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***The Governing Body for The Whartons Primary School, Otley, has had an application approved by the Department of Education (DfE) to join a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) – The Collaborative Learning Trust (CLT). This MAT includes our local secondary school, Prince Henry’s Grammar School, as well as two other local primary schools. The Governing Body’s decision is not binding at this stage. The Governing Body will now enter a consultation period with Parents, Carers, Staff and the local community to consider whether this is the best option for The Whartons. This consultation period will last from 16th September to 11th November 2024 and dates of meetings are noted at the end of this document.***

***To learn more about what this will mean for you, your child and the wider community The Governing Body have provided over the next few pages some frequently asked questions and answers about Academies and MATs.***

**Frequently Asked Questions – Academy Status**

**What is an Academy and how do they differ to a Local Authority maintained school?**

* Academies are independent state schools funded directly by the government (through the Education Funding Agency) rather than via the Local Authority as maintained schools are.
* Academies have more freedom than maintained schools, for example, over their finances and curriculum.
* Academies remain part of the community. They serve children and families in a particular area and retain the same responsibilities as maintained schools.
* The Headteacher in an academy continues to work in partnership with the governing body on strategic matters, as in a maintained school.
* Academies are subject to the same laws on employment, equality, admissions and special needs.
* Academies are required to follow the same rules over pupil exclusion.
* Academies are subject to the same Ofsted Inspection regime.

**What is a Multi-Academy Trust?**

A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is where two or more academies/schools join together and form a single trust with a Board of Trustees overseen by the trust’s Members. Maintained schools who want to join a MAT will need to convert to an academy.

Within a MAT all schools are governed by one academy trust. Each school retains its own local governing body, which is, in effect, a committee of the MAT board. The schools' governing bodies operate under the control of the trust, which is responsible for running individual schools. The trust is accountable and responsible for the performance of each of the schools and may delegate its decision-making powers to the governing bodies of the individual schools. As the MAT is a single entity, it is envisaged that schools can achieve strong collaboration and maintain/ drive up standards by providing a cohesive strategy and vision across all the schools working together.

**What is the Collaborative Learning Trust (CLT)?**

The Collaborative Learning Trust is the official name of the Multi Academy Trust which began with Prince Henry’s Grammar School and Bramhope Primary School, and now has 7 schools.

Further information can be found[***here***](https://www.collaborativelearningtrust.com/page/?title=About+Us&pid=6)

**Which other schools are already part of the CLT?**

CLT currently includes the following schools:

* Prince Henry’s Grammar School (Otley)
* Ashfield Primary School (Otley)
* Bramhope Primary School (Bramhope)
* All Saints CofE Primary (Bradford)
* Micklefield CofE Primary (Micklfield)
* St Mary’s CoE Primary Academy (Hunslet)
* Trinity All Saints CofE VA Primary (Bingley)

**Why is the Governing Body of The Whartons considering joining Collaborative Learning Trust (CLT) MAT?**

The Whartons’ Governing Body sets the school's vision, ethos, and strategic direction; while providing the required oversight. We have an obligation to consider and plan for the school’s long-term future and the quality of education provided for our pupils.

The Whartons is a key part of the Otley, Pool and Bramhope ‘Family of Schools’ community. This includes the long, continued and successful relationship with Prince Henry’s Grammar School (PHGS), and two primary schools who have also recently joined the CLT. This community has worked on joint action plans, training and school improvement projects together for several years. The Whartons’ leadership were involved when this Trust was first created (2018) providing views on the key values and other areas.

The Governing Body and school leadership have observed the declining quality of support and services from the Local Authority (LA). The school leadership has had to ‘fill gaps’ which has led to increased pressure and workload on the school and its staff. The Governing Body has considered that the operation and the structure of the CLT could provide better opportunities for its pupils, staff and the school functions, than our current arrangements.

The Governing Body has been regularly reviewing joining the CLT since 2019 and believe it is now the right time to join. We see this as an effective way to secure the school’s long-term future and continuing school improvement. We note most of our students choose Prince Henry’s, a CLT school, for their secondary education journey. Importantly, the values of the CLT closely align with those at the Whartons.

**What does the Governing Body consider to be the potential benefits of being part of the Collaborative Learning Trust?**

***Pupils*** - The possibilities for improvement in educational resources and teaching, leading to better learning environments and results e.g. by sharing specialist facilities and resources. By belonging to a larger learning community there could be opportunities to collaborate with pupils from across the Trust’s diverse schools, which builds understanding and enables all pupils to grow together.

***Staff*** - Increased opportunities for training and development. This includes collaborative professional development; subject lead forums, networks and sharing best practices. Better opportunities and training for staff lead to better outcomes for pupils. Enriching the curriculum through greater partnership working.

***Resourcing*** - Having the availability of reliable local support in areas such as HR, finance, health and safety and estates. Realising economies of scale when purchasing resources and services. Creating opportunities to secure investment in school buildings and educational facilities for the benefit of current and future students.

***School Leadership*** - Spending less time on administration and getting the resources and help when they need it, allowing them to focus more time on pupils and staff. The ability to have access to available dedicated school improvement capability, and leadership support.

**Has the decision to join Collaborative Learning Trust already been made?**

No. Until the views of our parents, carers, staff, the local community and other stakeholders of our school have been obtained, a final decision will not be made. The Governing Body must weigh up both the pros and cons of Academy conversion.

**Will we lose our identity and community at The Whartons through joining the CLT?**

The current CLT model gives all the schools within it a lot of autonomy. This is different to some other MATS. The legal structure of the CLT means that church and non-church schools can work together as part of the Trust. All types of school should maintain their individual identity and reflect the needs of their students and community.

Further information can be found[***here***](https://www.collaborativelearningtrust.com/page/?title=Parent+and+Carer+FAQs&pid=56)***.***

**What changes would I see at The Whartons if it converted to an Academy and joined the CLT?**

There would be little visible change as a result of joining CLT:

* Your school will retain its own character and ethos.
* The name of the school, the headteacher, the staff, the school uniform, the school term dates and timings of the school day **would not change** as a result of joining CLT.
* The Local Governing Committee will continue to provide governance and support the school much as they do now and parents will continue to be represented on the Local Governing Committee.
* Children with special educational needs (SEND) will continue to receive additional support the way they do now.
* CLT will provide some central administrative services, which will help your school to be more efficient and therefore allow school leaders and school funding to be more focused on teaching, learning and support for students.

**What about working with other schools?**

Our school already has strong partnerships with other local schools. We are therefore very interested in models that allow us to build on these partnerships through academy status.

Joining the CLT could allow us to continue the strong and established partnerships we already have, provide better opportunities for our learners and save money by benefiting from economies of scale. We shall continue to build and strengthen our existing school partnerships with schools outside the CLT (e.g. in the Otley, Pool and Bramhope family of schools and through the Red Kite Alliance).

**Will pupils’ education be disrupted by a transition to academy status?**

No. When an academy is approved to go ahead, it will do so with minimal disruption to the staff and students. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes, with support from a dedicated team from the Trust who have gone through this process before with other schools. There may be some initial disruption for staff for example due to changes of IT systems, assessment models, CPD (training) systems, but this should not affect day to day teaching.

**Would moving to join CLT make a difference to how our children are taught at The Whartons?**

No. Although academies are not required to teach the National Curriculum they do have to teach a broad and balanced one that includes English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education and promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. In reality there is very little difference between the National Curriculum and academy curriculum legal requirements. The intention is for CLT schools to continue to follow the National Curriculum. Children would still be required to take national tests.

**Does it mean more money for The Whartons?**

Academies are funded in a similar way to other schools, however, becoming an academy would open up additional capital funding opportunities for us to explore for example the School Conditions Allocation Fund (for the improvement of school buildings and facilities). Joining CLT could allow us to achieve savings through the sharing of services and resources across the schools within the MAT. The best value protocols currently in place in our schools will be further developed in order to improve the quality of provision at a much more competitive cost. Economies of scale will be sought.

**What is involved in becoming an Academy?**

The Governing Body has voted for this proposal in principle and Department for Education (DfE) has decided to approve our application. Governors will meet with parents, carers, staff and the wider community during a consultation period before the Governors reach their final decision.

**Is there a cost in moving to an academy model?**

The DfE has approved the application and given The Whartons a £25,000 support grant to be used in the conversion process, including legal fees etc. The funds can only be used for the conversion process and any funds not used in this process must be returned if the Governing Body decides NOT to convert.

**How will the Governance Model for the CLT and The Whartons operate?**

The CLT has a Board of Trustees, approved by the DfE. The Board of Trustees delegate decision making for certain functions to a Local Governing Committee for each school. Our school will have a Local Governing Committee, largely made up of our existing governors. The Local Governing Committee will continue to ensure that the needs of the school are monitored closely, work with staff to develop and maintain the individual character and ethos of our school and act as a key link between the Trust, the school, parents, carers and the local community.

This ‘mixed MAT’ model means that the CLT is allowed to include a mix of Church of England and community schools. Within the CLT the community schools will remain as community schools, and the church schools as church schools. The structure of the CLT allows for more formalised, collaborative working whilst allowing the individual characteristics and ethos of each school to continue.

Further information can be found [here.](https://www.collaborativelearningtrust.com/page/?title=Governance&pid=61)

**When would The Whartons change to become an Academy?**

While there is no fixed time frame the Governing Body are looking to make a decision on what our preferred option is (whether to join the CLT or remain as a Local Authority maintained school) in 2024. Schools can change to Academy status within 3-4 months of consulting with parents, carers, staff and the local community. It is for our Governing Body to decide whether the school should convert to Academy status. If, following approval of the DfE and the consultation period, the Governing Body decides to go ahead, we would aim to become an academy and join the CLT ahead of the start of the school year 2025/26.

**What does it mean for teachers and staff?**

At present, The Whartons teachers and staff are employed by the Local Authority. On conversion to academy status, teachers and staff employed by the Local Authority will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) process to be employed directly by the CLT. In addition, conversion will not affect any union memberships. We are also consulting with our staff to seek their views.

**Will the CLT employ Non-Qualified Teachers?**

No. All class groups of pupils will be registered to a qualified teacher, as is the case in school currently.

**Next steps:**

* We will shortly enter a consultation period where a series of meetings with parents, carers and staff will be held for individuals to learn more about the CLT and to ask questions. The date for the parent consultation meeting with the CLT and Governors is Thursday 26 September, 6pm.
* Drop-in sessions will be held where you can come to speak to a governor if you have any questions or concerns. The dates and times for these are as follows:
  + Friday 4 October, 8.30-9.30am
  + Tuesday 8 October, 5-6pm
  + Wednesday 16 October, 12-1pm

Please also feel free to speak to a governor at pick up or drop off if you see them in the playground.

* The consultation period will come to an end on Monday 11 November
* Wider information on the Academies programme is available on the Department for Education website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-conversion-process>