



Department
for Education

Regional Schools Commissioner for Lancashire & West
Yorkshire

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Dear parents and carers,

I wrote to you on 11 January to update you on plans to transfer Bell Lane Academy to a new trust.

As you will be aware, this followed the decision taken by the current trust, Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT), to work with the Department for Education to look for a new trust for each of its schools. As part of this process, there was an opportunity for parents, staff, governors, local authorities, MPs and other interested parties to contact the Department for Education to share views on the proposals. In my letter of 11 January I explained that, whilst we had been able to take a decision on the new trusts for some of the academies that are currently part of WCAT earlier than anticipated, we were not yet in a position to confirm the final trust for Bell Lane Academy. I explained that we were working to do so in the coming weeks.

Following careful consideration of all views and information shared with the Department for Education, ministers have now decided that Bell Lane Academy will join Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT). I am confident that OGAT is best placed to support Bell Lane Academy and I have attached further detail on OGAT for your information. If you have not yet been able to speak with representatives from OGAT, they would be very happy for you to get in touch.

In terms of next steps, we will transfer Bell Lane Academy to OGAT within the current academic year, and are working closely with WCAT and OGAT to ensure that this is done with minimal disruption to pupils, staff and parents. Our priority remains ensuring that all pupils receive an excellent education and I believe that setting this clear direction now will provide further stability for the remainder of the academic year. I strongly believe that staff, parents and pupils at the academy should feel positive about the future of Bell Lane Academy, moving forward with OGAT. In addition, we are working closely with OGAT to determine the funding and resources that will be provided to Bell Lane Academy to secure an excellent education for all pupils.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued engagement with this process, and to particularly thank staff at Bell Lane Academy for the work they do every day. I remain committed to working with all involved to secure the best possible educational outcomes for every pupil at Bell Lane Academy.

Yours sincerely,

VICKY BEER CBE

Regional Schools Commissioner - Lancashire & West Yorkshire

Outwood Grange Academy Trust and Bell Lane Academy

We have now confirmed that Bell Lane Academy will join Outwood Grange Academy Trust (OGAT). This note provides further information on the trust.

OGAT is one of the country's most successful academy sponsors and is ranked as one of the highest performing multi-academy trusts in England in performance tables. The trust was established in 2009 from Outwood Grange College of Technology in Wakefield, whose performance is consistently well above the national average. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the trust is Martyn Oliver who was previously the Principal of Outwood Grange Academy and led the school to an Ofsted Outstanding judgement. The Chair of the trust, David Earnshaw CBE, was a head teacher in Wakefield prior to his retirement.

The trust has 24 academies – 18 secondaries and 6 primaries – in the Tees Valley, Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire regions. It has a well-documented track-record of delivering outstanding outcomes for young people. Six schools in the trust hold Outstanding Ofsted ratings, whilst another six are rated as Good. In 2017, OGAT's primary performance in the multi-academy trust performance tables was high, with the trust achieving above average progress scores in all measures. OGAT's average writing progress score was the highest score achieved by a multi-academy trust in the country.

As well as experience of turning around underperforming schools, with the brand renowned for its rapid and sustained improvement, OGAT has the ability to support and consolidate performance in good and outstanding schools. It has a well respected and very effective school improvement model, which has evolved from the work that originally took place at Outwood Grange and enabled that school to move from the bottom 10% of schools in the country to the top 10%, culminating in an Outstanding Ofsted. OGAT's transformation model underpins and maintains performance in the trust's strongest schools.

Since being provisionally identified as the new trust for Bell Lane Academy, OGAT has engaged with stakeholders including parents, staff, professional associations, governors, and Wakefield local authority. The trust has carefully considered the educational position of the academy and, using its transformation model, has identified the current areas of significant strength and areas requiring improvement and action. When Bell Lane Academy joins the trust, OGAT plans in particular to introduce their tried and tested model for school improvement whilst still ensuring that the academy remains responsive to its local community. OGAT plans to hold a parents' meeting in the next few weeks, which will explain their model and any changes that they will need to make to place your child first, raise standards and transform their life chances.

The Department for Education received a number of views relating to OGAT during the listening period. These views were equally balanced between those expressing positive views and those expressing reservations. Views were expressed about OGAT's track record of school improvement, trust policies, potential changes to the academies and the prevalence of OGAT academies in Wakefield. Support for the academy was offered by alternative organisations, however having carefully considered the options and all views and information shared we have determined that OGAT is best-placed to support Bell Lane Academy.

Now that OGAT has been confirmed as the new trust for Bell Lane Academy, it plans to immediately increase the amount of support it is offering to the staff and students to help, in particular, the current cohort of students to fulfil their potential.