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ASSOCIATES



Consultation Report Stephenson Memorial Primary School

November 2023

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1. Introduction

In July 2023 Stephenson Memorial Primary School were issued with an Academy Order by the Secretary of State for Education. The approval meant that the school could move forward in the next stage of planning which proposes that the school will become an Academy and take the next steps to join Smart Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Trust.

This decision followed a period of research which had been conducted by the school's governing body to help inform their final decisions and recommendations which in turn has 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 community that the school serves.

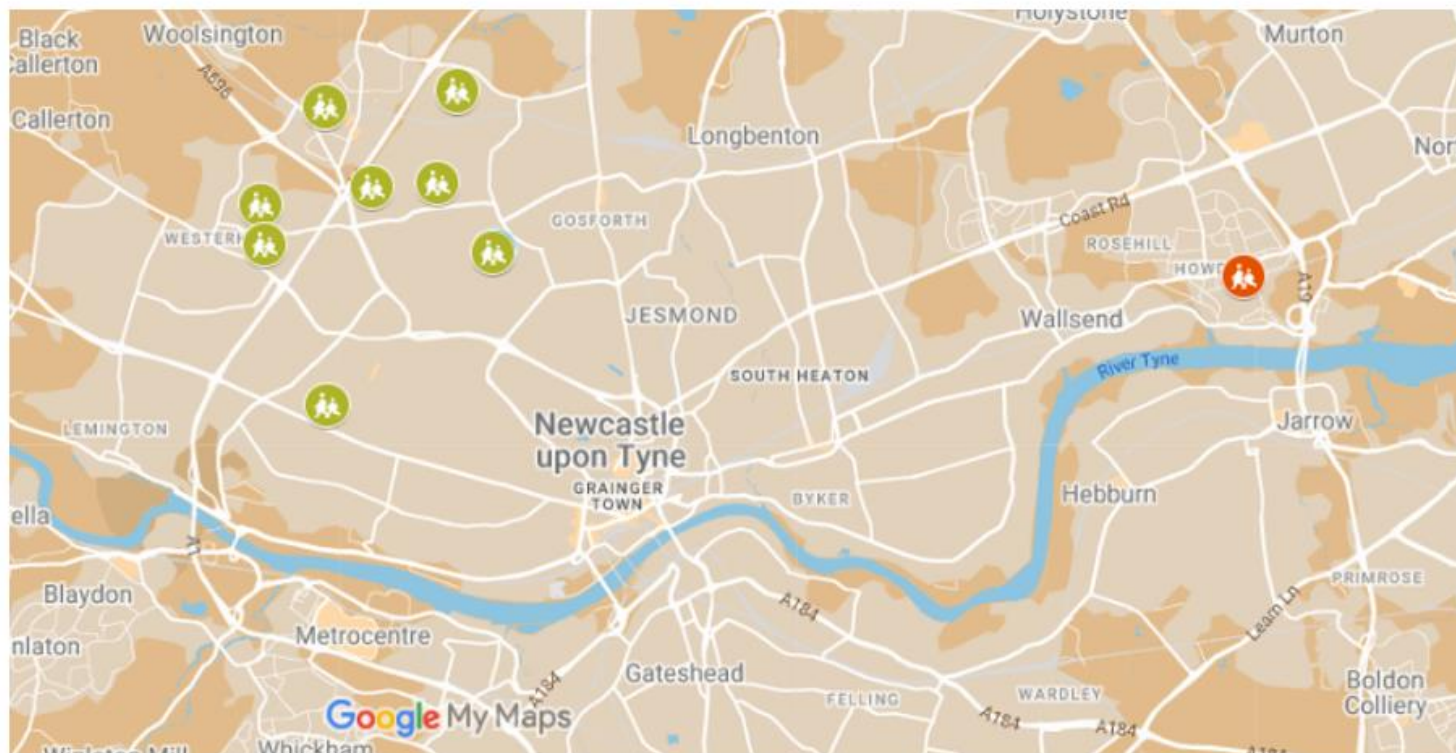
One of the first priorities in this phase is stakeholder consultation. Consultation commenced on 11th October 2023 and concluded on 7th November 2023 and views have been sought from parents and carers, staff, trade unions, and other key stakeholders. Further within the report we have shared a breakdown of meetings that happened, communications which were issued and a copy of all feedback received as part of the process.

1.1 Geographic position of the school(s)

The map on the next page shows where Stephenson Memorial Primary School is in relation to where other Smart MAT schools are located. All schools within Smart MAT are based in Newcastle. They have excellent road connectivity due to the proximity of the schools to each other meaning that travel time between schools permits staff to meet regularly in support of school improvement and their professional development. Stephen Memorial Primary School is no more than 30 minutes away from other Smart MAT schools.

Stephenson Memorial Primary School

- Stocksfield Avenue Primary
- Kenton Bar Primary School
- North Fawdon Primary School
- Mountfield Primary School
- Kingston Park Primary School
- Cheviot Primary School
- Farne Primary School
- Wyndham Primary School
- Stephenson Memorial



2. Consultation Methodology

The overall aim of the consultation process was to ensure that everyone who has a stake in the decision of the school to become an Academy and join Smart MAT had the opportunity to hear about the plans and to share their views.

The objectives of the process were to:

- Provide relevant background information for stakeholders;
- Explain the reasons for the proposed transition to academy status;
- Set out the stages in the process for the school to become an academy with Smart MAT and the associated timelines;
- Answer questions raised.

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);
 - Being well-publicised.

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;
- School website (See Appendix 1).

2.1 Direct letters

Letters introducing the consultation were sent to the following groups and sample letters are included in Appendix 2. Letters were sent to:

- Parents/Carers/Community members;
- School Staff;
- Trade Unions;
- Governors
- Local schools
- North Tyneside Learning Trust

2.2 Online survey

A Google Survey was created and used as an online tool to provide everyone with an opportunity to have their say and to gauge reaction to the proposal to convert to academy status and join Smart MAT. The results of the survey can be found in Appendix 3.

2.3 Publicised meetings

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

Date	Time	Event	Venue
18 Oct 2023	4:00pm	Unions and School Staff Consultation Meeting	Stephenson Memorial Primary School
20 Oct 2023	9.15am	Parent and Community Consultation Meeting	Stephenson Memorial Primary School

2.4 Staff, Parent/Carer and Community Meetings

At each of the consultation meetings a presentation was shared with information about Smart MAT and why Stephenson Memorial Primary School is proposing to convert to an academy. A sample copy of the presentation can be found in Appendix 4. The presentation was also shared online via the school website.

2.5 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

At Appendix 5 is the FAQs document that was distributed to all stakeholders and a copy was also displayed on the school website.

3. Overview of the Feedback received

Appendix 6 contains all the questions, comments and feedback received from the various meetings and surveys which took place throughout the consultation period. The number of participants in meetings and survey responses are outlined on the next page.

3.1 Attendance at Consultation Meetings

Date	Event	Venue	Number in attendance
18 Oct 2023	Unions and School Staff Consultation Meeting	Stephenson Memorial Primary School	27 staff 2 union representatives
20 Oct 2023	Parent and Community Consultation Meeting	Stephenson Memorial Primary School	11

3.2 Google Online Survey

We received 52 completed surveys online. Full detailed feedback can be found in Appendix 3.

3.3 Themes and Key Messages

Appendix 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 school and Smart MAT are provided in the remainder of this section.

The results of the survey show that 48% of stakeholders completing the survey were in favour of the proposal when asked *Do you support the proposal for Stephenson Memorial Primary School to become an academy and join Smart Multi Academy Trust?*, with 37% saying they weren't sure. It is worth noting that 89% of those who said they were not sure completed the survey in advance of the opportunity to attend the meeting to find out more information.

Stakeholders are most interested in:

3.3.1 The impact on the identity of the school.

Parents sought reassurance Smart MAT did not have a one size fits all solution and that everything which makes the school good will remain as it is now. Reassurance was given that all school in Smart MAT have been given the autonomy to create their own identity.

3.3.2 Funding

Questions were asked about how the funding will change if the school becomes an academy and there were concerns that the school would be in a worse position financially. Stakeholders were reassured that the funding received would remain the same and were provided with details of how funds were received by the Trust and then distributed to schools.

3.3.3 The impact on SEND at the school.

Questions were raised and answered on the impact that Smart MAT could have on the SEND provision at the school. A discussion took place around the expertise that exists at the other Smart MAT schools and how this can be pooled with the vast experience of the staff at SMPS to ensure that best practice is shared and that all children and their families have the best possible resources available to them across the MAT.

3.3.4 Reassurances post conversion

There was a nervousness around Smart MAT growing too large too quickly and questions were raised about what happens if SMPS joining Smart MAT does not work out. Reassurances were given to alleviate the concerns from Smart MAT around their growth plans and the due diligence which has already taken place both ways. Smart MAT highlighted that they will also benefit from the expertise SMPS will bring to them.

3.3.5 Queries on any changes to staffing levels post conversion

Stakeholders queried if any staffing changes would take place – either more or less. It was explained that staffing levels are determined by the school budget and number of pupils on roll and that the school has a responsibility to ensure that they set sustainable budgets to meet the need whether they are Local Authority maintained or an academy.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

On compiling all the feedback and reviewing the data received, the conclusion that can be drawn is that there are no apparent legitimate reasons why the school should not become an academy according to the timescales outlined. Stakeholders who raised concerns had their questions answered and, where this was done in a meeting, were satisfied with the responses. Ultimately stakeholders were provided with the assurances that this is the right decision for the school, its pupils, staff and community.

The Trust have demonstrated their commitment to working with Stephenson Memorial Primary School and North Tyneside Learning Trust and look forward to moving forward together to make a positive difference to the children they would be responsible for.

Thank you to Governors, school leaders, staff and Smart MAT for responding to the questions raised.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1	Extract from School Website
Appendix 2	Sample letters
Appendix 3	Survey results
Appendix 4	Presentation
Appendix 5	FAQ Document
Appendix 6	Q&A Documents