

## **Merger with the Compass Partnership of Schools Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is an academy?**

The CHANGE Schools are academies, which are state-funded, independent schools, held accountable by the Department for Education (DfE) by a legally binding Funding Agreement. They are independent of the local authority and receive their funding directly from central government.

Previously academies have tended to replace schools that had poor results and needed to improve. Under the Academies Act 2010, all schools are now able to become academies.

There is now a drive from the Department for Education for schools to form Multi-Academy Trusts.

Academies are still part of the community and serve children and families in a particular area. They retain the same responsibilities as any maintained school as part of the learning community.

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

CHANGE is a multi-academy trust (Trust), which is a group of academy schools who agree to work together, overseen by an overarching charitable trust, whose purpose is the advancement of education for the public benefit. Trusts also help to support other schools.

### **What does the national educational landscape look like?**

Academies first began under the Labour Government and the current Government has expanded the process.

As of January 2021, 78% of secondary schools are now academies and 37% of primary schools are academies. More than half of children and young people (55%) are education in school trusts.

Any new school will automatically become an academy via the 'free schools' process. Local authorities are not involved in the set-up of new schools as academies, nor are these schools accountable to them.

The Government recognises the value of a self-improving school system in which groups of schools work closely together to continuously improve. With the ongoing reductions in school funding, the cost savings of schools maximising economies of scale together is significant.

In the future it is likely that every school will be part of a Trust.

### **Why are we considering merging with the Compass Partnership of Schools?**

CHANGE have decided to merge with the Compass Partnership of Schools following a rigorous period of due diligence during which we looked at a number of Trusts.

Trustees decided to go with Compass as it offered the best opportunity for CHANGE schools and because its values were most closely aligned to our own.

The Department for Education Regional School's Commissioner fully supports our decision to pursue a merger with the Compass Partnership of Schools.

### **Why now?**

We want to shape and secure the best possible future for the children in our schools now, as well as those who will join our schools in the future. The Department for Education states that groups of 12 – 15 schools represent a sustainable model and we have always shared that this would be our aim to grow to a group of this size.

### **Do staff have a say?**

We have written to staff across our schools to explain why we are consulting on merging with the Compass Partnership of Schools. Staff will be kept updated throughout the process and will continue to have the opportunity to ask questions and share views.

### **Would my child's school change?**

We want to continue to be a great school where every child is valued. We do not intend to change except in ways that we think will improve the school even further. It is unlikely that the children would see much, if any, change, in their day-to-day school lives.

Whilst they are united behind a core vision and ethos, the schools in the Compass Partnership and in the CHANGE Schools Partnership are all unique, and this is something that we would want to continue to preserve and celebrate in the future.

### **Would the schools and Trust have to change their names?**

No each school would retain its name. Our larger trust of 10 primaries and one all-through special school will be called the Compass Partnership of Schools.

### **Would changes be made to the length of the school day and to term dates?**

No, we would not seek to make changes to the length of the school day or to term or holiday dates. If this was something that we felt in the future could benefit the children we would consult with staff, parents/carers, and the children themselves.

### **What would the changes mean for staff?**

Staff would not notice significant changes in their everyday working lives. They already experience and champion the benefits of partnership work and those opportunities would grow. Professional development would further expand and there would be a greater range of opportunities for career progression.

Terms and conditions for existing staff would remain the same and the Compass Partnership would become the new employer of the CHANGE Schools staff.

### **Who makes the final decision on the merger of the two trusts?**

The Compass Board of Trustees. The Board of the CHANGE Schools Partnership has already confirmed that it wishes to merge with Compass having undertaken a thorough review process.

**Would other schools join the group and how would the decision be made to do this?**

Any decision on additional schools joining the Trust would be made by the Board of Trustees. We would expect other schools to join as time goes on and any school that joins would be expected to abide by our vision, ethos, and governance structure. They would also be required to contribute to and learn from the other schools in the group.

**Who runs a Trust?**

The Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for the Trust. The CEO, Executive Headteachers and Headteachers would contribute to the leadership of the whole group under the leadership of the Board of Trustees.

Each school would continue to have its own Local School Committee (formerly Local Governing Body), whose responsibilities are delegated to them by the Trust through a Scheme of Delegation.

**What process has the Board gone through in deciding to consult on merging with the Compass Partnership of Schools?**

The CHANGE Board has undertaken a thorough process in order to identify Compass as the best fit for our schools going forward. This is not a decision we have come to quickly; rather it is the result of the evolution of everything we have been through as a group of schools and then a Trust. We have undertaken a vast amount of due diligence.

**What is the planned date for the merger?**

The proposed date for the merger is 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021.

**Who will be the CEO of the new Trust of 11 schools?**

John Camp who is currently interim CEO of CHANGE will continue as CEO.

**Will there be a change to the CHANGE leadership structure?**

Michelle Bernard, one of Compass Executive Heads will become the Executive Head of the CHANGE Schools and is already supporting the schools during this autumn term.

**Will the composition of the Board of Trustees and the Members change?**

Mary Whitehead will continue as the Chair of the Board of Trustees which will oversee the eleven schools.

It is likely that two of the CHANGE Trustees will join the Compass Board. The Members will remain as they are currently. You can find more information on the Compass governance structure here: [Governance - Compass Partnership \(compass-partnership.uk\)](http://compass-partnership.uk)