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ASSOCIATES

Elements Academy Consultation Report

June 2022



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1. Introduction

In February 2022 the Department for Education approved our application to move forward to the pre-opening phase for a new special free school in Rotherham for children from Key stage 2 to Key Stage 4 (7 – 16 years) with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. The school will build on the excellent work of the Aspire Pupil Referral Unit and the Rowan Centre as part of the borough wide solution for SEND and will bring SEMH provision for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans together within one new facility.

The statutory consultation took place between 4 April – 27 May 2022 and this report sets out an overview of the process and the outcomes including recommendations for the future of the new school.

2. Consultation Methodology

The overall aim of the consultation process was to ensure that everyone who has a stake in the development of the new school had the opportunity to hear about the proposals and to share their views and ideas about the plans.

The objectives of the process were to:

- Provide relevant background information and context for stakeholders;
- Explain the reasons for the new school;
- Share key detail including key policies linked to admissions, safeguarding and SEND, site information and curriculum plans;
- Provide an opportunity for stakeholders to hear / read more and ask questions.

The principles laid down by the project team for the consultation were that it should be:

- An open and transparent process;
- Accessible to all stakeholders in terms of:
 - The times of the events;
 - The ability to meet virtually or physically;
 - The language used (jargon-free wherever possible and acronyms fully explained);
 - Well-publicised and advertised.

A variety of media were used to consult including:

- Direct letters to parents and carers, management committees, partner agencies and staff of both Rowan and Aspire schools; local councillors, MPs and all Rotherham schools;
- Media releases to the press and articles in local community publications;
- Leaflets distributed to local residents;
- Publicised meetings involving presentations and questions and answer sessions;
- Frequently asked questions and comments slips;

- Online Survey;
- Dedicated consultation email account;
- Website / Social Media;
- Emails.

2.1 Direct letters

A letter and/or email introducing the consultation were sent to the following groups and an example is included at Appendix 1a – 1j:

- Parents and Carers/Management Committee members and staff from Rowan and Aspire schools;
- Local councillors & MPs;
- Partner agencies;
- Rotherham MBC schools;
- Other key stakeholders in the region.

2.2 Online survey

Throughout the consultation Google survey was used to capture a response to key questions, which included:

1. Please tick the box which best describes the type of stakeholder you are?
2. Do you agree with our statement of provision (admissions policy)?
3. Do you agree with our safeguarding policy?
4. Do you agree with our SEND policy?
5. Is the proposed curriculum offer engaging for the pupils who may attend the school?
6. Our proposed permanent site is situated on the historic Dinnington College site on Doe Quarry Lane, Dinnington, S25 2NF. Do you agree this is an appropriate location?
7. Should the Trust enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State to open our school? To understand more about what is a Funding Agreement log onto <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-and-free-school-funding-agreements-multi-academy-trust>
8. Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a new uniform with the new school logo? This would be a plain polo shirt, branded jumper and trousers or skirt?
9. Any further comments or questions?
10. If you would like to receive a copy of the final report and findings and/or would like a response to any question asked whilst completing this survey, please complete the details below before submitting your form

There was also an opportunity with all questions to leave additional comments should the stakeholder wish to do so.

2.3 Website

<https://www.eat.uk.com/free-school-consultation/> was live throughout the consultation period. The site (which was accessed via the Ethos Academy Trust website) was aimed at providing detailed information about Ethos and the proposals with an opportunity to email questions or comments or to conduct the online survey. Screenshots from the website can be found in Appendix 2.

2.4 Publicised meetings

The following meetings were communicated to stakeholders and carried out during the consultation period:

	Thursday 5 May Aspire Stakeholders	Monday 9 May Rowan Stakeholders	Tuesday 10 May General Stakeholders
	Rotherham Aspire Rawmarsh Site, New Street, Rawmarsh, Rotherham, S62 5AF	The Rowan Centre, Estate Rd, Rawmarsh S62 7JD	The Rowan Centre, Estate Rd, Rawmarsh S62 7JD
3.30pm	Aspire Staff	Rowan Staff	Partner Agencies and local schools
4.45pm	Aspire Management Committee	Rowan Management Committee*	Councillors / LA Officers
6.00pm	Aspire Parents / Carers	Rowan Parents / Carers	General Community

*due to unforeseen circumstances the Management Committee for the Rowan Centre were unable to meet during the consultation period and was rearranged for 8th June. The Management Committee were also given the opportunity to view the presentation and speak to Ethos Academy Trust in the interim period until the meeting could take place.

2.5 Leaflets and Posters

The Trust hand delivered circa 320 leaflets to local residents on the immediate roads surrounding the school. The roads included: Doe Quarry Lane, Pencil Lane, Hope Avenue, Queen Street, Hunters Drive, Poynton Drive; Hunters Chase and Jessop Court.

2.6 Email – Consultation@eat.uk.com

The email address above was used to enable anyone who wished to be able to post a question or a comment about the proposals. At the end of the consultation period, these questions and comments were collected to be responded to as appropriate.

2.7 Community, LA, Partner Agencies, Schools, Councillors, Staff, Management Committee and Parent/Carer Presentations

At each of the consultation meetings a presentation was given with information about Ethos Academy Trust and why they are looking to open a new special free school in Rotherham. A copy of the presentation was placed on the Trust website and a copy can be found in Appendix 3.

3. Overview of the Feedback received

Appendix 4 contains all the questions, comments and feedback received from the various media used throughout the consultation period. Numbers of participants in meetings and surveys are below.

3.1 Attendance at Consultation Meetings

Date	Event	Venue	Number in attendance
25/04/2022	Rowan Staff	The Rowan Centre	All staff
28/04/2022	Aspire Staff	Aspire Rawmarsh Site	Approx 22 staff
05/05/2022	Aspire Staff	Aspire Rawmarsh Site	Approx 15 staff
05/05/2022	Aspire Management Committee	Aspire Rawmarsh Site	6
09/05/2022	Rowan Staff	The Rowan Centre	Approx 50 staff
09/05/2022	Rowan Families	The Rowan Centre	6 in person / 12 virtually
10/05/2022	Stakeholders / Partner Agencies	The Rowan Centre	0 (attended the general session below)
10/05/2022	Local Authority Representatives	The Rowan Centre	0
10/05/2022	General Community	The Rowan Centre	4
27/05/2022	Aspire Families	Aspire Rawmarsh Site	Approx 50 parents / carers
08/06/2022	Rowan Management Committee	Virtual meeting	5

3.2 Online Survey

We received 7 completed surveys online. Full detailed feedback is summarised on the next page:



Please tick the box which best describes the type of stakeholder you are?	Are you completing this survey (please tick all that apply)	Do you agree with our admissions policy (statement of provision)?	Do you agree with our safeguarding policy?	Do you agree with our SEND policy?	Is the proposed curriculum offer engaging for the students who may attend the school? (Detailed curriculum plans will be shared within our meetings and copies of the information will be displayed ...)	Our proposed permanent site is situated on the historic Dinnington College site on Doe Quarry Lane, Dinnington, S25 2NF. Do you agree this is an appropriate location?	Should the Trust enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State to open Gilbert Ward Academy? To understand more about what is a Funding Agreement log onto https://www.gov.uk/governmen...	Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a new uniform with the new school logo? This would be a plain polo shirt, branded jumper and trousers or skirt?	Do you have any further comments or questions?
Parent / Carer of a student currently at a Rotherham mainstream school	Having received the survey link but no supporting information	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Parent / Carer of a student currently at a Rotherham mainstream school	Having received the survey link but no supporting information	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Parent / Carer of a student currently at Aspire	In advance of attending a consultation meeting	Don't know	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know	No	The uniform is going to be a massive issue for my son who has a lot of sensory needs. I have a lot of questions that need answering and would like someone to contact me ASAP 07481895349.
Parent / Carer of a student currently at Rowan	In advance of attending a consultation meeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know	Don't know	Yes	No
Partner Organisation	In advance of attending a consultation meeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know	Don't know	Don't know	Yes	
School staff member - Aspire	Having read consultation documentation available to you (whether sent home, to work or online)	Yes	Yes	Yes	More Curriculum information is required but the starting point is a very good start.	No, the travel time for some pupils within the authority will increase due to the hours pupils are required to attend school. Taxi's tackling rush hour traffic within Rotherham will be delayed or they will have to collect children earlier than usual. For a pupil living	Yes	Yes	



Please tick the box which best describes the type of stakeholder you are?	Are you completing this survey (please tick all that apply)	Do you agree with our admissions policy (statement of provision)?	Do you agree with our safeguarding policy?	Do you agree with our SEND policy?	Is the proposed curriculum offer engaging for the students who may attend the school? (Detailed curriculum plans will be shared within our meetings and copies of the information will be displayed ...)	Our proposed permanent site is situated on the historic Dinnington College site on Doe Quarry Lane, Dinnington, S25 2NF. Do you agree this is an appropriate location?	Should the Trust enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State to open Gilbert Ward Academy? To understand more about what is a Funding Agreement log onto https://www.gov.uk/governmen...	Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a new uniform with the new school logo? This would be a plain polo shirt, branded jumper and trousers or skirt?	Do you have any further comments or questions?
						in West Melton, they will need to travel approx. 15 miles on direct A roads, which are all busy first thing in the morning. 15 miles in rush hour traffic could see a travel time of 30 - 60 minutes, plus.			
LA representative (inc officers, councillors)	Having read consultation documentation available to you (whether sent home, to work or online)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know	Yes	Don't know	no need for branded uniform, many families are struggling and don't need this extra worry	



3.3 Themes and Key Messages

The meetings held during consultation were predominantly well attended and everyone was engaged, and Ethos are extremely grateful for the contributions everyone made both in the formal meetings and also via emails, phone calls and online. All questions asked and the responses are included in Appendix 4 however, the headline themes and messages are summarised below.

Transition for Pupils

Questions from pupils themselves, parents/carers, staff and wider stakeholder groups were centred around what transition will look like both prior to the move and upon opening of the new building.

Key areas of consideration:

- When can pupils visit the new building? What will it look and feel like?
- When will pupils know who their class teacher is and when will they meet them?
- What does the curriculum look like and what will they be learning?
- When will they meet pupils from the respective schools forming Elements?
- Is there a uniform and will all pupils have to wear it?
- How will I get to the new school?
- How many pupils will there be at the new school and what age groups will attend?

Staffing

The local authority TUPE consultation ran simultaneously with the Trust statutory consultation being discussed in this report. With this in mind the feedback in part reflects the timing of the two running in parallel and not all answers were available immediately.

The detail raised by staff centred around the following areas:

- TUPE process – where do colleagues fit in the structure and what will their role(s) entail?
- Staffing structures – what does the final staff structure for Elements look like?
- Ethos as an employer – will the trust be changing terms and conditions? Do Ethos provide opportunities for staff to develop and learning new skills?
- Clarity on roles and expectations, teaching groups etc – how soon will staff know what and who they are teaching?
- Training and CPD opportunities – are Ethos supportive of CPD and what opportunities might there be more widely in the Trust



- Visiting the site and meeting colleagues from the respective school coming together to create Elements Academy – nobody wants the first time they meet to be when the school opens and staff would welcome the opportunity to have team building / meetings before the summer break.

Meeting Pupil Need

A pivotal line of enquiry from stakeholders was in regards the ability of Elements Academy to meet all pupils' SEMH needs. Would the school be appropriately staffed, trained and equipped to meet existing and new needs?

Were Ethos aware of the existing pupils needs and how are consultations going for September's intake of new starters?

Buildings, Accessibility and Travel

The academy will be based at the site of the former Dinnington College in Dinnington and an existing building is being refurbished to accommodate up to 135 pupils. Stakeholders were most interested in the following:

- When will the building be complete and when can they access/see it?
- The location / distance of the building being the very East of the Borough rather than been central – is this the best place?
- Making a college building work for SEMH pupils: ensuring there is enough specialist provision/space within e.g. calm rooms, therapy spaces etc
- Can staff afford to travel the additional distance?
- Security both inside and out, ensuring children are safe at all times
- Car parking - the volume of staff and limited spaces is a concern

Governance

Representatives of both schools Management Committee's met with representatives from Ethos as part of the consultation process. There were two main lines of enquiry:

1. Transition of pupils and staff – members sought clarity on the plan of activity over the remainder of the summer term and what work was to be done and when. Committee members were assured that a plan was in place with allocated roles and responsibilities with a clear reminder we must not forget about communications with parents / carers. It was stressed how important the school website is and ensuring clarity of message asap.
2. Future governance of Elements Academy – the Academy Performance Review Committee (APRC) was introduced as the proposed local governance solution. Ethos stressed the importance of having local knowledge and continuity of membership where possible and invited members to contact the Trust direct to ask questions and potentially submit an application to join the APRC.



Communications

The enthusiasm and desire from stakeholders to ensure that Elements Academy is a success from day one was a key theme. In order to ensure success the power and importance of good communications was emphasised.

Parents/carers want to feel informed. They want to support the school and their child in readiness for the move.

Staff would like clarity as soon as possible on structures, resourcing and expectations of them so they can prepare for life at Elements Academy and as an employee of Ethos Academy Trust.

Pupils want to meet staff, see the new building and experience what it will be like in September before they break up for the summer.

4. Local Authority Feedback

In parallel to this consultation the Local Authority facilitated a small consultation to ascertain whether the public agreed that the Secretary of State should enter into a Funding Agreement. They received 28 responses total:

22 people agreed

6 did not agree

Further comments can be found in Appendix 5.

5. Trust response to the consultation feedback

At the point of appointment of Ethos being identified as the preferred sponsor of Elements Academy in February 2022, a lot of work has taken place to get to where we are today. We should not underestimate the volume of work and the significant contributions of many individuals and organisations and thank each and every one of those involved.

A detailed transition plan underpinned by equally detailed communications is required. At the time of preparing this report, the plans have been finalised and are all in place with roles and responsibilities, deadlines and outcomes agreed. This is reviewed and updated weekly.

The Board of Trustees of Ethos will consider the detail of the report and the following recommendations:

- Ethos should continue to push ahead with the planned opening for September 2022;
- Communications need to be timely, fit for purpose for the audience and need to be in place quickly;



- Recruit as quickly as possible to support staff vacancies in the structure to ensure the school is fully staffed for September;
- Keep one eye on cost of living and staff retention. Travel distance is a concern for staff and parents/carers;
- Arrange transition events for staff, pupils and parents / carers before the summer term break.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In summary, throughout the 6 weeks' consultation period we have concluded that there is a strong demand for Elements Academy and that there is support and commitment from a variety of stakeholders across Rotherham MBC. Stakeholders are extremely passionate and committed to ensuring the school is a success from day one and that pupils and staff have the necessary support during this transition period and over the first 12 months particularly.

The Trust will follow up on actions identified in the feedback linked to communications, transition, staffing and curriculum planning and we look forward to sharing further communications as the project develops through to opening and full operation.

A detailed mobilisation plan should be prepared, maintained and shared regularly, ensuring no stone is left unturned.

Finally, Ethos Academy Trust would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation and helped inform this report and our future work and priorities. Together we will make Elements Academy a successful school where everyone can say "we helped create this new academy".



7. List of Appendices

Appendix 1a – 1f	Letters
Appendix 2	Consultation Website
Appendix 3	Consultation Presentation - example
Appendix 4	Collective Feedback comments, questions and answers
Appendix 5	Local Authority Consultation Feedback