

## Converting to Academy status and joining Cathedral Schools Trust: FAQs for parents and carers

Questions	Responses
<b>Background information</b>	
Why are governors recommending Henleaze Infant School (HIS) becomes an academy?	<p>As governors who are involved in setting the strategic direction of the school we always need to look ahead to secure a strong future for our school. Through local and national policy changes over time, we believe that academisation is now the best way to enable effective collaboration between schools as well as making the best use of funding.</p> <p>Bristol was an early adopter in academisation of schools and already has a greater than average percentage of Secondary and Primary schools that are academies compared to other councils. This means Bristol Local Authority (LA) has limited funds and capacity to support the schools that remain LA maintained. LA schools pay a 'top slice' to the LA for services and in recent years we feel we have not received good value for money. Capacity for supporting business functions (e.g. HR and finance) and curriculum development (including staff professional development) is severely limited through the LA.</p>
Why are Governors recommending Henleaze Infant School join Cathedral Schools Trust?	<p>The schools on our campus have a strong history of collaboration, particularly the Infant and Junior schools whose curricula are more closely aligned. The supportive relationship between our schools to date has been facilitated through our informal partnership and governors and leaders wanted to find a way to formalise and strengthen the work between the two schools.</p> <p>In Autumn 2021, stemming from this desire to work more closely with Henleaze Junior School (HJS), to expand opportunities for staff development, improve pupil outcomes and make financial savings, a working group of HIS and HJS governors and senior leaders was set up. The merits of becoming a two-school MAT, developing a new local MAT with other interested schools was explored as well as research and meetings held to learn about the fit of other established local MATs. After much analysis of information, the conclusion was the best option for both schools was to join an established MAT together as a two-school MAT was not financially viable and would not provide the desired school improvement benefits. For these reasons, this option would not be agreed by the Department for Education.</p> <p>The agreed criteria for a suitable MAT included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sharing similar values and vision for pupils</li> <li>● Being local</li> <li>● Consisting of Primary and Secondary schools</li> <li>● Having a strong curriculum offer focused on the school community</li> <li>● Having a strong staff development offer</li> </ul>

	CST was strong in all the areas above and their commitment to collaboration and mutual support between their schools would enable us to work with other like-minded schools.
Why don't Henleaze Infant School and Henleaze Junior School become 1 school?	Each individual school receives a £120,000 lump sum as part of their funding grant. If we became one school, we would lose 1 lump sum which is a considerable proportion of the overall budget. The savings from business efficiencies between 2 schools would not be significant.
<b>Cathedral Schools Trust Structure and Policies</b>	
What other schools are members of CST?	CST Primary Schools: St Werburgh's, Headley Park, Stoke Park, Victoria Park, Hotwells Primary and Cathedral Primary. CST Secondary Schools: Trinity Academy, Bristol Cathedral Choir School and St Katherine's School
Are all CST schools faith schools?	CST is a mixed MAT which means that, within its group of secondary and primary schools, there are faith schools and non-faith schools. Bristol Cathedral Choir School and Bristol Cathedral Primary School are the only 2 schools that are Church of England 'Voluntary-Controlled' schools (i.e. Church of England faith schools) and required to have a 25% church representation on their local governing bodies (LGBs). None of the other schools are faith schools and there is no requirement for their LGBs to have church or religious representation.
What is the CST approach to Inclusivity and Diversity?	CST is committed to developing and implementing equality within its group of schools and has an Equalities Lead who works across all schools to further develop their Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) strategy. The role has been established to take forward key areas including DEI within the curriculum as well as recruitment and retention of staff. CST is striving to develop a more representative and diverse workforce but acknowledges that it has some way to go to achieve that aspiration and this remains a challenging issue right across the educational sector.
Would HJS become a feeder school for any of the CST secondary schools?	There are no plans for this. Currently the feeder schools within CST are on the same site as the secondary schools eg: Bristol Cathedral Choir School and Cathedral Primary School, and Stoke Park Primary School and the new Trinity Academy.
Who would manage admissions?	Admissions would continue to be managed through Bristol City Council's coordinated admissions process. The difference would be that CST would become the Admissions Authority and their Admissions lead would support Henleaze Infant School with any queries, e.g. around out of year group applications or appeals. The transition of Infant School pupils to Henleaze Junior School would remain as is.
What changes would be apparent to parents and children? Would the transition be noticed?	There would be no changes to the School's name or its uniform etc, and the current Henleaze Infant School curriculum and behaviour policy would remain in place. Over time, as our staff collaborate with staff from the other CST schools, we should see the Teaching & Learning, Leadership and the business efficiency of our school further develop. This is likely to include some curriculum changes as we engage in the curriculum networks sessions with other schools within the Trust.

	<p>However, our work with CST to date has given us confidence that their core curriculum philosophy is aligned with ours and some key areas already match e.g. the phonics and maths progression we follow.</p> <p>We expect to be able to devote more time to teaching and learning as one of the core aims of CST is to reduce the management burden on leadership teams and staff to enable them to devote more of their time and energy on their main role. <b><i>'How can we make children's learning better?'</i></b> is a consistent focus of CST.</p> <p>Trust wide events help to bring the schools together as a family. Examples are the annual Trust Sports day for primary schools and the annual Trust Music Concert for all pupils that will be held this year in the Bristol Beacon.</p>
<b>Teaching and Learning: The school curriculum</b>	
Are MATs (incl CST) exempt from following the National Curriculum?	Academies do have some freedoms around the National Curriculum; however, all CST schools currently follow the National Curriculum and, currently, each school develops its own curriculum plans.
Do schools in CST have a common curriculum?	<p>Through collaboration between the current 6 Primary Schools, the schools have moved to adopt the pedagogical approach and curriculum progression for most subjects set out in CUSP, a published curriculum document.</p> <p>CST does not dictate that schools take on CUSP and recommend those that do, do so in a gradual, planned way. They do recognise that if schools do not follow CUSP, they will limit the opportunity for collaboration and school improvement with other schools within CST.</p> <p>The principles behind the CUSP curriculum are aligned with those we follow.</p> <p>CST follows Unlocking Letters and Sounds for phonics and White Rose Maths for maths.</p>
Would joining CST lead to an increased focus on Christianity in the Religious Education (RE) curriculum?	There is no imposed, standardised approach to the teaching of RE across CST. As it is a mixed MAT its member schools retain their faith or non-faith status and they are able to continue their RE curriculum in the way they did before they joined.
SEND is a huge challenge for all schools and currently support from the LA is limited. What would CST do differently?	Our school would continue to apply for EHCP (Education Health Care Plans) and top-up funding through the LA and there would still be access to support offered currently by Bristol. Through collaboration with the other CST schools we would gain access to another layer of SEND support; This would include an active SENDCo Network and informal observation. There is a real opportunity to share best practice through collaboration between staff and schools' SENDCos. CST recently procured speech and language therapy for all schools in the Trust.
What focus does CST have on PSHE, wellbeing and emotional education?	All CST schools put the education of the 'whole child' at the heart of what they do and this is clearly reflected in each school's vision and values. There is an active group of PSHE leads who work together to drive this agenda.
How do CST schools engage with 'green' and eco issues?	'Green' issues are very important to CST - it is active on this, with representatives from all schools meeting each term to collaborate and work together to deliver a sustainability strategy. The trust has a Sustainability Lead who is a member of staff at one of the Trust

	primary schools and has been recognised nationally for their contribution to work in this field. CST recognises that there is much more that could, and should, be done on this and would welcome Henleaze Infant School's involvement and contribution
<b>Governance</b>	
What would the implications be for the Governing Body and its role and responsibilities?	<p>The Governing Body would become a Local Governing Body with powers and duties delegated to it by the CST Board of Trustees. Its overall role would not change, as it would be responsible for "monitoring the School's key performance indicators and acting as a critical friend to the Headteacher"; however, it would no longer be responsible for ensuring the strategic direction of the school, or for overseeing its financial performance. This would allow the governors to focus much more on the teaching and learning aspects.</p> <p>The Henleaze Infant School community would continue to have a voice through the parent governors and other governors recruited to the Local Governing Body.</p>
<b>Impact on staff</b>	
What is the Henleaze Infant School Staff view on the recommendation to join CST?	During a period of informal consultation, there has been a positive reaction to the recommendation by governors to join CST from staff, especially in relation to collaboration/networking possibilities and professional development. One question that has been asked is: could CST require staff members to work in other CST schools? The answer is No; this is not CST policy. However, there could be opportunities for secondments etc for staff who requested them.
What changes would there be to HIS staff roles? ie teaching staff, support staff and premises staff	All roles would remain unchanged and would be protected and transferred under TUPE – "Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)". If a member of staff subsequently requested a change to their role, their 'carried forward' Henleaze Infant School contract would be replaced by a new contract under the prevailing CST contractual terms.
Is there a risk of staff being subject to additional pressure because of demands for or expectations of higher achievement?	CST regards its staff as its most important resource and it works hard to listen and respond to their needs. Active network groups across leaders, teachers and support staff and annual staff questionnaires provide opportunities to feedback and adapt approaches. All CST schools have trained mental health first aiders. The Trust has high aspirations for all members of its community but recognises that these aspirations will be achieved by working with people.
<b>Financial Considerations</b>	
What would the financial implications be of HIS joining CST? Would it mean that more funding would be available?	<p>One of the important elements of the Governing Body's due diligence considerations is to examine the financial implications in detail.</p> <p>In outline, Henleaze Infant School would receive 100% of its per-pupil funding from the DfE and then contribute 5% of that to CST as payment for the services that its Central Team provides (i.e. school improvement, admissions, HR &amp; recruitment, IT and finance). Currently, HIS's per-pupil funding is routed via the LA, which retains 2% from all its LA-maintained schools as their contribution to its Core Services. However, we also have to pay for services we obtain from the LA's trading arm such as admissions, HR, payroll, finance, premises management, SIMS (School Information Management</p>

	<p>System). Therefore, a headline comparison of 5% vs 2% is not an accurate representation of the total costs involved.</p> <p>One of CST's aims is to ensure that its centrally-provided services represent good value for money for its schools and a better service, therefore enabling them to direct more of their funding on their core educational activities, rather than on non-educational costs</p>
What is the CST on its schools' financial reserves? Would Henleaze Infant School retain 'ownership' of reserves if it joined?	<p>The CST policy on financial reserves is that they belong to the schools that build them up. As CST is a single legal entity, it is not possible to say that legally those reserves belong to a specific school but that is in effect how CST operates. The Trust's published accounts show how the reserves are allocated to each school (on CST website). In effect, the reserves are allocated to the schools that 'earned' them</p>
Would FHIS (our parent teacher association) still exist and would funds go straight to the school?	<p>There would still be an important role for FHIS in raising funds and organising the community events that are part of the school calendar.</p> <p>Money would go directly to the school to support the funding of pupil events, enrichment and curriculum resources as it does now.</p>