



Kingswood, Leeds and Broomfield CE Primary, Platts Heath  
and Ulcombe CE Primary Schols

8th September 2023

Dear Parents, Carers and Stakeholders,

We are writing to inform you that, after much careful consideration, the Governing Board of The Aspire Federation (Kingswood, Leeds and Broomfield CE, Platts Heath and Ulcombe CE Primary Schools) are seeking to convert to an Academy Trust.

We have expressed our interest with the DfE and are planning to set up our own Aspire Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

In seeking to convert to an Academy trust, our priority is to ensure we continue to provide a high-quality education for all our pupils. We believe forming an Academy Trust will allow us the freedom to make effective financial decisions, securing our future and driving improvement across all our Schools thus ensuring we continue to offer all our children the very best possible education.

The Aspire Multi Academy Trust will include the four schools who form the Aspire Federation at present: Kingswood, Leeds and Broomfield CE, Platts Heath and Ulcombe CE. These schools will continue to work closely together as a local hub, under the leadership of an Executive Headteacher initially Emma Hickling although this will change as the Trust develops.

We already have two other Schools planning to join our Trust, Nonington CE Primary and Goodnestone CE Primary. These schools will be the start of a new second Hub, in the Canterbury/ Dover area. An Executive Headteacher will also oversee this Hub.

Emma Hickling will become the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Aspire Multi Academy Trust.

The reason behind the formation of a new Trust is the need we believe to establish one exclusively for the support and development of small rural Primary Schools. Aspire is passionate about the protection of the individual nature of small Schools and believes that the way the Aspire Federation currently works is a strong model which can be grown and replicated. The Trust will maintain an inclusive and Christian vision and will continue to champion the work of small Schools and the progress of the pupils within them. The Schools will remain largely unchanged with no changes to uniform, class structure, School

vision or traditions and the Federation will become the Maidstone Hub of The Aspire Multi Academy Trust.

We will retain a single Board of Governors' across our Hub and the primary concern will always remain your children's wellbeing and education, and how this can be best delivered. We are all looking forward to this exciting new venture and fully exploring all the new and diverse opportunities an Academy Trust offers all our children as we move forward.

The principle behind forming our own Trust is largely based on independence, and a desire to make our own decisions regarding our finances and the growth of the organisation thus ensuring the best possible education for all our children.

Further, before proceeding with any conversion, there will be a Formal Consultation in which we invite you to share your views and ask any questions you may have. We will hold open meetings to ensure everyone has ample opportunity to explore and question us becoming a Trust.

There are a number of ways you can take part in this consultation:

The consultation starts on Monday 11 September and finishes on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

You can write to the via your school office, or email them again via your school office email address.

Please kindly address all correspondence for the attention of Annie Allum, Chair of Governors.

A meeting for parents and stake holders will be held towards the end of the consultation period – details will follow.

We would like to invite you to read through our answers to FAQs about this consultation, attached to this letter.

This is an exciting opportunity to shape our future and bring about positive change in the way we run our Schools, develop our character and values, and continue to drive the best possible outcomes for all our pupils.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any comments, queries or questions you may have as your views matter to us. We aim to give everyone the opportunity to fully understand what and why we are looking to become the Aspire Multi Academy Trust.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document..

Kindest regards

Emma Hickling  
Executive Headteacher

Annie Allum  
Chair of Governors

# **Becoming a Multi Academy Trust**

## **Frequently asked Questions & Answers**

### **Will the school day or term dates change?**

Although Academy status would mean the Aspire Schools would have complete autonomy on these decisions, we are aware parents have children in different Schools as do Staff and there are no plans to change.

### **Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) change?**

No, responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND will be just the same as they are now.

### **Can Parents/Carers with a child with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) nominate an Academy as their first choice school?**

Yes, schools converting to Academy status can retain the admissions criteria they currently use. We have no plans to change this. These arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the Schools Admissions Code.

### **Will children with Special Needs get the same level of support in School as they have now?**

Yes, at least as good a level of support as they receive now.

### **Will class sizes change / go up?**

Not as a direct result of becoming an Academy. Other factors such as increase in catchment area population may cause class sizes to rise, but being an Academy will enable the schools to plan their own response to this issue and limit class sizes as deemed appropriate.

### **Will the same subjects be on offer?**

Yes. being an Academy means that the Governing Board can choose its own curriculum, rather than being dictated to by others. This will allow greater flexibility for subject area development. We have developed our own curriculum and our curriculum is evolving we have no plans to change this approach.

### **Will you change the entry criteria?**

### **Will you become selective in choosing pupils?**

### **Will you change the catchment area?**

All Academies are required to adopt clear and fair admission arrangements in line with the admissions law and the School Admissions Code. When a School / Federation converts to become an Academy, it will be the admission authority and responsible for its own admission arrangements. This means the Academy will need to manage its own admission process. It will involve periodic consultation and regularly publishing the Academy's admission arrangements. Applications for school places will still be made to the Local Authority, who will notify the Academy of the applications accordingly.

### **If there are more Academies, how do local parents have a fair choice of school?**

Local Authority's continue to have overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient places to meet demand locally and all Academies are required to participate in the local coordination of admissions. Applications for school places are made to the Local Authority, who will notify the Academy of the application.

**Will parents have to start paying for clubs etc?**

No, there will be no additional charges other than what we already charge for now.

**Will you change the age range?**

There are no plans at this time to change the range of provision.

**Will the school have enough money to pay for all the services it needs?**

Yes; the bottom line is that we will not be financially disadvantaged by a move to Academy status. Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority plus additional money to cover the services no longer provided for them by the Local Authority. The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, Academies have greater freedom on how they use their budgets, alongside the other freedoms that they enjoy.

**Will the individual Schools names change?**

The Aspire Federation will become The Aspire Trust and the individual Schools names will remain the same.

**Will the uniform change?**

The only change to the uniform will be the Aspire Trust name on one badge not the Aspire Federation. Students will still be able to wear the current badges until parents normally buy new uniform. Any new items purchased would then contain the new Academy Trust name on the badge.