



Consultation Report St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School

June 2019



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1. Introduction

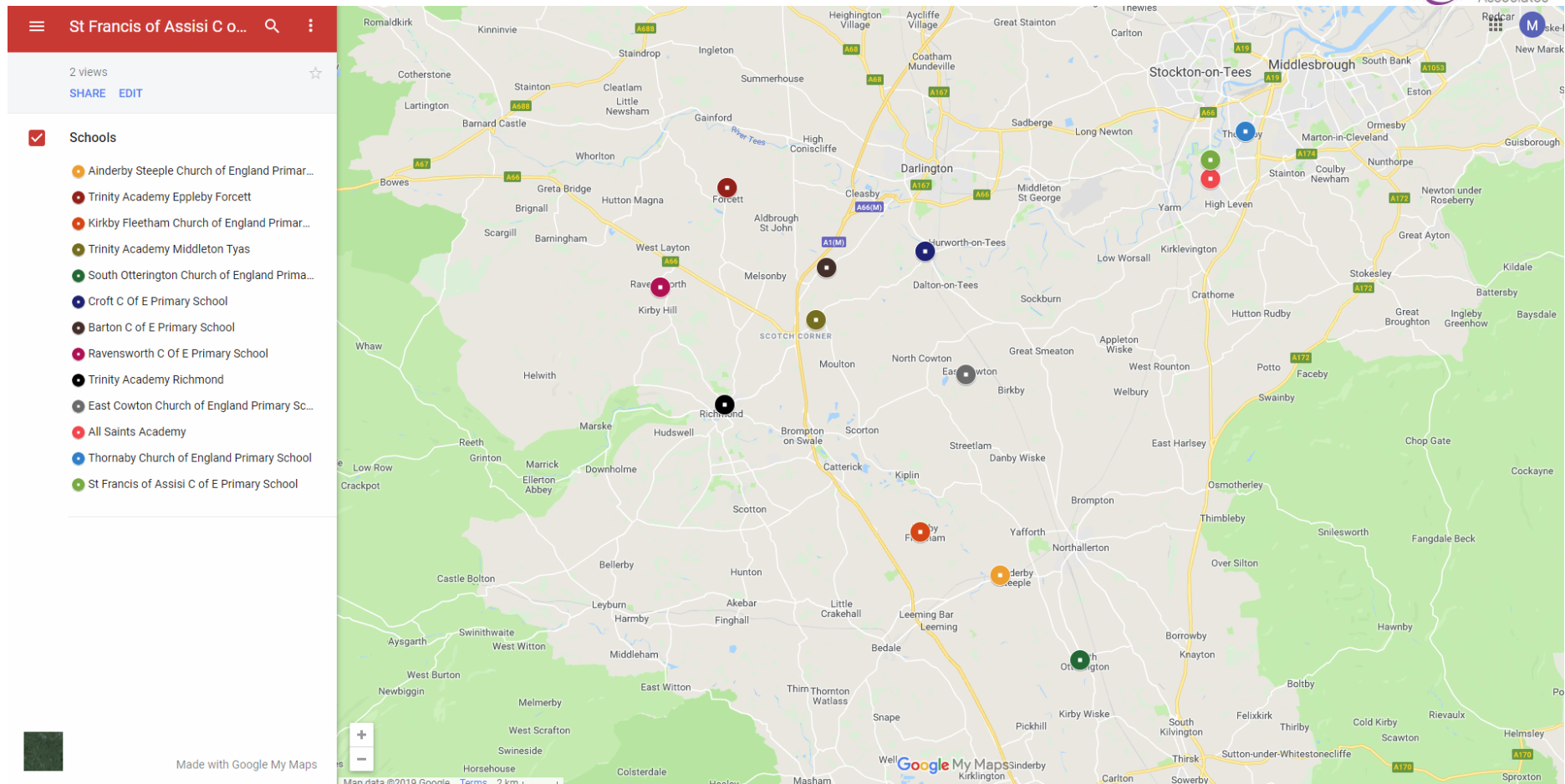
In April 2019 St Francis of Assisi Church of England Primary School was issued with an Academy Order by the Secretary of State for Education. The approval meant that the school could move forward in the next stage of planning which proposes that the school will join Dales Academies Trust (Dales) on the 1 August 2019.

This decision made by the governing body followed a period of intense research which had been conducted by the governors and leadership to help inform their final decisions and recommendations which, in turn subsequently informed this consultation. Consideration was given to what was in the best interests of pupils now and in the future, as well as what the implications of the options would be for staff, parents/carers and the communities of Ingleby Barwick. St Francis want to work within a Trust that has a strong focus on school improvement working collaboratively across a group of like-minded Church schools.

One of the first priorities in this phase is stakeholder consultation. Consultation commenced on the 29 April 2019 and concluded on the 22 May 2019 and views have been sought from parents and carers, staff, trade unions, the community and partners. 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.

1.1 Geographic position of the school(s)

The map on the next page shows where St Francis is in relation to where other Dales Academies Trust schools are. All schools within Dales have excellent road connectivity due to the proximity of the A16, A1 and A66 roads meaning that travel time between schools permits staff to meet regularly in support of school improvement and their professional development.



2. Consultation Methodology

The overall aim of the consultation process was to ensure that everyone who has a stake in the decision of the school to become an Academy and join Dales had the opportunity to hear about the proposals and to make their views known about the plans.

The objectives of the process were to:

- Provide relevant background information for stakeholders
- Explain the reasons for the proposal
- Set out the stages in the process for the school to become an Academy with Dales and the associated timelines
- Answer questions raised

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 language used (jargon-free wherever possible and acronyms fully explained)
 - Well-publicised

A variety of media were used to consult including:

- Direct letters
- Text messaging
- Publicised meetings involving presentations and questions and answer sessions
- Frequently asked questions and comments slips
- Online survey
- School and Trust websites (See Appendix 6)

2.1 Direct letters

Letters introducing the consultation were sent to the following groups and are included in Appendix 1a and 1b.

- Parents/Carers/Community members
- School staff and Trade Unions

2.2 Online survey

Survey Monkey was used as an online tool to provide everyone with an opportunity to have their say and to gauge everyone's reaction to the proposal to convert to academy status and join Dales. The results of the survey can be found in this report under section 3.2.

2.3 Publicised meetings

The following timetable of events was communicated to stakeholders and carried out during the consultation period:

Date	Time	Event	Venue
13.5.19	2.45pm	Trade Union Meeting	St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School
13.5.19	3.30pm	Staff Consultation Meeting	St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School
21.5.19	2:45pm & 5pm	Parent/Carer/Community Consultation Meeting	St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School
21.5.19	4pm	Playhouse Nursery	St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School

2.4 Staff and Parent/Carer Meetings

At each of the consultation meetings a presentation was given with information about Dales Academies Trust and why the school is proposing to convert to academy status. A copy of the presentations can be found in Appendix 2a and 2b.

2.5 Frequently asked questions (FAQs) and comments slips

At Appendix 3 is the FAQ document that was distributed to parents/carers and staff in the school and a copy was also displayed on the school website.

3. Overview of the Feedback received

Appendix 4a and 4b contains all the questions, comments and feedback received from the various media used throughout the consultation period. Numbers of participants in meetings and surveys are below.

3.1 Attendance at Consultation Meetings

Date	Event	Venue	Number in attendance
13.5.19	Trade Union & Staff Consultation Meeting	St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School	1 union member, NASUWT 29 Staff
21.5.19	Parent Consultation Meeting	St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School	21 session 1 16 session 2
21.5.19	Playhouse Meeting	St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School	2

3.2 Survey Monkey Online Survey

Survey Monkey was used as an online tool to provide everyone with an opportunity to have their say and to gauge everyone’s reaction to the proposals. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 5.

	Parent/Carer
Have you received enough information regarding the reasons why the school is proposing to become an academy and join Dales Academies Trust?	1 Yes
Have you received enough information about Dales Academies Trust?	1 Yes
Should we keep the school name the same	1 Yes
Should we keep the school uniform the same?	1 Yes
Do you support the proposal for St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School to convert to academy status and join Dales Academies Trust?	1 Yes
Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement for St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School	1 Yes

	Staff Member
Have you received enough information regarding the reasons why the school is proposing to become an academy and join Dales Academies Trust?	4 Yes 1 Don’t know
Have you received enough information about Dales Academies Trust?	5 Yes
Should we keep the school name the same	5 Yes
Should we keep the school uniform the same?	5 Yes
Do you support the proposal for St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School to convert to academy status and join Dales Academies Trust?	5 Yes
Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement for St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School	3 Yes 2 Don’t Know

	Governor
Have you received enough information regarding the reasons why the school is proposing to become an academy and join Dales Academies Trust?	1 Yes 1 Don’t Know
Have you received enough information about Dales Academies Trust?	2 Yes
Should we keep the school name the same	2 Yes
Should we keep the school uniform the same?	2 Yes
Do you support the proposal for St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School to convert to academy status and join Dales Academies Trust?	2 Yes

Do you agree that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement for St Francis of Assisi C of E Primary School	1 Yes 1 Don't Know
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A summary of all the responses, themes and the messages contained therein, is provided below.

3.3 Themes and Key Messages

Appendix 4 contains all the questions, comments and feedback received from the various consultation events / media used throughout the consultation period. A summary of all the responses and the messages contained therein, with implications for the school and Dales provided in the remainder of this section.

Stakeholders are most interested in:

3.3.1 Admissions – will they change particularly in terms of secondary admissions?

Parents/carers raised a number of queries regarding admissions and whether under this proposal admissions to secondary schools would change.

Will there be changes to the school admissions policy and also would the change to academy status mean there would be a greater opportunity of St Francis children accessing places All Saints were the two main queries raised. The answer to both points is no, there are no changes proposed and no greater opportunity for St Francis learners to go to All Saints when they move to secondary school.

3.3.2 Financial authority, viability and sustainability

Stakeholders requested further detail on financial matters linked to:

- How Academy finances worked – please see appendix 4 for a breakdown of the process
- What central services and costs were provided by Dales – please see appendix 4
- What delegations and authority remained with the Headteacher and governors?
A copy of the Trust Scheme of Delegation can be found on the Dales website www.dalesmat.org as far as possible the Trustees delegate as many responsibilities as they can to a local level. School leaders best understand their pupil needs and the curriculum priorities therefore we are confident that the delegations are right. Just recently we have made some alterations to provide greater clarity to Headteachers and Governors and this was based on feedback received from local governing bodies in Dales.
- The overall financial position of Dales based on the 2018/19 annual accounts and report - please see appendix 4

3.3.3 School improvement and Dales' capacity to provide rigour, assurance and improvements at all levels across education performance.

Questions were raised linked to the Trust capacity and expertise to provide high quality school improvement capacity and quality assurance. For example, would staff be forced to work / support other academies and employees possibly at the detriment of St Francis of Assisi CofE Primary School?

Dales employs a registered HMI Ofsted inspector to provide independent challenge across all schools in the Trust. Collectively Headteachers meet regularly to provide support and challenge and importantly peer to peer support. Already in the first 18months Dales has cross Trust moderation in place, developing subject networks and made progress in other joint projects across schools which benefit everyone, for example a colleague at Kirkby Fleetham is leading on the Trust mental health strategy.

No employees would be forced to work in other schools however, there will be opportunities for staff should they have the capacity. Decisions will be linked to staff's continued professional development, capacity and implications at the host school etc. We also noted that it is not always about physical capacity sometimes it is having a mentor or someone to pick up the phone to and equally to share tools and best practice to help inform and improve others.

As part of this report it is noted the school and Dales also met with Directors of Playhouse Nursery to discuss arrangements post conversion and to answer any questions anyone had about the long-term arrangements. It was confirmed that all current agreements will transfer as is and there would be no change.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

On compiling all the feedback and reviewing the data received, the conclusion that can be drawn is that there are no apparent legitimate reasons why the school should not become an academy according to the timescales outlined. There is a view that this will be a positive move for the school, but this is not yet shared widely amongst all stakeholder groups and it is important to recognise the ongoing dialogue is going to be extremely important.

Whilst there are queries about the process and why the school has chosen to become an academy and join Dales, there are no major concerns or contra-indications that have been raised through this consultation process.

Response rates from parents/carers and community members at the school was relatively positive with 39 stakeholders attending meetings or providing feedback via email or the online survey. From this can be deduced that:

- Stakeholders are interested to find out more about their school becoming an academy and joining a MAT
- Stakeholders are content to leave these decisions to the managers and leaders of the school but would like to be kept informed of progress towards academy status

Following the completion of the consultation period for the school it is recommended that:

- The school proceeds with the next phase of the joining process
- Further communication is issued to staff, parents and carers keeping them updated of progress towards academy status

5. List of Appendices

Appendix 1a	Invite letter to staff and Trade Unions
Appendix 1b	Invite letter to Parents/Carers/Community
Appendix 2a	Staff Presentation
Appendix 2b	Parents Presentation
Appendix 3	Frequently Asked Questions for Stakeholders
Appendix 4a	Staff and Trade Union feedback
Appendix 4b	Feedback from Parents/Carers/Community
Appendix 5	Survey Monkey Online Survey results
Appendix 6	Extract from Dales Academies Trust Website