



2nd February 2024

Dear Parents/Carers,

Re: Proposed Academy Conversion

The educational landscape is changing and many schools are making the move towards converting to academy status.

During the last academic year, Philips's Governing Body and the school's Senior Leadership Team have been exploring the idea of joining an existing Multi Academy Trust (MAT) looking carefully into the benefits and potential drawbacks of this possible move. After much consideration on how any changes in our status would benefit our school, and having met with and considered a variety of other options, we have identified one MAT, The Oak Learning Partnership, who we feel are the perfect match for our vibrant and exciting school. We believe that joining them will be an exceptionally positive step.

We write to inform you that the **Governing Body of Philips High School has taken the decision to consult on a proposal to convert to academy status and join the Oak Learning Partnership.**

We are committed to continual improvement and will always make decisions based on what is in the best interests of our pupils, staff and all school stakeholders. By joining Oak Learning Partnership, we very much hope to be able to forge greater links with other schools and help shape the future of education for the children of Bury and beyond.

The consultation period will open on **2nd February 2024** and close on **1st March 2024**. During this period you are invited to do one or both of the following:

1. Attend a consultation meeting on **Thursday 29th February 5.30 pm in the School Hall** at Philips High School. This will be an opportunity to meet with the CEO of Oak Learning Partnership, Mr James Franklin-Smith and find out more about the MAT: its values, vision and mission and to expect following the conversion. Please book a place on this link <https://forms.office.com/e/LdJHHWJnpQ>
2. Complete the parent consultation questionnaire attached here <https://forms.office.com/e/R1ADX4cacM>

To help you understand why we have taken this decision and why we believe that joining Oak Learning Partnership will make us stronger together, please read the information below.

We will address one question straight away. This proposal is different to when a school becomes a 'sponsored academy' and is controlled by an outside organisation. **Our proposal means that Philips High School will maintain its identity and will be in control of its**

future. We are proposing to join Oak Learning Partnership as a 'capacity giving' school meaning we would be joining as a school in a strong position.

Oak Learning Partnership

Oak currently have 3 schools in its trust. One secondary, one special school and one other primary. You can find more details about the trust on their website: <https://oaklp.co.uk/>

Vision, Values and Ethos

- Like Philips High School, Oak Learning Partnership is a values-driven organisation who is passionate about working together with integrity and honesty showing respect and kindness to everyone.
- Like us, Oak Learning Partnership's central aim is to run exceptional schools who deliver excellent outcomes for **all** learners of all abilities and disabilities.
- Like us, Oak Learning Partnership is uncompromising in their ambition. There is clear moral purpose and a strong shared belief that schools can, and should, impact positively upon the lives and life chances of all pupils.

Partnership and Collaboration

- Collaboration between schools is the key to excellence in all aspects of education, leadership and opportunity.
- Oak Learning Partnership actively encourage schools to maintain their own individual identity through the schools existing values, curriculum and culture as these serve the context in which the school operates. Philips would be operating within a strategic partnership. Working within the MAT's family of schools will serve only to improve the quality of education, share best practice, and operate even more effectively and efficiently.

Quality of Education

- Having visited schools within the Trust it is clear that Oak Learning Partnership promotes academic excellence. Schools within the MAT are judged to be both 'Good' and 'Outstanding' (what we aspire to be).
- Like us, the family of schools create rich, bespoke experiences for their children to enjoy and remember.
- Like us, Oak Learning Partnership schools put children and inclusion at the heart of everything they do and strive to inspire learners and improve their lives as a result of the education they receive.

Staff Development

- It is evident that Oak Learning Partnership value educational for all. They are keen to work with people who want to make a difference, who share the same values and vision with an aligned philosophy for educating children.
- Oak Learning Partnership invest in professional development at all levels and provide opportunities to develop and share skill sets across its schools.
- As it is at Philips, staff retention is important to the MAT and one of the ways to keep staff is to provide development opportunities which will enhance expertise, give us the

professional courage to explore new possibilities, and to share knowledge, best practice and expertise.

As well as the above, why Oak Learning Partnership specifically?

- They are not corporate in any way, shape or form. We would therefore retain our independence– there would not be any risk to our ethos and identity. Some aspects would align for example: the school website, a redesigned school logo access to central office functions such as HR and finance, but none of these would impact negatively on the quality of education.
- We would be the second secondary school to join the MAT meaning we would be instrumental in shaping the future of the MAT as it grows.
- The Oak Learning Partnership's schools serve different communities, age groups and abilities meaning together we will have a fuller understanding of the education of 4-18 year olds.
- Whilst the Governing Body would be different in terms of its duties, we can keep all our members who would form the Quality Education Board for the school.

What's in it for Philips?

- The primary motivator behind this proposal is to have an opportunity for us to feel part of something 'bigger'. In other words, it would mean that we would be more than just us.
- Our funding struggles would be alleviated by economies of scale.
- The prospect of trust-wide continuing professional development (CPD) for staff is very exciting.
- The teaching will be even better! Facilitating the sharing of effective practice across a group of schools will enable us to strengthen our own practice, we can learn about practical approaches that have shown to be effective in one school and then apply them to Philips, and we have lots more colleagues to act as a 'critical friend'.
- The Oak Learning Partnership's CEO will be accountable for the whole trust's performance so we can therefore expect frequent validation, thereby aiding self-evaluation and improvements.
- It opens doors for our pupils e.g. collaboration with other schools for visits, sports events, discovery days, shared experiences beyond the curriculum.

Disadvantages of academy status

- Having completed extensive research into the pros and cons of joining a MAT, governors and leaders are aware that the disadvantages sit largely with the historical nature of academy conversions and the stories that have been told about them. We are proposing to join Oak Learning Partnership as a 'capacity giving' school, one that offers strength and capacity to improve even further. The decision has not been made for us by external pressures or a poor Ofsted judgement. It has been made by the governors and leaders of the school whose mission is to provide the best possible education for our children and we believe that this is the way forward for us in the current educational context.

How can I find out more?

- There is more information on the Department for Education's website www.education.gov.uk/academies

Finally, we would like to say thank you for your continued support to the school. We are confident that joining Oak Learning Partnership will simply improve our school and the education our children receive.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Owen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Ms T Owen
HEADTEACHER