

Bridge Education Trust (Southampton)

(A mutual Schools Cooperative Education Trust)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Trust School?

A Trust School is a local authority maintained school, which is supported by a charitable Trust. To become a Trust school, schools must adopt their own foundation eg community schools need to change their category to become a foundation school. This Trust then appoints some of the governors to serve on the school governing body.

All Trust schools operate within the same frameworks as other maintained schools: they teach the National Curriculum, follow the School Admissions Code and are inspected by Ofsted. The local authority will fund the school on the same basis as all other local authority schools and will retain its intervention powers if there are problems at the school.

What changes if a school became a Trust school?

- The schools would become Foundation schools supported by a Trust. (Change of Status)
- The school's governing body would become the employer of the staff rather than the local authority. (Change of employer)
- The governing body would be responsible for admission arrangements (Change in admission arrangements)
- The land and assets would be held in trust rather than owned by the local authority. (Change in land ownership)

Why do our schools want to change?

- To establish a more formal partnership and enable a closer working relationship with local schools;
- Build upon existing relationships to improve outcomes for our pupils.
- Underpin the current values of each individual school, which are in line with universal Cooperative values;
- Help us to deliver all our schools' visions and values.

Cooperative Values and Principles

Self-help, Self-responsibility, Equality, Equity, Democracy, Solidarity, Ethical Values.

As a Cooperative Education trust, we will adopt and support the values and principles of the cooperative movement in our work. Our Trust schools will remain part of the Local Authority system, but we will enjoy the additional benefit of being supported by a charitable trust (Bridge Trust), which will appoint some of the trust governors.

We have benefited from our already strong partnership across the Federation and see a strengthening of this as a way of securing future, self-sustaining improvement for all of our schools.

How does a school acquire the foundation category?

Regulations provide a formal route for schools to acquire foundation category. This involves a decision by the governing body following a period of consultation with parents, the local authority and other stakeholders and the publication of statutory notices followed by a four week period for representations.

Are the schools being forced to become Trust Schools?

No, this is a voluntary decision for the current governing body, after consulting with parents and other local stakeholders and publishing formal proposals.

Would the school uniforms change?

Each school will retain its own individual identity. There will be no changes to uniforms.

Will school catchments change because of the Trust?

No. School catchments will remain under the Local Authority's responsibility.

Will it change what children learn?

Like all maintained schools, Trust schools will teach the National Curriculum and still be inspected by Ofsted. We hope to offer increased opportunities to enrich our children's learning through our joined-up working.

Will the staff move around to the other schools?

Staff are employed by each individual school. Staff from all of the schools will work with one another to help improve outcomes for our children.

Will it change what children learn?

Like all maintained schools, Trust schools will teach the National Curriculum and still be inspected by Ofsted.

How will the schools be funded?

The schools will be funded on the same basis as other maintained schools, according to the local authority's funding formula. They will be allocated their own capital money on the same basis as other schools.

How much money is the Trust going to invest?

Working with a Trust is not about generating income for the school – there is no requirement or expectation that the Trust will contribute financially. The Trust's value is in how it strengthens the school's leadership and governance.

Can a Trust school dispose of surplus non-playing field land?

Yes – but if the Trust wants to dispose of land they should consult the governing body of the school. If the governing body want to dispose of land it must ask the Trust to agree – in practice as the governing body includes Trust appointed governors, this should be a fairly automatic process. The Trust must then inform the local authority of their plans to dispose of non-playing field land. Local authorities can object to proposals if they feel that they are not in the interest of the school in the long term, or would disadvantage the wider community.

Local authorities will also be able to object to reinvestment proposals and to claim a share of the proceeds attributable to public investment in the land. Where local agreement cannot be reached, the matter will be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for resolution. Local authorities will not be able to force a Trust to sell any surplus land to raise money.

Trust schools will be able to benefit directly from the disposal of land, but all proceeds must be used for capital investment in educational assets in either the school itself or the maintained sector (according to the Trust's Memorandum and Articles) and the trust itself will not be able to profit from any such disposals. There is no change to the rigorous procedure for any disposal of school playing fields, which will continue to require the consent of the Secretary of State.

Do parents have a say about Trust schools?

Parents will be consulted about the proposed Trust and will be able to express their views. As with all maintained schools, parents will continue to be involved as elected governors of the schools.