

Paradigm Trust: Media and Stakeholder Q&A

Ipswich parents/carers and stakeholders 1 September

What is actually going to change to improve results?

- *We have a tried-and-tested approach to school improvement that we intend to apply to Ipswich Academy. We will focus on three areas: the quality of teaching to improve results, behaviour for learning and the quality of leadership and management.*
- *The first thing we will do is to ensure that students have sufficient literacy skills to access the curriculum at the right level. Nothing else works if they can't. This will mean ensuring that teachers are assisting students to develop these skills and, if necessary, putting the basics in place. We will then focus on core subjects such as maths, science and IT.*
- *In terms of behaviour, our initial focus will be on ensuring that the behaviour of students does not disrupt the teaching and learning of any other students at the Academy. Our rules will be simple and clear, and consequences for not obeying them will be made clear and be fully enforced.*
- *As leaders and managers our priority is to ensure that all lessons at Ipswich Academy are outstanding. This will mean a forensic focus on teaching and learning based on the use of accurate data about student achievement and levels of progress. All staff will be held accountable for outcomes whatever their role.*

How soon will we see progress and what will it look like?

- *Our first step will be to conduct a review of teaching and learning from the first week of school (starting on 7th September). Over the weekend of the 12th/13th September we will analyse the results so that by 14th September we will be in a strong position to decide what needs to improve and how quickly.*
- *Families, staff and students will see an improvement in the school environment on a daily basis. As we improve the quality of teaching and the standard of behaviour, there will be a direct impact on students' learning. The changes we will make to the quality of leadership and management will have a positive effect on all aspects of the school.*
- *We recognise that it will take time for this progress to translate into improved exam results. However, we are certain that by getting the foundations for teaching and learning right at Ipswich Academy, the results will improve significantly.*

Will there be any changes in the qualifications available?

- *We will follow the National Curriculum and a full listing of qualification choices is on our website – www.ipswichacademy.org.uk*

Are you closing the sixth form?

- No

What, if anything, are you changing in terms of uniform / rules around appearance?

- *We will keep the uniform and rules around appearance as they currently stand, but they will be more rigorously enforced.*
- *Students are expected to wear the Ipswich Academy blazer and plain black loose leg trousers (no leggings or tight trousers). They must wear a plain white shirt with a school tie or the Academy black polo shirt. Students must wear plain black footwear. Only one set of stud earrings and a watch can be worn for school. No other items of clothing such as hoodies, or accessories such as necklaces, bracelets (including loom bands) or any other piercings (facial or otherwise) should be worn for school.*
- *The school logo is used only by schools in the Kunskapsskolan group – LST has said this can be phased out over time. Students are welcome to continue wearing their existing uniform, which features the current school logo, until they need to be replaced. A replacement logo will soon be offered to families and this can be added to existing uniform.*

Are there any changes to the timetable?

- *From September, all students will be required to be in school on Friday afternoons to complete a full lesson after their lunch as they do on every other weekday. This replaces the early finish on a Friday previously scheduled for the students.*

How will you keep us up to date on further changes?

- *We will aim to communicate regularly to parents and carers on the improvements we are putting in place at Ipswich Academy.*
- *In the first term of this year we will communicate with you via post while we ensure that our contact database is fully up to date.*
- *We ask that during this period you provide us with your preferred email address so that from the start of the following term we will be able to email you directly. If you would prefer that we continue to communicate with you by post then please let us know during the first term.*
- *A new website for Ipswich Academy was launched on 1 September - www.ipswichacademy.org.uk, initially it will contain some basic information but it will be updated regularly and will have more information in the coming months, including the information that is emailed and posted out.*

Are staff going to be re-trained?

- *Our first step will be to conduct a review of teaching and learning from the first week of school (starting on 7th September). Over the weekend of the 12th/13th September we will analyse the results so that by 14th September we will be in a strong position to decide what needs to improve and how quickly.*
- *Staff will receive specific training in areas where gaps are identified in their practice. There will be a particular focus on their ability to ensure that students have sufficient literacy skills to access the curriculum at the right level.*
- *All staff will also be trained on the expectation we have for the behaviour of students.*

A number of the staff have left, have you replaced them?

- *Yes, we have all of the staff we require to run the school and deliver the national curriculum with the revised timetable.*

Are you expecting any more departures?

- *As with any large school, a level of staff turnover is always to be expected. We have no concerns in this area.*

How will you manage behaviour in the classroom?

- *We will seek to instil a positive, open attitude in every student so they are receptive to learning when they are at school. We recognise that this will take time, and strict disciplinary processes will be introduced to ensure that no child's education is affected by the disruptive behaviour of another.*
- *All staff will be well trained on the standards of behaviour we expect throughout all aspects of the school life.*
- *Any student who is behaving in a disruptive manner will be removed from the classroom by a senior team member and their work in a separate room will be closely monitored.*
- *If additional disciplinary measures are necessary, these will be managed by the senior management team and may include Saturday morning detentions and fixed term exclusions. There is also no requirement for notification before imposing a detention.*
- *Instead of texting parents/carers the day before a detention, notification will be made via a member of staff writing a note in the student's planner. It is therefore vital that parent/carers look at their child's planner regularly so they can see what homework is due and, in some cases, when detentions are issued. If, when being issued with a detention, a student does not have their planner with them or refuses to hand it over, then the detention*

will still stand as the school have made every attempt to inform parents/carers through the planner.

Will you be implementing stricter rules and consequences?

- *The standards of behaviour we expect and will enforce will be similar to that of many other successful schools. Whilst the rules will not necessarily be stricter, we will ensure that all staff work towards ensuring they are fully adhered to and that disciplinary action is taken when this is not the case.*

Will students be allowed mobile phones?

- *Students will be allowed to bring mobile phones and other electronic devices to school and use them appropriately during their break or lunchtime. However, these items will be immediately confiscated if they are seen or heard during lesson time, and will be kept in a safe place until the following Friday afternoon, when a parent or carer can come and collect them. We would be grateful if parents/carers could communicate these expectations to their child/ren before they return to school. We will also explain our approach to students on the first day of term and will adopt a flexible approach for the first day only.*

Will students continue to use Ipads / laptops in lessons?

- *We are reviewing the use of iPads. While this is going on, students should continue to use their iPads at home to support independent learning. They should not be brought into school unless a member staff specifically requests it. If they are brought in without such a request, they will be subject to the same rules as mobile phones. We would be grateful if parents/carers could communicate these expectations to their child/ren before they return to school. We will also explain our approach to students on the first day of term and will adopt a flexible approach for the first day only.*

Will you provide additional support for year 11 students as they approach their GCSEs?

- *Yes, we absolutely understand that there may be gaps that need to be filled quickly. We will look at the progress of each student individually and establish high, aspirational targets for them. We will provide more teaching time and access to online resources that can help in different areas. We will then support them in any way needed to help them achieve these targets.*

What additional facilities will be provided outside of normal school hours?

- *Additional lessons will be available once the performance review has been completed.*

What will be the governance structure for the school under Paradigm Trust?

- *The ultimate governing body will be the Paradigm Trust board of directors – under which there are three Committees responsible for Operations & Finance, Education, and Audit & Risk. For Ipswich Academy, there will be an Interim Executive Board (IEB) which will report to the Paradigm Trust board, this will include members of the former Academy Council.*

- *We recognise both the need and desirability of ensuring local engagement and working closely with the Suffolk County Council on this.*

Why is a primary school head teacher coming in to run a secondary school?

- *The issue here is about school improvement, not the age of the students. The leadership team at Paradigm Trust has successfully delivered significant school improvement on three separate occasions in institutions that were in serious weaknesses, causing grave concern or required improvement. This tried-and-tested approach to school improvement ultimately drove the creation of Paradigm Trust and we intend to apply it to Ipswich Academy as well.*
- *The fundamental key characteristics are a relentless focus – day in and day out – on the quality of the teaching, leadership and management. Paradigm Trust has demonstrated time and again high levels of performance in all these areas.*

Does Paradigm Trust have any experience in working with secondary schools?

- *Yes. The Paradigm Trust leadership team has previous experience of working in secondary education and we will also be drawing on expertise from within our strategic partnerships and network. We will also aim to develop local partnerships with strong education providers in Suffolk who will be able to provide us with further expertise as required.*

What is Paradigm Trust?

- *The leadership team behind Paradigm Trust has worked together since 2003. Amanda Phillips became head teacher of Old Ford Primary Academy (OFPA) in 2003 and Executive head teacher of Culloden Primary Academy (CPA) in 2006. OFPA was in serious weaknesses, having been previously in and out of special measures, and CPA was “causing grave concern” at the time. By 2008 OFPA was judged by OFSTED to be outstanding and in 2015 CPA was judged by OFSTED to be outstanding.*
- *The leadership team’s tried-and-tested approach to school improvement ultimately drove the creation of Paradigm Trust. Two of the three current schools have been judged “outstanding” by OFSTED.*
- *Paradigm Trust was formed as a Multi Academy Trust, in September 2013, when the two founding schools, OFPA and CPA, converted to Academy status.*
- *More recently, In February 2014, OFSTED reported that CET Primary School Tower Hamlets required improvement and the DfE agreed that the school should be transferred to Paradigm Trust. In September 2014, Paradigm Trust became the sponsor of what is now Solebay Primary Academy (SPA)– and an external review carried out by retired HMIs has now judged the school to be good with outstanding features in the quality of leadership in and management of the school.*

- *Our schools offer a curriculum to enrich students' lives and develop their self-esteem through:*
 - *using best practice in teaching and learning,*
 - *being guided by a clear sense of purpose and direction,*
 - *strong and effective leadership, high expectations and a relentless pursuit for excellence where only the best will do,*
 - *valuing and developing the skills of all staff, and*
 - *developing strong family and community partnerships*

Who will be the principal?

- *Our Executive Principal is Amanda Phillips CBE, and she will lead the school improvement programme at Ipswich Academy and serve as principal of the academy. Her work as a National Leader of Education brings her into contact with a range of educational settings and organisations across the country. Her dedication, focus and success have resulted in securing a glowing reputation for Paradigm Trust's schools, both nationally and internationally.*

Why was Ipswich Academy transferred to Paradigm Trust?

- *In January 2015, OFSTED reported that Ipswich Academy required special measures. OFSTED considered that the school's students were not achieving highly enough and that their literacy skills were weak. It also said that disabled students were "poorly supported", teachers did not all have the "necessary skills" to effectively teach and students' attitude to learning was "inadequate" and "slowing" their progress.*
- *Paradigm Trust was asked by the DfE to take on the role of sponsor for Ipswich Academy as a result of our strong track record of working with schools where significant improvement is required. Ipswich Academy was transferred to Paradigm Trust from 1st September.*

Has Paradigm Trust bought the school?

- *No. Ipswich Academy became part of Paradigm Trust from 1st September.*

How would you describe the issues faced by Ipswich Academy?

- *The OFSTED inspection identified a number of areas where it felt the school was failing and its report gives detail on areas that require immediate improvement.*

What will happen to Ipswich Academy staff? OFSTED said that they do not have the necessary skills to effectively teach – will they lose their jobs?

- *Improving standards at Ipswich Academy is clearly the most immediate priority. We believe that the quality of the teaching has a direct impact on learning. Our first step will be to conduct a review of teaching and learning from the first week of school (starting on 7th September). Over the weekend of the 12th/13th September we will analyse the results so that by 14th September we will be in a strong position to decide what needs to improve and how quickly.*

Will class sizes in the school change?

- *We will review the way that the school operates but will only make changes to anything that we assess is not working well in its current form.*

Will there continue to be a large number of supply teachers working in the school? How will you ensure the quality of their teaching?

- *One of our main objectives is that the school is staffed in a way that allows us to deliver the outstanding education that we believe every child deserves. We will employ a range of strategies and are confident that we have the resources necessary to ensure that excellent staff work at Ipswich Academy. Meanwhile, the executive team at Paradigm Trust has met with agencies that provide supply teachers in Ipswich and made our expectations very clear to ensure that every student receives consistently high quality teaching.*

How will you attract good quality teachers to the school?

- *One of our main objectives is that the school is staffed in a way that allows us to deliver the outstanding education that we believe every child deserves. We will employ a range of strategies and are confident that we have the resources necessary to ensure that excellent teachers work at Ipswich Academy. Paradigm Trust has strict standards that all teachers must adhere to, and this will ensure a consistently high quality of teaching across the school.*

Will you change the name of the school?

- *No, we will not change the name of the school.*

Will the work currently being done around careers and aspiration continue?

- *We will review the way that the school operates but will only make changes to anything that we assess is not working well in its current form*

Will existing extracurricular tutorials and enrichment activities continue?

- *Students and students at all of Paradigm Trust's schools can take part in enrichment activities before and after the school day, and sometimes even at weekends and during school holidays. We are committed to putting in the extra hours to do what it takes to ensure every child reaches the right standards and grades.*

Will you change the admission criteria?

- *Paradigm Trust is fully committed to a fair and transparent admissions policy. We shall review the current arrangements.*

How can you understand the problems around disruptive behaviour faced at this school when you are not from the local area?

- *We have experience of dealing with very disruptive behaviour at our other schools when we first started to work at them, and we will apply this experience to resolve any behaviour issues at Ipswich Academy.*

The transition from room to room for different classes is causing children to be unsettled during lessons. What will you do to alleviate this?

- *We have not witnessed unsettled behaviour as a result of these transitions. However, we will undertake a review of all aspects of the school and implement any necessary changes to ensure that every student receives the outstanding education that they deserve.*

Will you be expanding the intake in future?

- *As the school improves we would expect to see expansion in the future.*

One of OFSTED's criticisms of the school was that a section of students "persistently" truanted. What will you do to solve this?

- *We have clear procedures in cases of persistent / repeated absence from school and believe in immediate intervention with students and their families should incidents occur.*
- *We believe that, not only is it unacceptable for a child to miss a lesson unnecessarily, it is also not safe for them to be outside the school environment unsupervised in the day time.*

OFSTED said that disabled students at the school are "poorly supported". What measures will you introduce to improve this?

- *We shall identify all students who should be supported through the Disability Discrimination Act and ensure individualised action plans are drawn up to meet their needs. Central to this is the family who knows their child best.*

Why are you taking over this school? What's in it for you?

- *We were asked by the DfE to take on the role of sponsor for Ipswich Academy as a result of our strong track record of working with schools where significant improvement is required.*
- *Paradigm Trust aims to exemplify excellent educational practice. We believe that every child is entitled to an outstanding education, with equal access to knowledge, skills, opportunities, aspirations, life chances and dignity. If we can help to do this by taking control of a school that is struggling, then that is core to our philosophy.*

What effect do you think this will have on student numbers at the school?

- *We understand that change is unsettling, and there have been a number of changes at Ipswich Academy over the years. However, we hope that our strong track record of bringing excellent standards to our existing schools, will mean that parents/carers will want their children to be students at the school.*

How do you expect parents/carers to react to you taking over the running of the school?

- *We understand that change can be unsettling and that parents/carers will have questions for us. We will seek to reassure them every step of the way, and believe that any changes we introduce will have a positive impact on students at the school, who will become more confident and engaged in their learning.*

How confident are you that you will deliver improvements to the school?

- *We are confident about our ability to make this school a success and provide each student with the outstanding education that they deserve. We have a strong track record of bringing excellent standards to our existing schools, and we believe that we are more than capable of delivering similar results at Ipswich Academy.*

Do you expect this one to be as successful as your other three schools?

- *Yes. We have a strong track record of bringing excellent standards to our existing schools, and we believe that we are more than capable of delivering similar results at Ipswich Academy.*

How are parents/carers able to become involved?

- *We welcome parents/carers getting involved in their child/ren's education. There are many ways that they can get involved, including supporting their child/ren by encouraging their independent study and helping them with their homework. We have a series of meetings planned for the 10th September to talk to parents/ carers about how they can do that.*

Do you have enough resources to run a fourth school, when you already have three in Tower Hamlets?

- *Prior to any agreement for Ipswich Academy to become part of Paradigm Trust, we conducted a full assessment of our resources to ensure we had the capacity to look after a new school without it impacting our current schools. We are confident that we have the skills and resources.*

How much time will Amanda Phillips spend at Ipswich Academy, and how will the operational management of the school be handled if she is spending time tackling disruptive behaviour?

- *When Ipswich Academy transfers to Paradigm Trust, which we expect will be from 1st September, Amanda Phillips, the Executive Principal of Paradigm Trust, will spend four days a week at Ipswich Academy as Principal and she will lead the school improvement work. She will also be available in Ipswich at weekends as required. An excellent team from Paradigm Trust will be supporting her in this role at Ipswich Academy.*