



Growth Through Understanding

Thomas Bewick Consultation Report

30 October 2017

Growth Through Understanding





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1. Executive Summary

Thomas Bewick School are proposing to become an academy and join a new Multi Academy Trust called PROSPER Learning Trust (PLT). The governing body of Thomas Bewick have resolved to take this proposed action.

Between the 13th September 2017 and 25th October 2017, a robust consultation process was undertaken with the aim of ensuring that all stakeholders who wished to, could make their views known about this proposal. The consultation was designed to ensure that stakeholders could raise informed questions and make comments. All comments and questions were recorded and are included in this report. A variety of media have been used and care has been taken to ensure accessibility at all times both in terms of physical factors and intellectual factors.

In response to the consultation, the volume of feedback overall was lower than anticipated with some queries only coming from parents. Key themes to which the questions and comments were related included:

- Education
- Finance
- Term time/holiday calendar
- School transport

All the feedback will be analysed by the local governing body so that it can help to inform future planning and decisions. This report will also form the basis of the PLT wide communications plan ensuring that stakeholder voice is heard and is central to the future planning.

2. Introduction

2.1 This report outlines the reason for the consultations undertaken and summarises key findings. Information is presented under the following headings:

- The Aims of the Consultation
- Consultation Materials
- Consultation Audience, Events and Timeline
- Key Outcomes
- Conclusions and Recommendations

2.2 Key stakeholders have been consulted on the proposal for the potential conversion to Academy status for Thomas Bewick School and joining of PROSPER Learning Trust. The consultation period commenced on 13/9/17 and concluded on the 25/10/17.

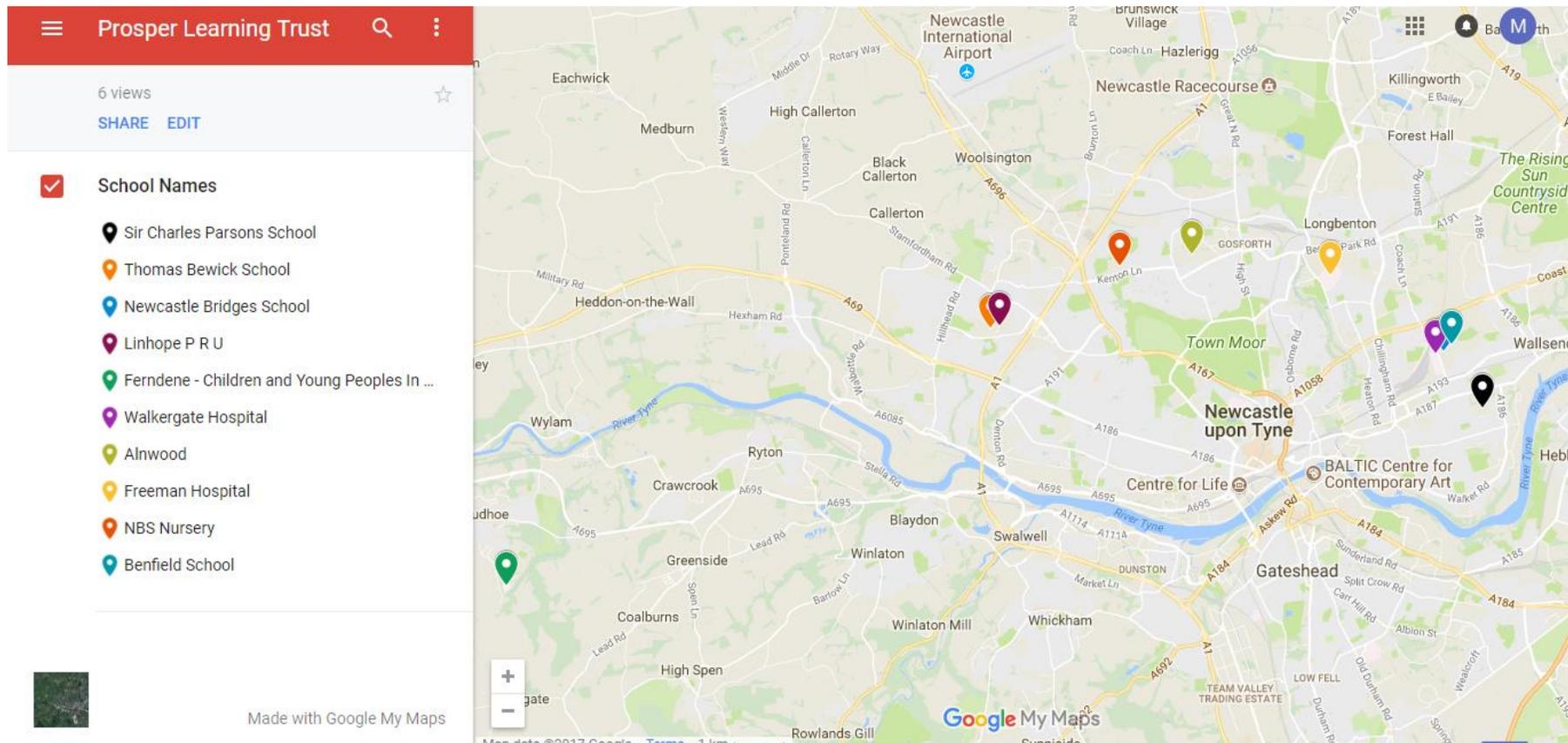
2.3 The findings included in this report are based on comments and suggestions made and questions raised during a series of consultation events.

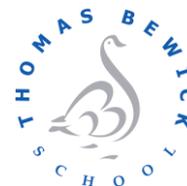
2.4 Copies of all answers to questions raised in the meetings are included in the appendices.

2.5 Geographic distribution of the proposed Prosper Learning Trust Schools



The map below shows where the schools proposing to join PROSPER Learning Trust are in the city. Their proximity will significantly aid joint working.





3. Aims of the Consultation

The consultation exercise had many strategic aims:

- To inform stakeholders of the scope of the proposal and provide information on both short and long-term implications, risks and opportunities
- To ensure that a wide range of stakeholders could contribute their views and ideas and ask questions
- To collate and analyse the views put forward to inform consideration by the Governing Body

4. Consultation Methodology

The overall aim of the consultation process was to ensure that everyone who has a stake in Thomas Bewick School had the opportunity to hear about the proposals and to make their views known about the plans to seek academy status and join PROPSER Learning Trust.

The objectives of the process were to:

- Provide relevant background information for stakeholders
- Explain the reasons for the proposal
- Outline the opportunities and concerns for the proposal
- Set out the stages in the process for academy formation 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:

- Letters direct to stakeholders
- Publicised meetings involving presentations and questions and answer sessions
- Frequently asked questions and comments slips
- Post-box placed in school receptions for questions and comments

4.1 Direct letters

To support the parental consultation, a letter for all parents/carers was developed and sent out (Appendix 01). The aim of the letter was to allow parents the opportunity of giving their thoughts about the school converting to Academy status and to raise any concerns they had.



Parents/Carers were given the opportunity of sending in feedback either by phone, email, or in writing. There was no direct response to the letter, however parents have contributed to the consultation via attending the consultation meeting.

4.2 Publicised meetings

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

Date	Time	Event	Venue
19.9.17	2.30pm	Trade Union Consultation	Thomas Bewick
19.9.17	3.30pm	Staff Consultation	Thomas Bewick
20.9.17	6pm	Parents drop in	Thomas Bewick

4.3 Frequently asked questions (FAQs) and comments slips

A frequently asked questions document (see Appendix 02) was prepared for the parents/community consultation events. The aim was to give as much information as possible about all the practical things parents could want to know, ranging from whether there would be new uniforms to what it could mean for the pupils' learning experience. This document complemented with the presentation and question and answer session gave parents a thorough understanding of what an academy is and what it could mean for the School.

4.4 Presentations

A series of PowerPoint presentations were developed for each audience to give all stakeholders consistent and relevant information as a starting point to inform the discussions.

Staff and Trade Unions had an additional focus on staffing/HR issues and implications for them whereas the parents' consultation focused more on what it could mean for pupils as well as providing more information on Academy status.

Key areas covered in the presentations were:

- The rationale for conversion and the local proposal
- Background from the Department for Education and what are the key requirements to convert and the benefits and opportunities of converting to an Academy.
- Governance structure
- Curriculum opportunities
- Staffing implications
- Financial considerations
- Legal implications for land, buildings, staff and governors
- What happens next

- Questions & Answers

A copy of all the presentations can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

4.5 School reception post boxes

In the school's reception we placed a sealed box with a posting slot to enable anyone who wished to post a question or comment. At the end of the consultation period these questions and comments were collected to be responded to as appropriate. All questions and responses are captured in Appendix 5.

5. 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 surveys are below.

5.1 Attendance at Consultation Meetings

Date	Event	Venue	Number in attendance
19.9.17	Staff meeting	Thomas Bewick	Approx. 55
19.9.17	Trade Union meeting	Thomas Bewick	8
20.9.17	Parents meeting	Thomas Bewick	5

5.2 Feedback at meetings

Feedback was provided from all 3 meetings and a copy is in Appendix 5. The overarching messages were about securing staff terms and conditions and also making sure the outstanding offer provided to children and young people would not be comprised under this proposal.

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

5.3 Feedback from Trade Unions

Trade Unions asked specific questions linked to the strategic direction of the school, future partnerships, local governance and whether long service awards will be acknowledged by the Trust.

5.4 Themes and Key Messages

Across school stakeholders were interested in different things for example parents were particularly interested in the impact on education and the school year as well as school transport,



staffing and the financial impact of academy status. Appendix 5 highlights all questions raised by all groups however, below we have provided a summary of the key themes and messages stakeholders are most interested in:

5.4.1 The formation of PLT

Staff are particularly keen to understand the governance structure and how this evolves, equally governors would like sight of the scheme of delegation to further understand their roles and responsibilities.

- Who has control over budgets?
- Who decides who fulfils what roles within the governance and leadership structures
- Who will lead the Trust? What are their skills and experience?
- How much responsibility will they give to the schools?
- The timeframes going forward and how soon are the schools progressing

5.4.2 Staff and trade unions – terms and conditions

Staff raised many queries regarding terms and conditions and contractual obligations, these included:

- Will staff contracts change? Will staff have to move between schools and apply for their jobs?
- Will PLT honour national and local agreements?
- Will staff be made to travel between different schools?

A full breakdown of the questions and answers is available in appendix 5.

5.4.3 Stakeholder communications

- How will views of parents be heard?
- Be clear on the vision and benefits of being part of a MAT
- Communication – how will this take place? Frequency etc

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The consultation with key stakeholders has been comprehensive. There has been no significant objection to the plans to convert to academy status and the proposal has received support from staff and parents that responded to the consultation.

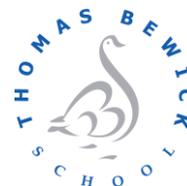
Therefore, the Governing Body are advised that the consultation has not demonstrated any significant objection to the plans for Thomas Bewick School to convert to academy status and join PROSPER Learning Trust.



All these questions are included in Appendix 5 for Governors to read.

In conclusion, recommendations to be considered by Governors if you decide to progress with the conversion are:

- Ensure all stakeholders are kept up-to-date on a regular basis so that they are kept fully informed.
- Keep communication regular, using letters and the school website as a constant means of communication.



7. List of Appendices

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| Appendix 1 | Letter to Parents & Carers |
| Appendix 2 | Stakeholder FAQs |
| Appendix 3 | Staff presentation |
| Appendix 4 | Parent/Carer presentation |
| Appendix 5 | MAT Questions and Answers raised |

