



The Gosforth Schools' Foundation Trust

Public Consultation on Changing from Community School to Foundation School Category and Acquiring a Charitable Trust

The Governing Bodies of the following schools are each proposing to change their category from a community to a foundation school and at the same time to acquire (establish) together a charitable trust, to be called The Gosforth Schools Trust.

The schools are:

Archibald First	Broadway East First
Brunton First	Dinnington First
Gosforth Park First	Grange First
Regent Farm First	South Gosforth First
Gosforth Central Middle	Gosforth East Middle

Archbishop Runcie CE First School, as a Church of England voluntary aided school, is already part of a Trust and therefore will not be changing status. However, Archbishop Runcie is already an active partner of the community of schools in Gosforth and would be an active partner of any Trust established by the Gosforth schools.

No decision has been made as yet, before proceeding to the next stage we would like to know what you think about the proposals contained in this booklet. You can take part in the consultation by

- **Attending a consultation** meeting at your school
- **Completing a response form** and returning it to your school

You can comment on the proposals at any time from noon on Monday 16 September to Monday 14 October, 12.00 noon.

Pupils will be consulted via their student councils, assemblies and a range of other internal school mechanisms.

The proposed date of implementation (i.e. the date on which any legal change of category would take place – and the Trust would be created), is 1 April 2014.

Our Headteachers and governing bodies believe strongly that by working together they can achieve significantly more for their schools than they can by working alone. The partnership of schools supported by the Trust will have greater capacity to improve standards, outcomes and services for children, young people and their families within our local communities. The Trust would build on the work already being undertaken in the local schools by providing new opportunities for collaborative development.

As members of a shared Trust, our schools will continue to be part of the Local Authority (LA) family of schools, but the change of category will allow us to be supported additionally by a charitable trust.

As a result of the change, each of the governing bodies will gain new powers and responsibilities. Each governing body will become the legal employer of staff at its school. Existing pay and conditions will remain unchanged, as the school will remain in the LA family of maintained schools, continuing to be subject to national pay and conditions for teaching staff and local conditions for support staff.

Each governing body would also become responsible for criteria for pupil admissions, but would work jointly with the LA to administer the provision of pupil places within the requirements of the National Schools Admissions Code.

The Trust would also hold the land and capital assets in trust for each school. Each governing body would retain day to day responsibility for managing these assets in the same way as they do now.

Visions and Values

The schools have a long tradition of working together for mutual benefit, this has included the Gosforth Pyramid Group of Headteachers and the Gosforth Working Together group of Headteachers and Chairs of Governors. As part of the Trust, each school would continue to work with existing partners to widen learning opportunities for children.

Working collaboratively has helped the schools to develop a common set of aims and values. Acquiring a shared Trust would help us to clarify our shared vision and aims, continue to raise expectations and standards across the partnership, and make our existing collaboration more sustainable.

We believe that to meet the current and future needs of the community we need to deepen our collaborative work. As a group of schools we know that we can achieve more by working together than we can by working alone. A shared Trust would help to make that belief a reality.

Key aims for our children from the Trust are to:

- *Expand educational opportunities for our children*
- *Retain our unique identities within our local schools*
- *Raise children's aspirations and to drive up standards*
- *Share best practice across the schools in the interests of our children*
- *To work more effectively with parents, carers, partners and the wider community*
- *Formalise the current partnership to protect and promote collaborative working [including schemes, policies and resources]*
- *To provide a stronger local voice in response to national changes*
- *Increasing leadership capacity and opportunities within our schools at all levels*
- *To seek opportunities for additional funding streams and financial efficiencies*

The LA has actively supported the ten schools to seek trust status, and will continue to provide technical and specialist support. Archbishop Runcie will join the Trust as a partner.

How will the Trust make a difference and how will it work?

The Gosforth Schools' Trust would bring together 11 schools which between them have a wealth of experience and expertise in the provision of education and a solid reputation built over time. In addition, each school's governing body brings a wide range of skills and experience which would be of benefit to the Trust as a whole.

The Trust is keen to explore links with other partners from the public, voluntary and commercial sectors that can help to further its aims. Charitable status and existing partnerships would help significantly in identifying suitable partners.

By making efficient and effective use of resources and employees, the Trust would provide schools with significant collective bargaining power in their negotiations with suppliers of goods and services. This would enable them to secure best value and prioritise funding for teaching and learning. The Trust would also encourage schools to pool expertise and resources to enable them to maximise the benefits for pupils and staff.

The Trust will be a charitable, not for profit organisation, meeting the legal and other requirements of the Department for Education (DfE). It would carry out its duties in relation to schools as set out by the DfE, specifically by appointing a minority of the members to the Governing Body of any supported schools and by holding the land and assets in trust for the community.

The Trust will be made up of representatives from schools, partners and members.

The Trust would appoint two governors to each of the 10 schools seeking trust status (these could be existing Governors identified by the Trust).

The Trust will be legally established and regulated (as with all charities) by the Charities Commission and registered as a company limited by guarantee with Companies House.

Should the Trust be acquired:

- Trustees will not be able to derive an income from the Trust.
- Any income generated by the Trust must only be used to support its charitable aims.
- The Trust will not seek to alter the individual characteristics of the partner schools, nor will it change the character (religious or otherwise) of a partner school.
- The Trust will work with other people and organisations, as appropriate, to carry out its work.
- As the Trust develops, it may be appropriate to consider additional partners. There would be a clear process involving existing Trustees to ensure that any future partner would comply fully with the vision, values and aims of the Trust.

The Consultation Process

After the consultation is closed all comments will be considered by the relevant governing body. Each school will provide a report for its governing body and these will be made available on the school websites. Each governing body will then hold its own meeting to review the report and all comments made before reaching an informed decision.

Each individual governing body will decide either:

- To issue Statutory Notices about a change from Community to Foundation Status and the acquisition of a Trust; OR
- To modify the proposal in the light of suggestions made during the consultation and if the changes are significant, consult again on the changes; OR
- Not to proceed and to remain as a Community School.

If a governing body decides to proceed and issues a Statutory Notice, there will be another chance to comment on any formal proposals which might be made before any final decision is made.

If an individual governing body decides not to proceed, it does not prevent other schools from proceeding after they have made an informed decision to do so. The outcome of consultation for each school is mutually exclusive.

Please complete the response form and return it to your school. If you have any queries about anything you have read here, please contact your local school.

There will be a Consultation Drop-in on Thursday 3rd October 2013 between 6 and 7pm in Broadway East First School Hall for the parents of children attending Broadway East and Gosforth Park First Schools. This is an opportunity for you to ask questions and view a PowerPoint presentation regarding the proposed changes to status. Members of the Governing Bodies and both Headteachers will be present.