

This is the final FAQ document responding to parental and community questions regarding the merger between BDAT and Bradford Girls' Grammar School. The initial engagement period closed on 19th October and the FAQ email will no longer be monitored. Further information about future parental engagement events about the merger and general school business can be found at <https://www.bggs.com/>

Bradford Girls' Grammar School – Parent and Family Briefing

Questions and Answers

Similar questions were raised throughout the evening and via email both before and after the meeting. These have been summarised below:

Why were families not part of the decision-making process and informed before the decision to join BDAT was made?

The process for transferring to a Multi Academy Trust is that it is researched and undertaken by the single academy Trust Board. The ultimate decision for the transfer comes from the DfE. Parents were informed that the school was in the process of applying to transfer to BDAT in a letter from the Principal on 13th May 2022 but until the decision from the DfE has been received there is no certainty that it will go ahead and therefore it was not the right time to share any further information with parents.

Can you give a list of the other Trusts that were looked at when making the decision to join the BDAT?

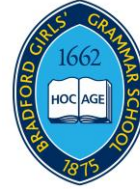
A detailed response of the process taken was given by the Chair of Governors, Alison Cooper in the presentation and given in the answer to question 4 below. BGGs are not able to share the names of the other Trusts that were considered as they do not have their permission to do so.

Is the data available that has informed the decisions of the board?

An initial list of around 90 trusts that operate in the Northwest / Yorkshire & Humber region was provided by the DfE, and they also provided guidance about the process to follow. Initial research used data that is publicly available. Throughout the process, support was provided by the DfE, and guidance was used from the Confederation of Schools Trusts.

I feel the criteria is biased towards BDAT and would prefer a more secular Trust. There are other Trusts in the area that would work better?

The criteria for choosing a MAT were set at an externally facilitated BGGs Trust Board visioning day in 2021 before any consideration was given to which MAT may best suit BGGs. The criteria and process were shared with parents in Alison Cooper's presentation.



Using data available the list of potential MATs was taken from 90 to 22 where further in-depth research was carried out. This was then reduced to 9 MATs with whom BGGs had further conversations and meetings and sourced further information. Two MATs emerged as final contenders and gave formal presentations.

Meetings were held at Trust, Member and School Executive level. Visits to member schools also took place by the Principal of BGGs and Head Teacher of Lady Royd School.

The BGGs Trust Board voted unanimously that BDAT is the Trust for the school to transfer to. BDAT was set up in Bradford for Bradford.

BGGs is, and will remain, a school without religious character, as is the case for a number of BDAT secondary academies. Nothing will change in the curriculum or day-to-day operations to promote a Christian ethos. BGGs do, however, share the same fundamental belief of providing the best quality education because children only get one chance, and align closely with the BDAT values of Inclusion, Compassion, Aspiration, Resilience and Excellence.

Were BGGs ever approached by another Trust to join them?

This happened only once, in December 2020, when the BGGs Board was still intent on remaining a single academy trust. This Trust was one that was considered in autumn 2021 but did not meet a number of the selection criteria. Governors were informed at the time. The name of this Trust shall remain confidential.

Do parents have a choice? Are we being informed or are we being consulted? Can we object? Do we have a voice, is it valued?

Within the voluntary process of transferring to a MAT, parents cannot influence the choice of partner. The ultimate decision was made by the DfE, and we were informed on 6th July 2022. However, it is good practice to engage with parents to share information and promote understanding and so we have put this in place as soon as we had the DfE approval for the transfer. Due to the timing, this could only be started in the autumn term.

During the course of the parent engagement meeting, Carol Dewhurst, CEO of BDAT picked up that really good communication is important for BGGs families going forward. BDAT and BGGs will be arranging further opportunities to continue the dialogue with parents, to ensure that families feel they are valued and do have a voice going forward together on this journey.



Who made the decision to announce the transfer in the local press first rather than inform parents first?

Parents were initially informed about the proposed transfer in May 22 through the school letter and told that full information would be provided in the Autumn term. It is unfortunate that some parents picked up the communication in the press first.

Who specifically made the decision to scrap the consultation process with parents that was detailed in a letter sent in May 22?

The letter to parents on 13th May 22 stated that governors had been exploring the possibility of joining a MAT since September 21; had undertaken extensive research with potential trusts and were at a stage where just one Trust was being considered in greater depth – BDAT. It was explained that this was an ongoing process, following guidance from the DfE and that it was anticipated that the consultation stage with parents would be early in the autumn term. This is now underway, as planned and communicated to parents in May.

The term 'consultation' has caused some confusion. As BGGs is already an academy, a formal consultation that would help inform a decision, is not part of the process to transfer to a multi-academy Trust. The DfE meaning of the term 'consultation' in this context, is to *inform* stakeholders of the transfer. This is often done in the form of letters to parents and staff. However, the school and BDAT have chosen to invite parents to discuss any issues they may have, because we value parental views and want to understand any concerns, share the decision-making process, and the benefits to the school and our children.

To help make this distinction clearer, the school has used the term 'communication and engagement' for the discussions this half term.

BDAT were involved in changing staff T&Cs pre-covid. I am fearful about how BDAT treats staff.

Trade Union representatives were present at the meeting and were involved in the BDAT change of staff T&C that was referred to. They offered to answer this question:

The communication with BDAT was open and transparent throughout the process and all the fears the Trade Unions had were absolved. BDAT listened to unions and to the staff and contracts were changed as requested by the unions. The union representatives advised that, in their opinion, this transfer is a good move for BGGs.



Woodlands School from BDAT have recently put in a planning request to change the only recreation space in the village. There are concerns about how much BDAT care about the community.

This was not answered on the evening as it was not part of the BGGs conversion.

Do you foresee an increase in spend per pupil in the new structure?

All secondary and primary funded places across the city are funded at the same rate (with additional funding available to children with special educational needs) and so the amount per pupil received will not change. However, there will be financial efficiencies that will be gained by being part of a Multi Academy Trust and these savings can then be used to enhance the school experience for the children.

Are there any plans to add a 6th form at BGGs?

There are no plans for open a 6th form at BGGs at the moment. However, children from BGGs will have access to a number of high quality Post-16 provisions across the city and will be supported with their applications to ensure the very best for their future on leaving BGGs.

My concern is how will this affect my child, especially with the transfer being in the middle of the year. What message would you give to the benefits and to alleviate the fears and concerns?

The transfer will only positively impact pupils. They will have more opportunity by being part of a Multi Academy Trust such as joint sports events, music concerts and other cross Trust events.

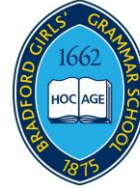
The current BGGs values will stay and will remain part of everyday school life for pupils, but these will be supported by the BDAT values which align with that of BGGs.

There will be no new signage, uniform or staffing structures. Nothing in school will visibly change.

Longer term, pupils will see staff who are even more supported and therefore even happier and who have access to more opportunities themselves for personal development within their own career.

There have been difficult times in the past for BGGs but the results have continued to go up and the trajectory for Ofsted is on the right track. This transfer gives the opportunity to accelerate the improvement.

We all believe there is more to education than the academic results alone. The heart of what BGGs does is to give our children the opportunities to be the best person they can be. BDAT are a fully supportive partner to enable BGGs to continue to achieve this.



Was it not the case a parent governor was removed from her position because she didn't agree with the processes used to choose BDAT and the decision to go with BDAT?

This is not something that can be discussed but this is a statement that BGGs would refute.

The following questions have been received by email and are not covered above.

Will the term dates change as I have already booked a holiday for July 23?

There are no plans to change the term dates for this academic year and they will remain as currently published.

Does this mean the school will no longer be just for girls?

We can confirm that the secondary school will remain a girls' school for ages 11-16 (Year 7 to 11) and there are no plans for this to change. Lady Royd Primary School will continue to operate as a co-educational school for children up to and including Year 6.

I am highly concerned about the level of academia at BGGs, the ability to nurture excellence in students, and the calibre of teaching and I also question the pastoral care and support.

To reassure you regarding the academic success; BGGs are proud to have maintained a long history of success. In 2022, despite students having all the challenges brought about by the pandemic the GCSE results at grades 9-4 and 9-7 were above national average; indeed of 24 schools who reported results to Bradford Council, BGGs performed 4th highest for grades 9-4 including Maths and English, and 3rd highest for English. Results were also high in Science, with students achieving an average grade 7 on all three separate sciences. Overall, 16 GCSE subjects' performance was better than national average, and students of all abilities made above average progress. This is testimony to the hard work and dedication of both staff and students, underpinned by the support and care provided for students through what was an anxious and challenging period for all. BGGs continue to work on improvement priorities which include embedding consistent approaches to teaching and learning. The potential for professional development is seen as a key benefit of joining BDAT, and BGGs look forward to sharing practice across the 18 academies and accessing their Professional Learning Communities.

Further information on school performance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables>



When did the school make an application to the Regional Director for the transfer of BGGs to BDAT?

The application was submitted by BDAT on 30th May 2022.

When did BGGs or BDAT advise BGGs parents that an application has been made?

We informed parents of the intention to begin the process in the letter to parents dated 13th May 2022. The formal application was submitted by BDAT on 30th May 2022. The email from the DfE was received by BGGs on 6th July to confirm that the transfer had been approved which was at the end of the summer term and so an update to parents was planned on the return to school in September. The letter sent to parents on 27th September 2022 to inform parents of the next steps in the transfer process. We had hoped to communicate the partnership earlier in September with parents however had to pause communication as a public sector organisation to mark the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during the national period of mourning.

When did BGGs or BDAT advise BGGs parents that parents could make representations and the deadline to do so, as part of the transfer application process for the Regional Director to consider before any approval was made?

It should be noted that the application process for a Single Academy Trust (BGGs) joining a Multi Academy Trust (BDAT) is different to that of a maintained school becoming an academy and therefore parents being able to make representations does not apply. The period of engagement with parents began on 27th September and ended on 19th October 2022. This process was unfortunately delayed out of respect due to the sad passing of Queen Elizabeth II. There will be further opportunity for parents to meet with BDAT staff to discuss this process further, the first of which being on 7th November at 8.45am.