



The Sutton Academy

Together Students Achieve

Principal: Mr P Willerton

19 January 2024

Dear Parent/Carer

As detailed in previous letters, the academy has been successful in an initial application to join 'The Challenge Academy Trust' (TCAT). This is an exciting step for the academy which will enable access to collaboration, resources and expertise to support the next chapter of our journey.

There will be an opportunity for parents/carers to attend a drop-in session with Andy Moorcroft, the Chief Executive of TCAT, myself and other key staff on **Monday 29 January from 6.00pm - 8.00pm** in the Community Room, within the main academy building. There will be refreshments available.

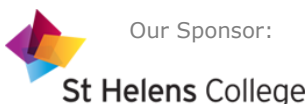
The purpose of the drop in, is to give parents/carers the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the move to TCAT. To support this, I have attached some frequently asked questions below for your reference.

As always, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



P Willerton
Principal



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1) Why is The Sutton Academy looking to join a Multi Academy Trust

The process and structure when becoming an academy were very different when The Sutton Academy first academised in 2010. At the time, it was a very new process, this led to The Sutton Academy becoming a “Single Sponsor Academy”, sponsored by St Helens College. At the time, the school was struggling and it was seen as a move to aid improvement. The process and structure are very different now, and the current academy protocols probably wouldn't have supported the conversion if it were to happen today. As The Sutton Academy, we have made significant improvements, particularly in the last nine years, securing good outcomes and a strong Ofsted report. Some schools are in the position where they are ordered to join a Multi Academy Trust due to poor performance - that is absolutely not the case with The Sutton Academy.

By joining TCAT, we believe there is an opportunity to genuinely collaborate with other strong schools, which will support us in our drive to offer a world-class quality of education at the academy. It will provide students with the chance to engage with the opportunities made available to them by TCAT, and their quality of education will grow from strength to strength through the work their teachers are undertaking. Despite not formally joining TCAT yet, there has already been collaboration opportunities the academy has been able to take advantage of to date. These include:-

- Students performing in the Trust wide musical event at Parr Hall.
- Staff sharing curriculum maps with experts from across the Trust to fine tune our own curriculum.
- Our own staff supporting schools across the Trust, which furthers their own development and aids retentions of quality staff.

2) Will the academy name change or will there be a new uniform?

No. Parents/Carers and students will see very little difference in the day to day running of the academy. TCAT's ethos is to allow leaders a high level of autonomy to run schools well for their community and understand that there isn't a 'one size fits all' approach to running schools. They will challenge and support where required but The Sutton Academy will still keep its identity.



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3) What research was undertaken to ensure that TCAT is the right trust for The Sutton Academy?

A working party was formed with the Principal and Trustees to explore a range of different options for the academy. The options included:-

- 1) To create and grow our own Multi Academy Trust; due to the recent success of The Sutton Academy. This was rejected by all involved as there were concerns that the attention required to grow a trust would distract away from the academy, and its current performance and growth would suffer.
- 2) Join a large Multi Academy Trust with presence across the country. The working party did not feel this route was appropriate for the academy. For some schools, where they need significant support to improve, it is an excellent route but it was felt this was not appropriate for the academy. This route would have led to a change in the academy name, uniform and a significant loss of autonomy.
- 3) Join a local trust with strong schools to all collaborate together. This was the preferred route, but it was also felt that to fully benefit the academy the trust would need to contain primary schools (to support our transition programme), secondary schools and also post-16 providers to collaborate with our Sixth Form. After meeting with a number of local trusts, it was felt that TCAT overwhelmingly were the strongest option, they matched our values and also allowed collaboration for Key Stages 2, 3, 4 & 5.



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