

Consultation Document

Ashton Sixth Form College - consultation on proposed establishment of a multi-academy trust and Ashton Sixth Form College's conversion to 16-19 academy status.

The Governing Body of Ashton Sixth Form College proposes to convert to become an academy, and to create a new multi-academy trust. The Multi-Academy Trust would comprise Ashton Sixth Form College in the first instance, with other schools from the local area joining in due course. The Multi-Academy Trust would be known as The Stamford Park Trust.

This consultation document is published by Ashton Sixth Form College on behalf of the Stamford Park Trust to seek views on the following:

- Ashton Sixth Form College's proposal to dissolve and transfer all of its property, rights and liabilities to the new Stamford Park Trust;
- Ashton Sixth Form College's proposal to convert to a new 16–19 Academy to be called Ashton Sixth Form College to carry on the Ashton Sixth Form College's educational provision;
- Stamford Park Trust's proposal to enter into academy arrangements with the Secretary of State for Education in relation to the new 16-19 Academy as part of the newly formed Stamford Park Trust

Background to the Proposal

Ashton Sixth Form College was given the option to convert to a 16 -19 Academy as part of the final recommendations from the Greater Manchester Area Based Review which concluded in July 2016. Academy status would align Ashton Sixth Form College more closely to the schools sector, support school improvement and allow it to reclaim VAT.

The final report following the Greater Manchester Area Based Review published on 29 November 2016, can be viewed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585764/Manc_hester_15_November_2016_FINAL.pdf

The Governing Body of Ashton Sixth Form College is currently submitting an application to convert to academy status and is working towards a proposed conversion date of 1st September 2017.

Ashton Sixth Form College has published a separate statutory notice in relation to its proposal to dissolve, a copy of which can be accessed at www.asfc.ac.uk/consultation.

The college has completed an equality impact analysis on the proposals and concluded that there will be no negative impact on those with protected characteristics. A copy of the consultation can be accessed at www.asfc.ac.uk/consultation.

Proposal

It is proposed that on 1 September 2017 the Corporation of Ashton Sixth Form College will dissolve and transfer its property, rights, assets and liabilities to The Stamford Park Trust which will on that date enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education to form a new 16-19 academy to be called Ashton Sixth Form College. It is also proposed to create a Multi-Academy Trust (The Stamford Park Trust) which would comprise Ashton Sixth Form College in the first instance, with other schools from the local area joining in due course. As well as canvassing the opinions of staff at Ashton Sixth Form College, members of the A+ Trust, and current students and parents, we intend to seek the views of other key stakeholders, including local Members of Parliament, local education providers at both pre and post 16, the Local Authority, relevant funding agencies such as the EFA and SFA, our Regional School Commissioner and the Secretary of State for Education.

Any comments or representations made about the proposals will be considered by the Governing Body of Ashton Sixth Form College prior to reaching a final decision. Details of how to provide comments and representation are set out in this document.

What is an academy?

An academy is an educational institution (formed as a company limited by guarantee and exempt charity) funded directly by the Department of Education, independent of local authority control. Under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are permitted to convert to academy status; this was extended to Sixth Form Colleges in February 2016.

What is a multi-academy trust?

A multi academy trust is an academy company that can operate and run more than one school. In this case the proposal is for The Stamford Park Trust to have within it Ashton Sixth Form College in the first instance, with other schools from the local area joining in due course. The Trust will have a Board of Trustees who will be responsible for strategy setting and the oversight of management. Each institution within the Trust will have a local governing body and the Board of Trustees may delegate some local functions to those local governing bodies. Overall accountability, including the corporate governance arrangements, would rest with The Stamford Park Trust Board of Trustees.

These arrangements have the potential for other schools in the local area to join The Stamford Park Trust and to create a supportive partnership of local education providers.

What are the benefits of being an academy and part of a multi-academy trust?

The Governing Body of Ashton Sixth Form College believes that there are many benefits to be gained from the academy conversion of the College and through the formation of The Stamford Park Trust. The Trust's aim would be the provision of outstanding educational support, quality improvement and stronger governance to schools and 16-19 academies with the Tameside area. The benefits to the local area are:

- Allow for the further development of partnership work, begun through the work of the A+ Trust, aimed at raising the level of achievement in all member institutions
- Secure better value for money through the use of joint procurement allowing more funding to be directed to teaching and learning
- Provide opportunities for the development of shared back office functions, such as Human Resources, Finance, Payroll, I.T. and, Health and Safety, further improving value for money and creating greater resource for teaching and learning
- Create opportunities to improve the recruitment, retention and development of talented staff to ensure that students and pupils are taught by the very best
- Lead to stronger partnerships and collaboration between the institutions for the sharing of expertise in teaching and learning, and student support aimed at improving standards and educational outcomes across the partnership
- Strengthen transition arrangements between the schools and the college between educational phases
- Support better quality information, advice and guidance for all students to ensure the right educational pathway for all students
- Support the continuation of adult and Higher education provision at Ashton Sixth Form College
- Exempt Ashton Sixth Form College from VAT charges, bringing savings which can be diverted to the improvement of teaching, learning and educational outcomes for all students in the institutions.

Are there any disadvantages to Ashton Sixth Form College through converting to Academy status?

- At the time of writing, the college would no longer be able to access commercial borrowing to support the development of the college's accommodation strategy, without the permission of the Secretary of State for Education. However, it is possible that this power may remain for converter Sixth Form Colleges
- Growth of both adult and Higher education may be restricted as a 16-19 academy must have 80% of its students on 16-19 study programmes

Would the admission policies change?

There would be no change to admissions policies as a result of these proposals.

How would the proposals affect staff working at the college and the schools choosing to join the Multi-Academy Trust?

If the proposals are accepted and Ashton Sixth Form College converts to academy status, all staff currently employed by the college would automatically transfer to the Stamford Park Trust. All current terms and conditions would remain the same, following SFCA guidance. Any future changes would be subject to consultation with all staff and their professional bodies and associations.

Staff at grant maintained schools would move from employment by the Local Authority through a simple TUPE arrangement to the Stamford Park Trust. All current terms and conditions would remain the same. Any future changes would be subject to consultation with all staff and their professional association and bodies.

A separate consultation will be undertaken with Ashton Sixth Form College's staff and the employees of any schools joining the Multi-Academy Trust whose employment will transfer to Stamford Park Trust under TUPE.

Would the College change through conversion to an academy?

The change in status from Sixth Form College to academy status would have little short term impact. There will be no change to the location, character, ethos, educational provision or mission of Ashton Sixth Form College on conversion to a 16–19 Academy.

The College is a high performing provider with a Good rating from Ofsted. There would be very little change to the day- to-day operation of the College from a student's point of view, other than the positive impact of improved teaching and learning practices through a shared approach. The College and any schools joining the Multi-Academy Trust would also be more financially secure, providing greater funding for teaching and learning. The College would retain its curriculum mix and breadth, and would continue to be inspected under the same Ofsted framework. The College would continue to be called Ashton Sixth Form College with the same ethos and educational philosophy as today.

In the medium to longer this proposal brings opportunities for greater partnership working between the College and future members of the Stamford Park Trust within Tameside and the surrounding area to improve educational outcomes, at all levels, and support more effective transition between key stages and provide the best and most appropriate information, advice and guidance to better inform progression to university, apprenticeships and employment.

Stamford Park Trust would enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to which the Secretary of State would fund the new academy(ies) subject to the terms and conditions therein. The current form of funding agreement for the academies can be viewed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-and-free-school-funding-agreements-single-academy-trust> .

How can you express your views?

We welcome your views and feedback about our proposals. As part of this consultation process, we are particularly keen to hear from interested parties on the following:

1. Do you support the proposal?
2. Do you have any additional comments, questions or suggestions for our consideration?

You can find our formal proposal on the college and school websites detailed below. You can also respond to the consultation using the following:

- Via the online consultation page at www.asfc.ac.uk/consultation
- By emailing your comments to consultation@asfc.ac.uk
- Or by writing to:

Consultation
Ashton Sixth Form College
Darnton Road

Ashton-Under-Lyne
Tameside
OL6 9RL

The consultation period begins on Monday 24th April 2017. The closing date will be Monday 5th June 2017.

More information about the academies programme can be found at www.education.gov.uk/academies.

Ashton Sixth Form College will prepare a written response at the end of the consultation period which will be available at www.asfc.ac.uk/consultation.

Thank you, in advance, for your contributions to our consultation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anton McGrath', written in a cursive style.

Anton McGrath
Principal