

North Beckton Primary School

Proposal to convert to academy and join the The Tapscott Learning Trust

Report of informal consultation meetings

25 September 2018

Introduction

This report provides details of the informal consultation with staff and parents carried out by the governing board of North Beckton Primary School on 19 and 21 September 2018, with regard to a proposal to convert to academy status and join The Tapscott Learning Trust

The governing board agreed that two staff meetings should be held on 19 September 2018 and that three parents' meetings should be held on 19 (2) and 21 September 2018 for the purpose of expressing their views on the proposal. The invitations to these meetings are attached as an appendix.

In addition the governing board has also invited trade unions to meet with staff on 24 September 2018 and the Newham Council Lead Member for Education has been invited to attend the governing board meeting on 25 September 2018 so that governors can hear the local authority's views.

Summary of informal consultation meetings

All of the informal consultation meetings were attended by members of the governing board, with one governor attending all meetings and three governors attending more than one meeting.

All meetings were introduced by Alison Helm and Paul Harris and governors contributed to the introductory comments at the parents' meetings. The purpose of the meetings was explained to attendees. They were advised that the meetings provided an opportunity to hear why the governing board was considering the proposal to join The Tapscott Learning Trust and to provide an opportunity for questions and comments to help governors decide if there was sufficient support to make a formal application to convert to academy. Attendees were also advised about the work of the Trust with the school over the last 18 months, its approach to developing staff, its commitment to inclusion and its commitment to leave individual school decisions (such as the curriculum and school uniform) to the local governing board and headteacher. Attendees were also advised that the final decision to convert would rest with the governing board.

Staff meetings – 19 September 2018

Attended by 58 staff over two meetings.

Questions

Do staff need to reapply for their jobs?

No, all staff will be TUPE'd (Transfer of Undertakings Protecting Employment) and no conditions will change.

Will our years of long service be honoured?

Yes, no changes will be made, all current terms are TUPE'd across.

Will our pensions continue?

Yes all terms will be the same, staff already in a pension scheme will continue and any member of staff not currently in a scheme is free to join at any time.

Comments

I have been associated with the school over the last 10 years as a member of staff and a parent and the staffing has never been as stable as it is at the moment. The Headteacher brings a real level of compassion to the role.

Collaborative working with the other schools in the Trust has brought real benefits.

Parents' meetings – 19 and 21 September 2018

Attended by 45 parents over three meetings. Following the introductory comments and general questions, governors and staff sat with groups of parents to respond to questions and hear their comments.

Questions

As someone who has been through the conversion process before, do you think this change into becoming an academy would be beneficial for everyone such as pupils, parents and staff?

Yes. Coming from a school and seeing the conversion first hand, this change to an academy will be very positive. I have seen three schools in Newham come together, working together and sharing their practises with each other in order to better themselves, the lives of the children and their education and the school. Curwen, Kensington & Ranelagh are working together in partnership with North Beckton and Rebecca Cheetham Nursery and the changes over the year have been tremendous and 100% positive from parents.

What could be the possible negative effects into becoming an academy?

There is always a negative and a positive. I believe there are more positives than negatives in the instant and we should look at the positive outcomes in becoming an academy. Should there be any negatives for North Beckton, there will always be the support from the other schools within the academy.

Should the conversion go ahead, would the children be affected?

No. The children are the one of the central reasons why we would like North Beckton to join the Trust. Children have and will always be the main focus and priority during the time the Trust has worked with the school and we will ensure there will not be a knock on effect to them or their education. North Beckton has come so far in the past year and we will not do anything to jeopardise their education or school life. Converting to academy could in fact contribute to their education.

If the school does not join the Trust, what would happen?

At present the TTLT supports the school both in financial terms and in support with teaching and learning and staff development. Should the school decide not to formally join the Trust then TTLT would withdraw its resources and move away from North Beckton. As a school with two "requires improvement" Ofsted gradings, the school will need to find a new partner.

Who will make the final decision on whether this conversion will take place?

The governors will come together and will make the decision on whether they think going into the Trust would be beneficial for all. Governors and the Head Teacher will always keep staff, parents updated and there will be an opportunity to make further comments during the formal consultation stage if the governors decided to proceed. The feedback and views from staff and parents will help the governors make the right decision.

Many parents already think that we have joined TTLT, why is the process taking so long?

From the beginning of the involvement of TTLT with North Beckton, the Governors have been adamant that they should spend as much time researching and also listening to staff and parents. Now that the school has worked with the Trust for well over a year, the positive effects are very clear and governors felt ready to move forward with the informal consultations.

Is there still a deficit budget for North Beckton?

Yes there is still a deficit budget, with the school are working hard to reduce. The Trust has currently supported the school with approximately £180,000.

You say that the schools in your Trust have IQM's for their Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, what is that?

These are awards of Inclusion Quality Marks. All of the three schools were holding centres of excellence awards and now Ranelagh holds Flagship Status for its provision for children with SEND.

Who were these people that were handing out leaflets last night? Were they school staff?

The Anti Academy Alliance were outside the school on Wednesday 20th September handing out leaflets, which were full of misinformation which the Trust will look into. They were not school staff. (see page 10)

So, that letter was not from the school itself?

No, these are not the beliefs of the school, its governors or leadership team.

Who are the Trustees and other leaders in the Trust?

We have eight Trustees, all but one lives within the Borough of Newham as we believe it is very important to include the local community in decisions. Of our five Company Members, only one lives outside Newham and one is a local councillor.

Will you send our staff to your other schools?

No, this is absolutely not the practice of the Tapscott Trust.

Will the admissions policy change with regard to deferred entry into Reception?

The school will continue to adopt the admission policy of the local authority.

Is the school against the Local Authority?

No. The Trust works very closely with the LA across many areas and Mr. Harris sits on many of its committees.

This is the first I have heard of this proposal, I have been at the school for over a year?

The Head Teacher discussed these potential plans at recent parents meetings to ensure that parents were kept in the loop of what was going on. It has only been a very recent decision that the governors have taken to consider a proposal for North Beckton to join the Tapscott Trust.

Has the decision already been made?

No, this is informal consultation and the first opportunity for governors to meet with staff and parents to hear their views. The outcomes will be discussed by governors who will then make a formal decision. If they do decide that they wish to join the Trust then parents will be asked for their formal opinions in a questionnaire, the results of which will be published, and there will be a further meeting. We urge parents and staff to ask questions, and to share their thoughts to ensure that governors have the full picture, and we urge parents to speak to other members of staff to hear their thoughts.

Why haven't school newsletters stated these plans?

Governors only decided to move forward with their ideas in the summer term and informal meetings were then arranged for this month to update parents. Parents were also informed during parents' evenings and Welcome meetings. The information to let parents know about these meetings was contained in the newsletters.

Another local school joined a Trust and then changed the uniform policy which caused the parents to spend a lot of money, will this happen?

As part of the Tapscott Trust's published vision and aims, we state that it will be up to individual schools and parents to decide whether the uniform needs changing. However, the Trust states that uniform must be affordable to all parents.

Why does the Tapscott Trust want to work with this particular school and not others in the borough?

Mr. Harris, as a National Leader of Education started working in partnership with North Beckton approximately 18 months ago, after the schools second Ofsted 'Requires Improvement' Rating. We believe that the partnership has worked very well and want to continue this. Other schools in the borough have approached the Trust to join but it is up to their own governors to make that decision.

If I had known a year ago when my child came to North Beckton that it would become an academy I would not have come here as standards may change

North Beckton has come a long way in the last 18 months in partnership with the Trust and all the schools currently in the Trust are rated either Outstanding or Good.

How are children allocated to classes each year?

This is a school decision and based on the number of new starters that come into the school. We do reassign classes to give a better balance and also believe that it gives pupils the opportunity to meet and get to know other children in the school. However, if parents are not happy the school will discuss individual cases with them.

I believe that North Beckton is very good at supporting children and parents with EAL

As a school we currently work with two therapists and have also introduced Vulnerable Childrens Meetings with staff to ensure that children are not slipping through the net, an idea that came from our shared work with the Trust. We support EAL children and are also looking at EAL lessons in the community for parents.

Will the school improve its ICT provision?

Over the last year, the Trust has worked with its own schools to make huge improvements in this area. However, North Beckton is not currently part of the Trust.

Do you provide clubs and afterschool provision at your other schools?

It depends on the needs of each community. At Kensington, they have a large proportion of mums who don't work and were not interested in afterschool clubs. It is always for the school to decide the needs of its individual community.

Would the school still follow the national curriculum?

The Trust schools' all follow the national curriculum but it is the additional offer at each school that the Trust helps with.

Do we know much about this Trust?

North Beckton has worked with the Trust for approximately 18 months in a type of 'try before you buy' mode. Staff are now used to working collaboratively with the other schools and parents are used to seeing Miss Helm and Mr. Harris.

If there is opposition to parents, where would we stand?

It would be up to the governors to make the decision and this will be based on the evidence that we receive. Governors are keen to hear of any practical reasons against joining the Trust rather than political ideologies. However, the governors will listen to all views.

Are academies for failing schools?

About 10 years ago this may have been the model but this has changed now. As an academy we are free to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the community and be more flexible with our learning.

When is the proposed date to join the Trust

Governors intend to meet shortly to listen to all of the feedback from staff and parents and then a formal decision will be made.

How will joining the Trust affect children with SEN?

TTLT is very passionate about providing for the needs of children with SEND. The CEO is a respected expert in the field, having worked on the Rochford Review and elsewhere within the DfE as an advisor. The Trust also provides specialist training for staff (and other schools) in Autism Education Training and in Speech and Language training with Elklan. Since working with North Beckton, the Trust has repeatedly pushed the LA for more support for children with SEND needs. In addition, all schools currently in the TTLT hold Inclusion Quality Mark's for their SEND provision.

Do Trusts employ unqualified teachers?

At North Beckton for specialist curriculum areas like Art, Music and PE we might use well-qualified staff with specialisms in this area as their skills and experience are often higher than regular class teachers. If Cover Supervisors were ever used to 'cover' sessions these would be very short term and the teacher would have planned the lesson and left the resources. We would never use unqualified teachers as full time class teachers or for long term cover.

Are the staff happy with the decision?

Governors are also meeting with staff this week but feedback so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

I have been worried about the amount of teachers leaving the school, will this change?

The school did lose quite a few members of staff at the end of the 2016/17 academic year but last year in 2017/18 this dramatically changed and only a very few people left, all with very valid reasons such as moving their jobs much closer to home. Staffing at North Beckton seem very settled now.

How does the Trust currently support higher achieving children?

Since coming to North Beckton, the Trust has introduced separate study for children in maths and English based on ability, which we believe is the correct thing to do. The last Ofsted Inspection did note that this was not happening at the school, but this has changed now.

Will the uniform change if we join the Tapscott Trust ?

No. Any changes in uniform will be a school decision, not for the Trust.

Does that mean that the uniform could change in the future?

If parents and governors felt that a change was needed then it would be up to the school to lead this decision, not the Trust.

Will the school hours change?

This is a school decision not for the Trust to decide. Each school will decide what is best for their community.

Who makes the decisions about school hours and uniform ?

The decision will be made by the governors of North Beckton

Will the school still have a governing body?

Yes, the governors will still be responsible for the budget and standards at the school.

I watched that programme on Panorama about Trusts and it was very negative, is that a reflection of what happens in Trusts?

The programme did concentrate on the negative aspects of work in Trusts. Whether academy or maintained there are good and bad schools. As in business, there are good and bad companies. We believe that the Tapscott Trust is one of the best models for both pupils, parents, communities and staff. Our accounts are audited every year and our standards are regularly checked by the government. Academies have a higher level of scrutiny than maintained schools.

Comments:

I am all for this positive change

Parents have seen all of the changes and believe in the Tapscott Trust and Mr. Harris

I am keen to ensure that the children are offered the best education and I think that we should join the Trust

I have been coming to this school for a number of years and the changes in the last year or so have been so noticeable and what the children can access has hugely improved, including breakfast club and now free after school clubs to support parents. We didn't have these before and without Mr. Harris and Miss Helm stepping in I believe the school would have disappeared.

There is now far more stability in the school.

In terms of accessibility to the senior leadership team, this school has completely changed. If I have a problem I can see most of them in the playground before and after school, it wasn't like that before and in the past I was left with no support when I needed it.

Nice to see the staff looking so much happier

The staff at North Beckton are really great, anything that helps them to develop is good for me and my children.

I can see a big difference here at school

Staff are so approachable now, what a difference

The school has more stability – this is what we need

The kids are happy and settled

We actually have a curriculum now, and a reading scheme which we didn't have before.

Newham Against Academisation

Anti-academy protesters handed out leaflets to parents on 20 September 2018 in opposition to the school converting (appendix). This made a series of arguments against MATs.

Newham Council and questions to The Tapscott Learning Trust

On 25 September 2018 the governing board met the Lead Member for Education and Skills and the Director of Education and Skills from Newham Council. To put questions to them about the governing board's proposals to convert to academy and to hear the Council's views on converting to academy and the Mayor's pledge to re-set the Council's relationship with schools so that they would remain maintained. On the same date the governing board met separately with the Chief Executive Officer of The Tapscott Learning Trust to put questions to him about the governing board's proposal to convert to academy and join the Trust. The minutes of these meetings are appended.

The Governing Board also noted that trade unions had met with staff on 24 September 2018.

Conclusion and next steps

The governing board considered the responses from parents, staff, Newham Council and The Tapscott Learning Trust received during the informal consultation process.

The governing board concluded that was sufficient support among parents and staff to take the proposal forward. The governors agreed unanimously to apply to the Secretary of State for an Academy Order for the school to convert to academy and join The Tapscott Learning Trust.

Arrangements would now be made for a formal consultation process to be held.

Parents/Carers at North Beckton

- North Beckton is a good school. It is in a good working **partnership** with schools in the Tapscott Multi Academy Trust (MAT).
- Why change? There is NO need to become part of a MAT.
- Multi- Academy Trusts (MATs) are businesses. Schools should **not** be businesses.
- The government wants bigger MATs. Small MATs, like those in Newham, can be swallowed up by bigger MATs who have no interest in our community.
- If a school becomes an academy there is NO way back to the council.
- In a MAT governing bodies have **no** decision-making power. Unelected and unaccountable trustees take over from governors.
- The new mayor, cabinet and councillors oppose academisation. They say **parents should vote YES/NO** on academisation.
- Schools become unequal. Every school that academises affects ALL of us. Academies do not all abide by fair admissions policies, provision for SEND, or national pay and conditions for staff.
- North Beckton is very inclusive. Other schools in the MAT may be less so. We need all our schools to be inclusive.

WHAT YOU CAN DO :

Ask the PTA, or form a parents group, and organise a meeting

Demand a meeting with your head and governors

Contact Newham Against Academisation for support, speakers, translations, etc.

KEEP OUR SCHOOLS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS NO TO ACADEMIES : NO TO PRIVATISATION

P&P: Newham Against Academisation : newantiacad@gmail.com

North Beckton Primary School Governors

Minutes of the pre-meeting held in preparation for separate presentations by Cllr Julianne Marriott and Paul Harris (CEO, The Tapscott Learning Trust (TTLT))

25th September 2018

Governors in attendance: Maggie Cameron-Ratchford – Co-opted Governor
Jackie Withnall – Co-opted Governor
Suus-Anna Harkstamp- Eve – Authority Governor
Sherine El-Damanawi – Parent Governor
Leena Choi – Parent Governor
Twinkle Jayakumar – Parent Governor
Natalija Girzade – Staff Governor
Alison Helm – Head Teacher

Also in attendance: Anne Sundberg – Clerk

Lisa Spencer had sent apologies for a late arrival to the meeting.

Governors met in advance of Cllr Marriott's and Paul Harris' attendance, to discuss and clarify the purpose of the visits. Governors understood this to be in terms of what the Local Authority (LA) may wish or be able to offer in order to encourage the school to remain a maintained school rather than convert to an academy within TTLT. Governors wished to agree those questions which they wished to pose to Cllr Marriott and Paul Harris and to also receive an update on recent developments. These responses could then be considered with the report of the informal consultation process and a decision taken on whether to proceed with the conversion process.

Alison Helm advised governors that feedback from separate internal staff meetings, as part of the informal consultation process, had been very positive.

Governors agreed that there were issues which had not been resolved by the LA in the past. Although the LA was saying that it was keen to give support, governors did not feel confident that this would happen and although December may be a deadline for the LA outlining its offer, this was not necessarily when any funding would become available. Governors acknowledged the union's viewpoint that this should not be a rushed decision but felt that since this had been in discussion for 18 months this was not the case. Governors were also aware that the school was mostly likely due an Ofsted visit in the near future.

Alison Helm tabled recent KS2 data and noted that the school was now in the top 1% in the country in some cases.

Governors discussed and agreed the following questions which they would wish to pose to Cllr Marriott:

- 1) Given that the school had a deficit budget, what measures and support would be given to clear this?
- 2) What CPD and programme of support would be provided for NQTs, NQTS+1 and leaders?
- 3) What was the situation with SEND funding as the school had not received this for last year and was taking more pupils with SEND?
- 4) Could the LA's stance be further explained in light of 18 months of supporting the school to join TTLT?
- 5) Was there any clarification on the relationship between the NEU, the Anti-Academies Alliance and the LA?
- 6) Who would be the School Improvement Partner (SIP) as these individuals were all currently part of Trusts? (The Head Teacher was currently receiving weekly support in this area).
- 7) What was there to suggest that the school should not continue the conversion process, in light of recent data and outcomes for children, and the fact that parents' and teachers' views had been heard and were favourable?

Governors discussed and agreed the following questions which they would wish to pose to Paul Harris:

- 1) Why could the school not continue to work in partnership with TTLT without joining?
- 2) Given that the school had a deficit budget, what measures and support would be given to clear this?
- 3) The NEU had expressed a concern that TTLT could become a big conglomerate and that the school would lose its identity within this. What was TTLT view on this in terms of vision and future size?
- 4) What would be the situation with staff terms and conditions and pensions?

Governors agreed that the above questions be asked by individual governors, in no particular order.

The pre-meeting closed at 5:35pm.

North Beckton Primary School Governors

Minutes of the meeting held with
Cllr Julianne Marriott (Cabinet Member for Education, Newham Council)

25th September 2018 at 5:40pm

Governors in attendance: Lisa Spencer – Chair of Governors (*arrived at 5:45pm*)
Maggie Cameron-Ratchford – Co-opted Governor
Jackie Withnall – Co-opted Governor
Suus-Anna Harkstamp-Eve – Authority Governor
Sherine El-Damanawi – Parent Governor
Leena Choi – Parent Governor
Twinkle Jayakumar – Parent Governor
Natalija Girzade – Staff Governor
Alison Helm – Head Teacher

Also in attendance: Cllr Julianne Marriott
Terry Reynolds (Interim Director of Education and Skills,
Newham Council)
Anne Sundberg – Clerk

Maggie Cameron-Ratchford took the Chair.

Governors welcomed Cllr Marriott and Mr Reynolds and introductions around the table were made.

Maggie Cameron-Ratchford noted that North Beckton Primary School had been considering academisation for the past year and looking at options. Informal consultations around this had been held. Therefore, there was now an opportunity for Cllr Marriott to explain the council's offer in encouraging the school to remain as a maintained school.

Cllr Marriott advised that she did not have such an offer but was attending the meeting as part of the new mayor's pledge to re-set relationships with schools and to keep schools as maintained schools. Although there was no offer as yet, Cllr Marriott wished to know what the council could do to help schools.

Cllr Marriott shared her own personal experience of being a school governor at a school which had converted to an academy and at which she had then become a Director of the Trust, following the 2016 Conservative government plans that all schools were to become academies. Cllr Marriott shared her view that this was not the best course of action for all schools. She had stepped down as a trust director when she became Lead Member

Lisa Spencer joined the meeting at 5:45pm and took the Chair.

Cllr Marriott continued that there was increasing evidence now that becoming an academy did not improve pupil attainment and so the government plans had been retracted. The

previous council had been keen on academisation of schools within the borough, but the intention now was to work with schools and to broker for schools to work together. The council did not have an offer to counter that of TTLT but did want to engage more and work with the school.

Terry Reynolds acknowledged the position that North Beckton Primary was in, in that it was working with TTLT and that it was recognised how important it was to work with other schools and have mutual support. There were both good and poor academies, and good and poor maintained schools. At this point, it was about which choice the school made, and it was known that the work with TTLT was good, and it was important to recognise this work already done.

Terry Reynolds noted that it was a good thing that in Newham there were only small MATs, and the borough had some MATs and some maintained schools. However, economies of scale only really worked in MATs of 12 schools or more, or those with a certain number of pupils. So, a question to consider would be what effect it could have on existing Newham MATs if other schools remained as maintained schools and so did not join them. It may be that the MAT a school joined at present could change significantly in the future. Existing MATs would need to look further ahead and consider future risks if Newham schools were not prepared to academise and join them.

Terry Reynolds stated that he could only apologise for the previous different messages from the council around this.

Governors posed questions (in italics) to Cllr Marriott and Terry Reynolds:

Given that the school had a £220K deficit, and that TTLT was assisting with this, what would happen with this deficit if the school decided not to join the MAT?

Terry Reynolds advised that there was a formal process for dealing with school deficits and the Local Authority (LA) could agree with the Governing Board to license this for 3 years. North Beckton Primary was 1 year into a deficit budget so would need to achieve a balanced budget within 2 years.

It could be that the LA would apply to the Secretary of State to remove the Governing Board and set up an IEB, but in reality, the LA would work with the Governing Board to bring the budget back on track. In most school budgets, the largest expenditure was usually staffing, at 80% of the total budget, so it would be inevitable that savings in this area would need to be investigated.

The Chair clarified that the deficit budget was due to historic errors made by the LA Finance department in that staff were paid incorrectly. At one point, governors had been told that the school had a £220K surplus, then that it had £2K, and so funds effectively got lost. A huge amount of work had been done in the school to investigate and resolve these errors but with no support from the LA to establish how the errors had occurred, and this was support that should have been available.

Terry Reynolds noted that should the school convert then it would carry its deficit budget into TTLT and governors acknowledged that they were aware of this.

Terry Reynolds advised that the ESFA expected schools and Trusts to work within budgets and money could be paid to the Trust which it could then move around as necessary.

What CPD and programme of support would be provided for NQTs, NQTS+1 and leaders?

Terry Reynolds advised that the LA did not have resources to provide this but that the school could use NPW or could contact teaching schools.

Alison Helm replied that the school was previously a teaching school, but this was no longer the case.

Cllr Marriott asked if schools were required to buy into CPD?

Terry Reynolds answered that schools had the responsibility to drive their own improvements for better outcomes in the classroom but if the school leadership was not ensuring this, then it became the responsibility of the Governing Board.

Cllr Marriott stated that the LA would not be able to put on courses but was bringing together National Leaders in Education (NLEs), as there were many of these in the borough, and the LA would take a slightly more interventionist or proactive approach to this. There were also partnership opportunities to facilitate good speakers and hear the latest views on education issues. Cllr Marriott expressed her view that there was something of an emphasis on data and teaching, and accessing university, but not in providing children with the chances to go out and do other jobs. It may be that SATs would be dropped in the future. The important thing was that pupils left school with good outcomes.

What was the situation with SEND funding as the school had not received this for last year and was taking more pupils with SEND? The LA would still be responsible for this even if the school joined a MAT.

Cllr Marriott stated that she was hearing a lot about SEND, that there were many SEND pupils in Newham and whilst agreeing with it being an inclusive borough, there was a need to give support. The LA was putting in a bid for a special school and would see what this could do.

Alison Helm reminded the meeting that the school had a deficit budget but was not receiving all the funding that had been agreed.

Terry Reynolds advised that there were problems with EHCPs and Level 3 and Level 4 top-up funding. Level 4 funding followed the pupil, but Level 3 funding was batch funding. He requested that the school send him details of pupils for whom funding was missing and that he would follow this up. He acknowledged that there were poor

processes in place to get the information to the correct council officer to deal with this. He would investigate this and revert back to the school with a response.

Alison Helm noted that this included resource provision pupils from last year and this year, and governors wished to know if the process gap in the council would be resolved so that the information was passed to the correct officer to deal. The school had a deficit budget so there was no time to allow for the LA to find funding.

Cllr Marriott advised that the LA was trying to address the EHCP situation, but it might be necessary to look at all schools and prioritise those which were worst off.

Terry Reynolds advised that a pupil would get annual funding, so if they moved school then this funding would stay with the original school. It may be necessary to consider paying this termly, but this would increase workload threefold so did need to be considered carefully.

Could the LA's stance be further explained in light of 18 months of supporting the school to join TTLT?

Cllr Marriott explained that the LA was controlled by politicians, who directed council officers.

Officers were required to promote the council's policy, so previously this would have been to encourage MATs, but under the new council this was to encourage partnership. It should be remembered that once it became an academy a school could not revert to being maintained.

Governors advised that it was difficult for the community to now understand the view that academisation was not good. Informal consultation had been carried out. Governors felt that the school had previously been let down by the LA and it was difficult to get support, but this had been forthcoming from TTLT.

Cllr Marriott stated that whatever decision the school made, the LA would still want to offer help and support, and that being an academy governor was very different from being a maintained school governor.

Terry Reynolds asked who had brokered the school's relationship with TTLT and the Chair responded that it had been the LA.

Who would be the School Improvement Partner (SIP) as these individuals were all currently part of Trusts? (The Head Teacher was currently receiving weekly support in this area).

Cllr Marriott questioned that the LA had provided the school with Paul Harris as an NLE rather than from TTLT.

Governors understood this, but the aim of the school was the children, and getting them the education they needed. CPD, training in partnership and good practice shared was already in place from TTLT.

Cllr Marriott advised that the LA was trying to create this for maintained schools and other partnerships were already in place. She acknowledged governors' views that groups of schools were reluctant to partner with RI schools but did not necessarily agree with it, as successful Head Teachers were keen to move forwards to help other schools.

Governors noted that timing for a decision was an issue for them and that the school could expect an Ofsted inspection in the near future.

What was there to suggest that the school should not continue the conversion process, in light of recent data and outcomes for children, and the fact that parents' and teachers' views had been heard and were favourable?

Cllr Marriott re-iterated that politically she would like the school to remain maintained but that the LA would continue its support should the school become an academy.

Terry Reynolds acknowledged that it was different scenario for each school but that governors at North Beckton could fortunately clearly state why they felt the decision to academise was the right one. But advice would still be to wait since the decision could not be reverted once made.

Was there any clarification on the relationship between the NEU, the Anti-Academies Alliance and the LA?

Cllr Marriott confirmed that the NEU was not endorsed by the LA in favour of any other union and that the Anti-Academies Alliance was an informal organisation. In light of recent events in which leaflets were handed out to parents by this group, causing some concern and confusion, Cllr Marriott had been in discussions with Paul Harris regarding this and the council's stance on this.

The Chair summarised that it was refreshing to hear the council's views on maintained schools and that this would hopefully work out, but that it would be difficult for North Beckton Primary to now change direction on academisation. It was not a decision being taken lightly, but to achieve the best for the pupils.

Governors agreed that their questions had been covered and thanked Cllr Marriott and Terry Reynolds for their time.

The meeting closed at 6:42pm.

North Beckton Primary School Governors

Minutes of the meeting held with
Paul Harris (CEO, The Tapscott Learning Trust (TTLT))

25th September 2018 at 6:50pm

Governors in attendance: Lisa Spencer – Chair of Governors
Maggie Cameron-Ratchford – Co-opted Governor
Jackie Withnall – Co-opted Governor
Suus-Anna Harkstamp-Eve – Authority Governor
Sherine El-Damanawi – Parent Governor
Leena Choi – Parent Governor
Twinkle Jayakumar – Parent Governor
Natalija Girzade – Staff Governor
Alison Helm – Head Teacher

Also in attendance: Paul Harris – CEO, The Tapscott Learning Trust
Paul Baglee – NPW
Karen Shirt
Anne Sundberg – Clerk

1. Questions to Paul Harris

Governors welcomed Paul Harris and Paul Baglee and advised that having met with Cllr Marriott, they now wished to pose some questions to Paul Harris, as part of the process in reaching an ultimate decision on whether to join TTLT.

(Questions in italics)

Given that the school had a deficit budget, what measures and support would be given to clear this?

It could be that the Trust would say that this should remain with the council, or work could be done with the DfE for the Trust to take over the license for this and take the deficit. Although the Trust would expect the council to keep this, the Trust did not want a delay which would affect the pupils and so would have to look at different ways of resolving this.

TTLT was committed to working with North Beckton Primary but if only as a partnership there would be concerns and a lack of conviction that the LA could pay. There were reserves in the Trust which could be used for this in order to not lose the good work already done.

In the building condition audit conducted, the school had only passed in 1 of 19 areas and the council would be held to account to rectify these issues, as the building still belonged to the council. TTLT could hold the council to account through the conversion

process to get the building up to necessary standard. There were also Condition Improvement Fund bids available as part of the academy process and due diligence had been undertaken, so TTLT was aware of the issues faced by North Beckton Primary.

What would be the situation with staff terms and conditions and pensions?

It had been agreed at TUPE level that these would stay the same or improve. If an academy wanted to change its terms and conditions, then there would be a consultation process and the Trust had a Joint Union Committee. The Trust could also look at what extra incentives could be given to staff and this could not be given to North Beckton Primary staff under a partnership arrangement if the school remained maintained. The Trust had also worked to improve CPD.

The Trust had a new Pay Policy which included protection for apprentices. Staff could expect additional benefits rather than have any taken away.

The NEU had expressed a concern that the Trust could become a big conglomerate and that the school would lose its identity within this. What was the Trust view on this in terms of vision and future size?

Originally, the five-year plan was for the Trust to comprise of 10 schools, but this has now changed as the Trust was looking at the number of pupils across the group rather than the number of schools.

Would these be Newham schools?

The Trust had looked to Newham schools until the new council had changed its viewpoint. The Trust might consider looking outside of Newham, and establishing hubs of schools. What was best for the children is what mattered. The Trust had a large number of pupils, so did not need to expand to include a large number of schools. The view of TTLT was to not expand by force or fast. There might be a benefit in looking at education outside of Newham but not by aggressively trying to take over. The Trust's vision was to deliver core provision for children.

Why could the school not continue to work in partnership with the Trust without joining?

It could, but not at the same level with other Trust schools paying towards this. If North Beckton Primary joined, there would be budget top slicing. The Trust had diverted a lot of money so far towards North Beckton and could not continue at this current level. Great results had been achieved at North Beckton, but this needed to be embedded in closer partnership as it took around 5 years to improve a school.

The Trust had tried to get economies of scale for North Beckton as well but had been unable to whilst the school was not part of the group, although these economies had been assured should the school join the TTLT.

The Trust had never advised against working with the LA but did not think the LA had the ability to offer what schools needed. The Trust would continue to work with other schools but not at the same level.

If you as CEO were absent, what would replace the process, as there is an idea that this is your vision?

It is not just about me as an individual. The Trust has an agreed vision and has developed good head teachers. The Trustees are also held to account by the Local Advisory Boards. Three of the Trustees are parents, as they have the skill sets (finance) required. The Trust is the overseer and would agree the Finance Policy, but the school would manage its own budget, safeguarding, curriculum and learning etc. Parents and staff have a voice if things are going wrong.

Schools can struggle to manage some things which they are obliged to deal with, such as health and safety, so the Trust manages this. Also, matters such as disciplinary investigations of staff can be managed by someone from another Trust school.

Jackie Withnall left the meeting at 7:15pm.

Governors thanked Paul Harris for his answers to their questions.

Paul Harris and Karen Shirt left the meeting at 7:17pm.

2. Report on Informal Consultation Meetings

Governors considered the report produced by Paul Baglee, previously circulated, on the informal consultations carried out during the previous week with parents and staff.

Governors had attended the consultation meetings and agreed that the report was an accurate account.

Governors were asked their views on the mood of the consultation meetings and agreed that staff were very positive and parents supportive, with only one parent raising examples of things that could go wrong. Parents were in favour of what had already changed.

Leaflets had been handed out by the Anti-Academy Alliance between the two parents' meetings, so by the time of the second meeting parents had been given some arguments for not proceeding. Governors agreed that this did not appear to have had an effect or changed the mood of the second meeting. Maggie Cameron-Ratchford had attended both meetings and was not aware of any difference between the two.

It was noted that 10 teachers and five members of the support staff had attended meetings with trade unions.

Had there been any mood swing in the staff between the original staff meeting and the union meetings?

Staff had not changed their minds, they understood the vision of the Trust.

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The governors noted that the same questions had been asked of the LA and the CEO of the Trust, and that there was nothing in the report on informal consultation meetings to suggest that the school should not continue with the conversion process. If governors decided to do this, then it would be necessary to apply to the Secretary of State for an academy order.

All information around the consultation meetings and minutes of meetings should be considered as evidence to support a decision to proceed. It should be noted that applying for an academy order did not commit the Governing Board to convert to academy and a formal consultation would need to take place.

Paul Baglee withdrew from the meeting at 7:30pm

3. Governors to make a decision on the way forward

The Chair asked governors if there was anything from the meetings this evening which they wished to raise and there was not. It was agreed that a communication should go out to parents as a briefing note of the parents' consultation meetings, with an assurance that there was no LA involvement in the Anti-Academy Alliance leafleting had been confirmed by Cllr Marriott and Terry Reynolds.

Governors agreed that they already had 18 months' worth of clear evidence in favour of joining The Tapscott Learning Trust and that this supported the proposal to convert.

Decision: Governors agreed unanimously to continue the process of joining The Tapscott Learning Trust, to apply for the academy order and to begin the formal consultation process.

Paul Harris and Paul Baglee re-joined the meeting at 7:35pm

Governors informed Paul Harris and Paul Baglee that after taking all information into consideration they had unanimously reached the decision above.

Next steps

- Academy Order application to be made
- The working party to meet again on 8th October
- NPW to project manage the consultation process

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7:50pm.