

Q&A from consultation period, including emails received, drop-in sessions, and consultation meetings with Staff and Parents.

Q&A from Staff meeting 24-Sept

What is the process from here

- Consultation with parents and staff completed
- Continuing due diligence and formal TUPE consultation with staff
- Governors review the consultation responses and hold an extraordinary meeting of the full governing board
 - Yes / No Decision
- Approval to proceed if 'yes' decision. End of process if 'no' decision.
- Finalisation for transfer – completion of due diligence activities and TUPE process
- Completion of legal documents
- Transfer on X date.

The timeline for this is uncertain as it is subject to the satisfactory resolution of each stage. Transfer to CLT could be as quick as March 2025 (possible, but unlikely due to the complexities that usually arise in the legal process). The current working assumption is to aim for transfer by the start of the next academic year - September 2025.

What would happen with the lunchtime staff and catering provision?

The school retains its autonomy to choose the best catering service provider, as is the case now. The school currently choose Leeds catering as it meets need and provides a good service. There are no immediate plans to make a change. The decision will continue to be the responsibility of school leaders and governors.

Is joining CLT a foregone conclusion?

No. See previous answer in FAQ re the process.

This is not a foregone conclusion. However, the Governing Board currently believe that the best strategic direction for the school is to join CLT. The results of the staff and parent consultation, plus the results of due diligence by both sides, will be fully considered and will inform the final decision of the Governing Board.

Once the school has joined CLT, is there an option to leave later?

No. Only in very rare and extreme cases of failure has a school be 'rebrokered' to a different multi-academy trust.

What happens with funding?

Funding formular remains the same - based on pupil numbers on roll, proportion of PP pupils etc.

The cost of CLT's central service offer (finance, HR, school improvement etc) is broadly the same level as the current top slice taken by Leeds City Council together the service level agreements take out to deliver the similar services.

What happens with investment in the curriculum?

If a specific need is identified in an area of the curriculum this will be addressed in the strategic plan, which will continue to be developed by the head teacher, the senior leadership team and governors. Funding will continue to be allocated on a managed budget basis in order to balance the budget and meet educational need, as is the case now. If the transfer goes ahead then the CLT's education improvement resource would be

available to help support in these areas – for example the subject leader networks to share resources, expertise and successful strategies.

Q&A with Parents, 26 Sept 2024

Attendees: Janet Sherif (CEO CLT), Julia Dickson (headteacher), David Drake (chair of governors), Alan Padden (governor), Phoebe Cowen (governor), 15 parents.

How are staff feeling about the potential move to a MAT? How will you ensure any worries don't impact the children?

We have tried to be as open as possible with staff and give them the opportunity to unearth any worries. Union reps are also gathering questions from staff members for us to respond to. After the staff consultation meeting we were pleased to hear several staff reflecting happily on the presentation and the potential benefits. We have followed the CLT closely since its inception and none of staff Ts&Cs/pensions have changed in that time. We are keen to ensure open communication and clarity of facts to support with any concerns. Autonomy is important for our staff and this is something the CLT will let us retain.

How will you ensure the CLT's ethos will be maintained over the years to come?

It is important to the CLT that schools have an ethos that aligns with theirs if they are going to join the CLT - for example working collaboratively. The work the CLT do with their Trust Board and governors is to maintain this alignment. For example, an annual strategy day is held with all schools' governors and the Trust board to discuss what is going well, what could go better - but also to come back to the values and take the opportunity to remind ourselves of their importance.

Additionally, the Articles of Association (legal document) provide clarity for the autonomy of schools, but also legal requirements for what the schools are delivering. All trustees (now and in the future) are required to uphold these Articles of Association and the vision and values of the Trust.

How fast is the process of becoming part of the trust?

If The Whartons goes ahead, we estimate conversion would happen ahead of the start of the academic year Sept 2025, it may be slightly quicker or longer than this. We don't think parents and students will notice much change in the day to day life at school. We will keep parents informed of any changes through our existing newsletters.

All the positives sound great. What are the disadvantages?

We have thought about this a lot and cannot think of many, we know in the short term the changeover could be slow, and the back office staff are likely to be busy getting up to speed with new systems.

Some of the reasons we are exploring this seem to be a push away from LA rather than pull to the CLT. Did you set any metrics that you wanted to see from the CLT that made you want to choose them now when you didn't in previous years?

We really value collaboration with other schools - this has become more difficult in the LA, and more interesting in the CLT - partly due to the increased diversity of schools that have joined in recent years. The small manageable size of the CLT is also attractive - it makes it easier to partner up for collaboration and share different viewpoints.

From the GB point of view - yes there were lots of push factors, but yes, the collaboration is a pull, as is the service offering for the back-office functions which have become very slow at the LA.

What is there to stop the CLT growing too big? Have you got a number of schools at which you're going to stop?

CLT: We have a growth plan of where we want to be in the future - about 12 primary schools and 3 or 4 secondary schools. We want all our schools to be within one hours drive to one another. We want to be a Trust where we work together and collaborate - so yes there would be a point where we would stop growing. We discuss this every year with our trust board and governing bodies as part of strategy discussions.

You spoke of a funding pot from the government - how does funding equity work for the site improvement fund?

The site improvement fund is given to the group of schools to support health and safety, safeguarding, estates to deliver education (leaking roofs etc). We have put together a policy for the Trust which sets out the criteria and how we apply this. We have professional external surveys for each of the school buildings, and from this decide where the funding is most needed. This policy was taken to headteachers first to check their thoughts, and then GBs and then the Trust Board for final approval - all had a say and transparency on how this money would be distributed.

Does the pot grow depending on size of the trust? Yes it does.

You mentioned that some things went wrong when academies were first started - what governance and oversight have you put in place to ensure this doesn't happen here at the CLT

The CLT have 'Members' that uphold the shared values - 5 members - who ensure that the Trust and its schools are run according to these shared values. The Trustees also then have oversight of the Trust and its schools, and the local governing bodies have the oversight of their individual schools. We also have direct oversight from the department of education – this is very much stronger than in the early days of academies. There is a handbook that sets out the running of academies - which has grown over the years, particularly with regard to financial checks and balances but also fraud, expected standards of operation, regulations etc.

Is there anything that the LA provides now that you think you'll lose?

Virtually everything that the LA provides we receive through service level agreements. Eg catering. Where these continue to be the best option we will be able to maintain this provision.

I've heard in other academies teachers sometimes get pulled away to go and help other schools in difficulty - will this happen if The Whartons joins the CLT?

CLT: I would like to think that we would all want to help schools in difficulty, but not at the expense of your own school. We do this in the CLT through the teaching networks, and sharing good practice. We are definitely about helping those in difficulties - but we will not be forcing our staff to work at other schools. Staff may want extra development and volunteer to go over and share practice, or present to their network on specific areas of best practice - but this would be on their terms. Staff employed to work at a specific school will always retain their right to continue working only at that specific school – it will be in their contract of employment.

How does our funding work now and how will the funding change if we move into the CLT?

At the moment the LA holds our funding which is based on the number of pupils we have. We pay the LA for service level agreements for various elements. If we join the CLT the funding will be held by the CLT, we will pay a top slice to the CLT for the back office support - which will be a similar amount to that currently paid to the LA for similar services. The funding for special educational needs and Pupil Premium will not be top sliced so the full per pupil amount is allocated to the school as it does currently.

Would you say that you find it difficult to recruit staff to the CLT? Are they happy to work for an academy?

So many schools now are in an academy trust - we have seen anecdotally that often staff now see this as an advantage rather than a disadvantage due to the opportunities a trust can bring for career development.

Will joining a trust impact breakfast club and afterschool club?

These will transfer over and continue to be run through the school in the same way as now.

Will there be any impact to pupils receiving free school meals/ breakfasts?

This provision will be the same as if we had stayed in the LA.

I've kept thinking "what's the catch"?! How do we get the parents that have missed out on tonight as they are not in the room on board as we've all come away from this feeling really positive?

We will put the presentation on the website and we will add the questions and answers that have been asked today onto the FAQs.

Q&A received via email/ drop ins

Will there be any change to The Wharton's admission policy if we joined the CLT?

There will not be any change to the school's admission policy as a result of joining the CLT. The school Admissions Policy may change sometime in the future e.g. increase or decrease in Pupil Admission Number (PAN), but any change would be due to the needs of the school, not as a result of being in the CLT.

Will the admission criteria for Prince Henry's change if we join the CLT, so that priority would be given to children from The Whartons along with from Pool and Bramhope?

There is no plan at the moment to change Prince Henry's Admission criteria. Pupils at The Whartons invariably secure a place at Prince Henry's because it is usually their nearest high school, so they would be offered a place at Priority 3 of the policy, if the school was oversubscribed. This is higher priority than for pupils who attend Pool or Bramhope school (Priority 4). This is why adding The Whartons as a named school would likely make very little difference (this is the same for all of the Otley based Primary Schools). The reason Pool and Bramhope were added as named schools on the Admission Policy is because for pupils who attend these schools Prince Henry's is often not their nearest school (therefore they do not get Priority 3) and had only the 'distance' criteria to secure a place, which meant they could miss out on a place at Prince Henry's despite being part of our Family of Schools. This is why Priority 4 (for pupils attending Pool and Bramhope Schools) was added to the Admissions Policy.

What happens if a school within the CLT "goes bust"? Will funding be taken from other schools in the CLT to support the struggling school?

The financial support offered by the central CLT team aims to support schools so that they maintain a surplus position. If a school joined us with an inherited deficit, the school would retain this deficit – but the CLT would support it to reduce and then eradicate the deficit via a robust deficit action plan. Whilst this happens the CLT reserves are used to support the struggling school, funds are not taken directly from other Trust schools.

Email received from parent:

I'm a yr2 parent at the Whartons, as well as a parent to two PHGS students.

I have been a governor at PHGS for the past four years and have, during that time, attended numerous PHGS and CLT events.

I've had the opportunity to speak to a number of governors and SLT from trust wide schools and have witnessed some of the fantastic work being done on a collaborative level.

Having had some insight into how PHGS has benefitted from being part of the CLT, and being aware of the number of primary schools who are benefitting from shared learning and other resources, I'm really pleased that Whartons are considering the CLT.

I truly believe that Whartons will be able to maintain their identity and benefit hugely from the support provided by CLT.

I'm happy to share my experience and knowledge (albeit on a limited basis) with governors, should they wish for me to do so.