



Chorlton High School
A Specialist Arts College



Academy Conversion

Equalities Impact Assessment

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide for the Governing Body of Chorlton High School an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) of their proposal for the school to convert to an academy.

The report has been prepared by the Co-operative College following an examination of published material including school policies and an interview with a senior member of the school leadership team.

The key question to be addressed is whether or not the conversion to academy will result in quantifiable or different outcomes for different groups or differential access to the services provided by the school.

The impact of the academy proposal is considered below in relation to the following standard Impact Strands:

- Gender;
- Race;
- Disability;
- Sexual Orientation;
- Religion and Belief;
- Age;
- Social Inclusion; and
- Community Cohesion.

In addition, in a school context, the arrangements for admissions are an important consideration for parents, students and other stakeholders. Accordingly the position on admissions has also been reviewed.

In conducting this study, no evidence has been found to indicate the proposal to convert to an academy will have any negative impact in any Equality Strand.

On the contrary; the decision of the governing body proposing to adopt a co-operative governance and ethos for the school on conversion is indicative of a desire to further embed the school's already enviable capacity to drive equality of opportunity and outcomes for learners and equality of opportunity for staff.

It can be expected that the school's established policies and practices will be strengthened through the flexibilities of academy status. The adoption of a co-operative membership governance model for the academy trust, supported by the adoption of the formal Values & Principles of the worldwide co-operative movement should complement the existing equalities strategy.

The conversion to academy status is expected to result in an overall positive equalities impact.

Background

Chorlton High School is an 11-16 community school and specialist arts college. The school describes itself as “a mixed, multi-cultural and multi-faith school”, proud of its diversity, which it sees as one of its strengths.

The proposers of the academy are the governing body of the maintained school and the intention is for the school to convert ‘as is’ in accordance with provisions in the Academies Act, 2010. Accordingly, there will be no changes to the age range nor to admissions arrangements to the school as a result of conversion.

Ofsted have described the school as being situated in a relatively affluent area of Manchester. But the radial nature of the city geography and the good network of public transport give rise to a varied pattern of admissions. Whilst the school draws from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals¹ is well above the national average.

More than 50% of students are of minority ethnic heritage and a significant proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is near the national average.

In response to differing outcomes measured against Equalities Impact Strands and in compliance with its statutory duty the school has published an Equalities Policy in which it has identified the following operational objectives to “narrow the gap in:

- Performance of children with special educational needs (SEN);
- Performance of children with English as an additional language (EAL);
- Performance of students receiving an entitlement to free school meals (FSM); and
- Participation rates in after school activities by students with FSM and or EAL.

The school is recognised as a rapidly developing, diverse and innovative institution, accelerating on its journey to becoming truly outstanding. As a mixed, multi-cultural and multi-faith school catering for students aged 11-16, it has a stated pride in being at the heart of the local community. There are strong, effective links with local primary schools, sixth form providers, further education colleges and local businesses.

The transition to an academy using the co-operative model is seen as a means of further embedding the school’s comprehensive character and its role in sustaining a cohesive local community.

¹ A commonly used and recognised measure of socio-economic deprivation.

Admissions

The academy conversion consultation has made it clear the academy will continue to operate in full the local authority admissions policy².

In accordance with this policy, places will normally only be offered up to the published admission number³ (PAN), which is the number of places available at the school in the year of entry. A child cannot be refused admission to the normal year of entry on the grounds of prejudice to the provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources unless the published admission number has been reached.

Outside of the normal Year 7 entry year admissions will be accepted where places are available in that year group.

Oversubscription criteria will continue to be applied where there are more applicants than places available for admission into Year 7. All applicants will be placed in a priority order determined by the criteria and places will be offered to the applicants with the highest priority set out below until all places at the school have been offered:

Children who are (or who have been) looked after by a local authority;
Children with exceptional medical/social needs;
Children with a sibling at the school;
Children who attend a primary school or academy located in the Manchester local authority area; and
All other children.

Within each category those living closer to the school will receive higher priority for places.

This means the conversion to academy status will not result in a change to the admissions arrangements for the school and therefore no adverse impact will directly arise for any equality strand.

It should be noted, however, that the conversion to a co-operative academy will require a line of democratic accountability to the local community, parents, students and other stakeholders; thereby ensuring consultation and local decision-making if any changes to admissions arrangements should be proposed in the future. This a positive strength, increasing local democratic influence on admissions.

² Manchester City Council Determined Admissions Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2013/14.

³ The PAN for entry in the 2013/14 academic year for Chorlton High School is 300.

Gender

There are more boys on roll than there are girls. This is mainly due to the near location of Whalley Range Girls School but no corresponding boys school. This factor is exacerbated by a cultural preference within part of the local population for single-sex education, particularly for girls. The convenient transport links and the opportunities for parental preference across the city contributes to the school's gender imbalance, as does the availability of schools selecting on ability.

Nevertheless; the school sees itself as the provider of learning for the whole of the local community. The school has worked hard to develop recognition as the school of choice for its locality (e.g. devising and implementing a Primary Transition Programme built around the school's Arts specialism). As a result of the school's recruitment efforts the proportion of girls on roll has increased from 27% ten years ago to 42% now.

Accordingly, the gender imbalance is no longer considered significant. Ofsted have recognised that effective monitoring is used to identify underperformance within gender groups and the quick application of support secures rapid improvement, in most cases. As a result of this, boys who would often underperform make better progress than nationally.

The school's Equalities Policy includes a commitment to improve the situation for, and the relationships between, men and women and boys and girls within the school and the wider community. There is also an explicit commitment to counteract the effects of any past discrimination in staff recruitment.

The opportunities from 'marketing' the school as an academy and the positive decision to operate the international co-operative values, including equality, as an explicit element of the school's ethos is likely to further reinforce the position of the school as an establishment aiming to meet the needs of students irrespective of gender.

The introduction of the Co-operative Values & Principles and the academy trust stakeholder membership model should allow the school to further apply its already strong commitment to gender equality.

Race

The school roll is representative of a diverse range of ethnic heritage, as illustrated in the table below. Ofsted has noted that more than half of the students are of minority ethnic heritage and a significant proportion speak English as an additional language. In its published report⁴, though, Ofsted noted that where an identifiable group of students of a particular ethnic heritage falter in their progress this is quickly identified “by the school’s very careful, frequent monitoring” This allows support to be targeted to secure rapid improvement.

The school is able to demonstrate an impressive record in supporting a drive to achieve above average outcomes across all groups measured by ethnic heritage. Strategies to address deficits in groups with historical underperformance are considered to be highly effective.

Black Caribbean	5%
Black – Somali	6%
Black - Other African	13%
Black background	3%
Arab	4%
Indian	2%
Pakistani	13%
Other Asian	1%
White British	43%
White European	1%
White & Black Caribbean	7%
White & Black African	1%
White Asian	1%

This resulted from 2010 in the CVA⁵ performance of the majority of groups aligning with the national average or higher; with some significantly above. There were no groups indicated as performing significantly below. Building on a further step in improvement in 2011; analysis of the 2012 figures suggests that performance by group has been maintained, again indicating good performance against national expectations.

This does not mean that the school is content with current support systems. The aim remains to support the best possible outcomes for all. There are plans to restructure the work of the in-house Learning Support Team and to use additional intervention processes to close the gap in outcomes between groups.

The move to academy status is expected to increase budgetary flexibility to better allow the school to target resources effectively. Furthermore, the adoption of a co-operative ethos for the academy and the application of the Values & Principles of the International Co-operative Alliance (including equality, equity, and fairness) will provide additional opportunities to embed the significance of equality within the curriculum and in the ethos of the school.

All members of staff are entitled to appropriate training, in order that they can play their full part in ensuring that the school promotes racial equality. Training is linked to priorities within the School Development Plan. The Academy directors will also identify their own training needs in relation to race equality.

⁴ Inspection No. 377266, Chorlton High School, 20-21 September 2011

⁵ Contextual Value Added – a statistic used to allow performance comparison between schools by allowing for variations from factors beyond the control of the school.

Disability

The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is near the national average.

There is a Disability Equality Scheme in place which includes a DDA⁶ Accessibility Plan. The school's approach is not focused solely on physical buildings issues (though these are addressed) but to embed equality for disabled children and adults into the culture of the school in practical ways. This includes accessibility, academic support and social and emotional development strategies for students with disabilities and impairments.

The school works closely with Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service (CAHMS) to support students with impairing or disabling mental health. There is a facility for students to find support on site and there is extensive safeguarding provision.

Ofsted have noted that students with special educational needs and or disabilities are often fully and skilfully integrated into normal classes and teaching assistants are guided by the teachers to tailor good support where appropriate.

The change to academy status will not have any impact on the school's approach to disability. Where a child has a Statement of special educational needs, the home local authority will continue to be responsible for funding but the processes for admitting a child with a Statement will be broadly similar to the existing arrangements.

The academy will continue to work with local authorities, NHS agencies and other partners to help ensure good opportunities and outcomes for students with special needs, impairments and disabilities.

Staff will transfer to the academy with their terms and conditions of employment unchanged. The school will continue to operate employment policies and practices based on those operated by the local authority.

Sexual Orientation

The school aims to demonstrate mutual respect between all members of the school community. The school's Equality Policy recognises the general duty to have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful sexual discrimination and to eliminate sexual harassment.

This approach will extend to the academy.

⁶ Disability Discrimination Acts, 1995 and 2005.

Religion and Belief

Ofsted have found relationships between staff and students and across religious and ethnic differences to be harmonious and supportive; stating “ this is a genuinely cohesive community”.

Provision is made to cater for the cultural, moral and spiritual needs of all children through planning of assemblies, classroom based and off-site activities; pupils’ views are actively encouraged and respected.

In the curriculum the aim has been and will continue to be to provide all pupils with the opportunity to succeed, and to reach the highest level of personal achievement. To do this, teaching and learning processes will ensure equality of access for all pupils, preparing them for life in a diverse society.

Students appreciate religious difference and cultural diversity. They already value equality and hold a strong sense of social justice (these are values to be embedded further and more formally through the adoption of the co-operative ethos).

Students are appropriately respectful of religious events and realise the consequences of prejudice, challenging this where needed.

Ofsted has found that students engage well with a range of groups from different backgrounds and respect the individuality of beliefs and difference. Students were found to be reflective, compassionate and supportive of each other; qualities promoted through all curriculum and pastoral areas.

Students are able to resolve conflicts responsibly and intelligently, seeking consensus while accepting the right of others to hold different opinions and belief (or non-belief).

Students engender a positive and inclusive school community ethos which is centred around the school's core values. It is anticipated that the conversion to academy status using the co-operative model will further strengthen and embed the positive and inclusive school community ethos. This is because of the Values and Principles of Co-operation (Openness, Honesty, Social responsibility, Caring for others, Self help, Self responsibility, Democracy, Equality, Equity and Solidarity).

A co-operative approach in the governance, curriculum and pedagogy of the academy will be ethically based and faith neutral. This will allow the school to set out and sustain a tolerant and non-discriminatory ethos that should be acceptable to all with a religious faith and those with none.

Age

The school has committed to strive to ensure that all students, at every age and ability level, have an excellent foundation for future success.

The school makes clear its consistently high expectation of all pupils regardless of age. To secure the best possible outcomes a range of teaching methods is used throughout the school ensuring that effective learning takes place at all stages for all pupils.

In support of the transfer from primary education, there is a defined transition curriculum, and a very successful transition programme which enables students to make a confident and successful transition to secondary education on both a pastoral and an academic level. This has been praised nationally and by Ofsted.

In order to enable Year 6 students to feel confident about their move to the school, a wide range of transition activities are provided at the partner primary schools. During primary Key Stage 2, specialist secondary school teachers work alongside teachers in primary schools. This means that many of the children already know their teachers on transition and might have learned in the secondary school prior to beginning Year 7. A 'buddies' support system operates.

There is a good relationship with Post-16 providers. Students are guided through applications processes in Year 11 – through a dedicated programme in Life Skills, a carousel of talks from colleges and a 'College Evening' for students and parents.

The number of post-16 year olds 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) is low for the school in comparison to the area.

The existing employment policies relating to age, including retirement age and pensions provision will continue to be aligned to local policies. Teachers will continue to have access to the Teachers Pensions Scheme and support staff to the Local Government Pensions Scheme.

The move to co-operative academy status will not result in measures to change terms and conditions of employment nor any changes to pension entitlements as provided for in the Teachers and Local Government Pension Schemes.

Academy status may allow the school to more easily respond in the future to the needs of Post-16 learning, for example in collaborative arrangements with other providers in order to better meet the specific needs of local post-16 leavers.

Social Inclusion

Although the school is situated in Chorlton, which is perceived as a relatively affluent area, the school is truly comprehensive in terms of the socio-economic and ethnic background of its learners. Analysis indicates that around 43% of current students attend from the immediate local community (the Chorlton and Chorlton Park wards); the remaining 57% largely from other parts of the city.

Prior attainment of students on entry has traditionally been below the national average, but in recent years the gap has begun to narrow.

The school has had a fairly static deprivation indicator over the past 3 years at almost double the national average. The percentage of students known to be entitled to FSM is double the national average. Around 57% of students have a minority ethnic heritage with 28% of students for whom English is not their first language.

Despite some great differences in material wealth and aspiration amongst the learners a high degree of harmonious interaction is a characteristic of the school of which the school is most proud.

The school is determined to give children from poorer backgrounds support, encouragement and aspiration. The school uses effective monitoring and targeted support. As a result of this, students with free school meals and boys (who often underperform) make better progress than nationally.

Parental engagement is seen as important in this regard. At the start of Year 7, parents are invited for an induction evening to meet staff, to hear about how parents can be involved with the school and to discuss any concerns.

Partnership with parents remains important and the school works to maintain high levels of contact with parents. Members of staff will often write to parents, contact them by telephone or invite them in to discuss issues of importance about their child's welfare and progress. Conversely, parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have any concerns they would like to discuss.

There are regular Parents' Evenings throughout the school year where parents can speak to their child's subject teachers and there is a thriving Parents' Association which meets regularly to discuss the development of the school.

On conversion to a co-operative academy the school's engagement with parents as a driver for improving social inclusion will be further enhanced through the academy trust membership model. This provides for any individual with an interest in the future success of the school (students, staff, parents and local residents) to become individual members of the academy trust. Through their respective stakeholder constituencies they will elect Directors of the academy.

Community Cohesion

In its academy proposal consultation, the Governing Body stated its firm commitment to “ensuring that Chorlton High School is developed as an outstanding school for the local Chorlton community that provides the very best educational opportunities irrespective of ability or background”.

The ambition and belief of the governors, to be carried across to the academy, is for the school as an excellent local community asset; a place where all students can reach their potential and achieve the highest standards. A central aim is to ensure fairness and to make sure that all children can succeed, whatever their background.

This ambition is the main reason for the proposal to convert to an academy. The Governing Body, supported by the staff, have expressed a determination to work hard for the school and the wider community.

The Governing Body have taken time (twelve months) to consider the options for the future organisation of the school. After careful deliberation they have concluded that in order to safeguard their vision of a comprehensive school firmly embedded in the life of the Chorlton community, the way forward is to convert to an academy.

The change is intended to further strengthen the qualities identified in the most recent Ofsted inspection; that is “this is a genuinely cohesive community” where “relationships between staff and students and across religious and ethnic differences [are] harmonious and supportive”.

Ofsted found the school to be a learning environment where “students feel very much a part of the community and often show admirable care and consideration for each other.” Additional Ofsted comments include:

“A relentless drive from the staff to ensure achievement for all provides outstanding equality of opportunity.”

“Students, on the whole, feel safe in school and report very few incidents of bullying”

The school has been able to build upon its cultural and religious diversity to help promote the social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of students. The move to a co-operative academy will increase the opportunities for this work. It will also assist the school in ensuring all parents and carers are encouraged to participate in the life of the school.

The academy membership structure will, through the Forum, support additional opportunities for communication with stakeholders (parents and the wider community) to ensure parents’ and community views are captured to inform practice.

Summary Table

Equality Strand	Does the proposal have a positive, neutral or negative impact on this strand?	Are there any changes which could be made to minimise negative impact identified?	Are there any mitigating circumstances?	Actions to be taken by when and whom
Admissions	Positive	n/a	n/a	
Gender	Positive	n/a	n/a	
Race	Positive	n/a	n/a	
Disability	Neutral	n/a	n/a	
Sexual Orientation	Neutral	n/a	n/a	
Religion and Belief	Positive	n/a	n/a	
Age	Neutral	n/a	n/a	
Social Inclusion;	Positive	n/a	n/a	
Community Cohesion	Positive	n/a	n/a	

