

Approval given for two primary schools to become Academies

28 March 2024



Two primary schools are due to become academies and join a multi-academy trust after their plans were approved by the Department for Education (DfE).

The Orchard Schools Partnership, which consists of Benfield Primary School and Hangleton Primary School, will convert to academy status and join the London-based Eko Trust.

The governors unanimously decided to go ahead with the conversion to academy status late last year.

Now, after the DfE decision, various “due diligence” checks will be carried out before the schools formally become academies, with the final date yet to be set.

Brighton and Hove City Council is expected to prepare to transfer staff to the Eko Trust under rules known as TUPE – the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

Emma Lake, executive head teacher at the Orchard Schools Partnership, said: “We are committed to ensuring our pupils continue to receive the best possible education and are delighted that the Department for Education has approved the decision to convert to academy status and recognises the benefits that joining such a strong trust will bring.

“We know by joining Eko Trust, our pupils and staff will benefit from an array of additional resources, expertise and a collaborative community.

“Thank you to our community for their support and contributions throughout the process.

“We now look forward to working closely with Eko Trust to go through TUPE alongside Brighton and Hove City Council and hopefully join them later this year.”

Orchard said that it wanted to join Eko Trust to ensure that it could continue providing high-quality education for its pupils and support for its staff.

Six of Eko Trust’s seven schools are rated outstanding or good by Ofsted and the trust said that it hoped to grow its base in Brighton and Hove over the next few years.

Eko Trust chief executive Rebekah Iiyambo said: “We were thrilled that the Department for Education has approved the decision for Orchard to continue on their journey of joining our trust.

“We have had the pleasure of working with Emma and the team over several months and know first hand how dedicated they are to supporting their school communities and ensuring they continue to evolve and enhance their provisions for their pupils and families.

“Orchard shares our values and commitment to nurturing, growing and developing people so that our children and families have the best opportunities to thrive and we are confident that this will be an excellent and fruitful partnership for all involved.

“They will be excellent additions to our Brighton and Hove hub which we look forward to growing over the next few years.”

The move was criticised last November by Brighton and Hove Trades Council as a “complete breakdown in trust” after school governors only informed the council and unions on the same day they announced the public consultation, which had already started.

The consultation process was extended for two weeks after councillors urged the schools to pause their academisation plans.

The schools had previously said that joining the trust would support curriculum design and academic planning, improve SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) provision, strengthen pastoral support and enhance professional development for staff.

[Source: Brighton & Hove News] Photo by [Katerina Holmes](#)