



Consultation on proposal for Frimley Church of England School to become an academy within The Prospect Multi Academy Trust

The Consultation Process was launched in the form of an online survey on 3 July 2020 and concluded on 4 September 2020. A Consultation booklet (PDF) was distributed by the school to all parents, governors, and community stakeholders, including local schools/MATs. 'Get Ahead VA' was engaged to independently manage the process. Governors are grateful to all respondents for their time and consideration.

Four questions were posed with questions 1-3 requiring a response of either 'positive' or 'negative', and were completed by all respondents, while question 4 allowed for free-text commentary

Results summary

18 respondents completed during the consultation process

Feedback via free-text commentary was provided from 5 out of the 18 respondents in Question 4

Question 1: *Do you consider the proposal for Frimley Church of England School to convert to academy status positive or negative?*

Positive 88.9% Negative 11.1%

Question 2: *Do you consider there will be a positive or negative impact on the local community or those with protected characteristics as a result of this proposal?*

Positive 88.9% Negative 11.1%

Question 3: *Do you consider the proposal that the newly established academy should join The Prospect Trust to be positive or negative?*

Positive 88.9% Negative 11.1%

Question 4: *Do you have any additional comments, questions or suggestions you would like us to consider?*

Comment 1: "I understand and support the decision to become an academy. My only concern is that the Headteacher retains control and the school keeps it's identity - I have seen that in local infant schools that the school has suffered because the new headteacher has been overruled by the academy."



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Comment 2: “No it sounds a great idea!”

Comment 3: “I feel this is an exciting opportunity for the school and our students to collaborate with other excellent schools/colleges in the area to have a smoother transition to secondary education after Year 6.”

Comment 4: “Why The Prospect Trust and not other primary schools?”

Comment 5: “I am extremely cautious of this proposal as the majority of academy conversions I have witnessed have resulted in the schools losing sight of the core values and control of their own finances. Frimley C of E school is a wonderful school with a friendly, open and ‘family’ like feel. I would be concerned that this could change. In my experience Tomlinscote school is very different and I would be sad to see Frimley change to more of there ethos and atmosphere. With an academy comes benefits but financial control must be kept as otherwise schools can be worse off. I am sad to see this proposal just before my child joins in September.”

Governors Response

Governors would like to thank respondents for contributing to the consultation and would offer the following responses in relation to comments 1, 3, and 5, above. The responses should be seen within the context of the Full Governing Body (FGB) having undertaken intensive due diligence on The Prospect Trust, over the period September 2019 to March 2020. The areas underpinning the comments were explored in detail during that time, and there were also numerous meetings with The Prospect Trust Leadership team both at the Trust and within Frimley. Additionally, the Headteacher met with the Principal of Tomlinscote to further explore the experience of being a member of The Prospect Trust. Governors voted unanimously to join The Prospect Trust *only after completing this process*. *It should be noted that the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are both governors.*

Comment 1 – Response.

The governors have been mindful that the Headteacher needs to retain her authority within the school and her ability to make decisions. Equally important to governors is that Frimley “keeps it’s identity” and much of the due diligence (above para) focussed on this. It also should be remembered that Frimley is a Church of England School and the Diocese of Guildford have also probed this area intensively and given approval to the project. Going forward, the character of the school will routinely/regularly be evaluated by governors, OFSTED inspections, and SIAMS inspections generated by the Diocese.

Given the above, governors remain confident that neither the identity of the school, or the role of the Headteacher, will be adversely affected by becoming an academy within the Prospect Trust.



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Comment 3 – Response.

Governors firmly believe in the benefits of securing a more effective transition to Secondary schools for Frimley children. Parents, in particular, will be aware that the quality of education at Frimley has improved significantly over recent years, and linking with a cross phase Multi Academy Trust ie. The Prospect Trust – if Frimley joins it - should help to produce a near seamless transition from Year 6 to Year 7. A similar process could occur if transferring to Sixth Form at age 16. Joining The Prospect Trust potentially offers Frimley children a continuum of educational experience from age 7 to age 18. The above is also the reason why Frimley has not opted to join a Primary Multi academy Trust – see comment 4, above.

Comment 5 – Response.

In most respects this comment reflects several of the concerns addressed in the response to [Comment 1](#), above.

Additionally, the comment reflects a concern about ‘losing control over their own finances’ and the imperative to retain financial control. The intensive due diligence exercise (outlined at top of section) provided governors with reassurance that these were not valid concerns, although the Frimley budget would be devolved from The Prospect Trust and not the Department of Education. Tomlinscote is a case in point, having received significant investment from Trust funding since becoming part of the The Prospect Trust.

Conclusion

Following the overwhelmingly positive outcomes of the consultation exercise, governors are minded to take this exciting opportunity to become an academy within The Prospect Trust, hopefully achieving this aim early in 2021.

Regards,
Tony Ryles
Chair of Governors

