

Multi Academy Trusts - FAQs

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is where a number of schools join together and form a single Trust with a Board of directors answerable to the Trust's members.

The directors (or trustees) of the Trust are responsible for the strategic oversight of all academies within the Trust. They are the conscience of the Trust, ensuring that the objectives are upheld and they monitor the effectiveness of individual academies, manage central services and report to the Secretary of State. They work to ensure that individual academies are performing to the best of their ability and that they get the support and challenge that they require. The Trust is the legal entity and it has one set of Articles of Association that govern all the academies within it. Each of the academies in the Trust has its own Local Governing Board that deals with local issues.

The Trust would be accountable for all its academies within its MAT. However, before any agreements are signed, the Trust would work with schools to agree those matters that will be handled centrally (for example legal services and financial auditing) and those that will remain the responsibility of the individual academy's Local Governing Boards. This agreement will be encapsulated in the Scheme of Delegation.

Why are schools considering converting and joining a MAT?

Schools have always operated within a changing educational landscape and the introduction by the coalition government of the Academies programme and the continued support for this programme from the current Conservative Government means that for schools to do nothing is not seen as a viable option. It is the Government's vision that all schools in England will convert over time to Academy status and will cease to be 'maintained' by their Local Authority. Furthermore, Local Authorities are adapting to the new landscape and reducing many of their school-focused functions including the capacity of their advisory and consultative teams.

Across the country now, there are an increasing number of MATs with many academies joined together. This is the direction that the education system is moving towards as academies work more closely together for the benefit of children and young people. It is a goal of this Government that the vast majority of schools will become academies and work together in MATs to raise the educational achievement of all children.

What are the benefits of forming a MAT?

There are numerous potential benefits including:

- A better shared understanding of both primary and secondary phases, which will improve transition and potentially accelerate children's progress;
- Greater opportunities to share best practice and professional development programmes, adding real value to the education of all children;
- Further develop the quality of teaching and learning across all schools;
- Better value for money and joint procurement; this will help participating schools navigate the tough financial climate without disadvantaging the quality of service for children.
- Governance with a clear focus on strategic development, teaching and learning, and accountability;
- Recruitment, retention and professional growth of staff; and
- Shared responsibility for all the schools within the MAT.

What would change if the proposal moves forward?

Rob Haring is already Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a smaller existing MAT. As CEO of the proposed MAT he would: manage the strategic development and growth of the MAT; act as Accounting Officer for all its schools; be a conduit for developments with the Regional Schools Commissioner, including school-to school improvement support.

Otherwise, the individual schools within the proposed MAT would see minimal change. Local Governing Boards would continue as they do now, but would also work in closer partnership with the other Local Governing Boards. There would continue to be an overarching Multi-Academy Trust Board of Trustees representing the diversity of schools within the MAT. Plymstock School would still retain its unique identity, values and ethos.

The proposed MAT has a vision for education that goes beyond individual schools ensuring that every child attends a great school. It wants all its children to excel in their learning and develop into happy, enthusiastic, responsible members of the community. Schools in the MAT would therefore continue to offer a rich, broad and balanced curriculum in line with the National Curriculum. Although not yet fixed in stone, this vision could be encapsulated in the phrase, ***“Every child in a great school – stronger together”***

How will being part of the MAT improve standards for our children?

Being a member of the MAT will enable participating schools to utilise the expertise of staff from other schools in the MAT to raise the educational achievement of all children through collaborative working and shared training where appropriate. The talents of schools together become greater than the sum of their parts.

Would teachers work at different schools?

In a MAT staff usually remain in their own schools, although there will be opportunities for secondments. However, being part of the MAT can provide many professional development opportunities. Staff from schools who are part of a MAT may attend joint training, where skills can be shared and good practice can spread between the schools.

How does the admissions process work for academies in the MAT?

Academies have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places.

Academies are required to comply with the Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes of Practice as if they were maintained schools. They are also required to participate in Local Authority coordination of admissions processes and the Local Authority’s Fair Access Protocol.

All Local Authorities are required to coordinate admissions for primary (including infant and junior) and secondary schools (including 14-19 schools) in their area. All schools, whether Local Authority schools or academies, must participate in the scheme.

What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies in a MAT have to provide?

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools. As part of a MAT, all schools continue to be inspected as separate schools. However, this is not to say that in the future the MAT could be inspected as a whole in line with Government policy. For those schools becoming academies by joining the MAT, they will still have to take part in national tests and in teacher assessments of students' performance as they apply to maintained schools. The results are reported in performance tables in the same way as they are now.