



# Whitburn Church of England Academy

An Academy with Specialist Status in Maths and Computing

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*'Excellence for All'*

5<sup>th</sup> October 2016

## Consultation on the formation of a Multi Academy Trust

Dear Parent/Carer,

As you know our school converted to Academy status in January 2011. Since then, more and more single academies have joined or are joining Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). A MAT is where a group of academies join together and form a single Trust company with a single board of directors who are accountable to the Trust members. Many other local schools have already established successful MATs and many more are in discussions with their governors.

In order for an Academy to join other schools it must have MAT company documents ('articles') in place as these documents set out the legal structures enabling such partnerships to happen. As a result of positive conversations with Members, the Board of Governors has voted to proceed with consultation on changing from single Academy status to Multi Academy Trust status. Initially, Whitburn Church of England Academy will be the only school within the MAT but this change in legal status will enable us to bid to provide new school provision in areas where there is a need for this. We are currently investigating an opportunity presented to us by 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. Subject to a successful funding bid, this new school would also become part of our MAT.

There are three key reasons why Governors wish to convert to a Multi Academy Trust:

1. **The economic advantages** for Whitburn Church of England Academy are vital at a time where chronic underfunding is the biggest threat to our future provision.
2. **To prevent us being forced to join another MAT** – although there is no immediate threat to Whitburn, single academies are much more vulnerable to being compelled to join a MAT and therefore forming our own MAT would give us a greater degree of protection.
3. **To further enhance the school to school support work**, as this is an expectation for us as an outstanding school and Teaching School.

Each of these reasons is outlined in more detail below.

### Economic Advantages

The key advantage for Whitburn in forming a MAT is economic. The funding we are receiving from the Education Funding Agency for Years 7 to 11 during 2016-17 is over £200,000 less than we received in 2012-13 for the same number of pupils. Since 2013, we have also had substantial increases in employers' national insurance, employers' pension contributions and staff salaries, none of which have been funded by the Department for Education. Although we now receive post-

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Document available in large font, alternative language or audio format on request



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16 funding, the rate per Sixth Form student in England is set at a lower rate than for pupils in Years 7 to 11 and therefore is only just sufficient to cover Sixth Form costs.

The greatest advantage of being a MAT for Whitburn is the ability to share costs with one or more other schools for some staffing and also to achieve greater economies of scale in the procurement of goods and services. Achieving savings without compromising the quality of our educational provision is essential to the future of the academy and creating a MAT will offer far greater opportunities for this.

In the longer term, being within a MAT could offer the opportunity to expand our provision by sharing the costs of services and staff. Examples here could be the funding of a school nurse and counsellor, or employing teachers to deliver additional subjects such as Latin or Mandarin. Such opportunities become much more viable when shared between schools. At present, many of the ways we would like to further develop and enhance our provision at Whitburn Church of England Academy are prohibited by a lack of funding. We strongly believe that creating a MAT will improve our financial position and allow us to become an even more successful school.

### **To prevent us being forced to join another MAT**

As stated previously, there is no current direct threat to Whitburn from this. However, the scale of change in education in recent years has been enormous and it is very clear that MATs are now the preferred form of governance for academies. The majority of the 5000 academies in England are now part of MATs and this grouping of schools is supported by The Department for Education, Ofsted and the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Governors believe that forming our own MAT will protect the school from the possibility of being compelled to join another MAT in the future. The direction of travel for Church of England schools and academies is very much towards forming or joining MATs. We believe that by taking a lead and forming our own MAT on our own terms that this will help protect the school in the longer term without compromising our ethos, identity or the outstanding quality of education provided. In January 2011, the bold decision taken by governors led to us becoming the first former voluntary aided school in the country to become a converter academy. Since conversion, the results have consistently placed us as one of the top performing state schools in the north-east region, as well as adding a long awaited Sixth Form. The trust that parents and carers showed in supporting the difficult decision to become an academy has been vindicated. We are confident that if parents and carers place their trust with us once again over conversion to a MAT then we can take this wonderful school forward without losing what we have worked so hard to develop over many years.

### **School to school support**

In recent years, it has become the expectation of outstanding schools that they will provide substantial support to other schools in need. As a Teaching School and National Support School, Whitburn Church of England Academy already provides substantial support to other schools. Since being designated as a National Leader of Education in 2014, the Principal has spent a day or more each week supporting other diocesan schools. Other members of senior staff have also been deployed in supporting other schools. This support has been provided at no detriment to Whitburn, as in this period the school has opened a new Sixth Form and in 2016 has gained our best ever GCSE results. The deployment of staff has also resulted in generation of revenue through additional grants available to Teaching Schools and National Leaders of Education. All of the revenue from this funding has gone directly to Whitburn's budget. The requirement to support other schools will neither increase nor decrease with conversion to a MAT, but it will be the case that being a MAT will provide a different route to delivering school to school support. Forming a MAT would demonstrate our commitment to secondary education and give us the structural capacity to potentially take other schools within the MAT if we wish to do so in the future, helping to develop the quality of other schools as well as our own going forwards.

## **What would change if we became a MAT?**

### **On a day to day basis almost nothing would change as a result of converting to a MAT.**

The current Principal and Senior Management Team of the school will not change as a result of becoming a MAT and we are confident that there is currently capacity within the Senior Management Team and broader Senior Leadership Team to support the provision of a new school if successful in any bid. The directors of the Multi Academy Trust will be accountable for our school and any other academies which may ultimately join the MAT in the future. To enable this change will mean a restructure of our governance arrangements; for example some of our existing governors may ultimately be represented within the wider MAT structure as part of a local committee rather than as Directors on the MAT board.

We want to assure all our parents, carers, staff and students, that should we convert to a Multi Academy Trust we would remain a fully inclusive school serving the needs of our community. The Multi Academy Trust proposal is part of our strategy for change, building on our successes. We believe this move will help the school to continue to develop as an outstanding school and ensure that we continue to serve our community and the wider area.

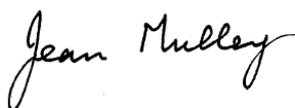
I have attached some information and questions about converting to a Multi Academy Trust (MAT). I hope that these will answer the majority of your queries.

Please email any comments or further questions to [office@whitburnchurchofenglandacademy.org](mailto:office@whitburnchurchofenglandacademy.org) with MAT Consultation as the email title or alternatively you can write to us at the school. If you wish to make a written response, please do so by Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October. Further information is available on our website.

The Board of Governors are determined to preserve our heritage, giving high priority to our Church of England status. They are equally determined that we will continue our own quest for excellence in all that we do, based on the needs of our children in this community. The Board of Governors are also determined that we continue to support others in the light of our Christian Faith.

I would like to thank you in advance for making the time to engage with this important issue.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs J Mulley  
Chair of Governors