

## **FAQs FOR THE WEBSITE:**

### **1. Why is Radley doing this?**

Radley College has always been a supporter of independent charitable education and has had close relationships with prep schools across the country throughout its history. This merger gives us a chance to be more directly involved in the sector, supporting it at a time of challenge and protecting the values that underpin what they, and we, do. We want and need prep schools to be strong and this merger gives us the opportunity to have a louder voice and a wider reach in the development of best educational practice for our children. The merger also gives us an exciting opportunity to build something distinctive and powerful in the world of independent education.

### **2. Why is Prep Schools Trust doing this?**

Prep Schools Trust has developed a strong group of schools over recent years and is committed to each of them providing the very best educational provision for all its pupils. We have always believed in the benefits of a multi-school group and a merger with Radley College gives greater stability, security, resource and ambition as we plan for the future. There is real excitement about the opportunity to develop a premium, powerful and influential group together.

### **3. Why is Radley the right partner for Prep Schools Trust?**

Radley College is a full-boarding boys only 13-18 school and has no plans to change that model. Unlike other senior schools that might look to merge with prep schools simply to shore up their numbers, the primary purpose of this merger is not to ensure a pipeline of pupils for Radley but rather for the College to work with Prep Schools Trust to build something new and exciting as a Group. We believe that with our aligned values and shared history we can do that best together.

### **4. What does Radley know about co-ed and prep education?**

It is a good question. At the heart of the answer, however, is the fundamental purpose behind the formation of the Group. This is not Radley seeking to impose itself on a group of prep schools or wanting to promote a particular form of schooling. This is about working together to create something exciting and new. Education is about so much more than location, style of offering and age range. As our core mission makes clear, we are committed to providing exceptional educational opportunities for all our pupils throughout their childhood and to developing young people of outstanding character and purpose for generations to come. We look forward to listening, learning and developing ideas together that will then be applied in each setting to the benefit of all.

### **5. What does Radley bring to Prep Schools Trust?**

As well as having much to learn, Radley has much to offer. It has national and international brand recognition. It has excellent governance and financial strength. It has a proven track record of effective strategic planning. It has expertise in each of the pastoral, co-curricular and academic spheres. It has an understanding of the national and international market. It has energy and ambition. Above all, from its founders through to today, it has an authentic appreciation of the value and joy of education for its own sake and of the importance of positive role models, in a caring community, cherishing and nurturing each child.

### **6. Why is Prep Schools Trust the right partner for Radley?**

In seeking to be directly involved in the prep school sector for the first time, a merger with Prep Schools Trust provides a number of real benefits to Radley. Firstly, PST is already a successful and established group that brings shared expertise and experience in the sector that Radley can learn from. Secondly, the variety within the Group – in terms both of geography and the nature of the educational offer - widens its

potential impact and influence on the sector. Thirdly, and most importantly, there are clearly aligned values and shared trustee vision as to the purpose and power of high quality charitable independent education: at a time of disruption and uncertainty, this merger provides a positive long-term strategic vision of a changing sector and an exciting platform for meaningful change.

**7. How much is it costing and who is paying for it?**

As a merger of charities, there is no financial consideration in the merger itself; the assets of one charity (Prep Schools Trust) simply transfer to the ownership of another (St Peter's College, Radley – the formal name of Radley College).

**8. Will other schools be joining?**

Prep Schools Trust has grown to seven schools in recent years and has a stated strategic vision to build on that number. While there are no immediate plans to expand further, and any such decision would be part of a long-term strategy, the vision is for the Group to be a leading light in the sector and to establish itself as a source of innovative and influential educational practice; over time, therefore, we would expect to be an obvious choice for those schools seeking to join a group and/or a model for those wishing to establish one.

**9. Will each school retain its independence after the merger?**

Yes. One of the great strengths of Prep Schools Trust is that each school has maintained its identity within its own historic, cultural, and geographical context and market. We are committed to ensuring that remains the case with Radley Schools Group: we want each school to be recognised locally as a centre of excellence. We will over time, as a group of eight schools together, develop a distinctive educational philosophy that can be seen and felt but only ever applied in order that each school continues to develop its own identity, strength and success.

**10. Will any of the schools close as a result of the merger?**

No. We are fully committed to supporting each of the schools to be self-sustaining success stories as part of a wider dynamic group. It has been very sad to see a number of schools in the prep sector close since the Government imposed VAT on fees and no doubt more will follow. This merger has the double advantage of strengthening each of our schools while at the same time maintaining the style of charitable independence which we have in our DNA.

**11. How much will Radley College change?**

Radley College has no plans to change its own model of education and will shortly publish its latest five-year strategic plan for 2025-30. This plan - which has been more than a year in the making – makes clear the ambition of Council to ensure that Radley remains a single sex full boarding school and continues to offer the very best balance between tradition and innovation, holds true to its core belief in truth, beauty and goodness being at the heart of good education, and expands its reach and influence within the sector. This merger is very much in the spirit of those aims. The Warden (Headmaster) will continue to run the College day-to-day, and in the same hands-on way. We hope, of course, that as for all its schools, the emergence of Radley Schools Group will have a positive influence on what we do – in professional development, in shared practice, in acquired expertise and in the emergence of new ideas – but it will not distract from the core business of ensuring that a Radley education remains the very best that it can be.

**12. How much will Prep Schools Trust schools change?**

Each of the schools will continue to operate its current model; there is no expectation of a change of structure or approach as a result of the merger; parents will not see any immediate changes to the education their children receive. Over time, of course, we hope that they will notice positive additions and developments as plans emerge to improve the offer at each location.

As previously announced, the current Chief Executive of Prep Schools Trust, Tom Beardmore-Gray, will retire this summer after seven years of outstanding service. Andrew Ashton, currently Radley College's Bursar, will succeed him.

In discussion and collaboration with the Heads, the new Chief Executive will develop a clear strategic plan for each prep school, to be ratified and agreed by Council. Structurally, at both executive and governance levels, there will be an emphasis on continuity of approach, with additional support and expertise being offered as part of a wider group.

### **13. How will the new structure work?**

The Council of Radley College will assume overall governance responsibility for the group. Two Prep Schools Trust trustees, Emma McKendrick and Peta Darnley, will join Council and they, with two additional members of Council, will form part of a new Prep Schools Committee (PSC), along with the Chairs of the Local Advisory Groups and other former Prep Schools Trust trustees.

The Prep Schools Committee will be responsible for receiving reports on each prep school and considering educational, operational, financial and compliance matters. The PSC will make recommendations and report to Council. The Local Advisory Groups (LAGs) will continue to operate in the same way, acting as sources of advice and support to each school. The Chief Executive will be responsible for working with each LAG and the PSC and will report to Council.

We will also create an executive strategic committee, formed to oversee and develop group strategy. This committee will be chaired by the Warden of Radley College and will report to Council.

### **14. How involved will Radley's management be?**

We hope that the creation of the Group will provide a number of exciting opportunities for professional development at all levels for the staff of all eight schools. However, it is important that Radley's management team continues to focus on the day-to-day operation of the College and the executive structure has been designed with that in mind. The Warden will continue to run the College as at present - and in the same way - and the running of the prep schools will fall to its Chief Executive (Andrew Ashton) and Chief Operating Officer, which will be a new appointment. We are in the process of appointing a new Bursar for Radley.

### **15. What will the impact on staff be?**

Radley College staff will continue to operate in their roles with no expectation of increased workload as a result of the merger. All staff in Prep Schools Trust will be transferred through a TUPE process to be employees of St Peter's College, Radley and their roles in the schools will also continue as at present. The prep schools will continue to operate in a very similar way with a central group office managed by the Chief Executive. Those at Trust Office will continue to work at their current site; plans for a greater integration of operational activity will take some time to take shape and that will be done collaboratively and carefully as the group develops.

Over time, for all staff at all eight schools, there will be opportunity for increased collaboration, collegiality and professional development as a result of being part of the Group. This is a particular and exciting advantage of the merger and we are committed to building a dynamic and aspirational community to the benefit of all our staff and pupils.

### **16. What will the impact be on the children at each prep school?**

In the first instance there will be no obvious impact on the children in each school with their current experience uninterrupted by the merger. They will continue to be prepared appropriately for their next schools and there is no expectation at all that any more PST boys should be looking to Radley as a destination at 13+ as a result of being part of the Group.

Over time, we hope there will be obvious benefits emerging for each school that will have a clear and positive effect on the education of each child. We are confident that the quality of staff recruitment; the sharing of expertise in pedagogy, pastoral care and character education; the benefits of effective and ambitious estates planning and the development of a dynamic and powerful joint philosophy of education will all have a collective impact for good on each school and on each child we educate.

#### **17. How quickly will integration happen?**

The planned merger should be complete by September 1st, with all staff transferred to the employment of St Peter's College, Radley on that date. That is, however, only the start. We are committed to a process that develops an effective Group strategy over the next few years, while supporting each school to be the best version of itself within its local context.

In Year 1, our priorities will be to spend time together to ensure an aligned vision; to work together with all schools on brand proposition, websites, admissions processes, data and communications to maximise recruitment; to undertake an in-depth estates analysis and master planning exercise that will identify short and medium-term goals for capital investment to meet future facility needs and to conduct an internal compliance review to ensure the highest standards of safeguarding, security, health and safety.

In Year 2, the focus will be on developing a group approach to pastoral care, teaching and learning and overall education provision, always sensitive to local need and context and building on the shared collaboration that will be a hallmark of our approach.

By September 2027, we will have a clear shared vision for our future development, an ambitious five-year strategic plan both for the group and for each school and a structure in place designed to ensure successful delivery of each of those plans.

#### **18. How will the group be branded?**

The eight schools will collectively form Radley Schools Group, with Prep Schools Trust no longer in operation as a charity as a result of the merger. Within the Group, each of the eight schools will continue to retain their identities as separate schools with individual brands.

#### **19. How will the finances work after the merger?**

Once the merger is complete, the group will have one set of accounts for the charity (St Peter's College, Radley). Within that, however, there will be a clear separation of the financial operation for the College on the one hand and the prep schools on the other. This will be reflected in the governance structure with Radley's General Purposes Committee (GPC) continuing to monitor the College's operations and the newly formed Prep Schools Committee (PSC) performing the same function for the other schools, with each committee responsible for reporting and recommending to Council. Budgeting, forecasting, and long-term financial planning will all be scrutinised separately as will all core financial decisions (fees, salaries, estates planning etc.).

#### **20. Will Radley invest in each of the schools?**

Each school in the Group, supported by the Chief Executive and the wider team, will plan their own budgets and forecasts, ensuring that the process is designed to achieve appropriate surplus to support their ambitions. In the current environment, this will not always be easy and will, of course, depend primarily on healthy numbers at each school. The Group will be committed to supporting that process and to making appropriate investment to deliver on its goals in the short and medium term, subject to an effective business case being made as to the 'return' on that investment.

The significant financial strength of Radley's balance sheet will certainly help in that process. A combination of effective planning, careful borrowing, focused fund-raising and judicious use of greater-than-expected proceeds from land sales has served the College extremely well in recent years and we are confident that it will provide a model for effective investment in the wider group. For the avoidance of

doubt, no parental fee income from Radley College parents will be used to subsidise any investment in the other schools, or vice versa.

#### **21. What will the impact on fees be?**

We are acutely aware of the impact that fee rises have had on parents. Driven by the decisions of the current Government to impose VAT, remove business rate relief and raise the rate of Employer's National Insurance, as well as being affected by wider economic challenges, the burden is significant. Both Radley and Prep Schools Trust are proud that we were able to mitigate some of the effects of VAT and will continue to balance three principles in each year's fee decision: the desire to offer the very best education to our children (including the fair remuneration of staff), effective management of costs and the recognition of the sacrifices parents make to send their children to our schools.

We also recognise the different price points, geography and wider market contexts of our schools. From September 2026, the fees for each of the eight schools will be set individually, while retaining an overall sense of philosophy and group identity in the process.

#### **22. How will fund-raising work?**

There have been successful examples of fund-raising at some of the schools in recent years and Radley College has an established Development Office team as part of its structure and a separate charity – Radley Foundation – to support its efforts. Effective fund-raising will also form an important part of the group's strategy as we plan for the future. While there may be support and advice from the centre, however, the approach will always be for the process to be school-specific: no money raised for one school will be used in another.

#### **23. Will Radley expect any of the prep schools to become 'feeders'?**

No. This merger is not about creating a pipeline of pupils; were that to be the motive, it would not be the right approach as it is clear that Prep Schools Trust schools feed a wide range of different schools and different markets. That will continue to be the case. In the same way, while Radley will welcome applications from boys at PST schools, they will be processed in the same way as those from other schools.

Through this merger, Radley will develop greater expertise in prep school education which will help its own approach to admissions, but the Group is clearly and emphatically committed to its schools providing the best pathways for each of its children: girls and boys, 11+ and 13+, day and boarding. That will not change.

#### **24. Will the merger affect links with other prep schools?**

No. Radley depends on strong relationships with all its feeder schools; Prep Schools Trust has important links with all its destination schools. Both remain of vital importance and will not be affected by this merger.

In terms of wider partnerships, Radley prides itself on its work locally and nationally and all the Group's schools will be encouraged to work effectively with partners to build meaningful and sustainable links and so enhance their educational offer.

#### **25. What happens next?**

The focus for the next few months will be on finalising the technical details of the merger and beginning the process of visiting each other's schools and sharing ideas. As well as working closely with Prep Schools Trust trustees, current chief executive Tom Beardmore-Gray and the wider team to ensure a smooth transition, the Warden of Radley College, John Moule, and Chief Executive-elect, Andrew Ashton, will be visiting each of the schools and will host the Heads at Radley. They look forward to meeting as many children and staff and parents as possible, answering their questions, hearing their ideas

and beginning the process of building a leading educational schools group, one that will set the educational standard for years to come.