



Elstow School



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Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) Frequently Asked Questions

What is a multi-academy trust?

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a single charitable company which operates a group of schools. In our case, each school will have a local governing body to oversee it. So while the MAT will ultimately be accountable and responsible for the performance of all schools in the trust, it will delegate responsibility for certain functions to the governors of each school.

Funding for schools within a MAT continues to be allocated on an individual academy basis. Funding is governed through a master funding agreement between the Secretary of State and the MAT and a supplemental funding agreement for each school within the MAT.

Having a single trust governing all schools results in there only being one employer for all staff which allows the sharing and movement of resources through schools in the chain.

MATs may decide that, within the rules of their funding agreement, some of an individual school's budget can be combined with others and used to fund shared services such as Educational Welfare, or ICT or catering contracts etc. This helps the Trust to achieve economies of scale and improve the quality of provision.

Why would a school want to convert as part of a multi academy trust?

A MAT, as a single legal entity, allows schools to achieve strong collaboration and to use this collaboration and accountability to drive up school standards. Where there are strong high performing schools in the chain, being part of a MAT enables closer sharing of best practice to improve standards further. Equally where there are underperforming schools in the chain, representation in the trust can ensure there is sufficient challenge and support to turn those schools around.

The MAT can also agree to delegate as much or as little power down to the local governing bodies of the schools involved as circumstance require, which again allows each MAT to define where "power" should sit. Also, being part of a MAT can help schools to target intervention resources more directly to improve outcomes for children.

Having the MAT as employer of staff also allows flexibility around sharing resources to meet the needs of the individual schools. The MAT's role is to provide a clear, consistent strategy and vision across its schools, often through them working together. MATs can often negotiate contracts and services that achieve much better value for money than if each school was to negotiate individually.

What are the main responsibilities of the MAT once the schools have converted and the trust opened?

Their main responsibilities include:-

- Setting the strategic direction for the schools in their group
- Responsibility for the performance of the academies, including monitoring and (where necessary) intervention to improve performance
- Ensuring that the right structure and organisation is in place to deliver the necessary high-standards for students
- Ensuring value for money and good use of public funds, and identifying & securing other finance and support when needed
- Challenging progress in all aspects of school operations, and at the same time providing support and guidance to achieve the highest outcomes
- Leading involvement with parents and the wider community, to promote the MAT and support community regeneration

Governance of the new multi-academy trust

How will the new MAT be governed?

The new MAT will have a group of Members and a Board of Trustees, and each school will have its own local governing body.

What are the “Members” of the multi-academy trust?

The “Members” are like shareholders in a commercial company. They appoint the Trustees to run the MAT, and are the only people able to amend the Articles of Association of the Trust.

What are the “Trustees” of the multi-academy trust?

The “Trustees” are those people who actually run the Trust, and who determine policies and make the decisions. They are the official statutory Governing Body of the MAT.

In our case, the Governors of Elstow School and BFS are currently in discussions as to who will be Members, Trustees, and on the Local Governing Bodies, once the MAT is created.

How will the role of governors change if our school becomes an academy?

All academies in a MAT are governed by one trust and a single Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for decisions relating to how each academy is run, from the curriculum to staffing. The MAT can establish a local governing body for each of its academies, to which it can delegate some of its functions. The MAT remains accountable for these functions.

The Governors of BFS and Elstow are currently planning how the governance model will work for this MAT and what functions will be delegated to the local governing body of each school within the MAT.

Finance

How is academy funding calculated?

Funding to schools within a MAT continues to be allocated on an individual academy basis. Funding is governed through a “master funding agreement” between the Secretary of State

and the MAT, and then there is a “supplemental agreement” between the Secretary of State and each school within the MAT.

Nowadays, all state schools within a Local Authority are funded in the same way, regardless of whether they are an academy or maintained school. The amount of money due to each school is determined according to a formula agreed locally.

Most funding for the running of academies comes from its “general annual grant” (GAG). This is paid to academies by the Education Funding Agency (EFA), based on a formula agreed locally.

What will happen to the various service contracts that a school already has?

When becoming an academy, a school needs to look at contracts they hold with external suppliers and the local authority, for services such as catering, cleaning, and ICT. If the school wants to keep a contract with an existing supplier, they will discuss with the supplier how to transfer it to the academy trust. Software licenses will need to be renewed or transferred to the trust.

MATs must also decide whether their existing financial and management information systems are suitable for the requirements of an academy and multi academy trust, as they will have to produce management accounts, cash flow reconciliations and balance sheets across all their schools, and for the Trust as a whole.

Admissions

Will there be any changes to the admissions arrangements change for our schools?

There are currently no plans to change admission arrangements from those used currently used by Elstow or BFS. Academies are their own “admissions authority” – they are in charge of deciding their admissions arrangements – and they are required to consult on their Published Admission Number (PAN) where they propose either to increase or keep the same PAN. This means that the MAT:

- will be responsible for consulting on and determining (‘finalising’) each school’s admission arrangements in accordance with the School Admissions Code.
- becomes responsible for organising admission appeals in compliance with the School Admission Appeals Code, not the local authority.

Once admission authorities have determined their admission arrangements, they must notify the appropriate bodies and publish a copy of the determined arrangements on their website, and the website of each individual school, displaying them for the whole offer year (the academic year in which offers for places are made).

MATs may not decrease the “PAN” of any school without the consent of the Local Authority (because the Local Authority still has a statutory duty to ensure that it offers enough places for all of its children, and reducing a PAN would prejudice the ability of the Local Authority to meet this statutory requirement).