

## Formation of a Multi Academy Trust Frequently Asked Questions

### **General**

*The Robert Carré Trust (RCT) and Community Inclusive Trust (CIT) are currently undertaking due diligence with a view to merging. What follows are the answers to questions that may be asked by current and future stakeholders about the proposed merger.*

### **What is a Multi Academy Trust?**

A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is normally where a number of schools join together and form a single Trust with a Board of Directors answerable to the Trust's members. For the purposes of this document CIT is the receiving Trust and RCT the transferring Trust.

A Trust has different tiers of governance. Members of the Trust are responsible for the strategic oversight of the academies. They are the conscience of the Trust, ensuring that the objectives and vision and values are upheld. They appoint the Trust's Directors (sometimes called Trustees) who determine the policies of the Trust, monitor the effectiveness of individual academies, manage central services and report to the Secretary of State. They work to ensure that the academy is performing to the best of its ability, and it gets the support it requires. Should the MAT expand, the role is the same for the Directors for other schools or academies within the Trust. The Trust is the legal entity, and it has one set of Articles that govern all the academies within it. The Trust has a Master Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, and each academy also has a Supplemental Funding Agreement. Each of the academies in the Trust has its own Local Governing Tier that deals with local academy issues.

The receiving Trust is accountable for all its academies within its MAT. However, before any agreements are signed, the receiving Trust would work with the transferring Trust to agree those matters that will be handled centrally and those that will remain the responsibility of the individual academy's Local Governing Tier. This agreement will be encapsulated in the Scheme of Delegation.

### **Are other schools also joining larger MATs?**

Across the country there are MATs with many academies joined together. This is very much the direction of travel as schools work more closely together for the benefit of the young people in the schools.

### **Why are RCT and CIT looking to merge?**

The RCT is one of the very smallest Trusts nationally, made up of just two schools. The two schools are good schools and have made significant progress in several areas while being part of the RCT. In the current climate it is hard to make further improvements without some significant financial investment and additional human capacity, so to merge with another strong MAT now would be doing it from a position of strength.

There is projected growth and expansion in Sleaford, and we need to be in a position to respond to this for the long-term benefit of the future generations of the young people of Sleaford. Our vision has always been that every learner matters and that our schools will be at the heart of the local community, encouraging diversity, and promoting inclusion within a selective setting, adding real value to learners' educational experiences. The schools will continue to work with local schools and partners including the community in education, health, the arts, business and sport, to extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom, promoting collaboration, innovation and lifelong learning. This includes working closely with St George's Academy as part of the unique Sleaford Joint Sixth Form. That remains a key strength of what we offer young people and there is no intention to move away from this.

Most government incentives available to schools are mainly offered to schools which have a) a large number of disadvantaged students or b) are part of a larger MAT. As a small selective school MAT, we are having to work harder and harder to invest in our schools, without compromising our prioritisation of the appointment and retention of well qualified staff with experience and specialist subject knowledge.

By forming a larger MAT through the merger, we would be able to access additional streams of DfE funding and tap into a greater range of expertise of MAT leaders with specialist areas of knowledge.

### **Why join the Community Inclusive Trust (CIT)?**

This is a voluntary merger proposition, consisting of two Trusts: Community Inclusive Trust and the Robert Carre Trust.

More information about CIT can be found here [CIT Academies](#).

As the process requires one Trust to be identified as 'transferring' and the other 'receiving' it is proposed that the RCT transfers to CIT. The RCT, as the potential 'transferring' Trust, would automatically dissolve on an academy transfer. Liabilities would move to CIT. Typically, this 'warts and all' transfer links to assets, contracts, staff and liabilities concerning the academies.

The target date for the transfer is 1 September 2025.

CIT because:

- It is deemed a strong MAT by the DfE.
- Its values are aligned with ours.
- We have a strong relationship already with CIT that has benefitted the RCT schools over the past 2 years.
- CIT is confident that its existing schools can benefit from what RCT schools bring to the Trust.
- We believe that a geographically close MAT, rather than a large national MAT, will have much more to offer the RCT schools.
- CIT is currently a Trust of 15 primary and special all through schools. As the first 11-18 secondary schools transferring, the RCT schools can be at the forefront of shaping the inclusion of selective or non-special secondary schools as CIT continues to develop as a Trust.
- It is an exciting time in CIT's development to be joining them as the first secondary schools.
- As a Trust we are ready for our next stage of development.
- Expanding as a Trust ourselves is not something the government is ready to consider especially as it is not supportive of grammar school Trusts, only bigger more inclusive Trusts.

The Trustees and Senior Leadership Teams of the RCT schools have researched and visited other MATs as part of our process of selection and identification of the best possible MAT in which to take our successful schools.

### **What are the benefits of merging with CIT?**

There would be several benefits:

- A significant level of autonomy in the secondary schools over curriculum and assessment, as well as associated policies.
- Capacity to enhance school improvement.
- Overarching assurance for Safeguarding.

- Sharing best pedagogical research and practices across schools.
- An expanded professional development programme (CPD) that adds real value to the education of young people.
- Efficiencies in administrative functions and joint procurement; this will help us in these more austere times to advantage the students.
- Improved and different ways of governance with a clear focus on strategic development, teaching and learning, and accountability.
- Potential for an enhanced local reputation for excellence encourages other schools to join the Trust.
- Improved leadership, management and governance that impacts directly upon the students.
- Recruitment, retention and growth of staff.
- Long-term sustainability of selective education in Sleaford.

### **Why are we consulting?**

Both Trusts have a shared set of values that underpin the communities they serve. We therefore feel that it is important to gather stakeholders' opinions regarding the proposed merger. These opinions will inform the respective Boards' decisions whether to proceed or not, as well as any final decision by the Regional Director at the DfE to sanction the merger.

### **Parents**

#### **What changes will I see?**

There will be very little visible change as a direct result of merging with another MAT. The Headteacher, staff, uniform, premises and curriculum will all continue to be very much those of the RCT schools. The changes that we hope you'll see will be a general continued improvement in the performance and running of the schools.

#### **How will joining the Community Inclusive Trust (CIT) improve standards for our children?**

This will enable us to utilise the expertise of staff from CIT to accelerate progress for our students. We will develop a set of specialists who will operate over a group of schools, releasing staff to focus on a) developing wider opportunities for our students b) creating capacity to ensure we are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible c) continuing to invest in our staff development to ensure the best access to a high-quality education for our students. These opportunities could be in middle and senior leadership, as well as with support staff. The talents of schools together become greater than the sum of their parts.

#### **Will teachers work at different schools?**

Generally, staff will remain in their own schools. Being part of the Community Inclusive Trust (CIT) will provide further professional development opportunities. Staff from schools who are part of CIT will attend joint training; skills will be shared, and good practice will spread between the schools. There will be some exchange of staff for training and professional development purposes.

#### **How does the admissions process work for academies?**

As publicly funded schools, all academies must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. Our admission policies can be viewed on our school websites.

#### **How will this affect admissions?**

Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School will remain as selective grammar schools after joining CIT. We do not perceive that selection, or standards, are under threat as we seek to maintain what we have, and we do not intend to change the 11+ qualifying score.

The schools are already academies. All academies, as their own admission authorities, must ensure that the practices and the criteria used to decide the allocation of school places are fair, clear and objective. Academies are required to undertake periodic consultation on their admission arrangements, regularly publish their admission arrangements, and conduct the admission process as part of a wider local authority process.

Academies are required to comply with the Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes of Practice as if they were maintained schools. They are also required to participate in local authority co-ordination of admissions processes and the local authority's Fair Access Protocol.

Academies are required to comply with any direction from the Secretary of State to admit a student to the academy, or to amend their admission arrangements if they fail to comply with the Admissions Code.

Academies retain the admission arrangements they had as maintained schools when they become academies. They can only change their admission arrangements following the procedures set out in the Admissions Code. Academies are required to provide education for students wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the academy is situated. Academies are not allowed to charge for admission.

Co-ordination is the process for allocating school places to children. Because admissions are centrally co-ordinated by the Local Authority (LA), parents/carers only need to complete one application form (but they can name several schools on it) and, because a single place is offered, places are not tied up by parents holding on to more than one offer. Academies remain part of this process.

**What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies have to provide?** All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools. As part of CIT both schools would continue to be inspected as separate schools. However, this is not to say that in the future that the MAT could be inspected as we are at the whim of government policy. Academic results would be reported in performance tables in the same way as they are now, i.e. against the school where tests are conducted.

#### **Will the schools have to follow the National Curriculum?**

Academies nationally are not required to teach the National Curriculum but rather a broad and balanced one that includes English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Within the Trust the individual academies would be responsible for their own curriculum development in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation and in line with expressed aims and values of the Trust. However, we shall continue to look to have common examination boards for external examinations and the Trust will co-ordinate and promote its academies to work together closely to encourage curriculum innovation and sharing of good practice.

#### **Will RCT's working relationship with other institutions continue?**

The RCT schools currently have a strong working relationship with St George's Academy and the family of grammar schools across North Kesteven and South Holland. These will continue and there will be significant opportunities to expand these across CIT's current schools and beyond.

**Do RCT and CIT need to get permission to merge?**

We will need to obtain the permission of the Secretary of State for Education via the Department for Education. The receiving Trust needs to complete an application for a Multi-Academy Trust to restructure.

**What will be the name of the Trust?**

CIT will be the receiving Trust therefore CIT will retain its name and company number as well as all its previous filing history on Companies House. On completion of the merger RCT would be dissolved losing its business status. However, the schools would retain their names as they did previously within the Robert Carre Trust.

**Governance****Will the governors' roles change when we become a MAT?**

The RCT Board and Members will be dissolved. Both Boards have set up a Task and Finish group to explore the merger. Both Boards appreciate that there are significant skill sets within the current RCT Board and Members which will enhance the capacity of CIT's Board moving forward. Formal selection processes are being undertaken by the CIT Board as the receiving Trust to select future CIT Trustees from the RCT Board and Members. This provides both Boards with a clear picture of the composition of CIT's Board post-merger if it goes ahead.

**How do the finances work?**

The purpose of MATs is to drive school improvement through the sharing of resources and expertise. In line with DfE guidance CIT operates a pooled budget with processes in place to ensure individual academies receive the appropriate funding to meet the purpose detailed above.

**What happens if either Trust encounters financial difficulties and has to fold?**

Both Trusts are in a stable financial position and academy accounts are available in the public domain. The composition of the Board and delegated authorities ensure that the management of the financial accounts is extremely stringent and robust. Both Trusts are fully compliant with ESFA accounting processes, and the Board of Directors hold leaders to account. The Trust has a comprehensive risk management approach.