

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Ethos, philosophy and structures**

#### **Will schools change their names when they become part of a merged Trust?**

No. All schools within the merged Trust will retain their current names. As part of the consultation, it is proposed that the newly formed Trust will have a new name.

#### **Will the merged Trust lead to a change to the ethos and values of FLT and VAT Trusts?**

The merged Trust will seek to develop and promote a unifying culture where every pupil can benefit from an outstanding education at a school which has a distinct ethos and character which can be valued by the community the school serves.

#### **Will individual schools lose their identity?**

No. All our Trust schools currently have a unique character and ethos which will be maintained. The schools within the Trust will be part of a wider community and team which ensures that they share and experience the benefits of being part of an expanded Trust.

#### **How will the Local Governing Committees work in the schools?**

The Local Governing Committees will continue to determine the strategic direction of their school taking into account the strategic aims of the Trust and their school's specific priorities.

The important link between the local community and the LGCs will not be lost. It will be for local governing committees to determine how they organise themselves to discharge the responsibilities delegated to them by the Trust Board. LGCs will still have responsibility for maintaining and improving education standards, challenging performance data, Safeguarding and Health and Safety.

#### **What will be the role of the Headteacher/Executive Headteacher/Head of School in the new merged Trust?**

Heads will continue to be responsible for their school's performance, the educational outcomes of pupils, the performance management of their staff, for the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff and the day to day internal organisation, management and control of their school.

#### **Would the school be in control of its own admissions and what would the admissions procedures be?**

Every Trust is responsible for determining what pupils are admitted to its schools, this is known as admission authority for its schools. Admission arrangements will continue to be set in accordance with the DfE school admissions code, changes to admissions criteria will always be consulted on.



We will also continue to work with and within Oxfordshire County Council's admissions system and code of practice, to be inclusive community based schools.

**Would you plan to change holiday times and/or hours of the school day?**

All schools have the ability to set their own start and finish times. Academies have the additional ability to set term dates, we will continue to align these across the Trust. There are no plans to change current practices as a result of the merger. Any proposed changes would be consulted upon.

**Will we see any differences in the day-to-day running of the school?**

Parents should not see any noticeable differences in the everyday running of the school.

**Partnership and collaboration with other schools**

**What will the merged Trust look like in three years' time?**

Although it is difficult to predict the future, it is likely that the Trust will have expanded during this timeframe, this will be with schools who share the same values and ethos as the merged Trust.

**Would you share facilities with other schools in your area?**

Yes. One of the essential features of all schools in the future will be greater collaboration and the sharing of resources, human and physical, in order to provide efficiency of resource used.

**Would schools club together to buy in services?**

Yes. The two existing Trusts have committed to working together in partnership, whatever the status of each individual school. They are looking at services and resources we could share such as purchasing and professional services, in order that schools can achieve further financial efficiencies.

**School policies, self-evaluation and Ofsted**

**What would happen to current FLT and VAT policies?**

On merger the process of aligning policies will commence to ensure consistency across the Trust. Any policies relating to staff will evolve through consultation with the Unions (OHRF Oxfordshire HR Forum).

**Would we still be subject to Ofsted inspections?**

The current practice of Ofsted inspecting individual schools will continue and the Trust Board will ensure schools are supported through this process. The Trust Board will also be able to respond to any changes that result from the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Inspection trials that are currently being undertaken.

**How will school self-evaluation work for the merged Trust?**

This will be led by the head in conjunction with the Trust School Development Team and Local Governing Committee.

### **Will the curriculum change?**

The new Trust will continue to be committed to ensuring every school is able to offer a high quality, broad and balanced curriculum building upon the best of what each Trust currently does.

### **How will this merger benefit our children directly?**

This information is contained within the consultation document.

### **Funding matters**

#### **Who sets the budgets for the individual schools within the merged Trust? Do the schools have ownership and responsibility for their budgets through their LGBs?**

The Trust Board will set the criteria for the annual budget cycle, approve individual school budgets and monitor performance against submitted budgets. The Board has overall responsibility to ensure financial management and value for money for all Trust schools.

Each school will have a delegated budget and Heads will be accountable for the financial management of their school, including staffing and planning for the future. Heads have the opportunity to sub delegate their budgets further within their school.

#### **Are the FLT and VAT Trusts in debt?**

No. Both Trusts monitor their finances closely ensuring that, they have built a suitable contingency fund for supporting continuing development and cushioning ourselves against cuts in funding and rising costs. Both trusts are currently in surplus and are able to continue to invest in pupils' education.

### **Employee matters**

#### **Who would the employer of the Trust's staff be?**

The Trust will be the employer of all staff working in the Trust.

#### **Can the Trust make changes to pay, terms and conditions of staff?**

Terms and conditions for teachers in maintained schools are determined through the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD), the Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales (the Burgundy Book) and the School's Pay Policy for teachers. For support staff, terms and conditions are determined through Oxfordshire County Council's Job Evaluation Scheme, the Oxfordshire Local Agreement (OLA) and the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service for Local Government Services (the Green Book).

Academies are not required to adopt the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, the Burgundy Book or the Green Book. However, they can choose to do so and the new Trust will still use these terms and conditions for all staff.



If in the future the Trust wished to introduce different terms and conditions of employment, it would need to consult with employees and the recognised trade unions on any proposals.

**Do you anticipate continuing with same levels of training and CPD for staff?**

Yes. In fact, over time these will increase from current levels as opportunities arise across the new Trust.

**Will staff have the opportunity to work across the Trust?**

If staff want they may be given the opportunity to work across the Trust at other schools. Staff may be asked to support other schools within the Trust as part of the Trust's school development programme. There may also be occasions when the Trust has the opportunity to support schools in difficulty who are not part of the Trust, and staff may be asked to work in those schools as part of school development.

Staff may be appointed to work at more than one school.

**What will happen to my pension?**

All staff employed by academies automatically fall within the Teachers' Pension Scheme or the Local Government Pension Scheme on the same basis as teaching and support staff in their current Trust.

**Will the change in Trust mean my continuity of service will be broken?**

No. All staff will retain continuity of service and their continuous service date will not change.

**Will staff job descriptions change?**

Job descriptions of staff will only change if their role changes as part of the merger.

**Will Trade Unions be recognised by the Trust?**

Yes in the same way that both Trusts currently consult with the recognised Unions the new Trust will continue to do so.

**What consultation is taking place about the proposed Trust?**

Staff like all stakeholders have the opportunity to respond to this consultation process.

The unions have been sent a copy of the consultation document.

## Land issues

**What happens about the transfer of land?**

All former Local Authority schools have a lease of land and buildings of 125-years from Oxfordshire County Council these leases will continue. The land and buildings of our Church Schools have separate arrangements, and these will be agreed with the Oxfordshire Diocese, however we do not envisage any changes to the current arrangements.



## **Accountability and responsibilities**

### **How will the merged Trust support the Heads in running their schools?**

The Trust will provide heads with the support they need to enable them to focus on teaching and learning and day to day organisation and operation of their school.

### **To whom are Multi Academy Trusts answerable?**

Multi Academy Trusts have Boards of Trustees who are accountable to their Members who hold overall responsibility. Trustees and Members are all locally appointed. The Trust is then answerable to Ofsted, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) and the Department for Education's Regional Director. This merger will not introduce a new level of management but will provide a sustainable structure to develop and move the merged Trust forward to meet our aspirations and goals.