

BROCKLESBY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

THE CASE FOR TERMINATING THE PROCESS TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL IN 2015

The local authority's reason for issuing a notice of closure is that, in its current form, the school's projected pupil numbers point to unsustainability in both educational and financial terms. The school fully understands this position.

The school has proposed developing its early years' provision in order to increase the numbers on roll to the extent that the school achieves financial sustainability within three years. Thus, the school would not remain in its current form. The local authority takes the view that this initiative, by itself, does not mitigate the risk to sustained educational viability.

The local authority supports a partnership between the school and Tollbar Multi Academy Trust (TMAT), whereby the school would access the Trust's pooled financial and educational resources. Furthermore, TMAT could organise publicity and transport that would increase pupil numbers beyond those planned by the school's early years' proposal. In order for this to happen, the school needs to convert into an academy. An application made to the Office of the Regional Commissioner was turned down by the Headteacher Board (HTB) on March 26th.

Feedback on this refusal suggests that the substantive reason hinges on the small size of school. A Freedom of Information (Fol) request for further detail has resulted in an uninformative and unhelpful response. The school and the TMAT feel that the HTB lacks experience of small schools and is not best placed to make judgements on future configurations that might assure their future.

In seeking new ways forward, the school has had discussions with Lord Yarborough, a governor of the school and landowner, who has agreed to fund the school to the extent of guaranteeing a balanced budget over the next two academic years, in order that the school has time to seek and plan alternative pathways to educational and financial sustainability.

The Governing Body of the school is now able to assure the local authority on three counts (from September 2015):

1. A guaranteed balanced budget over the next two years
2. Immediate educational viability and sustainability
3. A firm commitment to reapply for academy status within the next six months

A guaranteed balanced budget over the next two years

A letter of commitment from Lord Yarborough is attached (see attachment 3). Over the two year period, with the help of TMAT, the school will develop its early years' provision to 'grow' pupil numbers. In addition, over the two year period, TMAT will use its expertise and resources to increase pupil numbers through well targeted publicity campaigns and the organisation of transport from villages across county borders. These matters are already signalled in the consultation prospectus, application and supporting papers.

Immediate educational viability and sustainability

Again, as signalled in the consultation prospectus, application and supporting papers, TMAT will take control of staffing with a view to deploying appropriately qualified staff across all its constituent academies (and partner schools) in ways that secure cost efficiency and educational entitlement and excellence. In addition, TMAT will assume joint control of finance and administration, along with responsibility for school improvement.

A firm commitment to reapply for academy status within the next six months

The governing body of the school with TMAT will reapply for academy status for the school and incorporation into TMAT before February 2016. A period of time will be needed in the autumn term to engage in frank and productive discussions with the Regional Commissioner to assure the next application's success. From September, TMAT will treat Brocklesby Park as a 'partner school' and, as such, 'a school in the process of joining the TMAT'. This will allow TMAT to initiate all those strategies necessary to secure the school's long term future and, in due course, to remove it from Lord Yarborough's fixed term financial lifeline. The *quid pro quo* of this arrangement, given TMAT's monetary commitment, is that the local authority and the school commit to the TMAT solution and do not seek arrangements with alternative multi academy trusts. The governing body of the school will co-opt into its group a member of the TMAT board to develop relationships and to ensure a single and agreed development pathway. Furthermore, the local authority will devolve to the school in full all due revenue and capital funding.

The school and the Trust take the view that this alters the nature and circumstances of this school sufficiently to warrant a withdrawal of notice of closure. Governors ask that Lincolnshire County Council give this proposal due consideration. Should the Council wish to retain the notice but alter the schedule to defer the closure date then governors would ask for a one year "stay" to give the chance of one more application for academy conversion. Should this fail then all parties would cooperate in a managed closure in August 2016.

Attachments

- 1 Revenue funding projections September 1 2015 to August 31 2017
- 2 Capital funding projections September 1 2015 to August 31 2017
- 3 Letter of commitment from Lord Yarborough
- 4 Letter of commitment from the Tollbar Multi Academy Trust Board
- 5 Letter of commitment from the Brocklesby park School Governors
- 6 Letter of commitment from the Local Authority

1 Revenue funding**Two Year Budget from 1 April 2015**

	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>2016/17</u>
Income		
Budget Share	171,447	161,244
Early years adjustment	9,662	20,434
Carry forward	13,325	(2,396)
	<u>194,434</u>	<u>179,282</u>
Expenditure		
Teaching staff	114,544	120,073
Non-teaching staff	46,598	47,107
Indirect employee expenses (car allowance)	500	500
Development and training	3,500	3,000
Building maintenance and improvement	7,390	1,000
Grounds maintenance	1,488	1,538
Cleaning and caretaking	290	300
Water services	800	820
Energy and rates	3,000	5,745
Other occupational costs	1,546	1,822
Learning resources	500	1,600
ICT learning resources	434	442
Administrative supplies	4,697	4,832
Insurance premiums	2,800	3,497
Agency supply	5,000	3,000
Bought in professional services	3,743	3,815
	<u>196,830</u>	<u>199,091</u>
Accumulated deficit	<u>(2,396)</u>	<u>(19,809)</u>

2 Capital Funding

The devolved capital figures are as set out below

B/F at 01/04/2015	37,378
2015/16	4,191
2016/17 (estimated)	4,000
	<hr/>
	<u>45,569</u>

3 Letter of commitment from The Earl of Yarborough

I am a governor of Brocklesby Park Primary School and understand that the low number of pupils currently at the school has reduced its income to the point that it can no longer afford to run.

I take the view that an initiative to provide for very young children at the school could have a beneficial effect on future numbers. Furthermore, a partnership between the school and a local multi-academy trust, known as the Tollbar Family of Academies, could bring further benefits in terms of economies of scale and increased publicity.

These initiatives take time to bed in and bring the school back to educational and financial viability. Closing the school now prevents these initiatives taking off. I would like to give the school a chance to prove the possibility of sustained viability.

To this end, should the school remain open after August 31st 2015, I will establish a fund, for a period of no more than two years, to be known as the Brocklesby Park School Trust into which I am transferring £25,000. This sum equates to more than the school's projected revenue budget deficit by August 31st 2017. The school may draw on this fund over the next two years in order to meet its full running costs and continue to balance its budget.

For further details, please get in touch with my secretary who will be given responsibility for the management of this fund from September 1st 2015 to August 31st 2017.

4 Letter of commitment from Tollbar Multi Academy Trust

Should Brocklesby Park School remain open after August 31st 2015, Tollbar Multi Academy Trust (TMAT) will use its best endeavours to ensure a full, broad and balanced educational experience for all pupils at the school. Furthermore, it will work with the school to help it reach sustainable financial viability.

Subject to an invitation from the school, the TMAT Board will volunteer a member to join the Governing Body at Brocklesby Park. The CEO of TMAT will lead on all joint initiatives liaising with the local authority as necessary.

In terms of day-to day operations, TMAT will treat Brocklesby Park as though it were a full member of the Tollbar Family of Academies, for example, in the expectations of quality, staff deployment and involvement in intra-MAT activities. At the same time, TMAT is aware of the LA Maintained status of the school and the MAT will apply common sense principles to areas of co-working.

TMAT will discuss with the LA the delivery of services to the school with a view to securing efficiency and effectiveness.

TMAT will fully support the school in re-applying to become an academy within the Tollbar family of Academies. Should the application fail then TMAT will support the local authority in the managed closure of the school.

Should the MAT have any concerns over the school's progress towards educational and financial viability it will raise these directly with the local authority.

Should the school close, TMAT would expect to reclaim any physical assets in which it has invested.

Should the MAT have any concerns over the school's progress towards educational and financial viability it will raise these directly with the local authority.

5 Letter of commitment from Brocklesby Park School Governors

Should the school remain open after August 31st 2015, Brocklesby Park School Governors will continue to fulfil their statutory duties.

In addition, through co-opting a member of the Tollbar MAT Board onto the governing body, they will work to build a deep and productive relationship with Tollbar MAT in order to develop a viable and sustainable school in both educational and financial terms.

Governors envisage a period of two years will be required to reach this point.

During the autumn term 2015 governors will open discussions with representatives from the Office of the Regional Commissioner with a view to resubmitting, by the end of February 2016, a successful application to convert to academy status and join Tollbar MAT.

Should the application fail and/or viability cannot be achieved then governors, in discussion with Tollbar MAT will ask Lincolnshire Council to proceed with enacting the closure at the end of the 2015 -16 academic year.

6 Letter of commitment from the Local Authority

Should Brocklesby Park School remain open after August 31st 2015, the local authority will continue to exercise its normal rights and responsibilities in relation to the safety and performance of pupils at the school. Until any academy conversion the school remains maintained by the local authority.

That said, the local authority will work to maintain a productive relationship with Tollbar MAT, recognising the commitment it will be making to the school. Where TMAT is providing services to the school, the local authority will seek to rebate to the school the costs that would have been paid to deliver those same services by the local authority. The local authority will apply common sense principles to areas of co-working.

Given the time, effort and resources already invested by TMAT, the local authority will not look to any other multi academy trust or chain to secure the future of Brocklesby Park.

The local authority understands that TMAT intends that the school's capital budget is to be used to fund an early years' on-site removable building. Should this proceed and the school is subsequently closed, TMAT would retain ownership of the removable building and any other significant removable investment it had made.

Should the local authority have any concerns over the school's progress towards educational and financial viability it will raise these directly with the CEO of TMAT.

The local authority will continue to give every support to the school's application to convert to academy status and become incorporated into the Tollbar Family of Academies. Should the application fail then the local authority will proceed with the closure of the school.

This page is intentionally left blank