes and Key Messages

Appendix 5 and 6 contains all the questions, comments and feedback received from the various consultation events / media used throughout the consultation period. A summary of all the responses and the messages contained therein, with implications for the schools and proposed MAT is provided in the remainder of this section.

Stakeholders are most interested in:

##### 4.2.1 The formation of TLT, its governance & any future growth

Stakeholders were extremely receptive to the clarity provided during the consultation on the vision for the new organisation and many were excited by the opportunity of working with a group of like minded professionals.

Stakeholders sought reassurance around the proposed governance model, what it would look like and how it would work in practice. They were keen to understand who would be running the organisation, who would be the CEO and at what level decisions would be taken.

A very clear message came through with regards to supporting one another and also others who may need support in the future and stakeholders were broadly supportive of this position. Stakeholders were keen to ensure the support mechanisms were in place but not at the detriment of the 5 schools, capacity must be there.

What would be the next stage of discussions assuming the applications were approved? Understanding the roles and responsibilities of all the parties involved in the decision making including the DFE, RSC, ESFA, Governing Bodies and leadership of each school

#### 4.2.2 Financial considerations such as increased costs/central top slice/ falling budgets

This are being highlighted as a high priority during consultation with stakeholders keen to understand this proposal wasn't going to cost any more than what a school pays now and if anything would reduce costs overall. It was explained that a working party had been set up to look at this exact point and further detail would be known in coming weeks and months.

Leaders were clear that there was a finite budget for set up and this would be monitored throughout. They also stressed the point that as an Academy you can access pots of money you can't as a maintained school so there were new and additional opportunities for capital and school improvement funds beyond the annual budget.

Most remaining financial questions were linked to how much would the MAT take from a school budget, what would it pay for and what would be the benefit of this to each school.

#### 4.2.3 The impact on learners now and in the future

Parents and the communities were keen to see tangible examples (case studies) of where a MAT was making a real difference to educational outcomes for pupils ultimately stakeholders were clear this proposal must have a positive impact. How will SEND support work as an academy, will it be different or better? Parents were reassured local

collaborative arrangements would continue as they do now and even if the schools were academies this would not preclude them from participating in local partnerships.

The National Curriculum was a focus of parental questions as they were keen to understand if the schools would still adhere to it as Academies. Headteachers reassured parents that the National Curriculum was central to teaching and learning, planning and practice and that children still had to be prepared to sit the same testing systems as they do now and move between Primary and Secondary. Leaders reassured parents that their children would be at no detriment to others.

Examples were provided at meetings on how the work being done already was already having a positive experience for learners and how this would continue over months to come.

#### 4.2.4 Staffing – contractual implications, general concerns and opportunities

Staff across the schools raised a number of queries with a particular emphasis on;

- Geography – would staff be requested to go work in any of the other schools
- Contractual – will pensions be the same? Will Terms and Conditions and roles remain the same? Job security, costs, pay progression, recruitment and what are the differences between Calderdale & Kirklees
- General – professional development & CPD. Colleagues were able to see the distinct benefit of working collaboratively and sharing best practice. Who will be the decision makers?

Parents were also keen to understand staffing implications for their children and whether these proposals would mean a lot of change in the classrooms.

Overall, stakeholders were cautious but optimistic in identifying the risks and benefits this proposal could bring to the individual schools and their learners / communities. Many requested an opportunity to have continued dialogue as there was more information to share whether this was via messages home, letters or meetings.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

On compilation of all feedback and data received, the conclusion that can be drawn is that there are no apparent legitimate reasons why the new MAT cannot be established according to the timescales outlined. There is a view that this will be a positive move for all the schools, but this is not yet shared widely amongst all stakeholder groups and it is important to recognise the ongoing dialogue is going to be extremely important.

Whilst there are queries about the process and the detail of how the MAT will operate (much of which is still to be agreed and decided), there are no major concerns or contra-indications that have been raised through this process.

Response rates from parents and community members at all schools were low and particularly so from schools that are already single academy trusts. From this can be deduced that:

- Stakeholders are ambivalent about their school joining a MAT and creating TLT
- Stakeholders are content to leave these decisions to the managers and leaders of their schools
- Stakeholders of schools that have already recently converted have been through the process before and do not have further questions and queries.

Following the completion of the consultation period for all schools wishing to join the MAT it is recommended that:

- All schools proceed with the next phases of the joining process
- A range of media are used to further inform stakeholders of all the interim milestones and timescales and plans for the MAT as they progress
- Due diligence and financial modelling is completed
- Clarity is provided on the future leadership of the MAT and input sought from stakeholders on the future strategy of the new MAT.

## 6. List of Appendices

<b>Appendix 1</b>	Direct Letters	Parents/Community Members School staff and Trade Unions Local Schools Local Authorities
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Stakeholder FAQ's	All stakeholders
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Parents presentation	
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Staff presentation	
<b>Appendix 5</b>	Parents Feedback Q&A	
<b>Appendix 6</b>	Staff Feedback Q&A	