



# Northborough Primary School

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## ACADEMY CONSULTATION REPORT NORTHBOROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL

### 1. Background

The Governing Body of Northborough Primary School has been considering a proposal to convert the school to academy status and join the Soke Education Trust. It resolved in March 2019 to consult upon this proposal.

The Academies Act 2010 requires the Governing Body of a Local Authority maintained school to carry out a formal consultation on this proposal, as set out below.

5.1 Before a maintained school in England is converted into an Academy, the school's governing body must consult such persons as they think appropriate.

5.2 The consultation must be on the question of whether the school should be converted into an Academy.

5.3 The consultation may take place before or after an Academy order, or an application for an Academy order, has been made in respect of the school.

This report describes the consultation programme undertaken by the Governing Body, the feedback from this programme and makes a recommendation about the outcome of consultation.

### 2. The Role and Responsibility of the Governing Body

The Department of Education Governance Handbook 2017 summarises the purpose of governance as 'to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance.'

The DfE Governance Handbook further states that it is the responsibility of the Governing Body to develop 'a clear and explicit vision for the future set by the board, in collaboration with executive leaders, which has pupil progress and achievement at its heart' with a 'determination to initiate and lead strategic change when this is in the best interests of children, young people and the organisation, and to champion the reasons for, and benefits of, change to all stakeholders;

It also states;

'As the accountable body, the board\* is the key decision maker. It may delegate operational matters to executive leaders and governance functions to committees (including LGBs in a MAT) or in some cases to individuals, but the board as a corporate entity remains accountable and responsible for all decisions made and executive leaders operate within the autonomy, powers and functions delegated to them by the board.

\*the board should be taken to mean the accountable body for the school or group of schools: in local authority (LA) maintained schools, this will be the governing body.

Therefore, it is within the remit of the Governing Body, given current Government policy, to assess the benefits and risks of academy status and to decide whether it is appropriate for their school.

### 3. The Purpose of Consultation

The purpose of consultation is for the Governing Body, in accordance of the Academies Act 2010 and the DfE Governance Handbook 2017, to present the proposal to stakeholders, to gather feedback on the proposal and to understand the level of stakeholder interest, support and objection.

The Governing Body can then determine whether there is any significant stakeholder objection to the proposal that would cause them to reconsider.

#### 4. Consultation proposal

To convert Northborough Primary School to convert to academy status and join the Soke Education Trust.

#### 5. Consultation Process

The academy consultation ran from Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup> to Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 a period of four (4) academic weeks.

A summary of the consultation plan identifying the different stakeholders, how those stakeholders were consulted and what information was to be provided, is below.

Stakeholder	Approach	Information
Parents and carers of pupils attending the schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter and consultation document sent to all parents on Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Two consultation meetings were held on Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup></li> <li>• Consultation survey distributed on Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Meeting Q&amp;A summaries published May 14<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Further Q&amp;A published June 12<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent &amp; Carer Letter</li> <li>• Consultation Document</li> <li>• Consultation presentation</li> <li>• Consultation survey</li> <li>• Meeting Q&amp;A summaries</li> </ul>
Staff employed by the schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter, consultation document and FAQs sent to all staff on Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Consultation meetings were held on Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Consultation survey distributed on Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Meeting Q&amp;A summary published May 24<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Further Q&amp;A published June 12<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff letter</li> <li>• Consultation Document</li> <li>• Staff FAQs</li> <li>• Consultation presentation</li> <li>• Consultation survey</li> <li>• Meeting Q&amp;A</li> <li>• Further Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
Unions & professional associations for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint letter with copies of staff letters, consultation FAQs and survey sent to representatives on Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Consultation meeting Tuesday, June 11<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union letter</li> <li>• Staff letters</li> <li>• Consultation Document</li> <li>• Staff Consultation FAQs</li> </ul>
Other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter sent on Monday, May 13<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder letter</li> </ul>

## 6. Consultation meetings

### 6.1 Parent/carers consultation meetings: 2.00pm and 6.00pm on Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>

The two parent/carers meetings were attended by approximately 30 parents and carers.

The format of the two meetings was similar;

- The Chair of Governors, Debbie Hiller, set out the reason for the proposal in the context of the school's current situation and challenges and the investigation carried out by the Governing Body,
- The Headteacher, Stuart Mallott, explained the benefits of the proposal for pupils and staff and what would remain the same in the school,
- The CEO of Soke Education Trust, Ben Wilding, described the Trust's vision, the characteristics of the current member schools and its governance, leadership and management.

Also present at the meetings were school governors and Philip Cranwell (project manager).

Parents were then given the chance to ask questions and summaries of the Questions & Answers are attached as appendix A.

## 6.2 Staff consultation meeting: 3.45pm on Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>

The staff meetings were attended by 16 staff members.

The format of the meeting was:

- The Chair of Governors, Debbie Hiller, set out the reason for the proposal in the context of the school's current situation and challenges and the investigation carried out by the Governing Body,
- The Headteacher, Stuart Mallott, explained the benefits of the proposal for pupils and staff and what would remain the same in the school,
- The CEO of Soke Education Trust, Ben Wilding, described the Trust's vision, the characteristics of the current member schools and its governance, leadership and management.
- Philip Cranwell (project manager) explained how staff would be affected by the proposal and how they would be consulted.

Also present at the meetings was school governor Debbie Hodge.

Staff were then given the chance to ask questions and summaries of the Questions & Answers are attached as appendix B.

## 6.3 Further questions & answers

Parents, carers and staff were given the opportunity to ask further questions via email or via the survey form. These were collated and a response was published on Wednesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, two days prior to the close of the survey

## 7. Consultation survey

The Governing Body carried out a survey of parents, carers, teachers and support staff using a paper survey form, which was distributed on Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>.

The survey comprised the following questions:

**About you (Please tick one that applies to you)**

Parent/Carer

Teacher

Support staff

Member of local community

Other (please specify)

**Q1 What do you like about your school?**

**Q2 Do you support the proposal of your school converting to academy status and joining Soke Education Trust?**

**Q3 Please explain your response to question 2.**

**Q4 Is there anything else you would like to say about the proposal?**

By the close of consultation on Friday, June 14<sup>th</sup> a total of 24 parent/carers and two (2) teachers survey responses had been received.

### 7.1 Breakdown of survey response rates (Q2)

STAKEHOLDER	UNIVERSE	YES	MAYBE	NO	DK	TOTAL
PARENT	210	6	5	7	6	24
TEACHER	10	0	2	0	0	2
SUPPORT STAFF	15	0	0	0	0	0

To summarise the findings

- The **parent/carer response rate of 11%** (24 responses for 210 children) is above average for a survey of primary school parents and carers. (In my experience a response rate of 5% for a primary school consultation is average.)
- The parents/carer responses were split almost equally between the four options with seven parents objecting.
- The **teacher response rate of 20%** is much lower than might have been expected for a survey of primary school teachers. There were no objections.
- The **support staff response rate was 0%**. There were no objections.

## 8. Consultation summary

The consultation on the proposal has been comprehensive and stakeholders have been given clear opportunity to ask questions, receive further information and express views about the proposal.

It is noted that the Governing Body of Northborough Primary School have read and considered all comments written by parents, taking the time to discuss and consider the points and questions raised.

The response to the survey does not indicate any significant objection to the proposal among any stakeholder group.

The Governing Body is advised that the consultation has not demonstrated any significant objection to the proposal for the school to convert to academy status and join Soke Education Trust.

APPENDIX A: Q&A from the parent consultation meetings May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

APPENDIX B: Q&A from the staff consultation meeting May 22<sup>nd</sup>

APPENDIX C: Response to further parent questions published June 12<sup>th</sup>

APPENDIX D: Response to further parent questions published June 12<sup>th</sup>

APPENDIX E: Table of survey responses.

## Introduction

The Governing Body of Northborough Primary School held parent and carer consultation meetings on Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2.00pm and 6.00pm. A total of 30 parents and carers attended the two meetings.

This document is a summary of the questions asked at those meetings, the answers given and where helpful further answers have been added.

### Questions from the 2:00pm meeting.

#### **Q1. How does the school get its fair share of funding and resources?**

**A1.** Each member school receives its full funding allocation, which is based on the Local Authority funding formula for primary schools. As an academy Northborough won't receive any additional funding but will receive a proportion of funding that is currently held back by the Local Authority. Each member school contributes a % of its budget towards the trust's central costs, which are agreed each year by the trustees and headteachers.

#### **Q2. What are the Trust's weaknesses?**

**A2.** The trust was established in January 2018, so it is relatively young. Much of the focus has been on ensuring the trust is run effectively, efficiently and compliantly. We were delighted to get a clean bill of health from the Education & Skills Funding Agency following a monitoring visit in 2018.

The trustees monitor the performance of the trust and schools closely. No weaknesses have been identified but like any organisation there are things we want to do better.

#### **Q3. What happens if a school manages their budget poorly?**

**A3.** School Governing Bodies are given delegated authority to propose and monitor their budget. They must propose a balanced in-year budget and address issues that may lead to a deficit budget. Ultimately, if a governing body fails to manage their budget sustainably, the trustees have the power to remove their delegated authority and take responsibility. Schools that are run badly financially are not subsidised by schools that manage their finances well.

#### **Q4. How are Trustees and Members appointed?**

**A4.** When the trust was formed, the four governing bodies agreed who the Members and Trustees would be. They were chosen for their individual and collective expertise in education, governance, finance, business, HR, property and compliance. The list of Members and Trustees was ratified by the DfE and any changes must be communicated to the DfE. Going forward, new Trustees will be proposed by the Board for approval by the Members. New Members will be appointed by the Members. Currently, there is a vacancy and Northborough is welcome to propose a Trustee.

#### **Q5. How will the children benefit? Can you give some practical examples?**

**A5.** As teachers from the member schools have worked together to share ideas, resources and good practice, individual teachers have been able to enhance what they do in the classroom. This engages and develops the pupils and makes projects and topics more interesting. More broadly, the trust organised a choir event for the schools, hosted at the Cresset Theatre, which was well-attended by parents and families. The trust has a strong sports programme organised through Soke sports. Pupils have been participating in Trust Ambassador programmes to help shape the future curriculum.

#### **Q6. What are the specific areas that Northborough needs support for?**

**A6.** One particular area is music, which is a strength of the trust schools.

#### **Q7. Can the sports programme be enhanced e.g. through a sports coach?**

**A7.** The school is an active participant in the Soke sports partnership. The opportunity to have further sports coaching in the school is certainly something the trust can look at, for example using the Apprenticeship levy to fund the training of sports coaches.

**Questions from the 6:00pm meeting.**

**Q8. Most of our pupils move to Arthur Mellows. What do they think about the proposal?**

**A8.** Arthur Mellows is already an academy and part of a trust with primary schools that don't feed pupils into the school. We don't know what they think but we would expect them to be supportive of anything that helps prepare pupils even more for secondary school.

**Q9. Will the school funding increase or decrease as an academy?**

**A9.** Each member school receives its full funding allocation, which is based on the Local Authority funding formula for primary schools. As an academy Northborough won't receive any additional funding but will receive a proportion of funding that is currently held back by the Local Authority. Each member school contributes a % of its budget towards the trust's central costs, which are agreed each year by the trustees and headteachers

**Q10. Will the school have to follow the national curriculum? Will it have to follow the Soke curriculum?**

**A10.** Schools already have freedoms within the national curriculum develop their own policy. The trust does not have a curriculum policy. Each school has delegated authority to develop their curriculum to suit their school and pupils. Clearly, partnership working will lead to sharing and developing best practice, which schools may want to implement in their school but there is no enforcement.

All academies are still required to participate in national tests at Key Stage 1 and 2 and make sure their pupils are numerate, literate and ready for secondary school. This shapes each school's curriculum.

**Q11. Do you expect to see any impact on the children? I have spoken to a child in another academy who said she was treated less as a child after academisation?**

**A11.** We do expect there to be a positive impact on pupils and certainly no change to how the children are treated. As teachers from the member schools work together to share ideas, resources and good practice, individual teachers will be able to enhance what they do in the classroom. This will engage and develop the pupils and makes projects and topics more interesting. More broadly, the trust organised a choir event for the schools, hosted at the Cresset Theatre, which was well-attended by parents and families. The trust has a strong sports programme organised through Soke sports. Pupils have been participating in Trust Ambassador programmes to help shape the future curriculum.

**Q12. If the schools are working together could specialist teachers come in to teach in our school?**

**A12.** Primary teaching is very much based on a single teacher teaching their class pupils the range of subjects and topics. This helps with continuity for pupils and helps inter-connect the different parts of the curriculum. However, it is an interesting idea and if teachers felt it would be helpful it is something the Headteachers and CEO could look at.

**Q13. What is the Trust's growth plan?**

**A13.** The Trustees, Headteachers and Governors of the schools that formed the trust have discussed this a lot. There is no business plan with targets for schools or pupil numbers.

We recognise that the larger the trust the greater the combined resources and opportunities to develop programmes to support member schools. But grow too large, too fast and the trust could become difficult to run effectively. The aim is for sustainable growth, always ensuring the trust has the capacity to integrate new schools properly.

It is worth noting that the DfE suggests that 3,000 pupils is a threshold for sustainable trusts, which translates into adding several single form and/or two form entry primary schools, which feels too many.

**Q14. Does the Trust have to take on failing schools as a sponsor?**

**A14.** No. The decision to sponsor a school is for the Trustees, CEO and Headteachers.

**Q15. Do the financial benefits of partnership flow back into the school?**

**A15.** Yes. Ultimately the savings achieved by the trust mean that schools pay less for those services and have more to spend in the classroom.

**Q16. Will money be switched from pupils to pay higher salaries for staff?**

**A16.** No. Salaries already take up about 80% of a school's expenditure and those salaries are set by national agreements.

**Q17. Have staff cuts had to be made to join the academy?**

**A17.** No. Every school has a responsibility to balance its budgets and Northborough is no exception. The governors have had to make some tough, painful decisions over recent years but that has nothing to do with academy status

**Q18. What data is there for the impact of academy status on the Trust schools?**

**A18.** The trust was only established in January 2018 and its member schools went through the first set of national tests in May 2018. The trust will be reviewing the result of the 2019 tests in Autumn term 2019.

There is national data from 2018 that shows convertor primary schools do slightly better than LA maintained schools in Key Stage 2 tests.

However, in the same way a parent would judge a school on more than national test data, the impact of a trust can be judged by more than data. For example, the staff turnover at member schools has not changed since the member schools converted, suggesting staff are happy enough.

**Q19. How will Ofsted inspect the schools?**

**A19.** Ofsted will inspect each school individually as now. The judgement of one school will not affect the judgement of another school. Ofsted is testing trust-wide inspections where a number of member schools are inspected at the same time but that has tended to be used for much bigger multi academy trusts

**Q20. What have the Governors and Headteacher done to drive (informal) collaboration?**

**A20.** The Governors and Headteachers have actively pursued collaboration with other schools. However, there is a practical problem that out of 60 primary schools in Peterborough, 34 have converted to academy status forming several different multi academy trusts. Schools within those MATs tend to focus their partnership working with other member schools rather than those outside. So, there are fewer schools for us to work with, especially locally and the school risks becoming isolated.

**Q21. What will happen if we don't join?**

**A21.** The Governors are concerned that the pressures that the school faces will increase and will inevitably lead to a slow but steady deterioration in the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. This is a risk that the Governors are not prepared to take and having investigated thoroughly believe that joining the Soke Education Trust will help the school thrive.

**Q22. If in 2 or 3 years' time we decide it doesn't work can we go back?**

**A22.** No. Once a school converts to academy status it can't go back to being a Local Authority maintained school. It can only move to another multi academy trust with the consent of the Secretary of State for education. That is why it is so important that Governors have investigated very carefully which multi academy trust to join and carried out thorough due diligence

**Q23. How have staff responded to being part of an academy trust?**

**A23.** It would seem staff are happy enough given that staff turnover has not changed since the member

schools converted.

#### **Additional questions submitted not covered above**

**Q24. Will this mean staff may move between settings to cover sickness etc, concerns re continuity?**

A24. No. Staff are still contracted to work in their school

**Q25. Will Sencos discuss pupils with others from the Academy?**

The SENCO will have the opportunity to work with SENCOS from other Soke schools, share and develop good practice and share expertise on particular pupil needs. The trust is bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as now

**Q26. Will resources be shared ie. forrest school at Northborough accessible for other pupils to attend(hypothetical at present).**

A26. Yes and vice versa Northborough will be able to access facilities at other schools bearing in mind the logistics of moving pupils between schools

**Q27. Will school facilities be available for use out of school hours i.e. outdoor gym ,table tennis for community use?**

A27. That's a decision for the school.

**Q28. How can we measure improvements is there an annual review?**

A28. The trust is required to publish an annual report but more broadly communicates actively with Local Governing Bodies

**Q29. Are you planning to engage local businesses for sponsorship?**

A29. There are no plans to do so

**Q30. What, if any, do you for see are the potential barriers to this status?**

A30. None really following careful investigation by the Governing Body and DfE approval of the application.

**Q31. Will the status give more bargaining power when organising trips/enrichment opportunities?**

A32. Yes. Being able to organise enrichment across a larger number of pupils both increases buying power and reduces the cost per pupil.

#### **APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF STAFF CONSULTATION MEETING Q&A**

### **Introduction**

The Governing Body of Northborough Primary Schools held a staff consultation meeting on Wednesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 3.45pm. A total of 16 members of staff attended the meeting.

This document is a summary of the questions asked at those meetings, the answers given and where helpful further answers have been added.

**Q1. What was it about our school that made you think it would be a good fit for Soke?**

A1. The Soke schools have been working with Northborough for a number of years through local partnership arrangements such as the triads. It is clear that Northborough shares the same ethos and values of the Soke schools, putting the child at the centre of what the school does. It is a school performing well with many strengths in teaching and learning that would benefit the Trust. It is a school with a collaborative approach

and high aspiration. This makes the school a really good fit with the Soke Educational Trust.

**Q2. What's your vision for the Trust's growth? How many schools?**

**A2.** The Trustees, Headteachers and Governors of the schools that formed the trust have discussed this a lot. There is no business plan with targets for schools or pupil numbers.

We recognise that the larger the trust the greater the combined resources and opportunities to develop programmes to support member schools. But grow too large, too fast and the trust could become difficult to run effectively. The aim is for sustainable growth, always ensuring the trust has the capacity to integrate new schools properly.

It is worth noting that the DfE suggests that 3,000 pupils is a threshold for sustainable trusts, which translates into adding several single form and/or two form entry primary schools ,which feels too many.

**Q3. Is there a danger that growth will dilute the benefits for the member schools?**

**A3.** Yes and, as explained in question 2, is something that Trustees and Headteachers recognise.

**Q4. How can we be reassured about the promises for national pay?**

**A4.** Soke has delivered on the promise it made to the staff of the founding schools to offer pay, terms and conditions at least equal to those in a Local Authority maintained school. The trust implemented a new pay policy from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 that was aligned to the STPCD 2018 agreement. Similarly, support staff were awarded the agreed national pay award with effect from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. Staff are welcome to check with their colleagues at Soke member schools.

**Q5. Will we lose our relationship with local providers? Will we have to use Trust suppliers?**

**A5.** No. Each school can continue to use its suppliers as part of its delegated authority with some obvious exceptions. The trust uses EPM as its payroll and HR provider and requires schools to use particular financial software. Some trust-wide services are either a legal or regulatory requirement.

The trust is continually reviewing the contracts and services it provides to schools and has already achieved financial savings on trust-wide contracts such as absence insurance. By contrast a trust tender for parent communications and payment was halted because it would not have delivered clear benefits for schools.

If the trust presented a plan for a central service that was higher quality and/or better value than the school had itself, then we would expect schools to adopt that service unless they had a very compelling reason not to.

**Q6. How can I make a decision to stay or go when the resignation deadline for September 2019 is 2 weeks away?**

**A6.** The timetable has been determined by the ambition that, if it is agreed, that conversion goes ahead Northbrough should join Soke on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. It is the start of the school year and it would mean everyone can benefit from partnership as quickly as possible. We can see how that has meant consultation is taking so close to the resignation deadline for teachers. We would encourage you to talk to colleagues at Soke schools to find out their views on how being part of the trust has impacted them. It is worth noting that staff turnover at the member schools has not increased since the schools converted.

**APPENDIX C: RESPONSE TO FURTHER PARENT QUESTIONS PUBLISHED JUNE 12<sup>TH</sup>**

**Introduction**

The Governing Body of Northborough Primary School invited parents and carers to complete a consultation survey, which gave the opportunity to ask further questions.

This document is a summary of the further questions asked in the surveys, with answers. This is in addition to the Q&A published after the consultation meetings on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, which included thirty-one (31) questions.

**Q32. Is there supporting data available which quantifies the expected gain over the next 5 years of moving to an academy versus remaining under LEA control?**

**A32.** In response to a previous question about evidence for the impact of academy status the following answer was given.

“Soke Education trust was only established in January 2018 and its member schools went through the first set of national tests in May 2018. The trust will be reviewing the result of the 2019 tests in Autumn term 2019.

There is national data from 2018 that shows converter primary schools do slightly better than LA maintained schools in Key Stage 2 tests.” See table N4 in the data table inserted below.

The table is titled 'Table N4' and shows data for 'Key Stage 2' tests. It compares 'Converter primary schools' and 'LA maintained schools' across two years: '2017-18' and '2018-19'. The table has columns for 'Number of schools', 'Number of pupils', and 'Value added' (measured in 'Standard deviations'). The data shows that converter primary schools generally have a higher value added than LA maintained schools, particularly in the 2018-19 period.

Year	School Type	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Value added (Standard deviations)
2017-18	Converter primary schools	1,200	1,200,000	0.1
	LA maintained schools	1,200	1,200,000	0.0
2018-19	Converter primary schools	1,200	1,200,000	0.2
	LA maintained schools	1,200	1,200,000	0.1

**Q33. Within the academy how is the funding split for each school i.e. if there are 1500 pupils within the academy does each school receive exactly the same allocation per pupil?**

**A33.** Each member school receives its full funding allocation, which is based on the Local Authority funding formula for primary schools and its pupil numbers. As an academy Northborough won't receive any additional funding but will receive a proportion of funding that is currently held back by the Local Authority. Each member school contributes a % of its budget towards the trust's central costs, which are agreed each year by the trustees and headteachers

**Q34. Do sponsored schools receive more of the academy [Trust] 's money and resource?**

**A34.** No. Each sponsored school receives the funding allocated to it using the funding formula (see A33). Sponsored academies can benefit from additional funding to support school improvement, which must be spent on the sponsored school. This can be used to fund the support provided by the Trust, for example the input of the CEO or another Headteacher, to ensure Trust resources are deployed fairly.

**Q35. Will any more sponsored schools be taken on?**

**A35.** Possibly yes. The DfE may ask the Trust, especially if it is performing well, to sponsor another school. The Trustees, CEO and Headteachers would need to consider whether this was desirable or feasible.;

We recognise that the larger the trust the greater the combined resources and opportunities to develop programmes to support member schools. But grow too large, too fast and the trust could become difficult to run effectively. The aim is for sustainable growth, always ensuring the trust has the capacity to integrate new schools properly. It is widely recognised that supporting under-performing schools can benefit those staff deployed, strengthening their leadership and coaching skills and deepening their experience

**Q36. Do new teachers applying for a job at Northborough apply to the school or to the academy? As such would their contracts be different to existing staff and state within the that they could be asked to work anywhere within the academy should it be required?**

**A36.** The job would be to work in Northborough but the contract would be a Trust contract. That contract does not require them to work in other schools and any movement between schools would only be with the agreement of that member of staff and the respective Headteachers.

**Q37. What is Northborough's voice within the academy [Trust]? Do any decisions regarding the joining of additional schools need to be a unanimous decision or can they be out voted if other schools opinions form a majority - surely the bigger the academy gets the less of a voice they will have?**

**A37.** Northborough will have its own Local Governing Body, which will continue to include parent and staff governors. It will have the same delegated authority as the other school LGBs. Its' Headteacher will be part of the Trust Leadership Group and will have equal voice as other Headteachers.

It is important to recognise that Trustees have a responsibility for all schools, pupils and staff and are not there to represent individual schools. There is a vacancy for Trustee and Northborough's Governing Body have been

invited to nominate a Trustee. It is the Trustees that decide whether further schools join based on the recommendation of the CEO and leadership group

**Q38. What is the academy's 3-5 Year Plan pertaining to: Strategy – Including the plan with respect to acquiring additional schools. Will the academy take on any more sponsored schools? What are the current measured and future predicted tangible benefits of the academy? What are the current perceived and future predicted intangible benefits of the academy? What Key Performance Indicators does the academy use to measure its effectiveness? Are these published?**

**A38.** The Trust does have a growth business plan but this does not include with targets for schools or pupil numbers. Explanation of the growth plan was provided in A13 in the meeting Q&A.

The Trustees monitor the performance of the schools and the effectiveness of the Trust and school improvement plans through a combination of data reports and other quantitative and qualitative assessment. This information is not published but a summary of Trust performance is included in the Trust Annual report.

It is worth noting that the nationally reported attainment and progress of each cohort of Year 6 and Year 2 pupils does vary each year depending on the pupils. Children develop at different rates and at different times during primary school years so forecasting outcomes at a school level, let alone a Trust level, is challenging.

**Q39. Were staff consulted prior to the meetings on 22nd May?**

**A39.** Staff were briefed verbally on the first day of consultation on May 13<sup>th</sup> ahead of the meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Q40. Have the staff been asked to fill in feedback forms like the parents? If so, will the results be shared with parents?**

**A41.** Yes. The outcome of the staff survey will be published as part of the overall survey outcomes included in final consultation report. That report will be published in late June.

**Q41. What are personal opinions of teachers within the school. Do they feel it will benefit them or is it viewed a burden? Are they happy with the proposal?**

**A41.** Staff are being consulted at the same time as parents so their views are unknown and therefore, we cannot comment.

**Q42. Have parents of Children due to start school in September 2019 and who do not already have siblings within the school been made aware of the proposed changes and given a feedback form? They may have based their school choice on Northborough not being an academy.**

**A42.** No. Parents of September 2019 reception children have not been surveyed but they will be briefed once a decision has been made. Governors believe that those parents will have chosen Northborough because they believe it is right for their child and those reasons will not be adversely affected by academy status. If however, there are new parents concerned by academy status, if agreed, the Headteacher and Governors will seek to reassure them. It is worth noting that parents of children in Year 6 have been consulted even though their child will have left in September.

**Q43. It was also mentioned within the meeting that one of the Werrington schools is a single school academy, has this option been investigated?**

**A43.** The DfE no longer approves primary schools converting as stand-alone academies so this option was not open to the Governing Body.

**Q44. If the Trust takes on additional sponsored schools which puts a drain and burden on costs and resources, what measures are in place to ensure this doesn't have a negative impact on Northborough's needs. I understand short term there would be money for taking on that school but when this runs out what happens.**

**A44.** The Trustees, CEO and Headteachers recognise this risk and would only take on a sponsored school when it was confident that the Trust had the expertise, resource and capacity to enable a sponsored school to improve, without detriment to other member schools.

**Q45. I see benefits of being still small and local - is there a limit on the number of schools that can join Stoke Education Trust.**

**A45.** The Trustees, Headteachers and Governors of the schools that formed the trust have discussed this a lot. There is no business plan with targets for schools or pupil numbers.

We recognise that the larger the trust the greater the combined resources and opportunities to develop programmes to support member schools. But grow too large, too fast and the trust could become difficult to run effectively. The aim is for sustainable growth, always ensuring the trust has the capacity to integrate new schools properly.

It is worth noting that the DfE suggests that 3,000 pupils is a threshold for sustainable trusts, which translates into adding several single form and/or two form entry primary schools, which feels too many.

Please also see A35.

**Q46. Would Stoke Trust ever consider becoming a multiple academy trust? Sponsoring under-performing schools brings more money into the Trust so would this be appealing?**

**A46.** Soke Education Trust is already a multi academy trust since it has four member schools. Please also see A34 and A35 above regarding sponsoring schools.

**Q47. What level of staff engagement was there before the proposal went ahead, what input did they have on that decision and do they fully support that decision, what if they don't want to TUPE over? Staff changes have been significant in the last couple of years so staff motivation for this proposal is important. Are there any teachers that would rather remain as the school is now?**

**A47.** Governors recognise that a motivated, happy, supported staff are essential to good school. We have made every effort to reassure staff about the impact on them including organising a 'private' meeting with staff from other Soke Education Trust where they could ask any questions. Please see also A39-41 regarding consultation with staff.

It is worth noting that staff and parent are represented on the Governing Body that made the decision to consult upon the proposal.

**Q48. What impact will this have on class size, school hours, terms times and subjects - will anything change?**

**A48.** It will have no impact and any future changes will continue to be within the delegated authority of the Local Governing Body unless the steps are contrary to law or regulation or the school is under-performing.

**Q49. Will staff travel to other schools and our classes be taught by alternative teachers?**

**A49.** No. Teachers will be contracted to work in individual schools.

At the consultation meeting the question was asked. If the schools are working together could specialist teachers come in to teach in our school? The following response was given. "Primary teaching is very much based on a single teacher teaching their class pupils the range of subjects and topics. This helps with continuity for pupils and helps inter-connect the different parts of the curriculum. However, it is an interesting idea and if teachers felt it would be helpful it is something the Headteachers and CEO could look at."

**Q50. If one school needed additional support or had long term sick, would we loan a teacher?**

**A19.** The most effective approach for school improvement is based on support and challenge to its leaders and teachers rather than 'parachuting' good teachers. So, a teacher that was recognised as an excellent practitioner might support a colleague but they are highly unlikely to be teaching in that school.

Each school is responsible for managing sickness absence but in the case of long-term sick any movement between schools would be with the agreement of the staff member and the respective Headteachers.

**Q51. Do Ofsted checks still apply?**

**A20.** Ofsted will inspect each school individually as now. The judgement of one school will not affect the judgement of another school. Ofsted is testing trust-wide inspections where a number of member schools are inspected at the same time but that has tended to be used for much bigger multi academy trusts **Q21.**

**Q52.** As academies have the right to set their own term times, can you confirm if there are plans to change term times if the academy conversion goes ahead?

**A52.** There are no plans to change term times. Please see also A48.

## APPENDIX D: RESPONSE TO FURTHER STAFF QUESTIONS PUBLISHED JUNE 12<sup>TH</sup>

### Introduction

The Governing Body of Northborough Primary School invited staff to complete a consultation survey, which gave the opportunity to ask further questions.

This document is a summary of the further questions asked in the surveys, with answers. This is in addition to the Q&A published after the consultation meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, which included six (6) questions.

#### **Q7. Queries about the timeline - is it now or never? Why the rush?**

**A7.** The Governing Body has been considering the academy policy for at two years but has chosen to consult only when it was satisfied it was in the best interests of the school. There are two reasons for converting on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. First, the sooner the school joins the Trust the sooner it can benefit from membership and second, the start of the academic year is a logical, convenient time to join.

#### **Q8. Top slice - what are we getting for our money? Is this levelled out by any money released?**

**A8.** The school will benefit from a range of central services that should be better value for money or better quality than those commissioned by individual schools already. The Trust charge to schools includes these central services as well as the costs of the central costs of the Trust such as CEO, CFO, audit, legal and compliance. So part of the Trust charge is an investment by schools to secure the benefits of partnership as well as the support for leadership and staff that is currently lacking.

#### **Q9. Has there been a working party in governors? What did they find?**

**A9.** The governing body has, over the last four to five years, been monitoring closely the government's school's policy and its impact in our local area.

Now over half (54%) of Peterborough primary schools have converted to academy status and there are seven (7) local multi academy trusts with 3+ primary academies.

In part due to concerns about becoming isolated and not being able to choose which trust the school might join, the governing body has investigated a number of different multi academy trusts, including meetings with their senior leaders and staff.

In 2018 the governing body identified Soke Education Trust as the preferred partner for two key reasons. First, the vision and values of Soke Education Trust align very well with those of Northborough and second, as the most local primary-only multi academy trust, it could offer relevant expertise, support and resources to our school.

Both the governing body and Soke Education Trust have carried out detailed due diligence of the trust and agreed to the school's membership of the trust.

#### **Q10. Are we having a presentation from teachers before we decide on whether we think it is a good thing?**

**A10.** Soke Education Trust has organised for staff to meet with colleagues from Gunthorpe primary School, a member school. Hopefully this will help decide on the proposal.

#### **Q11. Who will be present at the union meeting?**

**A11.** The union took place on June 11<sup>th</sup> and was attended by regional/branch officers of the National Education Union (NEU) and GMB. Other unions including Unite, Unison, NASUWT and the Voice were invited to attend.



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## APPENDIX E: SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSE

STAKEHOLDER	UNIVERSE	RESPONSES (NO.)					RESPONSES (% OF UNIVERSE)					RESPONSES (% OF RESPONSES)				
		YES	MAYBE	NO	DK	TOTAL	TOTAL	YES	MAYBE	NO	DK	YES	MAYBE	NO	DK	TOTAL
PARENT	210	6	5	7	6	24	11%	3%	2%	3%	3%	25%	21%	29%	25%	100%
TEACHER	10	0	2	0	0	2	20%	0%	20%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%
SUPPORT STAFF	15	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

