
Parents' Questions and Answers

Key messages following the meeting on 9th July 2026 held at The Burgess Hill Academy

Thank you to the parents and carers who attended our question-and-answer meeting. This document summarises the main themes discussed and the commitments made. It is not intended to be a word-for-word transcript; individual matters raised after the main meeting have not been included.

Trust and School Representatives

Jonathan Morris, CEO, Sussex Learning Trust

Phil Snelling, Acting Headteacher-designate, The Burgess Hill Academy

Our shared direction

The Burgess Hill Academy will join Sussex Learning Trust in September 2026. The Trust's approach is to build on what is already working well, provide stronger support and accountability, and introduce change where it will improve students' experience and outcomes. The school will retain its identity, and there is no planned change to the school name or uniform logo as a result of joining the Trust.

1. Joining Sussex Learning Trust and school improvement

What difference will joining Sussex Learning Trust make?

The school will gain access to a wider network of experienced leaders, teachers and support teams. This will include close collaboration with other Trust schools, particularly Warden Park, so that strong practice, curriculum resources and specialist expertise can be shared more easily. The Trust will support improvement without replacing successful existing practice simply for the sake of change.

How will the school be led from September?

Phil Snelling will take up the role of Acting Headteacher from September 2026. He will be supported by Dan Wynne Willson, who will serve as Executive Principal. Dan will continue in his role as Headteacher at Warden Park alongside his responsibilities as Executive Principal at The Burgess Hill Academy. Dan's time at the academy will be used flexibly in response to the school's needs. The Trust will also undertake a formal recruitment process during the autumn term, with the intention of confirming the longer-term headship arrangements by January 2027.

How will leadership be supported and held to account?

The school will benefit from stronger Trust-level support and a re-established local governance structure. Governors will work with senior leaders, visit the school, review evidence and provide appropriate challenge. The new governance arrangements will include highly experienced educational and governance leaders.

Will the financial position improve?

The Trust explained that its central charge is substantially lower than the historic charge under the previous trust arrangements. This is expected to release approximately £220,000 each year for the school budget, although the overall budget will remain tight while pupil numbers are below the school's capacity. The Trust will also support the school in securing capital and external funding for site improvements.

2. Staffing, stability and curriculum continuity

What is being done about staff turnover and absence?

The school recognises that changes of teacher can have a significant effect on individual classes. The leadership team will continue to make decisions based on what is best for students, including reviewing class allocations, using experienced departmental staff and appointing suitable cover where necessary. Sussex Learning Trust also has established systems for supporting staff wellbeing, managing absence early and improving attendance at work.

How will curriculum quality be protected when staffing changes occur?

A key benefit of joining a larger Trust is access to shared curriculum planning, subject expertise and high-quality resources. This means that a well-sequenced curriculum can continue to be delivered even when staffing circumstances change. The school is already working with Trust colleagues in subjects including Business.

Why is the GCSE Business examination board changing?

The school has reviewed the content already taught, mapped it carefully against the new specification and considered the stronger outcomes and resources available through collaboration with Warden Park. Students will not be expected to start again. Any gaps between the two specifications will be identified and taught through a planned transition programme.

3. Support for Year 11 and GCSE preparation

What additional support will Year 11 receive?

The school will continue the structured approach that has already contributed to improved outcomes. This includes a clear teaching and learning framework, regular assessment, targeted intervention, additional curriculum time, revision support and close tracking of students' engagement and progress.

How will students close to their GCSEs benefit from the Trust change?

Current students will benefit immediately from increased leadership capacity, wider subject expertise, shared resources and stronger collaboration with Trust schools. The raising standards programme will continue from the start of the academic year, with earlier identification of students who need additional support.

Will the school continue to review its examination arrangements?

Yes. The school will evaluate the recent examination series, including student performance and the suitability of examination conditions, so that lessons can inform future planning. The priority will remain to provide safe, fair and appropriate conditions for all students.

4. SEND and support for additional needs

How will provision for students with SEND improve?

Improving outcomes for students with SEND is a key priority. The first layer of support must be strong classroom teaching. Staff are expected to know students' needs, use appropriate strategies and check understanding regularly so that teaching can be adapted quickly. This will be a key focus of the quality assurance process.

What wider work is taking place?

The school has been working with an experienced external adviser to review SEND provision and identify areas for development. The next stage is to implement and embed the agreed actions, strengthen interventions and ensure that information about students' needs is used consistently across subjects.

How will parents be involved?

Parents' knowledge of their child is important. The school will continue to encourage early communication between families, teachers, tutors and the SEND team so that successful strategies can be shared and applied consistently. Individual cases will continue to be discussed directly with the relevant family.

5. Academic challenge, options and Computer Science

How will higher-attaining students be challenged?

The teaching and learning framework includes regular checks for understanding, adaptive teaching and work that builds towards deeper application and independent thinking. The school will continue to review the progress of different groups, including higher-attaining students, so that they are appropriately challenged rather than allowed to coast.

Why was GCSE Computer Science not offered to the current Year 9 cohort?

Option subjects must be educationally appropriate and viable. The decision considered student assessment information, likely success within the qualification and the number of students required to sustain a class. This does not mean Computer Science has been removed permanently.

Could students still study Computer Science?

The school and Trust will explore alternative approaches for highly motivated students, potentially including supported independent study or an additional programme outside normal lessons. Any model would need to be realistic, properly supported and capable of giving students a fair chance of success.

6. Communication and relationships with parents

What concerns did parents raise?

Parents asked for communication to be earlier, clearer and checked carefully before it is sent. Examples included short-notice changes, incorrect links and decisions that had significant practical implications for families. The school accepts that communication is an area that must improve.

What will change?

The school will review its communication processes, including accuracy checks, the timing of messages and how major changes are explained. Sussex Learning Trust's communications team will also support the school to share information more consistently and to promote the many positive aspects of school life.

Will there be further opportunities for parent dialogue?

Yes. The school will consider making parent question-and-answer meetings a regular part of its calendar, alongside existing parents' evenings and other opportunities to provide feedback. The aim is to strengthen trust through open, constructive discussion.

How will the school improve its reputation in the community?

The school and Trust will work more closely with local primary schools, community groups, councillors and other partners. Positive news, student achievements and improvements will be communicated more actively so that the school's strengths are better understood across Burgess Hill.

7. Site, facilities and investment

What improvements are already taking place?

Work referred to during the meeting included improvements to changing facilities and toilets, refurbishment of the library, and a new IT suite ready for September. Further plans include developing a dance studio and a graphics space to support the wider curriculum.

How will future priorities be decided?

The school and Trust will maintain an estates plan that identifies urgent compliance and maintenance needs alongside improvements that enhance the day-to-day environment for students and staff. The Trust will also pursue appropriate capital funding and developer contributions where available.

What about sports facilities?

Parents' concerns about sports facilities were acknowledged. These will need to be considered as part of the wider estates and capital planning process. The school will communicate further when specific projects, funding and timescales are confirmed.

8. Uniform and the digital transition

Is the uniform changing because the school is joining a new Trust?

No wholesale change is planned. The school name and logo will remain, and families will not be required to replace uniform simply because of the Trust transfer. The school is reviewing the number of compulsory branded items in line with national expectations and will communicate any confirmed adjustments separately.

Will the school review practical concerns about uniform?

Parents raised concerns about comfort, fit and practicality, including PE clothing. These points were heard and will be considered as part of the school's review. The school will continue to expect students to be smart and appropriately dressed while ensuring that requirements are clear, reasonable and applied consistently.

Is the school moving from Microsoft to Google?

Yes. The transition will be phased rather than immediate, with the intention of completing it by January 2027. Staff and students will receive training during the autumn term, and the Trust's digital services team will support the transfer. Protecting access to existing work and minimising disruption will be central to the implementation plan.

Thank you for your continued support. We recognise that successful school improvement depends on strong relationships between students, staff, parents, governors, the Trust and the wider community. We will continue to share updates as plans are confirmed and implemented.