



Tong High School

Statutory Consultation Report



Tauheedul
Education Trust

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

In October 2015, TET was chosen as the Academy Sponsor for Tong High School. In accordance with the requirements stipulated in Section 5 of the Academies Act 2010, a statutory consultation process was subsequently undertaken to gauge opinion on the proposal to convert to Academy status.

1.2 Approach

The formal Statutory Consultation took place over a four week period from 2 November – 27 November 2015. A range of consultation methods and communication channels were employed to ensure as many people as possible were able to respond to the consultation, including:

- development and dissemination of a Consultation Document outlining the Trust's ethos and intentions in sponsoring the Academy conversion;
- development and dissemination of a Consultation Questionnaire (available online as part of the Consultation Document);
- a public consultation event (Monday 9 November 2015).

In order to ensure the consultation involved all relevant stakeholders, notification of the statutory consultation document and details of how to access the questionnaire were circulated to: Headteachers of local primary schools; school parents; and MPs and Councillors for the ward.

1.3 Findings

Attended by 20 people, the Public Consultation Event showed little opposition and confirmed that stakeholders broadly welcomed the proposal to convert Tong High School into an Academy, and for TET to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State in this respect.

The Staff Consultation Event - attended by approximately 80-90 members of staff - had a similarly favourable outcome, with no staff voicing objections to the proposed conversion or the choice of TET as a sponsor.

During the respective Consultation Events, representatives from TET and the School's Senior Leadership Team discussed why TET had been chosen as a sponsor and the comprehensive improvement support they could bring to the School. TET outlined how they would work with Tong's staff to enhance existing provision and deliver a broad and balanced curriculum designed to secure the best possible outcomes for the School's students.

Those in attendance were reassured that TET has a long-standing reputation for educational excellence and examples were provided as to how TET has offered improvement support to non-denominational schools in challenging circumstances, which resulted in increased attainment levels and more favourable Ofsted ratings.

Attendees were also assured that there were no plans to turn Tong High School into a faith school. It was reiterated that the School will remain non-denominational and co-educational, and added measures will be taken to ensure staff retention.

1.4 Discussion

Both consultation events welcomed questions from those in attendance. A number of queries were raised by staff, parents and the local community with regard to TET's experience and capacity, including the particulars of the Trust's education offer and any ensuing changes to the curriculum, TET's plans for the future, the Trust's level of commitment to community engagement, how TET proposes to address staff retention issues, and the timescales and specifics of the conversion process.

TET sought to address all of the questions and issues raised, either during the events themselves or by way of a detailed FAQ sheet, which was published on the School's website for parents or e-mailed to staff members shortly after the Consultation Events took place.

Responses to the Consultation Questionnaire itself were very low. Only two responses were received. The overwhelming majority of feedback was gathered at Consultation Events and, as a result of the positive feedback received, the School's Governing Body has agreed to proceed with the proposal to convert to Academy status with TET as the named sponsor.

2 Introduction

Tong High School is a non-denominational, all-ability, mixed gender secondary school and sixth form college for children aged 11-18. In October 2015, the Governing Body decided - in the best interests of the School and the education of its students - to apply for Academy status with Tauheedul Education Trust (TET) as the named sponsor. Under the proposal, Tong High School will become part of TET's Non-Faith Division and will retain its non-denominational status.

In order to provide an informed basis for the decision to convert Tong High School into an Academy, a legal duty (as per the Academies Act 2010, s5) requires that:

1. Before a maintained school in England is converted into an Academy, the school's Governing Body must consult such persons as they think appropriate.
2. The consultation must be on the question of whether the school should be converted into an Academy.
3. The consultation may take place before or after an Academy order, or an application for an Academy order, has been made in respect of the school.

In line with this requirement, the Trust and Governing Body undertook a formal Statutory Consultation Process over a four-week period from 2 November to 27 November 2015. The consultation was intended to:

- inform key stakeholders about the proposal to convert Tong High School into an Academy;
- assess and evaluate public opinion on Tong High School becoming an Academy;
- assess and evaluate public opinion on Tauheedul Education Trust becoming the named Academy sponsor;

- provide key stakeholders with an insight into how the Trust operates, their reputation for educational excellence, and their aspirations for Tong High School.

This document formally reports on the statutory consultation process and its findings.

3 Statutory Consultation Approach

The Statutory Consultation was a local, public consultation, inviting views from stakeholders across Bradford. A range of consultation methods and communication channels were employed to ensure as many people as possible were able to respond to the consultation. The approach developed was designed to both inform and seek responses to the proposed conversion.

3.1 Consultation Documentation

A Consultation Document outlining both the Trust's and the School's mission and values was produced. Within this document, notification of the consultation period, the options available for feedback (including an enquiry line, email address and address for written responses) and details of a public consultation event were reported. The document also included a tear-off Consultation Questionnaire.

The Consultation Questionnaire centred on four questions designed to assess public opinion on the Academy conversion:

1. Do you support the Mission Statement of Tong High School? (yes; no; don't know);
2. Do you think any groups or individuals will be adversely affected by the proposals outlined in our Consultation Document? (yes; no; don't know);
3. Do you think Tong High School's Admissions overview and criteria are clear and fair? (yes; no; don't know);
4. Do you agree that Tong High School should convert to become an academy with TET as its sponsor, by entering into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education? (yes; no; don't know).

3.2 Website

A page was introduced on the School's website to make information on the Trust's proposal and on the consultation itself more accessible. The website provided information about the proposed Academy conversion and a link to the Consultation Document.

3.3 Stakeholder e-Shots

Shortly after the consultation was launched, notification of the statutory consultation document and details of how to access the questionnaire were circulated to: Headteachers of local primary schools; school parents; and MPs and Councillors for the ward.

3.4 Public Consultation Event

A public consultation event was held at Tong High School on Monday 9 November 2015.

The event included presentations outlining:

- the background to the proposed conversion;
- why TET were chosen as Academy sponsors;

- information about TET;
- the benefits of becoming an Academy;
- how to take part in the consultation process.

A panel of representatives of the Trust and School led a question and answer session, inviting attendees to submit both verbal and written questions for their consideration. Time was also allowed at the end of the evening for one-to-one discussions between the Trust's representatives and members of the community.

3.5 Staff Consultation Event

The Staff Consultation Event also took place on Monday 9 November 2015.

Topics covered included:

- the background to the proposed conversion;
- information about TET and the Trust's previous track record;
- TET's priorities;
- TET's vision for the School;
- how to take part in the consultation process.

A panel of representatives of the Trust and School led a question and answer session, inviting attendees to submit both verbal and written questions for their consideration.

3.6 Other Stakeholder Engagement

As part of the wider consultation with key stakeholders, the Trust has maintained continued dialogue with the Local Authority and MPs and Councillors for Bradford.

4 Findings

4.1 Public Consultation Event

The public consultation event was attended by 20 people, and the queries that were raised during the course of the event have been summarised below.

Education Offer

Attendees questioned how the Trust will set about securing improved outcomes for students, and how long it will take to make a discernible difference to results.

TET explained that the Trust will prioritise working with middle and senior leaders in order to maximise performance in forthcoming GCSE examinations. The Trust will build on Tong's existing provision and ensure the curriculum is set up for success in the Progress 8 measure. TET advised that the Trust will collaborate with staff at the School to develop a curriculum tailored to deliver excellent academic results, but also designed to cultivate well-rounded, intelligent and socially-aware students. The curriculum will be complemented by clear and strategically-planned assessment, recording and reporting protocols.

TET advised that the Trust will provide development opportunities for staff, including nationally-recognised qualifications and coaching programmes.

In terms of timescales, TET advised that the Trust expects to see year-on-year improvements in exam results and every effort will be made to ensure the school is accredited as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' during its first Ofsted Inspection, which will happen three years post-conversion.

Attendees also raised the question of whether the Trust intends to continue working with other schools as part of a leadership and school improvement partnership. TET explained that the Trust and the School itself remain committed to current local Bradford-based partnership arrangements, such as the Bradford Partnership. TET advised that all schools can benefit from collaborative partnerships and, moving forwards, Tong will have access to a wider network of established education expertise - including a number of outstanding schools - in its improvement journey.

Attendees also enquired about implications for SEND students. TET advised that the Trust has considerable experience in working with students with complex needs and a long-standing reputation for inclusion and focusing on each student's individual needs. This is reflected in the progress students make at TET schools. TET explained that, where required, bespoke qualifications and alternative pathways will be offered for students who are unable to access the existing curriculum. Attendees were also informed that top-up funding will still be channelled through the Local Authority.

TET reassured attendees that there will be no changes to the scheduling of the school day, and the School's uniform will remain the same.

Questions About TET

Parents wanted to know how many secondary schools are currently part of the Trust, along with whether TET is profit-making, and how long the Non-Faith Division of TET has been established. TET advised that the Trust currently runs eight secondary schools across the country, with three more (including Tong) set to convert to Academies in the near future.

Attendees were advised that TET's Non-Faith Division has recently been formally constituted, but over the last five years, TET has been delivering successful school improvement support to many non-faith schools in the North West, including through its leadership programmes, which are accredited by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

Attendees were also informed that TET is a not-for-profit Trust.

Leadership and Governance

In response to questions concerning how TET will work in partnership with the School to deliver improvement support - along with the resources they intend to employ in order to do so - the Trust explained that TET's Trustees and the Local Governing Body will work together to ensure strong and robust leadership and governance of the school. TET advised that the Trust will establish a Bradford hub of education experts and central staff will support the school's teaching and non-teaching staff to bring about improvements. TET expressed the hope that, as the Bradford hub grows, collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships will begin to flourish – for example, clusters of local schools will enable TET to set up Professional Learning Communities for middle and senior leaders. Across the Hub

and the wider Trust, TET will work together with staff to develop collective approaches to curriculum development, professional development, planning and assessment.

Community Engagement

Attendees questioned how TET proposes to engage with the local community. TET reiterated that service to communities is an integral component of the Trust's mission statement and the Trust encourages all of its students to become actively involved in the local community, primarily through charitable endeavours - fundraising, food banks, volunteering etc. TET explained that the Trust encourages a culture of "giving back" and ensures its students are aware of the issues affecting their local communities. TET advised that the Trust will also encourage parents, carers and the community at large to play an active role in the School's development.

Funding Agreement

Following detailed presentations and discussions, attendees agreed with the proposal to convert Tong High School into an Academy, and supported the Trust's proposal to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State.

4.2 Staff Consultation Event

The consultation event was attended by 80-90 members of staff. They reiterated many of the same queries broached during the public consultation event (including the strategies TET intends to employ to raise attainment levels, the Trust's plans to improve community engagement, and whether TET intends to have Bradford-based support staff). However, they also raised some further questions, which are outlined below.

Staff Retention

Although staffing at Tong is stable, attendees expressed concerns about retention of staff at the School and enquired how TET will prioritise staff recruitment and retention. TET has a priority to help Tong to maintain the current stable workforce. TET explained that if required, they will deploy staff from the Trust to fill any existing gaps until a suitable candidate can be identified, and will also commission a Bradford-based team of education experts to work with the School, with additional support from TET's Central Office.

TET emphasised that they will also use standard recruitment avenues and capitalise on existing partnerships with organisations such as Teach First, Teaching Leaders and Bradford Council to identify suitable teaching staff and middle leaders.

In response to concerns about changes to existing terms and conditions of employment, staff were notified that a TUPE consultation will be undertaken as part of the conversion process. The Trust has reached a nationally-recognised agreement with leading Unions, and all staff - including support staff - will continue to work under national terms and conditions.

Staff were also informed that TET has already taken account of the cost of living pay award by implementing an inflationary increase to its current employees' salaries.

Staff Development

Staff asked about the development opportunities available to them through TET.

TET advised that Tauheedul College for Teaching and Leadership (TCTL) offers a range of development opportunities for both teaching and non-teaching staff, including school-centred initial teacher training courses, as well as training and support programmes for newly qualified and recently qualified teachers. Staff were informed that TCTL also has programmes for more experienced teachers who want to hone their pedagogy skills and keep themselves at the leading edge of teaching practice, including leadership courses such as the NPQML, NPQSL and NPQH, which are accredited by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

TET also explained that there are existing partnership arrangements in place to provide access to CPD programmes for support staff, including courses and qualifications specifically designed for Teaching Assistants, and DSBM qualifications for aspiring and existing School Business Managers.

Curriculum

Staff members had a number of queries regarding how TET intends to bring about positive changes to the School's curriculum, including:

- TET's stance on vocational subjects;
- Changes that will be made at Key Stages 3 & 4;
- How TET intends to help struggling EAL students;
- What support TET intends to offer current Year 11 students.

TET explained that the Trust aims to deliver a knowledge-based curriculum that prioritises high-value academic subjects, including those studied as part of the English Baccalaureate. This will ensure that the School performs well in the Progress 8 measure. The Trust will, however, deliver a comprehensive vocational, sports and arts offer to ensure that every student's needs are met and they have access to an inclusive, broad and balanced curriculum.

TET explained that the Trust's approach will be to deliver a two-year KS3 and a three-year KS4 curriculum. TET will work with senior leaders to implement a new grading and levelling system, and additional support and intervention will be provided for Year 11 students to ensure they fulfil their potential in KS4 examinations.

TET advised staff that the Trust has extensive experience in working with students who speak English as an Additional Language and has achieved considerable success in this area. The Trust's staff – including a former Local Authority Assistant Director of Education with responsibility for Access and Inclusion – will be deployed to assist schools in devising initiatives to ensure the best possible outcomes for EAL students.

Policy Review

In response to questions concerning policy change, staff were informed that the Trust has a policy schedule which sets out Trust-level and school-level policies. Tong will continue to use its own school-level policies, and Trust-level policies will be introduced over a transition period.

Staff also enquired what measures would be taken to improve attendance. TET informed staff that the Trust's schools have some of the best attendance rates in the country, and implementing a robust Pastoral System – as well as creating an environment where students are happy, encouraged to aim high and are held accountable for their actions – results in improved attendance. TET will work with the Pastoral Team to build upon and strengthen current systems and processes. These include daily phone calls, visits home and rewards to students that have good attendance.

Site Plans

Staff enquired whether there were plans to create a dual site between Laisterdyke Business and Enterprise College and Tong High School. The Trust advised that, whilst it encourages all of its schools to share ideas, research and resources, thereby creating collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships, schools are treated as a separate entities and there are no plans to merge Laisterdyke with Tong High School.

Timescales for Conversion

Staff asked for more information regarding the conversion process and the proposed timescales for completion. TET advised that they will consult with the School to devise a transition plan and ensure all staff are kept up-to-date in respect of any developments. TET explained the proposed timescales involved.

4.3 Consultation Questionnaire

A total of 2 Consultation Questionnaires were completed. Both respondents were in favour of Tong High School converting to Academy status with TET as a sponsor.

One respondent indicated that they felt certain groups or individuals may be adversely affected by the conversion, but stated that this would only be an issue *“if the school changes to a faith school. It is important that the school remains independent of any faith.”*

The respondent also stressed that their support of the Funding Agreement was contingent on *“due diligence being carried out”* and stated that they hoped the academisation of Tong High School was by way of *“mutual agreement,”* emphasising that the school has been working hard to improve of its own volition.

As stated above, all stakeholders have been informed that the School will retain its non-denominational status, and that this is a condition of the Funding Agreement between TET and the Secretary of State.

4.4 Other Stakeholder Engagement

On 27th November, the Trust met with Councillor Susan Hinchcliffe (Bradford Council's cabinet member for education, skills and culture) and Councillor for Tong, Alan Wainright. The meeting explored the immediate priorities for the School, the long term plan for improvement and the partnership with the Local Authority.

5 Discussion

The Trust has endeavoured to answer all of the questions raised during the consultation events as transparently – and thoroughly – as possible and, in doing so, has sought to deliver a compelling case explaining how TET's sponsorship of Tong High School will benefit students and staff alike.

Staff have been reassured that their terms and conditions of employment will remain unchanged, and TET will be working in partnership with them to ensure the best outcomes for students of all abilities.

Parents have been provided with a detailed account of what TET's sponsorship means for the School and their child's future, and how the Trust intends to raise aspirations and improve existing provision.

All stakeholders have been reassured that the School will remain non-denominational and co-educational, and measures will be taken to recruit new staff members and retain existing ones by offering staff access to nationally-accredited qualifications and development opportunities.

Though the response to the consultation questionnaire was nominal, both respondents were in favour of the Trust entering into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State.

After careful consideration, the Trust and the School believe the proposal to convert is broadly welcomed by the School community.

During the consultation, no significant objections or criticisms of the proposals were received, and no issues were raised that had not been anticipated by the Trust or the School.

It is therefore concluded that there is support for the Governing Body's proposal to convert to Academy status with TET as the School's sponsor.

6 Next Steps

The Trust and School will continue to implement their pre-conversion action plan in close consultation with the Department for Education.

The Department for Education and Secretary of State will consider the outcomes of the consultation as part of the Funding Agreement sign-off process for the proposed academy conversion of Tong High School.

Whilst the formal consultation period has ended, the Trust and School considers consultation as a continuous process and will remain in contact with key stakeholders throughout.