

Proposed Merger Consultation

FAQs regarding the merger of TCLT with Three Rivers Learning Trust

As is the current practice in both Trusts, schools will retain their own identities, expressing this through their own individual uniform, school names and badges.. Staff will continue to work in individual schools creating strong links with parents, governors and the wider community they serve. Parents will continue to benefit from having a relationship with the staff and leaders of their child's school. Local governance will continue to provide support, challenge and community connections for each school

1. What are the principal purposes of the merger?

The principal purpose of merger is to improve educational outcomes through collaboration with other schools by bringing schools together in learning networks, an approach which has been developed by the Confederation of School Trusts, sector body for MATs¹. Currently there are no peers within the high school phase for staff at PCHS or KEVI to join in a network, as TCLT and the 3 Rivers each have only one High school. In a merged Trust there will be two High schools and an increase in numbers of Middle and First schools giving wider opportunity for staff to work in learning networks, focusing on strong practice and impactful teaching, sharing and learning from each other ensuring that staff are supported to get the very best outcomes for pupils.

A school improvement system is being developed around the key idea of collaborative learning networks across schools. Headteachers strongly endorsed this approach to school improvement.

2. Will the identity of each school in the Trust be retained?

In the same way as we have retained the identity of each individual school in the current Trusts, we intend that to be exactly the same. Each school will have its own uniform, a local governing body with representatives from parents, staff and the community to look after it and a staff group for that school. Where aligning

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https://icm.cstuk.org.uk/assets/pdfs/ICE_10102_CST_What_Is_A_Strong_Trust_Discussion%20Paper2.pdf

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systems such as information systems, IT systems and curriculum is seen to benefit pupils, these will be considered.

3. Will one Trust be merged into the other or vice versa (this is relevant for the purposes of TUPE and the transfer of assets, land and contracts) ?

Technically one Trust closes and transfers into another, although both sides are clear that this is a merger and both organisations will cease to exist. For transfer it has been agreed that TCLT will close, as this is the cheapest option. As all the schools transferred into TCLT at the same time it is a faster and less costly approach for legal teams to manage the merger this way. Both sides are in full agreement that there will be a new organisation with a new name when the merger completes and the technical closure of TCLT is merely pragmatic.

4. What will the merged Trust management structure look like i.e. who will our CEO be and who will we be dealing with in terms of Trust central services ?

This work has now been undertaken by an advisory group made up of directors from both organisations supported by an independent HR consultant. The recommendation is for a Co-CEO role, shared by Alice Witherow and Simon Taylor, to establish the new trust. It is also recommended that the Chief Operating Officer would be Mark Tait and the Chief Financial Officer, Helen Beaton.

5. When is the decision on the merger to be taken?

A decision to finally merge will be taken after formal consultation and feedback from this is considered. Consultation closes on 17 March 2023 and a formal decision will be made by the end of April, any unexpected issues that arise after that could still halt the merger so no final decision is actually made until the paper is signed. We are working towards a merger date of 1st September 2023.

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6. Will staff other than central support staff begin to work across multiple schools as part of their main job description and as such will there be development opportunities for a range of staff in this possible merger?

It is very much planned that a larger Trust will give greater development opportunities for staff. Where there is opportunity to share staff, or for staff to work across schools this will be considered but under Tupe staff cannot be made to work across schools, and this would always be in discussion with individual members of staff. Being able to give development opportunities to more staff, in particular the staff at our High schools will be a key advantage of merger.

7. Is the plan to follow the model of the big academy trusts who all follow the same structures and rules across the whole trust?

We will be a Trust which aligns practice for the maximum benefit for pupils. This approach was discussed with all Headteachers in May and again in November when they met and was agreed as a strong model. This does not mean that everything will be the same across all schools but where aligning practices, structures or systems can be seen to benefit pupils and staff, then this will be considered. Examples of this can be seen in the introduction of the MIS systems Bromcom, the shared curriculum in First schools (TCLT), the SEND and Safeguarding networks (3 Rivers) and the approach to governance support that is already in place across both trusts.

8. Will we be able to continue working collaboratively as we do now as this has hugely benefited the pupils in our schools as well as staff and we are keen to keep this going?

Collaboration is key to the school improvement structure being developed. We have seen how key collaborations in both trusts have developed and strengthened classroom practice and how aligning aspects of the curriculum has supported strong professional networking and impacted on outcomes for pupils so we want to do this as part of the systems of the new organisation. Likewise we want to ensure that there are strong links at transition points and develop seamless practice and build on curriculum knowledge from one phase to the next.

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9. Will there be more costs to schools?

We believe that being larger makes us more cost effective and more financially sustainable. Having a stronger financial position will mean that we are able to be more strategic and less reactive. In the merged organisation we will benefit from more opportunities to free up time for educational staff to focus on school improvement. It would be anticipated that schools may choose to increase their contribution to Central Services in order to enable the Trust to deliver additional value that isn't currently available.

10. Will there be additional funding to manage the merger?

We have been successful in a bid to the Department for Education (DfE) for funding which will pay for the main merger costs such as specialist advice, legal support, changes to name etc.

11. What will happen to terms and conditions of employment including pay and pensions?

The position is the same as when the schools formed at TCLT and the 3 Rivers and the new Trust will continue to follow national and local agreements for terms, conditions, pay and pensions to ensure there is no change for staff. Both Trusts currently do this.

12. Is there an impact on job security?

The new Trust will face the same energy, funding and cost of living challenges as the 2 Trusts face currently. Whilst merger will not solve these issues it will create a more resilient and financially strong organisation that is better able to weather financial challenges.

A timeline is below, which outlines the key areas of work, however as in any process the timings can vary depending on circumstances. We aim to complete the merger and become a new merged organisation in September 2023.

13. How will this affect Local Governing Bodies and the board?



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Local Governing bodies working effectively to challenge and support schools will be even more important in a merged organisation. It is essential that in the new governance structure the voices of parents, pupils and staff are systematically heard and this will be a crucial piece of work for LGBs.

The Board will be formed by the Members of the newly merged organisation and will combine existing board directors with some new appointments to ensure the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience to run the merged Trust.

14. Where will the central team be located?

There is a need to find new premises to locate the larger Central team and office space is being sought that will accommodate central staff as well as providing a convenient space for meetings for school staff from TCLT and 3 Rivers Learning Trust.

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Consultation Dates

Consultation Meetings - staff and parents

27 February	4pm: Staff Consultation Rothbury	Dr Thomlinson, Rothbury
	6pm Parent Consultation Rothbury	Dr Thomlinson, Rothbury
1st March	4pm: Staff Consultation TCLT	PCHS, Prudhoe
	6pm Parent Consultation TCLT	PCHS, Prudhoe
7 March	4pm: Staff Consultation Morpeth	The King Edward VI High, Morpeth
	6pm Parent Consultation Morpeth	The King Edward VI High, Morpeth

Governors consultation

8th March	5pm Prudhoe Governors	PCHS, Prudhoe
9th March	5pm Rothbury Governors	Dr Thomlinson, Rothbury
15 March	5pm Morpeth Governors	The King Edward VI High, Morpeth