**Proposed Transfer of The Pear Tree Alliance to The Cornovii Multi Academy Trust**

**Frequently Asked Questions for Parents / Carers, Pupils & The Community**

1. **Who/What is The Pear Tree Alliance?**

The Pear Tree Alliance is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) of one school, Pear Tree Primary. As a MAT, it has existed since 01.09.2015. Mrs Hadfield is the CEO and Accounting Officer for the Trust, in addition to being the Headteacher of Pear Tree Primary School. Further details about The Pear Tree Alliance MAT can be found at [www.peartreeprimary.co.uk/page/governance/20533](http://www.peartreeprimary.co.uk/page/governance/20533)

1. **Who/What is The Cornovii Trust?**

The Cornovii Trust (TCT) consists of five schools; Alsager Highfields Primary, Alsager School, Audlem St James Church of England Primary, Brine Leas School and Weston Village Primary. It is a local MAT, the term ‘Cornovii’ was the name given to the inhabitants of Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire in ancient times. The Trust will always remain a local MAT, supporting schools in this area and focusing on ensuring a child’s school journey from the age of 4 – 18 is as seamless and impactful as possible. It was formed when two smaller trusts (Alsager MAT and Brine MAT merged in September 2022). Mr Richard Middlebrook (as Chief Executive Officer) oversees all five schools and has overall accountability for the organisation but the leadership and management of each school is delivered by the five Headteachers (Mrs Woollam at Highfields; Mrs O’Neill at Alsager; Mr Perry at Audlem; Mr Cole at Brine Leas and Mr Cutts at Weston). Similarly, TCT’s Board of Trustees have overall accountability for the organisation but as much as possible of the responsibility for this is delegated to the local governing body at each school. Further details about TCT can be found at [www.thecornoviiTrust.org](http://www.thecornoviitrust.org)

1. **When is this planned transfer due to happen?**

It is hoped the transfer to The Cornovii Trust will be in place on 01.09.2024. If / when it does, The Pear Tree Alliance MAT would cease to exist and Pear Tree Primary would revert to having a local governing body and become the sixth school in The Cornovii Trust.

1. **Can a school transfer without the support of the Members and Trustees?**

No. The Members and Trustees for the Pear Tree Alliance must approve the transfer. They have completed due diligence on TCT, driven this process (the reasons for it are listed below in point 16) and been kept informed before this has proposal has been shared with all key stakeholders.

1. **What is the role of the local governing bodies in a larger trust?**

If this transfer was to happen, Pear Tree Primary local governing body and Mrs Hadfield, as Headteacher, would have the responsibility for leading, running and managing the school (as now). The only difference is that the ultimate accountability would now sit with the Trustees of The Cornovii Trust and no longer with the Trustees of the Pear Tree Alliance.

1. **Do trusts need to consult before transferring?**

Yes, all trusts are required to inform, and if necessary consult with, staff, parents and carers, community stakeholders and Trade Unions when we can. For the Pear Tree Alliance staff, whose employment will transfer under TUPE (The Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations), there is a consultation process to undertake. There is no specified length of time for this process and schools/trusts have flexibility in how it is conducted. This formal process is now underway and will run from 05.02.24 to 04.03.24.

1. **Do we have to cover the cost to transfer?**

Yes, as both the Pear Tree Alliance and The Cornovii Trust are already MATs, (unlike an academy conversion), there is no money provided by the Department for Education for transfer/mergers. There will be some legal costs which will be met by both parties.

1. **What is the timeframe for this deadline of 01.09.24 to be met?**
* Information sharing period to run from 05.02.24 – 04.03.24. Including an information evening at Pear Tree Primary starting at 5pm on 12.02.24.
* Following the information sharing period, Pear Tree Alliance Trustees vote on whether to submit an application to the Regional Directorate (RD) for the northwest on transferring to The Cornovii Trust on 18.03.24.
* By 01.04.24 – submit transfer application to the RD.
* If approved by the RD, the legal process would begin of Pear Tree School adopting TCT minority Articles of Association and the school buildings and land being transferred to TCT.
* All legal transfer work completed (Funding Agreements, Transfer Agreements, TUPE etc) - by June/July 2024.
* Pear Tree Primary transfers to The Cornovii Trust 01.09.24.
* Pear Tree Alliance MAT is wound up during the autumn term ’24.
1. **Can a Trust (Pear Tree Alliance) withdraw from the transfer process?**

Trusts are able to withdraw right up until the point that they sign the Funding Agreement (this would happen in the summer term, if the vote was to proceed). Once this is signed, it is a legally binding agreement.

1. **Will Pear Tree Primary School change its name, identity or uniform, as a result of this transfer?**

No. The individuality of each school in The Cornovii Trust is celebrated and retained. We are a family not a chain. Under the Trust’s scheme of delegation, any decision around name of the school, uniform, mission statement, length of the school day etc would be a decision for the local governing body (as it is now).

1. **Will Pear Tree have greater freedom over admissions?**

No. We still have to comply with the Schools Admissions Code. Our current admissions

procedures would continue.

1. **Would we remain part of the coordinated admissions with the Local Authority?**

Yes, we would continue to be within the LA coordination of admissions i.e. the process for

allocating school places to children.

1. **Will Local Authorities still have the responsibility for planning for additional places when there is a growth in student numbers within an area?**

Local Authorities still have overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient places to meet demand locally.

1. **What will happen to Special Educational Needs (SEN) support?**

This will remain as now, so the transfer will make no difference to current arrangements.

1. **Will Pear Tree still be able to access funding for capital projects/building improvements to our school?**

Yes. However, due to the size of The Cornovii Trust, this will no longer be through applying to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), when we might / might not be successful. TCT qualifies for the School Condition Allocation (SCA) which would give the Trust a guaranteed sum of money each year to be spent on capital work across all the schools in the Trust, based on the areas of greatest need.

1. **What are the reasons for transferring to The Cornovii Trust?**

 By becoming part of TCT and joining a Trust of six schools, it will give Pear Tree the ability and

 capacity to:

* Further improve the educational experience and outcomes for all our children through sharing good practice, resources and expertise from across six schools.
* Improve the transition for our children from primary to secondary school through working closely with colleagues from both phases.
* Develop Pear Tree staff through working with colleagues from a range of local schools.
* Establish succession planning programmes and develop staff and leaders.
* Support staff recruitment and retention through increased professional development opportunities across a group of schools.
* Be more financially effective and efficient through economies of scale and centralising services where and when possible.
* Focus funds where they are most needed and work collaboratively to meet need more effectively and with greater speed.
1. **What process of financial audit will be demanded of academies and to whom will the auditors be responsible?**

As now for The Pear Tree Alliance, the main audit will be conducted by an external independent auditor, appointed by the Trust. In addition, we have termly internal audits too. The ESFA monitors trust’s finances and can audit at any time if it wishes.

1. **To whom are the TCT/Trustees/ and the schools accountable?**

We will remain responsible and accountable to the various organisations, governing bodies and government appointed officials as we are now.

1. **Are there plans to extend/grow The Cornovii Trust any further?**

 TCT will always be a local trust, providing local support and solution to local need in the regions of

Cheshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire, hence the name ‘Cornovii’. TCT do not intend to grow beyond these local geographical areas, the Trust believes that the best driver for school improvement is through collaboration and this is much easier when schools are geographically close together. TCT also believe that their role is to make a child’s school journey from the age of 4 – 18 as smooth, seamless and successful as possible. By working cross phase (primary and secondary) and focusing on the transition from primary to secondary school in a local area, it is the children who will benefit. TCT do hope to grow further in the Nantwich area, they are very hopeful that other local schools will choose to join them in the near future.

**END OF FAQS FOR PARENTS / CARERS, PUPILS & THE COMMUNITY**

Kind regards,

 

Mrs Ruth Hadfield and Mr Simon Holden

Headteacher Chair of Governors