

The proposal for Portesbery to join LSEAT: A guide for parents and carers

Why We Are Considering This Change

We want to ensure we have the right long-term support around us to provide the best possible offer for our children.

- Joining the **London South East Academies Trust (LSEAT)** would provide access to a wider network of expertise and support whilst maintaining our identity.
- From February 2025, Portesbery entered **an associate agreement** with the London South East Academies Trust (LSEAT). This has allowed us to closely explore the costs, benefits and risks of joining as a full member.

What Would Stay the Same?

- **Our Ethos and Values** Portesbery's culture of warmth, dignity and high expectations remains unchanged.
- **Our Pupils' Daily Routine** Class teams, timetables, uniform, curriculum pathways, therapies and enrichment continue as they are.
- **Staff Roles, Pay and Conditions** The Head, Senior Leadership Team (SLT), current teachers, administrative team and support staff will all stay in their current roles. Existing contracts transfer under TUPE regulations. Pay, pensions and union recognition continue.
- **Admissions and SEND Commitment** Portesbery will remain a special school for children and young people with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), sensory impairments, physical difficulties or challenging behaviour.
- **Our Relationship With Families** Communication, partnership working and the personalised approach you know will stay central.
- **Current Cohort** All children currently in the school would remain in the school.
- **The Size of Our School** There are no plans to change the school's PAN (Published Admission Number) or designation as an SLD school.

What Will Change?

- **Governance Structure** An LSEAT Trust Board oversees strategic direction, with a Portesbery local governing body focused on Portesbery's pupils and community.
- **Access to Specialist Support** LSEAT provides expertise in safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, therapies, curriculum and leadership development.
- **Internal Operations** HR, finance, IT and estates support become centralised.
 - This reduces administrative pressure on school staff.

- This enables more support with ensuring the Local Authority update EHCPs and complete pupils' banding reviews on time.
- There would be a reduction in time and workload associated with tribunals.
- **Alignment With Systems** The school will move to some new systems, for example payroll, which will align us with the other schools in The Trust.
- **Term Dates** LSEAT has adopted the two - week October half term, like Surrey.
 - Surrey will shorten the summer holidays by a week (term would end 28th July 2027).
 - LSEAT will add the 5 days as additional time off in October; the summer holiday would remain the same as it is currently (term would end 22nd July 2027).
 - The governors know that extra time off can be difficult for families and are exploring ways to minimise the impact this could have.
- **Quality Assurance** Our school would be subject to quality assurance checks by LSEAT. Monitoring visits by local governors would continue and we would still be inspected by Ofsted - which is also expected to begin inspecting Multi Academy Trust (MATs).

What May Change?

- **Places for Future Students** The school could continue to accommodate pupils from other local authorities whose needs align with our provision but would be able to prioritise children with the highest need, even if they live outside the local area.
- **School Name Change** The word "Academy" might be added to the school name. A full name change is usually only considered for failing schools to enable a fresh start, which is not the case here.
- **Additional INSET Days** While LSEAT could propose to add additional INSET days, other LSEAT schools maintain the current 5 days. No extra INSET days would be added without full consultation with parents.

Benefits for Our Pupils and Staff

- **Stronger Specialist Support** Access a wider team of SEND professionals, therapists and behaviour specialists. The Trust is predominantly made up of specialist schools meaning the expertise and resources are tailored to our pupils.
- **Outcomes for Our Pupils** Staff would have consistent access to shared expertise and ideas across The Trust to improve pupil outcomes and experiences.
- **Improved Curriculum and Resources** Shared expertise across LSEAT's specialist and alternative provision schools.

- **Greater Stability and Resilience** A larger organisation can plan long-term, manage risk and support schools through challenges therefore future proofing our school.
- **Better Recruitment and Retention** Trust-wide training, leadership development and career progression help us keep our dedicated staff.
- **Being Part of the SEND / SEMH Surrey & Sussex Hub** A group of up to 8 specialist schools would form the Surrey & Sussex Hub overseen by Mark Bryant (previous executive head of two Outstanding SLD schools), who would work closely with all those schools to improve educational outcomes for pupils.
 - The Surrey & Sussex Hub currently consists of Walton Leigh School, Acre Wood, Manor Mead School, Bramley Grange Academy and Bramley Oak Academy.
- **Autonomy** We would maintain control over our curriculum and the way the school is run on a daily basis. Changes to these would be decided at a local level with the view to improve outcomes for pupils.

Costs involved

- **One-off Legal and Technical Costs** These include legal work, due diligence and transferring systems. We expect these to total no more than £20,000 and can meet this cost.
- **Ongoing Trust Contribution (Top- Slice)** A percentage (expected to reach 6%) of our total budget will go to the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) to fund central services (HR, finance, estates, IT) and school improvement.

How We Can Afford This

- **Out of Local Area (OLA) Placements** LSEAT academies charge a premium for pupils admitted from other local areas, with the rationale being that Surrey have invested in the building, infrastructure, renovation and expansion. Portesbery could use this funding to pay the trust contribution (6% top-slice). This will not affect any current pupils.
- **Financial Modelling With LSEAT** Portesbery believes it can afford to join LSEAT without any adverse impact on staffing or provision.
- **Savings from Shared Services** LSEAT's scale allows the potential for better prices for services (cleaning contracts, training), reduced admin workload and more efficient systems.
- **Protection of School Budgets** The Trust can help Portesbery secure the correct and appropriate funding for our pupils.

Timeline and Next Steps

- **Consultation Period** We welcome questions, concerns and feedback from families, staff and partners.
- **Governing Body Decision** After reviewing consultation feedback, governors will decide whether to proceed.
- **Trust and DfE Approval** If approved, LSEAT will complete their due diligence review of Portesbery, including a financial assessment, before the proposal moves to the DfE's Regional Director for final sign-off.
- **Proposed Conversion Date** If agreed, conversion and transition to LSEAT could take place as early as November 2026.

Please follow this link to view further detail and FAQs:

<https://www.portesbery.surrey.sch.uk/LSEAT-Academy-FAQs/>

If you have any additional questions please email:

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