

Key Responses from the Parent Information Meeting 28.11.22

Why did the school open when there were possible delays to completing the new building?

As a result of significant growth in the Newcastle school population there was a need for additional school places. The Secretary of State agreed to our plan, in partnership with Newcastle City Council, to open the school on a temporary site with a reduced admission number for September 2021 to provide some of these places. Subsequent delays linked to a change in building design and specification and an unsuccessful procurement exercise, were not able to be anticipated.

Why did the procurement process to appoint a contractor fail? Why will the process now be any different?

Early engagement with the contractor was positive but subsequently the DfE was unable to reach agreement with the contractor for the Great Park project on commercial aspects, including building design and specification. As a result, they took the decision to procure a new contractor to deliver the project. Work on the procurement of a new contractor is well underway.

Teams within the DfE have reviewed the procurement process. After careful consideration an alternative procurement route via the DfE Construction Framework 21 has been selected as the most appropriate. DfE has considered the capacity of the contractors, including early market engagement, which has shown a good level of interest.

The aim is to appoint a contractor via a pre-construction services agreement by spring 2023. This will enable the successful contractor to work up designs and submit a reserved matters planning application, leading to a construction contract to be awarded in autumn 2023.

What is now the expected timescale for completion of the new building?

Milestone	Status	Indicative timescale
Transition to DfE Construction Framework 21 (CF21).	In progress	November /December 2022
Procurement commencement - expression of interests sought from contractors.		December 2022
Appoint contractor via a pre-construction services agreement (PCSA) to progress design, surveys, and a reserved matters planning application.		Spring 2023
Contract Award /Start on site (with the construction programme confirmed at this stage).		Autumn 2023
Completion on site.		Summer term 2024/25

What assurance can be given that the school will be ready before September 2025? Can anything be done to speed the whole process up?

DfE is fully committed to the delivery of Great Park Academy and is progressing procurement as quickly as possible. As part of DfE's agreement with Newcastle City Council, the authority is installing services to prepare the site ahead of contract award and DfE will consider early works where possible. The local MP Catherine McKinnell has requested a meeting with the Minister for Schools, Rt Hon Nick Gibb, for an update on the DfE's plan of action and to press for any issues to be resolved urgently.

Will the school still take children in Sept 23 and Sept 24 as the temporary building is not big enough?

See answer below

What are the plans for accommodating an increased number of pupils in 2023 and 2024?

DfE are working in collaboration with the trust to provide additional temporary provision with works to be complete for the September 2023 and September 2024 intakes. They are also working closely with Newcastle City Council to secure planning approval.

The proposed additional facilities include for:

September 2023

- An additional two general teaching classrooms, including ancillary provision such as toilets and associated landscaping works.
- Re-surfacing an existing area of hardstanding to provide a suitable facility for P.E. due to the increased pupil numbers.

September 2024

- Further additional classrooms again with ancillary provision such as toilets and associated landscaping works.
- A large practical learning space for Science and Design Technology subjects.

Gosforth Group will support this further and are committed to ensuring that all Great Park pupils have access to the specialist learning facilities they need within Gosforth Academy and other schools within the trust.

What provisions will be in place for specialist teaching such as science and design technology?

In Y7 both the science and design technology curricula have a significant number of theory-based lessons that can be delivered in a standard teaching classroom. Great Park Academy will be able to utilise specialist facilities in Gosforth Academy and other Gosforth Group schools to support the delivery of the full Y7 curriculum.

To deliver the practical elements we also have the option of planning Super Learning Days or afternoons, either half-termly or termly, when pupils will be able to spend time at one of our MAT schools undertaking experiments.

As noted above there are plans for a large practical learning space for science and design technology to be added to the temporary provision from September 2024.

How will the school provide a good range of enrichment activities, clubs, etc.?

We continue to run and develop our termly extra-curricular programme offering a broad range of activities. For example, this year in the autumn term, Year 5 and 6 had the option to attend enrichment classes/activities in: multi-sports, Spanish, performance, cross country, girl's football, boy's football, mindfulness, Chinese paper crafts, netball, and book club. A homework club also runs each night Monday - Thursday.

Will the school be built all at once or will some children remain in temporary classrooms at Gosforth Academy while construction is completed?

A phased handover of the new build will be considered with the contractor, so that students can benefit from the new provision and specialist teaching spaces as early as possible, when safe to do so.

How will the increased demand on the transport which is already under considerable pressure at the start and end of the school day be dealt with?

A transport assessment is underway to support the plans for the expanded temporary provision in September 2023 and 2024. Gosforth Group have also reallocated some staff to another location which will assist with parking on site. Newcastle City Council is aware of the situation and are engaged with the trust, DfE and Nexus in looking at potential ways forward.

There will be a further Information Evening in February when we will update parents on progress on both the permanent building and the expansion of the temporary provision. A representative from Newcastle City Council will be invited to attend this meeting alongside the trust and DfE.

ENDS.