

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are the educational benefits to the partner schools?**

The schools involved in the alliance have already collaborated extensively but wish to formalise the arrangement.

The overarching aim of the alliance is that we are 'stronger together' and that partnership and outward facing collaboration between practitioners in different schools is a key way to continually develop and improve teaching and learning for the benefit of students, parents/carers and communities.

Specific priorities are

- To enhance student learning and outcomes by widening access to a greater range of opportunities
- To increase and extend students' engagement with other people and experiences to develop their understanding of each other and the world
- To continuously develop each school's curriculum so that it promotes curiosity and aspiration
- To enhance our collective extra-curricular and enrichment offering in support of personal development
- To develop staff by giving access to a creative professional development programme in support of career progression
- To enhance and develop each school's provision through researching, sharing and pooling our experience and expertise
- To increase our capacity to support other schools

### **Will the school name or uniform change?**

No. All members of the alliance are clear on their expectations to remain independent and each school will maintain their unique individuality.

### **Will staff change?**

There will be no changes to the existing staffing structure as a result of creating an alliance. In fact, a major drive to form our alliance is to provide better CPD (continuing professional development) and enhanced career opportunities for all our staff.

### **Will staff levels change?**

No. Creating an alliance will not dictate the number or make-up of staff in each school. Decisions on staffing will be made by the individual schools.

### **Will the Terms and Conditions of staff change?**

No. There is no intention to change Terms and Conditions. The creation of the alliance will have no impact on existing contracts.

### **Will governance change?**

No. Each school will continue to be a Single Academy Trust, with its own distinct Trust Members and board of Governors (sometimes called trustees). Collaboration at governance level is available to promote best practice, but each school will continue to be self-governed.

**As a partnership of schools will you have increased purchasing power?**

Yes. It's probably the case that a group of schools will be able to obtain better value when negotiating contracts for services essential for running a school. Examples could include: insurance, accountancy, human resources management, payroll, broadband and other internet and IT services.

**Would our school's budget be used to bail out another partner school if it was in financial trouble?**

No, and no decision will ever be taken that might jeopardise that. All schools within the alliance will have their own budget and financial control. If another school joined the partnership then they would only do so if their financial position was strong.

**How is SEND affected?**

The creation of the alliance does not mean there will be changes to the arrangements for supporting SEND pupils. Each school will continue to fully support children with SEND as we currently do, whatever form the additional support needs to take. The alliance status may provide benefits in this area through, for example, the sharing of expertise and support.

**Will there be any change to the admissions policy?**

No. The current arrangements for each school as determined by individual school admissions policies, the Statutory Admissions Code and Admission Appeals Code will apply.

**Will the curriculum change?**

Not as a result of the creation of the alliance. Curriculum provision is always under review and in time schools may align to provide more effective school to school support but any changes will always be conducted on what is best for the students at an individual school.

**How will the alliance be run?**

The alliance will be led and managed by a Strategic Board composed of the Headteachers/Senior Leaders of each member school. The Strategic Board will direct and monitor the work of the alliance; holding regular meetings to determine the support that the alliance can offer. There is no hierarchy within the membership. There will be an annual joint meeting of the Strategic Board (Head teachers) and Members (Governor Representative from each school) to agree the strategic priorities and provide accountability for the work of the Alliance.

**When will the alliance start?**

The proposed creation date is January 2024.

**Is there a financial cost to joining the alliance?**

At present, schools will invoice each other as appropriate for any agreed and planned costs. A 'Partnership' fund to support the work of the alliance is likely to be formed longer-term. Contributions to the fund will be made on a pro-rata basis, dependent on size of each member school and will be commensurate with the planned level of support provided by the alliance. Governing bodies of each individual school will be required to confirm all contributions. The Partnership Fund will be held in a separate account and usual financial scrutiny applied to ensure probity and value for money.

### **Will other schools have access or rights over school facilities?**

No. Member schools may offer to support other schools through the use of facilities, particularly in the case of developing and improving student experiences, expertise and cultural capital via specialist provision, but these will be managed directly by individual schools.

### **What happens with a change in Leadership/Governance of one of the partner Schools?**

We would hope that any new School Leaders and Governors would wish to continue membership with the alliance however, there is no obligation for any school to remain affiliated to the group and membership can be withdrawn at any point.

### **Is there a timescale for the Length of the partnership between schools?**

No defined timescale for the length of partnership has been established at this stage. The success of the alliance will be continuously monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet its aims, with a realistic timescale for the alliance to demonstrate an impact of between 1-3 years. A formal review with Members will take place annually.

### **Will there be equity in work across schools?**

Yes. The Strategic Board will ensure that there is parity in the workload resulting from collaborative alliance work and that no member school will be at risk of being negatively affected. Improvement and support activities will have a designated lead and these will be fairly and equally distributed across member schools. Any additional work load will be continuously monitored and reviewed.

### **Is there any risk of the Alliance or an individual partner School taking over another Member School in the circumstance of poor educational or financial performance?**

No. The ultimate aim of the alliance is to support efficient and collaborative school to school working. Any Member School being in the very unlikely position of demonstrating poor performance, will receive nothing but full and complete support from other Member Schools, should this be requested.

Full accountability for the performance of each individual school will always remain with the Governing Body and Leadership Team of that school.

### **Will collaborative work involve the sharing of staff across schools and, if so, how will students and staff remain safeguarded?**

Elements of collaborative work across the alliance may require staff to work together in different settings or schools. This will not affect the terms and conditions of any employees and will be with the full agreement of colleagues.

Individual school safeguarding procedures will always be rigorously applied for all regulated activities.

### **Will the term dates change?**

All schools have the ability to set their own term dates. There is no intention to alter the current arrangements.

### **Will a parent's access to information be affected?**

No. All schools will maintain their own websites and communication procedures.

### **How will the money raised by a School Association be used?**

Where a school has its own autonomous Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or equivalent, it will remain specific to the host school, although they will be free to collaborate if they wish. The money raised by each school's PTA will only be used for its own school. They will continue to be independent of the school, raising money for agreed resources or projects that have been agreed with the school's leadership.

**Are schools able to collaborate with schools outside the partnership?**

Yes. Partners will retain existing partnerships within and outside of the alliance; this is one avenue to develop best practice, with other routes remaining available to partner schools.