Consultation about whether The Willink School should become an academy school within Pioneer Educational Trust

The Governing Body of The Willink School is consulting about whether the school should become an academy school within Pioneer Educational Trust (which includes Upton Court Grammar School, Desborough College, Trevelyan Middle School, and Foxborough Primary School).

The consultation runs until **Friday 4th December 2026** – please have your say.

If the proposal is taken forward it is anticipated that The Willink School would join Pioneer during spring 2027.

Our vision and ambition remain our priority. Our vision is that every student flourishes to achieve their full personal and academic potential, and that would not change. This proposal is about sustainability: securing the capacity, expertise and financial resilience The Willink needs to keep providing an excellent quality of education, in line with our ambition and aspiration for our students, for many years to come.

We have listened to parents. Families have told us that what matters most is that the things they value about The Willink stay the same. They would: the school name, curriculum, values, Headteacher and staff, school transport arrangements, and support for students with SEND, including those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and working with our local primary schools.

The rationale for the proposal

The Governing Body identified Pioneer as the most appropriate academy trust to join because:

- **Sustainability to thrive and achieve.** Like all schools, The Willink faces costs rising faster than funding and growing competition to recruit and retain staff. Joining a strong trust allow us to build shared expertise and financial resilience to maintain and protect what makes The Willink special; it underpins our desire to keep improving, so that our students continue to thrive and achieve;
- **Shared ethos and values.** Pioneer's values – being pioneering, inspiring collaboration, being consciously liberate, and investing intelligently – closely reflect our own commitment to high standards, inclusion and continuous improvement. The Trust respects the heritage and identity of each of its schools rather than imposing uniformity, so The Willink's "Village School, Global Outlook" vision, traditions and strategic direction would be preserved and strengthened;
- **A stable, well-led trust with a strong track record.** Every Pioneer school has been judged at least 'Good' or 'Expected Standard' by Ofsted. The Trust has grown steadily and carefully since 2014, and is overseen by an experienced and diverse Board of Trustees supported by a central team providing operational, financial and pastoral expertise;
- **Close enough to collaborate closely.** Pioneer's schools in Slough, Langley, Windsor and Maidenhead are near enough for staff and students to work together regularly – on professional development, moderation, enrichment and cross-phase projects – while serving different communities, so the partnership is built on collaboration rather than competition;
- **An excellent offer for staff.** Pioneer's professional development and wellbeing programmes, including the Pioneering Leadership Programme and the 'Thrive' programme for early career teachers, harmonise closely with The Willink's own well-established, research-led offer – from initial

teacher training and early career support through to National Professional Qualifications and senior leadership. Together they would give staff a coherent development pathway at every career stage, helping us continue to attract, develop and retain high-quality staff – the single most important factor in pupils' success;

- **A partnership of strengths.** The Willink brings its own well-established expertise, including eight years as Lead School for the Mobius Maths Hub, delivery of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), and leadership of the Two Counties Training Partnership with the University of Reading. Joining Pioneer would allow us to share these strengths more widely while benefiting from the expertise of colleagues across the Trust;
- **A careful, evidence-based decision.** Governors have carried out thorough due diligence in line with Department for Education guidance, examining the educational, financial, legal and premises implications. The proposal is also consistent with the Government's ambition, set out in the February 2026 White Paper, for every school to be part of a high-quality trust.

What would happen if The Willink joins Pioneer?

For students and families, day-to-day life at The Willink would stay the same.

What would stay the same:

- The school's name: we would remain The Willink School.
- The school uniform. Families would not need to buy anything new.
- School transport. If your child currently travels to school by bus, this would continue as now.
- SEND provision, led by the same SENCO and SEND team your child already knows.
- Our staff, with Ms Browning continuing as Headteacher.
- Admissions. The number of places in Year 7 and Year 12 each year (our Published Admission Number) and the over-subscription criteria would remain as they are now.

What would be new:

- Support from Pioneer's experienced central team on operational, financial and pastoral matters, freeing our leaders to focus on teaching and learning.
- Access to Pioneer's professional development programmes and staff wellbeing support, along with shared enrichment opportunities for students across Pioneer's schools.
- More opportunities for our staff to work with colleagues across Pioneer on curriculum development, leadership development and business support.

About Pioneer Educational Trust

Pioneer was formed in 2014 when Foxborough Primary School joined the trust that was originally established by Upton Court Grammar School. Trevelyan Middle School (in Windsor) joined in 2016, and Desborough College (in Maidenhead) joined in 2023.

The Board of Trustees of Pioneer is responsible for all the schools within the Trust. Local Committees provide local governance, and support and challenge to the Headteacher and leadership team, and include parents and staff. The current Willink governing body would evolve into being the Local Committee within Pioneer.

How can I find out more information?

A Question and Answer document is available on the school website (www.willinkschool.org.uk) or from the school office (0118 983 2030) that provides more detail about how an academy school compares to a community school (as we are now) and what the proposal to join Pioneer would mean.

How can I have my say?

You can have your say by completing the online questionnaire that is available here or by writing to the Headteacher at the school postal address (School Lane, Burghfield Common, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 3XJ).

Consultation meetings have been arranged for staff and for parents and carers.

The consultation closes on Friday 4th December 2026. Please share your views!

What happens next?

The Governing Body will consider all responses to the consultation before they make a decision about whether the school should join Pioneer.

If the proposal proceeds, it is anticipated that the school would join Pioneer during spring 2027. If the proposal does not proceed, the school would remain a community school maintained by West Berkshire Council.