

MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST CONSULTATION LETTER FOR PARENTS, CARERS AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY

We are writing to you with details of a proposal to convert Belgrave Primary School to academy status and to join The Learning Trust Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

The Wrexham Road housing development will include a brand new primary school which the council has secured funding to create a 1.5 form entry. However, this could accommodate a larger school if this was required to enable a preferred model of local education to be implemented. This represents an exciting opportunity to realise Belgrave Primary School's ambition to expand and provide high quality education and care to more children in the local community.

Taken out this paragraph regarding free school presumption

The Learning Trust, a local MAT that comprises Christleton and Queens Park high schools, has expressed an interest in bidding in partnership with Belgrave Primary School and for us to become the lead primary school. As many of our pupils continue their education at Queens Park High, we already have an established working relationship and share similar pupil centric ethos. A joint bid would combine The Learning Trust's experience of building a brand new school, with Belgrave's expertise in primary school education. This and our existing strong relationship with the local communities would maximise the prospects of a successful bid.

The Governing Board has taken great care to explore all reasonable options to ensure that the children of Belgrave Primary School are placed in the strongest position for the future. We believe the best way of securing the new school and also improving standards in the future while maintaining our school's ethos, philosophy and community future is by becoming an Academy and joining The Learning Trust.

As well as the opportunities presented by the new school there are numerous benefits of joining The Learning Trust such as shared resources and more opportunities for the children and staff to work together across the three other schools within the Trust, facilitating a seamless transition from primary to secondary education.

The Governing Board's priority is to enable the school to continue to provide an excellent education for our children, retaining their unique qualities and strengths while protecting the school's role at the heart of our community. We are therefore looking upon The Learning Trust's offer favourably and now want to consult parents, carers and members of the wider community about whether the school's conversion to academy status should take place.

The consultation period will start on the 01/05/2019 and end at 5:00pm on the 21/06/2019. There will also be the opportunity for parents and members of the community to meet and ask the Head Teacher, Governors and the CEO of the trust questions if they wish to, on Friday the 10/05/2019. Please contact the school office to arrange a time to attend. We have also prepared some Frequently Asked Questions for you to read online on the school website. Paper copies are also available at the School's reception.

Responses to this consultation must be emailed to **consultation@belgrave.cheshire.sch.uk**

Or posted to:

Consultation Response
Belgrave Primary School
Five Ashes Road
Chester
CH4 7QT

Yours sincerely,
Head Teacher and Chair of Governors

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and is no longer run by the Local Authority. The Trust is charitable, which means it must operate much like a charity and not for the profit of individuals or businesses.

2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A MAT is a single charitable entity which controls a group of academies within the trust. The trust's directors (or trustees) are responsible for overseeing the running of all the academies within the trust.

The trust is accountable for all the academies within the MAT; however, before joining the MAT, the academy and trust would agree on the matters that would be handled by the trust, e.g. legal services and financial auditing, and those that will remain the responsibility of the local governing board.

3. How would converting to an Academy benefit our School?

These changes are about enhancing teaching and learning for all children. They would allow us to share skills and operate more effectively.

Through partnership, The Learning Trust will support Belgrave in:

- developing and sharing best practice in teaching, learning and curriculum
- creating a skilled, motivated, expert workforce
- ensuring high standards through mutual challenge of performance
- making optimum use of their resources.

4. Who will be responsible for running our school?

The Learning Trust will have a Board of Directors including individuals from the Local Governing Bodies of all four schools. The Trust Board will delegate many powers to a Local Governing Board (LGB), which will have a role similar to that of the current School Governing Board. These powers will be agreed by Governors from all four schools. The vast majority of Governors are likely to be the same people as now.

5. What are the responsibilities of the MAT once Belgrave has joined?

The main responsibilities of the MAT include:

- Setting the strategic direction for all the academies within the trust;
- Being responsible for the performance of the academies, including monitoring and, where necessary, intervening to improve performance;
- Ensuring that the right structure and organisation is in place to deliver the necessary high-standards for pupils;
- Ensuring value for money, maximising available funds and identifying and securing additional finance and support when required;
- Challenging progress in all aspects of academy operations and providing support and guidance to achieve the highest outcomes; and
- Leading involvement with parents and the wider community to promote the MAT and support the community.

6. What are the members of a MAT?

Members are like the shareholders of a commercial company, they appoint trustees to run the MAT and are the only people able to amend the trust's Articles of Association – the Articles of Association is the document that sets out the framework to which the academy and the trust will work together.

7. What are the trustees of a MAT?

- The trustees oversee the day-to-day running of the MAT, determine what policies will be implemented and make the decisions that impact the entire trust.
- The trustees are the official statutory governing board for the MAT.

8. Will conversion alter Belgrave's existing ethos?

No, Belgrave will retain its own values and ethos whilst working to the goals shared by the academies within the MAT.

9. Will the academy still be inspected by Ofsted?

- Yes, all academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as maintained schools.
- The academies in the MAT will continue to be inspected separately; however, this may change in line with government policy.
- Ofsted will carry out inspections of the trust as whole.

10. What is involved in becoming an Academy?

The school must complete a consultation with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community which the Governors will take into account in reaching its decision. We are holding open consultation sessions at School on Friday the 10th of May at 9.00am – 10.30am and 2.45pm – 4.30pm.

We would expect to become an Academy within the Multi-Academy Trust on 1st September 2019, if the final decision to convert is made by the Governing Board.

11. Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?

No.

12. How much does conversion cost?

Costs depend on which law firm the academy chooses to use and how much the LA charges.

During the conversion process, the academy will be eligible for a grant of £25,000 from the Department for Education to cover the cost of the conversion.

13. Who makes the final decision?

- The governing board will consult with staff members, parents and local residents in order to make an informed decision on whether or not to join the MAT.
- After collecting evidence the final decision will be made by the governing board.

14. Does the MAT have charity status?

- Yes, the MAT has charity status – the directors of the academy trust are the charity trustees.
- Academies in MATs are 'exempt' charities – this means they are not required to register formally with the Charity Commission, but the academies have the same charitable status as the organisations that are fully registered charities.

15. How will being an Academy affect staff?

Currently, all staff are appointed through the Governing Board and are employed by Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council. After conversion, all staff will be employed by The Learning Trust. Staff

are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

16. How are the children affected?

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference, they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupils' learning.

17. Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. All funding comes direct from Government to the Multi Academy Trust which, through individual school participation on the Board of Directors, then controls the overall budget. Each school does not necessarily have more money, but as a group the schools are better able to **share the cost of resources**.

18. What are the risks of becoming an Academy?

The change to Academy takes a school out of Local Authority control but does not exclude the school from Local Authority support. **Local Authority support is provided equitably to maintained school and academies where a statutory duty applies. Other services are available on a traded basis for both maintained schools and academies to opt in as they wish.** At some stage in the future, any school might be influenced to become part of a broader Academy Chain. We believe that the ability to join a local MAT, under local direction, offers the best opportunity to sustain vibrant, successful local schools and the best outcomes for children.

19. How will parents be affected?

- Parents will not be affected; however, they may start to see and hear more information about the MAT.
- Parents may notice that correspondence sent by the academy, e.g. letters and emails, will include the MAT's logo.

20. Will parents be able to share their views?

Yes, the school will hold a full consultation which all parents, governors and staff members will be invited to take part in.

21. How will admissions to the school be affected?

The school will become its own admissions authority but will be required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient places locally and will coordinate the admissions process for all schools. This means parents will still only have to complete one application per child.

22. Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?

No. Academies must ensure that they continue to be at the heart of their community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

23. Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and exclusions change?

No. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

24. Will term times change?

No, the term dates will stay the same as other local schools.

25. Can a child with a statement nominate an Academy as his or her school of choice?

Yes. Schools converting to Academy status can retain the admissions criteria they currently use. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code.

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSAL TO CONVERT BELGRAVE PRIMARY SCHOOL
TO ACADEMY STATUS AND JOIN THE LEARNING TRUST

QUESTIONNAIRE

About you (Please tick one that applies to you)

- Parent / Carer
- Local resident
- Teacher
- Support staff
- Other (please state)

1. What do you like about our School?

2. Do you support our School converting to an Academy and joining The Learning Trust?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

3. Is there anything else you would like to say about the proposed Academy?

On completion of this questionnaire, we would ask you to either drop it into school reception or post it to school by **21st June 2019**.