

## **Consultation on proposed changes within Royston Schools Academy Trust**

### **Greneway, Roysia, Meridian Schools - moving forward together**

#### **Purpose of the Document**

This consultation document sets out Royston Schools Academy Trust's (Garden Walk, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7JH) proposal to merge Greneway Middle School (Garden Walk, Royston, Herts, SG8 7JF), Roysia Middle School (Burns Road, Royston, Herts, SG8 5EQ) and Meridian Upper School (Garden Walk, Royston, Herts, SG8 7JH) to create a through school for Years 5 to 13.

Summary information on the schools within Royston Schools Academy Trust - see Appendix 1.

#### **Who is making this Proposal?**

Royston Schools Academy Trust, also referred to as 'The Trust'. The primary responsibility of the Trust is to offer the highest quality education within a defined set of resources. The Trust is accountable for both the finances and the educational outcomes of the three schools. In relation to this proposal, the Trust has two key objectives:

- Educational excellence
- Financial sustainability

#### **What change is being proposed?**

- To merge all three schools into a through school, under a new name, with middle years, upper years and sixth form provision. The school would admit pupils from ages 9 to 18 (Years 5 to 13).
- To site the school on the current Garden Walk sites (where Greneway and Meridian schools are currently situated).
- To deliver Sixth Form provision through a partnership between Meridian Sixth Form and The Knights Templar School Sixth Form (Park Street, Baldock, Herts, SG7 6DZ).
- To affect these changes for September 2018.

#### **Summary of rationale for change**

- Schools are primarily funded according to the numbers of pupils they have on roll. The capacity of the three schools based on Published Admission Number (PAN) is 1479 places. Currently, there are 957 pupils on roll across the Trust. The Trust is at 65% of its capacity and there are surplus places within the Trust.
- State funding is making it increasingly challenging to deliver the quality of education that we all want for our children. A report, 'Financial sustainability of schools' by the National Audit Office in December 2016 showed that schools face an 8.7% real-terms reduction in per-pupil funding between 2015-16 and 2019-20 due to cost pressures. See Appendix 2.
- Greneway, Roysia and Meridian all spend more money than they receive annually.
- Irrespective of pupil numbers, our schools continue to provide specialist teaching staff, even where there are relatively few pupils taking advantage of this.
- Running costs of the premises (such as heating, lighting, cleaning and maintenance of the buildings) do not change as pupil numbers on roll do.
- All three schools are rated as 'Good' by Ofsted. However the financial challenges posed by running three separate schools on three sites means that the quality of provision will become increasingly difficult to maintain, let alone improve.

## **What is the context to this change?**

- The Trust is committed to achieving educational excellence in the local Royston community and is aware of the value the community places on the three-tier system.
- In 2014, with an increasing budgetary deficit, falling pupil numbers and reductions in state funding all threatening to damage the quality of education offered, the Trust applied for a loan from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This was to support the financial situation until the increase in projected pupil numbers (Hertfordshire County Council) materialised . This resulted in a 'Financial Notice to Improve' and a requirement from the ESFA to provide a recovery plan to pay off this loan.
- Staff across the Trust have worked hard to try to do more with less but, despite everyone's best efforts, infrastructure costs (e.g. maintaining three sites and three centres of administration) remain too high. This has been further compounded by the current funding levels in state education and increased competition from local schools impacting pupil numbers on roll. Despite these efforts, the loan still exists and projections based on the schools' in-year expenditure shows this deficit increasing. The Trust believes that it would be inappropriate to continue making small economies as projections suggest the situation will never be resolved. A more strategic response is required.
- Despite some excellent A level results and recent increases in pupil numbers, the current Sixth Form provision is not currently financially viable. The Trust is committed to maintaining as wide a 16-19 provision as possible and has noted parent feedback on the growing success of the local Sixth Form. We are working with Knights Templar to enable sixth form courses to continue to be offered to local Royston pupils. These negotiations are still in progress. It is our intention to publish the plans for the Sixth Form by the end of November.

## **What other options have been considered?**

- The Trust has maintained dialogue with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and involved The Regional Commissioner's Office and other education experts, to look at all available alternatives objectively and dispassionately. Many options have been considered, including closing individual schools, closing the sixth form or reverting to the two-tier system – all of which have been considered and rejected against the following criteria:
  - 1) Inability to provide a full quality educational offer in Royston (Years 5 to 13).
  - 2) Posed a threat to the three-tier system favoured by the local community and could not be achieved without significant changes to First Schools.
  - 3) Not financially viable or sustainable.

## Why this option?

**The Trust's primary objective is to ensure there is sustainable, quality education provision for local children.**

### **Financially prudent**

- A well-run, through school, combining the best that the individual schools can offer, is the optimum option. This will allow us to be financially prudent, focussing the resources on teaching and learning, not only maintaining the quality of education, but improving it.

### **Maintain three-tier benefits**

- In our decision making, we have taken into consideration the strong views of many in the community, to maintain, where practical, much of the three-tier system. The through school will continue to deliver middle and upper years provision with specialist teaching. In addition, we intend to keep pupils within peer groups that minimise social pressures and maximise opportunities for learning and development.

### **Through school benefits**

- The Trust has researched schools providing education across the primary and secondary age ranges, including through schools, focusing on a curriculum and an assessment system that works all the way through the school to support greater continuity of learning and faster progress for pupils. For more information about the identified benefits of a through school, see Appendix 3.
- There are many proponents of through schools who see advantages: minimising educational dips resulting from transition, familiarity with learning environment and a continuity of care and provision by staff, who learn to truly understand their pupils, throughout the entire educational journey.

### **Garden Walk sites (Economies and space)**

- To accommodate middle and upper years on the Garden Walk sites will allow us to take advantage of economies of scale and be efficient with our resources. An assessment of the current Garden Walk sites with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), with Published Admission Numbers at the Garden Walk sites offering 1119 places, indicates that the current need for pupil places can be comfortably met within current buildings. This proposal will meet pupil number projections now and in the future. The Trust is exploring with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) any resources released by the Burns Road site and how this can best be used to benefit the new school.

### **Benefits of one site**

- To have one site enables staff to collaborate more readily, giving us the best educational advantages which is financially sustainable.

### **Expert staff across all Key Stages**

- Excellent staff and leadership with experience across Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5, are very well placed to maintain the three-tier benefits and develop through school benefits.

## What would this mean for your child?

- The degree of impact of the proposed changes will vary with individual circumstances. The Trust acknowledges that for pupils and parents currently attending Roysia School, the proposed changes will be more significant. We are committed to understanding these impacts and working with parents and pupils through this period of change.
- All pupils in the existing schools would be guaranteed places in the through school.
- All current Year 12 pupils will complete their Sixth Form courses in Royston.
- All pupils will be taught in an age appropriate environment, for example, providing a specific area for Year 5 pupils with separate playground space. It is worth noting that in the past the current Greneway site has accommodated 600 + pupils aged 9 to 13.
- In terms of familiarity with the proposed site, currently 82% of pupils within the Trust attend the Garden Walk sites which are located metres away from each other.
- During the transition, arrangements will be in place so that pupils have time and space to adjust to the new school. All pupils will be supported during this transition process by our well established pastoral teams. We will use our Transition Support Worker where appropriate.
- There will be an appropriate level of both teaching and non-teaching staff to deliver age related, quality educational outcomes.
- The staff will come from the three existing schools of Roysia, Greneway and Meridian and therefore provide familiarity and continuity for both parents and pupils.
- Some children will find themselves in larger teaching groups, in particular Roysia pupils and Meridian 6th form pupils. The Trust is committed to delivering quality education in class sizes, in line with schools nationally, for example Year 5 entry is based on a principle of 30 pupils per class. Teachers across the three schools are trained and skilled in teaching a variety of class sizes.
- It is recognised that the school's location will have the greatest impact on current Roysia parents and pupils. Some pupils will have shortened journeys to schools and some will be longer. The 'DFE Home-to-school travel and transport statutory guidance' relating to safe 'walking distance' is defined as three miles if aged between 8 and 16. This proposal will lead to an increase in pupil numbers attending the Garden Walk sites and related traffic at certain times of the day. This increase in pupil numbers is within the Published Admission Number (PAN) for Greneway and Meridian which is 1119 pupils.
- Based on meetings with Hertfordshire County Council in relation to traffic on Garden Walk, a transport assessment was conducted which considered the impact of additional school provision and this has been taken into consideration in this proposal.
- As a newly formed school, we expect there to be changes to uniform. Whilst no decision has been made about a new uniform design, the Trust is committed to a transition period of up to two years with flexibility for current pupils in terms of uniform. Input will be sought from parents and pupils linked to uniform design.

### **What would this mean for staff?**

- The Trust is committed to using the strengths and expertise of staff from all three schools.
- In keeping with the Trust's commitment to education excellence and financial sustainability, a leadership, management and staffing structure for the new school will be established.
- The Trust recognises that this is a period of uncertainty and we are working hard to minimise this. If approved and implemented, those individuals impacted will be fully consulted and unions will be engaged throughout. Professional input will be provided by Herts for Learning (HfL) Human Resources.
- The Trust has an excellent staff that are passionate about children's welfare. Throughout the process of transition, staff will continue to focus on teaching, learning and support for the children within their care. Staff will be encouraged to be actively involved with the transformation into the new school.

### **What would this mean for admissions?**

- The Royston Schools Academy Trust is the admission authority for Greneway, Roysia Middle Schools and Meridian Upper School and responsible for setting the admissions policy. Admissions will continue to be managed by Hertfordshire County Council in line with the Trust's published admissions arrangements under agreed criteria. There will be no change to the oversubscription criteria, although the distance between home and school will be measured from the address point of the entrance to the new site for 2019/20 onwards. Pupils transferring to the new school in Year 5 will remain on roll until Year 11(or Year 13 if entering the 6th form). There will be no need for an application process for entry to Year 9 because all pupils will be on the roll of the through school.

### **What are the arrangements for the consultation process?**

The consultation will run for 6 weeks from Friday 20th October until 4pm on Friday 1st December 2017. Copies of the Consultation document and Feedback Form are available on Royston Schools Academy Trust Schools' websites or from school offices.

Stakeholders consulted will include pupils, parents and staff of the current Royston Schools Academy Trust community and pupils, parents and staff of partnership schools through the Royston Area Schools Partnership (RASP), Hertfordshire County Council, Trade Unions, Councillors and the Member of Parliament. As this is a significant change, we welcome responses from the whole community.

In Royston Schools Academy Trust schools, pupils' feedback will be gathered using age appropriate methods to contribute to this consultation.

**You can make your views known by completing and returning the attached feedback form no later than 4pm on Friday 1st December 2017.**

**Other feedback opportunities:**

An initial Royston Schools Academy Trust Parents' Meeting was held at Greneway Middle School (Garden Walk site) on 28th September 2017 to outline the proposal and hear feedback.

The Trust will be holding drop-in sessions. These sessions will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to seek clarification and understanding of the proposal and provide any further feedback:

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Time:</b>	<b>Location:</b>
07.11.17	1730 - 1900	Roysia Middle School, Burns Road site
09.11.17	1730 - 1900	Meridian Upper School, Garden Walk site

**What happens after the consultation?**

The Royston Schools Academy Trust Board will meet at the end of the consultation (December 2017) to analyse and carefully consider all of the responses received. The analysis of the feedback will inform any final proposal submitted to the Department for Education (DfE).

An assessment of the proposal will be made before the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), makes a final decision. In making decisions on proposals, the Regional Schools Commissioner will be advised by their Head Teacher Board. Head Teacher Boards are made up of experienced academy headteachers and other sector leaders who advise and challenge Regional Schools Commissioners on the decisions they make.

We know that the prospect of any change can be unsettling but please be assured, that whatever the future holds, we remain committed to doing our very best for all of our children.

## Appendix 1

**Information on the Schools**

Royston Schools Academy Trust (Garden Walk, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7JH) consists of:

- Greneway Middle School (Garden Walk, Royston, Herts, SG8 7JF)  
<http://www.greneway.herts.sch.uk/>
- Roysia Middle school (Burns Road, Royston, Herts, SG8 5EQ)  
<http://roysia.herts.sch.uk/>
- Meridian Upper School (Garden Walk, Royston, Herts, SG8 7JH)  
<http://www.meridian.herts.sch.uk/>

School:	Ofsted Inspection Date:	Overall effectiveness:
Greneway Middle School	26th April 2017	Good
<p><i>‘The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. There is a strong sense of teamwork throughout the school.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders, including governors, have high aspirations for all pupils. This vision is shared by staff. You place a strong emphasis on developing high-quality teaching and learning.</i></p> <p><i>Pupils follow an engaging curriculum which makes good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a range of enrichment activities such as clubs, trips and visits.’</i></p>		
Roysia Middle School	8th February 2017	Good
<p><i>‘Senior leaders and governors have created a school culture where pupils are encouraged and supported in order to achieve well academically and develop emotionally and socially. As a result, pupils are confident learners.</i></p> <p><i>Pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum and have access to specialist teachers and rooms. The curriculum makes strong provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</i></p> <p><i>The school’s work to support pupils’ personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils receive high-quality support to overcome barriers to learning.’</i></p>		
Meridian Upper School	28th January 2015	Good
<p><i>‘Good leadership at all levels, including by the governing body, has driven the school forward.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders have established a culture of ambition for students and staff alike.</i></p> <p><i>Students behave in a polite and mature manner. They have good attitudes to learning and want to succeed. Students and adults enjoy positive relationships so all members of the school community re valued and respected.’</i></p> <p><i>The school works well with its partner middle schools to ensure that students experience a smooth and successful transition into the school.’</i></p>		

## Appendix 1 Continued

### Information on the Schools

Table to detail Royston School Academy Trust current pupil populations:

School	Age Range	Published Admission Number (PAN)*	Pupil Number Census 2015	Pupil Number Census 2016	Pupil Number Census 2017	Pupil Number as % of PAN 2017
Greneway Middle School	9 - 13	480	453	442	435	92%
Royasia Middle School	9 - 13	360	167	180	191	50%
Meridian Upper School (Years 9 - 11)	13 - 16	639	361	344	331	54%
Meridian Sixth Form	16 - 18	202	118	104	119	51%
<b>RSAT</b>	<b>9 - 16</b>	<b>1479</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>957</b>	<b>65%</b>

\* The PAN does not reflect capacity of the site.

For example, Greneway site has historically accommodated 600 + pupils aged 9 to 13.

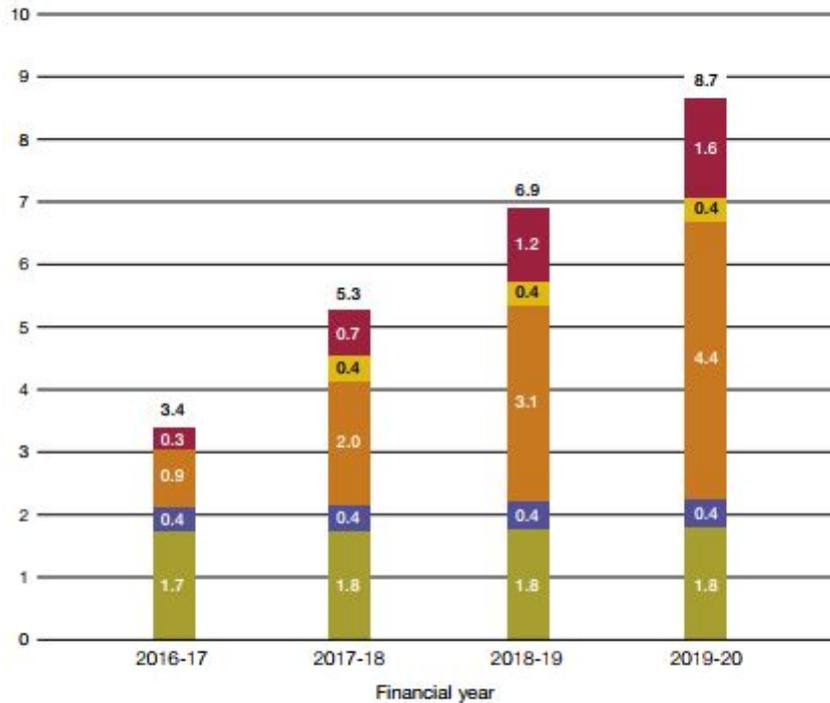
## Appendix 2

A report by the National Audit Office in December 2016 showed that schools face an 8.7% real-terms reduction in funding by 2019/20 compared to 2015/16.

### Cumulative cost pressures facing schools, 2016-17 to 2019-20

The Department estimates cumulative cost pressures on schools of 3.4% in 2016-17, rising to 8.7% by 2019-20

Cumulative cost pressure (%)



- Inflationary pressures on non-staff spending
- Apprenticeship levy
- Annual pay award and salary increases
- Teachers' pension scheme
- National insurance

Note

1 Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

Source: Department for Education

National Audit Office, Department for Education 'Financial sustainability of schools', December 2016

## Appendix 3

The Trust has researched schools providing education across the primary and secondary age ranges, including through schools, notably the Ark Academy Trust and Simon Balle School.

The Simon Balle School in Hertford is an excellent example of a successful through school. Consistently in the top 10 state schools in Hertfordshire, current figures show it has nearly 5 applicants per pupil place.

The Trust's aim is to become a through school focusing on greater continuity of learning and faster progress for pupils. Benefits of through schools that would relate to our Trust include:

Improved educational outcomes by:

- Providing a cohesive curriculum suited to the needs of pupils to ensure the highest outcomes;
- Providing a coherent and consistent system of assessment to track pupils' progress and target necessary interventions;
- Preventing any educational dip resulting from transition;
- Providing teaching staff with more opportunities to understand and plan for the requirements across Key Stages; and
- Building strong and supportive relationships between pupils and teachers across Key Stages.

Improved leadership and management by:

- Creating a unified vision and values for the school;
- Providing coherent and highly effective leadership structure to work across middle and upper years;
- Providing teaching and support staff with access to a wider range of continuing professional development opportunities; and
- Channelling specialisms (for example, special education needs, data management) to better meet the needs of the school community.

Improved educational provision by:

- Introducing a broad, balanced and sustainable curriculum which reflects the needs and aspirations of the community;
- Improving range and quality of facilities and learning resources available to all pupils;
- Increasing the continuity of support for vulnerable groups of pupils;
- Making efficient and effective use of finances, in terms of staffing and purchase of services;
- Broadening the range of extra-curricular and out-of-school activities; and
- Developing a distinctive community ethos where identity with the school creates a sense of pride.

## Royston Schools Academy Trust Public Consultation Feedback

Consultation on the proposal to merge Greneway Middle School, Roysia Middle School and Meridian Upper School and create a through school, Years 5 to 13, on the Garden Walk sites.

The Trust's primary objective is to ensure there is sustainable, quality education provision for local children.

After considering this written proposal, do you agree that it should be formally proposed?

Yes, I agree

No, I disagree

I neither agree nor disagree

If you agree, please tell us your views:

If you disagree, please tell us your views:

Please suggest any alternatives for consideration by the Trust that will address the key objectives of the proposal: educational excellence and financial sustainability.

Please let us know if you have any other comments:

All responses will be treated as confidential but it would help our understanding if you could provide the following background information:

**Your name (Optional):**

**Are you responding as (please put a 'x' in each box that applies):**

Parent / Carer of pupil (s) at Greneway Middle School

Parent / Carer of pupil (s) at Roysia Middle School

Parent / Carer of pupil (s) at Meridian Upper School

Royston School Academy Trust Staff Member

Parent of Child/Children at Other School/s  
Please state name of School/s \_\_\_\_\_

Governor  
Please state name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please state) \_\_\_\_\_

This can be completed by:

- Electronic return using this weblink <http://bit.ly/RSATConsultation>
- Email to [clerk@rsat.org.uk](mailto:clerk@rsat.org.uk)
- Hand delivered paper copies, in sealed envelopes, for the attention of RSAT Clerk, returned to either: Greneway Middle School, Roysia Middle School or Meridian Upper School
- Post to: RSAT Consultation, Clerk to Trust, Greneway Middle School, Garden Walk, Royston, Herts, SG8 7JF

**Thank you for taking part in this consultation.  
Please return your Feedback Form by 4pm on Friday December 1st.**