

## **What is a Multi Academy trust?**

A Multi Academy trust (MAT) is where a number of academies join together and form a single trust with a board of directors answerable to the trust's members. A single academy trust can convert its legal structure to MAT status before it joins with any other academies so it is in a position to join other academies when it wishes to do so. In the first instance Whitburn Church of England Academy would be the only school in the Trust, however the Trust can agree that other schools can join or may look to deliver new provision in other areas.

Members of the trust are responsible for the strategic oversight of the academy. They appoint and have the power to remove the trust's directors who determine the policies of the trust, monitor the effectiveness of each academy within the MAT, manage central services where appropriate and report to the Secretary of State. They work to ensure that each academy is performing to the best of its ability and it gets the support it requires. The MAT enters into a supplemental funding agreement with the Secretary of State in respect of each academy within the MAT, each school having its own budget stream and staffing structure.

Each of the academies in the trust has its own local governing committee which has authority delegated to it by the directors. However, if there is a school in the Trust that needs more support in some areas, then there would be greater oversight as laid down in a document setting out the delegation and reporting structures and called the "scheme of delegation".

## **Are other schools also creating MATs?**

Across the country there are MATs with many academies joined together. This seems to be very much the way that education is going as academies work more closely together for the benefit of the pupils in a local area. In South Tyneside there are existing MATs such as at Cleadon Church of England Academy and Holy Trinity Church of England Academy. Several other local schools, such as Harton Technology College, are now in the process of forming MATs.

## **How could other schools join our proposed MAT?**

There are two main ways in which other schools could join our proposed MAT:

1. Initially in the case of Whitburn Church of England Academy, this would be through the submission of a bid, with the support of the Diocese of Durham, to create a new Church of England School in the south of the region in an area of high population growth. In the future we could also support other schools in the area who cannot, or do not wish to, convert to academy status independently by allowing them to join the MAT.
2. To become a formal sponsor of an underperforming school. However, this would only be undertaken where the other school(s) in the Trust had the capacity to provide this support and where the sponsored school had sufficient resources to pay for any such support. The Trust would be aiming to develop any sponsored school's provision so that it became at least good, preferably outstanding. In some circumstances good schools join with others for the benefit of all the students and the efficient running of the schools

It may be that schools we support are also Church of England schools which will mean a shared vision and ethos already exists. However, we will also consider supporting other schools in the community. Non-Church of England schools will be able to retain their own individual character and ethos through protections in the legal documents.

## **What are the benefits of forming a MAT?**

Schools in a MAT can benefit from being part of a larger organisation. Examples would include:

- Better sharing of resources such as employing specialists across schools to support pupils with particular needs; sharing “back office” resources such as HR and Finance departments as well as reprographics expertise.
- Better purchasing power: having a larger organisation allows economies of scale for e.g. computers, paper and photocopying.
- Opportunities for greater staff development or progression through working across schools to share best practice or support particular subject developments

This could mean savings to the budget for schools in the Trust due to economies of scale (e.g. ordering goods or sharing HR and Finance expertise) which means more money for each school to spend on staffing, resources or other items. The Trust structure also supports the sharing of best practice across schools.

## **What would a school becoming part of a Multi Academy Trust mean for our pupils and parents/carers?**

Pupils and parents/carers will continue to be part of their school community with the same support structures that currently exist. The school local governing committee will be able to exercise the usual range of powers. There may also be increased monies available in the budget for teaching and other students support services due to economies of scale (see above).

## **What would stay the same?**

The day to day life of the school would remain completely unchanged by conversion to a MAT. Examples of areas which would remain unchanged include:

- The ethos of the school and our focus of ‘Excellence for all’.
- Admissions policy, which is non-selective and open to those of all faiths and those of no faith. The Admissions Policy is reviewed on an annual basis and this annual review would continue.
- We would continue to offer a broad and balanced curriculum with strong focus on literacy and numeracy.
- Uniform – again we review this on a regular basis but the formation of a MAT will not instigate a change in uniform.

## **Who runs the Multi Academy Trust?**

As currently happens at Whitburn Church of England Academy, the MAT Directors Board has overall responsibility and accountability in law for the performance, site and overall viability of the Trust. In a Multi Academy Trust, the Directors Board is the top level of governance within an academy school. The local Governing committee sits beneath this and supports the Principal and Senior Management Team to make and implement strategic decisions. When there is more than one school in the trust, each school has its own Governing committee.

### **Who decides who can join the Trust?**

Decisions would be made by the Directors Board in consultation with the Governing Committee(s). A school cannot demand to be part of the Trust, nor can the Trust be forced to take any school by any other body. The Trust would intend that there is sufficient flexibility for Local Governing Committees (LGC) to create autonomous governing committee structures.

### **How does a school apply to join the trust?**

Any school interested would talk to representatives of the Trust about the practicalities of how this would work, and check that the school and the Trust hold common values in their approach to education. If there was interest in exploring this further, then the MAT would form a working group to work with representatives of the applying school for both parties to reassure each other of the financial, site and performance health of both the applicant school and the existing Trust.

### **Do we need to get permission to convert to a MAT?**

We will need to obtain the permission of the Secretary of State for Education, via the Education Funding Agency (EFA). As a Church of England Academy we also need the permission of the Diocese of Durham Board of Education, who have confirmed they are supportive of this process.

### **What changes do we need to make to become a MAT?**

There are three main changes which we need to undertake:

- a. convert our current Articles of Association into MAT articles;
- b. enter into a Deed of Variation to adopt the MAT funding arrangements;
- c. gain approval for the different governance structure for our MAT as part of the business case.

### **If we proceed when will the change be made?**

Subject to the outcome of the consultation and approval from the Education Funding Agency we would hope to become a MAT by January 2017.