

LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSES TO KEY ISSUES RAISED

Set out below are the responses of the Local Authority to a number of the key issues raised during the consultation period for this proposal:

Key issues raised	Local Authority responses
<p>Moving from Community to Trust Status would be a better option for the school in terms of raising standards and pupil attainment</p>	<p>Trust status for some schools may be an appropriate way forward as a Trust partner, such as a local business or educational institution, may be able to help to drive up standards and give a school renewed impetus. The advantage to a school of having trustees is that the school is able to establish long-term formal arrangements with identified partners who are committed to furthering the educational aims of the school. However, these advantages are already set up at the Academy, which has close links to Honda, and Marlborough School, and is building partnerships also with others stakeholders in the borough, such as the FE colleges. The main sponsor, ULT, is seeking to improve the Academy by aligning the knowledge and skills of partners with the needs of the Academy.</p> <p>In general terms, the level of involvement from business partners differs in Academies and Trust Schools. Academy sponsors appoint the majority of governors to governing bodies of their schools. In Trust schools, the Trust can appoint either a minority or majority of governors – the decision is made by the predecessor governing body. Academy sponsors also contribute financially. In the case of Trust schools, the Trust is not expected to make any financial contribution.</p> <p>It is considered that a separate Trust arrangement, would not offer the pupils of Penhill Primary School a sufficient step change to significantly improve standards. As already stated, Penhill is on the DCSF list of 'hard to shift' primary schools, and the DCSF requires the Local Authority to take decisive action. The challenges that the school faces are very significant and have persisted for a number of years. The Local Authority considers that an immediate structural solution is required, and that inclusion within the Academy would enable a significant and sustainable shift for Penhill pupils that a Trust arrangement would be less likely to offer. A Trust arrangement would not produce the re-structured leadership that the Academy would bring and which is essential to bring about the step change in performance required at Penhill. See also 'Alternative Options' in the body of the report.</p>

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<p>Pupil attainment/standards at Penhill Primary School are improving and the last Ofsted report reflected this.</p>	<p>Penhill Primary School is on the DCSF list of 266 'hard to shift' primary schools in England, out of approximately 17,000 primaries nationally. The school has failed to meet the floor target at Key Stage 2 in both English & Maths for the last five years, despite being supported by a Local Authority Task Group and a School Improvement Action Plan. This has also been disappointing for the Local Authority as support provided in similar circumstances elsewhere has generally been effective.</p> <p>Standards of pupil attainment at the end of 2007 were inadequate and well below the national average, although overall pupils made satisfactory progress. The Ofsted inspection in September 2007 judged that achievement overall across the school was satisfactory, although performance was not consistent and varied across year groups and subjects, and 'many pupils struggle to reach the expected level for their age'. Out of the 27 areas graded by Ofsted, 23 received a grade 3 (satisfactory), two received a grade 2 (good– healthy lifestyles and safe practices) and two a grade 4 (inadequate– the standards reached by learners, and the attendance of learners). It received no grade '1's.</p> <p>Based on the 2007 key stage 2 SAT results, Penhill is 48th out of 52 primary schools on the contextual value added measure, and 52nd out of 52 for average point scores. This year (2008) 47% of Penhill pupils reached the expected level in English, down from 62% last year. 62% reached the expected level in Maths, up from 44% last year. The Government's floor level for these targets is 65% of pupils reaching the expected level. This means that the school has failed to meet this floor level for six years running. Further details are set out in paragraphs 1.2,1.3 and 2.5 of the report and in the consultation documents (Appendices 2 and 3).</p>
<p>There is no evidence that the Academy will raise attainment.</p>	<p>The indicators so far are that the Academy is having a strong impact on standards and pupil attainment. At key stage 2 this year (2008), 56% of pupils reached the expected level in maths compared to 42% last year, and in reading, 73% reached the expected level compared to 50% last year. At key stage 3, there have been improvements in English this year from 53% of pupils meeting the expected level, to 65%. In addition, Maths is up from 44% to 55% and Science is up from 48% to 51%. At key stage 4, from 2006 to 2007, the % attaining 5 A*- Cs including English and Maths has moved for 5% to 20% (and from 9% to 24% not including Maths and English). There has been a significant drop in 2008, due</p>

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	<p>to a serious setback in mathematics.</p> <p>The developing educational plans of the Academy suggest that it will break out from the traditional year group structures and move towards working with vertically organised systems, where the needs of the individual learner can be more readily met and personalised. Students will be progressed according to the 'stage' they are at in their development rather than their chronological age. Such a development could make it more difficult for the current Penhill Primary School pupils to integrate into the Academy when they move at age 11. Being within the Academy will therefore help to remove or reduce a number of the transition issues between primary and secondary, which traditionally is when pupil performance dips – accepting of course that Penhill pupils would remain on a separate site. Further details are set out in paragraph 2.5 of the report and in the consultation documents.</p>
The expanded Swindon Academy will be too large.	<p>If Penhill Primary School became part of the Academy, it would remain on its present site and continue to be fully integrated into the local Penhill Community. Although part of a larger school, it is considered that this would not 'feel' the case. The Academy focuses on personalised learning and care for pupils as individuals, and this would apply equally to those pupils based in the new Pinehurst building when it opens in 2009/10. Pupils at Penhill would remain on their own site but would have the advantage of having access to state of the art facilities available in the Pinehurst building. The ULT consultation document provides further details – Appendix 3.</p>
The funding for the buildings is only available to Penhill Primary if it is part of the expanded Academy.	<p>The refurbishment of Penhill Primary School is recognised as a high priority. There have been many demands on the Council's Capital resources over recent years, and funding has had to be targeted, particularly at those schools with accommodation in the poorest condition.</p> <p>It is estimated that up to £2.3 million may be required to refurbish and remodel the school if it becomes part of the Academy. If the proposal does not proceed, the work remains a high priority with a strong case to implement improvements, but it is for Cabinet to determine how funding is allocated to all major capital schemes, including at Penhill. Further details of the proposed improvements to the accommodation are included in the ULT consultation document (Appendix 3).</p>

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<p>Penhill Primary School is part of the local community. There are concerns that this would change if it became part of the Academy.</p>	<p>As stated in the ULT consultation document (Appendix 3), there is a very strong emphasis placed on community involvement. ULT have made clear that the Penhill site and buildings will serve the community of Penhill. It will support regeneration initiatives and will be a facility for the whole community to use.</p> <p>It is intended that the Penhill site will offer a range of facilities to the community including extended school activities, a youth service provision and access to ICT and business facilities, which would all be subject to a Community Use Agreement between the Council and ULT. There will also be close links established with other schools, the colleges and local employers. In addition, there are two Local Authority representatives on the Academy Governing Body – the Lead Cabinet Member for Children and the Group Director Children. Further details are set out in the ULT consultation document – Appendix 3.</p>
<p>The pre-statutory consultation process did not provide a proper opportunity for people to express their views, or to obtain answers</p>	<p>There was a thorough and extensive consultation process carried out which lasted 6 weeks, from 1 June until 14 July. Approximately 3500 households in Penhill and other stakeholders were sent the Local Authority's and ULT's consultation documents (Appendices 2 and 3). Five 'formal' consultation meetings were then held over 9 and 12 June at Penhill Primary School. In each case, presentations were made initially to explain the proposal as fully as possible, and these were followed by a Q and A session and an opportunity to put forward views/comments. Representatives of the Local Authority, ULT, DJB and Swindon Academy attended each of these sessions and gave as full an answer as possible to each question. The open offer of further consultation meetings was made for staff, parents, governors or others, although none were received.</p> <p>A summary of the key issues raised at these meetings and breakdown of the 357 response forms received is together with responses from Penhill Governing Body, trades unions and Swindon Academy were set out in the report in July 2008 (see Appendix 5).</p> <p>A separate and extensive consultation exercise was carried by DJB, independent consultants appointed by ULT. A summary of the results were reported to Cabinet in July 2008 (see Appendix 5) and the full DJB report is attached at Appendix 4.</p>

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Who are DJB and are they impartial?	As indicated above, DJB are independent consultants appointed by ULT. They are on the DCSF list of approved consultants and have been commissioned by ULT to undertake consultation exercises for proposed Academies across the country. They do not work exclusively to DJB and have been commissioned to do work by a number of other organisations.