



Inspiring Futures
through Learning



CHILTERN
LEARNING
TRUST

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The proposed merger is an exciting time for both trusts and our schools, and a fantastic opportunity for us to further strengthen our partnerships as a group of like-minded education providers by formalising the relationships between us.

These questions have been created from discussion in conjunction with the partners seeking to form a new Multi-Academy Trust. We hope they will answer many of your queries, but if not, please don't hesitate to ask.

MAT formation partners and rationale																																													
What is a multi-academy trust?	A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is an academy trust that operates more than one academy.																																												
Who are the settings looking to form the new trust?	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Chiltern Learning Trust:</th> <th>Inspiring Futures through Learning:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Ardley Hill Academy</td> <td>Ashbrook School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aspley Guise Village School</td> <td>Brooklands Farm Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cedars Upper School</td> <td>Chestnuts Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Challney High School for Boys</td> <td>Exeter - a learning community</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Challney High School for Girls</td> <td>Fairfields Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chiltern Academy</td> <td>Glebe Farm School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dallow Primary</td> <td>Heronshaw School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Daubeney Academy</td> <td>Heronsgate School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Denbigh High School</td> <td>Heronshill School and Nursery</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kempston Academy</td> <td>Holmwood School and Nursery</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lancot School</td> <td>Lavendon School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lark Rise Academy</td> <td>New Chapter Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lea Manor High School</td> <td>Olney Infant School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Linslade School</td> <td>Olney Middle School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marston Vale Middle School</td> <td>Priors Hall – a learning community</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Putteridge High School</td> <td>Rickley Park Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Springfield Primary School</td> <td>St Mary and St Giles CofE Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wootton Primary School</td> <td>St Mary's Wavendon CofE Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Two Mile Ash School</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Whitehouse Primary School</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Woodnewton – a learning community</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Chiltern Learning Trust:	Inspiring Futures through Learning:	Ardley Hill Academy	Ashbrook School	Aspley Guise Village School	Brooklands Farm Primary School	Cedars Upper School	Chestnuts Primary School	Challney High School for Boys	Exeter - a learning community	Challney High School for Girls	Fairfields Primary School	Chiltern Academy	Glebe Farm School	Dallow Primary	Heronshaw School	Daubeney Academy	Heronsgate School	Denbigh High School	Heronshill School and Nursery	Kempston Academy	Holmwood School and Nursery	Lancot School	Lavendon School	Lark Rise Academy	New Chapter Primary School	Lea Manor High School	Olney Infant School	Linslade School	Olney Middle School	Marston Vale Middle School	Priors Hall – a learning community	Putteridge High School	Rickley Park Primary School	Springfield Primary School	St Mary and St Giles CofE Primary School	Wootton Primary School	St Mary's Wavendon CofE Primary School		Two Mile Ash School		Whitehouse Primary School		Woodnewton – a learning community
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Why are we considering forming a new Multi-Academy Trust?	<p>Collectively, our Trust Boards believe the best way forward to further enhance our work is to merge Chiltern Learning Trust and Inspiring Futures through Learning to leverage their respective strengths.</p> <p>The two Trusts are highly complementary – their respective experiences in primary and secondary and initial teacher training are regionally and nationally</p>																																												

	<p>recognised, and recent partnership working has focused on sharing the best expertise across the whole range for both trusts.</p> <p>Crucially, the two trusts are geographically neighbouring, covering North Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, Hertfordshire, Luton, Bedford, Central Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire, meaning a formal merger would be logical and highly efficient in preserving local identity.</p> <p>Anticipated benefits of a joint organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced outcomes and wider experiences for pupils • Broader expertise through collaboration across all key stages and school improvement initiatives • Greater talent development via enriched career pathways and collaborative opportunities • Increased organisational resilience through shared resources and financial efficiencies • Wider reach across six local authority areas • Further economies of scale • Together, the two trusts could create a resilient, diverse, and sustainable organisation capable of supporting over forty academies.
<p>What would the trust be called?</p>	<p>The trust will have a new name, as it is a new organisation.</p> <p>The new trust vision would build on our shared, core ethos and values – we would maintain and strengthen our focus on each child enjoying their learning and achieving their full potential in a stimulating, nurturing environment, maintaining our high expectations and commitment to inclusion.</p> <p>We are currently working to develop a name that reflects these principles and our deep connection to the local community, and we look forward to sharing it with you very soon.</p>
<p>Will the schools' names change?</p>	<p>No, all schools will retain their current names.</p>
<p>Who makes the final decision on the proposal?</p>	<p>The Board of Trustees of both Inspiring Futures through Learning and The Chiltern Learning Trust, along with the Diocese of Oxford, will make the decision on whether this Trust will proceed, based on the outcomes of a due diligence process which includes engagement and consultation with all stakeholders. If all are in agreement, the proposal will be taken forward to the DfE.</p> <p>The application is then considered by the DfE Advisory Board.</p>
<p>Would other schools join us and who would</p>	<p>Once the new Trust is formed, any decision on additional schools joining our MAT would be made by the Board of Trustees. It would then also have to be approved by the DfE Regional Director. As time goes on, we would expect other schools to</p>

<p>make the decision on if additional schools join us?</p>	<p>join and any school/setting that joins us in our vision & ethos and governance structure as well as fully contributes to and learns from the other schools/settings.</p>
<p>Will the trust grow?</p>	<p>The newly formed MAT being proposed would consist of 39 schools, approximately 23145 students and 2714 members of staff.</p> <p>It is hoped that more schools will wish to join the trust in the future. There is a clear understanding between all the leaders that the growth strategy needs to be carefully planned.</p>
<p>Who is the trust accountable to?</p>	<p>Like the current trusts are at present, the new Trust would be accountable directly to the Department for Education (DfE) and external auditors. We would be overseen by the Regional Director at the DfE, as well as continue to be subject to Ofsted inspections.</p> <p>Each school would still have their own separate Ofsted inspections and gradings.</p>
<p>Who runs a trust?</p>	<p>The trust will be overseen by the CEO and central team on behalf of the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>Our existing headteachers and senior leadership teams will continue to lead and manage their schools as they are currently doing. The Headteachers will work in collaboration with each other and drive their establishments forward.</p> <p>The Board of Trustees would be reconstituted to include people drawn from both of the organisations involved in the merger, drawing on the skills and knowledge of the existing trustees in these organisations.</p>
<p>What are the advantages for us?</p>	<p>We have worked hard to explore the potential structures that will enable us to deliver exceptional education in the future. Having carefully considered the potential advantages and disadvantages of a range of options, including maintaining the status quo, we are confident that forming a new Trust, where together both Trusts have a voice in leading the way, is the best way to bring about the most benefit for our schools and local communities we all serve. Here is the positive impact that we believe such an approach will deliver.</p> <p>Community -based resources and collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a structure for highly performing community-based provision that meets local community needs whilst gaining from the benefits of being part of a larger, regional organisation. <p>Regional influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the need for increased Trust capacity within the region.

	<p>Collaborative Learning Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the sharing of best practice among schools • Encourage collaborative learning and professional development for teachers to develop their practice. <p>Resource Optimisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pooling of resources allows for more efficient use of funds, staff, and facilities. • Collective purchasing power leading to cost savings on supplies and services. • Long-term sustainability and viability – stronger together. <p>Increased Educational Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable schools to offer a broader range of subjects and extracurricular activities. • Access to a wider network of expertise and specialised resources. <p>Improved Outcomes for Young People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced school improvement, supporting high-quality provision for all pupils. • Sharing the best practice across all our schools, raising aspiration and achievement. <p>Streamlined Administrative Processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent policies and procedures to promote efficiency and clarity. <p>Professional Development Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded professional development opportunities for teachers and staff. • Access to a larger talent pool for recruitment and staff advancement. • Increased leadership opportunities for staff, enabling us to retain our most talented practitioners and nurture staff to fulfil wider roles. <p>Financial Stability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial stability through shared resources and risk mitigation. • Greater resilience against economic uncertainties or budget constraints. <p>Governance and Leadership Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared governance structures promote effective decision-making. • Access to experienced leadership and governance support. <p>Joined up local approach to Community Engagement and Outreach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for joint community projects and outreach initiatives.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened ties between schools and local communities. <p>Increased Accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent accountability structures to foster continuous improvement. • Regular monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure quality standards. <p>Flexibility and Autonomy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a balance between collaboration and individual school identity. <p>Wider Network and Partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden the network of educational partners and stakeholders. • Opportunities for cross-school events, competitions, and collaborative projects. <p>Shared Ethos and Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of educational philosophies and values for a cohesive learning environment. • Promote a sense of shared purpose and community. <p>Adaptability to Changing Educational Landscape:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better preparedness to adapt to changes in educational policies and practices. • Collective strength to navigate challenges and seize new opportunities.
<p>As a larger partnership of schools, will you have increased purchasing power?</p>	<p>Yes, due to the economies of scale, a larger group of schools will be more likely to be able to obtain better value when negotiating contracts for services essential for running a school, such as utilities, insurance, accountancy, payroll, educational psychology, broadband and other internet and IT services.</p>
<p>What are potential risks?</p>	<p>A time of change may raise concerns and uncertainties. This engagement period gives you the opportunity to give us feedback. We want to understand and respond to the questions you will have.</p> <p>However, we firmly believe that the greatest risk is to stand still and remain at our current size. Merging together and forming something new will greatly increase our capacity to deliver high-quality education and family support and continue to build the expertise within our organisation. It provides security rather than risk.</p> <p>The bringing together of multiple settings into one entity is complex, not just operationally, but culturally and as such needs to be navigated with care. This is a risk as colleagues navigate change. Leaders will be prepared for this and will be</p>

	<p>able to draw on the support of other local leaders who have navigated this process recently.</p> <p>We will be financially linked and with that comes initial risk as the change is made, but also great opportunity to maximise value in everything we do and continue to invest directly in our pupil services and colleagues. Both of our organisations have sound finances, healthy reserves and sustainable staffing models. Buildings and estates are also sound.</p> <p>Due diligence processes will ensure that each organisation knows all the necessary detail about each other before any decisions are made.</p>
<p>A lot of news reports I've seen are about failing schools being forced to be taken over as academies. What does this have to do with us?</p>	<p>A school that is failing can be taken over by a sponsor and turned into an academy with the aim of the sponsor driving improvement in the school. What does not make the news is that strong schools are able to start or grow their own Multi-Academy Trusts and lead on school improvement in their group. We want to make this move because we are a group of high -performing schools with strong leadership, and we want to continue to build on this.</p> <p>The strength of the schools involved and the leadership capacity will enable the new Trust to support wider school improvement in our region without putting provision and standards at risk in our current schools.</p>
<p>What process have the trustees gone through in deciding to begin this process and will the new trust definitely be formed?</p>	<p>The board of trustees have voted individually to confirm that we would proceed with engagement on the formation of a new Trust and to work together to explore the possibilities. This is not a decision we have come to lightly; this is the result of the careful consideration of options for both trusts, understanding the local and national context and assessment of our successful current partnerships. The leaders and Trustees have all undertaken a vast amount of research as we strive to make the right decisions for each respective organisation.</p> <p>At the end of the engagement period, which includes a rigorous process of due diligence, each organisation's board of trustees will further consider their decision, weighing all evidence and information before making any final decisions to apply.</p>
<p>What is the timescale for MAT formation?</p>	<p>The entire process from start to finish generally takes 6-9 months.</p> <p>So, for our situation, it is likely that Inspiring Futures through Learning and the Chiltern Learning Trust would be able to merge in Autumn 2026.</p>

Impact on staff	
How will this all impact the staff's daily work?	<p>For most staff the merger won't have an impact on their daily roles. Teaching and support staff will continue in their same roles at their current schools.</p> <p>For some members of leadership/business roles there may be more change, and this is likely to increase as the Trust develops. The central services team may grow and develop in a larger Trust.</p> <p>As the Trust develops and grows, there will be exciting opportunities around increased collaboration, wider professional networks, shared CPD, career pathways and progression opportunities.</p>
Will staff be employed on current terms or school teachers' terms and who would be their employer?	<p>There is no plan to change terms and conditions for staff. Terms and conditions for existing staff would remain the same and pensions would transfer (including pension contributions).</p> <p>The new Trust would be the employer of all staff.</p>
Will staff have to reapply for their jobs	<p>There are no such plans for the vast majority of staff. If any restructuring decisions are made, those directly affected will be consulted with individually.</p>
Will staff be moved across locations?	<p>There is no plan to have teachers working across locations – we all have our specialisms and expertise, and we would want to make best use of these. On the positive side, being part of a larger organisation should allow more progression opportunities and personal development.</p> <p>For those who want it, there will be opportunities to work across more settings as part of wider collaborative work.</p> <p>One of the benefits of working in a Trust is that in the event of an emergency, there are other professionals who may be able to support, but this would be the exception rather than the norm.</p>
How will this support staff's professional development?	<p>As the trust develops, we hope there will be exciting opportunities around increased collaboration and professional development opportunities. There will be opportunities to develop leadership and to succession plan, ensuring we retain the very best staff within the trust.</p>
Will my length of service be protected?	<p>Yes. When staff transfer to a new employer under a merger of this nature, continuous service is typically protected under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) regulations. This ensures your</p>

	rights regarding notice periods, maternity/paternity leave, and redundancy pay remain intact
What happens to my pension?	There is no plan to change pension arrangements. Both teacher and local government pension schemes will transfer over, including all employer contributions
Will there be new opportunities for promotion?	Yes. One of the key strategic advantages is the creation of "broader opportunities for professional development, staff progression, and succession planning". A larger organisation with over 2,700 staff allows for a much wider talent pool and more diverse leadership roles.
Will the Trust's central team be based at a specific location?	While revised central services will be created for the larger trust in time, the specific blueprint for where these teams are physically based is still being discussed. The vision is to ensure these services effectively support schools across all represented local authorities.

Impact on Teaching and Learning and pupils

Will all our local partnerships stop if we merge as a trust?

As **Chiltern Learning Trust** and **Inspiring Futures through Learning** work toward this merger, we remain committed to the principle of local communities driving local solutions. This partnership is designed to strengthen, rather than replace, our existing local ties.

Sustaining Local Partnerships across Regions

The merger will not bring an end to our current local partnerships. We recognise that our schools span multiple local authority areas, and we see a significant advantage in maintaining these diverse relationships regardless of a school's formal designation. We will continue to champion sharing and collaboration for the benefit of all young people in our respective communities.

A Unified Mission for Pupil Success

A primary motivation for this merger is to ensure every pupil achieves their full potential by removing the barriers that hinder their ambitions. To achieve this across our various regions, we will continue to work closely with:

- **Multiple Local Authorities:** Maintaining strong, individual links with each relevant council and education department.
- **Education and Health Providers:** Collaborating with other schools, colleges, and health and welfare professionals.
- **Community Partners:** Engaging with local charities and outreach initiatives to support our pupils' holistic needs.

By joining forces, we aim to provide a structure that meets specific local needs while gaining the broader influence and stability of a larger, regional organisation.

Are we going to be teaching common curriculums across the trust?

We do not intend to have a completely common curriculum across the new Trust. Individual school identity is important to us and our school contexts vary. It would be inappropriate to have a completely uniform curriculum across the Trust. Retaining the individuality and creativity of each organisation's curriculum is also important to drive innovation and further improvement.

Over time, we expect to find ways to do things more efficiently and take full advantage of being able to learn from each other and share best practice.

Will there be a centralised behaviour /pastoral team?	No. Each setting has its own structures and systems, and that is what makes us all unique. However, opportunities to get to learn and share expertise will be hugely beneficial as we start to work together. It may be that the locality model lends itself to future opportunities to develop these teams across a locality to enhance capacity and capability.
How will Ofsted judge us?	Each individual setting will be judged by Ofsted as they have been in the past. They have their current rating and will be inspected in line with the current inspection framework. In the future, Ofsted will inspect trusts, and it is probable that the new trust will undergo such an inspection.
Will there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?	No. All of our schools will remain non-selective, and any future changes to admissions criteria will reflect community needs and be subject to consultation, as is currently the case.
Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?	There is a lot of debate around school term times and holiday patterns and whether the current model best serves our pupils. As a Trust we want to adopt the best holiday pattern for our pupils and staff but are mindful of the need not to move too far away from the pattern of other schools and providers in the area so that we support families with children in different schools. If any proposals on this were to be drafted in years to come, they would include wide consultation with all parents and colleagues.
How will this affect my child's daily routine, such as school hours or the curriculum?	The day-to-day experience for pupils will largely remain unchanged. While the merger allows us to share best practice and enhance the curriculum over time, we do not intend to move to a completely uniform curriculum. School hours and term dates will also remain as they currently are in the first instance.
Will there be any changes to the support provided for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?	There will be no reduction in the level of support provided. In fact, one of the primary benefits of a larger trust is the ability to pool expertise and access a wider network of specialised resources and professionals, such as educational psychologists, more effectively.
Does the merger mean that funding for my child's school will be reduced?	No. Each school will continue to have its own budget. The merger is intended to create economies of scale, meaning we can save money on back-office costs like insurance and utilities to ensure more of our funding is focused directly on educational provision.

Impact on systems and operations	
What will change within the central services?	The vision is to create revised central services for the larger new Trust. We will include all affected staff in that conversation as it develops. This is something we don't have a blueprint for at this stage; we will need to find our own solutions, and this will be through lots of discussions with the people who really understand it.
How would estate development be funded	Trusts with over 5 settings and 3,000 students are eligible for the Schools Condition Allowance, which is an annual fund that comes directly to the Trust on a formula basis. This enables trusts to plan for long-term priorities and allocate resources according to need, and it ensures funding is shared appropriately. Trusts are also eligible to bid for a range of wider funding opportunities and grants for specific projects, particularly those of wider benefit to the community.
Will our systems change (e.g. MIS, parent pay, etc)	We are currently looking at all the systems that our settings use to understand what is the same and where there are potential efficiencies. Where we establish that there is potential to adopt a Trust-wide solution that meets need, we would seek to do this. Some systems, such as the Management and Information System, do need to be common across a Trust. Other systems can be school-specific.
Will IT support be kept in-house or outsourced to a company that looks after the IT for the entire Trust?	Shared IT support is one of the potential positives of working in a larger organisation. As with all our operations, we will review effectiveness. However, outsourcing management of our IT to an external company seems unnecessary, given the existing expertise we have within our organisations.