



Birch Hill Primary School

Consultation to become an academy and join Maiden Erlegh Trust

Published: 9 May 2023

This document will be kept up to date with responses to questions or comments received throughout the consultation process and will be made available on both the Birch Hill Primary School and Maiden Erlegh Trust websites.

Question / Comment	Response																											
I work under Greenshaw Learning Trust and would like my children to be the same	Comment. No response required																											
Academy is just an opt out from lea	Comment. No response required																											
I would like to see a plan from the School Management covering the transition and any specific improvements that Pupils/Parents will see	Transition plans will be developed and shared with all stakeholders in the lead up to, and after conversion.																											
Maiden Erlegh are a well-respected local trust and have done a great job at great hollands	Comment. No response required																											
<p>I'm yet to be convinced that taking Birch Hill out of direct local education authority control and placing it into a 'one size fits all' multi-academy structure is a good move.</p> <p>1) Does this move directly translate into better educational standards for pupils?</p> <p>2) What does this move mean in terms of the school's accountability to the local community and to pupils' parents?</p> <p>These are things that I hope will be addressed at the April 20th consultation meeting.</p>	<p>1) Great Hollands Progress measures have improved significantly since it joined the Trust. 2022 results for KS2 places the school in the top 10% in the country.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">2018</th> <th colspan="3">2019</th> <th colspan="3">2022</th> </tr> <tr> <th>R</th> <th>W</th> <th>M</th> <th>R</th> <th>W</th> <th>M</th> <th>R</th> <th>W</th> <th>M</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>-1</td> <td>-0.2</td> <td>0.1</td> <td>1.3</td> <td>-0.8</td> <td>4.1</td> <td>2.7</td> <td>3.3</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>2) The school will absolutely retain its links to its local community – this is a keystone for the Trust. The parent body plays a significant role in that and this would not change as a result of BHPS joining Maiden Erlegh Trust.</p>	2018			2019			2022			R	W	M	R	W	M	R	W	M	-1	-0.2	0.1	1.3	-0.8	4.1	2.7	3.3	5
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Every school I have known which has converted to a academy has had a quick decline performance overall.	See answer to previous question.																											



<p>The school does an excellent job, even though financing etc is terribly skewed against schools which are not academies due to political dogma. I also fear that a 'Reading-centric approach' may occur, which is not appropriate for Birch Hill.</p>	<p>Maiden Erlegh Trust has schools in Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and Oxfordshire.</p>																											
<p>No I'm touch with Parents or pupils and schools become corporate and not in touch with the community.</p>	<p>Comment. No response required</p>																											
<p>The information sounds like this is a good idea</p>	<p>Comment. No response required</p>																											
<p>I have a few questions that I would like answered as I am unable to make the parents consultation on 20th April.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What experience does the trust have of working with a school with a SEND unit? With the dramatic increase in social, emotional and mental health issues with children and young people since the end of lockdown, what plans do they have to support schools in this area. 2) Will Birch Hill have autonomy over its budget or will it have to support other schools, particularly in relation to any PTA funds or income NOT derived from the DfE, grants etc. 3) Will there be any uniform changes, if so, will parents in low incomes be supported with the extra costs. 4) What evidence can the Trust show that joining an academy will improved the experiences and outcomes of children at the school. 5) Is the top slice that is taken from the schools budget to support the shared services greater or lesser than the amount the LA takes, if it is greater can you 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Maiden Erlegh Trust is an inclusive MAT and currently runs a 25-place Resource Unit for children with ASD at Maiden Erlegh School. It also runs Hamilton School, a 56-place SEMH special school in Reding, and from September 2023 will open Oak Tree School, a 150-place ASD special school in Wokingham. The Trust also run Cranbury College, a132-place alternative provision academy in Reading of which 80%+ are primary and secondary-aged children with an EHCP. The Trust is committed to supporting all children in all our schools and has invested in creating additional capacity to support children with SEND including the development of our own Integrated Therapy Team. 2) Birch Hill will have autonomy over its delegated budget including the use of any PTA funds, lettings income and any other locally generated funds. The school will need to comply with the Trusts financial processes and procedures in relation to the use of public funds. 3) There will not be any uniform changes imposed by the Trust. 4) Great Hollands Progress measures have improved significantly since it joined the Trust. 2022 results for KS2 places the school in the top 10% in the country. <table border="1" data-bbox="981 1050 1680 1177"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">2018</th> <th colspan="3">2019</th> <th colspan="3">2022</th> </tr> <tr> <th>R</th> <th>W</th> <th>M</th> <th>R</th> <th>W</th> <th>M</th> <th>R</th> <th>W</th> <th>M</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>-1</td> <td>-0.2</td> <td>0.1</td> <td>1.3</td> <td>-0.8</td> <td>4.1</td> <td>2.7</td> <td>3.3</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> 5) The Trust pools its funding and distributes this out to schools on a needs basis. Needs analysis is undertaken collaboratively with the school leadership and a devolved budget is assigned. It is highly likely that BHPS will be a net beneficiary i.e. will be delegated a higher budget than would be delegated by the LA. 6) Expectations from Birch Hill are: 	2018			2019			2022			R	W	M	R	W	M	R	W	M	-1	-0.2	0.1	1.3	-0.8	4.1	2.7	3.3	5
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<p>explain what the trust will provide to justify that increase (i.e. is the support better than the LA).</p> <p>6) Join a Trust is collaborative, what does the Trust expect from Birch Hill?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To maintain their community ethos b. To have unapologetically high ambition for pupils and staff c. To both contribute to, and benefit from, the work of the wider Trust – we are one organisation d. To contribute to system improvement by being professionally generous, engaging with local and national networks and sharing of best practice and expertise
<p>I trust that any decisions made in becoming an academy and the academy trust that is chosen are thoroughly thought through and in the best interests of the school.</p>	<p>The Governing Body of Birch Hill have conducted a rigorous process of meetings and interviews with prospective MAT partners. The decision to name Maiden Erlegh Trust as the schools preferred MAT partner was unanimous.</p>
<p>Joining the trust will secure the long term future of the school providing financial stability, staffing and specialist SEND help</p>	<p>Comment. No response required</p>
<p>Birch Hill needs a new Head teacher, not to become an Academy. many pupils are being failed now, hence many parents removing their children, they should not have to do this.</p>	<p>Comment. No response required</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Please provide tangible examples, including quotations from Staff, parents and pupils at Great Hollands school to evidence the benefit and support that the trust provides. 2) It would be helpful to have some tangible examples of actions that have been taken that show the power of the trust (i.e. shared resources, value for money in purchasing etc), and also what the new opportunities are that have/will be provided to pupils which perhaps aren't available currently via the LEA and how exactly you will go about fostering the community of staff, pupils and parents/carers (not high-level, actually on the ground). 3) Please list the top 5 things that you would consider would be done at Birch Hill (this could relate to the top 5 things you tend to do at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) School improvement (SI) offers are sharply targeted to what the school requires. SI is more frequent and more rigorous / hands on support from safeguarding leads / Behaviour Hub leads and Trust support services are offered routinely. The Trust provides all senior leaders time and support to focus on teaching and learning development and not get burdened with operational / managerial aspects of leading a school. Staff quote that they feel 'ahead of the curve', whilst parents state that 'communication is a particular strength' and pupils love the regular visits from Trust leaders who they know personally (something never seen in LA time). 2) Implementation of a robust phonics programme that would not have been affordable previously which led to a significant increase in pupil outcomes. Site security upgrades e.g. replacement of fencing to higher safer form, fixing roofing areas that leaked / increase in IT hardware for pupils / broadband upgrades all managed centrally for the school without distracting school from its core tasks of teaching and learning. New opportunity for alignment with DfE Hubs and work with high performing schools outside LA. The community experience at Great Hollands – the school remains a community school and there are not significant changes seen from a parental perspective – just a steady improvement overtime of the quality of teaching and



<p>other schools but would be helpful if it was more specific).</p> <p>4) Please add the point asked about preferred providers to the FAQs so that everyone is aware before and after school clubs will remain as will catering.</p> <p>5) How do you remain 'local' what stops you expanding to a much larger MAT?</p> <p>6) Birch hill is in a strong position to join the ME MAT, what was meant by this?</p> <p>7) What's the biggest change current parents will be aware of?</p> <p>8) Will spend per pupil go up, down or remain the same as current (once trust directors/staff salary costs are removed)?</p> <p>9) What would your plans be for investment in infrastructure and facilities? Buildings, repairs, IT facilities etc.</p> <p>10) How do you ensure staff retention, providing clear examples of actions taken and measures of success (what is the well-being package/strategy to prevent the need for mental health interventions). Do pupils benefit from mental health resources within the trust too?</p> <p>11) Will SEND support continue to the same or better level than currently?</p>	<p>learning and an improving educational experience for the children. The school remains its own unique character serving its local community as before, just better – much better.</p> <p>3) The vast majority of things that need to be done pertain to administrative and operational functions of the school e.g. systems, processes, staff contracts etc. Ensuring alignment with Trust policies and procedures is a priority, as is ensuring that all staff are inducted into our organisation. A significant part of bringing Birch Hill into the Trust is around engagement, with staff, pupils and parents. The school's development priorities remain their development priorities – what the Trust brings is more focussed support. We would not be looking to re-write the schools development plan as this needs to be owned locally.</p> <p>4) The Trust would have no plans to change the wrap-around provision – that would remain a school responsibility. With catering, the Trust runs its own in-house catering as is the case at Birch Hill, so the catering team at the school would be supported by our Catering Manager.</p> <p>5) The Trust Board have no aspiration to become a mega-MAT, with schools all over the country. This is a unanimous position. The circumstances where this position might change is if the DfE requested MET support with schools in a different area. As we do with all projects, we would assess fit with our values, our own capacity and assess the potential impact on our existing schools before any decision is taken.</p> <p>6) Birch Hill school is a strong school that would no doubt benefit from the support of a local MAT but also has strength and areas to add value to the other schools. It is also able to determine its own path</p> <p>7) Most likely the parents will not notice any significant change as a result of Birch Hill joining MET other than some communications from the Trust e.g. Trust Newsletter.</p> <p>8) It is difficult to do a like-for-like comparison since a lot of back-office costs are absorbed into the Trust, but ultimately the school will be resourced so that it can continue to best meet the needs of the children.</p> <p>9) We have already identified some areas of investment required e.g. to the SRP, in ICT provision and on some external areas such as fencing. The Trust will commission a Condition Survey and the results of this will inform the long-term investment plan for the school. The school will still receive its own capital funding which they will be able to direct towards their own priorities.</p> <p>10) Retention is one element of ensuring our organisation is staffed by appropriately qualified and experienced people. Just by being a part of a larger organisation</p>
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	<p>provides opportunities to staff that currently don't exist e.g. internal secondments, internal promotions or other projects. All our staff have access to a wide range of professional development programmes developed either by the Maiden Erlegh Institute, National Professional Qualifications or Apprenticeships. The Trust has a comprehensive staff benefits package, including an extensive Employee Assistance Programme package and Mental Health First Aid support.</p> <p>11) MET is well known for its inclusive ethos and this is an area of strength the school and governing body identified within the Trust. The school will have ready access to a broader range of expertise that exists within the Trust given our expertise in SEMH and ASD particularly, the focussed leadership of SEND within the Trust and through our expanding integrated therapy team.</p>
Sports and ICT	Comment. No response required
<p>1) Why are the Governing body of BHS looking to convert to an Academy?</p> <p>2) Is this because Birch Hill School are considered underperforming? As, looking at the media this is one of the main drivers to convert. If so, what areas are Birch Hill underperforming?</p> <p>3) Does the Head Teacher Mr Dillion support this?</p> <p>4) What about the teachers?</p> <p>5) Why Maiden Erlegh Trust? Why not Kings Academy?</p> <p>6) What is the main driver?</p> <p>7) The FAQ's state that many things will "remain the same". So as with point above, what is the main driver? Is it just financial?</p> <p>8) You state, "Academies are publicly funded, self-governing schools for children of all abilities". Academy status gives schools freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance – More precise details around this</p>	<p>1) FGB decided that academisation was the best way to ensure the future of the school. The Local Authority (LA) services are significantly reducing and the government are directly funnelling money away from LAs and into MATs and Teaching School Hubs. This gives them less capacity to help support and improve schools. Governors have discussed academies several times over the last 6/8 years and always said no. However, the National and Local picture is changing and it was decided now is the right time.</p> <p>2) No. Birch Hill Primary School is a good school and our Self Evaluation – including feedback from the LA – is that remain Good.</p> <p>3) Yes. He fully supports this decision. He has also been fully involved at all stages of this process.</p> <p>4) We are still in the informal consultation – feedback from Senior Leadership Team, teachers and staff is supportive of this decision.</p> <p>5) Mr Dillon, Senior Leaders and Governors have spent the last 6-8 months rigorously reviewing various MATs. We decided on MET as it was felt they match our values and vision, offer strong 'central services' and have excellent SEND support and provision.</p> <p>6) As above. LA services are significantly reducing. We believe joining a strong, local, community-focused MAT secures the best future for Birch Hill</p> <p>7) As above. We are a Good school, review ourselves as a Good school, and plan to go into the next Ofsted inspection as Good. It is not just a financial decision. While governors believe, joining a MAT will make Birch Hill more financial secure – more importantly, governors believe the services we will buy will be better quality and we</p>



<p>is needed to enable us to decide whether to support this or not.</p> <p>9) What would be the main benefit seen of this conversion for our children?</p> <p>10) You state converting to an Academy status will allow you to “creative with the curriculum” but then go on to say “Maiden Erlegh Trust will not impose changes to the curriculum on the school”.</p> <p>11) What would it mean for Birch Hill School in terms of “supporting” other schools in the trust for example Great Hollands School? You state there will be “opportunities to work closely with other Trust schools, including Great Hollands Primary School”.</p> <p>12) Will this impact the visions and goals for Birch Hill school? Take away time and resources from the school?</p> <p>13) What is the process of this consultation? Who ultimately makes the decision? Do we get to vote? Ultimately, do we have any say?</p> <p>14) Once converted to an Academy status we cannot convert back to a Local Advisory Board (LAB) – is this a risk?</p>	<p>will receive a better service. For example, the MAT School Improvement Team will monitor the quality of standards more regularly and more robustly than the LA do. Similarly, MET’s SEND/Inclusion team will support Birch Hill to improve the quality of our SEND provision.</p> <p>8) Whilst academies do have more freedoms than LA maintained schools, the reality is that most will follow the national curriculum.</p> <p>9) Day to day, children will not see any difference. However, by joining the MAT, this will give SLT more capacity to improve the quality of education. Therefore help Birch Hill get even better.</p> <p>10) While joining a MAT, ‘gives schools more freedom over the curriculum’ MET do not plan to make any changes to schools curriculum. We have done this in any of our schools.</p> <p>11) The strongest Trusts are those who are able to readily share best practice and contribute their expertise for the benefit of all children in the Trust. Maiden Erlegh Trust schools do this often and given the breadth of our provision and the depth of expertise we have in all areas of education provision this will be enhanced by the expertise of staff at Birch Hill. As a strong Trust, we also do a lot of work with other schools not within our organisation to help them develop and improve in areas they have identified they need support with.</p> <p>12) The visions and goals of Birch Hill Primary School are unique to this school community. Boiler-plate visions and goals do not work, especially within a Trust with such diverse provision. Being part of a MAT is an ecosystem where support is freely given and received, so the school will gain as much benefit as it offers in the long term.</p> <p>13) Ultimately the Governing Body will decide whether or not to proceed. The Regional Director must first approve and issue the Academy Order but the Governing Body are under no obligation to proceed unless they themselves are satisfied it is in the best long-term interests of the school and its community.</p> <p>14) Correct. There is currently no legal route for academies to convert back to LA maintained schools. Such is national and local policy, however, the vast majority of schools will be academies by 2030.</p>
<p>Concerns about how the school will operate and be accountable when part of an academy, also the involvement and voice of parents in decisions that are made by the school particularly in relation</p>	<p>1) The school will continue to operate in much the same way as it does today. What it will benefit from is ready-access to a wide range of support, both educationally and operationally, that it currently doesn’t get from the LA. In terms of accountability, the Trusts Scheme of Delegation lay out clearly the responsibilities and accountabilities</p>



to the curriculum. However although do not agree in principle with academies I am supportive of the extra resources this could bring to the school & the enrichment of the pupils.

across all areas. Some reside with the Headteacher, some reside with the Local Advisory Board, some reside with the CEO and some reside with the Trust Board. Ultimately, it is the Trust Board who is accountable for ensuring educational outcomes and financial viability of the school. The CEO is accountable to the Trust Board, the Secretary of State for Education and to Parliament directly.

- 2) Stakeholder Voice plays a huge role in how we work. Annually we survey pupils, staff and parents and the outcomes of these drive school development plans and Trust strategic plans.