



**Glastonbury Thorn School
Proposed Academisation to join the
Alliance Schools Trust**

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and not through the Local Authority (LA), in our case, Milton Keynes Council.

2. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership. Within a multi-academy trust, all schools are governed by one academy trust. Each school within the Alliance Schools Trust retains its own governing body. The trust is accountable and responsible for the performance of each of the academies and may delegate some of its decision-making powers to the governing bodies of the individual academies. As the multi-academy trust is a single entity, it is envisaged that schools can achieve strong collaboration and drive-up standards by providing a cohesive strategy and vision across all of the schools working together.

3. Is this the right time for Glastonbury Thorn to consider converting to an Academy and joining the Alliance Schools Trust?

Yes. Following changes to the provision available from the local authority, demographic challenges and financial constraints facing the education system as a whole, Governors have spent the last year evaluating several options for the future for Glastonbury Thorn and concluded that joining a MAT is the best way forward. Considerable time has been spent on evaluating several MAT options, and based on a detailed analysis, the Alliance Schools Trust was found to be the best option for the Glastonbury Thorn.

Glastonbury Thorn has the opportunity to become stronger by leveraging the scale of a proven, local MAT, to enhance the value that it offers to all of its stakeholders. In addition to our own ambition to become stronger as a school, and as you know, the educational landscape is very dynamic, and whilst the local authority has been an excellent partner in the past, and will remain a close ally in the future, their capacity and remit in schools is gradually being eroded because of cuts in funding from central Government. Glastonbury Thorn governors felt that the communities of our schools would be best served by joining a MAT at a point where we can choose one that best aligns with our views and ethos rather than facing the possibility of being forced to join a less fitting one in future years.

4. How do you know the Alliance Schools Trust is the right partner for us?

Governors conducted an extensive evaluation of local academy MATs and applied stringent criteria in their search for the 'best fit' for Glastonbury Thorn. The Alliance Schools Trust is local to the Milton Keynes area and shares our passion for providing the best education and opportunities for the children in our care. The reputation of the Alliance Schools Trust Schools is high and has been consistent over time. Many students from Glastonbury Thorn go on to other Alliance Schools Trust schools and report positively about their experiences. Additionally, at this point, the Alliance Schools Trust is still developing its primary sector, meaning that the Glastonbury Thorn schools can be a part of shaping this within the alliance, rather than fitting into an existing model.

5. Has the decision to convert to an Academy already been made?

No. Until the views of our parents, staff, the local community, and other stakeholders of our school have been obtained, a final decision will not be made. The Governing Board must weigh up both the pros and cons of Academy conversion. We also require approval from the Secretary of State for Education.

6. Would there be any changes to the admissions policy/criteria?

No, there would be no planned changes to Glastonbury Thorn admissions criteria.

7. Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?

Academies, free schools and voluntary-aided schools are able to set their own term dates but are asked to set the same or similar dates in the interest of parents who may have children at different schools. The Alliance Schools Trust aims to follow MK wide dates where possible.

8. How will being an Academy affect staff?

If Glastonbury Thorn does become an Academy, all staff will automatically transfer to the new Academy Trust, on their current pay and conditions. All new staff would be employed under the Alliance Schools Trust pay and conditions agreements. Strict TUPE arrangement would be followed.

Currently, the employer for staff is Milton Keynes Local Authority. After conversion, all staff at Glastonbury Thorn will be employed by the Alliance Schools Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. HR experts will walk staff through this process, and unions will also oversee this.

9. What is a TUPE transfer?

TUPE regulations protect your rights as an employee when you transfer to a new employer. TUPE stands for Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment).

A 'TUPE transfer' happens when:

- an organisation, or part of it, is transferred from one employer to another
- a service is transferred to a new provider, for example when another company takes over the contract for office cleaning

You may be affected by a TUPE transfer if:

- you're transferring from your current employer to a new employer
- other employees are transferring to a new employer, but you stay employed with your current employer and do not transfer
- other employees have been transferred to the organisation you work for

10. Who will be responsible for running our school?

The Head teacher of Glastonbury Thorn would still be responsible for running the school. The school would also retain its own local governing board. The Trust has a Board of Directors. Head teachers from all schools are accountable to the CEO and the Trust Board.

11. How does a conversion impact upon Ofsted?

Under the Academies Act 2010, schools may apply to the Secretary of State to convert to academy status. Such schools are known as academy converters.

Upon conversion to academy status the existing school closes and a new school opens in its place. Although little may have changed, the academy converter is a new legal entity. Most academy converters have yet to have a section 5 inspection. However, to assist parents and other interested parties, information about, and the inspection history of the school which preceded the new academy are made available.

It is important to note that, as the academy converter is a new school, which may not yet have been inspected, the inspection judgements of the predecessor school are not those of the new academy. However, the most recent inspection judgements of the predecessor school are taken into account by Ofsted for the purpose of scheduling the first inspection of the new academy converter.

12. What is involved in becoming an Academy?

The school will meet with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community before the Governors reach their final decision. The Governing Board has voted for this proposal in principle, and The Secretary of State for Education will decide (or not) to approve our application if Governors decide to proceed. The Trust will cover the cost of the conversion process including legal fees etc.

13. Would the school have to change its name or uniform?

No, there will be no change to the name or uniform of Glastonbury Thorn School. Each school in the Trust is committed to the retention of its individual identity.

14. How are the children affected?

Governors and the Alliance Schools Trust envisage only positive improvements for our children over time. The children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time, the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn which will result from greater training opportunities for staff and wider opportunities for children in such areas as STEM subjects, the arts and Sports. The children and staff will potentially have access to resources currently unavailable to us e.g. minibuses, Sports Facilities.

We can liaise and support the schools in the Alliance in whatever way we feel is beneficial to our children.

For staff, we can support each other and use our strengths to guide us moving forward. Staff training can be a very productive way of supporting and developing ourselves and what has happened in other local partnerships is the growth of leaders, talent identification and enhanced career paths have developed.

15. Will we get more money as an Academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. All funding comes direct from Government to the Multi Academy Trust which controls the overall budget. Each school does not necessarily have more money, but as a group the schools are better able to control their part of the budget and seek economies of scale. The scale of the Alliance Schools Trust means access to School Condition Allocation Funding which is spent primarily on Health & Safety priorities but also capital infrastructure projects across the Trust. Glastonbury Thorn would be able to benefit from access to this additional funding.

16. Will you be introducing any new charges? No. There is no intention to charge in the future for anything that is currently free.

17. How will the money raised by the Parents/ fundraising be used?

Each school will continue to have its own independent mechanism for fundraising. The money raised by each school's fundraising efforts will only be used for its own school and will continue to be independent of the school, raising money for agreed resources or projects that have been asked for by the school's leadership.

18. How will admissions to the school be affected?

Currently the admissions process will continue as it is. However, this policy is reviewed annually and if necessary, a consultation process would take place for any changes. The Alliance does buy into the model of local schools for local children.

19. Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?

No, we are committed to being at the heart of our community and in improving the life chances of all MK children. We will continue to collaborate with other schools outside of the proposed MAT and the wider community.

20. Will there be more exclusions as an Academy?

No. Academies must follow the exact same government guidance and law on excluding pupils. This includes reporting exclusions to the Local Authority.

21. Will the Curriculum change?

We currently teach to the National Curriculum and do not foresee moving away from this. Our main consideration will always be to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that helps us to encourage in children a lifelong love of learning.

22. Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and exclusions change?

No, responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

What is a Regional Director?

The responsibilities of the Regional Director include monitoring the performance of Academies and intervening where underperformance is found; making strategic decisions on the creation of MATs and granting academy orders; ensuring there are enough academy sponsors to meet local demand.

23. Why is it that schools are generally looking to join MATs?

There are several factors that are encouraging schools to consider joining a MAT that include:

- Statements from the current government over the last few years that have outlined their desire that all schools join a MAT in the longer term
- Tightening Local Authority budgets have often (though not always) seen a reduction in the breadth of services that schools can access through their Local Authority. Many would see this as a trend that won't be reversed.

24. Who holds a Multi Academy Trust to account?

At the moment the Regional Director holds MATs to account in that they will only support the growth of a MAT if they are happy with how they are performing. Currently Ofsted inspect individual schools/academies, but plans are in place to inspect MATs also.

25. How long will this process take?

If the Governors agree to pursue this option, the conversion process is estimated to take around 4 months (potentially in time for September 2026).

26. How can I find out more?

The best source of information on academies is the Government's own website: <https://www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools> .

28. What does the Alliance Schools Trust offer to support members of its LGBTQ+ community?

All legal matters surrounding the equality act are followed for any protected characteristic, not exclusive to LGBTQ+ pupils and staff. The Trust maintain an inclusive and supportive ethos around all

protected characteristics, including sexual orientation. In addition to this, each school has a LGBTQ+ ambassador who is responsible for ensuring LGBTQ+ themes are instilled throughout the curriculum and that staff feel the culture is inclusive.

32. Will joining the Alliance Schools Trust lead to an increase in class sizes?

No. Glastonbury Thorn will continue to adhere to the School Admissions Code, which limits infant school classes to 30 pupils per teacher.

As you will know, we have separately consulted on reducing the number of children in the school in response to local demographic projections and a lower forecast demand for primary school places in the local area. We do not anticipate that this will change as part of a MAT.

33. Do the Trustees of the Alliance Schools Trust profit from the schools?

No. All of the trustees are volunteers except for the CEO of the Alliance Schools Trust who sits on the Board. The CEO is paid in line with the size of the organisation and all other trustees are not paid at all. Alliance Schools Trusts financial statements are a matter of public record and are available on Companies House for anyone who wishes to look.

34. Could staff be told to work at other schools in the Alliance Schools Trust?

No. Employees contracts are transferred over as they are as part of the TUPE process and the specific to the schools they are employed in. However, if it were mutually agreeable, there could be opportunities for staff to work at other schools in the Alliance.

35. Who is in charge of making HR decisions in the school?

As currently, HR is managed by the Headteacher of the school with advice, guidance and support given by the HR department. By joining the Alliance Schools Trust, we would have access to their HR resources and a much more comprehensive level of support than at present.

36. How will the joining of a MAT help improve the schools?

- Access to a range of resources and expertise for the children to improve the curriculum. For example, sporting events, access to specialist teachers and increased resources.
- Access to additional funding to improve buildings and structural provisions in the school.
- Professional Development Opportunities for staff to aid staff retention and help to ensure we keep the fabulous staff we have.
- Working to improve the transition between Primary and Secondary schools by aligning the curriculum.
- Financial benefits by utilising economies of scale to reduce outgoing costs for the school. These funds can then be spent on additional provision for the children.

37.

38. Will there be any changes to the Breakfast/After School provision across the schools?

There will be no change to this due to joining with the Alliance Schools Trust. The continued running of the provision and costs take into account staff availability and overall costs. Barring unforeseen changes to these factors, we do not believe there will be any changes.

39. What due diligence has taken place on the Alliance Schools Trust?

This process is still be undertaken but thus far it has included: an investigation into all the Alliance Schools Trust policies to ensure they align with our own; visits to the existing schools and meetings with the current Heads to understand autonomy within the organisation; regular meetings with trustees and the Executive Board to align vision moving forward; investigation into financial records to ensure there are no anomalies; meetings and conversations with staff members and parents of the existing schools to find out about their experiences; and social media searches to gain a deeper understanding of the schools reputation in the local community. We have been happy with all investigations thus far.

40. Will ultimate decisions regarding the schools rest with the Headteacher or the Trust?

There is a Scheme of Delegation in place which outlines which roles are responsible for which aspects of the running of the school. The majority of decisions sit with the Headteacher of the school in the way that they do now. The Headteacher has autonomy for decision making in the school but is accountable to the Trust. Should the school need support or improvement, the Trust will become more involved. This is the same as how the local authority has worked with schools in the past.