

# Frequently Asked Questions about Academy Conversion and Joining a Trust

2 December 2025 (revised 13 February 2026)

## **What is a Schools Trust?**

A Schools Trust (sometimes called a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)) is a single charitable company which operates a group of schools. In Lighthouse Schools Partnership, each school or federation continues to have a local governing body to which key functions are delegated under the Scheme of Delegation. The Trust is ultimately accountable and responsible to the Department for Education, and the Diocese of Bath and Wells or Diocese of Bristol (depending on the school), for the performance of all its schools.

## **Why might a school want to join a Trust?**

A Trust, as a single legal entity, allows schools to achieve strong collaboration and to use this partnership and accountability to improve and maintain school standards. Having the Trust as the employer of staff also allows flexibility around sharing resources to meet the needs of the individual schools involved. A Trust can also provide a clear, consistent strategy, and vision across a group of schools working together. Trusts can often collectively negotiate contracts and services e.g. power, internet, supply staff, CPD, technology etc that achieve much better value for money than if each school was to negotiate individually. This can have a positive impact on workload, professional development and ultimately student outcomes. As Local Authority services are gradually reducing, a Trust can provide specialist centralised services to its members, for example HR or SEN support whilst the school retains local services as required.

## **Which Trust is it proposed that we join?**

We are consulting on joining Lighthouse Schools Partnership (LSP). LSP currently includes 34 schools across Bristol, North Somerset and Bath and Northeast Somerset. They are an established partnership of strong schools and already have established a strong offer of services including strength in staff training and development. We have considered a number of options and are attracted by the ethos, ambition, and governance structure of LSP.

The Lighthouse Schools Partnership already has a number of schools within their 'Bristol Hub': St Mary Redcliffe CE Primary, Easton CE Primary, Fishponds CE Primary and Horfield CE Primary. LSP moved to Foundation equality representation in its governance to facilitate the joining of these primary schools and the Trust has built a very strong relationship with the Diocese of Bristol and with Bristol City Council. We have seen LSP commit to serving the city and they have been making changes to their personnel and governance to ensure that they increasingly represent the diversity and context of Bristol.

The other secondary schools in LSP are Backwell School, Churchill Academy & Sixth Form, and Gordano School in North Somerset and Chew Valley School in Bath and

North East Somerset. We have already been sharing reciprocal school improvement services and some other opportunities with these schools.

## *Governance*

### **Will the structure of the Governing Body change?**

The composition of the Governing Body will be maintained as it is now. We will continue to have elected Staff and Parent Governors, and the Church of England will appoint the majority of our governing body as they do now. If we decided to become part of an academy, our Governing Body will be a Local Governing Body (LGB). The LGB would be a committee of the Academy Trust's Board of Trustees which has delegated responsibility to oversee our school.

### **What will be the future responsibility of the Governors?**

In a Trust, the Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for educational standards and the business operations of the schools. LSP operates a Scheme of Delegation and allocates the work of overseeing standards in each school to the school's Governors (LGB). As each school also has its own budget the Governors take responsibility for planning and spending funds at school level. This means that the overwhelming majority of decisions are taken at local school level. This is not the same in all Trusts and is one of the reasons why we have chosen to engage in discussions with the Lighthouse Schools Partnership.

### **What is a Mixed Trust?**

Lighthouse Schools Partnership is a Trust which includes both community schools and Church of England schools. The Trust's Articles of Association are the ones agreed between the Department for Education and the Church of England. 50% of the **Members** (individuals who sit above the board of trustees and are there to make sure the trust's governance is effective) and 50% of the **Trustees** (individuals who work at an executive level in the MAT. They are responsible for all the academies that operate within the trust) are approved by the Diocese of Bristol or the Diocese of Bath and Wells. St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School will remain a Church of England school.

### **What changes might be made to SMRT admissions?**

Lighthouse Schools partnership can confirm that the admissions oversubscription criteria for Year 7 and the Sixth Form, will continue to be determined by the school's Governing Body, as is the case in all LSP schools. This includes the school's right to maintain its current criteria, such as church-going priority. Any future change to this delegation would need to be approved by the diocese, which adds further assurance.

### **What decisions will be made at the local level in Lighthouse Schools Partnership?**

Lighthouse Schools Partnership regards local decision-making as a key principle. LSP provides the central service as well as additional strong support and challenge where it is needed. Educationally SMRT is currently doing very well indeed, and LSP will aim to ensure that the school continue to progress and uses its resources for the full benefit of its pupils and community. One example would be regarding the structure of the school

day and the early Friday finish; matters such as those would remain entirely with the Headteacher and Governors, so long as the school was meeting its obligations on learning hours for pupils.

### **Will SEND provision change?**

SEND provision remains locally determined. SMRT's inclusive approach remains under school control. Joining LSP would provide SMRT with additional support for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The school would gain access to the LSP central SEND team, including the Director of Inclusion and Lead Teacher for SEND. All specific SEND funding would continue to be received directly and in full by SMRT. The deployment of Teaching Assistants is entirely delegated to schools.

### *Conversion and Consultation*

#### **Has the decision to convert to academy status already been taken?**

No. The Governing Body has passed a special resolution to grant **conditional consent** to formally investigate becoming part of Lighthouse Schools Partnership. We have also informed the Department of Education of our desire to formally explore joining Lighthouse Schools Partnership and they are considering the potential match with LSP. This is the start of a legal process which has now triggered a full consultation across our school community. A final decision on whether to join Lighthouse Schools Partnership or not will only be taken once the consultation has been concluded. It is feasible that the Governors could reverse their current thinking, and they will be carefully considering the responses to the consultation. Likewise, it is feasible that LSP could reverse their current thinking.

#### **If the Governors decide to convert, when would it happen?**

We are discussing this with the Department for Education Regional Director's office. We would be aiming for a conversion in autumn of 2026.

#### **Who are we consulting with?**

We are consulting with parents and carers, staff and their representatives, Bristol City Council, the Bristol Diocese, other local schools, and local community groups.

#### **Have members of staff been consulted?**

We are formally consulting with the staff as a crucial part of the ten-week consultation period (2 December 2025 to 5 March 2026), excluding school and public holidays.

#### **Do the school leadership team and governing body have the capacity and expertise to take on the additional responsibilities and accountabilities of academy status?**

The governing body and school leadership team has experience in running this successful school. By operating within a Trust, the non-educational functions of running of the school can be shared. Lighthouse Schools Partnership will provide external and

internal audits, compliance systems, procurement expertise, HR support, and tested structures that will allow our leaders and Governors to focus more fully on the educational and pastoral purposes of our school.

### **Why are we considering change?**

In the current educational and economic climate, being a standalone Local Authority Maintained school, and one of only two LA standalone secondary schools in Bristol, brings with it a number of challenges. The relationship between schools and the LA have changed considerably as more schools have joined Multi-Academy Trusts. It would be remiss of us not to consider whether remaining as an LA maintained school continues to be the best option for SMRT going forward. Having secured positive Ofsted and SIAMS outcomes and continued academic success, this is the right time for us to review our strategy moving forward. We are incredibly ambitious for our school community.

### **What about Due Diligence?**

A full process of due diligence will be undertaken where the school and LSP will share information to fully inform the decision. The Chief Financial and Operating Officer from LSP has provided the list of key information that they need to provide to us and that we need to provide to them.

### **What will happen to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Deficit?**

If the decision is made to join the Trust each school continues to be responsible for its own LGPS deficit recovery, the details of that will follow once they are known from the Avon Pension Scheme.

## *Terms and Conditions*

### **Will staff terms and conditions of employment change?**

If the decision is made to join the Trust, there will be continuity for staff already employed by the school. Staff will join the Trust through a TUPE process (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)). Lighthouse Schools Partnership employs their staff on terms equivalent to or better than those set out in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD). Support staff pay scale alignment would occur without detriment. LSP adhere to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and National Joint Council (NJC) scales for support staff. Teachers would remain in the Teachers' Pension Scheme, and support staff would remain in the Local Government Pension Scheme.

### **Will there be any redundancies?**

Redundancies cannot be guaranteed or ruled out in any structure. Educational roles are not expected to be centralised. Operational roles may see Trust-wide coordination with redeployment preferred.

### **How will workload and CPD be affected in a Trust?**

LSP secondary schools do not use a centralised curriculum or mandated CPD model. Professional development is collaborative and evidence based.

### *Finances*

#### **Who receives the funding for an academy within a Trust?**

Under a Trust structure, the General Annual Grant (GAG) in respect of each Academy is received by the Trust and would be under the control of the Trustees of Lighthouse Schools Partnership. In Lighthouse Schools Partnership this is then passed on to each school which will then set its own budget.

#### **Who would be responsible for setting and agreeing the budget?**

Financial responsibility for all schools within LSP sits at Trust level and statutory accounts have to be drawn up for the Trust as a whole. However, there is a Scheme of Delegation which charges each Local Governing Body with setting and monitoring its own school budget.

#### **What percentage of the budget would be taken by the Trust?**

The LSP Core Services Charge (sometimes called the 'top slice') is currently 4.79%. 75% of the Core Services Charge covers existing direct costs and bill so it not additional spending. The remaining element funds the support that the LSP Central Team delivers in areas such as premises management, HR advice, IT delivery, procurement, purchasing etc. Expert guidance on quality of teaching, school improvement, professional development and SEND are also funded this way. The school would also get access to existing contracts held by LSP, many of which are negotiated at an improved rate than those currently in place at SMRT. The current offer is set out on the [LSP website](#).

Anything over and above services included within the top-slice could be negotiated and paid for separately. Within LSP some schools already buy more service as a traded offer.

### *Changes and Continuities*

#### **Will our school ethos change?**

LSP values the differences and character of each school. Although we will collaborate even more, our own ethos and brand will be safeguarded as laid out in the Scheme of Delegation.

As a Voluntary Aided school SMRT can only join a MAT where half of the Trustees are appointed by the Church of England. LSP already works with two dioceses both of whom have rights and responsibilities in appointing their Trustees. LSP delegate the oversight of school culture and ethos to the local governing body, who are required to have an Ethos Committee, that includes members of staff, to ensure that the Christian ethos is

lived. A member of the LSP Central Team works with our church schools to ensure that they are meeting their obligations.

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

No.

**Will the school change its uniform?**

No, we will not be changing the school uniform.