



Invitation to share views on Bassingbourn Community Primary School joining Peterborough Keys Academy Trust

The Governing Body has been carefully considering the future of Bassingbourn Community Primary School, and we have been exploring the option of converting to academy status and join Peterborough Keys Academy Trust (PKAT).

As you may be aware, the educational landscape is continually evolving, with a growing emphasis on collaboration and shared resources. In line with this trend, many schools across the country are moving towards joining multi-academy trusts. These trusts foster collaboration among schools, promote sharing of best practices, and provide enhanced support for the staff and pupils within their network.

Bassingbourn has been on a challenging journey over the past few years, starting with the initial change of leadership in 2021, the subsequent OFSTED inspection in April 2022 and the Formal Warning Notice being issued by the Local Authority in October 2023. During this period, the school has faced a number of staffing challenges, including senior leadership positions. In addition, there were several formal complaints made to the Local Authority, OFSTED and the Department of Education against the school, raising concerns regarding safeguarding, SEND and school provision.

Since January 2024, the school has moved forward with new leadership including governors. The school has set out a clear pathway to address the significant historic concerns. Bassingbourn Community Primary School was re-inspected by OFSTED in October 2024. Although the school has made significant progress, it still needs more support to ensure practice is embedded consistently and securing more positive learning outcomes for pupils. OFSTED has recognised the actions taken by the school as appropriate and necessary.

Having reflected on the development and progress of Bassingbourn, it is important that we ensure the school have a robust support network to provide long-term sustainability so that the provision at Bassingbourn continues to be developed and remains strong, irrespective of the changes and challenges it may face. The school has considered a list of potential trusts to assess whether they have the capacity to provide the support that Bassingbourn needs to sustain its development and the alignment of the vision and values. As governors, it is our duty to provide strategic direction to the school and we believe that the time is right for us to make the change and become an academy within PKAT Trust.

We have identified PKAT Trust as the best fit for Bassingbourn Community Primary School. We believe our pupils will continue to flourish and benefit from greater collaboration with other schools, which are already part of PKAT Trust. Therefore, the governors intend to

express interest to the Department for Education in becoming part of PKAT Trust and an application will be presented to the Regional Schools Commissioner in due course.

However, before making any final decisions, we genuinely value your input as staff, parents and carers. Your opinions matter greatly to us, and we want to ensure that your views are considered during this crucial point in the process.

Therefore, we invite you to participate in a consultation process, which will be open between **Monday 27th January 2025** and **Friday 14th February 2025**. You can do this by completing the online form via the link below.

[Bassingbourn Community Primary Academy Consultation Questionnaire](#)

A meeting with staff and union representatives is scheduled on Monday 27th January 2025 3.30-4.30pm to discuss the consultation and to provide an opportunity for staff to ask any questions.

We will also be holding an informal drop-in session for parents and carers on Tuesday 11th February 2025 between 3.30pm and 4.30pm, in the school, where you can ask any questions, you may have.

All comments must be received by noon on Friday 14th February 2025 which is the end of the consultation process.

What happens now?

In order to proceed with the next steps of this potential partnership, we will be consulting with staff, parents and carers between Monday 27th January and Friday 14th February 2025 before seeking approval from the Department for Education (DfE).

The timeline of decisions / processes is laid out below.

1. We will consult directly with parents, carers and staff and seek their views using an online form.
2. We will produce a page on our website that gives further detailed explanation of the information gathered to demonstrate the governors reasoning behind the application to convert.
3. We will be holding an informal drop-in session on Tuesday 11th February between 3.30pm and 4.30pm, in the school, where parents and carers can ask questions.
4. After the consultation has been completed, our governing body will confirm the decision.
5. We will then look to seek approval from the Department for Education for the conversion.
6. If the Department for Education approves the application, there would then be legal work that would be completed with the Local Authority and staff. This could take several months.
7. When all the legal work has been completed, the governing body would agree to the final decision to convert.

8. We are seeking to be in the family of PKAT schools in September 2025.

We believe that this potential collaboration would strengthen our school community and create an even more nurturing and supportive environment for our children to thrive. We encourage you to actively participate in the consultation process, as your engagement would ensure that we make an informed and collective decision that is in the best interest of our children.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to Bassingbourn Community Primary School. Together, we can shape a brighter future for our children.

WHY DO WE WANT TO BECOME AN ACADEMY?

What is an academy?

Academy schools are state-funded schools in England, which are directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct funding and control by the local authority.

Are all academies the same?

No. There are many different types of academies. For example, some schools have become academies independently; others have joined together with other schools to form a multi-academy trust (MAT); whilst others have joined larger groups and organisations, often known as academy chains. Different academies have a variety of school improvement and governance arrangements.

There are also differences in the amount of 'standardisation' or 'alignment' that individual MATs expect. Some have a standardised curriculum that they insist their schools teach, others do not and allow the school to continue to teach in the ways that it believes are the best for their children. Some MATs insist on the same uniform or 'branding' of the school, others do not.

Why are we considering converting to an academy now?

The current educational climate is changing, and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of the benefits that becoming an academy brings. Many schools wish to make the move now to determine their own destiny and to make the changes when it is right for their own school. As a school in need of continued rapid improvement, gaining academy status would give us the sustained and enhanced support to continue with our rapid improvement journey and to secure a high-quality education for all children. Becoming part of a MAT will bring greater opportunities for working even more closely with the wider trust community of schools. We genuinely believe that it will help make us even better as a school. As in all of the decisions that we make, the impact on the children is our highest priority. We do not make changes unless it will help our school community.

Who is the PKAT Trust?

Peterborough Keys Academies Trust (PKAT) is a multi-academy trust established in 2018 and approved by the Department for Education (DfE) as an Academy Sponsor. The Trust encompasses five schools, including four primary schools and one secondary school, collectively educating 3,487 pupils. PKAT is committed to fostering an environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally, supported by a community of dedicated professionals and shared resources.

As a Trust, PKAT aims to deliver excellence in education by working collaboratively across its schools to share best practices, enhance teaching standards, and provide a broad and balanced curriculum. Each school within the Trust retains its unique character while benefiting from a collective ethos of inclusivity, innovation, and high aspiration. With a focus on both academic achievement and personal development, PKAT equips students with the skills and values needed to succeed in life beyond school.

What are the advantages of becoming an academy and joining a MAT?

The governing body believes that working together to ensure the highest standards across the trust is an exciting new proposition. We will also continue to actively work with all local schools and current partners, ensuring the best of both worlds.

Advantages of joining a MAT:

- Allowing Leaders of Learning to focus on Learning.
- Collective development and support across a group that wants to work together
- Strengthening of Governance accountability – additional support from educational experts
- More collective bargaining and cost reduction
- Professional development across subjects – drawing on secondary expertise
- Support for school systems – HR, Budgeting, Grounds maintenance etc
- Review of all our systems and processes as part of joining to ensure they are as efficient and effective as possible

Advantages of joining the PKAT Trust specifically:

Joining Peterborough Keys Academies Trust (PKAT) would offer Bassingbourn Primary support to improve educational outcomes and foster long-term improvement. PKAT has a proven track record of driving rapid primary school improvement. These successes have been underpinned by a robust framework of accountability, excellent leadership appointments, a well-structured curriculum, and improved teaching practices supported by instructional coaching. Positive Ofsted outcomes further reflect the Trust's ability to raise standards effectively.

Bassingbourn Primary would also benefit from PKAT's inclusive and innovative approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs (SEND). The Trust has invested in effective systems and processes to ensure pupils with complex needs are well-supported within mainstream settings, allowing all students to thrive. PKAT's focus on SEND has been

recognised in inspections, with particular praise for the collaboration between the Trust and school staff to meet pupils' needs while considering staff workload and well-being. Access to a dedicated Trust director of SEND and resources to implement cutting-edge practices would enable Bassingbourn Primary to deliver an exceptional level of support for its pupils with SEND.

What are the disadvantages of academy status?

As an academy, there are a number of additional responsibilities placed on the school in terms of financial management and reporting, however these are dealt with centrally and not within the school itself. It is expected that on a day-to-day basis, pupils, their parents and carers, teachers and staff will not notice the difference if we became an academy.

WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?

Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the school?

No. The school will continue to be called Bassingbourn Primary School. Please be assured that the character, ethos and values of our school would remain unchanged should academy conversion take place.

Would becoming an academy mean a new uniform?

No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

Would becoming an academy mean the school could still be open to the community?

Yes. There will be no change to the current provision and use of the school by different groups to hold events.

What will be the impact on our children with special needs?

There will be no change to the level of support provided. We will continue to recognise that every child is different and has the right to be included as a valued, respected and equal member of the school community. PKAT's inclusive ethos and values was one of the factors that we felt made a good fit for our school.

Will the school hours be any different as an academy?

Although it is highly unlikely that the school day will be changed, as is the case now, parents would be consulted prior to any change in school hours, although no change is envisaged.

Will pupils' education be disrupted by a transition to academy status?

No. If conversion is approved, it will happen with minimal disruption to staff and students. Most of the changes will take place behind the scenes, with support from a dedicated team from the trust who have gone through this process before.

If we move to being an academy, will this change what is taught?

We would be expected to continue to offer the full range of National Curriculum subjects. OFSTED inspects academies and their handbook for inspection is the same one as is used in any other school. The academy would be expected to strive to be outstanding in the statutory OFSTED rating. Any changes, as now, would be made by leaders in the school because we believed it was the best thing to do for the children.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?

How is an academy funded?

In maintained schools, all revenue funding (building funding is slightly different) goes directly to the local authority (LA). The LA takes a proportion of the money from the school budget to provide essential services to the school and the rest is delegated under the local management of schools. Schools can, and do, buy additional services from the LA and other providers. As a result, schools currently depend upon the LA for many services such as school improvement, HR, finance, etc.

Academies will receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools, plus funding to meet additional responsibilities that are no longer provided for them by the LA. The money that would have been provided to the LA to run the school would be provided directly to the Trust, which would retain some of the budget in order to provide services to the academy.

Being part of a larger organisation increases bargaining power and the ability to get better deals on services etc. This ultimately means that there would be more money available to spend on each child.

Does this improve on current funding arrangements?

Converting to an academy will not be to our detriment financially, although there may be the potential for some financial gain; however, no decision will be motivated by money. Funding is available to cover the costs of the conversion process itself, which the Trust has agreed to support with, once the decision to convert has been approved. In addition, the trust board has access to capacity funding from the Department for Education as well as opportunities to bid for capital funding on an annual basis.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?

What will be the terms and conditions for staff?

On conversion, teachers and staff currently employed by Cambridgeshire County Council will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (transfer of undertakings protection of employment) process, to become employees of the PKAT Trust. Conversion will not affect any union memberships. All terms and conditions as part of the PKAT Trust match or improve the contracts of employment currently under Cambridgeshire County Council.

Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion?

At present, teachers and other school staff are employed by Cambridgeshire County Council. Following conversion, they will be employed directly by PKAT Trust.

As the letter states we believe that this potential collaboration would strengthen our school community and create an even more nurturing and supportive environment for our children to thrive. To reiterate, the primary focus of this potential partnership is to allow our teachers and leaders to concentrate even more intently on educating our children.

Your views and questions matter to us. You can complete the consultation questionnaire via this link [Bassingbourn Community Primary Academy Consultation Questionnaire](#) (this link will be live from Monday 27th January to Friday 14th February 2025).

Paper copies of the questionnaire are available at the school office.