



DARELL PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Academy Conversion Parent Consultation Summary

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the parent consultation for Darell to join Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust. The consultation was between 21 November 2016 and 31 January 2017.

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Consultation Process

The consultation started on 21 November 2016 and was closed on 9 January 2017. An extension was given until 31 January to allow for responses to the third supplementary Q&A.

The consultation was initiated in writing to all parents inviting questions and feedback. Three documents were sent to parents:

- Proposal and invitation for consultation;
- Bite-size brief on academy conversion - 1-page only;
- Initial Q&A, which was supplemented with questions raised during consultation period.

The school website had a page dedicated to academy conversion directly linked from the home page. A contact form and a dedicated email account were set up to receive parent comments. A dedicated drop-box was also provided in the school reception for parents who were unable to use the website.

In addition to written communication, the following meetings took place:

- 14/15 November - information meetings with Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust led by Maggie Bailey, CEO of the Trust.
- 13/15 December - meetings with Governing Body and Local Authority (represented by Matthew Paul, Associate Director for School Place Planning, AfC) to discuss academy conversion.

In addition, governors were available on Friday mornings during the consultation period from 8:30-9am to meet informally with any parents.

Four supplementary sets of Q&As were issued to parents in response to questions raised during the consultation process.

A working group of governors met regularly throughout the process to respond to questions raised by parents/staff. In addition, a parental steering group was set up to provide advice on how the consultation process could be tailored to the Darell parent community. The group met several times but some members felt that the consultation should have taken place before the academy application was made and therefore, the group disbanded.

Key Themes:

The key concerns raised are set out below together with a summary of the Governor response. The majority of this information has been shared previously often in more detailed form.

Alternatives: The governing body had not fully considered the alternatives to academy conversion. Federations (or other forms of collaboration) offer a good alternative without leaving the Local Authority umbrella. There had not been sufficient information shared with parents about the alternatives considered and why they were thought unsuitable for the school's future.

GB response: The GB began considering academies along with other operating models in 2014 as part of its strategic planning for the school. The GB reviewed the options available in multiple meetings both internally within the GB and school leadership team and with AfC representatives. A summary was provided to parents in the Q&As.

Pupil numbers: In order to increase pupil numbers, the school is aiming for higher levels of attainment similar to other schools with different cohorts and philosophies. Darell has an inclusive ethos and this may be adversely affected by a policy of focussing on SATs results. Also, improved attainment may not lead to increased pupil numbers since there are too many school places in the local area.

GB response: The GB wish to improve the levels of attainment for all pupils irrespective of any financial benefits associated with additional funding. The inclusive approach of the school should not prevent children achieving good levels of attainment and we continue to aim for all children get the best education. The GB recognises that improving standards is not the only factor for low pupil numbers and is looking at other alternatives for reducing vacancies.

Support for staff: Many parents expressed significant support for staff and concern that staff have not been consulted and/or were not in favour of becoming an academy. Parents expressed an interest in receiving feedback from the staff consultation.

GB response: The GB have formally consulted with the staff via the SLT and the process of informal consultation and engagement continues as new staff arrive. Further formal consultation with staff will take place prior to transition.

Opportunity cost: The conversion process is a distraction to the main efforts of the governing body who should be focussed upon improving the school in other ways.

GB response: The work associated with conversion has been carried out in addition to the responsibilities of the regular governance committees, which focus on the school development plan and overall performance.

Views of Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust: Both positive and negative views were expressed about the Trust. Some parents were already familiar with Grey Court and they felt that this could be a positive relationship. Others felt there was not enough transparency about the Trust.

GB response: The Trust was a new organisation at the time of consultation and there was not a lot of information publicly available. The Trust now have their own website which publishes information about the organisation, ethos and finances of the trust (<http://everychildeverydayacademytrust.org/>)

SEN provision: Concern was expressed about how the SEN provision might be affected by an academy conversion. There had not been sufficient information shared about potential changes.

GB response: The GB do not anticipate any adverse changes to the SEN provision and no specific changes have been discussed with the Trust. Greycourt School have similar proportion of SEN pupils and inclusivity is a key part of their ethos.

Financial impacts: Parents were concerned about school finances and how they could be affected by conversion. A variety of views were expressed about the benefit academy conversion would or would not bring to the school financial situation.

GB response: School funding is evolving rapidly and our financial position is reviewed regularly by the Resources committee. The financial impact of converting will be reviewed by the GB once the conversion date is known so that the existing funding can be compared directly. The rationale for converting is not financial, however, it is anticipated that as the Trust grows, there will be opportunities for shared services and efficiencies.

Local Authority relationship: Parental perception was that the LA provide a good and extensive range of services and therefore the need for change was not clear.

GB response: The Local Authority support is changing and the scope and scale of some services have been declining over time due to budget constraints. As an academy, Darell will still be able to buy into LA services, where they offer best value but may also have other options due to being part of the Trust.

Data

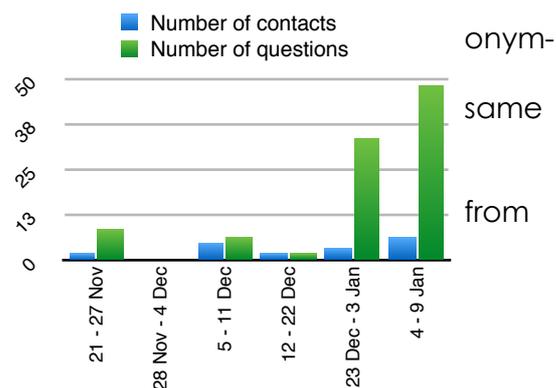
Total number of unique contacts: **18** of which 6 were anonymous.

Note: This does not include multiple contacts from the individuals.

Total number of questions asked: **97**, of which 67 came from two parents.

Characterisation of opinions:

- 5 were neutral
- 2 were positive
- 11 were negative



Meetings:

2 parent meetings were held during the consultation. These were advertised to the school community as part of the initial consultation invitation and also in school newsletter and by email/text:

12 December 7pm - 3 attendees

14 December 9am - circa. 20 attendees

These meetings opened with a short presentation which summarised the Governing Body's rationale for the proposal to join the Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust, followed by questions from the floor. Answers were provided by members of the Governing Body, including the Head Teacher.