

Commentary upon the Educational Case for Change

Impact on Education Standards

- 1.1 The educational case in support of the Kings Priory proposal suggests that the merger of two high performing schools will automatically improve educational achievement within the borough. Further information has been sought on the educational case for change, but it has not been provided.
- 1.2 Both Priory Primary and Kings School perform well at KS2 and KS4 reflecting the socio economic profile of their intake and the fact that the Kings School selects upon ability.
- 1.3 Priory Primary School was judged as outstanding by Ofsted in 2007 and at its last inspection in 2009 Kings School was judged as good by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. As a result of this and the historical reputation of both schools the Academy proposals have proved popular with some parents.
- 1.4 However it is also true that both schools face challenges and concerns have been expressed by other parents and schools about the potential detrimental impact of the proposals upon education standards across the Borough in the longer term.

Kings School

Key Stage 4

- 2.1 Kings School currently selects pupils on their ability and therefore they are expected to perform well at GCSE compared to other schools in North Tyneside where pupils' ability reflects the full range. However whilst KS4 results at Kings compare well against the national school averages, in relation to five A* - C including English and maths results declined between 2009 and 2011. The recently published 2012 results indicate that the declining trend has been arrested, however results have not returned to 2009 level.
- 2.2 In 2009 pupils at The Kings School achieved 97% 'good' GCSEs but in 2011 performance dropped to 87%. In 2012 the school achieved 93% 'good' GCSEs which is an improvement of 6% from 2011 but is still 4% below the school's best of 97% in 2009.
- 2.3 There is no published progress data for Independent schools at KS4 as their pupils are not required to take the otherwise statutory Key Stage 2 Standard Assessment Tests, which provide the nationally recognised 'starting point' for all secondary phase progress measures.

‘A’ Level

- 3.1 The two key national measures used to judge attainment at A Level and other Level 3 qualifications at post 16 are:
- How well students perform **across all their chosen subjects** (Average Point Score per Student)
 - How well they perform **within individual subjects** (Average Point Score per Entry)
- 3.2 When using the first measure (Average Point Score per Student) three schools, Seaton Burn College, Whitley Bay High School and St Thomas More RC High School exceeded The Kings School’s performance in 2012 and King’s was ranked fourth in the borough. It is important to note that generally Kings’ students will enter the sixth form with abilities which will be higher overall than those of maintained schools because of the more selective entry policy. However, given their starting points, the progress that King’s students made for the 3 years between 2008-10 when the Department for Education published data illustrated that The Kings School performed significantly below the national average in 2010 and 2009 and below the national average in 2008. This placed it third from bottom within North Tyneside for each of the years 2008–2009 and second from bottom in 2010.
- 3.3 Another key measure is the proportion of students achieving 3 or more A Levels or equivalent, as most universities regard 3 A Levels as a minimum requirement for many of their courses. The Kings School was rated fourth in North Tyneside for 2011–12 on this measure. Again considering the narrower measure of the proportion of students achieving 3 or more A levels The Kings School is ranked second in the borough behind Whitley Bay High School.

Priory Primary School

- 4 The local authority has been working with Priory Primary School to raise standards particularly in relation to the achievement of higher ability pupils at KS2. Results improved at KS2 from good to outstanding between 2011 and 2012. Current priorities for the school relate to improving performance in the Early Years and Foundation stage, improving standards in reading and writing for pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) and improving standards for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Managing Change

- 5 The pace of change associated with the timetable for creating Kings Priory Academy is challenging. It will be important that any disruption resulting from the restructuring does not divert attention away from sustaining improving trends and tackling current issues. However, there are also risks relating to

education outcomes associated with the proposed change which will need to be effectively addressed in order to secure improvements in education standards. In particular Kings School will need to:

- Radically change both the current curriculum model and approaches to teaching and learning in order to meet the needs of a more comprehensive intake and manage the impact of larger class sizes; and
- Significantly build its capacity to meet the needs of students who have complex Special Educational Needs, those entitled to Free School Meals and those who have particular needs as a result of being in the care system.

Early Years Provision

- 6 The prospectus for Kings Priory indicates that proposals to establish a 75 place nursery class will be brought forward for 2014. However, the Project Manager has now indicated that proposals for a nursery class for September 2014 will not be progressed until a later date. Whilst the creation of a nursery class is not therefore subject to consultation at this stage it should be noted that if a 75 place nursery class were to be established on the Kings Priory School site then this will impact severely on Sir James Knott Nursery School. Sir James Knott Nursery School is an outstanding school which has been commended by HMCI on a number of occasions. It is unclear as to how the creation of a nursery class on the Kings Priory Primary site would add value at Early Years and Foundation stage.

Sixth Form Provision

- 7.1 The Chair of Governors at Priory Primary School has stated that the proposal seeks to address the lack of a sixth form provision in Tynemouth. However a sixth form centre has operated at the Hawkeys Lane/Queen Alexandra Road site for nearly 40 years and for many students in Tynemouth and North Shields it has been their first choice post-16 destination. However, with the agreement and support of North Tyneside Council in September 2010 Tyne Met College sixth form was re-opened under the brand of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College. The new College is an innovative collaborative partnership with Marden High School, John Spence Community High School, Norham High School and Tyne Met working together through joint governance and management arrangements.
- 7.2 The partnership has provided the three schools with their own sixth form provision. From opening in September 2010 the Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College has been a success with student numbers (primarily from the partner schools) dramatically increasing alongside sustained improvements in student retention, achievement and high grade attainment. In fact, during 2011 the College was awarded two national Good School's Guide Awards for the

quality of its 'A' level provision and a History Tutor was named the 'Oxford University Inspirational Teacher of the Year'.

- 7.3 In addition Tyne Metropolitan College offers a wide range of high quality vocational qualifications on both the Queen Alexandra College campus and its main campus on the Coast Road.
- 7.4 In addition to the opportunities provided by the Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College, students from Tynemouth have also progressed to Whitley Bay High school, one of the top performing sixth forms in the region.
- 7.5 Notwithstanding the above the merger of Priory Primary and Kings School is not in itself a prerequisite to creating a maintained sixth form on the Kings School site.

Conclusion

- 8 Given the above points, and without further information being provided about how Kings Priory School will address the educational challenges and risks it faces, it is not possible to conclude at this stage that the proposed new Academy will automatically add value to standards of educational achievement.