



To Parents/carers at BST

13 September 2021

Proposal to merge Berkshire Schools Trust and Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

Dear Parent / Carer

Following our last communication in July and a meeting with the Department for Education over the summer, we can confirm that the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner are in full support of a merger going ahead between Berkshire Schools Trust and Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust. The Trustees of Berkshire Schools Trust (BST) are therefore pleased to move towards the next phase of the proposed merger process: a formal consultation. Both Trusts have been working closely together and discussions have been incredibly positive. The proposal is for ODST and BST to merge together to become a single Multi Academy Trust (MAT) with all schools becoming members of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST).

A rigorous process of due diligence has taken place between BST and ODST since May 2021 and many Trust wide discussions have taken place. ODST has a set of values that reflect its Church of England foundations but also support the unique nature of each of its community schools. For BST's senior leaders, governors and trustees, the preservation of the distinct character of each of our own schools in any new trust setting was non-negotiable. As part of the due diligence process, governors and senior leaders within BST spoke to their counterparts in similar schools within ODST and were reassured that schools joining ODST, whether church or community, have benefited from strong support when needed, and have also been empowered to develop their school's unique character.

We can conclude therefore that our Trusts have aligned visions and that there is a lot of common ground between the two organisations, both in terms of values and ethos, and our ambitions for our pupils and staff. It is clear that we both place community at the heart of what we do, and that we both strive to provide high quality inclusive education. Most of all, we have a shared belief in putting our children, staff and school communities first.

We understand that this decision is a very important one for both parties as it means BST schools becoming part of ODST. We are clear that the merger must be right for everyone involved, especially for the pupils and staff. However, it is also clear that the Department for Education, represented by the Regional Schools Commissioner, sees no other option for us but to merge with someone, and ODST offers so many benefits to our schools.

Even though this merger means that BST's three schools would transfer into ODST and that BST itself would be wound up, please be assured that our schools are committed to remaining rooted in our local communities, supporting our children to grow and to flourish, and to continuing to work in partnership with other local schools and those in neighbouring authorities, to the benefit of all.

The formal consultation process will open at 12pm on Monday 13 September 2021 and close at 12pm on Monday 11 October 2021.



We would welcome your views on this merger proposal. There are three ways to provide feedback:

1. By using the online form found [here](#)
2. By attending one of our online consultation webinars (links below).
3. By emailing trustsecretary@berkshireschoolstrust.org

The consultation meetings are an opportunity for you to join us virtually and find out more about what this merger means for you and your child, and you can ask any questions you may have and meet some of the key people involved.

Webinar Date	Webinar Registration Link
Thursday 23rd September 2021 6pm – 7pm	Consultationmeeting230921
Wednesday 29th September 2021 6pm – 7pm	Consultationmeeting290921

Please find attached to this letter a Frequently Asked Questions document which, based on our experience, should answer many of the questions you may have. We hope you find them useful. We also urge you to look at our respective websites which will give you more information about our Trusts and schools:

[Berkshire Schools Trust](#)

[Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust](#)

We very much look forward to hearing your views.

Yours faithfully



Angie Morrish
Chair of Trustees
Berkshire Schools Trust



Angharad Brackstone
CEO
Berkshire Schools Trust