



**Bacup and Rawtenstall  
Grammar School**

**Stakeholder Engagement  
Report**

**March 2023**





## Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Introduction .....                          | 3 |
| 2. Stakeholder Engagement Approach .....       | 3 |
| 2.1 Stakeholder Engagement Documentation.....  | 4 |
| 2.2 Website .....                              | 4 |
| 2.3 Stakeholder E-shots .....                  | 4 |
| 2.4 Stakeholder Engagement Events .....        | 4 |
| 3. Findings .....                              | 5 |
| 3.1 Stakeholder Engagement Questionnaire ..... | 5 |
| 3.2 Staff Engagement Event.....                | 5 |
| 3.3 Parent Engagement Events.....              | 7 |
| 4. Discussion.....                             | 8 |
| 5. Conclusion.....                             | 9 |
| 6. Next Steps .....                            | 9 |



## 1. Introduction

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School (BRGS) has been considering options for an appropriate multi-academy trust (MAT) partner. As a result of ongoing discussions between the school, the BRGS Board of Trustees, and the Regional Director, Star Academies has been selected as the most appropriate MAT to lead the school and bring new capacity to maintain and develop the school's education provision.

BRGS will transfer to Star Academies on 1 September 2023. As the MAT partner, Star will bring added drive, expertise and capacity to push forward the current improvement programme in the school. The school will retain its grammar school status.

The Trust and Governing Body undertook a Stakeholder Engagement Exercise over a five-week period from Wednesday 11 January to Wednesday 15 February 2023. The Stakeholder Engagement Exercise was intended to:

- inform key stakeholders about the proposal to transfer Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School to Star Academies
- assess and evaluate public opinion on Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School joining Star Academies
- assess and evaluate public opinion on Star Academies becoming the named multi-academy sponsor
- provide key stakeholders with an insight into how the Trust operates, its reputation for educational excellence, and its aspirations for Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School

This document reports on the stakeholder engagement process and its findings.

## 2. Stakeholder Engagement Approach

The engagement exercise invited views from key stakeholders across the local area. A range of methods and communication channels were employed to ensure as many interested parties as possible were able to respond. This included:

- Development and dissemination of a Stakeholder Engagement Document outlining the Trust's ethos and intentions in welcoming Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School to the Star family of schools
- Development and dissemination of a Stakeholder Engagement Questionnaire (available online as part of the Stakeholder Engagement Document)
- An engagement event for members of staff (held on Thursday 24 January 2023)
- Engagement events for parents (held on Wednesday 8 February 2023)

The approach developed was designed both to inform and seek responses to the proposed transfer. Key stakeholders were provided with an insight into how the Trust operates, its reputation for educational excellence, and its aspirations for Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School.



## 2.1 Stakeholder Engagement Documentation

As stated, a Stakeholder Engagement Document outlining the proposal was produced. Within this document, notification of the stakeholder engagement period, the options available for feedback (including an online survey and an email address for written responses) and details of staff and parent stakeholder engagement events were set out.

The Stakeholder Engagement Questionnaire centred on three questions designed to assess public opinion on the Academy transfer:

1. Do you think any groups or individuals will be adversely affected by the proposal outlined in our Stakeholder Document? (yes; no; don't know)
2. Do you agree that Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School should join Star Academies? (yes; no; don't know)
3. Do you have any further questions or comments? (open response)

## 2.2 Website

The school's website was used to make information on the proposal and on the stakeholder engagement itself accessible. The website provided information about the proposed Academy transfer and a link to the Stakeholder Engagement Document and Questionnaire.

## 2.3 Stakeholder E-shots

Shortly after the Stakeholder Engagement was launched, notification of the Stakeholder Engagement Document and details of how to access the Stakeholder Engagement Document and Questionnaire were circulated to the Headteachers of local secondary schools in the BB4 area, school staff, school parents/carers, the Local Authority, and MP and Councillors for the ward.

## 2.4 Stakeholder Engagement Events

A staff engagement event was held on Thursday 24 January 2023. All staff were encouraged to attend. In addition, two parent engagement events were held on Wednesday 8 February 2023, one for parents/carers in Years 7-9, and a second for parents/carers in Years 10-13, with parents/carers of children in multiple years choosing their preferred session.

During the stakeholder engagement events, representatives from Star and the school delivered a presentation outlining:

- the background to the proposed transfer
- why Star was chosen as the preferred Multi-Academy Trust for Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School to join
- the benefits of joining a Multi-Academy Trust
- information about Star, its track record and the composition of its staff
- how to take part in the stakeholder engagement process

Representatives from Star and the school led a question-and-answer session as part of this event.



### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Stakeholder Engagement Questionnaire

A total of twenty-four stakeholder engagement questionnaires were completed with regard to Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar school transferring to Star Academies. Responses were received from parents, prospective parents, a member of staff at the school, and two employees at another school, and are recorded below:

Do you think any groups or individuals will be adversely affected by the proposal outlined in our consultation document?

| Response     | No.       |
|--------------|-----------|
| Yes          | 6         |
| No           | 10        |
| Don't know   | 8         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>24</b> |

Do you agree that Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School should join Star Academies?

| Response     | No.       |
|--------------|-----------|
| Yes          | 8         |
| No           | 7         |
| Don't know   | 8         |
| No answer    | 1         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>24</b> |

The issues raised by respondents to the questionnaire included:

- The future of the school's sixth form
- The Trust's approach to safeguarding (Ofsted concern for BRGS)
- Support for groups with protected characteristics (Ofsted concern for BRGS)
- General perspectives on the value of academisation and how this would impact on the local area
- The extent to which the school will have autonomy after joining Star
- The Trust's approach to character education
- Star's policies and procedures on attendance and punctuality

All of these points were addressed during the engagement events. The Trust and the school will continue to engage with stakeholders.

#### 3.2 Staff Engagement Event

The staff engagement event was attended by approximately 100 people. The queries that were raised during the course of the session have been summarised below.

- **Staff Development and Performance Management:** staff asked what opportunities for progression there would be after BRGS joined Star Academies. Information was shared about the range of professional development programmes offered by Star through the Star Central Team,



Star Institute and Star's involvement in the National Institute of Teaching.

- **Staffing Structures, Terms and Conditions and TUPE:** staff requested information about the following:
  - **Changes to terms, conditions and contracts:** the TUPE process and the protections that it offers were outlined; it was explained that Star is committed to offering terms and conditions in line with national agreements.
  - **Restructuring and staffing changes:** it was explained that no staffing changes were being discussed as part of the transfer. The Governors continue to review the school's financial position, and that were a staffing restructure to be deemed necessary, this would be separate from the transfer process.
  - **Centralised business functions:** the Trust's requirements regarding centralised systems were clarified, demonstrating where schools had autonomy.
  - **Would staff need to apply for their jobs:** it was explained that this would not be the case.
  - **Internal job moves and career progression within the Trust:** the relevant processes were described.
- **Education:** staff enquired whether the school's curriculum would change. It was clarified that the school's curriculum was broadly in line with the Star curriculum model, and therefore, no major changes were planned as part of the transfer. The Governors and Senior Leaders at the school will continue to review the curriculum annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and meets the needs of the young people at the school.
- **School estate:** staff asked whether there would be investment in the school estate. It was explained that the Trust's Capital and Estates team will work with the school to agree a cycle of improvement works and secure investment.
- **Branding, Identity, Uniform and Admissions:** staff asked how much emphasis there would be on keeping the identity and history of BRGS. Reassurance was given that the Trust is keen to preserve the tradition and heritage of BRGS, and accordingly the school will retain its name, uniform and logo, although a dress code for sixth form students will be introduced. Admissions arrangements will also remain as they currently are.
- **Links to Star:** staff asked the following:
  - **Will BRGS be joining with the Valley Leadership Academy?** The Trust will work with both schools separately to help them develop and succeed. Existing partnership arrangements will continue and will be supported to grow further.
  - **How will BRGS fit the profile of Star?** BRGS will become part of the Lancashire Star Partnership of schools and will benefit from and contribute to its collaborative strength.
- **Sixth Form:** a number of concerns were raised by staff in relation to the current viability of the school's sixth form. In response, the Trust confirmed that it would put in place a number of actions to address the issues raised. These included strengthening the leadership of the sixth form, maintaining and underpinning its academic offer, enhancing the co-curricular programme and implementing a 3 year marketing strategy.



- **Governance:** staff asked about the future governance of the school and the continued involvement of current Trustees post-transfer. The school will establish a new governing body within Star's governance structures and current Trustees will be encouraged to apply to become Trust appointed governors.

### 3.3 Parent Engagement Events

Two parent engagement events were held on Wednesday 8 February 2023, one for parents/carers in Years 7-9, and a second for parents/carers in Years 10-13, with parents/carers of children in multiple years choosing their preferred session. A total of 250 parents/carers attended the events. The queries that were raised during the course of the session have been summarised below.

- **Identity, Uniform, Branding and Admissions:** parents asked what changes they could expect in relation to the school's identity, uniform, branding and admissions. It was confirmed that the school's identity will be maintained, and that there would be no changes to its name, uniform and branding. The exception to this would be the introduction of a dress code for sixth form students. Admissions arrangements would remain the same, with alignment of the entrance examination with local grammar schools.
- **Priorities for BRGS joining Star Academies:** parents were keen to know what priorities the Trust and school had jointly identified after BRGS transferred to Star. Three key priorities were shared:
  - Ensuring that all pupils are safe and happy
  - Addressing standards and performance in the sixth form
  - Developing the co-curricular programme
- **Sixth Form:** parents expressed their concerns about the performance of the school's sixth form and asked what the plan was for improvement. It was confirmed that:
  - The sixth form has significant potential
  - An experienced dedicated sixth form leader will be recruited
  - The Trust will work with the school's senior leadership team to produce a sixth form improvement plan to maintain continuity and stability
  - A dress code will be introduced
  - The sixth form will be led and managed in the same way as the school
  - A network of sixth forms is being developed within the Trust
  - A 3 year marketing strategy for the sixth form is being formulated
  - The development of the sixth form will be informed by student voice
- **General transfer to Star Academies:** parents posed a number of questions about how BRGS would be positioned within Star. These included:
  - **Given that Star is a large MAT, currently operating 31 schools, how will the Trust ensure that BRGS received adequate support?** Reassurance was given that BRGS would derive significant benefits from being part of a successful MAT. It will be supported by a skilled central team comprised of specialist experts in all areas of school development and will also gain substantially from collaboration with other schools in the Trust.
  - **Will BRGS be the only selective school in the Trust?** It was confirmed that this is currently the case, but that dialogue has begun with other grammar schools with a view to them



- joining Star. The Trust has also entered into a partnership with Eton College to maximise the number of students in the North of England securing places at the top universities.
- **Why was Star selected as the sponsor for BRGS?** It was confirmed that Trustees were impressed by Star's track record of sustaining and improving schools and close alignment to its core values and ambitions and aspirations for young people.
  - **SEND:** parents enquired about what provision would be in place for pupils with SEND. The audience was informed that Star has considerable expertise and a strong track record of success in supporting pupils with SEND to succeed. Current arrangements with the local authority for pupils with a high level of need will continue.
  - **School Transport:** parents were concerned about affordable bus travel to the school, particularly from the Todmorden area. The trust and school acknowledged the difficulties and agreed to continue discussions.

## 4. Discussion

The Trust and school have endeavoured to answer all the questions raised during the stakeholder engagement events and online questionnaire as transparently – and thoroughly – as possible and, in doing so, have sought to provide a compelling case explaining how Star's sponsorship of Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School will benefit both pupils and staff. Through the stakeholder engagement documentation, presentations to both staff and parents, and discussions as part of question and answer sessions, it was noted that the academy transfer would help the school to access and deliver:

- enhanced partnerships and wider networks
- a high-powered, knowledge-based academic curriculum
- carefully focused traditional teaching
- rigorous tracking and personalised intervention
- highly qualified staff that are motivated, well trained and using cutting edge research
- a skilled central team that works alongside schools to deliver educational excellence, operational excellence and a strong Star community – Star's Central Team will work to secure the school's long-term health, providing support and guidance on HR, IT, Estates, Admissions, Governance and Legal, and strengthening governance and leadership
- high quality school improvement support – Star's education team will build leadership and teaching capacity within the school, implement an accelerated improvement and school support programme
- a collaborative approach to policy and systems development
- an investment in staff wellbeing and continuous development – through the Star Institute and the National Institute of Teaching, Star Academies will provide a range of training opportunities for teaching and non-teaching staff to support staff's career development.

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School will join a growing family of Star schools across Lancashire which will work together to build a strong, dynamic and vibrant learning community to benefit all the children and families within the partnership of schools and the communities they serve.

Staff have been reassured that they will retain their terms and conditions of employment, and Star will





be working in partnership with them to ensure the best outcomes for pupils of all abilities.

The Trust has provided a detailed account of what joining Star means for the school, including the offer to parents and pupils, and how Star intends to bring added drive, expertise and capacity to push forward the current improvement programme in the school.

All stakeholders have been reassured that the school will retain its community ethos, and measures will be taken to support and develop staff by offering staff access to nationally accredited qualifications and development opportunities.

## 5. Conclusion

After careful consideration, and following the discussions during the stakeholder engagement process, the Trust and the school believe the proposal to transfer is wholly welcomed by the school community.

It is therefore concluded that there is support for the Trustees proposal to transfer Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School to Star Academies on the 1 September 2023.

## 6. Next Steps

The Trust and school will continue to implement their pre-transfer action plan in close consultation with the Department for Education.

The Department for Education and Secretary of State will consider the outcomes of the stakeholder engagement as part of the Funding Agreement sign-off process for the proposed academy transfer of Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School.

Whilst the formal stakeholder engagement period has ended, the trust and school consider engagement as a continuous process and will remain in contact with key stakeholders throughout.