



BOTHAL PRIMARY



Bothal Primary School Consultation

Information for parents, carers and stakeholders

www.wiseacademies.co.uk



Introduction

This booklet is intended to provide information for parents and the community. We hope this will answer some of the questions that you may have about the proposed partnership between Bothal Primary School and WISE Academies.

It is proposed that Bothal Primary School will become an academy and join the WISE Academies family of schools from 2026. The leaders and governors of both organisations are already working together to form this new relationship and to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children of Bothal.

When a school becomes an academy it is important to share information with key stakeholders including parents, employees and the local community that the school serves to understand what this means, give them all an opportunity to express their views and raise any questions.

In this booklet we have set out the real benefits of coming together with WISE Academies and how both Bothal Primary School and WISE Academies can move forward together into a bright future with the combined strength of an established Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) and an already strong school.

Around half of schools in England are already academies with many being part of successful MATs like WISE Academies.

Bothal Primary School is seeking to become an academy because the leaders and governors recognise the benefits of a school-led system which means more opportunity for sharing of best practice and effective benchmarking of standards.

The ethos and vision of Bothal Primary School is well matched to the approach of WISE Academies, and both organisations already aspire to the highest possible standards of education. We know that this is what matters most to parents, the local community and (most of all) to our children. Bothal Primary School has high expectations and WISE Academies is an organisation with a reputation for excellence.

After reading this document we hope that you will agree that academy conversion is in the best interests of Bothal Primary School and that the school will continue to go from strength to strength as part of WISE Academies. We would love to hear your views and would be pleased to respond to any queries that you may have about the academy conversion process.

Louise Hall
Executive Headteacher
Bothal Primary School

Zoe Carr, OBE
CEO
WISE Academies

Executive Headteacher's Message

It has been a privilege to serve this wonderful school community for many years. Throughout my time at Bothal, I've seen countless children grow, thrive, and go on to achieve great things – and I've had the pleasure of working with a dedicated and talented team who are deeply committed to giving every child the best possible start in life.

During my career, I've witnessed many changes in education – from curriculum and assessment reforms to a steady shift towards greater school autonomy. Bothal has always responded to these developments with professionalism, care and ambition, remaining focused on what matters most: delivering a high-quality education for our children and families.

As part of that journey, in 2007 the school took an important step as a founding member of The Ashington Learning Partnership, a Foundation Trust that has helped us to strengthen collaboration between schools and take greater ownership of our direction. This experience has laid strong foundations for the future and demonstrated the benefits of working in partnership to achieve shared goals.

In autumn 2023, our Ofsted inspection confirmed what we already knew – Bothal is an exceptional school. We were graded Outstanding in all five categories, with inspectors praising our high expectations, strong values, and the way in which pupils are supported to “be the best you can be” in every aspect of school life.

As Executive Headteacher, I am passionate about sustaining this success and creating the right conditions for the school to continue to grow and thrive. We believe the next natural step in our development is to join a strong Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) that shares our values and has the capacity to support our continued improvement.

Joining a MAT brings a range of benefits – including access to specialist expertise, wider professional development for staff, financial resilience and improved opportunities for pupils. Many schools that have joined established Academy Trusts have seen enhanced outcomes and enriched school experiences, both in and beyond the classroom.

Following careful consideration, we are proposing to join a successful and well-regarded MAT with strong roots in the North East. Its ethos closely aligns with ours, and we believe it offers the right blend of support and opportunity to help Bothal continue to excel for years to come.

We are currently holding a series of consultation events where parents and stakeholders can find out more, ask questions and share feedback (details are listed on the back page). You are also welcome to get in touch by email or letter – we want to hear your views as part of this important process.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to hearing your thoughts as we consider this exciting next step in our school's journey.



Louise Hall
Executive Headteacher
Bothal Primary School





A view from our Chair of Governors

I have a sense of great pride in the many achievements of staff and students during my nine years on the school governing body.

While our Ofsted 'Outstanding' report in late 2023 and super SATs results this year stand out for me as recent examples, so do the numerous messages of praise we have received from members of the public about our children's behaviour during their school trips last term.

For school isn't just about curriculum and tests, it is an environment where young people are nurtured to also learn and respect our values and expectations of relationships and conduct.

It is an approach we share with WISE Academies, which places great emphasis on this aspect of educating alongside academic achievement.

I am confident that as part of the WISE family, Bothal Primary School will continue to thrive and improve at an even faster pace in a supportive environment of excellence among other talented school leaders.

I am looking forward to the next step in our journey, and would urge parents/carers and other stakeholders to take part in this consultation and share your thoughts with us.

Gemma Craik

Chair of Governors

Bothal Primary School



A WISE choice!

Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) have many clear benefits compared to other school models. MATs are able to achieve important efficiencies and have proven to be the best model of sharing and collaboration.

WISE Academies has been established as a MAT since 2011, so is well placed to work with schools becoming academies. WISE Academies has its heart in the North East of England, successfully operating 16 academies, seven of which are in Northumberland.

The Academy Trust was delighted to launch its Research School and Great North Early Years Stronger Practice Hub in 2023. The award of both the Research School and Stronger Practice Hub is a great honour, being only one of 33 research schools and 18 stronger practice hubs in the country. This has allowed the Academy Trust to develop strong partnerships across the region and work with strategic partners, one of which is Bothal Primary School.

We are very proud of our track record, as we have repeatedly strengthened our schools and achieved good and outstanding Ofsted ratings.

The idea of partnership is important to us and is central to the success of our MAT. We know that we can learn from each other's successes. The way we work means that we can use the talent that exists within our organisation in a creative way to allow all of our academies to achieve their full potential. Key to our educational vision is the provision of a welcoming, caring and supportive learning environment which supports us to nurture the

development of each child in our care. This is something that we never lose sight of in our Academy Trust.

Through our work with our Research School and Early Years Stronger Practice Hub we are well informed about what high quality evidence-informed practice looks like. Bothal Primary School is already a very strong school and its union with WISE Academies will provide further strength to ensure your children receive the very best education.

One of the things we will strive to do is to ensure the Executive Headteacher and senior leaders of Bothal have more time to focus on what matters most, which is the education of your child. Both WISE Academies and Ashington Learning Partnership have dedicated staff working in Finance, HR, Governance, IT, Estates and Catering who will work together to provide expert support.

The Academy Trust recognises the dedication and hard work of all its staff to allow the greatest of opportunities to be provided for the children in our schools.



A view from our Chair of Trustees

Having served as Chair of Trustees for The Ashington Learning Partnership since its launch in 2007, entrusting the baton for our highly regarded schools to another organisation is a responsibility we do not take lightly. Our commitment to the children, families, and wider community of Ashington has always been at the heart of every decision we make, and this step is taken with the utmost care and belief in what will best serve their future.

Trustees, like our colleagues on the governing body, have carefully examined both the potential benefits and the possible challenges of transferring to a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), and in particular the choice of WISE Academies.

Across the country, academisation has now reached a tipping point, and there are clear advantages to being part of a larger network of primary schools. WISE is a Multi Academy Trust with a national reputation for excellence, regularly highlighted by Ministers as an exemplar in the education sector.

As someone born and educated in Ashington, and who has enjoyed success in business, I see investment in our community not only as a responsibility but also as a privilege. I want to ensure that the children of Ashington have the very best opportunities to achieve and thrive, and I believe this new partnership will help our schools reach even greater levels of success.

Along with my fellow trustees, I am confident that we have chosen a MAT partner that reflects our vision and values, and upholds the high expectations we have for our children. Together, we will prepare them for the increasingly competitive and technologically advanced world of work, while ensuring that our schools remain firmly rooted in the strength, pride, and spirit of Ashington.

I would encourage parents, carers, and all members of our community to read this document, which provides further information about academisation and WISE Academies, and to take part in one of the upcoming consultation events if possible.

Chris Smith

Chair of Trustees, Ashington Learning Partnership



Your questions answered

Will the name of the school change?

The word 'Academy' may replace 'Primary School'.

Will the curriculum change?

We feel that it is important to follow the National Curriculum so that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum offer. The Bothal team have developed all of their curriculum with this in mind so there is no need for change. Our academies continue to collaborate with other subject leads and share best practice.

Will we have a new uniform for pupils?

The school uniform will remain the same other than any changes to the school's name as described above. Typically, academies within the Academy Trust have a badge that acknowledges that they are part of the WISE family of schools whilst also maintaining their unique identity therefore the WISE logo may be incorporated into the school's logo.

We understand it is important to be aware of factors such as cost and availability of the uniform. Because of this, parents will not be expected to replace existing uniform and the incorporation of any change in name / logo will take place over time.

Will staff change after conversion to an academy?

No. All staff will transfer to WISE Academies on conversion. The leaders and governors of Bothal are strong leaders and are enthusiastic about the prospect of working with like-minded professionals from across the Academy Trust.

What is the benefit to Bothal Primary School?

WISE Academies has a national reputation and has received many plaudits and high profile visitors including Government Ministers, National and Regional Schools Commissioners and the Chief Inspector of Ofsted. By Bothal joining the MAT there will be greater opportunity to shine a spotlight on the high quality provision and great work at Bothal at a national level.

WISE has many high performing academies which would allow the leaders at Bothal to engage in benchmarking with other great schools. Together they can learn from each others' successes and strive for the highest possible expectations.

Could class sizes change?

Organisation of classes is very much a matter for determination by the leaders of Bothal taking account of pupil numbers and characteristics along with staff availability and curriculum needs. This is not something that WISE Academies prescribes.

How will pupil admissions be handled?

Parents will notice no difference in this respect. Although the Academy Trust will become the admissions authority, it must comply with the same Admissions Code. This means that the Academy Trust will participate in the co-ordinated admission arrangements operated by the Local Authority (LA), participate in the local in-year Fair Access Protocol and comply with equalities law on admissions.

Would sessional hours change?

There is no change planned. Bothal already determines the timing of its school day and can make changes as necessary to meet the needs of the curriculum.

Will policies change?

Key policies that affect your child's education will remain the same. Stakeholders will be reassured that the policies of WISE Academies are fully inclusive to all children.

Will the school receive more money after academy conversion?

Academies receive their funding directly from the Government rather than via their Local Authority (LA). The school will receive the same level of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the LA as a maintained school.

Will this change the relationship with other schools in the area?

No. It is recognised that Bothal has well established links with other schools in the area which will continue.

WISE Academies has a very strong commitment to working with all local schools and academies outside of the Academy Trust in the areas where the Academy Trust operates through collaboration, provision of services and the work of its Research School and Early Years Stronger Practice Hub.

Transition is important at every stage of a child's education and therefore it is deemed essential that strong links are maintained and developed with other school phases to ensure continuity of learning. Like Bothal Primary School, WISE Academies has its heart in the North-East of England. Everything we do is focused on the success of our local communities and for Bothal; this would only be further enhanced with its alliance with WISE Academies.



Why does WISE Academies want to join with Bothal Primary School?

Through meetings with the Executive Headteacher, Governors and Board of Trustees it was quickly recognised that Bothal Primary School and WISE Academies shared the same vision and ethos.

Bothal Primary School has an Executive Headteacher, Governing Body and Board of Trustees that recognise the opportunities of working in this partnership. The mutual benefits of working together to serve this local community are clear through the use of shared resources, expertise, intelligence and above all a shared commitment to the highest expectations for Bothal.

Conclusions

As can be seen, WISE Academies is built on firm foundations and is determined to develop outstanding academies. Just like Bothal, every effort is made to provide a learning environment where all children achieve highly, are well prepared for the next phase of their education and develop their unique talents and interests.

We very much welcome the opportunity to work with our new partner in taking all of our academies forward into an even brighter future.



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We are determined to create outstanding academies and will work hard to ensure that every school in the WISE family is a first class organisation.”

Meet the CEO

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. My name is Zoe Carr and I am proud to serve as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of WISE Academies.

I have worked in education since 1995 when I qualified as a primary school teacher and have spent the last 21 years in school leadership; 12 of which have been as CEO of WISE Academies.

In 2018, I was honoured to receive an OBE for my services to education and I have been a serving Ofsted Inspector since 2017.

My passion has always been getting the very best outcomes for all pupils through the highest quality of education and seeing each child thrive as they develop their unique talents and interests.

Over the years as CEO I have seen time and time again the real practical advantages of schools being part of our Multi Academy Trust, and how this has benefited pupils across the region. The Trust's contribution to the success of its schools has been recognised by Ofsted many times.

It would be a privilege to work with Bothal Primary School and for WISE Academies to play a pivotal role in shaping your child's education at this important stage in their life.

I look forward to meeting you at forthcoming meetings for parents and members of the local community.



A stylized, handwritten signature of Zoe Carr in grey ink.

Zoe Carr, OBE
CEO
WISE Academies

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The breadth of talent that exists across the Academy Trust workforce is used in a creative way to allow all academies to rapidly achieve their full potential. ”





An Academy Trust with a national reputation for excellence

"I firmly believe that becoming an academy can bring enormous benefits to schools and their pupils. And that's often about coming together as an Academy Trust. Multi-Academy Trust's are powerful vehicles for improving schools - by sharing expertise, working collaboratively, driving improvements. This is something we want to see more of, because it repeatedly shows that it can improve outcomes for pupils. Take the WISE Academies in the North East, which has taken on nine sponsored academies since 2012. Since then every single school inspected has been judged as good or outstanding by Ofsted."

Rt. Hon. Damian Hinds, Secretary of State for Education, April 2019 - Academies Show

"It was a hugely valuable experience for us to see such a caring, coherent and consistent Trust and one which is achieving genuine excellence on so many fronts. While also having a mindset of constantly wanting to get better. A few of the heads have commented on the quality of what we were presented with, but more importantly that we then really did see this when we were out in the schools."

Matthew Knox (former HMI and CEO of Inspire Partnership Multi Academy Trust, Wakefield), October 2024

"We know that the past few years have been tough for Croftway, as it has for all schools, so everyone there should be extremely proud of being judged outstanding for the first time. An outstanding grade means just that: their pupils are getting an excellent education."

"We've seen that sustained and rapid progress has been made in all aspects of school life since their last inspection. When we visited in January this year, it was clearly a school where children flourished."

"It has an ambitious curriculum, excellent teaching, particularly for children with special educational needs, and exemplary pupil behaviour. The school leaders and teaching staff are relentless in their drive and determination to provide a high-quality education to all pupils in a safe and supportive environment."

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector (following a visit to Croftway Academy in March 2023 after the academy achieved an outstanding judgement, having joined WISE Academies as a previously inadequate school)

"Governance, including the local governing body and the board of trustees, is exceptionally strong, well organised, skilled and knowledgeable. The trust supports and challenges the school's work well."

Extract from Ofsted report of Adderlane Academy, June 2025

This is a consultation document

The information in this booklet is provided to assist parents and the local community in understanding the benefits that lie ahead as a result of the partnership between Bothal Primary School and WISE Academies.

It is an important part of the conversion process that we hear from parents and other interested parties so that they can express their views and receive answers to any questions that they might have.

A consultation meeting will take place at the school to give you an opportunity to meet school leaders and members of the WISE team: **Thursday September 25 – 5.30pm at Bothal Primary School Upper Site.**

The email address for responses is: **consultations@wiseacademies.co.uk**

Alternatively, should you wish to submit your views in writing please do so to: **MAT consultation, Bothal Primary School, High Market, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 8NT**

We look forward to hearing from you!

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