



Leigh & Bransford – Conversion to Academy and membership of Mercian Educational Trust

Dear Parents,

As Mr Bill has informed you, Leigh & Bransford Primary School academy conversion has been approved by the Department for Education and that Mercian Educational Trust is the Multi Academy Trust that the school will join.

Both the Trust and school have been working closely with the DfE and Worcestershire County Council to prepare for the transition; which we envisage will take place on or after January 2023.

We are thrilled to welcome Leigh & Bransford into our family of schools and we look forward to forging strong links between all our schools. Mercian Educational Trust was keen to work with Leigh & Bransford. It is a neighbouring school that has historically worked closely with MET schools. We believe this new partnership will enrich and enhance the education of pupils in our locality.

Mercian Educational Trust currently consists of 4 schools operating across 5 different sites. Our schools are based within Malvern and Worcester:

-  Great Malvern Primary
-  Honeywell Primary School
-  Northleigh CE Primary School
-  Somers Park Primary (including the satellite site, Malvern Vale)

I am sure there will be lots of questions emerging over the coming weeks and we will do our best to answer them as fully and as promptly as we can. To assist you initially, you will find overleaf information in the form of Frequently Asked Questions.

If after reading this you have further queries you can ask the school directly using the usual communication channels or alternatively you can contact MET directly via email office@metacademies.org.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and I look forward to working closely with Leigh & Bransford and its community in the near future

Yours sincerely
Dafydd Lawday

Chief Executive Officer

Gené Willis

Chair of Trustees

Becoming an Academy

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school which is maintained or sponsored by a Trust, rather than by the local authority or a diocesan board of education. They are charitable companies limited by guarantee. They are funded by, and accountable to, the Secretary of State for Education. In effect they are publicly funded independent schools.

What is an Academy Trust?

All academies are charitable companies limited by guarantee and as such have a Trust Body. The Academy Trust is responsible for the running of the Academy and has control over the land and other assets. Any charitable body has two groups involved in the corporate governance of the organisation: Directors (also known as Trustees) and Members. All Multi Academy Trusts have '**Members**' within of the Trust Body. Members have a number of additional statutory rights such as the right to appoint Directors/Trustees and receive accounts.

Within Mercian Educational Trust we have a Members Board and Trustees Board. The Trustees board delegates some of its duties to two committees; Finance and Human Resources. It also delegates oversight of pupil performance / quality of education to the Local Governing Boards at each school. All Board members are community volunteers, freely providing their expertise and skills for the betterment of pupils and education.

Why is Leigh & Bransford becoming an Academy?

The school has been through a robust process of evaluating their future strategy to determine how the school continues to grow and develop. Governors and School Leaders met with several Multi Academy Trusts to determine a strong partnership.

Mercian Educational Trust is confident that following a process of Due Diligence and meetings that Leigh & Bransford would be an excellent addition to the Trust family of schools. They are open to the concept of joint working, cooperation and inter-school support

Would the school have to change its name?

There is no desire or need for the school to change its name uniform, signage and logos. You will see that our Trust logo will appear at the footer of letters and on the school website as a indicator that the school is part of the MET family of schools.

What does this mean for my child?

On a day-to-day basis your child will notice little obvious change. However, there will be increased partnerships and opportunities to work with other schools and share expertise.



Your child's educational experience will certainly benefit from these enhanced links. Examples that will be visible for you and your child include involvement in joint school trips (including residential), inter-school competitions and pupil parliaments/ councils working together on Trust development areas, such as our sustainability project. Furthermore, should your child need additional educational support, there will be an enhanced sources of support and advice that the school can access and benefit from.

What is different about being an Academy?

Academies benefit from greater freedoms to innovate and raise standards. These include:

- 🏆 independence from local authority control;
- 🏆 the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff;
- 🏆 freedoms around the delivery of the curriculum; and
- 🏆 the ability to change the lengths of terms and school days.

In practice what this means is:

- 🏆 Academy governing bodies are not subject to the governance regulations (ie constitution, powers, duties and procedures) in the Guide to the Law. Instead, these are determined by Articles of Association. However, academies are still subject to the law on employment, equalities, admissions and special educational needs and are required to follow the same rules over pupil exclusions as maintained schools;
- 🏆 Academies have an Academy Trust which is responsible for the land and assets of an academy. The Trust employs a small team to perform these roles and has oversight via community volunteers upon Members & Trustee Boards
- 🏆 It is possible for the individuals to serve on both the Trustees Board and a Local Governing Board to serve and support both boards;
- 🏆 Academy Trustees are the direct employers of staff, have direct health and safety responsibilities, they are the school's admission authority and are responsible for ensuring an annual external financial audit;
- 🏆 Some services previously provided by the local authority, such as SEN support for non-statemented pupils, behavioural support, legal services and school improvement services can be bought or procured elsewhere. In Worcestershire schools this been the case for several years, so we do not anticipate there to be much change in this requirement.
- 🏆 Academy schools have freedom from following the National Curriculum, though what is taught with schools is still required to be 'broad and balanced';
- 🏆 Academies have the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff. However, Mercian Educational Trust has adopted the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and national pay scales for support staff. It is important to note that, on transfer, the terms and conditions of existing staff are protected;
- 🏆 Academies are their own admissions authority. However, an academy cannot change its admissions policy until it is able to consult on doing so in line with the School Admissions Code.
- 🏆 Academies must provide education for 'pupils of different abilities' unless they were selective before conversion to academy status.

Are there costs incurred through the conversion process?

Yes. The Department for Education makes a grant available to cover these.

Will staff have to reapply for their jobs?

This will not happen. There are stringent employment laws that protect staff in Academy conversions.

Do the current governors continue to be governors?

All the governors' terms of office automatically come to end when the school converts. We hope that existing governors will wish to continue to support the school on the new Local Governing Board and will offer themselves for appointment.

How long does the conversion process take?

We are working hard with all partners to achieve a conversion on 1st January 2023.

What else do we need to know?

There are sure to be lots of questions emerging over the coming weeks and months. You can ask the school directly using usual communication channels. If you have questions for Mercian Educational Trust please contact them via the email office@metacademies.org.uk. Both the school and Trust will do their best to answer queries as fully and as promptly as possible.

