

Frequently Asked Questions – Conversion to Academy and joining a MAT

What is an Academy?

An academy is an independent state school that is run by an Academy Trust, a legal body operating similarly to a charity. Whilst the academy is funded directly by the Government, it is no longer run by the Local Authority. This means that academies have more freedom and control over the school curriculum, hours, and term dates. 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.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust? (MAT)

A Multi-Academy Trust is a legal entity that governs a group of schools through a single set of trustees. It is set up by a group of schools, usually a local collaboration, that share a common ethos and vision.

A MAT is accountable for all academies within the group. Academies are answerable to the Trustees and to the Department for Education (DfE) rather than to the Local Authority. A MAT is a charitable company, limited by guarantee. This means that it is registered at Companies House.

A Multi-Academy Trust allows the academies to support each other in developing and sharing best practice in teaching as well as sharing the high quality staff and resources.

Why are we considering joining a Multi-Academy Trust?

We are a highly successful school, who individually and more recently in collaboration, has improved outcomes for children, demonstrated financial efficiencies and provided exceptional professional development of staff. We want to secure and protect our school going forward. The direction of Department for Education policy is for all schools to become academies and become part of a multi-academy trust. We want to retain our unique character and join a Trust with a similar ethos and values. The local authority is fully supporting our decision to pursue becoming a Multi-Academy Trust.

Has the Department for Education or Local authority put pressure on the school to convert to academy/form a MAT?

Absolutely not. This is a decision taken by the Governing Body after careful consideration.

How would converting to an Academy benefit pupils?

Becoming an academy will give the school more freedom to make decisions about the best way to provide an outstanding education for our children. This can allow for more unique and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, improving the experience and performance of the children as a result.

Will our school change?

We want to continue to be a great school where every child is valued. We therefore do not intend to change except in ways we think will improve the school even more. For children, it is unlikely that they would see much, if any, change in their day-to-day school lives.

Wilton Primary will keep the same name but will become Wilton Primary Academy. We will have the same uniform colour and logo; children will be taught in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the experience for the children. Our plans are focused on ensuring that we share the best practice, continue to develop and evolve together and meet the needs of our communities.

Will each school/academy have its own Head teacher?

There is a Head teacher in every academy within the MAT.

How will parents have a say in the running of the academy?

Parents and families will continue to be represented on local councils through elected governors. The local councils (LCs) for each academy school oversee the performance of the individual academy. These have a

similar status to committees of a maintained governing body and the powers they have are those that are delegated to them by the board of trustees of the MAT.

How will admissions to the school be affected?

The school will become its own admissions authority but this will still have to be clear and fair and in line with admissions law and the national School Admissions Code. The Local Authority will continue to have responsibility for making sure there are sufficient places locally and will coordinate the admissions process for all schools.

Does becoming an academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?

No. Academy funding agreements state that academies must ensure that they are at the heart of their community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

As an academy/MAT, will we still work with the local authority (LA)?

Yes. Academies are independent of the local authority; however, we wish to continue working with the LA, other local schools and local partners.

If our schools are no longer part of the local authority, then who are we accountable to?

The MAT would be accountable directly to the Department for Education and our accounts audited by the DfE's Education Funding Agency and external auditors, and we would be overseen by our Regional Schools Commissioner, as well as continue to be subject to Ofsted inspections.

What will happen to our school's funding?

The Department for Education meets the running costs for an academy in full. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the academy will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement.

How will the school be accountable financially?

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts, e.g. we will be required to produce and file accounts and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.

Who makes the final decision on whether each school converts to an academy?

The governing body of the school.

What processes have the governors gone through in deciding to begin this process and will we definitely become an academy within a MAT?

The governing body passed a resolution in the autumn term to consider converting to an Academy and to explore the possibility of joining an established MAT. This decision was taken because of wanting to shape our own future, to respond to the changing educational climate and with careful evaluation of all options to move forward with the process. At the end of the consultation period, the governing body will analyse the consultation responses and then have a final vote on whether to convert to academy status and join Tees Valley Education MAT.

How can I find out more?

The best source of information on academies is the Government's own website:

<https://www.gov.uk/become-an-academy-information-for-schools>