



Gatehouse Green Learning Trust - Merger Consultation

GATEHOUSE GREEN LEARNING TRUST MERGER CONSULTATION

The announcement by our CEO of her intention to retire at the end of the 2021/22 school year gave the Board of Trustees an unprecedented opportunity to review and reflect on the achievements of the Trust so far, and how we could shape the future direction that would maximise the benefits to our children and staff. We focused on how we could strengthen our commitment to an inclusive and high quality education for all our children, and our determination to improve the professional development and career opportunities of staff.

After considerable discussion, debate and advice, we agreed that the best way to achieve our long term ambition would be through being a part of a larger family of schools that shared our core values and principles. The next stage was to investigate the preferred route to achieve this while maximizing the benefits for all involved.

We took the decision to explore a merger with a local trust that shares our vision, values and ambition for everyone in our trust community. We strongly believe that being part of a larger family of schools would provide even greater opportunities for our children and staff.

Inclusion is at the heart of our vision and values through the celebration of diversity and difference, respecting the contribution of our staff in providing education excellence for all children irrespective of their personal circumstances.

In thinking about achieving our vision and values we explored a number of options and tested how these aligned with our own values and how a merger would strengthen them. We particularly focused on benefits to the learning and wellbeing of our children, continuing professional development and staff wellbeing, and effective school improvement.

WHY MERGE

The recent retirement of Sarah Baker, who was instrumental in creating and developing Gatehouse Green Learning Trust means that the trustees of GGLT must consider how they can best secure the future for all the schools within the trust to achieve the best outcome for every child. The Government is committed to a fully trust led system with a single regulatory approach, which will drive up standards through the growth of strong trusts ([Opportunity for all. Strong schools with great teachers for your child](#), March 2022)

Gatehouse Green Learning Trust and Excalibur Academies Trust share the same vision and values. At the heart of our shared vision for education is a self-improving, school-led system which has the best evidence led practice and in which every child is able to fulfil their potential. By facilitating a more lateral approach across our family of academies, by offering more opportunities to innovate and provide higher levels of teaching, we create the conditions which promote system leadership and collaborative activity.

EXCALIBUR ACADEMIES TRUST

Founded in 2012, Excalibur Academies Trust has grown from two schools in Marlborough, Wiltshire, to 15 schools reaching from Bristol to Reading along the M4 corridor, providing high quality education to over 6000 children from age 2 to age 18. The trust has developed a geographical hub structure to ensure that maximum benefit is derived from collaborative working, sharing expertise and resources.

Excalibur's mission is to provide an excellent education, empowering individuals to thrive and grow within a caring, aspirational and outward looking culture. It is a values-driven organisation with a strong moral purpose, a track record of raising standards and narrowing the gap for disadvantaged students. The Board and Executive of Excalibur Academies Trust is committed to ensuring that every school in the trust will be stronger by being part a family of schools.

OUR VALUES

Ambitious

High expectations and aspirations for everyone; learning from the best and thinking big; an optimistic outlook.

Empowering

Believing and investing in our people; developing talent and potential; celebrating diversity and individuality; working collaboratively and celebrating achievement.

Ethical

Doing what is right and challenging what is wrong; showing kindness and compassion; promoting wellbeing and sustainability.





BENEFITS OF OUR MERGER

Outcomes

There are Outstanding schools in both trusts and the impact of this is further reflected in positive Ofsted inspection reports. A larger trust can invest more in their school improvement team; attracting and retaining high quality staff.

Opportunities for students

- Creating an environment in which knowledge, skills, expertise and resources shared will improve outcomes for students, and offer a broader curriculum and enhancement of enrichment activities.
- The sharp focus of resources on shared needs and priorities will extend the reach of the best teachers and most experienced leaders across the trust.
- Cross phase working will facilitate the smooth transition from primary to secondary and into post 16 study.

Opportunities for staff

- Professional development, training, support, peer group working by subject and specialism, plus wellbeing.

- A larger trust offers greater career development opportunities improving leadership and staff stability and succession planning.
- The sharing of knowledge and expertise between leaders, staff, governors and trustees. Across the two trusts there is a wealth of expertise which working collaboratively will ensure all benefit from.
- The merged trust will have eight schools in Bristol which massively increases the opportunities for coordination and collaborative working.

Resilience

- A larger trust is better able to cope with change and uncertainty both in the context of the education landscape and financially.

Cost effective

- Resources can be more effectively targeted on child facing activity through improved systems and structure.
- Creating a larger trust reduces the overall administrative burden.

THE FUTURE

For students

- A highly effective Academy Improvement Team with experienced primary, secondary, special educational needs and child welfare specialists.
- A sharp focus on meeting the needs of disadvantaged students and those with additional needs and special talents.
- Participation in trust wide groups focused on areas important to students including sustainability, equality, diversity and inclusion.

For staff

- High quality professional development for all staff.
- A talent management and succession planning strategy.
- Increased opportunities for secondments and career development opportunities, including leadership development at all levels.
- Membership of a range of Trust wide network groups, including Principals' forum, subject leaders and cross phase groups.

For schools and their communities

- Support and training for local governors including an Academy Committee Chairs' Forum.
- A strong and experienced Board of Trustees with membership drawn from both trusts.
- Excellent back office support in finance, HR, Health & Safety, estate management and marketing.
- The financial security of being part of a larger organisation.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will school names be changed?

The names of all the schools will remain the same. Many of the schools have a long and rich history; all have a reputation and value within their local community. Their individuality is represented through that name and individuality is one of our shared values.

The two multi academy trusts will become a single charitable trust taking the name Excalibur Academies Trust.

What will happen to the land and buildings?

The existing legal agreements for use of and ownership of the schools' land and buildings will be transferred from Gatehouse Green Learning Trust to Excalibur Academies Trust. The existing protections that ensure that the land and buildings can only be used for educational purposes will also transfer.

Will schools lose their identity or individuality?

The special and unique identity of each school is very important. Excalibur Academies Trust and Gatehouse Green Learning Trust are diverse families of schools and do not have a one size fits all model for school identity or student facing policies and procedures. We will continue to recognise and celebrate the history and identities of the different schools as we embrace a larger family of schools. Our schools will be united by a common vision but each will implement the values that underpin their work in the way that best suits their community. The identity and ethos of each school will not be changed as a result of the merger.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will there be changes to school uniform?

No changes will be made to school uniform.

What will the merger mean for students?

- Increased opportunities both educational and through enrichment activities.
- Potential access to a broader curriculum.
- There is no expectation that students will move between school sites unless it is in their educational interests to do so.
- There will be opportunities for further collaboration in sport, the arts and learning outside the classroom with enrichment activities and events. Where facilities are available for students at some schools but not all in the area, we will increase access and opportunities for all our students.

What will the merger mean for staff

- Improved career development, progression and coordinated succession planning.
- Commitment to staff wellbeing, including an employee assistance programme.
- Access to the Leadership development programme.
- Access to a comprehensive programme of training and professional development.
- Teacher training programmes for those early in their careers or wanting to develop specialisms.
- Opportunities to work with peer groups across the trust including cross phase working.
- The employment conditions of staff transferring to a new trust are fully protected under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations).

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR?

What has happened so far?

The trustees of Gatehouse Green Learning Trust have received representations from a number of multi academy trusts with a presence in Bristol and are confident that Excalibur Academies Trust provides a clear sense of moral purpose that aligns the vision, values, and mission of Gatehouse Green Learning Trust. Excalibur Academies Trust provided a compelling commitment to high expectations and ambition for all children and staff. Both trusts share the understanding that the provision of high quality education is transformative and instils in young people the best vision of themselves.

What happens next?

All stakeholders impacted by the merger will be consulted. A due diligence process will be conducted to ensure financial and educational standards. Once this has been satisfactorily completed approval of the trustees will be obtained and an application made to the DfE for the merger to proceed.



HOW DO I ENSURE MY VIEWS ARE CONSIDERED?

Consultation events and meetings, and the opportunity to voice and submit views are open from **11 October to 4 November 2022**.

For further information, or to provide feedback, please visit www.gglt.co.uk/Merger-Consultation