



Report on the consultation about the conversion of Woodhouse College to become a 16-19 academy within a new multi academy trust and the associated dissolution of the sixth form college corporation

Consultation report published 28 April 2020

Summary

Section 33N(2) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 requires that details of a proposed dissolution of a sixth form college corporation must be undertaken in accordance with regulations. The regulations set out information about what the proposal must contain, how it must be published, who it must be sent to, how long the consultation period must last, and that the corporation must take account of views raised during the consultation. These requirements were complied with.

Consultation materials were distributed to stakeholders on 24 February, and the required newspaper notices were published on 25 February (Guardian) and 27 February (Finchley Times). The consultation closed on 30 March.

Consultees were able to respond via post, email or an online questionnaire. Meetings were held for staff and parents; drop in sessions were held for staff and students.

For the meetings that were held during the consultation, approximately 17 staff attended the meeting on 26 February and none attended the drop in session on 4 March, one student attended a drop in session on 4 March, and two parents attended a meeting on 4 March.

42 individuals completed the online questionnaire and one parent submitted an email response.

Respondents identified the following potential benefits:

- Additional funding;
- Partnership with Imperial College London; and
- Increased opportunities for Maths / STEM through the Maths School.

Respondents identified the following potential concerns or uncertainties:

- Risk of curriculum narrowing;
- Accountability of and governance within academy trusts;
- Whether the culture / ethos of Woodhouse College would change;
- Whether terms and conditions for staff would change, including increases to senior salaries;
- Whether there would be practical implications, such as college day; and
- Whether the organisation would be run more as a business than an educational institution.

This document includes responses to these key themes.

One respondent suggested that the consultation process should be frozen during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was not considered necessary as the scheduled consultation meetings had taken place over 2 weeks before the temporary physical closure of schools and colleges was announced and enacted. Online responses remained possible throughout the consultation period, and almost all were submitted more than a week before the college physically closed. In terms of this consultation, Covid-19 did not disadvantage any individuals or prevent any individuals from sharing their views.

The legal requirements

Section 33N(2) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 requires that details of a proposed dissolution of a sixth form college corporation must be undertaken in accordance with regulations.

The relevant regulations are the Sixth Form College Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012 and regulation 4 requires that:

- The details of the proposed dissolution must be published at least four months before the proposed date of dissolution;
- Certain prescribed information must be published in a newspaper circulating in the area served by the college and one national newspaper;
- The proposal must be sent to a prescribed list of individuals and organisations;
- A period of at least one month from the date of publication in newspapers must be provided for representations to be made;
- The corporation must “take account” of views expressed in any representations; and
- The corporation must publish a summary of the consultation within two months of the end of the consultation and make this available free of charge to any person who requests it.

The Academies Act 2010 requires maintained schools to consult about conversion to academy status (section 5), and requires consultation about new institutions (section 10). The conversion of a sixth form college to academy status is not covered under either of those sections. The requirements of Section 33N(2) meant that all relevant stakeholders were aware of the proposal through the legal requirements for consultation about the dissolution of the sixth form college corporation.

The consultation process

The consultation materials consisted of:

- A consultation document and a more detailed Question and Answer document
- The dissolution notice

The consultation was launched on 24 February by distribution of the consultation materials to:

1. All staff
2. All students
3. All parents / carers
4. The Headteacher / Principal of all secondary schools in Barnet
5. The Chairs of Governors of three partner secondary schools
6. The Chair of Governors and CEO of Barnet and Southgate College
7. The Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, and Lead Member for Children's Services at Barnet Council
8. The Barnet Council Ward Councillors for the ward where Woodhouse is situated
9. The Head of School Improvement for Barnet Education
10. The Members of Parliament for the constituency where Woodhouse is situated (Finchley and Golders Green) and four whose constituencies may be affected (Chipping Barnet, Enfield and Southgate, Hendon, and Hornsey and Wood Green).
11. The Secretary of State for Education
12. The Chief Executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency

All materials were available on the College website on 24 February.

The dissolution notice was printed in:

- The Guardian on Tuesday 25 February 2020
- Finchley Times on Thursday 27 February 2020

Meetings / drop in sessions were held:

- For staff: 26 February and 4 March
- For students: 4 March
- For parents: 4 March

People were able to respond:

- By completing the online questionnaire on the College website
- By writing to or emailing the Principal
- At the meetings / drop in sessions for particular stakeholder groups.

The questionnaire consisted of three qualitative questions as well as quantitative information about the respondent. The qualitative questions were:

- What do you feel are the advantages or opportunities if Woodhouse establishes a multi academy trust and becomes a 16-19 academy?
- What concerns have you got about Woodhouse establishing a multi academy trust and becoming a 16-19 academy?
- Please write any other questions or comments that you have about the proposed multi academy trust or becoming an academy.

The consultation responses

In response to the consultation:

- Approximately 17 staff attended the meeting on 26 February and none attended the drop in session on 4 March; one student attended the drop in session on 4 March; two parents attended the meeting on 4 March.
- 42 individuals completed the online questionnaire:
 - 1 staff
 - 22 students
 - 17 parents
 - 2 local residents
- 1 email response was received from a parent who was unable to attend the meeting for parents.

Key response themes were (in order of the number of times they were mentioned):

1. Additional funding as an academy was identified as the most common advantage;
2. The relationship between the College and Maths School given that both would be on the same campus – this was a significant part of the discussion at the meeting with staff;
3. Concern that academy status and / or the Maths School would result in a narrowing of the curriculum to the expense of humanities and other subjects – this concern appeared to relate to the Maths School proposal and whether a consequence of that would be an impact upon the curriculum offered at Woodhouse College;
4. Concern or uncertainty about accountability of academy trusts and their governance / decision making structures;
5. Concern or uncertainty about whether academy status and / or the Maths School would change the ethos and culture of Woodhouse, making it more academically exclusive and / or less inclusive – this included some concern about evolution of culture as individuals leave / join over time;
6. Potential benefits from partnership with Imperial College London;
7. Potential benefits to Maths / STEM students from the Maths School;
8. Concerns either that academy status could affect terms and conditions and / or workload of staff, and / or that it would result in an increase in senior staff salaries;
9. Some practical issues were raised – such as whether there would be an impact upon the college day or admissions or uniform etc; and
10. Limited concern that academy trusts are run more like businesses than educational institutions.

One response suggested that the consultation process should be frozen until the Covid-19 outbreak had been dealt with.

Response to issues rather through the consultation

The following table identifies issues that were raised through the consultation and responses to those issues.

The consultation process was about the conversion of Woodhouse College to being an academy. The consultation document included the proposed Maths School since this is part of the rationale for the conversion of Woodhouse. While the consultation was not specifically about the Maths School a number of responses covered both elements.

Theme from respondents	Woodhouse College response
Additional funding	We agree that this is a benefit
Concern about curriculum narrowing	<p>The Woodhouse College curriculum will not change as a result of academy conversion – it will continue to offer the wide range of subjects that it does now. It is very important to recognise that there is no need or desire for the College curriculum to change.</p> <p>The Maths School (which would be very small – approximately 1/7th of the size of the College) would have a very narrow curriculum focusing upon Maths.</p>
Relationship between the College and Maths School	<p>The current plan is that the Maths School would be physically and organisationally separate in most respects. Two areas of collaboration might be a) for business support services (ie finance, premises) which may operate across both schools, and b) educationally, to allow Maths School students to study one A level subject at Woodhouse that is not taught at the Maths School. However, the Maths School is still several years away and the relationship with Woodhouse will be thought through in increasing detail as the project progresses.</p>
Accountability and governance	<p>The existing College Corporation is an independent legal entity, accountable to the Secretary of State via a funding agreement. An academy trust is also an independent legal entity, accountable to the Secretary of State via a funding agreement. Academies, being part of the schools sector, have less independence than the current college does as part of the further education sector.</p> <p>Our multi academy trust would be small, local and specific. It would not grow into a larger regional or national organisation – that is not what the college or Imperial College London intend.</p> <p>The Board of Trustees would be accountable for the performance of both Woodhouse College and the Maths School, and each would also have a Local Governing Body that includes elected staff, parents, and students.</p> <p>All governance committees would comprise experienced personnel with appropriate skill sets (e.g. educational, outreach,</p>

	<p>legal, accounting & audit, building & maintenance, business, strategic, HR, safeguarding, etc), drawn from the existing governance pools of Woodhouse College, Imperial College London and elsewhere, as required.</p>
Culture and ethos	<p>There is no intention to change the culture or ethos of Woodhouse College. We would remain a large sixth form providing a wide range of A levels and seeking to ensure our students make excellent progress.</p> <p>The Maths School would establish its own distinct culture and ethos, reflecting its smaller pupil / staff numbers and narrower curriculum.</p>
Partnership with Imperial College London	<p>We agree that this is a benefit, to Woodhouse and the Trust as well as to the Maths School. We look forward to developing the partnership with Imperial in the coming years.</p>
Focus upon Maths / STEM	<p>Woodhouse College will continue to offer the broad range of A level courses as now. It will continue to offer and celebrate the humanities, arts and STEM subjects as it does now, and students will continue to be able to make subject choices that include subjects across these areas.</p> <p>The Maths School will have a narrower curriculum, focusing upon Maths and STEM.</p>
Terms and conditions for staff	<p>The existing terms and conditions would be retained for existing and future staff. They are nationally agreed and we have successfully utilised them since we became a sixth form college in 1992.</p> <p>It is possible that some business support teams (such as finance, HR, ICT, premises) may evolve to serve both Woodhouse College and the Maths School. Teaching and student support staff are likely to be (where possible) linked to either the College or the Maths School although there may be some limited overlap, in particular as the Maths School grows.</p> <p>Senior salaries would not change as a result of being an academy.</p>
Practical issues	<p>There is no intention or need for any practical aspects of Woodhouse College to change as a result of being an academy – ie admissions process / policy, college day or term dates, uniform etc.</p>
Business not educational focus	<p>The College is an independent legal entity that exists to provide public benefit through education. An academy trust is the same. Both the current College and the future Trust must operate within their financial means in order to have long term sustainability. Becoming an academy does not change our financial responsibilities to spend public funds effectively and efficiently.</p>