

Consultation feedback

Consultation documents were posted or emailed to all parents and stakeholders on 26 January 2007. These gave details about the proposal to form The Innovation Trust and also about the proposed Trust members (see www.monkseaton.org.uk for the original documents). The documents explained the various ways in which people could respond with their views: questionnaire, either in hard or electronic copy, email or letter. Two meetings were also held on 5 February 2007, one for staff and one for parents and students, to provide an opportunity to meet and talk to the proposed Trust members. Parents of Year 11 students were given an additional opportunity to complete a short questionnaire giving their views on the proposal during Parents' Evening. All students were also asked to complete a sharepoint survey giving their views. Throughout this process the school has endeavoured to abide by the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on Consultation (see <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation/>) and is committed to a transparent and open consultation process.

The feedback provided here is based on all responses received via all mediums. It includes a short statistical overview of responses; a breakdown of responses to each question asked on the questionnaire, and also where applicable a summary of responses relevant to that question but not actually provided in questionnaire form; a summary of the issues addressed at the two meetings on 5 February; and a summary of student responses. The feedback incorporates 'Issues to Consider' for the governing body of Monkseaton Community High School based on the responses received and the concerns raised during the process. Finally it sets out the next steps and how the school plans to move forward.

Statistical overview of responses

1) Parent responses

Total Responses	Total In Favour	Total Against	Total Unsure
52	50 (96%)	0	2 (4%)

2) Employee responses

Total Responses	Total In Favour	Total Against	Total Unsure
9	7 (78%)	0	2 (22%)

3) Student Responses

All students were asked to complete a sharepoint survey giving their views about the Innovation Trust. They were asked to answer the following question:

What do you think about our school becoming a trust school?
Do you think it's a good or a bad idea?

Total Responses	I think it's a good idea	I think it's a bad idea	I'm not sure	Don't care
42	32 (76%)	0	7 (17%)	3 (7%)

4) Other responses

Total Responses	Total In Favour	Total Against	Total Unsure
11	4 (36%)	6 (55%)	1 (9%)

Analysis of respondents:

	Anonymous	Unions	Other
Total In Favour	1	1	2
Total Against	1	5	
Total Not Sure	1		

In Summary:

Total responses received via all mediums, and including individuals and organisations	Total In Favour	Total Against	Total Unsure	Total Don't Care
114	93 (82%)	6 (5%)	12 (10%)	3 (3%)

Summary of responses

Consultees were given five questions to answer on the questionnaire in order to give their views on the proposals. Other available methods of response were email or letter.

1) How do you feel about Monkseaton Community High School adopting Trust status?

Of the 13 respondents who returned completed questionnaires, eight were in favour of the proposal to adopt Trust status and thought this would be a positive step for the school. Reasons given for supporting the proposal generally reflected the belief that Trust status would be advantageous for the school. Concerns centred predominantly around the role and composition of the governing body, employment issues and union representation. For the two respondents who were unequivocally opposed to Trust status (one of these represents the national UNISON response), the relationship with other local schools is key and they feel that Trust status would have a negative impact on this.

A further nine responses were received by letter and email from a variety of stakeholders including a parent, an employee, the Chair of Governors at a local school, the Learning and Skills Council and five union representatives. One of the union representatives reported no areas of concern and gave his support to the proposal. The other four union representatives echoed concerns around employment issues and how Trust status might impact upon Monkseaton's relationship with other local schools. Other concerns were around admissions arrangements and the lack of evidence that Trust status will improve educational standards. The four non-union responses however were generally positive and viewed the Innovation Trust as an exciting opportunity to improve students' education.

Of the further 50 parents who completed the short questionnaire at parents' evening, 48 gave their support to the proposal and registered their belief that the Innovation Trust is a good idea. One parent wanted further information on the specific advantages and disadvantages of becoming a Trust school and one wanted further information on the composition of the governing body. This has since been provided.

Issues to Consider

If the governing body decide to publish formal proposals, they should include information on the following issues:

- The composition of the proposed governing body.
- How the process of decision-making will be carried out.
- Employment rights of both teaching and non-teaching staff, should the Trust be established.
- The impact that Trust status will have, if any, on union representation.
- The impact that Trust status will have, if any, on relationships with local schools.

- How the Trust will contribute to raising standards
- The governing body should also continue to work on securing a resolution to enable new staff to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- The governing body should consider whether the unions that are opposed in principle to Trust schools might best resolve their issues as part of a debate at a national level with the appropriate government bodies.

2) How do you feel about Monkseaton Community High School working with:

- a. Microsoft**
- b. North Tyneside Council**
- c. Tribal Education**
- d. Independent Chair from Higher Education: Professor David Reynolds, Plymouth University?**

This was the second question asked in the questionnaire, and 10 of the 13 respondents felt that the involvement of the proposed Trust members in the school would be beneficial. The most common reasons given for supporting the involvement of these partners were that they will bring valuable expertise and increased opportunities to the school, and that the important links with North Tyneside Council will be maintained. Concerns included what was perceived as the 'sudden' involvement of Tribal Education where no previous relationship existed, and the national issue of private sector outsourcing of school services.

Other responses supported the involvement of this wide range of partners and the ability to continue to work collaboratively with partners outside the Trust. Three of the union responses raised concerns over private sector companies gaining control of school assets, and other issues were around the geographical distance of the partners and why Trust status is considered necessary since the school is already able to work with sponsor governors.

Issues to Consider

If the governing body decide to publish formal proposals, they should incorporate:

- A rationale on what it sees as the benefits of Trust status and working with the specific partners proposed that is illustrated with specific examples.
- Further information on the safeguards in place with regard to the school's assets.

3) The partners share our commitment to the school's ambition to strive for realising every student's potential. The Trust will appoint some governors who have the expertise to help the school to make this a reality for all our students. Our vision is:

- **A school that values learning, and prepares students for their future**
- **Excellent vocational and academic provision for all our pupils**
- **Support for every student to develop new skills and reach their potential.**

How do you feel about this vision?

The issue of the school vision was only addressed by the 13 respondents who completed the questionnaire. The majority of them supported the vision and felt it was right for the school. Suggestions included making a reference to the importance of preparing students to become responsible citizens, making some reference to staff and also to raising the standard of achievement at GCSE and A Level. One respondent felt that the vision should be less general as it is too difficult to provide for every vocational and academic opportunity.

Issues to Consider

The governing body should consider how this vision statement might include some specific issues such as raising standards, taking into account the views expressed by consultees.

4) We propose that the Trust should appoint a minority of governors – this would bring in expertise from our partners, but no group would have overall control and one third of governors would still be elected parents. Do you think this model is right for the school?

Of the 13 respondents who completed the questionnaire, seven felt that appointing a minority of governors from the Trust would be a good idea. Several school employees were concerned if there were changes to the current governing body. There was also some concern around how the composition of the governing body could be altered in future to give Trust partners more power. Two of the unions raised concerns about democratic accountability.

Issues to Consider

If the governing body decide to publish formal proposals, they should incorporate information on how the proposed governing body will change if the school adopts Trust status and also how it might change over time.

5. Do you have any other comments, concerns or suggestions that we should think about before we publish formal proposals?

Comments made by respondents via the questionnaire and also by letter and email centred around a number of key issues. Several mentions were made of the importance of providing assurances to staff about their terms and conditions of employment and other related issues such as pension arrangements, human resources, occupational health and health and safety support. Various respondents also raised concerns about the impact of Trust status on collaboration with local schools. A number of union representatives requested open meetings.

Issues to Consider

If the governing body decide to publish formal proposals, they should consider these concerns.

Issues addressed at the consultation meetings:

In addition to the comments provided in writing, a range of issues were addressed at the consultation meetings on 5 February (minutes are available at www.monkseaton.org.uk). At the staff meeting concerns were raised about whether the Trust would have any direct influence on day to day issues in the school, and there were assurances this would not happen. The distinction between the Trust and the governing body was discussed, as was the role of innovation in the school. The proposed Trust members explained their individual motivations and why they felt it necessary to change the current system. Pensions arrangements were discussed. At the parents' meeting the issue of Tribal's low public profile was raised, as was the importance of family learning.

Student responses:

42 students responded to our request for their feedback regarding the proposal to adopt Trust status. 76% thought the proposal was a good idea and the remainder either weren't sure or didn't care either way. The most common reasons given for the proposal being a good idea were that it will mean more money and better facilities for the school and that it could advance learning. Those who weren't sure mostly stated that it was because they were unsure what a Trust school is. Several students requested information about this and also about the actual difference that becoming a Trust school would make to them. When asked what things they think are best about the school at the moment, the most popular responses were 'the pyramid', 'teachers', 'the software' and 'the friendly environment/sense of community'. When asked what they would like to see the Innovation Trust improve, they overwhelmingly opted for the school environment and facilities.

Issues to Consider

See Section 1 on Issues to Consider, bullet points 3 and 5.

The governing body should also:

- Consider how best to clarify the distinction between the governing body roles and those of the Trust.
- Encourage the unions to continue engaging in dialogue with the DfES about the development of Trust schools, as well as considering where their concerns could be addressed in the proposals.
- Provide students with more information about the Innovation Trust in assemblies and by email.

Next steps

The governing body will meet on 21 May 2007 to decide whether to proceed with the proposal on the basis of the responses outlined here. If they decide to proceed they will have to publish formal proposals by 8 June 2007 at the latest, and provide all stakeholders with another opportunity to respond before making a final decision whether to implement the Trust in time for the next academic year.