



**Report on the Governors' Consultation to
convert to an Academy and join University
Schools Trust**

December 2020

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1. Consultation Timeline and Process

On the 14th September 2020 Governors of Cyril Jackson Primary School (CJPS) published a consultation on the proposal to convert academy status and join University Schools Trust (UST)

The consultation can be found [here](#).

The consultation was published on the school's website and publicised to parents, staff, the Local Authority, other local schools and union and professional associations representing school-based staff. A series of consultation meetings were held for parents and union representatives. Meetings were also held with the Director of Children's Services and other LA officers from the LB Tower Hamlets and the Ward councillor Cllr James King

Consultees were also able to respond to the consultation in writing.

The consultation ran from 14th September to 30th October – a period of 7 weeks.

The following table summarises the consultation meetings held:

Date	Audience	Governors/School side Present
8 th July	Debbie Jones (outgoing DCS of LBTH) James Thomas (incoming DCS of LBTH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sue Stollery – Chair of Governors Hodo Dirir - Headteacher
8 th September	Cllr James King – Ward Councillor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sue Stollery – Chair of Governors Hodo Dirir - Headteacher
11 th September	Whole School Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hodo Dirir - Headteacher
28 th September 3.45pm 4.35pm 5.30pm 6.15pm	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ross Tranter, Co-opted Governor Darren Milgate –Vice Chair of Governors Hodo Dirir - Headteacher Yessica Gimenez – Staff Governor Helen Millward- Staff, Co-opted Governor Philip Moss (Adviser) Alison Andrews - Clerk
29 th September 9.00am 9.50am 10.40am	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ross Tranter, Co-opted Governor Darren Milgate –Vice Chair of Governors Hodo Dirir – Headteacher

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yessica Gimenez – Staff Governor • Helen Millward- Staff, Co-opted Governor • Philip Moss (Adviser) • Alison Andrews - Clerk
6 th October 9.00am 10.00am	Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ross Tranter, Co-opted Governor • Darren Milgate – Vice Chair of Governors • Hodo Dirir – Headteacher • Helen Millward - Staff, Co-opted Governor • Alison Andrews - Clerk
6 th October	Union and Professional Association Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ross Tranter, Co-opted Governor • Darren Milgate – Deputy Voce Chair of Governors • Hodo Dirir – Headteacher • Yessica Gimenez – Staff Governor • Philip Moss (Adviser) • Alison Andrews - Clerk
6 th October	Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ross Tranter, Co-opted Governor • Darren Milgate –Vice Chair of Governors • Hodo Dirir – Headteacher • Yessica Gimenez – Staff Governor • Alison Andrews - Clerk

Notes of all meetings were taken and are available [here](#).

The following is not a verbatim report on all of the meetings. Rather, it gathers together, in a series of issues/themes, the questions, comments and concerns that were raised in all of the meetings.

2. Parent consultation meetings

SEN provision

Some parents were concerned about the impact becoming an academy would have on SEN provision, in particular the specialist provision for their children.

SEN provision will not be affected by becoming an academy – both resourced units will remain in place and wider SEN provision for pupils would continue as normal. Also, individual pupils will continue to receive additional support from external professionals where needed (e.g. Speech and Language Therapists etc).

Governance of the School

A number of questions centered on the governance of the academy: would the school still have a governing body, would parents still be represented on it, what powers would the governing body retain and lose as an academy within UST and who would the governors be accountable to once they had left the LA?

It was explained that the members of the existing governing body would transfer over to a “Local” Governing Body (LGB). The LGB would have at least 2 elected parents and could continue to have staff representatives on it.

For good or outstanding schools, UST is committed to giving LGBs high levels of delegated authority. There are some issues that the Trust would have a final say over such as budget setting. This, however, is no different from the control the LA has over the school now – while the governors are responsible for putting the school’s budget together, the LA has the legal responsibility to ensure it is sustainable or, where a school is in financial difficulty, that robust plans are in place to support the school back to a stable position. This is the same with Academy Trusts.

UST’s “scheme of delegation” means the LGB of the school is well placed to continue to challenge and support the school and maintain its outstanding Ofsted judgment.

In terms of accountability, it is the case that an academy comes out of its local authority but Trusts remain accountable to Ofsted and the Department for Education for the educational and financial performance of their academies (see further detail in the section on UST below).

Parents will still be able to raise issues of concern and complaint. Where such issues were not resolved in school, they can escalate their concern to the

Trustees of UST and, beyond that, Ofsted, the Education Skills and Funding Agency or a range of other statutory bodies dependent on the issue in question.

All academies must publish and operate a complaints policy. If a complaint escalates to a formal hearing the complaints' panel must include a suitably qualified and experience person who is independent of the Trustees in order to ensure the complaint is heard objectively.

UST matters

A number of questions were raised about UST: by joining UST would the uniqueness of CJPS be lost? Would UST intervene in the day-to-day running of the school? Would UST still support pupils with EHCPs and those requiring additional support.

Some parents were concerned about the controls and accountability framework in place to ensure the Trust remained focused on providing education and whether it had to adhere to key policies that were the *norm* in Local Authority Schools.

Some parents asked what services CJPS will receive from UST and what plans UST has for further growth?

One parent asked about the Ofsted record of UST, noting that it had only received one Ofsted inspection so far and that had judged the Royal Greenwich Trust School as *Requires Improvement*.

UST has no intention of imposing on the school specific ways of working or force it to dilute its uniqueness. The Trust's scheme of delegation also makes clear its individual academies retain high degrees of autonomy meaning that CJPS will be able to retain its distinctive ethos and ways of working.

UST is a charitable trust. As such, it can only operate in line with its "charitable object": the provision of state education. This is the same for all academy trusts. The Secretary of State for Education operates regulatory and oversight powers for academy trusts on behalf of the Charity Commission. As a minimum, therefore, trusts must operate inline with the principles and rules of charities and cannot deviate from them or alter their core purpose – this is set out in legislation and in the Trust's Articles of Association.

The associated powers and duties of academy trusts (to employ staff, support families and the wider community, incur expenditure, purchase goods and services etc) only exist in so far as they support the charitable object and cannot be used in support of other outcomes and/or purposes. So, for instance, while an academy trust can generate income through, say, letting out its premises in the evening or at weekends (in the same way as a local

authority school can), it can only use this income in support of the charitable object. It cannot use it as a “profit” for distribution to directors or other members of staff.

In addition, academy trusts must operate in line with much of the same educational legislation as local authority schools around matters such as SEN, admissions, inclusion, equalities etc. In this way, academies and local authority schools operate on a “level playing field” to ensure all parents and children have equal entitlements and protections regardless of the type of school they attend.

It is also the case that UST does not have plans to expand rapidly and/or over a large geographical area. Instead, UST has modest ambitions to a) operate across a limited geographical area and b) is aiming to grow to between 8-10 schools over a period of 3 to 4 years. This would large enough to be sustainable and ensure it and the academies within it are financially secure (see below). At 8 schools (or c.6000 pupils) the Trust would not, however, be too large that it loses a close and supportive relationship with and between its constituent academies.

UST provides a number of central services to its schools. These include: Finance and HR support, Health and Safety and estates advice, ICT, data and compliance services and services for professional development.

UST took over Royal Greenwich Trust School in 2016 and since then has made significant improvements that the latest Ofsted report acknowledged, particularly in relation to behavior for learning, attendance and sixth form provision. The school has also grown placing it on a more stable financial footing. Nevertheless, Ofsted identified further areas for improvement and judged that the school continues to Require Improvements. UST continues to support the school on its improvement journey and is fully expecting the school to receive a good judgment at its next inspection.

Finance

Parents asked how by becoming an academy would impact on the funding the school received and what the financial benefits/savings would be as a result of becoming an academy as opposed to remaining as a local authority School.

Some parents also asked if they would be charged as a result of the school becoming an academy?

A number of Parents questioned whether there was a danger that funds from Cyril Jackson would be diverted to other Trust activities and whether with only two schools in the Trust UST had the capacity to support Cyril Jackson.

Academies and local authority schools are funded in exactly the same way. This ensures that no school is disadvantaged due to its status. In broad terms, schools of the same size with pupils with similar characteristics (levels of deprivation etc) and in the same area (e.g. inner London) will receive broadly similar funding.

Most local authorities, however, retain/top slice funding from all of their school budgets to pay for central services. They then “delegate” the remaining funding to their schools. They also offer services to schools to buy into. Over the last few years the range of services LBTH has been able to offer has diminished as budgets have been squeezed. The services that have remained have tended to focus predominantly on schools facing challenges. This can mean that good and outstanding schools are not receiving the level of service they once did but nevertheless still need. For instance, Cyril Jackson, as well as buying into LA services, is supplementing some services provision by purchasing third party support to “fill the gaps” left by the LA.

In contrast, as an academy the Local Authority top-slice is not applied. The totality of the funding allocated via the funding formula is received by the Trust. The Trust will retain an amount of each academy’s budget to provide a range of services such as finance, HR and other statutory duties. For UST this is c.5% of an academy’s core budget.

An academy may still choose to buy services beyond those provided by the Trust and these can still come from the LA if it is providing good value for money.

The Governors will undertake a detailed due diligence exercise if they choose to progress to the next stage. Part of this will be to make a comparison on a like-for-like basis between the LA top slice and funds retained by UST.

As with all academies, it is not the case that CJPS will be significantly better off in cash terms than it remained a LA school. It is also likely that the like-for-like comparison will show the top slice/retained funds to be broadly similar, and certainly not different enough to be a decisive factor in the governor’s decision to convert or otherwise.

Rather, academies within a trust have the freedom and significant incentives (unlike local authority schools) to share back office and other functions with each other and use the purchasing power of the trust in order to gain good value for money and to exercise a high degree of control over the quality of the services it receives.

As part of the due diligence process governors will gain a full understanding of the services UST will provide, the benefits of procuring certain services at a Trust level (catering and cleaning for instance) and the services the academy will still need to procure.

Parents will not be charged for sending their children to school if it becomes an academy. Any additional activities that are currently charged for (trips, before and after school clubs etc.) will remain in place.

Finally, once the Trust has retained the c.5% of the academy's budget for the provision of services the remainder will be under the control of the school and will not be diverted to other purposes in the Trust.

Consultation Process

Why are you consulting during the COVID-19 crisis? Your priority should be on keeping pupils and staff safe through this difficult time and helping pupils catch up on their learning.

Why are you not giving staff and parents a vote as part of the consultation?

The school's priority remains, as always, the health, safety and welfare of its pupils, staff and families. During this exceptional period additional and extraordinary measures have been put in place. Cyril Jackson Primary School has a comprehensive Risk Assessment that follows the DfE's guidance and ensures the "Systems of Control" are at all times operational in order to limit the spread of the virus. Indeed, the school received a monitoring call from Public Health England in the Autumn term which confirmed that school's actions were more than compliant with its expectations.

The school remains vigilant and take all precautions necessary.

It is unclear how long the current arrangements will be in place, though it is not unreasonable to assume it may be some time. On this basis, the business of the school must continue and the current consultation on academy conversion is simply one aspect of this.

The school is not unique in moving forward with consultations. LBTH has recently published consultations on the closure of Shapla Primary School and Cherry Primary School this term. The authority also implemented from the start of this academic year a number of proposals they consulted on during 2019-20, including the amalgamations of St Anne's and Guardian Angels Catholic Primary Schools, and Smithy School and Redlands School. Similarly, the RSC and Head Teacher Board has continued to consider and approve school conversion and school reorganisation projects throughout the current COVID-19 crisis.

We do not believe therefore that the current circumstances mean that we should not progress with work that we believe may be in the best long-term interests of the school. We did accept that parents might have had other priorities during what is a very challenging time and that is why the consultation ran over 7 weeks to give everyone the opportunity to respond in

their own time. We held a series of carefully controlled consultation events: parents accessed them via a door not used by pupils and staff, rigorous social distancing was observed, and masks were worn. At the end of each session sanitising and cleaning took place. This was fully in line with the school's risk assessment.

There was an opportunity to respond online which we felt was particularly important for parents and other stakeholders who were vulnerable or not comfortable with coming into school.

In terms of a ballot, this is a consultation process, not a referendum on whether to become an academy or not. Regulations are clear in this regard; it is the decision of the Governors whether to seek to convert to academy status or not. The consultation is an important part in the decision-making process as it provides governors with a clear understanding views of the parents and staff which they much have regard to. However, it is not the decision-making process.

Privatisation

Becoming an academy represents the privatisation of education in which the profit motive becomes a driver and community assets can be sold off

This is not the case. As outlined above, Academy Trusts are charitable organisations. They are regulated by the Secretary of State for Education and must follow very clear rules and regulations through their Articles of Association. These ensure they adhere to their primary purpose of providing education and cannot be changed.

When a local authority school converts to an academy the land and buildings are leased to the trust on a long (125 year) lease. In this way the community "asset" remains in the ownership of the local authority, albeit with tenant responsibilities and rights sitting with a trust. The lease will ensure the trust is unable to alter the use of the building and/or undertake activities in it that are incompatible with the proper and safe conduct of the school. If the academy closes at some point in the future and the premises cease to be a school the land and buildings revert to the LA and do not remain with the trust.

Admissions

Will you be making any changes to your Admissions Policy?

No. When the school becomes an academy the Trust becomes its admissions' authority (rather than the LA which is the case now). However, the governors remain committed to operating the inclusive and

comprehensive admissions policy it does now and has assurances from the Trust that it has no intention to change that.

Staff Issues

Will there be a reduction in staffing as a result of becoming an academy.
How do staff feel about the proposal?

There will be no reduction in staff as a result of becoming an academy.

The issues and concerns staff have raised regarding the proposal are set out below.

Improvement

How will becoming an academy improve the learning for pupils?

During the consultation meeting a range of benefits for pupils were identified:

- Pupils could benefit from some lessons taught by subject specialists – this could very beneficial in the upper years of the school in subjects such as Modern Foreign Languages, Science etc;
- A “family” of schools could be established to support a through-school framework creating continuity at key transition points for both pupils and parents;
- Professionals across the MAT could share expertise, improve teaching and learning and develop the curriculum experience for pupils not available to single schools;
- Pupils could access wider facilities and experiences – e.g. by using specialist facilities for PE, dance, drama, music, science etc.
- School leaders could focus exclusively on teaching and learning and school improvement, as the Trust would take on responsibility for delivering back office functions.
- Schools could easily pool resources to develop effective and efficient services.

In addition to these benefits, pupils may benefit from having access to a range of facilities not available to them at Cyril Jackson – e.g. sports facilities, drama

and dance, science etc.

The Local Authority

Why does the school want to get away from the Local Authority?

While the change of status brings greater independence from the LA there is no intention to “get away” from the LA or not continue to work with it. Rather, the school will continue to work in partnership with the local authority and may continue to buy services from them. UST is a unique Trust in that representatives from the local authority sit on its Trust Board. UST is proud of this relationship.

It is the case, however, that the services the LA can provide have reduced, particularly to Outstanding schools. By joining a trust, the school will be part of strong partnership of schools committed to working together and to developing services that best support their circumstances and needs.

It is unlikely that the service reductions and budget squeezes that all LAs are experiencing are likely to be reversed. The governors therefore must take decisions they believe to be in the best long-term interests of the school. In their view, this is through joining a Trust which will provide security and support for the crucial “business functions” of the school, provide excellent professional development opportunities for staff and enable the school to maintain a strong relationship with the LA and serve its community.

Federating with other schools and remaining an LA school is a possible option and would provide some scope to share and pool resources, but not in the way joining a Trust allows or in a way that would provide a clear strategic leadership. Federations by the nature mean that the individual schools maintained their fundamental relationship with the LA and while they may gain some value by sharing resources and staff the real value of integrating services and support provided by being part of a trust are not realisable.

3. Staff Consultation

Staff consultation took place on 6th October. In addition to a number of the issues raised by parents staff also a number of questions outlined below.

Terms and Conditions

Will the terms and conditions and pay arrangements remain the same? Even if they do remain in place in the immediate term, what guarantee is there that they will remain in place over the long term? Will the unions still be recognised?

Will staff be forced to move between schools or work at different sites in the Trust?

Since SPWT School converted to an academy, UST has followed national and local arrangements for teachers and support staff.

There would be therefore no change to the terms and conditions of staff in CJPS if the school converted to an academy and joined UST. Staff would transfer under the TUPE regulations on the same Ts&Cs as they enjoy now.

It is the case that academy trusts are not required to follow these arrangements. UST, however, has no plans to alter them.

While there are some examples of academy trusts that have altered them in certain ways, the vast majority of academies continue to operate on the basis of the national arrangements. It is not the case, therefore, that large numbers of staff in academies are operating under terms and conditions that are not as beneficial as their colleagues in local authority schools. On a purely practical level it would not be sensible for an academy trust to offer worse conditions to staff than those in LA schools. Being able to attract, recruit and retain good quality staff is vitally important to sustain outstanding provision for children.

In any event, terms and conditions are not “set in stone” in any sector. For instance, LBTW is currently undertaking a consultation on changes to support staff terms and conditions. Any change/outcome as a result of these discussions will be reflected in USTs arrangements. This will have been a LA instigated change, not a trust one.

It is also important to note that the academies must continue to offer the Teacher Pension and Local Government Pension Scheme to their staff as appropriate.

Unions will continue to be recognised.

UST will recognise continuity of employment for all staff as they transfer from the local authority.

Staff will not be forced to work at different schools in the trust. However, there are likely to be opportunities to work across schools in the Trust that staff may choose to apply for or take advantage of in order to develop and extend their professional experience.

UST

What services will UST provide?

Will the school still buy into some Local Authority services?

Why not consider a larger MAT or ones that had primaries?

UST will offer the key back office support services of finance, HR, H&S advice, ICT, data and compliance. In addition, UST provides a wide range of professional development opportunities that CJPS staff already take advantage of.

However, this does not mean that the school will continue to purchase some LA services where they are providing good levels of support and offer value for money.

UST is a small MAT at present, however, as the options appraisal pointed out, it contains provision across all key stages which could be of benefit to CJPS in terms of sharing practice and developing through-school approaches to the curriculum and teaching and learning.

Change in Policy/Government

As an academy are we more vulnerable to policy change, for instance, being forced to join another, larger MAT or even return to LA control?

The Conservative Party's policy has been pro-academy since 2010 and is unlikely to change. The Labour manifesto at the last election specifically omitted a commitment to returning schools to LA control – the practicalities of doing so would be considerable. It is more likely that future policy changes, rather than reversing academisations, would bring academy trusts' instruments of government more in line with the provisions governing maintained schools such as making national and local terms and conditions compulsory or being more prescriptive in relation to the make-up of Governing/Trust Boards etc.

In terms of being forced to join a larger MAT in the future, while the MAT continues to be successful in terms of the quality and improvement trajectory of its schools it is unlikely that the Regional Schools Commissioner would seek to force it to combine with other MAT – indeed it does not hold such powers.

Leaving the Local Authority

If services have been diminishing at LA level why haven't the heads put more pressure on to the LA to respond to their concerns?

Will there be sufficient liability insurances in place once the school becomes an academy?

It is the case that head teachers in the Borough have made clear their concerns and, in some cases, their dissatisfaction with the support provided by the Local Authority. While these concerns have been acknowledged it simply is the case that the LA has diminishing resources to provide comprehensive services in the way it once did. It is particularly the case that for Good and Outstanding schools the level of support the LA can provide is very limited as it necessarily has to concentrate on schools in more challenging circumstances. On this basis it is not unreasonable for individual schools to look elsewhere for support.

UST is a member of the government backed Risk Protection Arrangements program that provides a comprehensive insurance cover for trust and local authority schools.

4. Union Consultation Meeting

The union consultation meeting took place on 6th October.

In addition to some of the questions asked at the parent and staff consultation meeting the unions also raised the following issues:

The previous consultation

Have the governors considered the conflict of interest point that was raised during the last consultation?

The inclusion of other MATs in the consultation feels like *reverse engineering* as it is clear CJPS wants to join UST.

The RSC, in responding to the school's application to become an academy in February 2020, stated that while she was supportive of the governing body's desire to convert to academy status, in her view the conflict of interest around the involvement of Gillian Kemp was "not mitigated as effectively as it could have been".

In re-running the consultation, the governing body established a new working group which included members not involved in the original consultation process. The working party met on a number of occasions in order to develop the consultation proposal. Neither Gillian Kemp nor anyone else from the UST was part of the working group or had any involvement in the development of consultation proposal.

In terms of the consideration of other MATs as possible options, the RSC stated:

I would advise that you demonstrate the rationale for choosing your preferred trust, including robust evidence showing how you have made that decision and how you have engaged with other trusts and/or stakeholders. I should stress that this decision does not exclude UST from the process going forward and I will consider whatever trust you put forward without prejudice

In the light of this the working party set out very clearly the rationale and criteria for why the school wishes to become an academy, the benefits it would gain from doing so and identified a number of MATs it felt it should consider. It then undertook a clear options appraisal exercise and held discussions with a number of the MATs identified as possible matches for CJPS. The detail of these processes are set out clearly in the consultation report.

In doing so the governors are confident that they have responded to the RSC's advice and acted transparently and rationally.

There is no need to become an academy

The unions made the point that this there was no pressure on the governors to academise nor was the school suffering falling rolls.

The decision to consider becoming an academy is not driven by external factors such as falling rolls. Rather, as set out in the consultation document and in this report, the governors see major benefits for the pupils, teachers and families by becoming an academy that are not realisable by remaining in the Local Authority.

What will the costs of academisation be?

If, following the consultation process, the governors decide to apply to become an academy and are successful they will receive a grant of £25,000. This will be used to support the process of due diligence and the legal and financial work need to become an academy. The grant will be sufficient to ensure the resources of the school are not used to support the conversion.

5. Written submissions

Nine written submissions in response to the consultation were received.

Three confirmed their support for the proposal. These were from the CEOs of local academy trusts (one of whom is the Branch Secretary of the NAHT) and a local school.

One response was from the MP for Polar and Limehouse, Apsana Begum. She expressed concern over the proposal, particular in relation to holding the consultation during the pandemic, the extent to which the consultation was a distraction from the work of the school in supporting pupils catch up in their learning and a principled objection to schools leaving the Local Authority.

All of these issues are addressed in responses outlined above.

Two responses were from parents.

One was writing on behalf of 55 parents who signed a petition in opposition to the proposal on the basis that the school should not be pursuing it during the pandemic as not all parents would be able to respond meaningfully.

The other parent who responded asked about two areas: one relating to the financial contribution CJPS would be making to UST and how that compared to the contribution the school makes to the LA: the other asked for the governor's Equality Impact Assessment relating to becoming an academy.

In response, the school stated that both of these issues would be addressed as part of the due diligence process should the governors decide to proceed with an academy application to the RSC.

One response was a joint submission from Unison and the NEU expressing opposition to the proposal on the basis that the consultation should not be taking place during the pandemic. The submission also stated that they had held a ballot of staff members who had expressed their opposition to the proposal, though the detail of when this took place and the numbers involved was not clear. The school has asked for clarification on the ballot but at the point the outcome report was published had not received a response.

In addition, the submission expressed opposition due to the issues of there being little evidence that academies drive up or maintain standards, academies and their assets are not subject to democratic control and they can lead to the deterioration of staff terms and conditions.

Again, all of these issues have been addressed in the response above.

The eighth submission was received from The Lord Cashman of Tower Hamlets expressing his opposition to the proposal, again on the basis of the consultation taking place during the pandemic. This response also referred to the petition received in response to the previous consultation. It also makes

the point that in his view the issues of conflict of interest and choice of MAT are not resolved in the current consultation.

A ninth submission was a copy of a letter from the DCS of LB Tower Hamlets to the Sue Baldwin, RSC making reference to the petition of 55 parents.

Governors received the copies of all of the written responses to the consultation along with any responses from the school as part of their review of the consultation responses.

6. Next Steps

It is now for the Governors to consider the next steps in the process.

Their options are to:

- 1) Stop the process
- 2) Enter a period of due diligence – if this option was chosen it would be sensible to submit an application for an Academy Order as this releases a conversion grant of £25,000 from the DfE which can be used to support this next stage of work;
- 3) Consider further areas to explore/consult on prior to making the decision to proceed or not.

It is also worth noting that having been granted an Academy Order the governors are not committed to converting. If after the due diligence and further discussion the governors can decide that it is not right for the school to convert. In this instance the conversion grant does not need to be re-paid to the DfE.

7. Recommendation

The governors are grateful to all of the parents and other stakeholders who took the time to attend the consultation meetings and/or respond in writing.

The questions asked were helpful in supporting the governors' thinking and in giving them a clear understanding of the views of their stakeholders concerning the proposal.

It is the case that a proposal of this nature will be opposed by some. This is their right and the governors respect the positions articulated. However, over the course of the consultation period it is the case that there was only limited negative reaction to the proposal. Many of the issues raised instead sought assurances the school will continue to provide the same level of support and care for its pupils if it became an academy. The governors are strongly of the view that this proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the quality of the education the school provides. They are rightly proud of this and will not do anything that could undermine it. Indeed, through the development of shared back-office services and the opportunities offered as being part of UST they can see enhancements and benefits not available to it by remaining as a maintained school.

Recommendation

Having considered this report it is **recommended** that the governors agree to submit an application to the RSC to become an Academy.

In doing so the governors acknowledge that, should the application be successful, this does not commit them to becoming an academy. Rather, it

releases a grant to enable the governors to undertake the appropriate due diligence and other work related to the process of becoming an academy and joining UST.

Once this work has been completed the governors will review it and make a final decision as to whether to convert or not.

December 2020