

*“Giving Children and Young People the best start in life”*

**A Proposal to expand Swindon Academy  
to include Penhill Primary & Nursery School  
Consultation Document**

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### Introduction

This document has been produced as part of the independent public consultation into the proposal to expand the 0-19 Swindon Academy to include Penhill Primary and Nursery School. The purpose of the document is to inform potential students, parents, staff, governors, education partners in Swindon, interested parties affected by the proposed site and the wider community on the proposal to this expansion to the Academy, so that they can express their views during the consultation process.

### Background to this proposal

The Department for Children Families and Schools (DCFS) and Swindon Borough Council (SBC) in collaboration with the sponsor United Learning Trust (ULT) established the Swindon Academy in September 2007. The academy replaced Headlands secondary school and Pinehurst Infant and Junior schools. The Council now wishes to expand the academy to include Penhill Primary School.

The academy is an all age 0–19 academy providing education and community services and will serve students from Pinehurst, Gorse Hill, Seven Fields and Penhill, one of the most deserving areas of Swindon.

The academy will permit the more effective deployment of multi-agency approaches - easier access, economies of scale for all agencies involved, and closer relationships through more regular formal and informal contacts all resulting in an improved standard of provision for the children.

The Penhill school building will be extensively refurbished and will remain on its current site about one mile from the main academy campus.

### The Public Consultation Process

The following areas are the key priorities for consultation:

- The Academy's intake and development
- Transition-Continuity and Progression
- Governance
- Community links and wider use

This independent public consultation is being conducted by DJB Consultancy on behalf of ULT and will run in parallel with the SBC consultation process. SBC will consider all the views that are expressed as part of this public consultation and the separate SBC statutory consultation process before making a decision to publish statutory proposals to close Penhill School. The Sponsor will seek the Secretary of State's approval for the expansion of the academy.

Further details about the consultation process and how your views can be represented are given at the end of this document.

## **1. Reason for this Proposal**

During the consultation to establish Swindon Academy there were a number of responses suggesting that some feeder schools to the academy, excluding Pinehurst Infant and Junior schools, which would be part of the academy, would be disadvantaged, i.e. Penhill, Gorse Hill and Seven Fields. 86% of the academy's student cohort comes from these feeder schools, with 20% from Penhill.

However, although in the future there will be opportunities for feeder schools to the academy to work closely with the United Learning Trust, Penhill Primary School standards have been identified by SBC as a critical issue that needs to be addressed urgently.

Penhill Primary school is on the DCFS list of 266 'hard to shift' primary schools and has failed to meet the floor target at key stage two in both maths and English for five years, despite receiving considerable additional resource and support from the Local Authority. An Ofsted inspection which took place in September 2007, judged the standards reached by learners to be inadequate (grade 4). The local authority considers that a structural solution is required to move this school forward. If the school became part of the academy it would benefit from the drive to raise standards, which is enhanced by the establishment of an academy.

The developing educational plans for this all-through academy suggest that it will break out from traditional structures and move towards systems where the needs of the individual learner can be more readily met and be personalised. Pupils/students will be able to be progressed according to the 'stage' they are at in their development rather than their chronological age. Such a development may make it more difficult for the pupils of Penhill Primary School to integrate into the academy when they move at eleven.

As well as helping to raise standards, an academy expanded to include Penhill Primary School will also promote inclusion and enjoy the benefits attached to continuity of care and personnel especially with respect to more vulnerable children.

ULT and SBC share the view that an all age 0-19 academy is well placed to transform the education and learning opportunities for primary pupils of all abilities from the surrounding area, raise aspirations and achievement and challenge expectations of learning. It removes a number of transition issues when moving from one school to another and provides continuity of teaching and learning for pupils<sup>1</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence shows that pupil performance dips, and pupil progress is slowed,

development allows for a cross-curriculum approach to teaching and learning across all the key stages ensuring individual levels of attainment are improved.

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as a result of moving schools. In an area where raising standards of achievement is a key priority- which has not to-date been successfully addressed through to age 16-it is vital that these barriers to progress are removed.

## **2. The Academy Proposal**

The proposal to undertake a feasibility study to expand Swindon Academy established in September 2007, which has replaced Headlands School and Pinehurst Infant and Junior Schools to further include Penhill Primary and Nursery School is supported by the DCSF, Swindon Borough Council and the Governors of Swindon Academy. The proposal is subject to agreement by the School Scrutiny Committee. As part of the feasibility the expanded academy will:

- In partnership with the Council, explore the inclusion of Penhill Primary and Nursery Schools into the 0-11 element of the academy.
- In partnership with the Council, also further explore the way in which existing 0-4 family support services can be integrated into the academy
- Open in January 2009 in the existing Penhill school building and have a planned programme to refurbish the current accommodation.
- Guarantee places for all existing students at Penhill School into the 0-11 element of the academy at the time the school closes in December 2008.
- Be co-educational and free of charge for pupils of statutory school age.
- Continue to operate the existing schools catchment areas and admissions policies in September 2008.
- Adopt the current ULT Admissions Policy (see section 9) subject to any agreed amendments to reflect local existing policies with effect from September 2009.
- Be committed to the pursuit of high standards and levels of achievement in all areas of learning activity and behaviour.
- Be a place where all students will be supported in realising their full potential and encouraged to take their place in society as active and positive contributors.
- Work in partnership with other primary, secondary schools and further education establishments in Swindon.
- Be at the heart of the local community, providing a driver for change through the use of its facilities either during or outside academy hours.
- Be sponsored and managed by the United Learning Trust a subsidiary of the United Church Schools Trust.
- Build on its corporate partnership with Honda who is active in supporting the work of the academy. Honda is a major global company with a European manufacturing base in Swindon and Sales and Services operations in Langley.

## **3. What are Academies?**

Academies are a new type of all ability school which aim to bring a fresh approach to school leadership, teaching and learning, raising the standard of education provision in the maintained sector in the more disadvantaged areas. Academies draw on the expertise of the sponsor and have the freedom to try new ways of teaching within an innovative and stimulating environment.

Across the country, academies are being created to replace schools in challenging circumstances or to meet demand for additional school places. The Government is committed to establishing 400 academies with at least 200 open or in the pipeline by 2010.

Academies are state-funded independent secondary schools. They are independent of the Local Education Authority and have more autonomy over curriculum design than maintained schools. They offer a broad and balanced curriculum together with a specialism. All places are free of charge with no fees paid by parents and are available to the local community within an agreed admissions policy.

Academies are operated by a not-for-profit charitable trust. Sponsorship for academies is from the private or voluntary sectors that make donations up to a ceiling of £2 million to support the charitable purposes of the academy. This establishes a long-term financial endowment to enhance educational progress in the academy and in the local community more generally.

The capital costs for remodelling the proposed Penhill extension will be funded by Swindon Borough Council.

The annual recurrent costs are funded directly by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) at a level comparable to the funding of similar schools in the area. In addition, each academy receives a per-student grant equivalent to specialist schools in the maintained sector.

#### **4. About the Sponsor: United Learning Trust (ULT)**

ULT is a registered charity, specifically created to establish a family of academies which provide an outstanding education to young people across the country. Established in 2002, ULT is a subsidiary of the not-for-profit charity, the United Church Schools Trust (UCST), which owns and manages a family of independent schools in the UK for 125 years. ULT offers the stability of an organization with a long term commitment to education in this country and the experience to run schools.

UCST's extensive experience in providing high quality education makes ULT a unique sponsor of academies. Its experience in bridging the private and public sectors brings significant benefits to teachers, students and parents through the sharing of good educational practice. The two organisations share the objective of offering students outstanding education.

In order to satisfy its charitable objectives, ULT is required to ensure that the academy is founded on a Christian ethos. ULT hopes and expects that its ethos can be accepted by people of all faiths and none.

ULT currently operates and manages 13 academies: Manchester, Lambeth, Northampton Salford-City, Barnsley, Sheffield Park, Sheffield Springs, Paddington, Walthamstow, William Hulme Grammar School, North Oxfordshire, Swindon, and Stockport. It also has two others in feasibility in Accrington and Midhurst, West Sussex.



## **5. The Academy Ethos**

The ethos of Swindon Academy is one of:

- Respect
- Service
- Compassion
- Discipline
- Hard work

This is supported by a constructive and supportive environment where all students and staff are valued and respected. Students are given individual care and support and guided and encouraged to develop a lifelong love of learning.

A culture of hard work is instilled throughout the academy. It has a philosophy that encourages achievement. Students will be expected to develop a high standard of learning and life skills.

ULT academies aim to enable each student to become a balanced articulate person with the:

- intellectual freedom to be creative
- confidence to initiate
- flexibility to react to change
- compassion to serve others.
- motivation to have a lifelong love of learning.

It is a core belief of the ULT that students thrive when parents, the school and the community work together to encourage and support the success of each student.

ULT respects the differences that exist between the different communities it serves. ULT has a strong and vibrant commitment to quality and innovation built on dynamic partnerships with parents, the local community and business organisations, local organisations and other education providers.

## **6. The Vision for the new Academy**

The academy offers a high quality educational experience to students to ensure that they are thoroughly prepared to meet the challenges of the workplace, either directly from school or after higher education. In particular, it will aim to offer:

**Innovative teaching, learning and development for all**

- Learning approaches that are targeted to the needs of the students through a mixture of modular learning paths.
- A well-considered programme of life skills, incorporated into many parts of the Academy day and curriculum, which will help prepare students to become active and responsible citizens;
- A fully accessible academy with extended day programmes that offer study support and additional learning opportunities and a wide range of arts, sports, and recreational activities;
- Provide opportunities for an integrated approach to teaching and learning across different year groups;
- Personal tutor and peer mentoring systems which offer individually- tailored learning plans for every student to raise their aspirations and achievements. Particular attention will be given to the core areas of literacy and numeracy. Where appropriate, there will also be links to external agencies and advisors to assist with the rounded development of students;
- Extension programmes and accelerated learning opportunities, delivered using ICT and distance learning materials;
- Innovative approaches to the teaching and learning process, based on a framework of study skills and methods of monitoring, assessment, reporting and planning that encourage more ICT-based learning, with provision for community participation;
- A framework of professional development and training in transferable skills related to the use of new technology, and remuneration policies to attract, retain and continuously develop teachers and support staff;
- Developing with the local business community and other key stakeholders ways of assisting the regeneration of the area;
- Being a learning resource at the heart of the local community with a commitment to supporting a broad range of community needs.

### 7. The Academy's Curriculum and Specialism

The academy will be committed to providing a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for all its learners. To achieve this it will have due regard for the key areas of the National Curriculum, but as a publicly-funded independent school it will be free to develop innovative and creative approaches to both teaching and learning, making education relevant and exciting. All students will have access to the core curriculum, English, Mathematics, Science and Information Communication Technology.

The curriculum will be at the cutting-edge of educational development and designed to support the highest level of achievement by students. State-of-the-art technology will help ensure that the curriculum is accessible online 24 hours a day.

Each student will have a carefully prepared individual programme of learning. This student-centred approach has been designed to meet the needs of all students and will be present through the student's school life.

The 4-11 primary curriculum will be developed by blending existing good practice with new opportunities for learning. The aim will be to encourage high levels of individual achievement through an exciting, engaging and creative curriculum which will also have a strong emphasis on the development of the core skills that provide the building blocks for the future success of learners. The education of primary phase students will be further enhanced through access to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilities and technologies which the academy will provide for all its learners.

One of the key benefits of a 0-19 academy is that all professionals and key stakeholders in the chain of learning can ensure the best possible continuity of planning and progression for the individual learner.

In addition to covering key areas of the National Curriculum, the academy has a focus on specialist subject areas in which it will aim to become recognised as a Centre of Excellence. The specialism should enable the school to retain and recruit enthusiastic, inspirational teachers with outstanding motivational skills. The academy's specialism is Science with Business and Enterprise.

## 8. Teaching and Support Staff

The ULT is responsible for the employment of the academy's staff. The Principal decides, within the budget framework, how many teachers to employ and makes the appointments.

It is recognised that the teachers and support staff at the academy are its most valuable resource. Without good, well-supported teaching the academy's vision for success will not be realised. Therefore it is establishing:

- Sound and sensitive employment practices
- Excellent working conditions and relationships
- Modern management structures
- Competitive levels of remuneration and rewards.

The staff employed work to a common goal of raising standards for all students. The academy will ensure strong pastoral care for students, which will involve parents and the community.

ULT will consult with the Trade Unions about the application of the TUPE regulations, as applied to staff in Penhill School, in advance of those staff' joining the academy.

### 9. Admissions

The academy is fully inclusive in terms of admissions with a comprehensive intake of boys and girls across all ability ranges. The academy currently provides up to 1,200 places for students aged 11–19. Up to 180 students will be admitted in Year 7 each year and there will be a maximum of 300 places in the Sixth Form.

The academy currently provides up to 420 places for students aged 4–11 with up to 60 pupils being admitted into Reception each year. There are also 52 part-time nursery places available. The Penhill site will admit up to 60 pupils into Reception each year. 52 part-time nursery places will also be available.

If incorporated as part of the expanded academy, all students at Penhill School will be automatically offered a place at the academy at the time the school closes in December 2008. Thereafter, pupils at the Penhill site will automatically transfer to the academy's secondary provision unless there is parental preference to the contrary.

The expanded academy will adopt the current ULT Admissions Policy, subject to any agreed amendments to reflect local existing policies with effect from January 2009.

The principles on which the admissions criteria are based include:

1. Children with statements of SEN where the Academy is named on the statement;
2. Children in Public Care (Looked after Children);
3. Children for whom it is essential to be admitted to the school because of special circumstances related to medical and social needs;
4. Children with special educational needs (SEN) but without a statement will receive equal consideration with other applicants;
5. Children who have a brother or sister on roll at the academy at the time of admission;
6. Places will be allocated to children in relation to the distance from the child's place of residence to the academy (Penhill site).

The academy is aware of the need to provide facilities which will be appropriate for specific students with Special Educational Needs. These would include:

- Students who are gifted and talented;
- Students with individual learning difficulties;
- Students needing support with access.

The process of application for the academy will be made on the common application form of the Education Authority in which the applicant resides.

The academy's admissions arrangements follow the DCSF Code of Practice (including the guidance on appeals against refusal to admit), and is founded on impartiality, regard for the law and the principles of natural justice. The appeals system is transparent and fair. ULT's Academy Policy on exclusions takes account of DCSF guidance.

### 10. Governance

The ultimate governance of the all the sponsors' academies is the responsibility of the Trustees of the ULT.

The Trustees are responsible in particular for:

- Overall policy for each Academy
- Policy decisions on where and when to open new academies
- Fundraising
- Appointment of and Principals and Vice Principals
- Relationship with the Government
- Budget for the whole group
- All staff contracts.

At the local level, the Swindon Academy has its own Local Governing Body (LGB). The aim is that the LGB should best reflect the specific needs of the academy. It is essential that the members will extend the skills and influence of the LGB and actively support and promote the aims, ethos and aspirations of the academy.

#### Members of the LGB include:

- The Chair
- The Principal, ex-officio
- Two elected Parents
- An elected teacher
- An elected member of the support staff
- A representative of the Local Council

In addition, the LGB includes other members drawn from the local community and from business and industry. Honda is represented on the LGB of the academy in Swindon and Sir Anthony Greener (one of the benefactors via the ULT) is the Chair.

The LGB:

- Assist on appointment panels
- Support the Principal and the ULT Finance Director in monitoring and managing the budget.
- Are responsible, with the Principal, for school policies and operations such as:
  - o Admissions
  - o Behaviour
  - o Discipline
  - o Exclusions
  - o Curriculum and its delivery
  - o Reporting to parents
  - o Maintaining the quality of the school
  - o Links with the community

### 11. Building Improvements at Penhill

The proposals that are being considered for building remodelling will offer improved quality of provision and facilities in a number of key areas of the school as well as providing an independent youth and community provision. Building construction work, in the main, will relate to internal structural changes to some rooms as required and general improvements and decoration to the whole school. Major improvements will be made to all flat roofs and metal windows, which will enhance the overall efficiency of the buildings. Upgrades will also be made to the M&E infrastructure (heating and ventilation) in line with current legislation on building efficiency. A new landscaped car parking facility will be provided at the front of the school which will give more emphasis to the entrance to the school and the current mobile classroom provisions will be integrated into a secure nursery block with it's own reception and secure access.

A summary of the changes considered are as follows:

- Structural remodelling to some of the classrooms to meet BB99 standards.
- Structural remodelling of the reception and nursery provisions into an independent secure unit. (Removal of all mobiles).
- Addition of some general multi-use rooms.
- Addition of a secure youth and community provision with it's own entrance and identity.
- Improvements to M & E facilities (heating & ventilation).
- Replacement of all metal window frames to be replaced with uPVC
- Refurbishment of all flat roofs
- Improvements to surface water drainage.

### 12. Community Involvement and Wider Use

The new Penhill site and building will serve the community of Penhill, will be involved with Regeneration Initiatives, and will be a facility for the whole community complementing the existing facilities in the area.

It is proposed that this new academy site will offer:

- Extended school activities, including leisure and sport, child care, before and after school, holiday and weekend provision;
- A Youth Service provision on-site.
- Access to ICT and business facilities;
- Access to larger spaces e.g. halls, drama studios;
- The opportunity for some co-located health and social services provision that reflect the priorities of the local community.
- Continuing education and learning opportunities for local people.

Parents will be expected to participate actively in the education of their children, not just providing encouragement and support but also being fully engaged in the home/school partnership and other aspects of academy life. The academy will look to introduce modern and immediate ways to communicate with parents.

Links will be established with other primary and secondary schools, Further and Higher Education Colleges and local employers. It is expected that the academy will make a valuable contribution to promoting social inclusion, equality and diversity.

### 13. Consultation

Independent Consultants, DJB Consultancy - Dame Jocelyn Barrow, Lead Consultant, and Dawn Hill - are running the consultation process for expansion of the academy. The Consultants have considerable experience of working in education and with ULT. They aim to engage all sectors of the community.

The consultation process will start from 01<sup>st</sup> June 2008, during which time this consultation document will be widely circulated. DJB Consultancy will undertake consultation in parallel with the Council and be in attendance at the Public Consultation Meetings held by the Council for parents, staff and governors and the Penhill Forum. DJB Consultancy will further carry out a random survey of Penhill parents and hold focus groups with Penhill parents and pupils; a series of interviews with key academy and Penhill staff and governors and key stakeholders in Swindon including Headteachers of associated primary schools,



Swindon Borough Council Education Officers and Councillors, and trade union representatives.

**The public meetings will be held at,  
Penhill Primary School, Alton Close, Penhill, Swindon, SN2 5HF on,  
09<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

|                |        |
|----------------|--------|
| Parents/carers | 3.30pm |
| Staff          | 4.45pm |
| Governors      | 6.00pm |
| Parents/carers | 7.15pm |

**Penhill Forum, Penhill Primary School, Alton Close, Penhill, Swindon, SN2 5HF on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2008 at 6.00pm**

Details of the above meetings will be given to local schools and through the local media. At the public consultation meeting ULT and the Council will each make a presentation and be available to respond to your questions and listen to your views, which will be recorded by the consultants.

At the end of the consultation period, the Consultants will bring together all the views from the consultation and prepare a report for ULT, the DCSF, Swindon Borough Council and the schools concerned.

**Interested parties can additionally express their views on the proposal by writing to:**

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The document can also be accessed at:  
[www.ult.org.uk](http://www.ult.org.uk)