

Inspira Academy Trust & Turner Schools Merger

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation 2023

FAQS

Q: What is the rationale behind the merger of Inspira Academy Trust and Turner Schools?

The DFE have been clear that Inspira Academy Trust cannot grow in its own right and the only route for Inspira is to merge with another trust. The DFE have published a set of standards that academy trusts are expected to meet. Turner Schools and Inspira Trustees share a common set of goals and believe in shared vision and values. Although Turner would appear to be a larger trust, it is actually considered a small trust in the DFE's view. Two strong trusts coming together will bring many benefits including greater collaboration between more schools and greater economies of scale which is a particular consideration in financially challenging times.

Q Why is the merger being proposed now?

Inspira cannot grow on its own and this is needed in order for schools already within the trust to thrive in order to provide excellent educational opportunities for all children. Turner Schools are looking for strong primary capacity which Inspira bring with having 2 good schools and staff with experience in developing the capacity needed to build a larger stronger trust.

Q How do we know that post-merger, Chartham will receive a sufficient level of care and attention from Turner's central services team?

Careful due diligence has been considered by both sides in the merger process and both trusts are reviewing how the central teams can come together to ensure that all schools in the merged trust are supported and developed. The benefits of increased capacity in central services will mean that Chartham and St Stephen's as part of a Canterbury hub will have access to a much larger range of services such as facilities and school improvement services. The trust is drawing up capital expenditure plans and including Inspira schools in these.

Q How will the merged trust ensure that the schools in Inspira do not lose their individual identity and autonomy to make decisions?

The vision and values of both trusts are well matched and trustees agree that all schools within the trust should have their own Headteacher and Senior Leadership Teams to make the right decisions for the communities which the schools serve. Alignment will be carefully considered and decisions will be made by senior leaders who know their schools well, for example, decisions about curriculum delivery are made at a local level to ensure the needs of pupils are met. There will be a shared understanding across the trust board and at local governing body level that all schools are different and they have a range of strengths and challenges and they serve different communities.

Q How will the merger benefit the communities of Chartham Primary and St Stephen's Infant Schools?

The Trust has "Strengthening communities" at the heart of its mission statement. We will expect our schools to contribute strongly to their communities and society in general. Creating young citizens who can increasingly change society, including their community, for the better. The Trust will seek opportunities to develop buildings and spaces to provide facilities that benefit communities and will develop effective community partnerships to enrich educational experiences for all children.

Q What are the other benefits and opportunities to the schools in the merged Trust?

All schools in the trust will have more opportunities to collaborate both within their own phase and also cross phase. A range of in-house facilities and premises services will ensure that the ageing school buildings are compliant and fit for a first-class education. IT infrastructure will be improved for pupils in all classrooms and there will be access to a fleet of minibuses so that pupils can benefit from a range of sporting activities and educational experiences. All staff will be able to access a range of professional development opportunities as part of being in a larger trust which will have a positive impact on pupils.

Q What will the governance arrangements be for the school's post-merger?

There will be one trust board made up of existing Turner and Inspira Trustees. Each school will have their own governance board as they do now. Local Governing Boards will have delegated responsibilities to ensure that schools are held to account for the education they provide. The Headteachers sit on these boards.

Q How will the staffing structures change as a result of the merger?

There will be very little change to existing staff structures post-merger. The central trust services are being reviewed and it is anticipated that all staff will be absorbed through the merger into roles that will bring greater benefits and strength to the services accessed by the schools.

Q Will the schools three or four or five years from now, find themselves the lesser-regarded schools in a bigger family of schools?

No, all schools will have access to high quality services and support in order for them to thrive and succeed and provide the very best education possible. The trust has systems and processes in place to monitor the effectiveness of all schools in the trust and prioritise schools most in need. The trust has a capital expenditure plan, where all schools in the trust benefit from projects to enhance opportunities for pupils.

Q What will the future leadership structure look like?

All schools will have their own Headteacher and Senior Leadership Teams as they do now and this will not change as part of the merger. The CEO of Inspira will join the Turner Schools Executive Leadership Team and will continue to lead the primary schools across the merged trust with Headteachers leading their schools.