

## Frequently asked questions (all stakeholders)

These questions have been created from discussion in conjunction with the partners seeking to form a new Multi Academy Trust and discussions with other Multi Academy Trust convertors. We hope they will answer many of your queries, but if not, please don't hesitate to ask.

<b>MAT formation partners and rationale</b>	
<b>What is a Multi-Academy Trust?</b>	A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is an academy trust that operates more than one academy.
<b>Who are the settings looking to form the new trust?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pendle Vale College, Lancashire</li> <li>• South Craven Academy Trust:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ South Craven School, North Yorkshire</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Pennine Trust:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Blacko Primary School, Lancashire</li> <li>○ Colne Lord Street Primary School, Lancashire</li> <li>○ Colne Park High School, Lancashire</li> <li>○ Laneshaw Bridge Primary School, Lancashire</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Why are we considering forming a new Multi-Academy Trust?</b>	<p>The current direction of the Department for Education policy is for all schools to become academies and become part of a multi-academy trust.</p> <p>Over recent years, many schools have looked to form trusts as a way of providing financial and educational support for groups of schools. The current position is that 80% of secondary schools and 40% of primary schools have now become academies across England.</p> <p>The Pennine Trust is already a multi-academy trust and was formed in 2018. Whilst the 3 primary schools within the Pennine Trust have benefitted greatly from collaboration, Park High School has been the sole secondary school. Growing our trust has been a priority for the last 2 years. The chance to work with 2 strong secondary schools will create opportunities for the strong collaboration in the secondary phase that has been a significant benefit in the primary phase.</p> <p>We have learned how through our partnerships and collaborative working with other schools can provide an improved educational experience for our own learners. This includes through various areas including teaching and learning, an enhanced and engaging curriculum, staff development and progression opportunities, finance and human resources. A larger organisation will enjoy these benefits at scale and make more effective use of our resources.</p>
<b>What would the group of schools (the trust) be called?</b>	The trust will have a new name as it is a new organisation. We are using the working name 'Northern Roses'. Now as it is hoped the new name for the trust comes from the consultation, with all stakeholders having a chance to make suggestions and shape the final decision.

	<p>The trust vision would build on our shared, core ethos and values – we would maintain and strengthen our focus on each child enjoying their learning and achieving their full potential in a stimulating, nurturing environment, maintaining our high expectations and commitment to inclusion.</p>
<b>Will the schools' names change?</b>	<p>No, all settings will retain their current names. This was also the case when the Pennine Trust was formed in 2018.</p>
<b>Who makes the final decision on the proposal?</b>	<p>The Board of Trustees of the Pennine Trust will make the decision on whether this trust will proceed, based on the outcomes of a due diligence process which includes engagement and consultation with all stakeholders. The Board of Trustees at South Craven and the Governing Body at Pendle Vale will make the decision on behalf of their school communities. If all 3 boards are in agreement, the proposal will be taken forward to the DfE.</p> <p>The application is then considered by the Advisory Board of the DfE Regional Director for North West or Yorkshire and Humber.</p>
<b>Would other schools join us and who would make the decision on if additional schools join us?</b>	<p>Once the trust is formed, any decision on additional schools joining our group would be made by the Board of Trustees. It would then also have to be approved by the relevant Regional Director. As time goes on, we would expect other schools to join and any school / setting that joins us would be expected to abide by our vision &amp; ethos and governance structure as well as fully contribute to and learn from the other schools / settings.</p>
<b>Will the trust grow?</b>	<p>The white paper set out that the government expects most trusts will be on track to serve a minimum of 10 schools or 7,500 students. Their argument is that at this size, you can achieve true economies of scale.</p> <p>It is hoped that more schools will wish to join the trust and there has already been interest which is pleasing to see. There is a clear understanding between all the leaders that the growth strategy needs to be carefully planned to allow consolidation. Rapid growth is hard to manage and will be less successful.</p>
<b>Who is the trust accountable to?</b>	<p>The trust would be accountable directly to the Department for Education (DfE) and our accounts audited by the DfE's Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and external auditors, we would be overseen by our Regional Director, as well as continue to be subject to Ofsted inspections.</p> <p>Each setting would still have their own separate Ofsted inspections and grade.</p>
<b>Who runs a trust?</b>	<p>Daily the trust will be overseen by the CEO and central team on behalf of the Board of Trustees. The CEO is appointed by the Trustees later in the process, but it is envisaged that John Tarbox, current CEO of</p>

	<p>the Pennine Trust, will assume the role, with the support of the Headteachers from the other schools.</p> <p>Our existing headteachers and senior leadership teams will continue to lead and manage their schools as they are currently doing. The Headteachers will continue to work in collaboration with each other and drive their establishments forward.</p> <p>The Trust Board would be reconstituted to include people drawn from all of the organisations involved in the merger, drawing on the skills of the existing governors and trustees in these organisations or even people not currently serving in that role.</p>
<p><b>What are the advantages for us?</b></p>	<p>We have worked hard to explore the potential structures that will enable us to deliver exceptional education in future. Having carefully considered the potential advantages and disadvantages of a range of options, including maintaining the status quo, we are confident that forming a new, larger trust is the best way to bring about the most benefit for our individual settings, local communities, and education across the region. Here is the positive impact that we believe such an approach will deliver.</p> <p><b>Locality based resources and collaboration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a structure for high performing locality-based provision that meets local community needs whilst gaining from the benefits of being part of a larger, regional organisation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Regional influence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet the need for increased trust capacity within the Lancashire and North Yorkshire regions.</li> <li>• Provide structures that can maintain high quality provision at small rural primary schools i.e. small rural primary schools can thrive in a locality model with shared services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Collaborative Learning Environment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitates the sharing of best practices among schools, in particular the delivery of a 4-18 curriculum across the trust</li> <li>• Encourages collaborative learning and professional development for teachers to develop their practice.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource Optimisation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pooling of resources allows for more efficient use of funds, staff, and facilities.</li> <li>• Collective purchasing power leading to cost savings on supplies and services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Increased Educational Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enables schools to offer a broader range of subjects and extracurricular activities.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to a wider network of expertise and specialised resources.</li> </ul> <p><b>Improved Outcomes for Young People:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced support mechanisms for those who may be struggling.</li> <li>• Sharing of successful teaching methods and strategies for improved educational outcomes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Streamlined Administrative Processes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent policies and procedures promote efficiency and clarity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Professional Development Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded professional development opportunities for teachers and staff.</li> <li>• Access to a larger talent pool for recruitment and staff advancement.</li> <li>• Increased leadership opportunities for staff, enabling us to retain our most talented practitioners and nurture staff to fulfil wider roles.</li> </ul> <p><b>Financial Stability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides financial stability through shared resources and risk mitigation.</li> <li>• Greater resilience against economic uncertainties or budget constraints.</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance and Leadership Support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared governance structures promote effective decision-making.</li> <li>• Access to experienced leadership and governance support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Joined up local approach to Community Engagement and Outreach:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for joint community projects and outreach initiatives.</li> <li>• Strengthened ties between schools and local communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Increased Accountability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transparent accountability structures foster continuous improvement.</li> <li>• Regular monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure quality standards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Flexibility and Autonomy:</b></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintains a balance between collaboration and individual school identity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Wider Network and Partnerships:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadens the network of educational partners and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Opportunities for cross-school events, competitions, and collaborative projects.</li> </ul> <p><b>Shared Ethos and Values:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of educational philosophies and values for a cohesive learning environment.</li> <li>• Promotes a sense of shared purpose and community.</li> </ul> <p><b>Adaptability to Changing Educational Landscape:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better preparedness to adapt to changes in educational policies and practices.</li> <li>• Collective strength to navigate challenges and seize new opportunities</li> </ul>
<p><b>As a larger partnership of schools will you have increased purchasing power?</b></p>	<p>Yes, due to the economies of scale, (for the Pennine Trust an increase from 1750 pupils to 5,000 pupils) a group of schools will be more likely able to obtain better value when negotiating contracts for services essential for running a school such as insurance, accountancy, HR, Payroll, broadband and other internet and IT services.</p>
<p><b>What are potential risks?</b></p>	<p>A time of change may raise concerns and uncertainties. This engagement period and consultation gives you the opportunity to give us feedback, we want to understand and respond to the questions you will have. However, we firmly believe that the greatest risk for the Pennine Trust is to stand still and remain at its current size. Merging with two strong secondary schools will greatly increase our capacity and the expertise within our organisation. It provides security rather than significant risk.</p> <p>The bringing together of multiple settings into one entity is complex, not just operationally, but culturally and as such needs to be navigated with care. This is a risk as colleagues navigate change. Trust leaders will be prepared for this and will be able to draw on the support of other local leaders who have navigated this process recently.</p> <p>We will be financially linked and with that comes risk, but also opportunity as resources can be allocated based on need. All of the organisations involved have sound finances, healthy reserves and sustainable staffing models. Buildings and estates are also sound.</p>

<p><b>A lot of news reports I've seen are about failing schools being forced to be taken over as academies. What does this have to do with us?</b></p>	<p>A school that is failing, or 'coasting', can be taken over by a sponsor and turned into an academy with the aim of the sponsor driving improvement in the school. What does not make for dramatic news is that strong schools are able to start or grow their own Multi-Academy Trusts and lead on school improvement in their group. We want to make this move because we are a group of good and outstanding schools with strong leadership, and we want to continue to build on this.</p> <p>The strength of the schools involved and the leadership capacity will enable the new trust to support wider school improvement in our region without putting provision and standards at risk in our current schools.</p>
<p><b>What process have the trustees gone through in deciding to begin this process and will the new trust definitely be formed?</b></p>	<p>The board of trustees have voted individually to confirm that we would proceed with engagement and consultation on the formation of a new trust and to work together to explore the possibilities. This is not a decision we have come to quickly; this is the result of the evaluation of all options available, understanding the local and national context and assessment of current partnerships. The leaders and Trustees have all undertaken a vast amount of research as we strive to make the right decisions for our organisation.</p> <p>At the end of the engagement and consultation period, which includes a rigorous process of due diligence, each organisation's board of trustees or governing body will further consider their decision weighing all evidence and information before making any final decisions to apply.</p>
<p><b>Can settings withdraw from the conversion process?</b></p>	<p>Settings can withdraw right up to the point that they sign the Funding Agreement. Once this is signed there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the school or trust, and the termination process would require a long notice period.</p>
<p><b>What is the timescale for MAT formation and a conversion?</b></p>	<p>The entire process from start to finish generally takes 6-12 months. Maintained schools can take longer to convert, and is on a case by case basis.</p> <p>So, for our situation it is likely that South Craven and the Pennine Trust would be able to merge by spring 2025. It might take slightly longer for Pendle Vale to join, though the trust would operate on the assumption that this would be the case, with all 3 founding organisations playing a full part in development of the trust.</p>

Impact on staff	
<p><b>How will this all impact the staff's daily work?</b></p>	<p>For most staff academisation won't have an impact on their daily roles. Teaching and support will continue pretty much the same at each setting. For some members of leadership/business roles there may be</p>



	<p>more change, and this is likely to increase as the trust develops. The Pennine Trust already has a strong central team, who manage the business side of the trust. This central services team will grow and develop in a larger trust.</p> <p>As the trust develops and grows there will be exciting opportunities around increased collaboration, the potential for a 4-18 curriculum, wider professional networks, shared CPD, career pathways and progression opportunities.</p>
<b>Will staff be employed on current terms or school teachers' terms and who would be their employer?</b>	<p>There is no plan to change terms and conditions for staff. Terms and conditions for existing staff would remain the same and pensions would transfer (including pension contributions). Their contracts would TUPE across to the Trust. The Pennine Trust has not changed terms and conditions since its inception in 2018.</p> <p>The trust would be the employer of all staff.</p>
<b>Will staff have to reapply for their jobs</b>	<p>No, staff will not need to reapply for jobs. It is possible that we may have restructuring in future, whether we form this new trust or not, but there is no plan for this at the moment.</p>
<b>Will teachers be moved across locations?</b>	<p>There is no plan to have teachers working across locations, we all have our specialisms and expertise, and we would want to make best use of these. On the positive side, being part of a large organisation should allow more progression opportunities and personal development.</p> <p>For those who want it, there will be opportunities to work across more settings as part of wider collaborative work. We anticipate having a number of leadership roles with responsibility for specific areas of provision across the trust.</p> <p>One of the benefits to working in a trust is that in the event of an emergency, there are other professionals who may be able to support, but this would be the exception rather than the norm.</p>
<b>How will this support staff's professional development?</b>	<p>As the trust develops, we hope there will be exciting opportunities around increased collaboration and professional development opportunities. There will be opportunities to develop leadership and to succession plan, ensuring we retain the very best staff within the trust.</p>

### Impact on Teaching and Learning and pupils

<b>Will all our local partnerships stop if we become a trust?</b>	<p>No. The trust's philosophy is about local communities bringing about local solutions, so there is a huge advantage to continuing with all partnerships irrespective of the designation of the school. Sharing and collaborating for the benefit of young people in our community will always be supported and encouraged.</p>
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	<p>A key driver for the trust is ensuring all pupils achieve and that we break down those barriers and obstacles that currently prevent our young people from fulfilling their ambition. We will continue to work with the local authority, other education providers, health and welfare professionals and charities, etc. to fulfil these aims.</p>
<p><b>Are we going to be teaching common curriculums across the trust?</b></p>	<p>We do not intend to have a completely common curriculum across the trust. Individual school identity is important to us and our school contexts vary. It would be inappropriate to have a completely uniform curriculum across the trust. Retaining individuality and creativity of each organisation's curriculum is also important to drive innovation and further improvement.</p> <p>Over time, we expect to find ways to do things more efficiently and take full advantage of being able to learn from each other and share best practice. In the Pennine Trust, the primary phase has benefitted from a consistent approach to early reading and maths and shared development of the foundation curriculum in subjects such as history, geography and science. This reduces teacher workload and enables staff to work together to refine teaching approaches and assessments. It does not mean that history or science lessons look exactly the same in every school or that exactly the same content is taught.</p>
<p><b>Will there be a centralised behaviour / pastoral team?</b></p>	<p>No. Each setting has its own structures and systems and that is what makes us all unique. However, opportunities to get to learn and share expertise will be hugely beneficial as we start to work together. It may be that the locality model lends itself to future opportunities to develop these teams across a locality to enhance capacity and capability.</p>
<p><b>How will Ofsted judge us?</b></p>	<p>Each individual setting will be judged by Ofsted as they have been in the past. They have their current rating and will be inspected in line with the current inspection framework. It is possible that Ofsted will undertake more inspections of trusts as more and more schools become academies.</p> <p>All new academies will be inspected within 3 years of conversion. Those schools who are already academies now remain on the same Ofsted timeframes.</p>
<p><b>Will there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?</b></p>	<p>No. All of our schools will remain non-selective and we plan to have the same criteria applied for admission as is the case now.</p>
<p><b>Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?</b></p>	<p>There is a lot of debate around school term times and holiday patterns, and whether the current model best serves our pupils. The Pennine Trust has recently committed to a slightly shorter summer holiday and longer autumn half term break. As a trust we want to adopt the best holiday pattern for our pupils and staff, but are mindful of the need not</p>



	to move too far away from the pattern of other schools and providers in the area, so that we support families with children in different schools.
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Impact on systems and operations	
<b>Will all finance teams be merged from all schools or will they carry on as normal.</b>	The vision is to create central services for the trust. We will include all affected staff in that conversation as it develops. This is something we don't have a blueprint for, we will need to find our own solutions, and this will be through lots of discussions with the people who really understand it.
<b>Will the trust have a large, centralised team which includes numerous consultants and leaders?</b>	No, it is envisaged that the central team will start small and focus on core services such as finance, premises development and human resources. We will draw on existing expertise within our schools for much of our school support work, engaging external support on a needs basis for specific projects.
<b>How would estate development be funded</b>	Trusts with over 5 settings and 3,000 students are eligible for the Schools Condition Allowance which is an annual fund that comes directly to the Trust on a formula basis. This enables trusts to plan for long term priorities and allocate resources according to need, and ensuring funding is shared appropriately.  Trusts are also eligible to bid from a range of wider funding opportunities and grants for specific projects, particularly those of wider benefit to the community.
<b>Will our systems change (e.g. MIS, parent pay, etc)</b>	We are currently looking at all the systems that all settings use to understand what is the same and where there are potential efficiencies. Where we establish that there is potential to adopt a Trust wide solution that meets need, we would seek to do this. Some systems, such as the Management and Information System, do need to be common across a trust. Other systems can be school specific.
<b>Will IT support be kept in-house or outsourced to a company that looks after the IT for the entire Trust?</b>	Shared IT support is one of the potential positives of working in a larger organisation. We would most likely seek advice on how best to consolidate our IT systems over time. However, outsourcing management of our IT to an external company seems unnecessary, given the existing expertise we have within our organisations.