



**Birley Community Primary
Proposed Academy Conversion
Consultation Feedback
Report
November 2016**

The Proposal

Birley Community Primary School proposes to convert to become an Academy, with the Birley Family of Schools (the Birley Learning Community Cooperative Trust), and to join with L.E.A.D. Multi-Academy Trust, a Nottingham-based Trust. The conversion is currently planned to take place on 1 February 2017 for the following schools:

- Birley Community College
- Birley Community Primary School
- Birley Spa Community Primary School
- Charnock Hall Primary School
- Rainbow Forge Primary School.

Consultation Process

Staff and parents were invited to separate meetings with Steve Robinson, Executive Headteacher of the Birley Learning Community, on Wednesday 19 October.

The purpose of the consultation was to explain the decision being proposed, answer any questions that arose and to register any concerns people may have.

Following the presentation, staff and parents had the opportunity to ask questions. Questions and responses are set out below. A LEAD representative, Bobby Thandi, Deputy Chief Executive, attended the parents' consultation meeting to answer questions.

Trade Union representatives were invited to attend the staff meeting, but none did so. Separately, Steve Robinson, the Executive Headteacher of the Birley Learning Community, met with all the union representatives on Wednesday 2 November to go through the presentation and discuss the proposal. This meeting was on behalf of all 5 schools consulting to convert and took place at Birley Community College, with Bobby Thandi, Deputy Chief Executive of LEAD and Hannah Bingham, HR Director of LEAD. Union colleagues then took the opportunity to ask questions.

On behalf of the Birley Family of Schools, Steve Robinson wrote to our partner schools, informing them of our proposal and asking for any questions or feedback.

Copies of all letters and the presentation are at the back of this report.

Feedback

Here are notes of each meeting, with other responses and answers as shared at the time.

Parents

Proposed Conversion to Academy Parent Meeting

Birley Community Primary

19 October 2016

6.00pm

Steve Robinson, Executive Headteacher
Bobbi Thandi, Deputy Chief Executive

Steve posed first the question:

Have you already decided to convert?

Answer: SR The decision to convert is an order given by the Secretary of State. The purpose of this meeting is to explain to you what is happening and to take questions and concerns that you may have before we convert on the 1 February 2017.

Question: What are the feelings amongst staff?

Answer: SR We have had staff meetings at both schools now, the questions have been around contracts, pay and conditions, which L.E.A.D. have said they will guarantee. The main question has been "why L.E.A.D.", mostly the questions have been about how will it work and about uniform, and we haven't had a negative response.

Question: To attract new staff what will you do about Pay and Conditions?

Answer: BT All employees will TUPE across, all with existing Pay and Conditions, pay dates etc. will all stay the same. 700 employees have TUPE'd across since 2011 and not a single Pay and Condition has changed. Parent: What about New staff, attracting new staff? We adhere to the national pay scales and pay awards and make sure it is competitive in that context. If we do not keep ourselves competitive it is hard to attract new staff. One of the things we are aspiring to is to retain high quality staff, staff with clear pathways. This will be easier with a Family of Schools to keep the quality of staff and we see that as the way forward.

Question: Can I ask about the Freedoms, you talk about you could change the National Curriculum? What freedoms are you wanting to take?

Answer: SR There are freedoms, not sure what they all are but Pay and Conditions, National Curriculum and some minor exemptions. Some of which may change anyway but I personally don't want to change any. BT: It is an interesting question. Most Academies stick to National Pay Scales, the curriculum is directed by the leadership in schools and they have the opportunity to have a bit of creative freedom and tweak it for example with Reading Writing and Maths. Ofsted will still come in however and check the same things. Some schools have used freedom and elected to embed Music into their Curriculum but still comply with national standards. 1 Primary School is looking at languages. Finance has to take a part in it too, have schools got the resources. If a school presents itself for innovation we will embed and develop. If it works as a pilot we will share and learn. SR: We love to do music but finance is a barrier, as an Academy it will be better.

Question: Will you change the grading from ABC, will it stay the same?

Answer: SR It will stay the same yes. BT: We have a common framework as long as we can compare and contrast we will leave it the same. Parent: Children have struggled

with it. SR: to be fair the staff did too. It is the same at Secondary, where grades have changed to 9-1's!

Question: Can I ask about the building, we are sat in a building which is not the newest in the world? What will happen if for instance the boiler breaks, who will be responsible for this?

Answer: BT At the moment when the schools transfer to the Academy Trust, transfer to L.E.A.D. The assets, buildings and any liabilities that go with it will transfer to the Trust. What we have done because we are a certain size, we get capital from the government, so last summer we have invested £0.6m. We are in a fortunate position that 13 schools to date have had money invested and are in good condition at the moment. We are already visiting and assessing sites here in Sheffield and will start next summer. SR: We have had a new boiler recently but have already spoken to L.E.A.D. about new toilets here at Primary. We have limited capital at the moment.

Question: Normally the LA would put it right if something catastrophic broke, do you take that over?

Answer: BT We have emergency funding and would fix it straight away, from a Trust prospective it would be sorted. SR: One of the things we are looking forward to is IT back up. L.E.A.D. have a very successful provider and our IT is in need of refurbishment so that is really positive for us.

Question: When the change comes in February will it be a massive change?

Answer: SR From our perspective it will only change if it needs to. For instance with uniform if we decide to change it we will consult with Parents. The badge will change because obviously we need to incorporate L.E.A.D into it. There will be a transitional change over a period of time. Teachers will stay the same, classrooms will stay the same. We are starting to have meetings now so that staff can access support, looking at reading provision, but these things would happen anyway. BT: It is important for staff and children that from day 1 it will be seamless. There are things that will happen that we have already spoken about with the infrastructure, the building site, resources adding more capacity. All these things won't be completed on the first day in February, they will take time, it will probably be next Summer before you see any changes, finances are tight, with our other 13 schools when they joined us money was spent on buildings and now some of those schools are sat on £100,000, year on year we are encouraging them to spend money.

Question: Have these schools improved in terms of results?

Answer: BT Our 13th school has just joined us in June in Leicester. Before this we stopped and consolidated and didn't take on any more schools for 18 months. Out of the original 12 schools, 9 have had an Ofsted inspection and have all got Good or Outstanding judgments, some of them were in special measures, one had never had a Good judgement. The three that haven't are due to for an Ofsted inspection this term and are on track for a Good or Outstanding judgement. This is why we stopped to offer support and to ensure they were working effectively and all of those schools are now sat on £3.5 million pounds worth of reserve, that money is schools money. Parent: Are they all Primary schools? BT: Yes they are.

Question: Does that money stay with the individual schools?

Answer: The money used to come from the Department of Education to the Council to the School. Now it comes from the Department of Education to L.E.A.D. to the school.
Parent: So you are effectively replacing the Council? BT: Yes.

Question: What about Special Needs Funding?

Answer: There are some things that we have obligations to that cannot change. Parent: Will that money come to the Trust. BT: Yes to the Academy Trust, to the School. Parent: So it doesn't stop? BT: No, not at all.

Question: How many schools have you got?

Answer: BT 13

Question: How many are you hoping to take on?

Answer: BT We have 5 here in Sheffield and 3 in Derby that we are due to take on, apart from that we have no more plans. We have never intended to take on loads! In Sheffield this may be it, we have to make sure that the educational provision for current children is in place and we do what we do successfully so that may be it. Our Trustees are our regulators. Our Vision is on our website.
We are heavily monitored and heavily regulated, it is not about getting to a certain size.

Question: Is L.E.A.D. a profit making company?

Answer: We are a registered charity trust. We do have a Trading Company as part of our structure, we provide services outside of our schools, like IT contractors for example. Any money that is made from that is ploughed back into our schools, so for instance we have generated £80,000 from an activity and we are now having to think how to spend it. Funding is getting tighter and we now have to think outside of the box as to how we put this money back into our schools.

Question: Who makes up the Trust Body?

Answer: BT At the head of the tree is the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust – Trustees are approved by the Department of Education and have strategic checks in advance to make sure strategic plans are in place. The Multi-Academy Trust is the board at the top of the 13 schools with the Chief Executive, Diana Owen. Charity experts, Boots who work as financial advisors. Then there is a local governing body for each school. If you have 13 schools there has to be a detailed understanding so we set up the Nottingham Hub Board who are made up of representatives from our governing bodies and are there to act as communication channels and to make sure schools are performing as they should do. So if you add 5/7 schools we will probably do the same in Sheffield.

SR: There will be some change to the Governor structure here and we will be looking forward to new people joining our Governing Body.

Question: If we have a serious complaint, for instance about the Headteacher, who would we go to?

Answer: BT There is a complaints policy on the website, the procedure is that the first port of call is to the 1. Headteacher, 2. Chair of Governors, 3. Panel of Governors, 4. Trust or Department of Education.

SR We are going to be here for a few minutes if you have any questions to ask us directly.
Thank you for attending.

Meeting finished at 6.45pm

We received one separate response from a parent of a pupil at Birley Community Primary School, posing a number of questions which are listed below with the responses:

1. It wasn't long ago that we moved to be a community school now change again? If it is not broken then why change it? We became a Foundation School in 2013, having been a Community School for many years. A Community School is the government's legal definition of a state maintained non-faith school – a Foundation School is still a state maintained school, but one where the Governors employ the staff directly and the Trust owns the land and buildings. The government is now encouraging all schools to become academies – which is still a state school but one which is funded directly by the Government and not through the Local Authority. We believe that as this is what the Government wants, then it is best to take a decision for ourselves and choose what we want to do, rather than wait for them to force a change on us. School is most certainly not broken, and we do not want to change it – we want to get better support (LEAD is now better placed than the Local Authority to provide support) to improve still further.

2. I believe the school can set their own pay scales? Does this apply to teaching staff and head teachers? How is this monitored to be kept fair and not taken advantage of? We currently set pay according to teacher national pay and conditions, and this will continue under LEAD. This national framework is monitored by Governors according to our pay policy and staffing structures. There is no risk of anyone being able to “take advantage” of arrangements on pay.

3. I believe the school is given a lump sum of money by the government to spend as they see fit and manage their own budgets? What happens if this money runs out before the end of term? Can they apply for further funds? If not, where does this money come from? School receives funding from Government based on the number of children that it has. I manage the budget on behalf of the Governing Body, so that there is no danger of running out of money. Checks and balances in the system mean that could not happen.

4. If we do move to become an academy school and ofsted then grade us as a 'failing school' and we are put into 'special measures'. Will we then receive extra funding to help the school achieve?? As we are currently a Good school, with Outstanding, there is no likelihood of going into special measures, so the question is academic. If a school does go into a category, there is no additional money, but LEAD would in those circumstances have additional central resources they could use.

Staff

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status Staff Meeting Wednesday 19 October 2016 at 3.30 pm

Present

Steve Robinson (Executive Headteacher)
Teaching and Support Staff

Purpose of the Meeting

What is an Academy?

Steve Robinson clarified that an academy school is still a state school but independent of the Local Authority (Sheffield City Council) and receives its funding directly from the central Government.

The day to day running is still with the Headteacher but the accountable body is the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust Board and they are based in the Nottingham area

Schools are offered freedoms as an incentive and one freedom is not having to teach the national curriculum.

We will receive more money per head as none of it will be retained by the Local Authority.

Why we have chosen to go down the academy route?

It is the Government's declared aim that all schools become academies by 2020. As more schools become academies there is less that the local authority can do.

We work closely with our family of schools and want to stay together. The only way to ensure this is to make a decision together. Birley Community Primary School is the most successful in our family.

We have challenges around reading and language brought into school and struggle to get support. L.E.A.D. is a successful Primary Academy group.

We have a common set of values with L.E.A.D.

There will be no change in the day to day working or pensions. Staff will transfer under existing pay and conditions to L.E.A.D. Academy Trust.

L.E.A.D. Academy Trust currently consists of 13 schools. All of their schools have become good or outstanding.

Questions and Answers.

Q. Are there any risks that you are aware of?

A. There is a risk, but we want to keep the responsibility for our own school. Other risks that can happen in schools is a change of leadership, but that can always happen. There is a risk if we do not perform well but L.E.A.D. can support us to make the necessary improvements required.

Q. Ultimately aren't they in charge?

A. Yes, in the same way that the Local Authority are. Some Academy Groups can tell you what to do but the L.E.A.D. Academy Trust strongly believe in collaboration and leaves schools to their own individuality.

Q. Is the Family of Schools going to have one management?

A. The schools are too big for that. L.E.A.D. want to create a Sheffield Hub and we will be part that hub.

Q. Will the existing pay and conditions and pension rights remain the same but only for a certain length of time?

A. L.E.A.D. are committed to the national pay and conditions and work with the unions. They will honour Sheffield pay and conditions.

Q. When will all this take place?

A. The plan for conversion is 1st February 2017. There will be meetings before this date.

Q. Did you and Dawn not consider asking our personal opinions?

A. The Government has a policy what staff and parents think personally is not directly relevant. We as a Governing Body want what is best for our school.

Q. Is there still a possibility that we won't join?

A. Governors have to sign everything off, but it is highly unlikely. It could be that L.E.A.D. don't want us, however, we would add to their expertise and capacity.

Q. You mentioned that there will be opportunities for progression, will anyone be asked to move?

A. No one will be asked to move but may choose to.

Q. Could you be asked to move to another school?

A. You are employed where you are based, in this school.

Q. Do L.E.A.D have any schools that have any Nurseries?

A. Yes.

Q. Have any taken on the extra hours?

A. I don't know.

We received no additional questions or responses from staff.

Trade Union Representatives

Proposed Academy Conversion – Notes of Trade Union Consultation Meeting held on Wednesday 2nd November 2016 at Birley Community College

Present:

Lesley-Anne Craig (ASCL), Duncan Blackie (NUT), David Slegg (ATL), Kath Robinson (GMB), Rod Padley (Unison), David Haigh (NASUWT)

Steve Robinson (Executive Headteacher), Nicola Gregory (Director of Human Resources)

Bobby Thandi (LEAD), Hannah Bingham (LEAD)

Steve thanked everyone for attending and everyone introduced themselves.

Steve confirmed that this was a consultation meeting regarding the proposed academy conversion of Birley Community Primary, Birley Community College, Rainbow Forge Primary, Charnock Hall Primary and Birley Spa Community Primary. He said four of the five schools had held staff meetings and the fifth would be taking place after school today. He confirmed there had also been parent consultation meetings in each school.

Steve said the consultation period would end next week and there would then be formal TUPE consultation.

Rod asked what LEAD stands for.

Bobby said it was Lead, Empower, Achieve and Drive.

Steve said that at the staff meetings there had been the same outline presentation given where it had been explained what an academy is, how it is funded and the relationship between the day to day running and the Multi-Academy Trust. He said there was discussion about the freedoms to innovate that an academy has and the national curriculum although there is no intention in this instance to do anything other than follow this. He said there had been few questions from staff about any of this.

Steve said that the family of schools had been working closely together for some time and had developed shared staff and resources as well as shared delivery. He said the schools had worked as a co-operative trust for the last few years and Birley Spa had joined with this. He said there was a strong feeling that the schools should stay together for the community in this area and that 90% plus of the pupils in the College come from the feeder primaries.

Steve said that everyone was aware of the Government intention regarding academies and although they had moved away from imposition of this, the RSC is still tasked with the academy agenda.

Steve said that the family of schools had talked about this at length over the last year and as there was the intention to stay together as a group, there had been discussion with the RSC about the creation of a family of schools hub with the Co-operative but this was rejected and they had been told the only way was to join collectively with another group.

Steve said each school had considered whether or not to stay together or separate and make their own choices however there remained a clear commitment to working together as a family of schools.

Steve said it could be argued whether the schools were moving early on this however he said one of the schools has been below floor for two years and if this action had not been taken there would have been a sponsored solution for that school. He said none of the other schools were secure, Ofsted inspections previously have been RI apart from one of the schools therefore a second inspection would either be good or measures. It was for these reasons that it was felt to work now to try to secure the best sponsor for our schools.

Steve said the schools would be converting as academy converters and that it was felt this was in the best interests of all of the schools. He outlined the two sponsors suggested by the RSC, one had been Reach4 and the other LEAD. He said Governors had met with both and had decided that LEAD was the best fit for the family of schools. He said there were two main reasons for this, one was the sense of shared values and recent experience of leading schools and the second was that LEAD have had recent accolades around performance and success.

Steve said that he was not aware of any significant issues across the staff groups in the five schools and could certainly confirm that in his own schools there had been no negative feedback. He said he would share copies of the consultation feedback with the unions when the consultation period had concluded.

Rod said that he had heard good feedback about LEAD and asked how many schools there were in the MAT.

Bobby said there were currently 13 primaries, 11 in the Nottingham area and 2 in the Leicester area. He said there would be two secondaries joining in Derby however they were both PFI's so conversion was taking longer than had been anticipated.

Bobby said LEAD had been operating for 5 years as a chain and had started with Huntingdon Primary where the current Chief Executive had been Headteacher.

Hannah said that when the TUPE consultation takes place all staff are given information about LEAD and the academy conversion process in the form of FAQs. She said she had copies of the information for the unions to take away from the meeting. She said that staff are also offered a one to one meeting if they would like it to discuss any particular issues they may have.

David Haigh asked about the two secondaries and how many pupils they had along with their current Ofsted position.

Bobby said one had approximately 1200 pupils and was RI the other had approximately 600 and was also RI.

Lesley-Anne Craig asked about leadership and what was on offer for the secondary and the benefits.

Bobby said LEAD didn't take the decision to take on secondary schools lightly. He said that when they had grown to 12 schools they had stopped and taken time to reflect before moving further. He said 10 of the schools were now good or outstanding. He outlined the testing of their trade provision of school improvement in Birmingham and the development of the Teaching School Alliance.

Bobby said that LEAD recognised the need to build capacity to support secondary schools and had appointed a Director of Schools in anticipation of the first conversions in Derby. He said the person appointed was a former Headteacher who had taken a school to an outstanding judgement although he had yet to be able to start making an input to the schools given the delay in conversion. He said that as schools joined LEAD there would be further capacity added depending on the needs of those schools.

Bobby said that with Sheffield the intention was to build capacity locally however he recognised that initially there may be a need for colleagues in LEAD to travel to develop support.

Lesley-Anne said she was concerned that capacity wasn't there now and she didn't want the existing leadership in the schools to be the 'whipping boys' for progress.

Bobby acknowledged this and said it was about bringing in capacity to support. He said that the MAT does not come in and move staff. He recognised there was a need to get the mechanics in place but he said that there were also outstanding schools within the Teaching School Alliance who were keen to share their practice.

Steve said it had been a source of discussion within the leadership team in Sheffield. He said the Heads equally wanted to be part of a partnership which could draw on capacity but also share the good practice that exists within the family of schools.

Duncan Blackie said that LEAD were untested in secondary so he was a bit confused as to why they now felt able to take secondary on. He said he happened to know that there had been plenty of opportunities in Nottingham to date but LEAD have chosen not to. He said he was also unsure of the RSC logic in putting forward a sponsor without proven secondary experience to take over.

Steve said he couldn't answer why the RSC had made the decision they had however there was no secondary offer available to the family within Sheffield. He said he would also like to pick up on the language used and that he did not see this as being taken over but a decision to join the MAT to work in partnership.

Bobby said when many schools in the Nottingham area had been converting to academies, LEAD had been consolidating their position. He said that here in Sheffield there was a strong link between primary and secondary but that wasn't the case in Nottingham.

David Slegg said that if there were schools from different authorities within LEAD, did the schools retain policies or did LEAD have their own.

Hannah said that LEAD respect existing policies under TUPE and have not harmonised. She said that they take each school as it is and work with those policies. She said that LEAD had adopted the Burgundy Book and Green Book as well as development of their own policies although there were features of some of the existing policies that had been adopted, for example the trigger points in the Nottingham City policies for absence. She said that she had developed a guide to help manage the differences through checking start dates etc.

Kath asked who had overall responsibility in the structure as the employer.

Hannah said the MAT is the employer. She said a common sense approach was adopted to managing the policies transferring over so, for example, where there was reference to the Governing Body making a decision LEAD would have two local Governors and a Director involved.

Kath asked about national pay awards and negotiations.

Hannah said that LEAD did over and above. She said that the NJC pay scales are replicated however the lower scales have been discarded in favour of the living wage of £7.90.

Rod said that Sheffield City Council pays the living wage foundation figure of £8.20 and asked if this would be honoured.

Hannah said it would be as staff would transfer with this. She said that future decisions about increases in this would depend on funding.

Rod asked about funding and how this is made up.

Bobby said that LEAD top slice 4.6% from the core budget of each school. He said they also had access to extra streams of funding. He said that within the 4.6% schools would access support which meant they could develop reserves. He said that the schools had between them £3 million in reserve and the MAT a further £1 million.

Rod asked about structures and the influence of the MAT on the schools.

Bobby said that leadership of the schools day to day was delegated to the schools.

Duncan asked about the hub and would that be managed by Steve as Executive Headteacher.

Bobby said that was still being discussed and that LEAD did plan in time to develop local support. He said that the schools would report to the hub board.

Duncan said that if services were being delivered as before how could the schools be better off.

Bobby said he knew about the financial pressures and referred again to the reserves which had been built up. He said that on the commercial side of LEAD they had developed a model that they wanted to share. He said there had been a lot of hard work and some mistakes along the way. He said that the current top slice is 4.6% but there is a target to try to reduce this through creating shared resources and capacity. He gave examples of savings made through catering, insurance and utilities and use of collective buying power. He said there was also capital funding and opportunities there.

Steve said the Birley family already does some of this through shared services so it would be building on this and was another reason the schools had been attracted to LEAD.

David Slegg asked how the hub would interact with LEAD and how much autonomy would there be.

Bobby said there was a structure to meet with Chairs of Governors through the Chairs Forum and the Chief Executive holds a regular staff forum and Headteacher meetings. He said there would be a hub board pilot to connect with the MAT board.

Duncan said that in other academy chains there had been experience of Executive Headteacher roles becoming more important and a drain on the budget of the MAT.

Hannah said that the LEAD head office is very lean. She said the aim is to ensure people are in the schools so there are only 3 or 4 central roles and not lots of jobs for the boys. She said the intention was to coach and develop.

David Haigh asked about trade union recognition and facility time. He explained that in Sheffield there is a well-established arrangement to enable academies to buy-in to the facility time agreement with 98% of existing academies doing so. He said this arrangement allowed locally elected staff to work in local schools and allowed school staff access to those reps.

Hannah said that LEAD valued this.

David Haigh said he felt the arrangement provided value for money to those schools buying into it. He said he was a member of the Co-operation trust board at Birley and had listened to the presentation by LEAD with the commitment to local empowerment. He recognised there was a cost.

Hannah said that she had a letter to share with representatives which had been sent to each trade union and was a written commitment from the organisation to trade union recognition and the development of a facility agreement. She said she wanted LEAD to be in a strong position but it needed to reflect the size of the organisation and the coverage of different authorities.

Hannah said the letter had been sent to the unions in the East Midlands and invited a representative from each union to participate in a forum to quantify facilities time. She said she wanted open dialogue about this with a view to reaching an agreement in 2017.

Duncan asked if what was being said was that rather than buy in to the agreement in Sheffield, there would be a separate agreement for LEAD.

Hannah said that hadn't been decided. She said that she wanted to work with union colleagues to develop the rationale for whatever arrangement was agreed upon.

Duncan said the majority of schools in Sheffield paid in to the current arrangement.

Hannah said that from the meetings with union colleagues that might be something which was agreed but she needed to ensure there was fairness across the organisation.

David Haigh said he understood what was being said and that colleagues would want to be involved in talks about it.

Hannah said that LEAD wanted a termly meeting with union representatives to establish a 'JCC' type meeting but also to develop local arrangements.

Duncan said he would expect a JCC to be in place but felt a local arrangement was needed rather than a central facility.

Hannah agreed, she said the intention was for each school to continue to have local support but there was a need to look at the number of staff and ensure fairness.

David Haigh said it was complicated particularly with different union structures.

Hannah said that was why it was important to have the discussion and meet with a representative from each union.

Kath said it was important that staff had access to their local representatives and she had many concerns raised by members of support staff particularly about the roles they were asked to do which were beyond their pay grade. She said often, due to budget pressures, teaching assistants were expected to cover absent teachers.

Hannah said that LEAD have a clear commitment that no unqualified teachers will be teaching in schools.

Kath said she welcomed this.

Steve thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said feedback from the consultation would be circulated.

Nicola said that, in anticipation of TUPE consultation, a provisional date for the consultation meeting with the unions was being suggested for 23rd November 2016 at 2.30pm. She said there would be one union meeting but a meeting in each school with the staff which each union was welcome to attend. She confirmed that FAQs would be circulated and the presentations would be similar to those delivered previously in other conversions.

There were two separate communications resulting from this meeting – one an email from the NASUWT, emphasising the importance of Trade Union Facility Time (TUFT) to successful working relationships in Sheffield, and looking to build on that with LEAD to find a way forward which works here in Sheffield in the short and the long term; and one a generic letter from the NUT, providing advice to the Governing Body and asking some questions which are answered here:

- Budget projections and additional costs after conversion. It is not possible at this stage to provide the detailed breakdown that the NUT is asking for in terms of future budgets and costs, as that information is not yet available, but as we are joining a large multi-academy trust with significant reserves, existing contracts and lengthy experience of working as an academy trust, Birley Community College is not exposed to any risks on conversion (see published accounts). LEAD's stated aim is that all its school will be financially better off after conversion.
- The NUT also asks the Governing Body to adopt the TUC Model Recognition Agreement, which details the unions' position on trade union/employer relationships and Trade Union Facility Time (TUFT). LEAD have shared a letter inviting all recognised trade unions to a meeting to discuss these issues, so it would seem more reasonable for that discussion to happen with LEAD who will be the new employer.

Stakeholders/Partner Schools

In response to our letter to our partner schools, we had one response, wishing us well and expressing the desire to continue to work with us in future. As a group of schools, as a Sheffield LEAD hub, we intend to continue working in partnership with schools in our area.

Recommendation

In the light of the above responses I recommend that Governors move to conversion on 1 February, joining with LEAD Multi-Academy Trust.

Steve Robinson

Executive Headteacher

Appendix 1 Letter to parents

Dear Parents/Carers

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

As you may be aware, increasing numbers of schools across Sheffield and the country have converted to academy status over recent years. It is the Government's declared aim that all schools become academies.

We have been considering our position on this for the past year and we are determined to make the right choice for us, keeping our identity and commitment to our community. We want to join with a like-minded group of schools who can work with us to improve our school in the future. We have therefore met with several regional and national multi-academy trusts to consider what they can offer.

As a result, we have applied with our local family of schools to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010 and are proposing to join L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, one of the highest performing multi-academy trusts (MAT) in the country.

We would like to invite you to a meeting on Wednesday 19 October at 6.30pm to meet with us and representatives from LEAD to learn more about the proposals and to make any comments you might have.

This meeting forms a key part of our consultation process, and we have set out further information below.

What is an academy?

An academy is still a state school, but it is independent of the Local Authority (Sheffield City Council) and receives its funding directly from central government. As an academy, we have greater autonomy and control over many aspects of our work which we will exercise in partnership with LEAD Academy Trust.

What will becoming an academy mean for us?

- As we will receive our funding directly from the government it is likely that we will receive more funding as none of it will be retained by the Local Authority, and by joining with LEAD we will be able to benefit from joint services and contracts to reduce costs.
- We will have more autonomy over the curriculum that we teach and we do not have to teach elements of the national curriculum if we do not think they are appropriate.
- We will have more freedom working with LEAD to develop innovative ideas that build on the partnerships we have established with our partner schools in recent years.
- Working with LEAD, we can share good practice, adopt the best ideas and work together to achieve the best outcomes for our school community.

We have worked closely together with our family of schools for a number of years to improve provision and outcomes, as well as to enhance the experiences for children and young people in our community. We see this move to become an academy within the LEAD Academy Trust as a way to continue this path and accelerate improvement more rapidly.

Admissions arrangements will remain as they currently are, managed by the Local Authority. Our staff will transfer under the new arrangements, so you will not see any changes to your child's teachers, other than normal movement at the end of the year. There will be no requirement to change the uniform or the school badge/logo, but if we decide to do so we will only do that following consultation with our parents and school community.

Who are LEAD?

According to the Department for Education “The L.E.A.D. Academy Trust is one of the strongest sponsors operating in the East Midlands, with a track record of successfully improving underperforming schools...” and has been ranked among the top ten performing academy trusts/local authorities in the country for the past two years. They are based in the Nottingham area and want to develop a Sheffield hub.

We have included some information from LEAD on our website – “Frequently Asked Questions”.

How can I comment?

Any comments or representations made about the proposed academy conversion will be considered by the governors and LEAD Academy Trust.

If you want to respond in writing, please send your comments to:

Kevin St Clair

Birley Community Primary School, Thornbridge Avenue, Sheffield. S12 3AB.

Or dsalisbury@birleycc.sheffield.sch.uk (Clerk to Governors)

The closing date for comments on the proposals will be 11 November 2016.

Given how closely our family of schools has worked together over recent years, we believe it is a logical next step to join with a successful regional partnership, LEAD Academy Trust. Our intention is to continue the improvements we have seen in recent years, by building on that success with the knowledge and experience of LEAD. We see this as an exciting prospect for the future.

We look forward to discussing these proposals with you and hope that you feel you have the information you need. If you need anything further, do not hesitate to contact me at the school.

Yours

Headteacher

Appendix 2 Letter to Trade Union Representatives

5 October 2016

Trade Union Colleagues

Dear Colleague

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

I am writing to you on behalf of the Birley family of schools which includes Rainbow Forge Primary, Charnock Hall Primary, Birley Spa Primary and Birley Learning Community (which is Birley Community College and Birley Community Primary) Schools.

You will be aware of the increasing number of schools across Sheffield and the country converting to academy status over recent years. It is the Government's declared aim that all schools become academies.

We have been considering our position on this for the past year and we are determined to make the right choice for us, keeping our identity and commitment to our community. We want to join with a like-minded group of schools who can work with us to improve our schools in the future.

As a result, we have applied as a family of schools to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010 and are proposing to join L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, one of the highest performing multi-academy trusts (MAT) in the country.

You are invited to attend the individual staff consultation meetings in each school however I recognise that the dates/times may be difficult for you to attend at short notice particularly as there are five of them to cover. Alternatively I would like to invite you to a consultation meeting on Wednesday 2 November 2016 at 2pm at Birley Community College to discuss the proposal collectively on behalf of the family of schools. Please can you confirm to Debbie Salisbury via e-mail dsalisbury@birleycc.sheffield.sch.uk whether you can attend the meeting on 2 November 2016.

The staff consultation meetings are scheduled to start at the end of the school day as follows:

Tuesday 11 October 2016	Charnock Hall Primary	3.30pm
Wednesday 12 October 2016	Birley Community College	3.15pm
Thursday 13 October 2016	Rainbow Forge Primary	3.30pm
Wednesday 19 October 2016	Birley Community Primary	3.30pm
Wednesday 2 November 2016	Birley Spa Community Primary	3.30pm

A copy of the letter which has been given to all staff in the five schools is enclosed for your information.

I hope you are able to attend either a staff meeting or the meeting at the College to raise any questions and provide feedback during the consultation process. However if you are unable to do so you can submit a response in writing to the Chair of Governors at each school.

The closing date for comments on the proposals will be 11 November 2016.

Formal TUPE consultation will be carried out in due course with trade union colleagues and staff subject to consultation about the proposed conversion to academy status.

We look forward to discussing these proposals with you and hope that you feel you have the information that you need. If you need anything further please do not hesitate to contact me or Nicola Gregory, Director of Human Resources on 0114 2392531.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'R'.

Steve Robinson

Executive Headteacher

Birley Learning Community

Appendix 3 Letter to staff

Dear Colleague

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

As you will know, increasing numbers of schools across Sheffield and the country have converted to academy status over recent years. It is the Government's declared aim that all schools become academies.

We have been considering our position on this for the past year and we are determined to make the right choice for us, keeping our identity and commitment to our community. We want to join with a like-minded group of schools who can work with us to improve our school in the future.

As a result, we have applied with our local family of schools to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010 and are proposing to join L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, one of the highest performing multi-academy trusts (MAT) in the country.

We would like to invite you to a meeting on Wednesday 19 October at 3.30 to meet with us to learn more about the proposals and to make any comments you might have.

This meeting forms a key part of our consultation process, and we have set out further information below.

What is an academy?

An academy is still a state school, but it is independent of the Local Authority (Sheffield City Council) and receives its funding directly from central government. As an academy, we have greater autonomy and control over many aspects of our work which we will exercise in partnership with LEAD Academy Trust.

What will becoming an academy mean for us?

- As we will receive our funding directly from the government it is likely that we will receive more funding as none of it will be retained by the Local Authority, and by joining with LEAD we will be able to benefit from joint services and contracts to reduce costs.
- We will have more autonomy over the curriculum that we teach and we do not have to teach elements of the national curriculum if we do not think they are appropriate.
- We will have more freedom working with LEAD to develop innovative ideas that build on the partnerships we have established with our partner schools in recent years.
- Working with LEAD, we can share good practice, adopt the best ideas and work together to achieve the best outcomes for our school community.

We have worked closely together with our family of schools for a number of years to improve provision and outcomes, as well as to enhance the experiences for children and young people in our community. We see this move to become an academy within the LEAD Academy Trust as a way to continue this path and accelerate improvement more rapidly.

We can confirm:

- Admissions arrangements will remain as they currently are, managed by the Local Authority.
- Staff will transfer under existing pay and conditions to LEAD Academy Trust. Staff are entitled under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) to be provided with certain information by us in relation to the transfer of their employment. TUPE consultations will begin once this consultation process is complete

- There will be no requirement to change the uniform or the school badge/logo, but if we decide to do so we will only do that following consultation with our parents and school community.

Who are LEAD?

According to the Department for Education “The L.E.A.D. Academy Trust is one of the strongest sponsors operating in the East Midlands, with a track record of successfully improving underperforming schools...” and has been ranked among the top ten performing academy trusts/local authorities in the country for the past two years. They are based in the Nottingham area and want to develop a Sheffield hub.

We have included some information from LEAD on our website – “Frequently Asked Questions”.

How can I comment?

Any comments or representations made about the proposed academy conversion will be considered by the governors and LEAD Academy Trust.

If you want to respond in writing, please send your comments to:

Kevin St Clair

Birley Community Primary School, Thornbridge Avenue, Sheffield. S12 3AB.

Or dsalisbury@birleycc.sheffield.sch.uk (Clerk to Governors)

The closing date for comments on the proposals will be 11 November 2016.

Given how closely our family of schools has worked together over recent years, we believe it is a logical next step to join with a successful regional partnership, LEAD Academy Trust. Our intention is to continue the improvements we have seen in recent years, by building on that success with the knowledge and experience of LEAD. We see this as an exciting prospect for the future.

We look forward to discussing these proposals with you and hope that you feel you have the information you need. If you need anything further, do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours

Headteacher

Appendix 4 Letter to partner schools

Dear Sir/Madam

Proposed Conversion to Academy Status

I am writing to you on behalf of the Birley Learning Community Cooperative Trust and its member and partner schools – Birley Community College, Birley Community Primary School, Birley Spa Community Primary School, Charnock Hall Primary School and Rainbow Forge Primary School.

As you know, increasing numbers of schools across Sheffield and the country have converted to academy status over recent years. It is the Government's declared aim that all schools become academies.

We have been considering our position on this for the past year and we are determined to make the right choice for us, keeping our identity and commitment to our community. We want to join with a like-minded group of schools who can work with us to improve our schools in the future. We have therefore met with several regional and national multi-academy trusts to consider what they can offer.

As a result, we have applied with our local family of schools to become an academy under the Academies Act 2010 and are proposing to join L.E.A.D. Academy Trust, one of the highest performing multi-academy trusts (MAT) in the country.

This letter forms part of our consultation process, and we have set out further information below. We are writing to all our partners to let you know of our plans, and to give you an opportunity to make any comments you might have.

What is an academy?

An academy is still a state school, but it is independent of the Local Authority (Sheffield City Council) and receives its funding directly from central government. As an academy, we have greater autonomy and control over many aspects of our work which we will exercise in partnership with LEAD Academy Trust.

What will becoming an academy mean for us?

- As we will receive our funding directly from the government it is likely that we will receive more funding as none of it will be retained by the Local Authority, and by joining with LEAD we will be able to benefit from joint services and contracts to reduce costs.
- We will have more autonomy over the curriculum that we teach and we do not have to teach elements of the national curriculum if we do not think they are appropriate.
- We will have more freedom working with LEAD to develop innovative ideas that build on the partnerships we have established with our partner schools in recent years.
- Working with LEAD, we can share good practice, adopt the best ideas and work together to achieve the best outcomes for our school community.

We have worked closely together for a number of years as a family of schools within our current Trust to improve provision and outcomes, as well as to enhance the experiences for children and young people in our community. We see this move to become academies within a Sheffield hub of the LEAD Academy Trust as a way to continue this path and to accelerate improvement more rapidly.

Admissions arrangements will remain as they currently are, managed by the Local Authority. Our staff will transfer under the new arrangements. There will be no requirement to change the uniform or the school badge/logo, but if we decide to do so we will only do that following consultation with our parents and school community.

Who are LEAD?

According to the Department for Education “The L.E.A.D. Academy Trust is one of the strongest sponsors operating in the East Midlands, with a track record of successfully improving underperforming schools...” and has been ranked among the top ten performing academy trusts/local authorities in the country for the past two years. They are based in the Nottingham area and want to develop a Sheffield hub.

We have included some information from LEAD on our website – “Frequently Asked Questions”.

How can I comment?

Any comments or representations made about the proposed academy conversion will be considered by the governors and LEAD Academy Trust.

If you want to respond in writing, please send your comments to:

The Company Secretary,

James Beighton

Birley Learning Community Cooperative Trust

Birley Community College, Birley Lane, Sheffield. S12 3BP.

Or dsalisbury@birleycc.sheffield.sch.uk

Given how closely our family of schools has worked together over recent years, we believe it is a logical next step to join with a successful regional partnership, LEAD Academy Trust. Our intention is to continue the improvements we have seen in recent years, by building on that success with the knowledge and experience of LEAD. We see this as an exciting prospect for the future.

If you need anything further information, do not hesitate to contact me at Birley Community College.

Yours

Steve Robinson

Executive Headteacher – For the Birley Learning Community Cooperative Trust schools

Purpose of the consultation

- To inform parents of our plans by explaining:
 - What an academy is;
 - Why we have chosen to convert to academy status;
 - Why we have chosen to join with LEAD Academy Trust
- To note any comments that parents might have

What are academies?

- Academies are independent, state-funded schools, which receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through a local authority.
- The day-to-day running of the school is with the head teacher or principal, but they are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts and may be part of an academy chain.
- These trusts and chains provide advice, support, expertise and a strategic overview.
- They have more freedom than other schools to innovate.

Why have we chosen to become an academy?

- The Government's declared aim is for all schools to become academies
- We work closely together with our local family of schools and we want to continue to do so, maintaining our identity and commitment to our community
- Working as part of an academy trust will help us to improve more rapidly

Why join with LEAD?

Having met with a number of national and regional multi-academy trusts, we chose to apply to convert with LEAD because:

- We share a common set of values and principles
- LEAD is a high performing academy trust and will bring significant additional experience to our partnership