

Wednesday 21st June 2017



Consultation Process and Information

Dear Parents Carers,

As you will be aware, we held a consultation meeting for parents on Thursday 15th June. We held this meeting as early on in the consultation process as we felt possible because we wanted to be able to answer your questions, give you further information and begin gathering views as soon as could. We are aware that some of you found it difficult to attend the meeting due to the short notice and we would therefore like to offer you the opportunity to attend a drop in meeting in school. There will be representatives from the Governing Body available to talk to at both of the sessions we are offering. If you were not able to attend last week's meeting last week and would like to call in to talk to us, please feel welcome.

These sessions will take place on:

Friday 30th June 10am-12pm and Tuesday 4th July 5pm-7pm

We are also writing to you to provide a written summary of last week's meeting outlining the key issues and questions raised. We hope that you will find this helpful, and while we are all aware that there are still questions which we can't answer, we'd like to reassure you that we will take all of your views forwards in making our decision and will continue to value your feedback in shaping the next stages of this process if the proposals are to go ahead.

Summary of the Parents' Consultation meeting for the Proposal to relocate and expand Broadway East First School

78 parents/carers attended the meeting with the full Governing Body, Deb Tyler from Newcastle City Council and George Snaith, Chair of Gosforth Schools' Trust and Gosforth Federated Academy Trust.

In the questions and answers below we have summarised said the issues raised at the meeting and added additional information to help you to understand the proposals further. We hope that you find this helpful.

As well as the issues covered below, parents at the meeting and others who have been in touch with the school have expressed support for the relocation because of the benefits that they can see it would bring but have some specific logistical concerns about how it might work for their own families, e.g. in relation to travel to school or childcare. We are committed to working with you to find solutions for these practical issues and encourage you to share these with us through the consultation and other engagement so that we can do so.

Why weren't parents/carers told about the proposals sooner?

The Governing Body made a decision in October that they would be interested in consulting on a proposal to relocate and expand. At that time, we knew that there was the possibility of one school relocating and although we were interested in exploring this, we wanted to work with Gosforth Park to identify their preferences and to have a joint solution (i.e. one school would potentially relocate and one expand). Unfortunately Gosforth Park Governors were not able to reach that decision at that time. At Newcastle City Council's Cabinet meeting in November it was agreed that the preferred option to create additional school places in Newcastle Great Park was for one of the existing schools to relocate and expand other local schools. In March 2017 it was reported to the GST Directors that Broadway East had a desire to consult on the proposals to relocate, and that it was our intention to wait until Gosforth Park Governors were ready to consult regarding their plans. During the run up the election, and having still not been able to establish having a joint consultation with Gosforth Park, we made the decision that we should begin a consultation after the Purdah period (this is the time before an election when central and local government, and associated are not able to consult or express views which could be interpreted as electioneering) as we had concerns that the opportunity to relocate to the proposed site was time limited. We then started the consultation as soon as possible after the election had been held. From our initial discussions about these proposals to the current date we have been frustrated by circumstances outside of our control. We have now been told by Gosforth Park Governing Body that they are likely to expand

(grow in numbers) if Broadway East relocates. Newcastle City Council has informed Gosforth Park that work to create new places will be funded. It is not in the interests of the community, Newcastle City Council or the Gosforth Schools' Trust to leave a gap in provision (a shortage of places) at this location and we will work together going forwards to make sure that Broadway East's proposed relocation will not result in a shortage of school places in this part of Gosforth.

At the meeting, some parents/carers strongly expressed a view that the Governing Body had misled them, especially those who were new starters for September 2017. We would like to take this opportunity to stress that this is not the case but we were unable to communicate the proposal to individuals or groups of parents prior to the consultation. There was no manipulation of the release of information in order for the school to make any gain or to deliberately make a situation difficult for parents/carers. There would have been no benefit to the school in doing so as there is demand for places across Gosforth, and all of the Gosforth First schools are over-subscribed and full for September 2017. We are sorry that some of you feel that this proposal has made you reconsider whether you would have chosen Broadway as your first choice.

Can admissions to provision on the current site be guaranteed for families who don't want to move to the new site?

All admissions arrangements will need to adhere to the Admissions Code and therefore this 'guarantee' cannot be given. However, the intention of the Gosforth Schools' Trust and Newcastle City Council is to provide more places across the Gosforth area and to leave no gaps in provision. We will work together to find the best outcome across the whole of Gosforth.

Can places at GEMS be guaranteed? What will the feeder arrangements be?

There is a need for a Gosforth-wide solution for transfer at Year 5 and Year 9 and therefore we need to look at admissions and feeder arrangements across all schools. It is not possible to give guarantees for transfer arrangements at the current time when we consider the imbalance in numbers between the youngest and the oldest pupils in our schools. The Gosforth Schools' Trust, the City Council and the Federated Gosforth Academy have made a commitment to begin on this task as soon as we are able to, in the coming autumn term. We need to know whether our proposals are going to go ahead and what the likely expansion of Gosforth Park will be before this task can be meaningful. This will be carried out through full consultation in line with the Admissions Code.

Mr Stout, the Headteacher at GEMS, was at the meeting and he was able to confirm that we would all be working together to make the transfer to middle school as smooth as possible.

Some of you have asked us if there will be preference at GEMS for our September 16 and September 17 intakes or whether there will still be a sibling link criteria and how important it would be. We can't yet answer these questions but we will consider all of your questions when this work begins and we will work together to find the best solution for pupils across Gosforth. Some arrangements that are made may be linked to specific cohorts. However, the outcome of admissions consultations can't be pre-empted; there are multiple considerations including the expansion of schools and the free school. The relationships and patterns across Gosforth will change for more schools than those in our own community.

In the next three years, would money or resources be held back for the new school and therefore disadvantage the current school population?

No, the school's budget is already fully allocated for our current provision and we are not in a position to reallocate any of our income to support the new school.

Where is the information about the secondary school planned for the site? How can it be a free school and Gosforth Academy?

Under existing national education policy and legislation, free schools are the only way to set up a new school. Once established, free schools are designated as either independent schools or academies. Free schools are frequently talked about in the media and from our discussions with parents/carers, we are aware of some anxiety about the provision. The free school will be an academy within Gosforth Federated Academy Multi-Academy Trust and school leaders from the Academy will ensure that the quality of the educational provision in the new school is the same as it is on the current site. The new school will provide education for Year 5 to Year 11. The Gosforth Federated Academy Trust has assured us that this solution will help to preserve the integrity of the three tier system and the long established Gosforth Pyramid of schools. Information is available via the Gosforth Academy website <http://www.gosforthacademy.org.uk/great-park>.

What are the financial concerns and why does expansion increase financial viability?

All schools are feeling the impact of significant cuts in real terms. Until now, we have managed our budget so that we can maintain provision and we have been able to protect our workforce. However, like our partner schools, the projections for the next few years are worrying. There are fixed costs for schools which would have minimum, if any increase, in a larger school, but the income would be larger with the increased number of children.

Can't we wait until 2022?

By 2022, the opportunity to relocate to the proposed site will no longer exist and the school will be even more financially vulnerable. We do not want to be in a position where we can no longer provide the human and physical resources to run our school and maintain our excellent outcomes for pupils.

Did the Governing Body consider other options?

We have discussed other options and we believe that the proposals we have put forward represent the best possible solution and a one-off opportunity for the school.

Is it not disruptive to the education or well-being of children to relocate?

The children would be moving to a different site, but it would be the same school. The teaching staff would take into account the needs of any vulnerable pupils but, from our experience and knowledge, we believe that the children would be very excited about having a new school and the move itself would be a great stimulus for learning across the curriculum. There are lots of ways in which children could be involved in the planning and building process. The children would be with familiar staff and there would be no changes to teaching and learning relationships, other than the usual turnover of staff and recruitment of additional staff when necessary.

What would the Governing Body need to see to change their minds and not go ahead with the proposal? What will they consider as criteria in the decision making process?

Parents are asked to complete the response forms and return them to school. All of these will be read, collated and taken into account as we gather information and at the Governing Body's meeting after the end of the consultation period.

Our criteria for the overall decision will include:

- Views of all stakeholders
- Impact on teaching and learning
- Outcomes for pupils
- Quality of the curriculum
- Financial viability and long term health of the school
- Short term impact on families in Gosforth
- Long term impact on families in Gosforth
- Impact on staff
- Provision of places across Gosforth
- Impact on other local schools, as well as those in Gosforth

Is it possible that the school may not get through planning?

There is a planning process to go through. The NGP consortium has submitted an outline planning application for Cell A at Newcastle Great Park, which includes the two proposed schools. This can be viewed on the City Council's planning portal. If this gains approval, there will be a subsequent stage of detailed planning for the schools. To meet the timescale for proposed opening on the new site, work would need to begin on site by early 2019.

Is there a date for the decision to be made? Will it be before the closing date for applications for school places for 2018?

The Governing Body will meet on 17th July. They may make a decision at the meeting or they may defer if they are unable to make a decision. However, a decision will be made before the closing date for the next applications for school places.

The size of the proposed site seems unclear and it will be shared with the Academy?

Some feasibility work has been undertaken to assess whether the sites proposed by the Newcastle Great Park Consortium would provide sufficient space. This work has confirmed that there would be sufficient space to meet all of the existing standards for school buildings and external spaces. The plans also show open areas in Cell B1 that are proposed to be developed as sports pitches for school and community use. The site is adjacent to wildlife areas and this will provide excellent curriculum opportunities.

How would curriculum provision be enhanced?

Many teachers currently lead more than one subject area so their time to develop subject areas, as well as carry out their other responsibilities, is limited. A larger staff would allow more subject specialism and subject specialist teachers. Another example is that a curriculum could be developed to take advantage of the school's proximity to a range of habitats and environments. There are great benefits in teachers working together to plan and deliver the curriculum. We have no parallel classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 and this limits the benefits of peer to peer support for our staff. We would be able to target the curriculum more effectively when we have single year group classes and the opportunities to teach a mastery curriculum will be much wider. Gosforth Park and Broadway East are now the only two schools in Gosforth with mixed classes. If you have visited our school as a prospective parent, you will have heard the headteacher say that we make the mixed classes work because we have to, and further, that the difficulty is for the staff. We have excellent staff who work very hard to deliver two parallel curricula in English and Maths in the mixed-age classes. One of the ways we do this is by targeting more teaching assistant time at these classes. As we have embedded the new National Curriculum, this is becoming more difficult and much of our professional development time is centred around how we can make this work, rather than how we can improve our teaching and learning. Having parallel classes would allow us to improve already very high outcomes for our pupils in the core subjects and the wider curriculum through a more targeted curriculum, more effective use of classroom support and greater opportunities for collaborative working. There are some social benefits of the mixed classes and we would still build in opportunities for children to work together across classes and would continue to have groups and clubs across the school and Key Stages, e.g. the Eco Warriors and the School Council. The opportunities to develop different groups and clubs would increase with more staff with different skills, expertise and interests.

Will the ethos be the same?

As we stated in the previous documentation, the people who lead the school set its ethos and we will continue to care about this and would take our values with us. The relationships we build in our school will always be at the heart of what we do because this is what we believe makes our school special.

We hope that the above gives you a summary of the main questions and issues which were raised at the meeting. The meeting ended with Mr Jones thanking the attendees for a frank and honest discussion and he reassured parents that although there are lots of questions which we cannot answer yet, we will work with parents and carers to shape any future plans if the proposals go ahead. We are currently gathering your views and these are important to us, so please return your consultation form.

The Governing Body will be looking at the consultation forms and collating responses in the week beginning 10th July. On Monday 17th July we will meet to make a decision about whether to take the proposals forwards. If a decision cannot be made, it will be deferred. We will share the outcome of that meeting with you later in that week.

The Governing Body