



Consultation Report

**Consultation on the proposal to bring together Ark William Parker Academy
and Ark Helenswood Academy**

October 2018

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Summary

This report outlines the consultation that took place on the proposal that Ark William Parker and Ark Helenswood academies come together as one co-educational school from September 2019. The consultation was on:

1. The proposal to bring together Helenswood Academy and William Parker Academy to operate as a co-educational, Church of England school with a strong emphasis on the performing arts and sports from September 2019. This would formally be through the closure of Ark Helenswood Academy and the expansion of Ark William Parker.
2. The proposal to change William Parker's admissions arrangements for September 2019, allowing girls to be admitted to the school and increasing its published admissions number (PAN) from 240 to 360 for Year 7 admissions. The co-educational school would have a sixth form with a capacity of 300.
3. The proposal that the name of the co-educational school should be 'Ark St Helen's Academy'.

The consultation ran from Tuesday 18 September to Tuesday 30 October (six weeks). During the consultation period, meetings were held with staff, parents, students, the public, governors and a number of other stakeholders as outlined in the consultation programme and correspondence below. A full stakeholder list is included as **Appendix 1**.

Written communications, including a consultation brochure and comprehensive FAQs, were sent to all stakeholders and were made available on the consultation website. All questions raised during consultation meetings were answered orally or in writing and were added to the FAQ document.

All correspondence received to the consultation email address was responded to during the consultation period and this is outlined under *Responses to the Consultation*.

During the consultation a range of views were expressed – both raising concerns and in support of the proposal. Some of the key concerns raised during the consultation included:

1. Potential for disruption to teaching and learning – particularly for the Year 11 students
2. Concern regarding social and emotional issues arising from a co-educational environment
3. Removal of single sex education as an option for Hastings parents
4. Changes in staffing and the potential for redundancies
5. Plans for the Helenswood upper site
6. Opposition to the proposed name for the co-educational school.

Support for the proposal focused on:

1. Support for co-educational schools, principally from parents
2. The ease of having all children in one school
3. Sports and arts being made available to both boys and girls
4. The potential of improved facilities across the two sites.

By the end of the consultation period 107 online or hard copy forms were returned. 45% of responses received using the consultation response form were in support of the proposal to bring Helenswood and William Parker together to create a co-educational school, 42% were not in support and 13% didn't know or did not indicate whether they were supportive or not.

Regarding the name of the school, 35% of the responses received using the consultation response form (online and hard copy) were in support of the name Ark St Helen's Academy, 44% were not in support and 21% didn't know or did not respond.

Of the twelve emails received responding directly to the proposal to bring the schools together, four were in support, five objected, and three were neutral.

Letters of support to the proposal were also received from the Diocese of Chichester, East Sussex County Council, and Mark and Sarah Driver, Founding Sponsors of Ark William Parker.

Background

Ark began working in Hastings, the 13th most deprived town in England, in 2013 when it took over two of the four secondary schools (William Parker Sports College and Helenswood School). In 2014 two primaries also joined the network, Blacklands and Little Ridge, and a third, Castledown, joined the network in September 2017. The primary schools have made exceptionally good progress but the secondary schools, though improving, still face substantial challenges.

Alongside the significant oversupply of secondary places in the Hastings area - 26% across all year groups, with 90% of the spare places currently held within the two Ark schools. We believe that part of the reason for this is that the two schools are in old buildings, spread over three separate sites, all of which need significant investment (as compared to new buildings and facilities at other Hastings schools). They are also single sex at a time when this seems to be increasingly less attractive to students and parents.

As a result, both schools are running at under 50% capacity with a current pupil roll of around 1,300 students against a total combined capacity of 2,680. In order to secure the future of the schools we need a solution that: facilitates and accelerates the improvement of both schools; makes the schools an attractive destination for students, which is viewed positively in the local community; and is financially sustainable.

We have explored a range of options, both internally and with the Department for Education and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and, on the basis of discussions to date, we think the best option is to merge the two schools to create a mixed Church of England school with a capacity of 1,800 plus a 300 place sixth form.

We therefore ran a consultation on the proposal to bring together the two schools in September 2019, with years 7 and 8 pupils based on the current Helenswood lower school site, and years 9, 10 and 11 housed on the William Parker site, together with the Sixth Form.

Consultation process

On Monday 10 September we announced our intention to begin a formal consultation process on Tuesday 18 September. Notice of the consultation was also provided to

Helenswood and William Parker staff on the morning of Monday 10 September – with more detailed meetings held later the same day. Letters were sent home to parents on Monday 10 September, as well as emails and phone calls to key stakeholders and the local media.

The consultation brochure and FAQ document were made available on Tuesday 18 September for the formal launch of the consultation. This information was also made available on the consultation website which was launched the same day.

A full consultation programme is detailed in the following section of the report.

The aims of the consultation were:

1. To communicate the proposal to bring together William Parker and Helenswood to parents, staff and local stakeholders, to ensure that all understood the rationale for the proposal
2. To ensure that parents, staff and local stakeholders understood the consultation and decision making processes
3. To reassure parents that their children’s interests were paramount and would be protected
4. To ensure staff fully understood the process and the timeframe for any subsequent consultation on a new staffing structure
5. To create opportunities for parents, staff and the local stakeholders to feedback on the proposal, ask questions, and receive further information in an environment and forum that they were comfortable in

Consultation programme and correspondence

Date (2018)	Audience	Format	Details
Monday 10 September	Staff (William Parker)	Briefing and email	A briefing was held at 8.15am to inform staff that Ark intended to launch a consultation on the proposal to bring together Helenswood and William Parker Academies in September 2019. A letter was also distributed at the meeting (Appendix 2).
	Staff (Helenswood)	Briefing and email	A briefing was held at 8.35am to inform staff that Ark intended to launch a consultation on the proposal to bring together Helenswood and William Parker Academies in September 2019. A letter was also distributed at the meeting (Appendix 3).
	National Trade Unions	Email	An email was sent announcing the intention to consult and attaching copies of staff letters
	LGB members	Email	An email was sent from the Local Governing Body (LGB) Chairs to Helenswood and William Parker LGB members announcing the intention to consult and attaching copies of staff letters

	Hastings Borough Council (HBC)	Phone calls and emails	The Executive Principal made phone calls to Hastings Borough Councillors (see stakeholder list below) informing them of the intention to consult and followed up with emails
	East Sussex County Council (ESCC)	Phone call	Ark Head of Project Delivery call confirmed with ESCC that the announcement had been made
	William Parker Foundation (WPF)	Email	Email sent to the Chair of WPF from the Executive Principal confirming that the announcement had been made and attaching William Parker staff and parent letters
	Diocese of Chichester	Email	Email sent to the Diocese of Chichester confirming that the announcement had been made and attaching copies of the staff letters
	Stuart Smith, University of Brighton Academies Trust	Phone call	The Executive Principal made a phone call to the Executive Principal of the two other Hastings secondary schools, St Leonard's and Hastings Academy, informing him of the intention to consult
	Students	Assemblies	Assemblies were held with students at both schools before the end of the school day informing them of the intention to consult and explaining the content of the letters going home to parents
	Parents	Letters	Letters sent home to parents with the students at the end of the school day (Appendix 4)
	Staff	Meetings	Meetings held with staff at both schools to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions
	Media	Press release and phone calls	Information sent to the local press regarding the consultation and public consultation meeting dates
Tuesday 11 September	Students	Assemblies	Assemblies were held with students at both schools in order to hear their views and take questions
Friday 14 September	Hastings Primary Heads	Meeting	The Executive Principal met with the Headteachers of non- Ark Hastings primary of schools to discuss the intention to consult on the proposal
Monday 17 September	Staff	Briefing	Briefing held with staff to confirm that consultation would formally launch on the 18 September as planned
Tuesday 18 September	Formal consultation launch		

	All	Consultation brochure and website	Consultation brochure (Appendix 5) made available to all stakeholders via email, printed copy and consultation website. Staff and parents received hard copies. Detailed FAQ document also made available via the consultation website (this is included in the updated FAQ document under (Appendix 8)).
Wednesday 19 September	Staff	Meetings	Meetings held with staff at both schools to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions. Additional copies of the consultation brochure available.
	Parents	Meetings	6pm meetings held with parents at both schools to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions. Additional copies of the consultation brochure available.
Thursday 20 September	Student Councils	Meetings	The Student Councils met to discuss the proposals
	Parents	Meetings	10am meetings held with parents at both schools to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions. Additional copies of the consultation brochure available.
Tuesday 25 September	LGB members	Meetings	An extraordinary joint LGB meeting was held to discuss the proposals and update on the consultation process. During this meeting it was decided to set up a governor working party to assist with the oversight of the proposals during the consultation process and, if approved, the course of the 2018/19 academic year.
	General public	Meeting	6pm public consultation meeting held to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions.
Wednesday 26 September	HBC	Meeting	A meeting was held with the Executive Principal and Cllr Sorrell Marlow-Edwards to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions.
Thursday 27 September	Parents of Year 6 children	Meeting	A meeting was held with the Executive Principal for parents of Year 6 pupils at Ark primary schools to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions.
Tuesday 2 October	Staff	Email	Update emails sent to William Parker and Helenswood staff (Appendices 6 and 7) responding to the questions raised at the staff meeting. An updated FAQ document was attached to the email (Appendix 8).
	Parents	Letter	Update letters sent to William Parker and Helenswood parents (Appendices 9 and 10) responding to the key issues raised at the

			parent meeting. A printed copy of the updated FAQ document was attached to the letter (Appendix 8).
	All	Website	The updated FAQ document was made available on the consultation website.
Wednesday 3 October	Stagecoach	Meeting	A meeting was held with Stagecoach to discuss the proposals, and to discuss questions and concerns raised by parents regarding the potential transport implications if the proposal was to be approved
	HBC	Meeting	A meeting was held with the Executive Principal and the Leader of Hastings Borough Council to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions. A tour of the schools also took place.
Tuesday 9 October	William Parker LGB members	Meeting	LGB members voted unanimously in support of the proposals at their LGB meeting
Wednesday 10 October	Headteachers	Meeting	The Executive Principal met with non-Ark primary Headteachers in Hastings, along with Carole Dixon from Education Future Trust, to discuss the proposals
Thursday 11 October	WPF	Meeting	The Executive Principal met with the Chair of the William Parker Foundation to discuss the concerns raised in the Foundation's response
	Parents	Meetings	Individual meeting slots made available for parents of both schools – no bookings were made
	Freedom Leisure	Meeting	A meeting was held with Freedom Leisure to discuss the proposals
	Parents	Meetings	6pm meetings held with parents at both schools to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions. Additional copies of the consultation brochure available.
Friday 12 October	Parents	Meetings	10am meetings held with parents at both schools to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions. Additional copies of the consultation brochure available.
	Local resident	Meeting	A meeting was held with the Executive Principal and a local resident to address concerns and questions raised in an email response to the consultation
	Parent	Meeting	A meeting was held with the Executive Principal and an individual parent to address concerns and questions raised in an email response to the consultation
Tuesday 16 October	Helenswood LGB members	Meeting	LGB members voted unanimously in support of the proposals at their LGB meeting

Wednesday 17 October	Staff	Meeting	A joint staff meeting was held with staff from both schools to discuss the proposals. The joint meeting was held in response to requests from staff at earlier meetings.
18 October	Governor Working Party	Meeting	The first meeting of the Governor Working Party took place
	Hollington Gymnastics Club	Meeting	A meeting was held with the Executive Principal and Hollington Gymnastics Club to discuss the proposals
Thursday 25 October	General public	Meeting	6pm public consultation meeting held to discuss the proposals, hear views, and take questions.
Tuesday 30 October	Consultation ends (5pm)		
	LGB	Meeting	An extraordinary joint LGB meeting was held at 5pm to discuss the outcomes of the consultation
Wednesday 31 October	All	Consultation website	An additional list of FAQs, not already covered in the 'updated FAQs' was published to the consultation website (Appendix 11)

The consultation meetings were attended by Ark's Director of Secondary Education, Director of External Relations, Head of Projects Delivery, the Executive Principal and Principal, the Chairs of the Local Governing Bodies, and Hastings Communications Manager. The Diocese were also in attendance at the first public consultation meeting.

Responses to the consultation

Consultation response forms

As part of the consultation, responses were invited through the online response form on the consultation website. Hard copies of this response form were also made available at both school offices, during consultation meetings and at open mornings to be returned to the schools. The responses from 107 forms were as follows:

1. The proposal to bring together Helenswood Academy and William Parker Academy as a co-educational school with a strong emphasis on the performing arts and sports, from September 2019. The school would operate across the Helenswood Lower School site (Years 7 and 8) and the William Parker site (Years 9 to 13).

Support = 45%
Do not support = 42%
Don't know = 12%
No response = 1%

2. The proposal to change William Parker's admissions arrangements from September 2019 which would allow girls to be admitted into the school and also to increase its published admissions number to 360 for Year 7 admissions. The proposed new

admissions policy is available on <http://hastingsconsultation.org>

Support = 45%
Do not support = 41%
Don't know = 13%
No response = 1%

3. If these two proposals are approved, whether the school's name should be **Ark St Helen's Academy** to reflect the importance of the school's location, its Church of England ethos and its historic relationship to Helenswood.

Support = 35%
Do not support = 44%
Don't know = 20%
No response = 1%

Formal responses

Formal responses were received from:

- The William Parker Foundation (**Appendix 12**)
- The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Clement and All Saints', Hastings (**Appendix 13**)
- Diocese of Chichester (**Appendix 14**)
- East Sussex County Council (**Appendix 15**). It should be noted that this response was received on 31 October, after the consultation had ended.
- Mark and Sarah Driver, Founding Sponsors of Ark William Parker (**Appendix 16**)

Written responses were sent to The William Parker Foundation and the PCC addressing the questions raised (**Appendices 17 and 18**). An additional meeting was also held with the Chair of the William Parker Foundation and the Executive Principal on 11 October to discuss the matters raised in their response to the consultation.

The Executive Principal also received emails of support from Cllr Godfrey Daniel, Braybrooke & Castle Ward, and Cllr Andy Batsford, St Helens Ward.

A separate response was received from East Sussex County Council in respect of the admissions policy. Ark has agreed to make the changes requested.

Consultation email address

A dedicated consultation email address was set up and during the consultation period – twelve emails were received that responded to the proposals. All of these emails were directly responded to and any questions raised were included in the updated FAQ document.

Four of these emails were in support of the proposal to bring the schools together, five objected to the proposal, and three were neutral or offering feedback.

Four of the people who wrote emails expressing concern were invited to meet with the Executive Principal. Of the four meetings offered, two were accepted.

Conclusion

Should the proposals be approved by the DfE we will take into consideration all responses received, and questions asked, during the consultation, as outlined in FAQ documents and the responses written to staff, parents and other stakeholders during the consultation.

Appendices

1. Stakeholder list
2. William Parker staff letter (10 September)
3. Helenswood staff letter (10 September)
4. Parent letter (10 September)
5. Consultation brochure
6. William Parker staff email (2 October)
7. Helenswood staff email (2 October)
8. Updated FAQ document
9. William Parker parent letter (2 October)
10. Helenswood parent letter (2 October)
11. Additional FAQs (31 October)
12. Response from The William Parker Foundation
13. Response from The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Clement and All Saints', Hastings
14. Response from the Diocese of Chichester
15. Response from East Sussex County Council
16. Response from the Founding Sponsors of William Parker
17. Ark response to The William Parker Foundation
18. Ark response to the PCC