



Summary Consultation Report on the proposal to establish The Heights Primary School

March 2014

Introduction

The proposed Heights Primary School (HPS) is expected to open to pupils as a Free School on 5th September 2014. The Members of the Heights Primary Trust (HPT) have exercised their responsibility to conduct an appropriate consultation process in accordance with the requirements of the Academies Act 2010 and in line with current best practice. As a Free School offering new provision to the local area, the consultation was focussed on whether the 'academy arrangements' i.e. signing a funding agreement, should be entered into by the HPT Members and the Secretary of State, as outlined in Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010. In addition, the HPT consulted more widely with prospective parents and with local residents to gather wider feedback on the vision for HPS and to gauge its impact on the community local to its potential sites.

Location of the Heights Primary School

At the time of writing (March 2014), the EFA has not finalised site arrangements for the school. Detailed negotiations have been concluded and solicitors instructed for the acquisition of the school's permanent site but details of the schools temporary site are still to be confirmed.

During the consultation process the HPT confirmed that Mapledurham Playing Fields had been under consideration but that the ownership structure made it highly unlikely to be a viable option. Although the HPT stressed that this site was not currently being actively pursued as a preferred site, there is considerable local objection to any development on this land. This has led to a significant number of consultees expressing concern against the school on the grounds of location.

Timeline of the consultation process

The consultation process was held over an eight week period from 2nd December 2013 to 26th January 2014, with a two week break from 21st December 2013 to 5th January 2014 (covering the Christmas period). A wide range of activities were undertaken during the consultation.

Methodology

A range of consultation approaches were adopted in order to ensure a high level of genuine stakeholder engagement. These comprised:

- letters to key stakeholders, including MPs, MEPs, local Councillors and local schools and pre-schools;
- flyers posted to local residents in the RG4 7 and RG4 8 sub-post districts;

- regular and on-going contact with the local authority, Reading Borough Council;
- a formal consultation meeting;
- dialogue with all three local residents associations (CADDRA, WADRA and EGRA);
- informal discussions with stakeholders during and immediately after public events;
- regular promotion of the consultation through e-newsletters to the 350+ members on The Heights' email distribution list;
- a consultation section on The Heights Primary website;
- extensive use of social media (Twitter and Facebook);
- leaflets distributed to a number of sites around Caversham with a high footfall summarising the school's vision, ethos and plans, and providing contact and consultation-related information;
- a formal consultation survey (online and hard copies);
- press release to local newspapers; and
- publication of the School's Admissions Policy and SEN Policy.

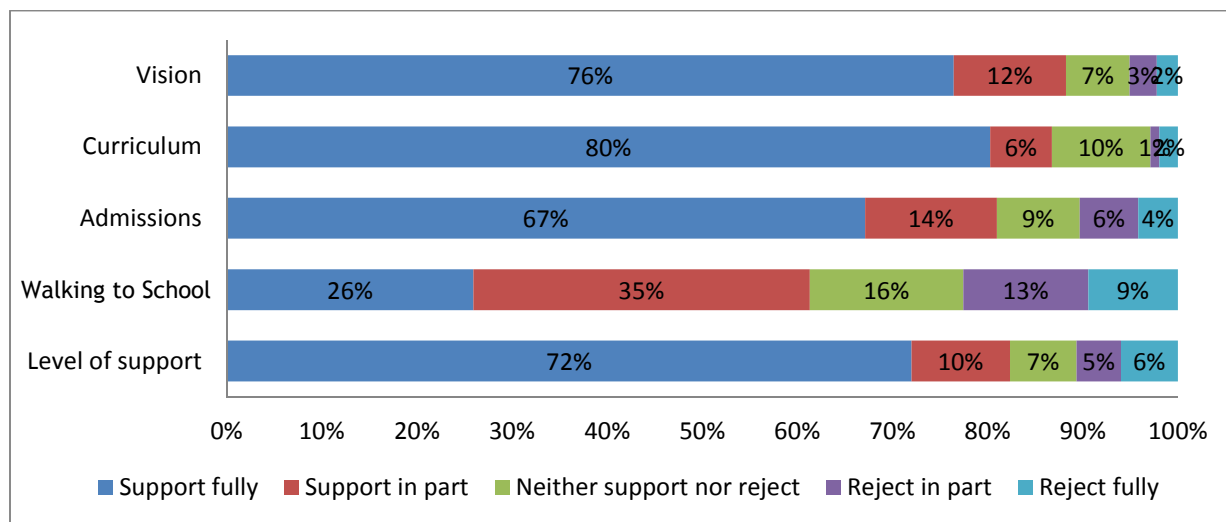
Consultation questionnaire

In order to accurately capture the views of stakeholders, a consultation questionnaire was developed to enable stakeholders to formally express their views and respond to the information received. Stakeholders were invited to complete questionnaires online, or to return completed forms via e-mail, post or in person at the consultation events.

Stakeholders submitted 351 completed questionnaires during the consultation period. However, a number of respondents did not answer some or all of the questions. 303 responses were received to the question regarding HPT entering into a funding agreement. Of these, 220 respondents (73%) stated that they were in favour of the proposal for the Secretary of State and HPT to enter into a funding agreement, with 30 respondents (10%) against the proposal. 53 respondents (17%) remained unsure. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

The following chart is indicative of support in percentages of the other areas consulted upon:

Figure 1 - High level analysis of support for elements of the HPS proposal



Stakeholder Groups

Survey Respondents were asked to best describe their stakeholder group. Respondents identified themselves as members of the following groups:

Stakeholder Group	Number	Percentage
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Stakeholder Group	Number	Percentage
Parent / carer of a prospective pupil	183	52%
Local resident	127	36%
Representative of a community group	3	1%
Representative from a school	5	1%
Representative of an employer / business	1	<1%
Other	14	4%
Rather not say	7	2%
Did not answer	11	3%
Totals	351	100%

Consultation Event

On 7th January 2014, the Trust hosted a public consultation event at Mapledurham Pavilion, Upper Woodcote Road. The event was advertised on the website, by emails to the 350+ mailing list, flyers to residents, posters in community locations, letters to key stakeholders and via social media. There were some 150 attendees at the consultation event, including prospective parents / carers and local residents. Two local Councillors made statements as did Rob Wilson, MP for Reading East. There was also a statement from the Chair of the Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA).

Media Coverage

Following the press release, there was a news article in *GetReading*. This article discussed the proposals, reviewed the consultation event and detailed how stakeholders could have their say.

Formal responses

During the course of the consultation, two letters were received from stakeholders. These were letters from Alok Sharma MP (letter referring the group to the MP for Reading East, Rob Wilson) and James Elles MEP (a letter of support). Mr Wilson attended the consultation meeting on 7th January 2014 where he made a speech in full support of the proposals to establish HPS.

The e-mail address consultation@theheightsprimary.co.uk was established to allow stakeholders to communicate by e-mail. The account received a total of 8 emails during the consultation from 4 people.

Social Media

The Heights' Facebook page had 336 members at the closure of the consultation. The Facebook page is used to advertise events, publish newsletters, provide news updates and to advertise for governors. There were some 48 posts made on the Facebook page during the consultation process, all supportive of the proposals.

In addition, the consultation process and event was advertised on a number of local Facebook community pages, including the Reading NCT page and the Caversham Gossip Girls, with over 3,000 members between them. There was an ongoing discussion regarding The Heights' potential site on Reading-forum.co.uk. Stakeholders could also engage with the Trust on Twitter, via the @heightsprimary account. The page had 89 followers when the consultation concluded and there were 68 tweets regarding the plans for the School.

Conclusions

Based on the fact that 351 survey responses were received in total and that there were 150 attendees at the consultation event and other informal sessions, the Heights Primary Trust Members are reassured that the proposals have been disseminated to and discussed by a wide variety of key stakeholder groups. The consultation process has further assured HPT Trustees of the high level of

interest regarding The Heights Primary School from prospective parents, local residents and political representatives.

All areas in which stakeholders expressed their views were subject to careful consideration and deliberation. A clear concern of the local community is the potential site at Mapledurham Playing Fields. The Trust has taken this into account as it continues to work closely with the EFA to identify the best possible location for the school. However, as at the time of the consultation, the Playing Fields was not being pursued as a preferred site for the school.

In response to these concerns, every effort was made to engage with the local community of Caversham and Mapledurham, including a leaflet drop to all post codes in the RG4 7 and RG4 8 sub-post code districts, as it was clear that these stakeholders would be some of the most directly affected by the proposals. Unfortunately it appeared that several isolated areas were missed from the leaflet drop and The Heights Primary Trust and other local residents delivered additional leaflets where possible. The survey responses and discussions at the consultation meetings demonstrated broad support for the school itself with the potential location being the cause of contention.

The consultation process indicates that the majority of consultees support the proposals for The Heights Primary. In light of the positive feedback received regarding the vision and ethos of the school and following a Members meeting on 10th February 2014 the Heights Primary Trust resolved (by email) that the project moves toward finalising the Funding Agreement arrangement and preparing for the planned opening date for pupils of 5th September 2014. However this is on the proviso that a suitable location can be acquired, which for the permanent site includes sufficient outdoor space.