

Brakenhale academy consultation Q&A

1. How will the proposal affect the school's vision and ethos?
 - The vision and ethos of the school will not change because it becomes an academy. The school is the key unit in the Trust, run by its leadership team, retaining its individuality.
 - Staff at Greenshaw High School said that when the school became an academy, people did not see a change.
2. Will we continue to see improvements? And what is the evidence that academy schools improve performance?
 - The improvements at Brakenhale will continue and the Trust will support the school and help it to move forward further and more quickly.
 - Its not just about the change to being an academy – its about school to school collaboration and the support given by the Trust – standing alone is not the answer.
3. Why not collaborate other with local schools?
 - We will continue to work with other local schools. But the collaboration in the Trust will be closer and more immediate.
4. Will the name and uniform change?
 - No, the name and uniform will not change as a result of becoming an academy. These things will be a matter for the school's leadership team and governing body.
5. Why the Greenshaw Learning Trust? Did you look at more than one Trust?
 - We have the same vision and values and moral purpose; high expectations, aiming for every child to achieve their potential. The Trust is clear about the type of trust it is and the schools it wants to work with. Brakehnale will retain its autonomy.
 - Yes, we did consider alternatives; and concluded that Greenshaw is the Trust we want to work with and its the right thing to do at this time.
6. Would there be more money for the school?
 - The school will be funded on the same basis as other local schools, whether or not they are academies.
 - As an academy, Brakenhale will get more money because the money that the local authority takes as a 'top slice' from the school budget will come to the school.
 - The school will be better off because it will have greater control over its budget, and will have choice over how it spends the money that would otherwise go to the local authority.
 - As part of the Trust the school will be able to achieve economies of scale.
7. What are the costs of joining the Trust? Does the Trust take a top slice?
 - The Trust takes a 3% 'top slice' from the school's per pupil grant; this funds core functions required to ensure that the Trust fulfils its statutory responsibilities, for example as an employer and charitable company.
 - The Trust has a record of providing value and quality services and can provide economies that will save the school money.
8. Some academies have got into financial difficulties; how do we know this will not happen here?
 - Some academies - and some local authority schools - have got into financial difficulties; all schools are feeling the pinch.
 - There will be benefits of being part of group of schools - economies of scale, the financial support and experience of the Trust and its other schools, and help from the Trust in managing the budget and making savings.
9. Are the Trustees paid?
 - No, it is a voluntary role - people are not allowed to receive payment for being trustees.

10. Would the school's intake and admissions arrangements change? Who allocates places to the school? Does the admissions number stay the same?
 - No change. The same students will come to Brakenhale if it is an academy as would come if it remained a locally maintained school.
 - The Trust will become the 'admissions authority', but that will not change the admissions process; the school will use the same application form with the current options for choosing a school; places at the school will be allocated through the same process as now.
 - The admissions numbers will not change. If in future the school wanted to change the admissions numbers that could happen – but it would be down to the school and the Trust.
11. Can the local authority override the wishes of the school and make it expand?
 - No, the local authority (or DfE) could not force the school to expand if it did not want to.
 - The Trust does work with the local authorities where it has schools to help them to meet the need for school places where any changes can be agreed jointly.
12. Do the land and buildings transfer with the school?
 - The land and buildings used by the school transfer to the Trust on a 125 year lease. They remain in public ownership – the local authority still owns the land, but cannot take it back.
 - School facilities will continue to be used by the community and other organisations, and the school will continue to receive an income for letting these facilities as it does now.
13. If you want to build on the school site, how would that work and who would decide?
 - Decisions on developments of the school buildings would rest with the school. The Trust would be responsible for bidding for funds from the DfE and for how any grant was used.
 - With 5 schools the Trust will become its own capital authority and would receive a capital allocation from Government that it would then distribute amongst its schools.
14. Parts of the school are in need of repair – are the chances of buildings being updated affected?
 - The school is part of the government's plans to improve the buildings and was hoping to receive funding to carry out repair and renovation work; it is not clear when the funding will be available but becoming an academy will not affect our eligibility.
15. Will the school have more scope to vary the curriculum?
 - The school will have more options to look at the curriculum in different ways. But there will be no changes because of becoming an academy and there are no plans to make any changes. The school will always offer a broad balanced curriculum.
16. Will term time and holiday dates change, for example if Croydon & Sutton have different dates?
 - No. Brakenhale will set its own holiday dates in line with other local schools.
17. How would it affect the funding and time available to statemented children? Will funding for SEN be reduced with more schools in the Trust?
 - The amount of funding will be no different if the school is an academy nor will it vary with more schools in the Trust; funding for statements (EHCPs) follows the student.
18. Will students needing extra help, eg psychology, educational welfare etc, currently provided through the local authority, still get it?
 - As an academy and with the support of the Trust the school will have greater flexibility and choice to secure quality services.
 - All of the schools currently in the Trust have specialist bases attached to them and the Trust has expertise to support students with special needs.
19. Will Brakenhale buy in to local authority support services like HR and IT? Who decides what services are bought back from the local authority?
 - There are some core statutory functions including HR that are provided by the Trust.

- Otherwise the school leadership team and governing body will choose where to get tsb support, and may choose to buy services from the local authority if they want to.
20. Will Brakenhale becoming an academy be detrimental to other local schools?
- There will be an impact on the local authority but we believe it will be manageable.
 - Brakenhale will continue to work with the local authority and with local schools.
21. It has been suggested that Bracknell Forest Council has resisted academies up to now.
- The representative of the Council told us that Bracknell Forest has been neutral and is keen to support its schools in what they choose to do.
22. How will the Trust be held accountable?
- The 'governing body' of the whole Trust is the Board of Trustees. The Board is accountable to the DfE through the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Education Funding Agency, and is responsible to Companies House and to the Charity Commission.
 - Each school in the Trust has its own local governing body, with staff, parents and local community representatives, that is responsible for the school and reports to the Board.
 - The Trust is accountable to its stakeholders, including students, parents and staff and the broader community, and will engage with them. The Trust has to be open and publish reports so people know what it is doing and how it is performing.
23. How will parents raise issues with the school and Trust?
- Parents can contact the school or the Trust in the same way they contact the school now.
 - The school governing body has parent governors – elected by all parents at the school - who can ask questions on parents' behalf and hold the Trust and school to account. Parents can ask the governing body how the trust is benefitting the school.
24. Will the school's governing body have to take on extra responsibilities and will they have the expertise required?
- The governing body does not need to take on extra responsibilities, as any extra responsibilities fall to the Trust. The school's governing body has the expertise to carry out its duties, and in doing so it will be supported by the Trust.
25. How many schools are there in the Trust?
- Currently three - 2 secondary and 1 primary; 2 schools have proposed to join, so by the summer we should be 5. Plus the Trust has DfE approval to open a new secondary school.
26. What was the previous Ofsted rating of those existing schools? Have they improved?
- Greenshaw High School - good with outstanding bits; Edenham High School - good; Green Wrythe Primary – 'Requires Improvement'.
 - The primary school results have improved this year and the two secondary schools have improved significantly. And the schools have brought about many other changes to make improvements.
27. How are children in Croydon more 'like minded' than children in other schools in BF?
- There is a synergy between Brakenhale and the other schools in the Trust. By joining the Trust Brakenhale is choosing the schools it wants to work most closely with, not just those geographically nearest.
28. Have you consulted feeder primary schools?
- Yes. All local primary schools have had information regarding the consultations and the process and have been invited along to these meetings.
29. You say you want to convert on 1 March. What's the rush? Why not wait?
- We don't want to rush it or for it to feel rushed; but we do not want to prolong the process or take longer than we need to. March the 1st is ambitious but achievable.

30. At the governing body meeting, did you have someone to offer the case against academies?
- We did try and find someone, but no-one would come and give reasons why not to convert.
31. Why would a school not want to become an academy?
- That is something you would have to ask them. Some schools in the borough have benefitted more than others and may therefore not feel they want to become academies.
32. How are the terms and conditions of staff affected?
- Pensions – no changes to costs or returns for support or teaching staff;
 - Staff will retain their Conditions of Service and the terms of their Contracts; it is likely there will be no changes or only very minor things like a change to pay date.
 - Staff don't get a new contract, just a covering letter detailing the change in employer.
33. What happens with terms and conditions in the longer term?
- The Trust's principle is to respect jtc and stpc for all existing and new staff. The Trust will seek to match or better recognised national agreements, dependent on changes to national policy that affect all schools. This is not time limited.
34. When will staff be paid and will they be paid earlier at Christmas?
- Staff will be paid on the last working day of the month, and earlier at Christmas.
35. How does TUPE work and when will we see the measures letter?
- The TUPE process is a separate statutory consultation that addresses any possible changes to staff terms and conditions; it will be run by the LA as the current employer. The TUPE consultation meeting will take place on 25 January, with a two week consultation period.
 - A measures letter will be presented at the meeting detailing any changes in contractual arrangements – it is likely there will be no changes, or only very minor things. The local authority will aim to get the measures letter out before the meeting; the Trust will get the information to the local authority as soon as possible.
36. What about a teacher who goes back to a join the local authority?
- This will depend on the local authority concerned, but if a teacher moves from the LA to an academy and then back to the LA, the Bracknell Forest would consider it a break of service.
37. What are the advantages for teachers to work in an academy rather than the local authority?
- Teachers become part of wider group; there are benefits for their professional development; the school has access to expertise in other schools, opportunities for close collaboration and the opportunity to bring in colleagues to support teachers.
38. Will staff be moved between schools and find they are on different pay to others in the school?
- The Trust will not move staff to another school. If a member of staff chooses to move to work in one of the other schools they will be paid appropriately for that school.
39. Will union reps continue to be given time off to carry out their duties?
- Yes. Union reps will be supported to carry out their duties.
40. What feedback has there been from staff? Are staff supportive?
- Few issues or concerns have been raised by staff. Staff are on board and have been very positive. Staff have been involved in a lot of change, and they see this as the next step.
 - A Union rep told us that staff were not strongly pro or negative, they had mostly detailed pragmatic questions.
41. How can staff raise further questions or concerns?
- In addition to these meetings, any member of staff can arrange a personal meeting with the Headteacher, with the head of the Trust or with an officer of the local authority; or they can speak with their union representative who can take the matter up on their behalf.