

# Frequently Asked Questions

Deansbrook Infant School — Proposal to Join AIM Academies Trust

Consultation period: 3 June – 26 June 2026

This document answers the most common questions about the proposal for Deansbrook Infant School to convert to academy status and join AIM Academies Trust. If your question is not covered here, please attend our consultation meeting on Wednesday, 10th June at 5:30pm at Deansbrook Infant School, or submit your question via the response form.

## Section 1 — Understanding academies and academy trusts

### What is an academy?

Academies are state schools funded directly by central government, rather than through the local authority. Academy status gives schools more freedom to be innovative and creative with the curriculum, timetabling, staffing and governance.

All academies continue to be inspected by Ofsted and comply with the same rules as other schools on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), exclusions and admissions.

An academy is part of a not-for-profit charitable trust (the MAT) run by a board of trustees. Further information from the Department for Education is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

### What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi Academy Trust is a charitable company responsible for overseeing the running of a number of schools. It has three layers of governance: the Members; the Directors (Trustees); and the Local Governing Bodies.

MATs can include primary, secondary and special schools. The partnership between schools in a MAT ensures they can share skills, best practice and resources, securing best value for money. Children will not notice any immediate difference — they will be, in the same classrooms, with the same teaching staff.

### What additional responsibilities does academy status bring?

- Currently Barnet Local Authority employs school staff. Going forward, AIM Academies Trust would be the employer.
- The Academy Trust would be responsible for admissions, although the Local Authority would still co-ordinate and ensure fair admission arrangements in line with the School Admissions Code.
- The Academy Trust usually enters into a 125-year lease for the school land. The school already has responsibility for maintaining the land and buildings.

## Section 2 — About AIM Academies Trust

### Who is AIM Academies Trust and what are their values?

AIM Academies Trust was formed in 2012 with an ambitious vision: that with structure, love and high expectations, there should be no limits to what any child can achieve. We believe that demographics should not define destiny.

Today we are three academies — all in areas of high deprivation in North London — serving over 2,700 students from age four to nineteen. Each school is led in a way that suits its pupils and its community. We deliberately keep decision-making close to the ground, so that leadership is visible, reachable and answerable.

Our approach is built on five commitments: transforming the culture and environment of our schools; delivering a high-quality, knowledge-rich curriculum; investing in teaching and teacher development through instructional coaching; developing leaders at all levels; and transforming the life chances of every young person in our care.

You can find out more about AIM Academies Trust at: [www.aimacademies.org](http://www.aimacademies.org)

### What is AIM Academies Trust's track record?

AIM Academies Trust has a strong and well-evidenced record of improving schools. Our three academies have achieved the following:

- Deansbrook Junior School: In 2025, 95% of pupils achieved the expected standard in their KS2 SATs, placing the school in the top 1% of schools nationally. Ofsted rated the school Good across all categories in March 2023, noting an ambitious curriculum, strong SEND support, positive relationships between staff and pupils, and effective professional development for teachers.
- London Academy (Edgware): Ranked among the top 60 schools twice nationally for GCSE progress in the last four years. One of the first 12 academies established under the Labour Government's flagship academies programme.
- AIM North London (Enfield): Received a Good rating from Ofsted for the first time in the school's history in 2023, just four years after joining the trust. Ranked in the top 25% of schools nationally for GCSE results in 2024 and oversubscribed in 2026.

### How many schools are in AIM Academies Trust, and where are they?

AIM Academies Trust currently operates three academies, all in North London:

- Deansbrook Junior School, Mill Hill, London NW7 (primary, ages 7–11)
- London Academy, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 (all through, ages 4–19)
- AIM North London, Enfield, N9 (secondary, ages 11–19)

Together, the three schools serve over 2,700 students.

### Why does AIM Academies Trust want Deansbrook Infant School to join?

Deansbrook Infant and Junior schools have shared a site and a community for many years. Bringing both schools together within the same trust is a natural and logical step — one that creates a genuine educational journey from Nursery all the way through to the end of Year 6.

Working closely with Deansbrook Junior School we have seen first-hand how the Infant School works and the quality of education it provides for its children. We admire the school's nurturing ethos, its commitment to its community and the dedication of its staff. These values are entirely aligned with our own.

As a trust, we are committed to ensuring that every school retains its own identity and community feel. Our role is to strengthen and support, not to impose or absorb. Deansbrook Infant School joining the trust will allow both schools to collaborate more deeply, share expertise and resources, and provide a truly joined-up experience for children and families in the local area.

### **What has the experience been like for Deansbrook Junior School since joining the trust?**

Deansbrook Junior School has been part of AIM Academies Trust since 2012 — over a decade of partnership. In that time, the school has gone from strength to strength. Staffing has remained stable throughout that entire time. Last summer, our long-standing Headteacher, Mr Putman, retired, along with Ms Greig and Ms Beadle.

In 2023, Ofsted judged the school Good across every category, praising its ambitious curriculum, positive relationships, strong SEND provision and effective professional development. Inspectors specifically highlighted the support the trust provides, including an incremental coaching programme for teachers and collaboration with other trust schools on curriculum development.

Most recently, in 2025, 95% of Deansbrook Junior pupils achieved the expected standard in their KS2 SATs — placing the school in the top 1% of schools nationally. This is the school that your child will be joining in Year 3, and it reflects what the trust is committed to delivering.

## **Section 3 — Leadership and governance**

### **What does having one Headteacher across both schools mean in practice?**

The proposal is for one Headteacher and one Deputy Headteacher to provide leadership across both the Infant and Junior schools. This is designed to create a consistent vision for teaching and learning and to strengthen the transition between the two schools.

### **Who will be on the local governing body and how can parents get involved?**

Deansbrook Infant School and Deansbrook Junior School will have a single local governing body whose role is to provide support and challenge to the school, and to represent the staff and local community. The local governing body will be accountable to the AIM Academies Trust Board.

At AIM Academies Trust, local governing bodies play an active role in monitoring educational outcomes, reviewing school performance data, overseeing safeguarding, and scrutinising pupil premium and special educational needs provision. Any governor appointed by the Trust Board can also participate in panels for complaints, appeals, admissions and exclusions.

As now, we will have at least two parent representatives for both the infant and junior schools.

Both existing governing bodies will play a transitional role if the proposal goes ahead.

## How does the Trust Board make decisions, and how are individual schools heard?

AIM Academies Trust is governed by a Board of Trustees (Directors) who hold ultimate legal accountability for all aspects of the trust's operation. The Board sets strategic direction, approves the trust's educational targets and education plan, and is supported by a Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Local Governing Bodies and an Education and Performance Committee.

Each school has a local governing body that feeds school-level priorities into the trust's decision-making. The Executive Team — led by Executive Principal Paddy McGrath — is responsible for the day-to-day running of the trust and for supporting individual schools. Principals and Headteachers are responsible for operational delivery within their school.

This structure ensures that each school has a clear voice, while benefiting from the expertise and resources of the wider trust.

## Who will be responsible for the school once it becomes an academy?

Day-to-day running of the school will be led by the school's Headteacher and leadership team, with the support of the local governing body and AIM Academies Trust. The Trust Board holds ultimate legal accountability.

As an academy, the school is also accountable to the Department for Education's Regional Director, and continues to be inspected by Ofsted in exactly the same way as a maintained school.

## Section 4 — What will change and what will stay the same

### What will change if the proposal goes ahead?

- The school would no longer be run by Barnet Local Authority and would instead be overseen by the AIM Academies Trust Board.
- The school would have a local governing body to provide support, challenge and community representation.
- Policies would be shared across the trust to ensure consistency between Deansbrook Infant and Junior schools.
- The school would be funded directly by the Department for Education rather than through the local authority.
- Staff would be employed directly by the Trust (transferred under TUPE — see Section 5), rather than the local authority.
- There would be one Headteacher and one Deputy Headteacher providing leadership across both schools.

### What will stay the same?

- The school name and location will remain unchanged.
- The nursery pre-school will continue in its current form; the infant school will continue as a two-form school from Reception to Year 2.
- School staff and leadership will continue to support pupils and families as they do now.
- The school values and ethos will stay the same.
- The school will continue to serve the local community.
- The school day is not expected to change.
- There are no current plans to change the infant school uniform.

- Parents/carers will still need to apply for a Year 3 place at Deansbrook Junior School.

### **Will the school's community feel and family culture be preserved?**

AIM Academies Trust is committed to ensuring that each of its schools maintains its own identity and community feel. Our philosophy is that leadership should be visible, reachable and answerable at school level — never distant or one-size-fits-all.

Deansbrook Junior School has been part of our trust since 2012 and continues to be a distinctive, nurturing school that is deeply rooted in its local community. That is precisely what we want to maintain and strengthen at the Infant School too.

### **Will the curriculum change?**

The school would continue to follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum and National Curriculum, while also having access — as all AIM schools do — to a high-quality, knowledge-rich curriculum developed collaboratively across the trust. This curriculum is refined based on teacher input and the local needs of students.

Pupils also benefit from the AIM 7 entitlement curriculum, which provides enriching experiences including, residential trips and cultural activities, developing young people's confidence and broadening their horizons.

### **Will there be changes to the school's admissions process?**

The school will continue to follow its admissions policy, which is set in line with national guidelines and the School Admissions Code. Any future changes would be subject to statutory consultation.

### **Will there be any changes to the school uniform or policies?**

At this stage, we do not anticipate any changes to the school uniform at the infants' school. Policies will be reviewed to align with trust-wide approaches where appropriate — to ensure consistency between the Infant and Junior schools — but any significant proposed changes in the future would involve consultation with parents and stakeholders.

### **What will happen to term dates?**

The school day is not expected to change. Term dates may be aligned with other schools in the trust in the future, but any changes will be communicated to families well in advance.

## **Section 5 — Staff**

### **How will this affect the staff?**

All existing staff will transfer to the academy under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) regulations. Their pay, conditions, and pensions remain fully protected and unchanged. Staff will become employees of AIM Academies Trust rather than Barnet Local Authority, but nothing about their contracts will change.

### **What professional development opportunities will staff have as part of the trust?**

Investment in staff development is at the core of how AIM Academies Trust works. All teachers across our schools have access to high-quality instructional coaching — we are

a strategic development partner with Steplab in developing an online teacher training tool — to ensure teachers are consistently teaching great lessons.

Staff can also access externally accredited National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) across a full suite of leadership pathways. The trust undertakes an annual staff wellbeing and workload survey, and staff wellbeing is a named priority for the trust.

Ofsted's 2023 inspection of Deansbrook Junior School noted that staff felt valued and appreciated that leaders invested in their professional development, specifically highlighting the incremental coaching programme as a benefit of trust membership.

## Section 6 — Pupils, SEND and inclusion

### What impact will this have on pupils day-to-day?

Pupils will continue to receive the same high-quality education in a familiar learning environment, with the same teachers and support staff. There will be no immediate changes to their daily school experience.

In time, pupils can look forward to greater collaboration with the Junior School, enriched curriculum experiences through shared trust resources, and will continue to experience a smooth joined-up transition to Year 3. The trust's AIM 7 entitlement curriculum also means pupils will have access to enriching experiences, including, residential trips and cultural activities.

### How will the transition from the Infant to the Junior School improve?

Creating a genuinely joined-up experience from Nursery to Year 6 is one of the most compelling reasons for both schools to be within the same trust. When both schools share the same trust, staff can coordinate more effectively, align their approaches to teaching and learning, and build relationships with pupils over a longer period.

- Pupil records, learning profiles and any support plans can be shared between schools — with families' knowledge — so that Year 3 teachers understand each child before they arrive
- Teachers across both schools can meet regularly to align curriculum approaches, making the Year 2 to Year 3 step less disruptive
- Children can have greater familiarity with the Junior School site and staff before their transition

### Will parents still need to apply separately for a Year 3 place at Deansbrook Junior School?

Yes. Being in the same academy trust does not change the admissions process. Parents and carers will still need to apply for a Year 3 place at Deansbrook Junior School through the usual admissions process co-ordinated by Barnet Local Authority.

Attendance at Deansbrook Infant School does not guarantee a place at the Junior School. The admissions criteria for Deansbrook Junior School remain unchanged.

### How will SEND provision be supported across the trust?

All academies are required to comply with the same rules on special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as maintained schools. The school's SENCO will remain in post, and

all existing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and support arrangements will remain the same.

Across AIM Academies Trust, SEND provision is a named priority. Ofsted's 2023 inspection of Deansbrook Junior School specifically noted that pupils with SEND are supported well to access the curriculum effectively, and that leaders are ambitious for all pupils to achieve well, including those with SEND.

In addition, we have a trust SEND lead, Lou Leonard, and our own Educational Psychologist, Jacqui Huruwitz, who provide support for all schools in the trust.

### **How will SEND support be maintained when a child moves from the Infant to the Junior School?**

Being in the same trust creates a significant opportunity for genuinely joined-up SEND support across the transition from Year 2 to Year 3. Pupil records, EHCPs and support plans will continue to be shared between schools — with the family's knowledge — to ensure that a child's needs are well understood before they begin Year 3.

## **Section 7 — Funding and finances**

### **How will funding work?**

As an academy, the school will receive funding directly from the Department for Education (DfE) based on the same national funding formula that currently applies. The overall level of funding is not expected to change as a result of conversion.

A key longer-term benefit of being part of a trust is the ability to create economies of scale — sharing administrative functions, procurement and resources across schools — which can free up a greater proportion of each school's budget for teaching and learning. Allowing greater security for the long-term financial future of both the infant and junior schools.

### **How are the trust's finances overseen and held to account?**

AIM Academies Trust, like all academy trusts, publishes annual accounts and is subject to scrutiny by the Department for Education. The trust has a detailed Finance Manual that sets out how the trust and schools handle their finances in a transparent and responsible manner.

The trust's finances are overseen by the Board of Trustees, supported by a Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, and are independently audited each year. Published accounts are available from Companies House and through the trust's website at [www.aimacademies.org](http://www.aimacademies.org)

## **Section 8 — Inspection and accountability**

### **Will the school still be inspected by Ofsted?**

Yes. Academies are subject to Ofsted inspections in exactly the same way as maintained schools. The school will continue to be inspected as an individual institution and will be judged against the same standards.

## What would happen if AIM Academies Trust were to grow or change significantly in future?

Academy trusts are accountable to the Department for Education's Regional Director, who monitors trust performance and governance. If a trust faces difficulties, the Regional Director has powers to intervene to protect the interests of pupils and schools.

AIM Academies Trust currently operates three schools. Our philosophy is that getting bigger will not change our commitment to keeping decision-making close to the ground and leadership visible at school level. The trust's scheme of delegation clearly sets out how authority is distributed between the Trust Board, Executive Team, school Principals and local governing bodies.

## Will parents still have a say in school matters?

Yes. Parent engagement remains important, and the governing body and school leadership team will continue to welcome input from parents. The local governing body will include parent representation, and the school will continue to hold parents' evenings, share reports and seek feedback.

At trust level, AIM Academies Trust undertakes an annual parent survey to identify and understand trends across all schools. The school's Principal will provide the local governing body with annual reports, ensuring parent concerns and experiences are formally considered.

## Section 9 — The consultation process

### Why are we being consulted?

The Governing Body of Deansbrook Infant School cannot make changes to the school without first seeking the views of parents and other stakeholders. It is important that the Governing Body hears your views before deciding whether to proceed with this proposal.

### Who is this consultation for?

This consultation is aimed at parents, staff, governors and everyone with an interest in primary education in the area. We want to gather the views of as many people in the school community as possible.

### How can I give my views and ask questions?

The consultation period runs from 3rd June to 26th June 2026. You can share your views by:

- Completing the Google form attached to the consultation letter by 4pm on Friday 26th June 2026.
- Attending the consultation meeting at Deansbrook Infant School on Wednesday 10th June 2026 at 5:30pm, where you can hear from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors of Deansbrook Infant School, a representative of Deansbrook Junior School, and the CEO of AIM Academies Trust

### What happens if the conversion does not go ahead?

This consultation is genuine. The Governing Body will carefully review all feedback before making a decision on whether to proceed. If the governing body decides not to proceed, Deansbrook Infant School will continue to operate as a maintained community school under Barnet Local Authority, as it does now.

### **When will a final decision be made?**

Following the close of the consultation on 26th June 2026, the governing body will review all feedback and decide whether to proceed. All parents and staff will be informed of the outcome. If the proposal goes ahead and all stages of the approval process are completed, it is anticipated that Deansbrook Infant School will join AIM Academies Trust in January 2027.

### **Have a question that isn't answered here?**

You are welcome to attend the consultation meeting on Wednesday 10th June at 5:30pm at Deansbrook Infant School, or complete the Google form provided with the consultation letter by 4pm on 26<sup>th</sup> June.