

**Bolshaw Primary School**  
**Joining a Multi Academy Trust**  
**Frequently Asked Questions and Answers**



**What is an Academy?**

Academies are state maintained schools free to all children. They are run separately from the local authority, and have an agreement with the Government which provides funding directly to the Academy Trust. They have to follow the same rules as all other state-funded schools over admissions, pupils with Special Educational Needs and exclusions. They are still inspected by Ofsted.

**What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**

A Multi Academy Trust is a company established to be responsible for a number of Academies. Each Academy remains a separate school, but the governors are responsible to a board of directors established for the Trust as a whole. This model is now extensive and more primary schools are seeking academy status as the Government is encouraging schools to choose this route. Directors are appointed on the basis of the skills they have and to ensure that the board has a range of skills available.

As the multi-academy trust is a single entity, it is envisaged that schools can achieve strong collaboration and drive up standards by providing a consistent strategy and vision across schools working together.

**Why are we considering converting to an academy now?**

The current educational climate is changing and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of the benefits that becoming an academy brings. Many schools wish to make the move now to determine their own destiny and to make the changes when it is right for their own school. As a successful school, gaining academy status would give us the autonomy to continue to develop and to maintain our high standards. Becoming part of a MAT will bring greater opportunities for working even more closely with other local schools and the wider trust community. We genuinely believe that it will help make us even better as a school. As in all of the decisions that we make, the impact on the children is our highest priority. We don't make changes unless it will help our school community.

**Why join The Honeycomb Education Trust?**

The ethos of the Trust is strongly aligned with the core values of Bolshaw Primary School. The Trust is very much primary school focused, set within the geographical area of Stockport, making communication and opportunities for collaboration effective. The potential for professional development and cost effective, financial sustainability will have a positive impact on the outcomes for our children. Relationships between the school leaders of the partner schools are very well established. The schools in the Trust will work together, each making a significant contribution to developing greater opportunities for children by building a collaborative learning community.

Most importantly, within the trust, Bolshaw Primary will retain its own individual personality, whilst continually developing in the future. Each school will make a contribution to the partnership, developing ever improving outcomes for every child in the Trust.

### **Has the decision to convert to an Academy already been made?**

The Governors have agreed in principle; however the conversion will not be finalised until the consultation has been completed and everyone's views have been obtained.

### **How does the conversion process work?**

Schools must present a detailed application, with the conversion being subject to the approval of the Regional Director through the Advisory Board.

Schools can withdraw from the application and conversion process right up until the signing of the funding agreement.

### **What does it mean financially for the school?**

For a number of years now, schools across England have been liaising with the Government for better, fairer funding. The reality is that the size and location of a school have a huge impact on the income it will receive each year and this in turn directly affects its ability to manage the school premises, employ additional staff or develop the range of resources necessary to drive school improvement forward. An ever-increasing number of schools in England are now in deficit and with lower birth rates leading to less children starting at school each September, the effect of the drop in funding that this brings will have severe implications.

Bolshaw Primary School continues to be an oversubscribed, well-respected and popular choice of school; school places are in demand within our community. However, we need to ensure we take positive steps to offset the many financial challenges presented to smaller primary schools, such as ourselves. Being part of a Multi Academy Trust will ultimately bring more financial security and sustainability.

By joining a MAT our base funding will no longer come to us via the local authority. In the first instance, this means that certain monies taken at source by Stockport will not be deducted. By virtue of no longer being a grant maintained school this also means there are other streams of finance we will now have access to, that at present we cannot apply for. We will also be able to take advantage of other providers for services that are currently sourced through the local authority, providing a wider choice and ensuring value for money.

### **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. They will understand that they are part of a community of schools and therefore build stronger community cohesion.

### **What about the staff?**

At present, all staff are employed by the Local Authority. When the school becomes an Academy, all staff will automatically transfer to the new Academy Trust.

The transfer would take place within the TUPE regulations for staff transfer, which ensures that staff retain all of their existing rights, terms and conditions and pension arrangements, including continuity of service. Pension rights would also be maintained as part of any conversion to academy status.

### **What is the effect of TUPE? (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment rights)**

The TUPE Regulations provide that the current employer's "rights, powers, duties and responsibilities" under the contract of employment of any transferring member of staff would be transferred automatically to the new employer, in this case the Academy Trust.

### **Do academies have to recognise Trade Unions?**

Where TUPE applies, all trade unions are recognised before the transfer. In this Trust, they will continue to be recognised by the new employer.

### **Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?**

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 – A MAT has the potential to make collaboration more effective.

### **Would there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?**

The Academy must continue to abide by the admissions code and follow the relevant policy and procedures.

### **Can a child with an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) 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. The Honeycomb Education Trust will have a strong commitment to inclusion.

### **Would the name of the school change?**

Bolshaw Primary School will retain its name and place in the community.

### **Would the school uniform change?**

There are no plans to change the school uniform.

### **Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?**

Bolshaw Primary School would continue to consider aligning with the Stockport Borough Council plan for term times. We will have greater flexibility however with regards to the term times, and would consult with the parental/carers community should we believe there is a better structure for the year.

**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.

**How can I find out more?**

There is a lot of information on the internet. You may find the link below helpful.

A source of information on academies is the Government's own website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/convert-to-an-academy-documents-for-schools>