



Formation of a Multi-Academy Trust – Consultation

In response to questions and issues raised by parents / carers at the four consultation briefings and via the parentconsultationMAT@springfield.uk.net email address, answers to further 'FAQs' are stated below.

These should be read in conjunction with those already noted in the original MAT consultation document.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there plans to change the school uniform?

There are no plans to change the school uniform.

My child has a special educational need (SEN). How does this proposal affect my child's support and provision funding?

Appropriate support for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities will continue to be provided by each school (academy) within the MAT as is the case now; our schools are inclusive in ethos and exist to serve the children who live in the locality.

Under the DfE's Special educational needs and disability code of practice (statutory guidance), every school is required to identify and address the SEN of the pupils that they support. Mainstream schools, including academies, must:

- use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to meet children and young people's SEN
- ensure that children and young people with SEN engage in the activities of the school alongside pupils who do not have SEN
- designate a teacher to be responsible for co-ordinating SEN provision – the SEN co-ordinator, or SENCO
- inform parents when they are making special educational provision for a child
- prepare an SEN information report

All maintained schools, including academies, have a duty to co-operate with the local authority on arrangements for children with SEND (with a reciprocal duty on the local authority) and a duty to admit a pupil if the institution is identified in an Education Health and Care plan. School admissions remains the remit of the local authority. The trustees of the MAT must ensure that the schools work with the local authority to develop and review the Local Offer for SEND pupils.

Maintained schools, including academies, identify those pupils who are eligible for additional funding when completing the annual school census. The high needs funding system, which supports provision for pupils with SEND, is managed by the Education Funding Agency. The high needs funding system comprises core funding, which is included in mainstream schools'/academies' budgets, and 'top-up funding'. Per pupil top-up funding is paid by the commissioning local authority; this includes to academies.

Further information regarding the Special educational needs code of practice and high needs funding can be accessed via:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-needs-funding-arrangements-2016-to-2017>

What are the 'success criteria' for the MAT?

We would like all schools within the MAT to be at least 'good' and preferably 'outstanding' with respect to the key Ofsted criteria. The new governance framework within the MAT should be highly effective and support sustainable school improvement. In *summary*:

- The MAT creates a 'high expectations' culture that enables pupils and staff to excel.
- A broad and balanced curriculum inspires pupils to learn. The range of subjects helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of their education, including the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical, spiritual and artistic learning.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are highly effective; pupils thrive in lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour and attitudes to learning which have a strong, positive impact on their progress.
- Pupils regularly take up opportunities to learn through a wide range of trips and extra-curricular activities.
- Throughout each year group, pupils make substantial and sustained progress in their learning, considering their range of starting points.

Would it not have made sense for other key feeder schools to be part of the proposed MAT?

Yes. However, our other key feeder schools are not in a position to join our proposed MAT as they are already part of (or in the process of joining) an existing trust. For example, Court Lane Infant and Junior Schools are both part of the University of Chichester Academy Trust.

Were other options considered?

Yes. The governors commissioned independent professional advice on the options available to the school. As part of an options analysis, governors scrutinised the potential benefits and risks of four options: joining a MAT, becoming a sponsor academy, forming a MAT and 'making no change'. Forming a MAT was considered to be the best option for the pupils and the school, going forward; hence the consultation on this model.

What processes of due diligence are applied to the conversion process?

Due diligence is defined as an investigation of a business option/transaction prior to signing a contract, or an act with a certain standard of care. It can be a legal obligation, but the term commonly applies to voluntary investigations.

With respect to the proposed formation of a MAT, the application of due diligence is an on-going process; the proposed MAT cannot be formed until the full governing bodies of all three schools give 'final' agreement. The DfE reviews key information regarding the schools' budgets, assets, building projects, educational outcomes and the skills and experience of proposed key members and trustees before consenting to an academy conversion order. The schools then commission legal expertise to represent them in negotiations with the local authority and DfE to ensure that any agreements are appropriate. This allows further opportunities to scrutinize funding and asset transfer agreements before conversion is agreed.

If the school is employing lawyers, isn't that an expensive process? How does the school pay for that?

Each school within the proposal receives £25,000 of additional funding, the 'academy conversion grant', from the DfE to cover the costs incurred by the process. If the school were not to go ahead with conversion, any remaining money from the grant would be returned to the DfE.

Are the members and trustees paid positions?

The employees of the school, i.e. the Headteachers, are paid positions; the other member and trustee positions in the proposal are not. The vast majority of members and trustees are existing or former governors from Springfield School, Solent Infant School or Solent Junior School. A MAT board of trustees cannot include more than one third employees and 19.9% local authority related personnel.

Trustees have a legal duty to: act in the charity's (i.e. the MAT's) best interests; manage the charity's resources responsibly; and act with reasonable care and skill, seeking advice where appropriate.

More information about the responsibilities of trustees can be accessed via:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2>

If I had a concern or complaint, how would this be managed in the absence of local authority oversight?

MATs are required to have transparent complaints procedures. If a complaint was not resolved at school level by the Headteacher or local governors, it could be referred to the Trust.

All academies are accountable to their Regional Schools Commissioner:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/schools-commissioners-group/about>

As is the case now, specific concerns can be referred to Ofsted.

Does the MAT receive the schools' funding?

We have agreed with the DfE that funding should go directly to the schools' budgets, with an amount in the order of 5% to be designated for core MAT activities (5% is what is spent currently on core functions and service level agreements). Any unspent money will be returned to the schools.

What is the name of the MAT?

We are hoping that members of the community will feedback their ideas regarding a name as part of the consultation process. The emerging 'front runners' include:

- 'The De Curci Trust' - after William de Curci, a 12th century Drayton and Farlington area landowner
- 'Trimaran' - nautical theme, the idea of three elements (hulls) sailing in the same direction
- 'Education for Excellence Partnership' – or similar phrasing, linked to the 'aiming for excellence' theme

Will the schools change their individual 'branding'? Won't that cost the schools money?

No. Each school will need to show that it is registered with the MAT, for example by including a 'footer' on school documentation and by a link/statement on their website; and the MAT will need to create a webpage through which it can make key information public. These additions can be achieved at minimal cost.

Will the names of the schools change?

No.

What has the reaction of staff been to the proposal?

Staff have been aware for some time that governors have been giving due consideration to the 'changing educational landscape'; and governors have invited all staff to take part in this consultation process. Questions received to date relate mainly to pay and conditions. Note that the TUPE (transfer of undertakings – protection of employment) process protects employment rights when employees transfer from one employer to another.

Without pre-empting the outcome of the full staff consultation, it would be fair to say that staff generally appear interested in the proposal and can see the potential educational benefits as well as the practical challenges. The Headteacher wrote to all unions, teaching and non-teaching, at the start of the consultation to make them aware of the proposal and process. The governing body is keen to ensure that any transfer process is a 'smooth' as possible for staff and that they are not unduly affected by any changes.