



Proposal for Archbishop Runcie First School to join NEAT

8th January 2019

Dear Stakeholders,

We are writing this letter to inform the stakeholders of Archbishop Runcie First School of our views regarding the school's proposal to join Newcastle East mixed multi Academy Trust.

We were initially very surprised to read of the proposals when they were shared with us in the penultimate week of term and we were concerned to read that the Governors at ARFS had 'researched, considered and evaluated a range of options for the school over a number of years'. If this process has taken place, it has done so without the involvement of the Gosforth Schools' Trust. Since the formation of the GST in 2014, we have developed close working relationships in the schools who choose to fully engage, and we have provided:

- School improvement support, including leadership support, for schools in difficulties or with potential vulnerabilities
- Joint data days
- Joint professional development opportunities for staff
- Newly Qualified Teacher support and training opportunities
- SEN working group for SENCOs
- Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher networks
- Subject leader networks and sharing of best practice
- Many local and relevant curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities for pupils
- Close moderation around standards of learning and progress

Our Trust has a strong local focus and the Directors and Headteachers have extensive knowledge and understanding of the local area and communities, as well as a strong belief in the three-tier system which is so successful in Gosforth. We believe that Archbishop Runcie Staff and Governors will not have the capacity to fully engage and benefit from the joint local work of the GST as well as being part of NEAT. More importantly, we feel that there are significant risks for the school in joining the NEAT:

- The school would effectively be leaving a highly successful group of local schools with consistently high outcomes and commonalities in their local communities
- The school will not have the capacity to work with the GST and NEAT resulting in it, and its pupils becoming isolated from schools in its locality
- The school's autonomy and decision making will be reduced in the immediate future and could be diminished completely in the longer term if the values and working practices of the NEAT change
- There is no breakdown, or guarantees, of cost savings to the school

While there are few guarantees in the future for any school, we believe that the risks of Archbishop Runcie joining the NEAT at this current time outweigh the benefits of developing stronger local working relationships with the Gosforth Schools' Trust. In our response to the proposals, we are urging Governors at Archbishop Runcie to explore with us the benefits of working together to secure their future as a strong, independent and successful school.

Yours faithfully,

Helen McKenna (Broadway East First School), Matt Ward (Grange First School), Richard Hukin (Brunton First School), Martin Fletcher (Dinnington First School), Leanne Lamb (Gosforth Park First School), Gillian Sanders (Regent Farm First School), Tim Stout (Gosforth East Middle School), Julia Bayes (Archibald First School), Sharon Coull (South Gosforth first School), Jeremy Bell (Gosforth Central Middle School)