

Frequently Asked Questions

Consultation on joining Ashmole Trust

The purpose of this FAQ is to address the questions and concerns of stakeholders and explain the thinking behind the consultation process. The questions are taken from the themes that have been emerging from the feedback process so far. To date there have been 10 responses. The consultation period ends on Friday 7th of July.

Transition and Partnership:

Q1: Can you provide more detail on the rationale behind this proposal?

A: The school is currently in a secure financial position despite the well documented funding challenges in education. The current economic climate is, as you would expect, significantly inflating our operating costs. Alongside this, Osidge is experiencing a decline in revenue linked to the reduction in the number of children in the local area registering in our Reception classes. Our 3-5 year financial plan indicates that under the current operating model, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a balanced budget. Joining Ashmole Trust is expected to attract children into our Reception classes with parents encouraged by the strategic relationship with Ashmole; this would help mitigate the fall in turnover. The collaboration with Ashmole would also provide us with scale, and afford us the opportunity to pool resources in key areas that will generate financial synergies for both schools. Our financial modelling indicates that this proposed arrangement is the best option currently available to us to ensure the effective stewardship of our school's assets and the maintenance of balanced budgets for the foreseeable future. Our primary aim continues to be the optimisation of funds and the appropriate allocation of the school's resources that impact the classroom and the learning experience for our children. Any potential partnership would aim to avoid any cost savings that might impact the quality of the education provision here at Osidge.

Governors have worked closely with the headteacher throughout this process and are committed to ensuring that the ethos, provision, staffing, leadership and resources are sustained, maintained and developed.

Q2: If we join Ashmole Trust, will children automatically transfer to their secondary school?

A: There are many advantages to having closer formal ties with Ashmole Trust. However, joining the Academy Trust does not automatically mean children will transfer to Ashmole Academy. Primary and secondary school placement decisions remain separate and will follow existing processes. The transition process depends on various factors, such as individual preferences, available spaces and admission policies. However, being part of the Trust can

work to support and improve the transition process for Osidge children who wish to attend Ashmole in Y7. (Also see Q8 below)

Q3: Who initiated the idea of joining the Academy Trust?

A: The process of joining the Academy Trust was initiated through discussions between the Osidge leadership team and Ashmole Trust. Both parties recognised the potential benefits of collaboration and explored the possibility of joining forces. The geographic and demographic proximity between the two schools have been evident for many years.

The views and perspectives of the headteacher at Osidge have been and will be crucial in the decision-making process as far as governors are concerned. It is essential to ensure open communication, dialogue and consultation between the heads and other key stakeholders to address any concerns or seek their input regarding the potential partnership.

Q4: Were other Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) considered?

A: The decision to focus on exploring Ashmole Trust was made after careful consideration. While other MATs have been evaluated, Ashmole Trust was chosen as a suitable potential partner based on various factors including the alignment of values evident in discussions with the Trust. If you'd like to find out more about Ashmole Trust you can do [here](#).

Benefits and Resource Sharing:

Q5: Can you provide clear examples of shared resources and expertise?

A: Working within Ashmole Trust offers opportunities for sharing resources and expertise, such as professional development programmes, access to specialised staff, joint extracurricular activities and collaborative projects that benefit both schools.

A Trust partnership is typically driven by a shared commitment to improving educational outcomes and enhancing collaboration. By working together, all schools can benefit from the exchange of best practices, increased access to resources, and opportunities for joint projects, ultimately creating a more enriching environment for all students involved. Examples of collaboration may also include joint training programmes for teachers, sharing best practices in curriculum development and access to specialised resources.

Q6: Is there a risk that resource sharing hides cost-cutting measures?

A: The intention behind resource sharing is not cost-cutting. Instead, it aims to leverage the strengths of both schools, maximise the efficient use of resources, and enhance educational experiences for students while maintaining the quality of education.

The primary focus of resource sharing is to enhance educational outcomes and provide a wider range of opportunities for students and not to compromise the quality of education. Any

decisions related to resource allocation would be made collaboratively, taking into consideration the best interests of both schools.

The financial implications of joining Ashmole Trust will depend on various factors, including the specific agreements and funding arrangements in place. While there may be potential financial advantages associated with collaboration and resource sharing, the focus is on optimising resources to provide an enhanced educational experience for all students at Osidge and at Ashmole.

Q7: Will Osidge have autonomy to block development or decisions by the MAT?

A: Joining Ashmole Trust does involve a sharing of decision-making processes. While there may be a reduction in the school's autonomy within the new structure, the partnership ensures that decisions are made collaboratively, taking into account the best interests of both Osidge School and the Trust.

Joining the Trust will involve a shift in governance structure, where some decision-making responsibilities are shared with the Trust board. However, a partnership agreement would outline the specific powers and involvement of the Osidge head, governors, parent associations and parents in decision-making processes. Some decisions may require consensus, while others may be subject to veto rights or defined thresholds.

Academic Focus and Standards:

Q8: Will membership guarantee Osidge children a place at Ashmole Academy?

A: Joining Ashmole Trust is expected to attract children into our Reception classes with parents encouraged by the strategic relationship with Ashmole. However, membership in the Academy Trust does not guarantee automatic placement at Ashmole Academy (secondary). Admissions to the secondary school are determined by their specific admissions policies, which would be separate from the Academy Trust membership.

The transition to the Academy Trust should not directly impact the catchment area or admissions criteria for Osidge School. Any changes to the catchment area or admissions criteria are subject to separate considerations and consultations.

Q9: How will joining the Trust enhance Osidge's academic focus?

A: Joining the Trust opens opportunities for collaboration and sharing best practices across all schools. Through shared expertise, professional development and collaborative projects, Osidge can enhance its academic focus and strive for continuous improvement.

Closer ties with Ashmole aims to foster collaboration and shared expertise while respecting the unique identity and context of Osidge School. The teaching and learning approach would

be a collaborative effort, focusing on pedagogical best practices and tailoring them to meet the specific needs and developmental stages of the students.

Joining Ashmole Trust does not mean the imposition of a specific teaching methodology or curriculum. Collaborative discussions and planning would be undertaken to ensure alignment and to leverage the strengths of all schools, while also respecting the unique identity and context of Osidge. The aim is to enhance educational opportunities and share expertise, while also considering the needs and dynamics of both schools.

Q10: Will Ashmole benefit from Osidge's land and facilities?

A: The potential benefits of joining Ashmole Trust are not limited to one-way advantages. The partnership can foster mutual benefits, including the possibility of using Osidge's land and facilities, depending on the specific needs and agreements between the schools.

Wellbeing and Ethos:

Q11: Will Osidge's caring ethos and focus on wellbeing be preserved?

A: Yes. Preserving Osidge's caring ethos and maintaining a focus on student wellbeing is an important consideration. Efforts would be made to ensure that these values are respected and integrated into the partnership, alongside the potential benefits of collaboration and shared best practices. The views and perspectives of the headteacher have been, and will be, crucial in the decision-making process to ensure alignment and to leverage the strengths of both schools, whilst respecting the identity and context of Osidge.

Preserving the caring ethos and prioritising well-being would be key considerations during the transition process. The partnership agreement and collaborative planning would address these concerns and establish mechanisms to ensure that the core values of Osidge such as care, respect and appreciation are upheld and strengthened.

Q12: Will the partnership prioritise results over children's happiness?

A: The partnership aims to strike a balance between academic achievement and student happiness. The wellbeing of children remains a priority, and the partnership seeks to provide an environment that supports both personal growth and academic success.

Communication regarding transition to the Ashmole Trust will be essential. Clear and timely communication channels would be established to keep parents and the wider community informed about the process, progress and opportunities for engagement. This may include meetings, newsletters, website updates and other communication tools to ensure transparency and clarity.

Parental involvement and engagement are critical for the success of any educational institution. Efforts will be made to foster and maintain our strong parent-school partnerships

through regular communication, transparent decision-making processes, parent forums and opportunities for involvement in school activities.

Decision-Making and Parental Involvement:

Q13: What powers will Osidge have in the partnership agreement?

A: The powers and decision-making authority of Osidge, including the headteacher, governors, and parents' association, would be determined through negotiation and outlined in the partnership agreement. It aims to strike a balance between local autonomy and collaborative decision-making.

The partnership agreement defines the rights and powers of Osidge's headteacher, governors, and other stakeholders. While the specifics would be determined through negotiations, the aim would be to establish a collaborative framework that ensures meaningful involvement and representation in decision-making processes. The agreement may outline areas where veto rights or consensus are required and provide a mechanism for ongoing communication and engagement.

Staff Concerns and Conditions:

Q14: What about school staff?

A: Staff have their own separate consultation process.

TUPE arrangements guarantee the employment rights of all Osidge employees should we go into formal arrangements with Ashmole Trust. Job roles and qualifications may be discussed during negotiations to ensure clarity and minimise disruptions for staff. Non-teaching staff will be treated fairly, and their roles and conditions will be addressed during the consultation process.