
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 7 April 2010

SUBJECT: Outcome of consultation on the future of Primrose High School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report informs the Executive Board of the results of the public consultation on the future of Primrose High School. It recommends that the Executive Board authorises Education Leeds to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice for the closure of Primrose High School on 31st August 2011 to be replaced by an academy on the same site sponsored by the Co-operative Group with Leeds City College as an education partner. The Executive Board will subsequently be invited to consider the outcomes of any representations made during the statutory notice period before making a final decision on the future of the school in July 2010.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In 2008, the Government launched the National Challenge. This means that the minimum standard expected of every secondary school is that 30% of their young people achieve five good GCSEs including English and Maths.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 14th October 2009, Executive Board considered the latest of a series of reports on the local authority's response to National Challenge. This report emphasised the need to identify deliverable solutions as a matter of urgency if this complex and challenging agenda is to be taken forward successfully. The Board agreed to consult formally on a range of proposals, including the closure of Primrose High School and the establishment of an Academy on the site in September 2011.
- 2.3 At its meeting on 6th January 2010 the Executive Board approved a public consultation on this proposal, following the submission of an expression of interest naming The Co-operative Society as the sponsor of a proposed Academy, with Leeds City College as an education partner.
- 2.4 The consultation period ran from 7th January to 5th March 2010. Details of the consultees can be found in Appendix 1. A consultation document was published both electronically and on paper which specified the proposal being consulted on with an outline of the rationale behind the proposal. Meetings with local councillors were held via the Inner East Area Committee. Meetings were held with the school

- 2.5 council, staff, governing body and a public meeting was held in the school. In total attendance at the various meetings was approximately 70 people (a number of people attended more than one meeting). A total of 89 written responses were received, (including 1 petition with 355 signatures). Of the responses none were for the proposal, and all were against (including the petitions). Details of respondents are included in Appendix 2.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Under current legislation, deficit budget balances at existing schools have to be written off by the Local Authority on closure. Legislation does not provide for a deficit budget balance to carry forward to a successor academy. Based on the latest school staffing budgets there an anticipated budget deficit of £339,160 to write off in order to open the new academy at Primrose. The school has a responsibility to take steps to ensure that the final deficit is minimised. The local authority expects that the school will find significant savings to ensure that this is the case..
- 3.2 Members of Schools Forum have in the past expressed concern about the level of projected deficit budget balances on closure of the schools. They were particularly concerned at the prospect of being asked to agree to a “blank cheque” (particularly as further future academies remain a possibility) without assurance that budgets were being monitored rigorously in the lead up to closure. It was noted that if the schools were to remain as LA maintained they would be expected to arrive at a balanced budget over time.
- 3.3 In addition, there would be an ongoing impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant which involves the removal of the level of funding that would have been provided to the Academy had it still have been funded through the local formula. In addition to the funding adjustment through replication of the local formula, funding would also be removed based on the level of central expenditure on certain central activity within the schools budget. This funding adjustment will require the Local Authority to cut central expenditure in line with the reduction of funding. Due to the level of fixed costs, economies of scale and varying support provided for individual schools, the budget reduction is unlikely to match the cost reductions through no longer providing services to an Academy.
- 3.4 Part of the funding that would go directly to the academy rather than via the local authority is the allocation for extended services. It is unclear what the potential academy may decide regarding this contribution, and therefore what the impact on the local extended services clusters in South Leeds may be.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Board is asked to;

- (i) note the outcome of the consultation on proposals to close Primrose High School to be replaced by an academy on the same site, sponsored by the Co-operative Society with Leeds City College as an education partner
- (ii) Approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Primrose High School on 31st August 2011, conditional upon DCSF approval to establish an academy on September 1st 2011.

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Electoral Wards Affected:

**Burmantofts and Richmond Hill
Gipton and Harehills**



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in



Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)



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This report emphasised the need to identify deliverable solutions as a matter of urgency if this complex and challenging agenda is to be taken forward successfully. The Board agreed to consult formally on a range of proposals, including the closure of Primrose High School and the establishment of an Academy on the site in September 2011.

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- 2.5 In total attendance at the various meetings was approximately 70 people (a number of people attended more than one meeting). A total of 89 written responses were received, (including 1 petition with 355 signatures). Of the responses none were for the proposal, and all were against (including the petitions). Details of respondents are included in Appendix 2.

3 THE MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 A full summary of the consultation responses is provided in Appendix 3. The notes of meetings are not intended to be a verbatim account, but they do represent the questions and views raised. Copies of all of the consultation responses can be found at www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolorganisation.
- 3.2 During the consultation the following issues emerged.
- a) the level of change already experienced by the school, including the move to a new PFI building and the establishment of the Federation – issue of **stability**;
 - b) concern about the experience, expertise and resource that the sponsor/partner will bring – the **sponsor**;
 - c) concern about Academies in general, the more radical behaviour associated with some academies and their contribution to local communities – **academy issues**;
 - d) **staffing issues**
- 3.3 **Stability**
- 3.3.1 Within the context of the National Challenge, the local authority is obliged to consider structural and governance changes, including academy status, to accelerate improvements at the school. The government has raised its expectations of the minimum standards schools must achieve, and the timescale to achieve them.
- 3.3.2 There is the need to accelerate improvement. It is recognised that there has been improvement, but we need to see this impact faster on the achievements of young people. Not enough young people are succeeding and reaching their potential at the present time. Academy status will bring further resources and partners that will help to build the capacity to sustain the necessary improvements

into the medium and long term.

3.4 **The Sponsor**

The Co-operative Society has a strong presence in Leeds and will aim to use its co-operative structure, ethos, values and principles to drive improvements and engage the local communities that Primrose High School serves. The Society would bring strong governance, expertise in community engagement and leadership support based on its work in formally supporting schools since 2003, and its cultural change programme being used successfully in partner schools and academies. Leeds City College, formed by the merger of three local colleges, provides a breadth of experience and knowledge that will allow scope for specialist curriculum provision and increase the opportunities available to students at the school

3.5 **Academy Issues**

The Co-operative Society has outlined their intention to consult fully on all aspects of the new academy to ensure the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. The society has emphasised that it places much importance on gaining an understanding of the school and the local needs of pupils and the community and this partnership would be based on the organisation's collaborative values and principles. The memorandum of understanding, which an academy sponsor is expected to sign, provides a statement of the partnership to be established between the local authority and the academy sponsors and the role of the academy in the family of schools in Leeds. All pupils on the roll of the school at the time of closure would transfer to the roll of the academy.

3.6 **Staffing issues**

The Transfer of Undertakings (protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) apply to staff. This ensures that staff would have a job at the new academy and that their terms and conditions, including pension entitlements, would be protected. A new staffing structure would be the responsibility of the academy governing body. Should any new staffing structure be agreed, this would require consultation under TUPE. Education Leeds would offer support in seeking redeployment to those choosing to resign their post in principle as an alternative to working in an academy.

3.7 An alternative proposal has been received from the Governors of Primrose. High School (appendix 4) which suggests the school should be allowed to improve in its current form but with strengthened partnerships with local primary schools, other secondary schools, the City college and the Co-operative Group. We agree that these partnerships should be strengthened but that the Academy route would add the appropriate leadership strength and rigour.

3.8 An further proposal (appendix 5) was submitted by Lori Beckett (Leeds Metropolitan University) which supports the alternative proposals of the governing body and which stresses the importance of teacher lead research and development.

3.9 A submission from a staff representative suggests that the school should be allowed to make progress under its own efforts lead by a new governing body.

4. **IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

4.1 Proposals identified in this report would impact on the "Narrowing the Gap" and "Going up a League" agendas. Academies in Leeds have the potential to contribute to the ambitious targets to meet key priorities within the Children and

Young People's Plan and the work on the Local Area Agreement.

- 4.2 This proposal addresses the requirements on the Council to respond to the National Challenge in respect of this school.

5 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Statutory Implications

- 5.1.1 This consultation is the responsibility of the Local Authority, which is the decision maker on any proposal to close Primrose High School.
- 5.1.2 In the event of any objections being received during the statutory notice period the proposal would be referred to the School Organisation Advisory Board (SOAB), to make a recommendation to the Executive Board. A final decision must be made by the Executive Board within 2 months of the expiry of the statutory notices.
- 5.1.3 There is a separate parallel process of consultation regarding the opening of the new academy. The final decision maker with responsibility for approving the opening of the specific new academy is the DCSF. In making this final decision consideration will be given to the feasibility plan drawn up using input from informal consultation between the sponsor and all key stakeholders, including the Principal designate, the staff, pupils, local residents and Education Leeds. The outcome of this process should be available for consideration by Executive Board when making the final decision following statutory notices.

5.2 Resource Implications

- 5.2.1 Under current legislation, deficit budget balances at existing schools have to be written off by the Local Authority on closure. Legislation does not provide for a deficit budget balance to carry forward to a successor academy. Based on the latest school staffing budgets there is an anticipated budget deficit of £339,160 to write off in order to open the new academy at Primrose. The school has a responsibility to take steps to ensure that the final deficit is minimised. The local authority expects that the school will find further significant savings to ensure this is the case.
- 5.2.2 Members of Schools Forum have in the past expressed concern about the level of projected deficit budget balances on closure of the schools. They were particularly concerned at the prospect of being asked to agree to a "blank cheque" (particularly as further future academies remain a possibility) without assurance that the budgets were being monitored rigorously in the lead up to closure. It was noted that if the schools were to remain as LA maintained they would be expected to arrive at a balanced budget over time.
- 5.2.3 In addition, there would be an ongoing impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant which involves the removal of the level of funding that would have been provided to the Academy had it still have been funded through the local formula. In addition to the funding adjustment through replication of the local formula, funding would also be removed based on the level of central expenditure on certain central activity within the schools budget. This funding adjustment will require the Local Authority to cut central expenditure in line with the reduction of funding. Due to the level of fixed costs, economies of scale and varying support provided for individual schools, the budget reduction is unlikely to match the cost reductions through no longer providing services to an Academy.

5.2.4 Part of the funding that would go directly to the academy rather than via the local authority is the allocation for extended services. It is unclear what the potential academy may decide regarding this contribution, and therefore what the impact on the local extended services clusters in East Leeds may be.

5.3 **PFI Implications**

5.3.1 Primrose High School was constructed as part of the Leeds Combined Secondary Schools Project and there are a number of site specific issues which add to the complexity of the development of an Academy on the site, due to Primrose being physically adjoined to Shakespeare Primary School and Children's Centre.

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These issues include the shared use of facilities such as kitchen preparation, external pitch and multi-use games areas, consequently this will require further work by the Council and the development of a shared use agreement.

5.3.2 Through the creation of an Academy, the operation, use and control of Primrose High School would transfer from the Governing Body to the Academy Trust, although Leeds City Council would continue to be a counter-party to the PFI contract as a result of the model contract documents from Partnership for Schools. Therefore the Council would still retain responsibility for ongoing contract management, including payment of the ongoing Unitary Charge bill, variation and relationship management, including ensuring that the Academy Trust does not impede access for the PFI contractor. The Academy would take on the responsibility to pay contributions to the Council including recovery of any costs relating to pupil vandalism, and will be required to continue to work within the terms of the PFI arrangements, including the continued provision of Services by the PFI Contractor. Given the ongoing financial commitment by the City Council, there will be a continuing resource implication for the Local Authority to continue with the high level of contract management over the life of the PFI contract, essential to ensuring value for money (VFM) for Leeds City Council.

5.3.3 Council Officers are currently working to address a number of financial and contractual issues, including discussions with the DCSF, seeking to ensure that the terms of the indemnity offered by the DCSF to Local Authorities in the model documentation, is wide enough to cover not only default by the Academy Trust but also increases in the Primrose element of the Unitary Charge and any other additional Primrose related payments to the PFI Contractor that have been incurred by the Academy Trust. It is anticipated that the main principles of this will be agreed and completed prior to the Academy opening and it is also understood that no additional budget allocation will be available to the Council.

5.3.4 In the establishment of an academy, the Council and the Academy Trust are required to sign up to a lease of the land to the Academy Trust for a period of 125 years. As Primrose High School was established through PFI, care needs to be taken to ensure this does not impact on the PFI arrangements and the Academy Trust must accept that it is buying into the existing PFI service arrangements as previously discussed. Again, Council Officers are currently working to address this issue through discussion with DCSF and PfS. To implement the contractual arrangements noted above, the City Council will have to incur a number of costs relating to legal, financial and project management aspects of the transaction. A provisional estimate of between £100k and £200k has been provided for this work and it should be noted that these costs would be chargeable to revenue and there is no DCSF funding support available for these costs.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Board is asked to;

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- (ii) Approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Primrose High School on 31st August 2011, conditional upon DCSF approval to establish an academy from September 1st 2011.

7 BACKGROUND REPORTS

Executive Board, December 2008 – Building Schools for the Future: Expression of interest for follow-on projects

Executive Board January 2009 – The National Challenge and structural change to secondary provision in Leeds Progress Report

Executive Board March 2009 – The National Challenge and Structural Change to Secondary Provision in Leeds

Executive Board October 2009 - The National Challenge and Structural Change to Secondary Provision in Leeds

Executive Board January 2010 - The future of Primrose, City of Leeds, Parklands Girls' High Schools, and of girls only secondary education in Leeds

Appendix 1 List of Consultees

Schools	
Parents and carers	Letter home, posters advertising meetings, copy of booklet for every family Personal copy for every governor, member of staff and family
Governing body	Personal copy of booklet, consultation meeting
Staff	Personal copy consultation booklet Consultation meeting
Families expressing preference for September 2010	Individual copy to each 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd preferences
Family of schools	Copies of posters, response forms and consultation booklets plus letter to send home for each school
14-19 providers	Link to electronic copy of booklet
Wider community	
Libraries within 2 miles	Booklets and posters
Community Centres within 2 miles	Booklets and posters
Local media/public	Media releases marking beginning of consultation period and on week of public meeting
Education Leeds website and infobase	Details and consultation document uploaded on school organisation team's page News item – refreshed in week of public meeting and regularly throughout process
Leeds City Council website	News item at beginning of consultation period and during week of consultation meeting
Leeds City Council talking point	Details of consultation
Elected representatives	
Ward members – directly affected wards	Verbal briefing Invite to public meeting Copy of consultation booklet and covering letter
Ward members – city wide	Copy of consultation booklet and covering letter
Local MP	Copy of consultation booklet Electronic copy to all MPs
Area committee	Briefing paper describing long-term picture, referencing individual copies of consultation document Attended relevant meeting
Leeds City Council colleagues	
Corporate leadership team	Email and link to consultation document
Children's services leadership team	Email and link to consultation document
Children's services comms network	Email and link to consultation document, request to promote through organisations
Locality enablers	Link to consultation document and response forms
Area management team	Link to consultation document and response forms
Education Leeds	
All colleagues	Link to consultation document and response forms Email to all heads of service to disseminate
Board	Consultation booklet and covering letter
Leadership teams	Consultation booklet and covering letter
Other statutory consultees	
Neighbouring LEAs	Email and link to consultation document
Learning and Skills Council	Send link to details of consultation
Catholic Diocese	Hard copy of consultation document and covering letter Electronic link
Church of England Diocese	Hard copy of consultation document and covering letter Email and link to consultation booklet
Unions	Able to attend staff meeting Email and link to consultation booklet
Learning community	

Headteachers	Email and link to consultation booklet Article Headteacher's Update
Governors	Email and link to consultation booklet Article Governor's update
Leeds race equality council	Email and link to consultation booklet
Chamber of commerce	Email and link to consultation document to president
Parents groups	Email and link to consultation document

Appendix 2 Summary of respondents

Primrose - Summary of respondents (letters and e-mails)	Total
Staff	34
Pupil	18
Governor/GB	10
Parent	3
Councillor	2
Community Representative	1
Local Resident	1
Union	1
Other	19
Grand Total	89

Appendix 3 Summary of Consultation Responses

1. Primrose

There were about 40 people at the public meeting. There were 89 written responses all of them against the proposal and a petition with 355 signatures.

2. This summary is not intended to be a verbatim account, but does represent the questions and views raised throughout the process, either in writing, or during the formal consultation meetings. They have summarised and grouped, as a number of respondents, in several different meetings, asked very similar questions using slightly different words. In summarising the representations made, every effort has been made to reduce repetition without losing any of the points raised. Copies of the original responses and meeting minutes are available at www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolorganisation. They are grouped into 6 main themes.

3 Theme 1 Consultation issues

3.1 Governing body only received documents after the start of the consultation period

The consultation has been conducted and advertised in a manner consistent with previous school organisation changes made by Education Leeds, and with DCSF guidance. The full list of consultees is in Appendix 1. Letters have been sent to current pupils, to local primary pupils and other local secondary schools and other local stakeholders. Posters and documents have also been placed in libraries and post offices. As soon as it became apparent that the governing body had not received copies of the documents through the above channels individual copies were despatched for governors' use.

3.2 Other languages should have been used for the document

The document carried an entry in a number of languages which indicated that where a consultee did not speak English and needed help in understanding the document the service of an interpreter would be available free of charge.

3.3 There was no-one at reception at the public meeting so some people could not get in.

It is acknowledged that there was some difficulty in gaining access to the public meeting after the meeting had started. Urgent arrangements were put in place to ensure that attendees could gain access to the main entrance and signposted the route through to the lecture theatre. The school's leadership undertook to ensure that the main entrance was staffed until 7.30 p.m. Where it was known that any individual had been unable to gain access contact was made with them to explain the situation and offer advice.

3.4 A desire for additional meetings in the community to be held.

The consultation has been conducted and advertised in a manner consistent with previous school organisation changes made by Education Leeds, and with DCSF guidance. The full list of consultees is in Appendix 1. Letters have been sent to current pupils, to local primary pupils and other local secondary schools and other local stakeholders. Posters and documents have also been placed in libraries and post offices. A community focus meeting has taken place with representatives from all the mosques in Leeds. At that meeting the community leaders attention was drawn to the consultations.

3.5 It was alleged that opinions won't be listened to and that a decision has already been made

No decision has yet been made, and all reasonable effort has been made to ensure this is clear in all responses. If the closure of the school to be replaced by an academy is approved, then in order to open by September 2011 some processes have to start in parallel with this decision. These also include the identification of the potential sponsor and educational partner ahead of the decision being made.

3.6 The timing of the proposals is unfair for parents who have just submitted applications for admission in September 2010

The parents of Year 6 children in the area have been provided with information on the proposals and it has been made clear that no decision has been taken at this stage.

3.7 Concern from some governors at the presence of the potential sponsors at their meeting

As the published proposal named the sponsor it is helpful, as part of the local authority's consultation arrangements, for the sponsor to attend the consultation meetings and outline their reasons for wishing to sponsor the academy. Attendance at the consultation events in no way suggests that a decision on whether to close the school and open an academy has been already taken.

4 Theme 2 Academies and the sponsors

4.1 How will becoming an Academy improve teaching and learning?

There are four key reasons why Education Leeds believes this is the right proposal for the community served by the school:

- The need to accelerate improvement. It is recognised that there has been improvement, but we need to see this impact faster on the achievements of young people.
- At Primrose High School not enough young people are succeeding and reaching their potential at the present time. The school has consistently struggled to support enough young people to achieve good grades.
- An academy will bring extra capacity (both professional expertise and other resources) to sustain improvement in to the medium term.
- The Co-operative Society has a strong presence in Leeds and will aim to use its co-operative structure, ethos, values and principles to drive improvements and engage the local communities that Primrose High School serves.

4.2 The potential sponsors have no experience of academies and are bringing no additional resources

The Co-operative Society has a strong presence in Leeds and will aim to use its co-operative structure, ethos, values and principles to drive improvements and engage the local communities that Primrose High School serves. The Society would bring strong governance, expertise in community engagement and leadership support based on its work in formally supporting schools since 2003, and its cultural change programme being used successfully in partner schools and academies. Leeds City College, formed by the merger of three local colleges, provides a breadth of experience and knowledge that will allow scope for specialist curriculum provision and increase the opportunities available to students at the school.

4.3 What other sponsors have shown interest or been considered?

There have been other interested potential sponsors but the Co-operative Society had been selected as the values and ethos of the group meet the expectations of the local authority

4.4 Concern that Leeds City College as an education partner would focus only on vocational courses

Leeds City College brings a breadth of experience that is expected to provide enriched curriculum support and increase the opportunities for all the students at the school which would be clearly linked to diverse provision integrated within the community. The involvement of the college provides a real opportunity for focussed development with an educational partner who could help to secure engagement in the 14+ curriculum.

4.5 Parents in East/Central Leeds will only have academies as a meaningful choice for secondary provision

Parents want to be able to access high quality, local education provision for their children which this proposal is intended to bring about.

Whilst some parents will in practice have a range of academies as their local

secondary provider, the quality of that provision should prove superior to that offered by the predecessor schools.

4.6 **Belief that pupil numbers will fall if Primrose becomes an Academy**

Evidence shows that within 2 years of opening, academies significantly increase in popularity. The David Young Community Academy is now oversubscribed.

5 **Theme 3 Alternative options**

5.1 **Why had other options not been considered?**

For transparency, the consultation document briefly describes why alternative proposals have not been supported. Leeds City Council requires Education Leeds to consult on one clear proposal, so the balance and range of views on it can be clearly considered and a decision can be made on whether to proceed or not. Presentation of multiple options confuses the democratic decision making process, as more than one option inevitably gains some level of support. During the consultation process Education Leeds officers have repeatedly encouraged respondents to suggest alternatives, which can then be considered by the Executive Board when they consider this report. Based on all the responses, they will make a decision whether or not to proceed, or to commission additional work and further consultation on alternative proposals.

5.2 **An alternative proposal from the governing body, to dissolve the federation and allow Primrose to continue as a community school should be supported**

Within the context of the National Challenge, the local authority is obliged to consider structural and governance changes, including academy status, to accelerate improvements at the school. Education Leeds does not believe that dissolving the federation with Primrose continuing as a community school would accelerate improvements.

5.3 **The last four years have been destabilising for the school through new building and federation. School needs a period of stability, not more change**

Within the context of the National Challenge, the local authority is obliged to consider structural and governance changes, including academy status, to accelerate improvements at the school. The government has raised its expectations of the minimum standards schools must achieve, and the timescale to achieve them. There is the need to accelerate improvement. It is recognised that there has been improvement, but we need to see this impact faster on the achievements of young people. Not enough young people are succeeding and reaching their potential at the present time. Academy status will bring further resources and partners that will help to build the capacity to sustain the necessary improvements into the medium and long term.

6 **Theme 4 Transition for staff and pupils**

6.1 **There is a lack of information about the transfer arrangements for staff, including continuity of service**

The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, generally called TUPE, would generally apply to staff. This means that staff would

transfer on existing terms and conditions of service. Members of staff and their representatives would be consulted extensively throughout the process. The only way terms and conditions could then be changed is through negotiation, on either a one to one basis, or through the unions. TUPE does apply to staff on secondment. TUPE means that staff do not have to work for the new organisation for 6 months before qualifying for employment rights. Ongoing, teaching staff have national pay scales and terms of employment, and these would be maintained.

6.2 There is concern over the retention of talented and skilled staff during transition

It is in the interests of the school to retain good staff not to lose them and Education Leeds is working with the school to ensure that staff feel valued and have a place in the future academy. The appointment of the future leadership team would be important in signalling the expectations of the sponsor and how it intended to move forward in improving teaching and learning.

6.3 Support staff have concerns over the security of their jobs

The TUPE Regulations 2006 (see 6.1 above), generally apply to staff. This means that staff would transfer on existing terms and conditions of service. Support staff are employed on local authority terms and conditions, which do vary across the country. The terms and conditions which staff currently enjoy would be protected under TUPE.

6.4 Would there be changes in timing of the school day or school holidays?

Such issues are part of setting up the academy and have not been considered as yet. It will be important to consider this by understanding what would be best for students and consulting with them.

6.5 The transition will be disruptive to the education of pupils

The Co-operative Society has outlined their intention to consult fully on all aspects of the new academy to ensure the views of all stakeholders are taken into account. The society has emphasised that it places much importance on gaining an understanding of the school and the local needs of pupils and the community and this partnership would be based on the organisation's collaborative values and principles. The memorandum of understanding, which an academy sponsor is expected to sign, provides a statement of the partnership to be established between the local authority and the academy sponsors and the role of the academy in the family of schools in Leeds. All pupils on the roll of the school at the time of closure would transfer to the roll of the academy.

6.6 Would the school uniform change?

Part of the funding when opening a new academy includes an amount for a new uniform. The sponsor has undertaken to consult with students and parents on a uniform policy before making a decision.

6.7 What would happen to the current school's budget deficit?

The new Academy must open without a deficit. Unless alternative funding can be found to clear the deficit, it would be written off through the Dedicated Schools Grant. The school is being supported by Education Leeds to minimise the deficit

this year and next.

7 Theme 5 Site and contract issues

7.1 What arrangements will be made with the co-located Shakespeare Primary School and the children's centre?

It is not possible to give a firm answer to this at present. Detailed discussions will need to take place with the sponsor and the DCSF on the implications for the co-located provision of Primrose High School becoming an academy.

7.2 What will happen with the PFI contract ?

In the establishment of an academy, Leeds City Council and the Academy Trust are required to sign up to a Development Agreement setting out the terms of the assignment of the land to the Academy Trust for a period of 125 years. As South Leeds High School was established through PFI, Leeds City Council is unable to comply with this requirement as currently drafted, as it has granted the lease of the land to the PFI contractor for the life of that contract and it does not own the building. Council Officers are currently exploring how this issue can be addressed through discussion with DCSF and Partnerships for Schools (PFS). In accordance with the Principles outlined above, the Academy Trust must accept that it is buying into the existing arrangements established through the PFI contract, including the already negotiated service agreements and building design.

7.3 What is the legal status of the Memorandum of Understanding

The MOU is not legally binding but establishes the principles of an academy in Leeds and sets out the Council's expectation of any partner. Staff and students should be reassured that such a document had been identified as a key part of partnership working.

7.4 What arrangement will there be for the playing fields used by Primrose?

Such arrangements have not yet been discussed. Detailed discussions will need to take place should the proposals be approved.

8 Theme 6 Educational standards

8.1 The school has improved significantly in the past year and it has had a good Ofsted report. Let it continue to improve and support it properly

Within the context of the National Challenge, the local authority is obliged to consider structural and governance changes, including academy status, to accelerate improvements at the school. The government has raised its expectations of the minimum standards schools must achieve, and the timescale to achieve them. There is the need to accelerate improvement. It is recognised that there has been improvement, but we need to see this impact faster on the achievements of young people. Not enough young people are succeeding and reaching their potential at the present time. Academy status will bring further resources and partners that will help to build the capacity to sustain the necessary improvements into the medium and long term.

8.2 The formation of an Academy offers no added value to education

There can be no guarantees about any changes, however Education Leeds firmly

believes that this proposal increases the likelihood of success because of the additional resources and expertise provided by the sponsor on a long term basis. The circumstances surrounding the school and the expectations of government regarding attainment levels have become more challenging, and this has prompted the need for further change.

8.3 If all the Primrose staff transfer to a new academy how will it improve?

The biggest change would be the status change, which is a catalyst for changing aspirations, achievement and parental involvement. This would all be achieved through strong governance and leadership. It is in the interests of the school to retain good staff not to lose them and Education Leeds believes that the sponsors would also work from that point of view. The appointment of the future leadership team would be important in signalling the expectations of the sponsor and how it intended to move forward in improving teaching and learning.

8.4 In East Leeds, children's needs are not served by a large academy.

This viewpoint is noted