



Consultation Report Mill Lane Primary School

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1. Introduction

It is with great privilege and anticipation that we present this consultation report on the proposal to become an academy and join a new Multi Academy Trust in the Kirklees area. During four weeks of consultation in November, we have engaged in an inclusive and transparent consultation process, inviting all stakeholders to contribute their perspectives and insights. Assembled by Gail Khan Associates, this report provides a thorough analysis and constructive dialogue surrounding the proposal and the feedback received.

We aim to provide governors and stakeholders with a comprehensive overview of the feedback, the merits of the proposal and the considerations vital for your deliberations. With the collective input of stakeholders at the forefront of our efforts, we trust that this report will furnish you with the clarity and confidence needed to make informed decisions that will shape the future of our educational community.

2. Background

For some time, the Governing Body have been carefully considering the school's future in a fast-changing and increasingly challenging educational landscape. Senior staff and the Governors have spent time researching and undertaking due diligence, looking at the options for the school moving forward.

We have decided that the best and only option to explore further, building on the success of the school, is to look at extending our partnerships, become an academy and join a new local Multi Academy Trust. The initial MAT application has been led and primarily developed by the following three schools to create a new Trust to be known as Industrious Education Trust (IET).

- Birkby Junior School
- Dalton School
- Moldgreen Community Primary School

Beyond our school there are currently two more schools considering exploring academy status and joining Industrious Education Trust which would take the total to six schools. The remaining two schools are:

1. Ashbrow School
2. North Huddersfield Trust School

The proposed mission of the new Multi Academy Trust is:

Mission:

Together with ourselves, we will form a small Trust of good and outstanding organisations who are committed to a truly inclusive education for all our young people, which sees them progress through all phases of education.

Vision

Our vision is to establish a trust, dedicated to finding **collaborative solutions** in ensuring **excellence for all children** and the foundations for life-long learning.

Delivered through:

- o The highest aspirations for all, through an inclusive offer
- o Meeting the needs of the local community
- o Being stronger together through shared services and expertise
- o Developing exceptional, inspirational and creative staff

3. Geographic distribution of the proposed MAT Schools

The map below shows where the schools proposing to join the MAT are located.

IET 6 school map



4. Consultation Methodology

One of the first priorities in this phase is stakeholder consultation. Consultation commenced on 4th November 2024 and concluded on 29th November 2024 and views have been sought from parents and carers, staff, the community and trade unions. 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

The objectives of the process were to:

- Provide relevant background information for stakeholders
- Explain the reasons for the proposal
- Outline the pros and cons of the proposal
- Set out the stages in the process for the school to become an academy and join the proposed MAT 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 media used
 - 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/emails
- Information made available on the school's own website <https://www.mill-lane.org.uk/> under the section 'Academy Consultation' and a link to the following website: www.industriouseducation.org.uk
- Social media channels
- Joint press release on behalf of Mill Lane Primary School, North Huddersfield Trust School and Ashbrow School was sent to Telegraph and Argus, Yorkshire Post, Yorkshire Live, Yorkshire Evening Post and Batley News
- Direct meetings held by head of school to regularly inform their members of staff
- Governor engagement
- Information on how to give feedback or ask questions via an online feedback form or consultation email address or paper forms available within the school
- In-person consultation events with parents, staff, stakeholders and governors. Unions were invited to attend the staff meeting.

4.1 Direct letters/emails

Examples of letters/emails introducing the consultation were sent electronically to the following groups and are included in Appendix 1a:

- Parents/community members
- School staff and Trade Unions
- Governors

4.2 Publicised events

All stakeholders were invited to a consultation event, an overview of events held can be seen below in table 5.1.

4.3 Frequently asked questions (FAQs), feedback survey and consultation emails

We recognise the paramount importance of clarity and accessibility throughout the consultation process. To facilitate open communication and address common queries effectively, we implemented a comprehensive Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) resource. Tailored specifically for staff, parents, and governors, these FAQs served as a central repository of information, providing clear and concise answers to common concerns surrounding the formation of the new Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

Appendix 3 is the list of all FAQs for staff, parents, the community and governors. Updated answers to these FAQs were delivered in person where possible at face-to-face events. Links were also sent in emails to the LA and Unions for their information.

4.4 Website

The school formed a dedicated section on their own website (<https://www.mill-lane.org.uk/>) under the section 'Academy Consultation' and a link to the following website: <http://www.industrioueducation.org.uk>. All communication materials were posted online including items mentioned within this section of the report.

4.5 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 IET.

4.6 Communication channels

Communication channels included the following: LinkedIn, text messages, ParentHub, email and school website.

5. Overview of consultation feedback received

5.1 Attendance at consultation meetings

Date	Time	Event	Venue	Number of Attendees
12 November	3:45pm	Staff Consultation Meeting (Unions invited. Present: UNISON and NEU)	School Hall	16
12 November	5:00pm	Parent/ Carer Consultation Meeting	School Hall	0
14 November	9:00am	Parent and Community Consultation Meeting Parents/ Carers	School Hall	1
20 November	5:30pm	Governor Meeting	Virtual meeting	5

Please be aware that a variety of informal consultation meetings with staff have been held, before and during the formal consultation process. These meetings are not included in the table provided above.

5.2 Survey responses

Format	Responders:	Date	Number of responses
Emails	All stakeholders	4/11/24 to 29/11/24	2
Survey	All stakeholders	4/11/24 to 29/11/24	0

5.3 Themes and key messages

Appendix 4a contains all the questions, comments and feedback received from stakeholders from the various media used throughout the consultation period.

A summary of all the responses and the messages contained therein, with implications for the school and proposed MAT is provided in the remainder of this section.

Stakeholders are most interested in:

5.3.1 Financial considerations

Stakeholders were keen to understand this proposal wasn't going to cost any more than what the school pays now and if anything would reduce costs overall.

Linked to the above:

- The £25 000 grant – does that cover the cost of conversion

5.3.2 Governance arrangements if the school becomes an academy

Stakeholders sought reassurance around the proposed governance model, what it would look like and how it would work in practice. In particular, the integration of the current governance arrangements at Mill Lane Primary and those of the proposed trust.

- What would be the impact on the role of Governors at Mill Lane
- Will the structure of the governing body change and will we still have to have co-opted, parent govts etc

5.3.3 Staffing – contractual implications, general concerns and opportunities

Staff at the school raised a number of queries with a particular emphasis on:

- How long after conversion can changes be made to terms and conditions?
- Who will undertake HT performance management and changes to salary post conversion?
- Will we stay aligned with LA pay scales for support staff?
- Currently support staff do not work training days, will this change?

5.3.4 What are the differences between academies and maintained schools

Stakeholders wanted to understand the differences between the two statuses, queries were raised about:

- At the moment we have a Governor Led Nursery at our school...do you have any intention of changing the way our Nursery is run when our school converts to the new Multi Academy Trust to be known as Industrious Education Trust (IET)?
- What are the biggest risks of joining a small MAT
- Why can't we join a local MAT?

Regional representatives from NEU and UNISON had the opportunity to feedback on any member concerns in relation to the project. No member concerns were raised. The representatives were encouraged to continue to feedback during the consultation period. The regional representatives think that this is a good idea. They would like termly meetings and for the MAT to support facilities arrangements if they get the go ahead. For them staff wellbeing is key.

Overall, stakeholders were cautious but optimistic in identifying the risks and benefits this proposal could bring to the individual settings and their learners/communities.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

On compilation of all feedback and data received, the conclusion that can be drawn is that there are no apparent legitimate reasons why the school should not convert to an academy and join the proposed MAT within the timescales outlined.

Stakeholders would like to see what works well at Mill Lane Primary School to remain in place. There are no major concerns or contra-indications that have been raised through this process.

Response rates from parents and community members at school were low considering the pupil numbers of the school. From this it can be deduced that:

- Stakeholders appear to be generally content for Mill Lane Primary School to become an academy and join Industrious Education Trust
- Low attendance at meetings and no responses to the survey would indicate that stakeholders are content to leave these decisions to the managers and leaders of the school.

Following the completion of the consultation period, if Mill Lane Primary School wishes to convert and join the MAT it is recommended that:

- The school proceeds with the next phase of the application process
- A range of media is used to further inform/update stakeholders of all the interim milestones, timescales and plans for the school as they progress
- Due diligence and financial modelling are completed

7 List of Appendices

Appendix 1	Communications examples
Appendix 2	Stakeholder Consultation Presentation
Appendix 3	FAQs
Appendix 4 (a)	Overview of the Consultation Feedback received
Appendix 4 (b)	Online Survey