

Multi Academy Trusts: Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions:

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and is no longer run by the Local Authority. The Trust is charitable, which means it will operate as a charity and not for the profit of individuals or businesses. Tarporley High School and Sixth Form college has been a Single Academy Trust (SAT) since 2012.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership. In our case we are looking initially to form a MAT with two primary schools: Tarvin Primary School and Eaton Primary School. The MAT would work towards becoming cross phase, covering children and young people, aged 3 -18 years. The name of the MAT has yet to be decided. It will be possible for other schools to join the MAT in the future but the aim would be to keep the MAT local and relatively small and manageable in size.

Why become a MAT? Why these particular schools?

- The three schools are similar in ethos and vision, have current and long-standing connections and therefore represent natural partners.
- Those involved in the proposal believe that development of a 3 – 18 curriculum that builds over time will help with traditional transition dips when students move from one key stage to another. The MAT will allow opportunities to work more closely with primaries to deepen staff understanding across the age range and make the transitions seamless. This learning could then be shared with all of our Partner Primary schools.
- Pooled resources will allow the MAT to access good specialist support for students with complex needs more easily. The MAT could potentially employ its own specialist support to work across the MAT.
- Across the MAT shared Extra Curricular opportunities (trips and clubs etc) could widen the variety and access available for students.
- Collaboration with other schools could provide welcome opportunities to improve the quality of teaching. Increased opportunities to work with the primary schools was felt to be particularly beneficial.

What would happen to our Partner Primary schools?

Our Partner Primary schools are in a range of contexts; some are already in MATs. We would continue to work closely with all of these schools in the same way, meeting regularly, sharing best practice and ensuring high quality transition arrangements for all students.

How will admissions to the school be affected?

There is no proposal to change our existing admissions arrangements.

Would the school change its name, logo, school day structure or uniform?

The individual schools are not required, and have no plans to change their names, logo or uniform, there are no plans for changes to the school day. The overarching Multi Academy Trust would have a single name.

How are the students affected?

The students will not notice any immediate differences. They will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms, with the same teachers. Over time the pupils may notice some changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from greater training opportunities for staff and innovative learning opportunities.

Will teachers work at different schools?

Generally, staff will remain in their own schools. Being part of the MAT will provide many professional development opportunities. Staff from schools who are part of the MAT could attend joint training, skills will be shared and good practice will spread between the schools.

Risks:

What are the risks of becoming a MAT?

- It is difficult to quantify the risks involved in conversion to a MAT, as every conversion process is different. Some stakeholders involved in any conversion situation may be concerned about the financial arrangements which will be put in place in case these adversely affect their own school, about the degree of independence their school will have in managing and recruiting staff and in setting a curriculum, and about the way that leadership and governance will function within the MAT. The way to ensure that these possible concerns do not place any of the schools involved at risk is to set up the MAT in a mutually beneficial way with a strong and positive ethos in place, and to ensure that it is well-run.
- It should also be noted that there are risks in not becoming a MAT. In the future, any school could be influenced to become part of a broader Academy chain. Creating a local MAT, under local direction, offers the best opportunity to sustain vibrant, successful local schools.

Can schools back out if risks are identified?

During the consultation period and Due Diligence investigations schools can back out at any time. This could be due to concerns articulated during the consultation period or as a result of concerns identified as part of Due Diligence.

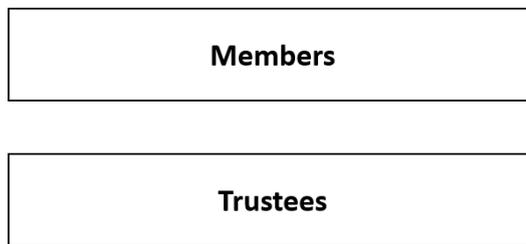
Is doing nothing and remaining a SAT an option?

Technically yes, but the wait and see policy is becoming less tenable if the school wants to have a choice over who it collaborates with in a MAT setting. MATs are becoming the norm both nationally and locally, it is the direction of travel within education. A number of local schools are either in a MAT already. If we want to have input into the way a MAT is set up and be able to choose our own partners then we need to create our own, rather than wait and only have the option to join an existing MAT.

Governance

Would the governors' role change when we become a MAT?

As a Single Academy Trust our governance structure is as follows:



Members must include people with educational and business/commercial experience, and have the expertise to effectively hold Trustees and employees to account across all aspects of the Trust's operations.

Trustees (usually referred to as the Governing Body or Board) have a range of roles and responsibilities, including:

- determining the strategic vision of the Trust;
- provide challenge and support to senior leaders
- develop and decide strategic and operational policies;
- develop and oversee the implementation of Trust action plans focussing on Trust improvement;
- set and monitor performance benchmarks;
- determine curriculum priorities;
- set the overall Trust budget.

If we convert to a MAT, there will be three tiers of governance rather than two. These three tiers will be:

- Members of the MAT
- Trustees of the MAT
- Local Governing Bodies (LGB)

MAT Governance Structure



The advantage of having this extra tier of governance is that many of the statutory duties that an academy LGB needs to undertake can be done by a highly professional and experienced group of governors. Economies of scale with the workload should result in stronger governance.

The role of the Trustees is more strategic than a board of a single Academy Trust. Whilst the LGBs will have delegated authority to run the academy school, the Trustees will be ultimately responsible for the academies it runs. The LGBs will be responsible for the standards of teaching and learning in their own schools, as well as the welfare of its staff and students.

In the MAT each academy will have its own LGB. These have a similar status to committees of a maintained Governing Body; the powers they have are those that are delegated to them by the Board. This will be formalised into a Scheme of Delegation.

How do I take part in the consultation?

The Governing Body is consulting with all its stakeholders and the wider local community. You are invited to submit your comments and views on the proposal from today until 4th March 2020 through the following:

- **By email:** matconsultation@tarporleyhigh.co.uk
- **In writing to:** MAT Consultation, Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College, Eaton Road, Tarporley, Cheshire, CW6 0BL
- **At our Stakeholder Information Evening:** Thursday 13th February 5.00pm-7.00 at Tarporley High School.

