

PROPOSED TRUST MERGER

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT REPORT



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Introduction

The Trustees and Members of Maltby Learning Trust (MLT) and Accord Multi Academy Trust have been considering for some time how we might further grow our family of schools to extend the impact of our work to date. The reasons behind our ambition to grow are twofold: firstly, we recognise that a larger organisation will have greater capacity to deliver the very best learning experiences and continue to improve our schools; and, secondly, we want to be able to contribute further to the education system and support more children, families, and communities to achieve success in our locality.

We are pleased that we have been able to engage in discussions about the possibility of the two successful and well-established Trusts joining together to create a brand-new organisation, built on the strengths of the two Trusts and resulting in an organisation that will be greater than the sum of their parts. This proposed arrangement will be a voluntary merger of equals, rather than any form of takeover / acquisition of one Trust by the other. The two Trusts have much in common, starting with a similar vision and values shaped around putting children and young people first, setting high standards, delivering exceptional learning experiences, and committing to and connecting with the local communities that we serve.

The decision to pursue the proposed merger, with a formal application to the Department for Education (DfE) Advisory Board, was reached unanimously by each Trust Board in May 2025 with a planned period of wider stakeholder engagement. Whilst the original submission of the application to the DfE Advisory Board was scheduled to be considered on 15 July 2025, due to unforeseen circumstances within the DfE this will now not be the case, and we are awaiting confirmation of a revised date in the autumn term of 2025-26.

The period of stakeholder engagement for both Trusts commenced on Friday 6 June 2025 and concluded on Friday 4 July 2025. It should also be noted that further engagement and communications will continue beyond this point to ensure that stakeholders remain fully informed regarding progress made towards the proposals.

The academies forming part of Maltby Learning Trust and Accord Multi Academy Trust are as follows:

Accord Multi Academy Trust	Maltby Learning Trust
Ossett Academy and Sixth Form College Horbury Academy Horbury Primary Academy Middlestown Primary Academy South Ossett Infants Academy	Maltby Academy Maltby Redwood Academy Maltby Manor Academy Maltby Lilly Hall Academy Ravenfield Primary Academy Sir Thomas Wharton Academy Wath Academy

Consultation and Engagement Methodology

The aim of the stakeholder engagement process was to ensure that all stakeholders were able to consider the merger proposals, raise questions, and have the opportunity to give their views.

The Objectives Were to:

- Provide the relevant background information
- Explain the reasons behind the proposals from the perspective of both Trusts
- Present a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to strengthen understanding
- Set out the stages of the process and the associated timeline
- Provide an opportunity to engage through an easily accessible form on each Trust website, and a dedicated email address for all staff
- Ensure an open and transparent process.

Identified Stakeholders Engaged / Consulted

Direct communications were sent to the following stakeholders as part of the engagement process:

- Staff
- Academy Governors
- Parents and Carers
- Community Members
- Local Authorities of Wakefield, Doncaster and Rotherham
- Local Multi Academy Trusts, academies and schools: primary, secondary and colleges
- Trade Unions: NASUWT, NEU, ASCL, Unison, GMB, NAHT
- Local MPs.

Method of Communication Engagement / Consultation

For external stakeholders, letters, emails and messages were sent electronically to outline the proposals and to provide a link to each Trust website where the engagement / consultation pack could be accessed.

Trust websites had designated areas outlining the proposals as part of an engagement pack for all stakeholders, alongside a link to a form to allow questions to be asked or for stakeholders to give their views.

For Trust staff, the engagement / consultation pack was distributed internally with a designated email address to allow questions to be asked or for staff to give their views throughout the engagement / consultation period.

Overview of Consultation Responses Received

The following table represents an overview of the responses received across each Trust throughout the engagement/consultation period:

	Accord Multi Academy Trust	Maltby Learning Trust
Engagement Response(s)	Staff (3) Parents (5) Local Authority (1)	Staff (1) Parents (7) Local Authority (2)

Emerging Themes

Given the response rate to the engagement / consultation process, it is difficult to present an informed picture in terms of any emerging themes, however it is clear that there is no substantial opposition to the proposed merger of Maltby Learning Trust and Accord Multi Academy Trust.


Of the responses received, the following were the key themes arising from the different stakeholder groups represented (*in italics*):

Staff (with responses provided direct to individual enquiries)

- *Whether the proposal would mean any changes to how each Trust currently subscribes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme.*
 - Response to staff confirmed that there were no planned changes in this respect.
- *Whether the formation of the new Trust would provide additional opportunities for career progression, specifically for existing apprentices employed by the Trust.*
 - Response to staff revisited specific points from the stakeholder engagement pack in terms of the rationale for the proposed merger and potential benefits for staff in terms of extended opportunities.
- *Clarification was requested on the benefits for staff and pupils, and whether there would be changes to the curriculum offer, school day, holiday patterns, and the expectations of staff to travel to different schools.*
 - Response to staff revisited the points already included within the stakeholder engagement pack information and FAQs.

Parents (responses formed part of post engagement / consultation updated FAQs where applicable and below)

- A comment was expressed about the financial benefits arising from the merger, particularly in relation to specialist staffing and capital investment to improve facilities.
- A comment described an assurance around the fact that pupils' education and welfare would remain a priority.
- Comments spoke positively about the strength of each Trust, with some reservations about the current geography and whether there should be consideration of other potential partners, specifically in each secondary pyramid.
 - In response to this comment, it is noted that whilst the geography may seem a challenge to some stakeholders it is not viewed as such by both Trusts. Both Trusts are heavily invested in their local communities, and this will not change or be a detriment to pupils, parents or staff because of the merger. Each Trust will continue to work closely with other schools, academies and Multi Academy Trusts locally as has been the case to date.
- A comment focused on the current Ofsted grading of each academy, and whilst all 'Good' or better, there might be a risk that this might not be the case given that some of the inspections were quite some time ago.
 - In response to this comment, it is the view of both Trusts that we will be collectively stronger together across all aspects of provision and that the merger would not present a risk to the quality of education or grading of any academy. As detailed in the Stakeholder FAQs, schools will continue to operate as they do currently, but will benefit from a wider breadth of knowledge, skills and experience which can only enhance the provision for all children.
- Comments focused on the perceived expectation that a wide range of staff would be required to travel between Doncaster, Rotherham and Wakefield.
 - Staff across each Trust have been assured that only a small minority of job roles will be required to operate across the two current 'hubs' of Maltby Learning Trust and Accord Multi Academy Trust. Colleagues based in schools will remain in their current roles and work in the same location. Colleagues employed in central



Trust associate staff teams will see some changes to process, but these changes will be communicated and consulted upon in an appropriate manner and timeline.

- It is important to note that one real positive of the merger is the greater opportunity for development and/or career progression and where opportunities arise in the new Trust, all colleagues will have opportunity to apply for positions should they wish.
- *Comments asked about how the merger proposal would be approved and whether there would be a parental vote.*
 - The merger is subject to approval by the DfE Advisory Board, which was expected in July 2025, but is now expected in the Autumn term. The DfE will consider the views gained via our stakeholder engagement/consultation, but they will not require a parental vote.
- *A comment raised some concern about the perceived negative impact on staff in terms of redundancies and terms and conditions.*
 - Terms and conditions of employment are protected by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). TUPE protects employees' rights when their employment transfers to a new employer. As part of the TUPE process all employees' contracts, including terms and conditions and pensions automatically transfer to the new employer. This means that employees retain their existing rights, powers, duties, and liabilities.
 - The proposed merger would not seek to create redundancies, and in contrast would seek to reduce this risk moving forward in what is a challenging financial landscape in education. One of the key drivers is to create enhanced opportunities for professional development and career progression.
- *A comment was received about larger Trusts not always delivering value for money and directing resources to meet greatest need borne out of the increased management costs with a larger entity.*
 - As one Trust the same amount of funding per pupil will be received as is the case currently. However, through increasing the size of the Trust, by this proposed merger, the new Trust will be able to achieve far greater economies of scale, which ultimately means more funding directed to support learning.

Local Authorities

- *Wakefield and Rotherham Local Authorities provided formal letters of support, with Doncaster stating their support through the online form for the merger proposals of Maltby Learning Trust and Accord Multi Academy Trust.*

Trade Unions

- *No formal representation was made from any Trade Unions either in support or against the merger proposals as part of the engagement / consultation process.*

Conclusion

Based on the limited stakeholder engagement response and the balanced feedback received to date, it can be concluded that there is no significant reason the merger of Maltby Learning Trust and Accord Multi Academy Trust should not proceed as proposed to the DfE.

There is strong support from Wakefield, Rotherham and Doncaster Local Authorities that this is a positive move for both Trusts and all the schools involved, however there were some questions and concerns posed by a small number of stakeholders, often arising from a lack of understanding, and it is important to recognise that ongoing communication will be important in terms of continued stakeholder engagement.

The survey response rates across each Trust were extremely low and therefore it can be perceived that stakeholders appear to be generally content about the proposed merger of Maltby Learning Trust and Accord Multi Academy Trust.

Following completion of the stakeholder engagement, this report will be published on each Trust website and shared with the DfE to support their decision-making process.



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