

Consulting on a greater future for education in Great Yarmouth

Additional frequently asked questions

The free school proposal

We are very proud of what the pupils, parents, and staff at Trafalgar College have achieved, and we are still absolutely committed to the vision of meeting the growth in pupil places in Great Yarmouth and a radical improvement in academic standards.

We have to reflect, however, that changing circumstances put that vision at risk: predicted pupil numbers are much lower than first anticipated.

We believe the best way of preserving the vision is to pursue a merged school. We will still provide additional pupil places, but without creating a surplus which would be potentially destabilising for several schools in the borough - Trafalgar included. We will still improve academic standards within the town, but we can bring those benefits to many more pupils by uniting Great Yarmouth Charter and Trafalgar. The focus on STEM will transfer to Charter, and be reflected in its new facilities and in the future curriculum.

The consultation has been widely reported and we have also directly invited local schools, community representatives, and other stakeholders to take part. Everyone involved in the original Trafalgar proposals is very welcome to take part.

The proposals are being put forward by the Inspiration Trust, and will be reviewed and submitted to the Department for Education following the consultation.

Pupil numbers and viability

Pupil numbers are much lower than anticipated at the time the Trafalgar bid was prepared.

In 2014, Norfolk County Council's cabinet was told when considering a proposed expansion plan that pupil numbers at the then Great Yarmouth High would rise to 1400 by 2018. There are currently around 730 pupils there.

In 2015, Norfolk County Council predicted that in 2016/7 there would be 4284 secondary-age pupils in Great Yarmouth, Gorleston and Caister. As of January 2017, the actual figure was 4165 - 119 fewer

students than predicted.

Not including Trafalgar College, there is today capacity in the area for 4755 students; nearly 600 more than the actual number of pupils. Trafalgar at full strength would add another 750 places plus sixth form, meaning a total surplus of around 1350 places. In considering the needs of the children of Great Yarmouth as a whole, we believe that this level of surplus would be damaging to the education provision at several schools in the borough. Spreading pupils too thinly would make it impossible to provide the range of courses and the high quality of provision and enrichment activities that children in Great Yarmouth deserve, and that we know Trafalgar College pupils and parents desire.

Standards and improvement

The Inspiration Trust has a very strong record in secondary education. In 2016 we were named by the Education Policy Institute as the top schools group in the country for student progress to GCSE.

Hethersett Academy, near Norwich, went from special measures to an Ofsted rating of Outstanding in less than three years after joining the Trust, and for the past two years has posted the leading results not just in Norfolk but in East Anglia.

East Point Academy in Lowestoft failed to show improvements under a previous sponsor, but after joining the Trust it became the first secondary in the town to exit special measures. In 2016 its GCSE results nearly doubled, with student progress above the national average. This year its results improved again, achieved 65% Grade 4+ English and Maths at GCSE.

The Hewett Academy, although more recently joined, has also shown significant improvement not just in results but in attendance and behaviour. It has just posted GCSE results up 19% on the number of pupils achieving Grade 4+ in English and Maths, the school's best results in more than 10 years.

Great Yarmouth Charter Academy - both before

and after the proposed merger - will be supported by the Inspiration Trust's existing schools, include our three National Leaders in Education and our team of subject specialist experts, to ensure that standards rapidly improve there too.

Policies and ethos

Although each of our schools has its own character, we share a wide range of approaches and policies across the Trust. This includes a shared belief in high standards, good behaviour, and an education that goes beyond the classroom to include sports and culture. Our staff are employed as Trust staff, and often work across our schools. The staff at Charter includes some who have transferred from other Trust schools to support the transformation there, and we expect that Trafalgar College staff will transfer across to continue to support and benefit students.

While Trafalgar is currently a small school it has only half the originally envisaged number of pupils in Years 7 and 8, and on the original plans would grow to more than five times its current size. Even without a merger, it would change considerably in character in future years. As part of the proposals, pupils will transfer with their classmates and with staff they know, and we anticipate a transition programme that will see some joint teaching, social, sporting, and cultural activities that will ensure pupils have a smooth transition.

We intend that the STEM focus will continue at the merged school. A larger overall pupil role will support a wider range of subject choices and allow pupils to get the best education in science, technology, engineering, and maths, in addition to a broad range of additional academic subjects.

Support for special educational needs and disabilities

All our schools offer full support for children with special educational needs. Unfortunately there has been a lot of inaccurate social media comment about Charter Academy's approach to SEND. The academy fully complies with its obligations, and provides custom support for pupils with special needs.

The school does have a more robust approach to behaviour than its predecessor school, but this in fact provides a much more supportive environment for children with conditions such as autism by ensuring calm ordered classrooms and social spaces, and has been welcomed by many parents and pupils.

There has been a lot of positive comment from the school and local community - though perhaps not from those with the loudest voices - about the improvements in behaviour and atmosphere and the reduction in bullying since the start of term.

The Salisbury Road site

Proposals for changes at the Salisbury Road site are being developed alongside the consultation process, and planning permission will be applied for in due course. While still in draft, these are likely to include some demolition of lower quality existing buildings to make better use of the current site.

The Beaconsfield Rec is not part of the school site and no building work is proposed for this area.

Student travel to and from any school site is subject to Norfolk County Council's rules on funding for school transport.

Religious designation

The proposed merger means taking some elements from both sides: from Charter that includes its non-denominational Christian designation. Charter is not a faith school or a church school but seeks to have an ethos of politeness, kindness, and understanding that would be shared by most people regardless of faith.

It is worth noting that there are more than 100 schools in Norfolk with a religious designation, without causing parents any concern. All schools are required to offer social, moral, and religious education, and parents equally have the right to withdraw their children from religious education if they choose.

The Great Yarmouth Grammar School Foundation may appoint up to two governors to the local governing body, although it has so far not taken up that opportunity. The overall responsibility for the school remains with the Inspiration Trust.