

Bedford Free School – Multi-Academy Trust Consultation

We believe that our pupils are entitled to the very best possible education. At a time when other parts of the Borough are undergoing significant changes and switching to a two-tier system, we are able to focus on the long-term picture and what will enable us to serve children and their families into the future.

The Governors believe that now is the time for BFS to formally create a multi-academy trust, and to do so in partnership with Elstow School. We believe that this change will provide students and staff at BFS and Elstow with greater opportunities than now, and offer more security and stability as we look to the future

What is a multi-academy trust?

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a single entity established to oversee and improve high educational standards across a number of schools. In our case, the MAT would initially be made up of two schools - Elstow School and Bedford Free School – and the Trustees would be drawn from existing governors from these schools.

You can view further detail on academies at the Department for Education website:
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies>

When would the multi-academy trust be formed?

All being well, we will officially create the MAT in April 2017.

Who would run the MAT, and who would run each school?

Little would change at Bedford Free School, in that the Principal would continue to run the school day-to-day. The main difference is that they would now be supported and advised by the BFS “local governing body”, instead of the Trust as it is now. (Currently the Trust IS the Governing body; after the change they would be separate.) The multi-academy trust would become the legally responsible authority

What is the aim of the new multi-academy trust?

We want to create a family of schools within which students are empowered and supported to achieve extraordinary academic and personal outcomes, preparing them for a fulfilling life. We would do this in line with the values of respect, honesty and high expectations, and operate on the principles of:

- Inclusivity
- Aspiration
- Parental-choice
- Knowledge-based curriculums
- Partnership, and
- Transparency.

Would BFS change in terms of how it is day-to-day?

We do not intend to change how BFS operates. As a high-performing school, its Principal and staff will continue to be free to run the school as they see fit. Over time, we anticipate that it

would work closely with other schools in the MAT, to the benefit of pupils – but this would be an evolutionary approach, as the Principal sees fit.

What would happen to the staff?

There will be no changes for the staff at BFS. All staff currently working at Elstow School would have the right to continue to work there once it has become an academy and joined the proposed MAT.

What happens to my views?

We really value your views, and we will be extremely grateful to all those who complete the questionnaire.

What happens now?

Assuming our plans for a MAT proceed, the Trustees of BFS will have to make certain adjustments to the “funding agreement” they have with the Department for Education. They would also have to change the rules governing the Trust, known as the Articles of Association, in order to allow for there being more than one school.

These are standard arrangements these days, and the Department for Education publishes “Model Funding Agreements” and Articles of Association online.

The Governing Body would like your views

A consultation questionnaire is available to be completed alongside this summary document - you can download a copy from the school website at <http://bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/about/multi-academy-trust.php> .

We are also organising information events – and we would be delighted to meet with you at either of these:

Elstow School – Thursday 5th January 2017, 2.45pm – 3.45pm

Bedford Free School – Thursday 5th January 2017, 7pm – 8pm

You can also write or email questions to the Principal at

consultation@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

Alternatively, if you would like to arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal, please contact the school.