



# Thorne Brooke and Marshland Primary Schools Consultation Report

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February 2019



<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Consultation methodology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Overview of the feedback received</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Conclusion and recommendations</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>List of Appendices</b>	<b>11</b>

## **1. Introduction**

In November 2018 Thorne Brooke and Marshland Primary Schools were issued with Academy Orders by the Secretary of State for Education. The approval meant that the schools could move forward in the next stage of planning which proposes that both schools will join Venn Academy Trust on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

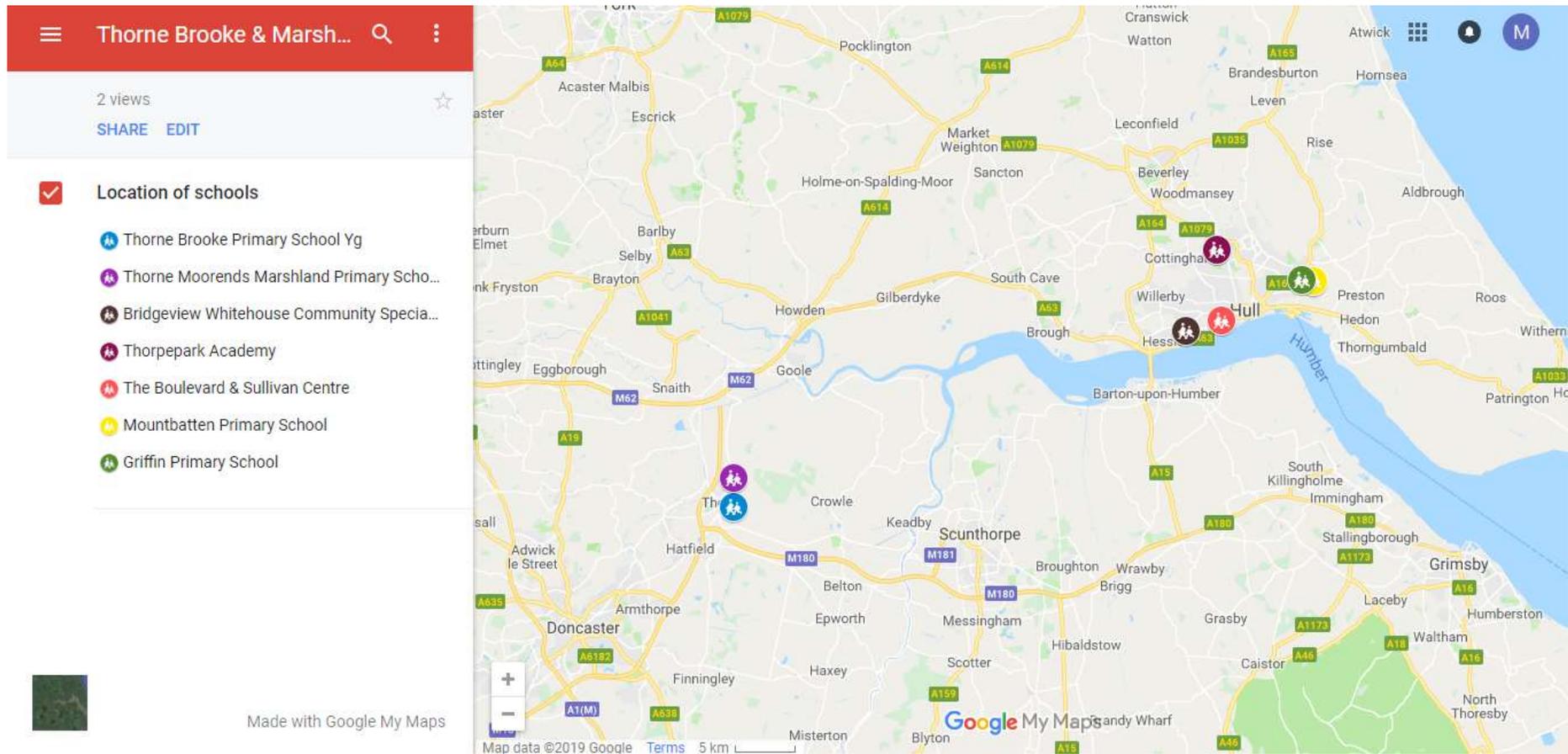
These decisions followed a period of three years of research which had been conducted by the federations governing body to help inform their final decisions and recommendations which subsequently informed this consultation. Consideration was given to what was in the best interests of learners now and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

One of the first priorities in this phase is stakeholder consultation. Consultation commenced on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and concluded on the 4<sup>th</sup> February\* and views have been sought from parents and carers, staff, trade unions, councillors and agency partners. Further within the report we have shared a breakdown of meetings that happened, communications which were issued and a copy of all feedback received as part of the process.

\* please note that the councillors meeting was arranged for the 12.2.19 and feedback has been included where applicable within this report.

### **1.1 Geographic position of the school(s)**

The map on the next page shows where the schools proposing to join Venn Academy Trust are located in the region alongside where the current Venn schools are.



## 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 join Venn Academy Trust 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 with Venn 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

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
- Online survey

### 2.1 Direct letters

Letters introducing the consultation were sent to the following groups and are included in Appendix 1(a-c). The Trade Unions were invited directly by the Local Authority HR representative.

- Parents/Carers/Community members
- School staff and Trade Unions

### 2.2 Online survey

Survey Monkey was used as an online tool to provide everyone with an opportunity to have their say and to gauge everyone's reaction to the proposal to convert to academy status and join Venn Academy Trust. The results of the survey can be found in this report under section 3.2.

### 2.3 Publicised meetings

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

Date	Time	Event	Venue
16.1.19	2:30pm	Trade Union Meeting	Thorne Brooke Primary School
16.1.19	3:30pm	Staff Consultation Meeting	Thorne Brooke Primary School
23.1.19	3:00pm	Marshland Parent Consultation Meeting	Marshland Primary School
23.1.19	5:00pm	Thorne Brooke Parent Consultation Meeting	Thorne Brooke Primary School
12.2.19	7:15pm	Councillors Meeting	Council Offices

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

At Appendix 2 is the FAQs document that was distributed to parents/carers and staff in each of the schools and a copy displayed on the schools websites.

### 2.5 Staff and Parent/Carer Presentations

At each of the consultation meetings a presentation was given with information about Venn Academy Trust and why the schools are proposing to convert to academy status. A copy of the presentations can be found in Appendices 3 & 4.

## 3. Overview of the Feedback received

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

### 3.1 Attendance at Consultation Meetings

Date	Event	Venue	Number in attendance
16.1.19	Trade Union Meeting	Thorne Brooke Primary School	9
16.1.19	Staff Consultation Meeting	Thorne Brooke Primary School	48
23.1.19	Marshland Parent Consultation Meeting	Marshland Primary School	14
23.1.19	Thorne Brooke Parent Consultation Meeting	Thorne Brooke Primary School	8
12.2.19	Councillors Meeting	Council Offices	

### 3.2 Online Survey Feedback

Survey Monkey was used as an online tool to provide everyone with an opportunity to have their say and to gauge everyone's reaction to the proposals. A detailed breakdown of the responses and any comments can be found in Appendix 6.

## Marshland Primary School

	Parent/Carer
Have you received enough information regarding our proposal	1 Yes 1 No 2 Don't Know 1 Skipped
We are consulting on a proposed name change of the school and would like to know your thoughts? We are proposing a shortlist of names which are:- Stay the Same Marshland Primary Academy Moorends Marshland Primary Academy Marshland Primary School Other – please put in comments box	3 Marshland Primary Academy 2 Marshland Primary School
Should we keep the school uniform the same	2 Yes 1 No 2 Don't know

Do you support the proposal for Marshland Primary School to convert to academy Status and join Venn Academy Trust	4 Yes 1 No
Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement for Marshland Primary School	2 Yes 3 Don't Know

## Brooke Primary School

	Parent/Carer
Have you received enough information regarding our proposal	1 Yes 2 No
We are consulting on a proposed name change of the school and would like to know your thoughts? We are proposing a shortlist of names which are:- Stay the Same Thorne Brooke Primary Academy Brooke Primary Academy Brooke Primary School Other – please put in comments box	3 Stay the same
Should we keep the school uniform the same	3 Yes
Do you support the proposal for Thorne Brooke Primary School to convert to academy Status and join Venn Academy Trust	1 Yes 2 Don't Know
Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement for Thorne Brooke Primary School	1 Yes 2 Don't Know

	Staff Member
Have you received enough information regarding our proposal	1 Yes
We are consulting on a proposed name change of the school and would like to know your thoughts? We are proposing a shortlist of names which are:- Stay the Same Thorne Brooke Primary Academy Brooke Primary Academy Brooke Primary School Other – please put in comments box	1 Brooke Primary Academy
Should we keep the school uniform the same	1 No
Do you support the proposal for Thorne Brooke Primary School to convert to academy Status and join Venn Academy Trust	1 Yes

Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement for Thorne Brooke Primary School	1 Don't Know
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A summary of all the responses, themes and the messages contained therein, is provided below:

#### 4. Themes and Key Messages from the feedback received in 3.1 and 3.2

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 Venn provided in the remainder of this section.

Stakeholders are most interested in:

##### 4.1.1 What will be the impact on children? What will change?

- Parents were reassured that immediate impact on children should be very little. The federation is working with Venn now to look at all aspects of practice so we can develop our staff and children to be confident teachers and learners. Together we want to provide children with the very best experience at school with the very best outcomes that they can achieve. Any changes would always be consulted on and discussed as required.
- Children with special educational needs will have a better offer going forward as Venn are specialists in the area of SEN and offer a fantastic track record in making a positive impact on children.
- Can there be more impact around the STEM curriculum?

##### 4.1.2 Proposals around changing the school names and uniforms and the financial implications

- The current school names are often shortened for ease and are known in the community for being Brooke and Marshland Primary Schools however their official titles are currently something much longer. For ease school wish to simplify each school name and are asking stakeholders their opinion on such a decision.
- If the names change the schools will look to update their uniforms but in a managed way so no family is impacted financially. There will be no expectations any new uniform is worn straight away and we will look to phase out current uniform over a 2 to 3 year period. Further details will follow as more is known.

##### 4.1.3 Further detail on Venn and why the schools have chosen to become academies and join Venn.

- Examples of rapid improvement were shared and Venn's positive impact at other schools in the Trust.
- Some parents felt they needed to know more about why the schools were choosing to become academies and join Venn particularly if they were unable to come to the two meetings which were held.

#### 4.1.4 Staffing - contractual implications, general concerns and opportunities

Staff and parents across the two schools raised queries with a particular emphasis on;

- Will current staff remain in post and will the leadership structure remain the same? Yes they will
- Contractual – will pensions be the same? Will Terms and Conditions, pay scales and roles remain the same? Job security, costs, pay progression and recruitment – Yes they will remain the same at the point of transfer
- General – professional development & CPD. Colleagues were able to see the distinct benefit of working collaboratively and sharing best practice.
- Venn – what is Venn's track record in maintaining existing contracts of employment on transfer? – Venn retain existing contracts until such a point colleagues may take up a new role within the organisation or there is an Economic, Technical or Organisational (ETO) reason for a change. The majority of employees who transferred over the last 4 years are receiving the same or very similar contractual benefits and no staff member is at a detriment because of the change in status.

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

#### 4.1.5 Building improvements

Concerns were raised on the condition of school buildings and whether funding may be available to support maintenance and condition needs. Venn confirmed it would look at all needs and the schools would form part of a Trust wide asset management system so we are clear on priorities and need. Venn will also apply to the ESFA Condition Improvement Funding stream for significant works.

## 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 schools should not become according to the timescales outlined. There is a view that this will be a positive move for both 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 why the schools have chosen to become academies and join Venn, there are no major concerns or contra-indications that have been raised through this consultation process.

Response rates from parents and community members at both schools were low. From this can be deduced that:

- Stakeholders are ambivalent about their school becoming an academy and joining a MAT
- Stakeholders are content to leave these decisions to the managers and leaders of their schools

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

- The schools proceed with the next phases of the joining process
- A further communication is issued to parents / carers providing them with detail on why they have chosen to become an academy and a bit more detail on Venn
- Governors decide on the proposed names of the schools going forward and develop a communication to parents/carers clarifying what this change will mean in practice

## 6. List of Appendices

<b>Appendix 1 (a,b &amp; c)</b>	Letters to Parents & Carers / Staff and Trade Unions
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Stakeholder Frequently Asked Questions
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Staff Presentation
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Parent and Community Presentation
<b>Appendix 5</b>	Feedback from all meetings
<b>Appendix 6</b>	Online Survey Responses