

The Burgess Hill Academy Joining Sussex Learning Trust

Information for Parents

What is happening?

The Burgess Hill Academy is joining Sussex Learning Trust (SLT) in the Autumn Term 2026. This is happening because the original Trust that the academy was a member of, University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT), is ceasing to operate, and a new home was required for The Burgess Hill Academy (TBHA). This email attempts to answer the questions you may have as an existing member of TBHA community. If you would welcome a chance to meet SLT officers and hear more, please follow this link: <https://forms.gle/UDMhUVREmsc6N5hd6>

SLT is a small Multi Academy Trust (MAT) originating in Mid Sussex. Most local to TBHA is Warden Park Secondary Academy (WPSA), with whom a very close working relationship will be established. SLT made a compelling proposal to UBAT and the Department for Education (DfE) to welcome TBHA into its Trust and to serve as the sponsor Trust for the proposed new schools in the Northern Arc.

Why has it taken so long?

Establishing TBHA's exact financial position during its transition from UBAT took a little longer than expected, but getting it right was our top priority. A key part of this was clarifying the projected student numbers for September 2026, which directly drives the school's funding. Essentially, we needed to ensure that SLT could protect the financial health of all our academies. To demonstrate to potential families the benefits of joining TBHA, school leaders, with support from SLT, recently conducted a two-week series of tours for prospective students. Thanks to the school's growing reputation and our exciting plans for close collaboration with WPSA, we are confident enrollment will continue to increase. After all, a school truly thrives when it has the backing of the community it serves.

Where will the main benefits from this transfer be felt?

The Trust's role is to create the conditions in which collaboration can be both meaningful and impactful. By fostering a culture of effective partnership, teachers and staff are the first to experience the benefits of collaborative working, which in turn has a positive impact on students and their outcomes. The school is continuing to make strong progress across all areas, and SLT is committed to sustaining this momentum while accelerating improvement wherever possible. There is a shared

commitment across the school community to ensure that TBHA becomes the very best school it can be. Our vision is for TBHA to be the school of choice for local families; a school recognised for its high standards, exceptional educational provision, and the outstanding outcomes achieved by its students.

Isn't this just another Trust taking over? Why should we trust you?

We understand the community has experienced some challenging times in the past. Our existing academy communities speak highly of the support and challenge that being part of our Trust adds to the efforts of their staff. The work of SLT is driven by an understanding of high standards in everything that happens in a school. This is based on a model of continuing professional development for our staff, grounded in collaboration with other exceptional colleagues.

What is the funding model of SLT?

Our central costs are transparent and much lower than UBAT and many other Trusts. The vast majority of the school's funding remains at the school, and we'll publish clear financial reports each year, allowing everyone to see exactly where the money is allocated. In SLT, TBHA will also receive annual capital funds to improve the buildings and facilities.

SLT has only ever received positive external audit reports, and DfE scrutiny assures that only financially secure Trusts are allowed to grow.

How do we know this will actually improve the school?

We have a strong track record of turning schools around through collaborative relationships across our schools, community involvement, staff development, and high expectations for all. The links between our existing academies, most notably Warden Park Secondary Academy, and the support and guidance of local educationalists will add to the school's already positive trajectory of improvement.

Why wasn't the community consulted before this happened?

We understand that frustration. The decision was made by the Department for Education with the school's long-term stability and success at its core. Please be assured that all decision-makers gave careful consideration to the options available and concluded that SLT was the most suitable partner to support TBHA's future development and continued improvement.

What happens to the current staff? Are they safe?

Yes. All current staff can TUPE across to SLT. We will be working closely with them to ensure they have everything they need to help students succeed. Our focus is on supporting and developing the great people already at TBHA.

What is the rationale for having an Executive Principal?

As Mrs Clinton stands down, TBHA will have an Acting Headteacher from 1st September 2026 to 1st January 2027. I am delighted to announce that Mr Snelling (current Vice Principal) has been appointed to this role, and we are very confident that he will fulfil this role brilliantly. He has very clear plans for how he wants to drive forward, at pace, the current trajectory of improvement the academy is on.

In addition, we are pleased to announce that Dan Wynne Willson, Headteacher of Warden Park Secondary Academy, will serve as Executive Principal for TBHA in the upcoming academic year. Dan will bring his extensive expertise to TBHA, supporting the Headteacher in championing the highest expectations across the entire school community. Under his oversight, the collaboration between WPSA and TBHA will be completely seamless.

Why should we believe anything will change?

Firstly, we do not believe in change for its own sake. TBHA already has many strengths, and we aim to build on those foundations rather than replace them. As part of SLT, school leaders will benefit from enhanced support, expertise, and opportunities for collaboration. We recognise that trust is earned, not assumed, and we ask to be judged by our actions. Over the coming months, we will be transparent about the impact of our work, sharing how we are supporting teachers, strengthening provision, and driving wider school improvement. Throughout this process, we will remain visible, accessible, and committed to listening and responding to the views of the school community.

Are you going to rename the school or change the uniform?

There are currently no plans to make changes in this area. We believe that school uniform plays an important role in promoting a sense of belonging, pride, and readiness to learn, and we expect students to continue to adhere to the school's existing expectations regarding uniform and appearance. At this stage, however, we do not anticipate any changes to the current policy.

What's your plan for the town and local community?

We believe schools thrive when their communities thrive. That's why we're exploring partnerships with local organisations, continuing to open the school up for community use, and involving local voices in decision-making. We want this school to be a beacon for the town. SLT enjoys strong local community links, which is one of the reasons that we were considered the best fit for TBHA.

I have a query or concern - where can I go?

Should you have any queries, please submit them via the form provided (accessible here: <https://forms.gle/UDMhUVREmsc6N5hd6>). You can also use this form to register your interest in attending a public meeting with our officers, the date of which will be confirmed soon.

We are excited to build this new partnership with you and appreciate your continued support of your school.