

HEART Academies Trust

Public Consultation Report

January 2017

HEART Academies Trust



Issue and revision record

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Executive Summary

Bedford Academy, Cauldwell School, Shackleton Primary, and Shortstown Primary have proposed to form the HEART Academies Trust. The core aim of the proposed new partnership is to create a family of academies who are at the heart of their community delivering great education and improving the life chances for all through challenge and support.

As part of the feasibility study into the establishment of the multi-academy trust (MAT), the schools have undertaken their statutory requirement under the Academies Act 2010, *'to consult such persons as deemed appropriate'*.

Communicating the aims and reasons for establishing the HEART Academies Trust has been a priority for governors and the senior leadership teams in each school. Consultation has been a continuous and open process, utilising various approaches since the earliest stages of the application process. This report summarises the core element of the statutory requirement, namely the public consultation that took place between 17 October and 28 November 2016. Ongoing consultation continues, and will remain through to the establishment of the MAT and beyond.

Most responses received have been positive and the overall level of engagement in line with that expected from a MAT that includes no sponsored academies. The concerns raised have related to financial responsibility and wanting to maintain the individual ethos of schools. The MAT has reassured parents that post conversion to Academy status, each school within the new MAT will retain its current name, ethos, and values.

Most people who responded to the public consultation supported the proposal that HEART Academies Trust should govern Bedford Academy, Cauldwell School, Shackleton Primary, and Shortstown Primary on behalf of the Department for Education.

1 Consultation Overview



If the Secretary of State accepts and approves the proposal, then the Academy would open in April 2017.

1.1 Local Context

Headteachers and school governors from four schools in Bedford and surrounding villages have proposed the creation of HEART Academies Trust (HAT) a new multi-academy trust (MAT) comprising of:

- Bedford Academy
- Cauldwell School
- Shackleton Primary
- Shortstown Primary

Governors took the decision to consult on the proposal in August 2016. The governors believed that a change to academy status and being part of a MAT would provide each School with more freedom and flexibility in terms of how they operate and how they are funded.

The Schools are aiming for a conversion date of 1st April 2017 and have been keen to maintain a realistic conversion pace whilst ensuring satisfactory public consultation.

1.2 Stakeholder Consultation

The Academies Act 2010 requires governors to '*consult as they deem appropriate*' on whether a MAT should be joined. This process should allow time for everyone with an interest to respond and ask questions.

The public consultation period began on **17 October 2016** and concluded on **28 November 2016**. In conducting this consultation, the key aims of the governors were as follows:

- To inform and engage key stakeholders such as parents and carers, staff at each School, the local community, and the public about the proposal to convert to an Academy and establish and join the MAT.
- To listen to views, opinions and concerns from stakeholders and where possible take these into account.
- To raise awareness among key stakeholders of the proposal to convert to an Academy, and to encourage them to engage with proposal.
- Exchange information and encourage ownership of the MAT.

If the Secretary of State accepts and approves the proposal, then the Academy would open in April 2017.

The governors wished to reach as many of the local community as possible to seek and hear views and opinions. They used a range of consultation methods to suit the mix of knowledge and understanding of the proposal. The following tools and events informed the various stakeholder groups about the proposal to convert:

1. Stakeholder letters
2. Factsheet
3. Presentations
4. Answers to frequently asked questions
5. Staff meetings and briefings
6. Parent meetings
7. Community drop-in event
8. Trade union meetings
9. One to one meetings
10. School website

The following tools and events provided means for active responses to be made and recorded:

11. Consultation questionnaire
12. Dedicated email address for staff
13. Centralised email address

Responses to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were also issued to staff and trade unions as part of the staff transfer [TUPE] process.

1.3 Discharge of Public Sector Equality Duty

The governors are mindful of their public sector equality duty arising from the Equality Act 2010 and will work with the Trust in the development of any final proposals to mitigate the likelihood of any adverse impact.

Governors took seriously the responsibility of ensuring all stakeholders could engage in the proposal and consultation process without discrimination. All stakeholder letters contained the following statement:

The governors are mindful of their public sector equality duty arising from the Equality Act 2010 and will work with the Trust in the development of any final proposals to mitigate the likelihood of any adverse impact.

If you are, or become, aware during this consultation process of any impact on members of the school community who share a relevant protected characteristic (e.g. age; disability; gender re-assignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation) then please contact us.

Responses came from a broad spectrum of the community including parents, staff, trade union representatives and residents.

“I am really concerned the positives that [the school] has will be stripped away.”

Parent comment

“I will be very disappointed if [the school] is ‘encouraged’ to take on the ethos of the others through this process.”

Parent comment

The Academy Consultation Questionnaire and Factsheet could be obtained in other languages and in large print.

1.4 Consultation Outcome

The public consultation process has given governors, HEART Academies Trust, and senior leaders of each School a real opportunity to interact with the local community. The level of interest reflected in the number of individuals who either sent written comments or attended engagement events was in line with that experienced by schools of this size nationally.

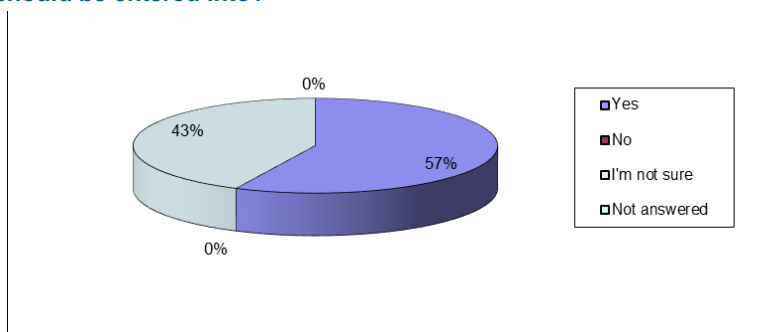
Formal responses came from a broad spectrum of the community including parents, staff, trade union representatives and residents.

Total questionnaires received = **21**

- **12** (57%) respondents supported the Academy arrangement
- No respondents stated that they were against the Academy arrangement.
- **9** (43%) respondents stated that they were unsure.

All respondents provided comments and a selection are included in this document.

Do you think the 'Academy arrangements': (i.e. the funding agreement) should be entered into?



Whilst there remains some concern amongst a few stakeholders, we can conclude that there is positive support to enter into Academy arrangements and establish a MAT.

A full analysis of responses starts on **page 8**.

2 Public Consultation

The Governing Body aimed to ensure as many stakeholders as possible had the opportunity to raise questions, concerns or offer support to the Academy proposals.

“Wisdom is strength”

The Exceptional Education Trust

We aimed to ensure that relevant individuals and organisations were made aware of the proposal and had the opportunity to obtain more information and give their views in different ways.

2.1 Letters to Stakeholders

Stakeholder letters containing **key facts**, a set of core **frequently asked questions**, and a **set of staff, parent or governor frequently asked questions** providing information about the proposal were produced in printed format and distributed locally and online. Each letter invited the recipients to attend one of a series of open events held during the consultation period. Copies were distributed to members of each school community including:

- Letters to all staff, parents, and governors
- Letters to the local community, including the local MP, district, and parish councillors, local schools, and organisations that use the School.

A copy of the stakeholder letter containing key facts and information can be found in **Appendix A**.

2.2 Presentation to Stakeholders

The Headteacher and Directors of the proposed HEART Academies Trust delivered a presentation setting out the benefits of establishing a MAT and converting to academy status. The presentation provided information on the following:

- Vision, mission, and values of the Trust
- Purpose of the Trust
- Structure of the Trust
- Reasons for converting to an Academy
- A review of questions already asked
- Next steps

A selection of presentation slides can be found in **Appendix B**.

2.3 Consultation Pack

A factsheet and questionnaire providing information about the proposal was available to all stakeholders between Friday 18 March and Wednesday 25 May 2016. Each questionnaire invited the recipients to

an open event, providing a tear off reply form and prepaid return envelope addressed to make it easier for respondents to complete and return.

The Trust sent a factsheet and questionnaire with letters to all stakeholders. Copies were also available to download from the School website or could be picked up from the School Reception.

The factsheet and questionnaire can be found in **Appendix C**.

2.4 School Websites

- www.bedfordacademy.co.uk/
- www.cauldwellschool.com/
- www.shackletonprimary.co.uk/
- www.shortstownprimary.co.uk/

The above named websites for each of the four schools provided updates on the proposed plans and information on how to contact the school's lead proposer.

The following downloads were made available via the website.

- Academy community letter
- Academy consultation factsheet
- Academy consultation questionnaire
- Frequently asked questions

Example web pages can be found in **Appendix D**.

2.5 Stakeholder Engagement

Information about open meetings was included in the consultation pack that was widely distributed.

The MAT also held a meeting for parents and the community to drop-in, and attended meetings with staff and trade unions. They also offered one to one meetings by appointment. These gave stakeholders the opportunity to meet representatives from the Trust, ask questions and offer their views.

“What are the benefits?”

Question from a parent of a child
at Cauldwell School

Consultation Events

Three public consultation meetings were held. Different dates and venues ensured access for as many parent/carers and members of the community as possible.

- Parent/carer event 17 October, 3:30-5pm at Cauldwell School
- Parent/carer event 18 October, 3:30-5pm at Shackleton Primary
- Parent/carer event 20 October, 3:30-5pm at Shortstown Primary
- 1:1 meetings 17 October – 25 November

At each meeting, consultation literature was available along with questionnaires and frequently asked questions. Parents were generally supportive and pragmatic about the proposed Academy conversions.

The breakdown of attendees is shown below.

Public meetings participant demographics

Stakeholder Group	Cauldwell	Shackleton	Shortstown	Total
Parent	3	2	5	10
Staff	2	2	4	8
Governor	1	1	2	4
Student	5		7	12
Resident	1			1
Total	12	5	18	35

Staff and Union Meetings

The Trust and Governing Body held further events at each School to allow other key stakeholders the opportunity to raise questions on the Academy proposal. These included:

- w/c 10 October, 2016, *informal meeting with staff at primary schools*
- w/c 17 October, 2016, *informal meeting with Bedford Academy staff*
- 31 October 2016, *initial meeting with staff and Trade Unions*
- 10 – 12 January, *formal meeting with staff and Trade Unions*
- w/c 16 January, *individual one to one sessions offered to staff.*

A total of 112 staff attended the meetings to obtain clarification from Bedfordshire Borough Council HR and a specialist TUPE advisor provided by the MAT. Personalised written responses were provided to individuals following the meeting and a list of tailored responses was also provided to questions raised by the general trade union GMB.

“Will it put the staff under pressure to change their teaching ways because this is a great school?”

Question from a parent of a child
at Shackleton Primary

3 Consultation Results

The consultation reply form at the back of the consultation questionnaire featured:

- A question asking respondents to indicate whether the 'Academy arrangements (i.e. the Funding Agreement) should be entered into
- A section giving respondents the opportunity to express their views on how the Academy could improve education in the local area, make a difference to other local schools; or express their view
- A section asking how the Academy could make sure it is really part of the community
- A section asking for details about the respondent, and how they would like to be kept up to date.

Below follows a summary of the responses.

3.1 Consultation Questionnaire Results

At the close of the consultation on 28 November 2016, a total of 21 reply forms were received from parents/carers.

The following is a breakdown of that response:

- **12** (57%) respondents supported the Academy arrangement
- No respondents stated that they were against the Academy arrangement.
- **9** (43%) respondents stated that they were unsure.

3.2 Record of Questions

A selection of questions and concerns raised at consultation events is listed below. A verbal response was provided at the time by the MAT.

- *Are Harpur Trustees employed by the Harpur Trust?*
- *Why are the four schools being included and not others?*
- *Will Bedfordshire Borough Council still manage admissions?*
- *Will there be enough funds to set up the MAT?*
- *Is there a guarantee teachers' structures will not change? In six months will staff be satisfied with changes?*
- *Do you see any areas we could be disadvantaged if we have to compromise?*
- *Under this scheme do we pick our curriculum?*
- *When Ofsted visit will it be as random when they come?*


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Appendix A. Stakeholder letter


Letter to School Community

As part of the consultation process, the Governing Body of each School sent letters to key stakeholders in the School community:



Shortstown Primary School





Schools mark

SHORTSTOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL
 Beauvais Square
 Shortstown
 Bedford MK42 0GS
 Telephone: 01234 740881
 Fax: 01234 743644
 E-mail: office@shortstownprimary.co.uk
 www.shortstownprimary.co.uk

Head Teacher: Mrs D Cottam

To all members of the School Community,

We write to inform you, that following agreement by the Governors, our School is now actively pursuing conversion to academy status having concluded that conversion will be a positive move for the school. We will be submitting our application to the Department for Education to progress towards academy status. We are aiming to become an academy by January 2017.

We are looking to create **HEART Academies Trust**. This would be a new multi-academy trust comprising of Bedford Academy, **Caldwell Primary**, Shackleton Primary, and **Shortstown Primary**. Post conversion each school within the new multi-academy trust would retain its current name and individual identity.







The core aim of the new partnership will be to create a family of academies who are at the heart of their community, delivering great education and improving life chances for all. We will value the dreams and aspirations of everyone in our community. Our overwhelming belief is that every child can be successful, both personally and academically, with early and effective help from staff that know and value them as an individual. We will have high expectations of all members of our schools; children, young people and professionals alike will be challenged and supported to achieve their very best. Adopting a 'stronger together' approach and a commitment to positive collaboration will allow each academy within the Trust to celebrate what they already do well whilst providing opportunities to ensure continued development and improvement across all academies within the Trust.

As part of the process to convert, we want to hear your views.

So that you can better understand what becoming an academy means, we will share with you as much information as is possible once it becomes available. You will have the opportunity to meet members of the proposed Trust and we have arranged information events at each school to outline our plan, listen to your thoughts and answer your questions. You can find details of these events at the end of this letter.

What is a multi-academy trust? A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a single entity established to undertake a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools. A group of schools form a single MAT, which has overarching responsibility for their governance. Each school will retain a local governing body.

Why convert to Academy status? Firstly, becoming an academy would allow us to support continuity of education within our community. Our school will retain its current name and identity, and it will continue to serve the needs of children and families in the local community; however, as an academy, the school will have much more freedom and flexibility in terms of how it operates and how we spend our funding. This will enable the school to continue to raise standards, supported by the existing staff, whose

commitment, stability, and expertise will help the school continue to be successful. Children and staff will benefit from new opportunities for learning and development as part of the MAT whilst continuing to work in the way they do now.

What happens next?

Staff Consultation We will be meeting with staff in the next few weeks as we undertake the TUPE consultation. "TUPE" stands for Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) which is a piece of legislation designed to protect the terms and conditions of staff when their job transfers from one employer to another. This is what happens when a school converts to an academy. Our staff are a very important part of the school, and it is important to us that they know, and that you know, at the outset that they will not suffer any adverse changes to their terms and conditions of employment by transferring to the multi-academy trust.

Academy Consultation We will be running a public consultation from 17 October to 28 November 2016. During this period, we will be consulting with parents and carers, staff, unions, the Local Authority, the local community including community leaders where appropriate, and local schools. We will be holding information events and offering 1:1 meetings where you can discuss what our academy conversion means with the school leadership team.

A fact sheet outlining details of the proposal and a timetable of events is enclosed. If you prefer to put your thoughts in writing, please complete the enclosed questionnaire. These are also available to download from the School website.

Should you have any comments or further queries then please e-mail the school by 28 November 2016 or write to the Headteacher, or Chair of Governors, care of the School office. We will update Frequently Asked Questions on the School website during the consultation phase and at the end of the consultation, we will write to you again with a summary of the views expressed.

We are mindful of our public sector equality duty arising from the Equality Act 2010 and will develop our proposals to mitigate the likelihood of any adverse impact. If you are, or become, aware during this consultation process of any impact on members of the school community who share a relevant protected characteristic (e.g. age; disability; gender re-assignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation) then please contact us.

We look forward to sharing our plans with you further and hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

Chair of Governors



Appendix B. Consultation Presentation

As part of the consultation, the Headteacher and Directors of the proposed Trust Board delivered a presentation. A few slides taken from the presentation are included for reference below.

	<p>The HEART Academies Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HEART Academies Trust is established as a independent charitable trust. To create a strong group of academies which can work positively and collaboratively together. Working together to maintain and provide school-to-school improvement programmes, to deliver great education and improving life chances for all. The Harpur Trust is the sponsor of HEART Academies Trust.
<p>Vision</p> <p>To create a family of academies who are the heart of their community improving life chances for all, through challenge and support.</p>	<p>Aims</p> <p>Know Every Child: Overwhelming belief that every child can be successful both personally and academically with early and effective help from staff that know and value them as an individual.</p> <p>Character: Developing the whole child to enable them to become successful adults by promoting key characteristics.</p> <p>High Expectations: High expectations of all members of our schools; children, young people, professionals alike are challenged to achieve their very best.</p> <p>Inspirational learning: Outstanding teaching making learning a memorable and enjoyable experience in a respectful, vibrant and supportive learning environment that delivers exceptional outcomes for all.</p>
<p>AIMS</p> <p>Highest Professional Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exceptional quality first teaching Highly effective intervention and support Innovative and collaborative professional development Highly effective data systems and tracking Expert use of new technologies and at forefront of technological development <p>Exciting Curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy and numeracy focus Specialist hub provision across a broad, balanced curriculum Shared specialist support in EAL, SEND, behaviour, wellbeing Careers and Aspirations programmes 	<p>AIMS</p> <p>Value Progress: continual desire to achieve and improve</p> <p>Strong Partnership with Parents and Carers: Personalised and supportive pastoral care systems throughout</p> <p>Inspirational Leadership: A 'Stronger Together' approach to share and maximise leadership capacity</p> <p>Dynamic Approach to staff development: Identifying potential and providing opportunities that allow staff to thrive and excel.</p>

Appendix C. Consultation Pack

Consultation Factsheet

A factsheet was printed and available online to answer key questions, publicise information events and outline the consultation process. The first page of a 2-page document is included below for reference.

September 2016

ACADEMY CONSULTATION FACTSHEET

Our children deserve the very best education. The proposal to convert our School into an academy is about creating new opportunities to raise standards and to provide new ways to help every child enjoy learning and achieve their best.

The Governors believe a change in status will provide the School with added freedom and benefits to further develop the standard of education currently offered at the School.

You can view further detail on academies at the Department for Education website:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies>

What is an academy?
Academies are publicly funded schools, independent from local authority control. This independence brings increased responsibilities and opportunity.

What is a multi-academy trust?
A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a single entity established to undertake a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools.

When would the school change to become an Academy?
If the process goes forward, conversion is likely to be complete in January 2017.

Why convert to Academy status?
The school will have more freedom and flexibility in terms of how it operates and how it uses its funding.

Who would run the Academy?
The Headteacher would run the school supported and advised by a local governing body. The multi-academy trust would become the legally responsible authority.

What are the aims of the new multi-academy trust?
The aims are to:

- Promote educational excellence
- Maintain the distinctive, caring, and supportive school ethos serving the needs of students and families within the local community
- Enhance the teaching and learning of all children.

The aim is for children, staff, and the community to feel proud to be part of the school. The Trust would support teachers and staff so they can continue to focus on student progress.

Would the teaching and learning change?
We would aim to continue to provide rich and varied learning experiences that allow children to develop their skills and abilities to their full potential. It would be a core part of the Academy's work to help develop the learning environment for children to make good and outstanding progress. We would achieve this by robust professional development for staff.

Consultation Questionnaire

A consultation questionnaire gathered views and detailed other ways for people to have their say. The first page of a 2-page document is included below for reference.

September 2016

ACADEMY CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Our young people deserve the very best education. The proposal to convert the School into an academy is about creating new opportunities to raise standards and to provide new ways to help all young people enjoy learning and achieve their best.

The Governors believe a change in status will provide the School with added freedom and benefits to further develop the standard of education currently offered at the School.

You can view further detail on academies at the Department for Education website:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies>

Before we can open the Academy, it is necessary for the Secretary of State for Education to enter into what are known as "Academy Arrangements".

In this case, 'Academy Arrangements' refer to the Funding Agreement. This is the contract between the Secretary of State and the Academy Trust under which, the Trust agrees to establish, maintain and run the school, and the Secretary of State agrees to provide funding for it.

The Department for Education publishes "Model Funding Agreements" on its website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-conversion-process#model-funding-agreements>

Do you think the "Academy Arrangements" (i.e. the Funding Agreement) for the School should be entered into?

Yes

No

I'm not sure

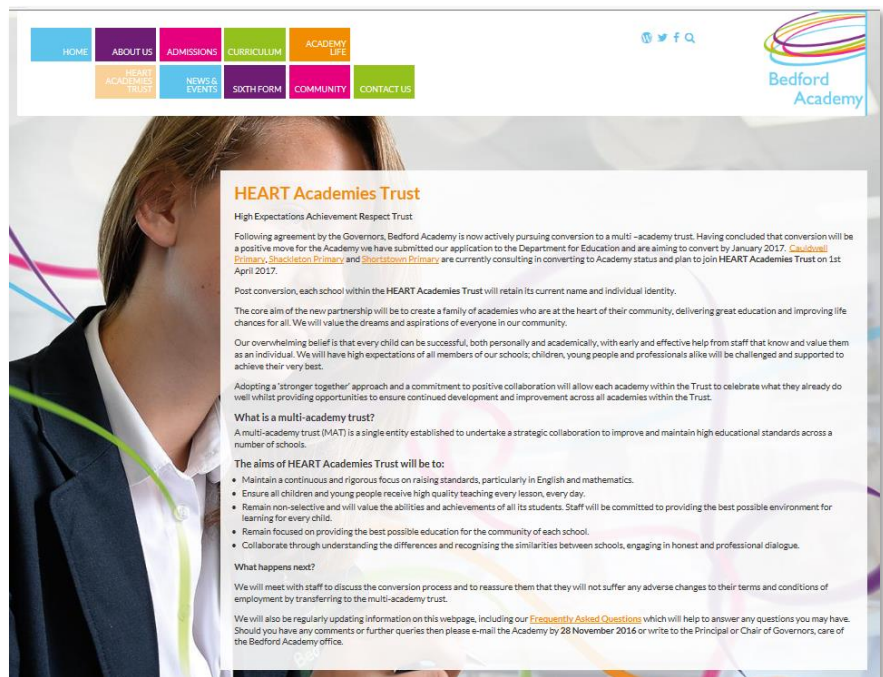
Please explain your response to the above question

Is there anything else you would like to say? If so, please outline your views here.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VIEWS

Appendix D. Website

Academy consultation webpage



The screenshot shows the homepage of the HEART Academies Trust website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT US, ADMISSIONS, CURRICULUM, ACADEMY LIFE, HEART ACADEMIES TRUST, NEWS & EVENTS, SIXTH FORM, COMMUNITY, and CONTACT US. Social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are also present. The main content area features a large image of a young person in a school uniform. Overlaid on this image is a text box with the following content:

HEART Academies Trust
High Expectations Achievement Respect Trust

Following agreement by the Governors, Bedford Academy is now actively pursuing conversion to a multi-academy trust. Having concluded that conversion will be a positive move for the Academy we have submitted our application to the Department for Education and are aiming to convert by January 2017. [Cauldwell Primary](#), [Shackleton Primary](#) and [Shortstown Primary](#) are currently consulting in converting to Academy status and plan to join HEART Academies Trust on 1st April 2017.

Post conversion, each school within the HEART Academies Trust will retain its current name and individual identity.

The core aim of the new partnership will be to create a family of academies who are at the heart of their community, delivering great education and improving life chances for all. We will value the dreams and aspirations of everyone in our community.

Our overwhelming belief is that every child can be successful, both personally and academically, with early and effective help from staff that know and value them as an individual. We will have high expectations of all members of our schools; children, young people and professionals alike will be challenged and supported to achieve their very best.

Adopting a 'stronger together' approach and a commitment to positive collaboration will allow each academy within the Trust to celebrate what they already do well whilst providing opportunities to ensure continued development and improvement across all academies within the Trust.

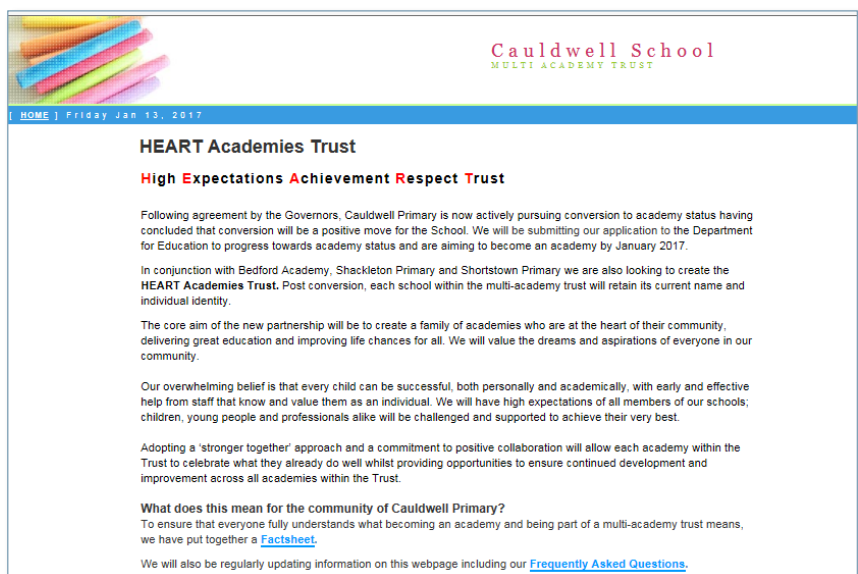
What is a multi-academy trust?
A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a single entity established to undertake a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools.

The aims of HEART Academies Trust will be to:

- Maintain a continuous and rigorous focus on raising standards, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure all children and young people receive high quality teaching every lesson, every day.
- Remain non-selective and will value the abilities and achievements of all its students. Staff will be committed to providing the best possible environment for learning for every child.
- Remain focused on providing the best possible education for the community of each school.
- Collaborate through understanding the differences and recognising the similarities between schools, engaging in honest and professional dialogue.

What happens next?
We will meet with staff to discuss the conversion process and to reassure them that they will not suffer any adverse changes to their terms and conditions of employment by transferring to the multi-academy trust.

We will also be regularly updating information on this webpage, including our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) which will help to answer any questions you may have. Should you have any comments or further queries then please e-mail the Academy by 28 November 2016 or write to the Principal or Chair of Governors, care of the Bedford Academy office.



The screenshot shows a page from the Cauldwell School website. At the top, there is a header with the school's name and logo, and a navigation bar with a 'HOME' link and the date 'Friday Jan 13, 2017'. The main content area is titled 'HEART Academies Trust' and 'High Expectations Achievement Respect Trust'. The text on the page is as follows:

HEART Academies Trust
High Expectations Achievement Respect Trust

Following agreement by the Governors, Cauldwell Primary is now actively pursuing conversion to academy status having concluded that conversion will be a positive move for the School. We will be submitting our application to the Department for Education to progress towards academy status and are aiming to become an academy by January 2017.

In conjunction with Bedford Academy, Shackleton Primary and Shortstown Primary we are also looking to create the HEART Academies Trust. Post conversion, each school within the multi-academy trust will retain its current name and individual identity.

The core aim of the new partnership will be to create a family of academies who are at the heart of their community, delivering great education and improving life chances for all. We will value the dreams and aspirations of everyone in our community.

Our overwhelming belief is that every child can be successful, both personally and academically, with early and effective help from staff that know and value them as an individual. We will have high expectations of all members of our schools; children, young people and professionals alike will be challenged and supported to achieve their very best.

Adopting a 'stronger together' approach and a commitment to positive collaboration will allow each academy within the Trust to celebrate what they already do well whilst providing opportunities to ensure continued development and improvement across all academies within the Trust.

What does this mean for the community of Cauldwell Primary?
To ensure that everyone fully understands what becoming an academy and being part of a multi-academy trust means, we have put together a [Factsheet](#).

We will also be regularly updating information on this webpage including our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Appendix E. Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently asked questions were published on the school website for the duration of the consultation period; the first page of the document [totalling 12 pages] is included for reference below.

Bedford Academy MAT and Primary School Academy Conversion Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

Academies

What is an academy?

Academies are classed as independent state-funded schools, which have the freedom to determine their own policies on such things as the curriculum, school hours, term dates, and staff pay. They offer a full, broad, and balanced curriculum. The Academies Act 2010 enables this. They aim to provide a free, first-class education for pupils of all abilities through a fresh approach to school leadership, teaching, and learning. Primary and Secondary schools are able to apply to convert into an academy and are accountable to the Secretary of State rather than the local authority.

Academies are managed by their own academy trust and are not the responsibility of the local authority. Academy trusts are directly given the money which would have been given to the local authority, so academies can choose how best to spend that money on the provision of education.

Who runs an academy?

An Academy Trust runs the academy, which is the statutory Governing Body. This is a charitable company limited by guarantee. The trust has a formal agreement or contract with the Department for Education (DfE) which sets out the parameters in which it must operate, and is also subject to charity law, public law (being publically funded), as well as general company law.

PRIME Academies Trust is the name we have chosen for our academy trust. Each academy within a trust also has its own Local Advisory Board, usually called a Local Governing Body.

Who decides which schools convert to an academy?

The decision for any school to become an academy rests with its governing body. Parents whose children attend the school in question along with local community stakeholders will be consulted on their views about the proposals. When a governing body makes an application for a school to become an academy, the application is considered by the Department for Education. Ultimately the Secretary of State for Education will decide whether or not to approve the application from the governing body.

Can a school convert without the support of the governing body?

Generally, no. Anyone can register an interest in their school becoming an academy but the governing body has to agree for the school to apply to become an academy. In limited circumstances, when a school is in a great deal of difficulty, the Secretary of State is able to make an Academy Order without an application from the governing body, but this power has rarely, if ever, been used.

If our school becomes an academy, will they be able to spend the majority of time teaching or will they have to spend it on bureaucracy?

The Academy Trust allows schools to focus on teaching and learning, leaving the trust to handle all the bureaucracy.

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Appendix F. Tailored response - extract

As part of the consultation, tailored responses to questions posed at consultation events were prepared by the MAT. Below is an extract taken from one of the responses.

In relation to your question with regard the benefits of working together, all of the four schools have a strong commitment and desire to create a strong group of academies that can work positively and collaboratively together to maintain and provide school-to-school improvement programmes, which deliver great education and improve life chances and attainment for all.

There already exists a close working relationship and strong support mechanism between the schools and the creation of the MAT will establish this in a formal arrangement. This will enable relationships to be strengthened and developed and utilise the breadth of expertise, knowledge and support that exists across the four schools.

The MAT believe that this partnership will create a strong sense of moral purpose, an aspiration to improve the quality of teaching and learning and allow the trust to capitalise on the benefits of this collaborative approach.

The rationale and general benefits for forming a MAT include:

- building a community to retain a local identity to local education provision
- a collective responsibility for the results of all children
- a clearer identity and purpose
- a stronger focus on teaching and learning
- enrichment opportunities for students
- high-quality staff development
- sharing knowledge and best practice
- strengthening attraction and retention of staff
- investment in school facilities
- economic benefits.

Appendix G. Newsletter

Ongoing consultation continues, and will remain through to the establishment of the MAT and beyond.

New Year message from Mrs Smith, Principal, Bedford Academy.

