



# **RICHARD TAUNTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE CONSULTATION**

*To dissolve the Corporation of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College and to enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education in relation to a new 16-19 Academy, to be formed on transfer and dissolution of the Corporation.*

**CONSULTATION PERIOD: 26 MAY – 14 JULY**

The Corporation of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College wishes to form a multi-academy trust with St Vincent College that if approved, would be known as Lighthouse Learning Trust (the Trust).

To qualify for membership of the multi-academy trust, the Corporation of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College is proposing that it dissolves in order that Richard Taunton Sixth Form College can convert to a 16-19 Academy and join the Trust.

We are consulting on our proposal to:

1. Dissolve the Corporation of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College
2. Enter a funding agreement with the Secretary of State in relation to a new 16-19 Academy and join Lighthouse Learning Trust as a founder member

We are pleased to provide further details on our proposals here. We believe there is an exciting future ahead of us and we welcome your feedback.

## PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

---

Richard Taunton Sixth Form College and St Vincent College have collaborated successfully for a number of years. The colleges' values of inclusivity and social mobility are aligned, and we have a passionate commitment to a shared vision to deliver high quality teaching that raises student aspirations, increases levels of achievement, and ensures that all young people in the respective college communities have access to first class education, regardless of background or circumstances.

We believe that establishing a multi-academy trust is the natural next step in strengthening that collaboration, and ensuring we deliver the best possible outcomes for young people. It would also provide the resilience and capacity for each college to continue to offer a full and varied sixth form curriculum to its communities.

Lighthouse Learning Trust, as a single legal entity, would have overarching responsibility for the governance of its founding members - Richard Taunton Sixth Form College and St Vincent College - and would operate with a shared executive structure and services.

## OUR CASE FOR CHANGE

---

**Higher quality and standards:** through pooled expertise, knowledge, best practice, and the development of a shared quality improvement unit, the Trust would deliver a step change in the quality of our provision.

**Resilience and investment:** we are no longer able to achieve further economies of scale as individual organisations, but we could achieve this collectively as a Trust. Both organisations are already lean and have implemented every cost saving measure possible, without compromising quality of teaching and care. Savings and efficiencies generated through the Trust would enable us to make further investments in front line teaching, pursue innovative projects and, critically, retain the broadest possible local education offer.

**Stay local:** school students are increasingly choosing to move out of cities to attend Sixth Form College. By implementing a school-facing strategy, we can use resources from both colleges to highlight and promote the high quality education options available in their respective local areas, and to develop and deliver an even better offer for the local community.

**Innovation:** taking this forward thinking and innovative approach would help to future proof the college by ensuring financial resilience and sustainability.

**Growth and stronger school partnerships:** implementing these changes opens the door to new growth opportunities that we cannot access as a standalone Sixth Form College. Other academies and schools could join the Trust and benefit from the expertise of member colleges, whilst we benefit from their knowledge and skills.

If we do not take this action, we cannot guarantee a continued high quality general education offering to our local community. We have to respond to changing economic, political and social trends if we are to thrive and secure our future.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MAKING THIS CHANGE?

---

At the core of the proposal is that the Trust delivers the best possible education for students, regardless of background, and that we can deliver more together than as separate institutions.

We believe the key benefits will be:

**Raising standards and improving quality:** as a multi-academy trust we can spend more money directly on improving the student experience and the quality of teaching and learning. The Trust will establish a shared quality improvement unit. This will enable us to make the most of our shared expertise, knowledge and resources to ensure the best possible outcomes for all students. A systematic approach to best practice sharing will be implemented across curriculum areas in both colleges, with a focus on quality, innovation, idea sharing and support for preparation of curriculum materials

**Financial resilience:** the college is operating in a constrained environment in terms of funding, and already has a lean structure. The opportunity to make savings by not paying VAT and by sharing support services, will allow more funds to be invested in front line teaching and learning. It will also mean that we can secure the best possible financial position during the forecasted demographic dip, and subsequent growth.

**A better offer:** the savings we would generate being part of a multi-academy trust would allow us to continue to provide the fullest possible general education offer to our local community, and potentially enhance it.

**Better opportunities for staff:** as part of a larger organisation we expect greater opportunities for personal and professional development of all staff, including better career progression and opportunities for secondments.

**Supports growth:** as a multi-academy trust we have the opportunity to grow, to include other schools and colleges, and to collaborate in a formal way. This extends the shared vision and values of both colleges, brings further expertise and fresh thinking to enhance the student experience and builds financial resilience through economies of scale.

## WHAT WILL CHANGE IF THE PROPOSAL IS IMPLEMENTED?

---

- The Corporation of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College would change its legal status to a 16-19 Academy. In order to do that, the existing Corporation would be dissolved
- We would be a founder member of a newly formed multi-academy trust known as Lighthouse Learning Trust
- There would be a new board of governing Trustees, accountable for the performance of each academy within the Trust. The Trustees would be drawn from the Corporations of the founding colleges
- The Trust would operate a central shared function that employs a Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Finance Director. This shared executive structure would include the current leadership of both of the founding colleges
- All staff would be employed by the Trust rather than individual colleges
- The Trust would build on our existing plans towards a shared service model across some support functions
- We would work towards alignment of curriculum, timetables and exam boards across colleges
- We would no longer pay VAT, enabling more money to be spent on teaching and learning
- There would be even greater collaboration across colleges supported by technology
- A new quality improvement division would be established
- As a 16-19 Academy we would be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State. The model form of that document can be found: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-and-free-school-funding-agreements-multi-academy-trust>

## WHAT WILL STAY THE SAME IF THE PROPOSAL IS IMPLEMENTED?

---

- The brand, identity, name, values, vision and mission of the college
- The college will continue to provide education to students aged 16-19
- Alice Wrighton would remain principal of the college
- Staff terms and conditions would remain aligned to the SFCA national agreements
- Richard Taunton Sixth Form College would have a local governing body, whose work would support the college and the Trust board
- Students would remain registered with their existing college
- Admissions arrangements would continue to be operated at individual institutional level
- We would continue to refer to ourselves as a sixth form college

## TIMELINE AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS

---

We are consulting with stakeholders for a six-week period from 26 May – 14 July. Following consideration of the consultation outcomes, if both Corporations wish to proceed, both colleges aim to become 16-19 Academies, and part of the Lighthouse Learning Trust, by 1 October 2017.

## TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

---

To share your views on our proposal please complete our online survey by 14 July 2017.

Survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/richardtaunton>

## FAQs

---

### **Is this proposal a merger of two colleges?**

The benefit of the multi-academy trust structure is that it allows both colleges to retain and build on their unique identities, whilst benefitting from a structure that allows more formal collaboration on identified priorities. The option of a formal merger of the colleges was considered as part of the Area Based Review, but was disregarded in favour of a multi-academy trust model. This offers the benefits of formal collaboration and cost savings, alongside the ability to retain the unique identities and characteristics of each college, and also retain a focus on serving local communities.

### **How will these changes affect staff?**

Currently, the employer for all staff is the Corporation of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College. After conversion, all staff would be employed by Lighthouse Learning Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions - this includes pensions. Continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with TUPE - the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

We believe that being part of a multi-academy trust would provide greater opportunities for staff than may be available in a standalone college including increased professional development opportunities for all staff, enhanced career progression across the members of the Trust, opportunities for secondments and mentoring. By operating within a shared structure we also expect greater resilience during times of demographic dips.

### **How will these changes affect students?**

Students would remain registered at Richard Taunton Sixth Form College. We would continue with our aim of providing the very best education for all students and our ongoing commitment to improving quality.

Students are currently represented on the board of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College. Current legislation does not permit students to sit on the board of a multi-academy trust. However, students can be members of the local governing body of each college, and we would continue to facilitate that.

**Will we get more money as an academy?**

16-19 academies receive the same level of funding per student as sixth form colleges. However, as an academy we can claim back VAT, which we are unable to do as a sixth form college. Therefore, our overall financial position will be better.

Additionally, we anticipate further savings through joint procurement and alignment of support services across both colleges.

**Who holds academies to account?**

We would still be accountable to Ofsted. Academies are also accountable to the Education Funding Agency and the Regional Schools Commissioner. Parents would continue to be involved in the governance of colleges through the Local Governing Body.

**How are multi- academy trusts governed?**

They have a Board of Trustees made up of people with a blend of educational, legal, financial and HR skills and expertise. Their role is to make sure that the Academies offer the best possible education for their students. They also have a responsibility to make sure the multi-academy trust runs effectively, efficiently, and compliantly.

Trustees are volunteers and are not paid. The Board of Trustees may delegate many of its powers to a Local Governing Body(s), which will have a mixture of representatives from parents, staff, students and the local community.

**Who is the CEO of the Trust?**

Matt Atkinson principal of St Vincent Sixth Form College would be the CEO. He would continue as Principal of St Vincent College whilst fulfilling the requirements of the CEO post. Matt is also well known to the Richard Taunton Sixth Form College community as the college's previous Deputy Principal.

**What input do parents/staff/stakeholders have as part of the consultation/decision making process?**

Parents, staff, students and other stakeholders will be involved in the consultation process. Their views will be considered by each Corporation's Board of Governors as part of the decision making process. The Governors will, however, make the final decision.

**Is the consultation process a vote on whether to proceed?**

No. The decision whether to go ahead has to be, and can only be, taken by the Corporation of Richard Taunton Sixth Form College. The consultation is an opportunity for interested parties to comment on the proposal. These comments will be considered by Governors before making any decision to proceed. The other parties who have to confirm we can proceed are the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Transactions Unit (part of Education Funding Agency).

## WHAT ARE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A SIXTH FORM COLLEGE AND AN ACADEMY?

	Sixth Form College (SFC) Sector	Academy Sector
<b>Borrowing</b>	SFCs are able to borrow, i.e. from private banks/enter into finance leases.	Academies cannot borrow without Secretary of State consent.
<b>VAT</b>	Cannot recover VAT.	An SFC converting to an academy will be able to reclaim VAT.
<b>Age Range</b>	It is easier for a SFC to start admitting younger students.	Recruitment of under 16s would place the 16-19 academy into the scope of the Admissions Code.  There is no barrier to an 11-16 school, or primary school joining a multi-academy trust.
<b>Regulation</b>	SFCs have more independence than academies. Please refer to the EFA guide on the law and regulation, which applies to SFCs and academies: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/357068/statutory_schools_policies_Sept_14_FINAL.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/357068/statutory_schools_policies_Sept_14_FINAL.pdf</a>	Academies are more heavily regulated than SFCs. They are subject not only to charity law (to the extent that it applies to exempt charities), and company law. They are also accountable to EFA through their funding agreements (and the Academies Financial Handbook 2016).
<b>Admissions</b>	No requirement for their admissions policy to be approved by EFA. Not subject to Admissions Code.	There is no requirement for 16 to 19 academies and free schools to comply with the Schools Admissions Code, but their admission arrangements need to be fair, objective and transparent.
<b>Inspection</b>	Common Inspection Framework	Common Inspection Framework
<b>Performance Measures</b>	16 to 19 academy performance is reported in the 16 to 18 performance tables  Independent Learning Record.	16 to 19 academy performance is reported in the 16 to 18 performance tables  16 to 19 academies established from sixth-form colleges as part of the area review process complete the ILR so there is no change in data collection processes.
<b>Intervention</b>	The same triggers are applied to determine if a 16 to 19 academy is underperforming as those applied to SFCs. In summary terms: 1. an overall Ofsted judgement of inadequate 2. performance below the National Minimum Standard set each year	The same triggers are applied to determine if a 16 to 19 academy is underperforming as those applied to sixth-form colleges.  RSCs are responsible for monitoring educational standards in academies in their area. If a 16 to 19 academy is judged inadequate by Ofsted, RSCs will consider appropriate improvement action in the first instance

		EFA monitors and intervenes on financial performance in academies.
<b>Growth</b>	Not possible to operate schools within the FE setting. Less opportunities for growth, other than through a sponsorship arrangement.	Model allows for growth, leading to increased purchasing power, security and potential to deliver financial benefits.
<b>Funding initiatives</b>	Less funding initiatives available to sixth form colleges. This is may be due to the fact the academies are central in Government policy.	Academies have access to funding initiatives, which are not easily accessible to SFCs (Capital funding/RPI (insurance indemnity scheme)).
<b>Capital Funding</b>		Access to capital may be more favourable. MATs with at least five academies and more than 3,000 pupils will receive a capital funding allocation to deploy strategically across their estate, to address their priority maintenance and expansion needs.