

A Mathematics and Language School, Barking Road, London E16 4DD **Headteacher:** Charlotte Robinson

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23 April 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

## **Consultation on academisation**

We hope that you and your families are well, and that we will all be able to enjoy a summer term with all our young people back in school. As we do so, we also want to share news with you about an important development for our schools.

### **What is being proposed?**

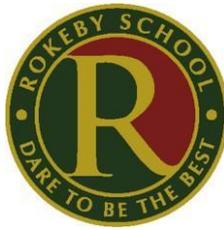
Governors wish to consult parents and staff on Lister and Rokeby becoming academies. We have consulted on this before in 2015 and were ready to proceed, but were unable to complete this because of an ongoing dispute with the Local Authority about how much we pay for our buildings contracts (PFI). This dispute has now been resolved.

Lister and Rokeby are currently federated (ie. both schools are overseen by a single Federated Governing Board, which sits above the Local Governing Bodies), and the Board members are appointed by the Newham Community Schools Trust (NCST), so we are already closely linked. However, because we have not been able to academise, we have two different types of school in the NCST partnership: Lister and Rokeby as Foundation Schools and Sarah Bonnell and Eastlea as academies. This proposal would bring us together as a single, unified Trust.

### **What is an academy and what is NCST?**

An academy is a school where the responsibility for its management rests with a Trust Board, rather than with the Local Authority. There are a number of technical differences between different types of school and a helpful summary of these can be found [here](#). About three-quarters of secondary schools in England are now academies.

Lister, Rokeby and Sarah Bonnell schools first came together in 2012 to discuss how we could work as partners to support the improvement of all our schools. In 2017 we established Newham Community Schools Trust as a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), and Sarah Bonnell joined in 2018. The Trust is a not-for-profit charity with the sole purpose of advancing education for public benefit. Our goal is to provide a world-class education for all young people in our community, and also to maintain the distinct identity of each school (as set out in our [Governance Principles](#)). Our belief is that by being committed to our partnership within a Trust, we can achieve more substantial and long term collaboration. We have a clear commitment to retaining staff and parent Trustee roles, and many of



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our Trustees have strong links with our schools, having served for long periods as Governors on our School Governing Bodies.

Because of the success of our partnership and the strength of our schools, we were invited, with the support of Newham Local Authority, to become the sponsor for Eastlea Community School when it received an Inadequate Ofsted judgement last year. Eastlea has now joined NCST and is making rapid progress thanks to the support we are providing.

### **What difference does this proposal make for my child, and what is the case for the change?**

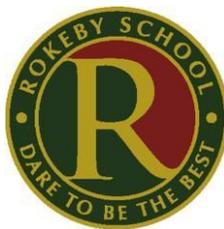
Becoming academies will make no noticeable difference to the day to day experience of your child in school. There will be no change to school name or uniform or curriculum.

The difference this will make is rather to the long term strength and stability of our schools. Students and staff in our schools already benefit from the existing partnership, through opportunities to participate in performances (like our Community Opera at the Albert Hall), sports events, scholars activities and much more, but also through staff sharing expertise. We have fantastic staff across the Trust, and want them to continue to have the opportunity to share their best practice. We believe we will be better able to attract strong staff through being able to offer development and training opportunities across our four schools.

But while we have been able to develop this far with our current split structure, we believe that the long term interests of our staff and students will be best served by unifying the Trust. Government policy strongly favours academies, and as previously stated, more than three quarters of secondary schools in England are academies. As long as we are not all academies, it is possible for that partnership to be broken up, including the possibility that Lister and Rokeby will be directed to join another academy Trust. In the meantime there will be fewer opportunities for us to access government funding or develop new opportunities for our students (most funding for improvements to school premises is now allocated for academies).

### **What is the case against this, and who is opposing it?**

In 2015 the NUT (the largest teachers' union, now known as the NEU) balloted its members for strike action against academisation in our schools. That dispute was resolved as the NCST made very clear commitments about our values and approach as a Trust, including our commitment to their being no detriment to staff pay and conditions.



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Regrettably, in our view as Headteachers, the NEU appears likely to disregard the fact that we have already addressed the concerns raised in 2015, and that we have maintained our commitments. We believe that this is because of their general opposition to academies in principle, rather than any concerns about NCST as an organisation (when Eastlea had to academise, the NEU made clear its belief that the NCST was the best option as a Trust for Eastlea to join).

### **How can you learn more, and how can you have your say?**

A set of frequently asked questions is available on the [NCST website](#) (information is also available on the News page of the [Lister](#) website, and the [Rokeby](#) website). We will also be hosting an online meeting for parents from both schools on **Friday 30th April at 3pm**. Please email either [heads.pa@lister.newham.sch.uk](mailto:heads.pa@lister.newham.sch.uk) or [lisa.spencer@rokeby.newham.sch.uk](mailto:lisa.spencer@rokeby.newham.sch.uk) if you would like to be sent a link to access the meeting. We strongly encourage you to attend the meeting, which Governors will also attend.

In the week beginning 3 May we will be sending out a survey to all staff and parents, so that you can express your views on the proposal, and make any additional comments if you wish. At the end of the consultation process Governors will then consider all responses and decide whether to proceed with the proposal.

Please feel free to contact us directly if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Charlotte Robinson  
**Executive Headteacher, Rokeby School**

Anthony Wilson  
**Headteacher of Lister Community School and NCST CEO**