



# Fern Hill Primary School

*Inspiration Collaboration Empathy Excellence*

Proposal to Convert to Academy Status

Questions and answers arising from the statutory consultation process (15th June - 19th July 2021)

# The Process - an overview

- March 2021 - Fern Hill wrote to community announcing that Governors had unanimously agreed to apply to convert to Academy Status and to join KET.
- 15th June - 19th July (midday) 2021 - Statutory consultation with stakeholders.
- September 2021 - Output from the consultation to be shared with the Governing Body. Governors decide whether to proceed, taking into account feedback from the community.
- September to December 2021 - Legal processes to take place.
- 1st January 2022 (provisional) - Fern Hill to become an Academy within the Kingston Educational Trust.

**Questions addressed at the  
statutory consultation  
meetings held on 12th & 13th  
July**

# **“What motivates the decision and what benefits will joining KET bring?”**

- Enhanced educational experiences for children
- Better opportunities to support our families
- Investment in and development of our staff
- Supporting our wider community
- One efficient and effective organisation (but still two schools)

**“The given rationales are very soft (opportunities to work together, community cohesion, etc). The vast majority of them could be done today, given effort. What are the concrete advantages and disadvantages of doing this that wouldn't be achievable in any other way?”**

- It is true that many of the benefits could be achieved through continuing collaboration between the two schools but this relies on goodwill from both parties and the time/commitment to collaborate outside of the existing governance structures.
- Formalising the relationship in a MAT turns the commitment into a responsibility, enshrined in the structures, people, policies & processes of both schools.
- Some benefits will accrue that simply couldn't be achieved otherwise, for example operational efficiencies, which could not only lead to cost savings but will also free up leadership time.
- Other benefits of converting to an Academy (freedom to set pay scales, choose service providers, set term dates etc.)
- The main disadvantage is a loss of autonomy. Much of our due diligence has been around getting comfort that Fern Hill's leadership team remain autonomous in the areas that we believe matter most.

**“Will there be any change in the curriculum after the school acquires academy status? If yes, then what will be the changes and how these changes will benefit our children?”**

There are no plans for Fern Hill to deviate from the National Curriculum.

While Academies do not have to adhere to the National Curriculum they are still required to provide a “broad and balanced curriculum”, children still have to take part in national tests (e.g. SATs, Phonics screening) and schools are still inspected by OFSTED.

# **“What will be the impact on funding?”**

- As an Academy Fern Hill will received the same amount of per pupil funding as they would as a maintained school.
- The funding will come directly from the Department for Education, rather than the Local Authority, and will go to KET rather than Fern Hill.
- KET will allocate budgets to Fern Hill and TKA, having retained some of the funding in order to provide services to each of the two schools (similar to how the Local Authority funds its core services).



# **“Will SEND provision at Fern Hill be impacted?”**

- Fern Hill’s responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability will be the same as an Academy as they are now.
- Pupil specific funding will remain with those pupils and will continue to be spent on enhancing and assisting their learning.

# **“Will joining KET give Fern Hill children priority for admission to The Kingston Academy?”**

- Currently there are no plans to change the admissions arrangements for TKA.
- Academies are in charge of deciding their admissions arrangements but are required to comply with the same Code of Practice as maintained schools and the Local Authority continues to have responsibility for coordinating the process.

# Other Comments...

“Fantastic and brilliant idea! The schools and community can only benefit from it.”

“As a parent of a Year 6 child who’s about to leave Fern Hill, this proposal doesn’t directly affect me. However, from everything I’ve heard so far about academisation, I think it’s an excellent idea which will hopefully bring great benefits to the pupils, staff and wider Fern Hill community....as long as the Fern Hill teachers, SLT and Mr Scott remain in place, I think most Fern Hill parents will be happy about this proposal!”

# Feedback from consultation sessions on 12th & 13th July

“Which services currently provided by the Local Authority will be moved to KET and over which types of decisions will Fern Hill lose autonomy?”

- Some functions provided by the Local Authority are statutory (for example in relation to SEND) or are provided to all schools (such as the co-ordination of school places through the Pan-London Admissions scheme) and these will continue.
- Some services currently provided will necessarily move to KET and become centralised within the MAT (in particular finance/audit, HR and legal) because KET will receive the funding, become the employer of staff and take on statutory/legal responsibility.
- Other Local Authority support provided to maintained schools can be accessed by academies, but the MAT will be able to choose which services it wishes to buy back, these currently include for example (for TKA) health and safety, occupational health and governance support.
- KET has a natural working relationship with Kingston Council and this will continue (the Council is one of the three founding members of the MAT, along with Kingston University and Kingston College).
- KET will take strategic decisions regarding the school and will hold it to account, in a similar way to Fern Hill’s current governing body (and some of this responsibility will be delegated from the KET board down to a Fern Hill local academy committee).
- School leaders will retain day to day operational control and management of the school, and centralisation of services should free up leadership time to focus on other areas such

**Questions & comments  
raised after the meetings  
held on 12th & 13th July**

**“Does this mean children from Fern Hill will automatically be granted admission in Kingston academy when they move into secondary school? Or will they have to reapply?”**

**“Upon conversion to the academy, will there be an automatic transition from Fern Hill Primary to the Kingston Academy Secondary?”**

See answer to question on slide 10.

**“Will the academy status provide more freedom over the National Curriculum?”**

See answer to question on slide 7.

**“Once the school converts to the academy, will kids be grouped in classes based on the level of their knowledge and abilities or will the academy have mixed group classes?”**

The way in which classes at Fern Hill are structured will not be impacted by converting to an Academy. Fern Hill’s Senior Leadership Team will continue to take operational decisions regarding teaching at learning at the school.