



# Hughenden Primary School

Enrich - Empower - Ignite

## Academy Consultation

**Hughenden Primary School is proposing to join Kings Education Trust.**

We have created this information pack to inform our school community and stakeholders about our proposal, share our plan and ask for feedback.

We will be working hard to ensure that we include all stakeholders in order to:

- keep everyone informed about progress on an ongoing basis;
- provide information and clarification of the process;
- communicate an ongoing timeframe and linked key action;
- provide coherence throughout this process.

To give your views after reading this information pack, please click here <https://forms.office.com/e/NcRBRRPqk4>

## Proposal to join a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)

Hughenden Primary School is a one form entry primary school serving pupils aged 4-11 from Hughenden Valley, neighbouring villages and High Wycombe. It also has a community pre-school with places for children from the age of 3. The Governing Board at Hughenden Primary School has been considering the benefits of joining a multi academy trust (MAT) after the government set out its plan for achieving its vision to see “all children benefit from being taught in a family of schools, with their school in a strong multi academy trust. ‘Opportunity for All’ white paper published in March 2022.

In seeking to convert to an academy, our priority is to ensure we continue to provide a high-quality education for our pupils. The Governing Board believes that joining a MAT will provide the freedom to make effective financial decisions, securing our future and driving improvement.

The benefits to Hughenden Primary School of joining a MAT are:

- collaboration; sharing specialist staff, allowing the school and its pupils to access a richer set of curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- providing a formal framework for sharing knowledge and experience of all aspects of school improvement;
- increased opportunities for staff development, progression and retention within the organisation;

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- the opportunity for enhancing strategic governance by maximising roles within a multi-tiered governance structure;
- Greater financial efficiency:
  - by procuring goods and services at a larger scale across the trust;
  - by sharing staff, including specialist staff who work centrally for the trust, like a school improvement team or pastoral team

## Multi Academy Trusts

The government's vision is for every school to be part of a family of schools in strong Multi Academy Trusts (MAT). MATs are primarily set up to improve education within their group of schools by supporting school leaders, sharing and implementing evidence-based best practice and by directing resources through a shared structure resulting in better teaching and improvement for pupils.

Strong academy trusts can use the opportunities of school-to-school partnerships to provide rich, rewarding opportunities for children, promoting their wider spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.

Strong and effective MATs are encouraged to consider strategic growth; in some cases, smaller trusts combine or in other cases, like ours, individual primary schools apply to join an existing MAT and seek to find a trust where they are welcomed as an equal partner and where there is alignment in their shared aims, ethos and vision.

## Rationale for Joining a Multi Academy Trust

Hughenden Primary School's Governing Board started to consider the possibility of joining a multi academy trust nearly two years ago, after the 'Opportunity for All' white paper was published in March 2022. The Board first considered which MATs might be suitable within Buckinghamshire and then invited three to provide a presentation to the Board.

Following the presentations, schools within two of the MATs were visited, by Hughenden's Leaders and Governors. One of the most important considerations for us, when deciding which MAT, the school might potentially join, was to identify one, which had a like-minded nurturing culture, vision and ethos similar to our school. We are grateful to each of the MAT's Headteachers and staff who showed us around their school and openly answered all of our questions about their experience of being part of a MAT.

The Board believes, that having considered carefully the pros and cons of each MAT, Kings Education Trust (KET) is the best partner for us. In addition to other benefits, the size of the MAT means that our school can have some influence on how the Trust operates, as it enlarges over time. Although, policies and management systems are centralised, each school within KET are autonomous. Having deliberated on the benefits to the school, its staff and pupils, the full Governing Board made a unanimous decision, at the end of the spring term 2023, to apply to join KET.

Following, this decision, the school applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to convert to an academy and formally join Kings Education Trust. The conversion project was approved by the Regional Director in December 2023. However, there are a number of processes that the school and KET need to undertake before the school can formally join the Trust; this consultation is one of the processes to complete.

The formal consultation period started on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 and is one part of the joint discussions on partnership working and alignment of systems and processes. The consultation period will close on Monday

5<sup>th</sup> February 2024. We aim to complete the formal processes as rapidly as possible and will keep you updated at each stage.

Governors and Leaders at Hughenden Primary look forward to working in partnership with Kings Education Trust for the benefit of all the pupils in every Trust school. Local collaboration will ensure that the interests of each school and their community are at the heart of decision-making.

## About the Multi Academy Trust we are proposing to join

**Kings Education Trust - “*Shaping Futures Together: Autonomy with a Shared Purpose.*”.**

The Kings Education Trust (KET) opened as a MAT (Multi Academy Trust) on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018 and currently comprises of three schools; Great Kingshill C of E Combined School, Ivingwood Academy and Waterside Primary Academy. Geographically, the three schools are close enough to be able to work purposefully together on shared projects and for our communities knowing that there is alignment in cultures and consistency in approach and support. The Trust aims to establish strong collaboration between the schools and school leaders within the MAT, with the aim of mutual support and collaborative strength.

From the perspective of each school within KET, there are real benefits to be gained from collaboration and growth, specifically the opportunity to support each other in these challenging times and to offer a fully inclusive 3-11 education journey for our children and develop excellent curriculum practice for each key stage, supporting greater learning outcomes for all of our pupils.

It is KET’s shared ambition to support its pupils to aim high, to give them the right knowledge, skills, opportunities and experiences and to provide the right pathways to fulfil their potential. This joining of a family of schools will help to build a stronger trust with a broader education offer to our children and help to secure a successful school community for many years to come.

Whilst raising aspiration for all our pupils is a key function of the Trust, the Trustees and leadership within the Trust have a core moral imperative to ensure that those pupils who are disadvantaged are provided with the best possible opportunities to develop and achieve. We place a high importance on emotional well-being and ensure that all our pupils, irrespective of their start in life, are given the chance to create their own positive futures.

KET’s aim is to foster strong governance, at local level, to provide a secure foundation for effective Trust leadership. We value and respect the connections that local governors have with the communities they serve and their knowledge of these.

All schools within KET have the opportunity to continue or commence participation in established professional development partnerships with Best Practice Network and work closely with Astra Teaching School Hub to provide initial teacher training placements which support the recruitment and retention of teachers in our schools. KET networks for Deputy Headteachers, SENDCos, Year group and Subject leaders meet at least termly as well as participate in KET wide projects and training. Over the last two years, Hughenden Primary School’s staff, governors and Leaders have been involved in collaborative events. These have included:

- shared Governor training;
- shared teacher moderation events;
- annual Safeguarding training for school staff;
- SENDCo support;
- participation in MAT wide projects such as the 2023/2024 *Outstandingly Happy Schools project*

## What Happens Next?

Whilst the two Boards take the final decision, with the Regional Director's approval, the planned transition phase in the next 4-6 months will address the importance of:

- aligning values and vision;
- creating a memorandum of understanding;
- sustaining the unique identity of Hughenden Primary School both now and in the future;
- addressing all practical, legal, operational and strategic matters in order to complete the transfer to Kings Education Trust.

## The Role of the Regional Director

The Regional Director (RD) oversees the creation of new Multi Academy Trusts, assesses their progress and viability and works with all schools to ensure they are supported to improve and to address underperformance.

Regional Directors act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and are accountable to the National Schools Commissioner. They work with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to provide oversight and scrutiny of academy trusts' performance, in line with the established framework for academy trusts.

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## FAQs

### What is an academy?

Academies are still state schools, but they're funded and operate a little differently than maintained schools.

Instead of being funded by the local authority, academy trusts are paid directly by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This means that academies have more control over how they do things, than schools that aren't academies. Academies do not charge fees.

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

Academy trusts are not-for-profit companies. They have trustees who are responsible for their performance, in the same way that local authority (LA) maintained schools have governors.

The trustees are both company directors and charity trustees, and the academy trust employs the school staff.

### Will the trust or trustees make a profit from the school?

No. Academy trusts are charities, and any surplus or other income must be used to benefit pupils.

### Will the trust take any money away from our school?

The trust will receive our school's money known as the general annual grant (GAG). It will retain a 5% fixed annual management account fee to form a fund to pay for some central services before passing on the rest to our school (known as top-slicing).

### Why is Hughenden Primary School considering joining Kings Education Trust?

The Leaders and Governors at Hughenden Primary School have been looking to collaborate more formally with a MAT for a while and the Board has considered carefully a number of other trusts in order to be certain which will be the most beneficial in terms of partnership for Hughenden Primary School. Most importantly, we sought a partner with common views and values so that, together, both can move forward, develop and evolve towards a fully inclusive 3-11 education offer which will combine the Trusts' strengths with our own for mutual benefit. The Governing Board at Hughenden Primary School believes that Kings Education Trust (KET) is the right partner for us.

### What decision has been made?

The Trust Board has agreed in principle to Hughenden Primary School converting to an Academy and joining Kings Education Trust subject to consultation with staff, pupils, parents, and relevant local and national stakeholders. Approval for the conversion was given by the Department for Education (DfE) in late December 2023. The conversion process is also subject to due diligence requiring legal and HR processes.

### What is the timescale?

Discussion with both governing boards and a staff consultation started formally in the summer of 2023 and was extended to the wider school community in January 2024.

Regional Director Approval has been granted; formal due diligence begins now. There are many formal processes to be undertaken and we expect the actual conversion to take place at some point in the summer

term 2024, notwithstanding any unexpected delays which often occur. Stakeholders will be kept updated each time there is news to share.

### **What are the anticipated benefits?**

Utilising strengths across all schools within Kings Education Trust will build a stronger, broader trust offer, continuing to improve outcomes for all our pupils.

Anticipated benefits will include:

- developing great teachers;
  - by prioritising teachers' professional development and their career opportunities;
  - by linking retention and development of future teachers and leaders from within our communities giving stability to our pupils;
- prioritising collaborations between our Pre-School and Primary staff, empowering them to exchange knowledge, share experience and workload whilst recognising the uniqueness of our different communities.
- developing governance through shared training and collaboration to enable support and challenge for a 3-11 educational offer and increase the opportunities for local collaborations with key stakeholder groups.
- sharing of SEND, finance, safeguarding, HR and health and safety expertise to further strengthen offers and increase negotiation powers when re-contracting services.

### **How will pupils be affected?**

Pupils 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 pupils. In time pupils 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 pupils' learning. There will also be opportunities for them to take part in events and activities with their peers from other Kings Education Trust schools, e.g. sports competitions, an annual art project and shared Year 6 residential.

### **What about staff?**

Staff in KET schools, have already been through the process of joining a trust and this will be a similar process with Hughenden Primary School. The staff automatically transfer to KET using 'Employees Rights' within TUPE regulations, which ensures that staff retain all of their existing rights, terms and conditions and pension arrangements, including continuity of service.

Where TUPE applies, all trade unions are recognised before the transfer and will continue to be recognised by KET. Staff will be supported through this process by their unions and HR.

### **Does joining Kings Education Trust change the relationship with other schools and the community?**

No. We will ensure that our school continues to be at the heart of our community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community. All existing school partnerships, beyond KET, will continue.

### **What will Governance look like?**

Each school within the Trust continues to have their own Governing Body, known as a Local Advisory Committee (LAC), to represent them, holding their academy to account and support developments. KET holds regular meetings for the chairs of the LACs which provides connectivity between governance levels for all academies within the MAT. At least annually, there is an opportunity for all LACs to come together and meet with trustees to take part in shared training and/or collaboration events.

### **Will there be any planned Trust funding cuts?**

No. We do not anticipate any planned funding cuts as a direct consequence of this change.

### **Will there be changes to the Admissions Policy/Criteria?**

No. There are no plans to change the schools' admission policies

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

No. We will retain the school's existing name. Over time the Kings Education Trust logo will appear on signage and documentation for stakeholders to recognise that the school is a part of the KET family of schools.

### **Will the school's uniforms change?**

No. The school uniform will remain the same.

### **Will feeder school criteria change for any primary to secondary school admissions?**

No. There are no plans to change the current arrangements. Buckinghamshire Council will still coordinate the admissions process for all KET schools.

### **What happens to current roles? Are you planning any job losses or changes to staff contracts?**

There are no planned changes to current permanent roles, we do not anticipate any significant changes to staff contracts or job losses as a direct consequence of this change.

### **Will the curriculum remain the same?**

Initially the school's curriculum will remain the same. Over time there may be benefits in aligning some of the resources used to enable shared training and resources but this will be determined by curriculum leaders, individual teachers or school leaders but never for the sake of it and only when there is a benefit for pupils.

### **Can you share information on the other Trusts that were considered?**

We considered all of the multi academy trusts (MATs) in Buckinghamshire; there were three that met our initial criteria. We had presentations from three CEOs and then visited schools within two of the MATs to check whether our ethos and vision was aligned with that of the MAT. We are very grateful to the Headteachers and staff of the MATs visited for their time in showing us their schools, in action, and for answering our questions on their experiences of being part of a MAT so openly.

For further information or to leave your thoughts please click here <https://forms.office.com/e/NcRBBRPqk4>