

Frequently asked questions

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?	<p>South York Multi-Academy Trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Archbishop of York's CE Junior School, York ○ Bishopthorpe Infant School, York ○ Dunnington CE Primary School, York ○ Escrick CE Primary School, North Yorkshire ○ Fulford School, York ○ Wheldrake with Thorganby CE Primary School, York <p>The Star Multi-Academy Trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Appleton Roebuck Primary School, North Yorkshire ○ Brayton CE Primary School, North Yorkshire ● Kellington Primary School, North Yorkshire ○ Kirk Fenton CE Primary School, North Yorkshire ● Monk Fryston CE Primary School, North Yorkshire ○ Riverside Primary School, North Yorkshire ○ Saxton CofE Primary School, North Yorkshire ● Sherburn High School, North Yorkshire ● Sherburn Hungate Primary School, North Yorkshire ● South Milford Primary School, North Yorkshire ○ Tadcaster Grammar School, North Yorkshire
Why are we considering forming a new Multi-Academy Trust?	<p>We have learned through our partnerships that collaborative working with other schools can provide an improved educational experience for our own learners. Larger trusts can use funds and staff more effectively to address the needs of their school communities. This includes developing teaching and learning support systems, an enhanced and engaging curriculum, staff development and progression opportunities, finance and human resources, and improved procurement opportunities. A larger organisation will be more sustainable and enjoy these benefits at scale and making more effective use of our resources.</p> <p>The Department for Education (DfE) encourages multi-academy trusts (MATs) to merge and grow in size because larger trusts can have a greater impact and are better able to address school needs.</p>

<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 South York Multi-Academy Trust and The STAR Multi-Academy Trust, along with the Diocese of York, 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 Advisory Board of the DfE Regional Director for Yorkshire and Humber.</p>
<p>Would other schools join us and who would make the decision on if additional schools join us?</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 join and any school / setting that joins us would be expected to abide by our vision & ethos and governance structure as well as fully contribute to and learn from the other schools / settings.</p>

<p>Will the trust grow?</p>	<p>The DfE had previously stated that to be sustainable, Trusts should be of a size of 10 schools/7500 students or more. At this size, MATs can achieve true economies of scale.</p> <p>The newly formed MAT being proposed would consist of 17 schools and approximately 7000 students.</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>The Trust would be accountable directly to the Department for Education (DfE) and our accounts audited by the DfE's Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) 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 setting 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 Trust Board would be reconstituted to include people drawn from both of the organisations involved in the merger, drawing on the skills of the existing governors and 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 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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 of practice across all our school, 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.
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	<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. • 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 able to obtain better value when negotiating contracts for services essential for running a school such as insurance, accountancy, HR, Payroll, education 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 with an existing Trust and forming something new will greatly increase our capacity and 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 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 risk, but also opportunity as resources can be allocated based on need. 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 for dramatic 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 quickly; this is the result of the evaluation of all options available, understanding the local and national context and assessment of 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 The Star Multi-Academy Trust and the South York Multi-Academy Trust would be able to merge by Autumn 2025.</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 setting.</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 to 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>

Impact on Teaching and Learning and pupils	
Will all our local partnerships stop if we merge as a trust?	<p>No. The trust's philosophy is about local communities bringing about local solutions, so there is a huge advantage to continuing with all partnerships irrespective of the designation of the school. Sharing and collaborating for the benefit of young people in our community will always be supported and encouraged.</p> <p>A key driver for the Trust is ensuring all pupils achieve and that we break down those barriers and obstacles that currently prevent our young people from fulfilling their ambition. We will continue to work with the local authority, other education providers, health and welfare professionals and charities, etc. to fulfil these aims.</p>
Are we going to be teaching common curriculums across the trust?	<p>We do not intend to have a completely common curriculum across the 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 individuality and creativity of each organisation's curriculum is also important to drive innovation and further improvement.</p> <p>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.</p>
Will there be a centralised behaviour / pastoral team?	<p>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.</p>
How will Ofsted judge us?	<p>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. Ofsted do inspect trust and in the future it is probable that our trust will undergo such an inspection.</p>
Will there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?	<p>No. All of our schools will remain non-selective and we plan to have the same criteria applied for admissions as is the case now.</p>
Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?	<p>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.</p>

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 ensuring funding is shared appropriately. Trusts are also eligible to bid from 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.