

## **Multi Academy Trusts**

### **What is an Academy?**

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government not through the Local Authority. The Trust is given charitable exemption, which means it must operate much like a charity.

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

A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is where a number of schools join together and form a single Trust with a Board of Directors answerable to the Trust's members. Members of the Trust Board are responsible for the strategic oversight of all academies within the Trust. They are the conscience of the Trust, ensuring that objectives are met, the effectiveness of individual academies is monitored and that central services are managed efficiently. The board are accountable to the Secretary of State for Education to whom they report. The Board work to ensure that individual academies are able to perform to the best of their ability and that they get the support and challenge they require. The MAT will have a board of directors/trustees. The Trust will delegate powers to Local Governing Bodies (LGB) which will have a role similar to that of the current School Governing Body. Initially the LGB will have the same governors as it has now.

More information can be found here: [www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies](http://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies)

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

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

### **Which MAT is it proposed that we join?**

Extend Learning Academies Network (ELAN) is a Partnership of strong schools. Locking, Mead Vale, Oldmixon, Bournville, Walliscote, Milton Park, Mendip Green and Windwhistle primary schools. Together the partnership has more than 2,500 children and young people. It is our intention that each school within our MAT will retain its own distinctive ethos and individuality.

### **Will the name of the school change?**

We will not be changing the school name.

### **Will the school change its uniform?**

We will not be changing the school uniform.

### **Will term dates and school day times change?**

We have no plans to alter the times of the school day or term dates, keeping these in line with most North Somerset schools.

### **Will the curriculum change?**

We have greater freedom and autonomy over our curriculum. This will enable us to continue to develop our curriculum over the next few years should we so wish and the freedom to review any proposed changes by government and to decide whether they are right for the children at our school. We may also choose to work with some or all of the other schools in the partnership on joint curriculum projects.

### **Will the admissions policy and criteria change?**

Academies are bound by the School Admissions Code. This means that, for example, we would not become selective.

**Will the school receive more money from the government?**

At present North Somerset retains a proportion of our funding to provide some central LA services. As an academy we would receive that money directly and will be able to choose who to buy those services from and how they should be best deployed for the specific benefit of children at our school. By becoming part of a Multi-Academy Trust, we would be able to take advantages of economies of scale to maximise our resources.

**Will the senior staff spend more time running the business side of the academy instead of focusing on the teaching and learning?**

The senior leaders at school will continue to be fully focused on delivering high quality teaching and learning. ELAN provide a core service offer to member schools which includes HR, Payroll, Finance, Estates management, School improvement and CPD

**How will the school be accountable financially?**

We will be governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts so we will be required to produce and file annual accounts with Companies House, as part of the Multi-Academy Trust.

**Will the school get support towards the expenses of academy conversion?**

A £25,000 grant is provided from the DfE (2021) towards the costs of the conversion including legal expenses.

**What is the Local Authority view on academies?**

Academy status offers schools an opportunity to develop a new relationship with the Local Authority We envisage that we will continue to work very closely with the Local Authority.

**Does withdrawing from the Local Authority control leave us on our own?**

As we will be working in daily collaboration with other schools in the cluster, our MAT and the wider region we will definitely not be on our own. We will also be maintaining our excellent relationship with North Somerset LA who have a key role in commissioning education and overseeing standards across all schools in the area.

**What will be the future responsibility of the Governors?**

The Trust Board has overall responsibility for educational standards and the business operations of the partnership. In practice they will delegate the work of overseeing standards in each school to the school Governors. As each school will also have its own budget the Governors will have to take responsibility for planning and spending funds at school level.

**Can you revert to LA control once you have become an academy?**

The rules from the DfE state that a school would be required to maintain its academy status for at least 7 years. There have not been any examples of Academies reverting to LA control.

**What support will there be for children with special educational needs?**

SEN support for children with statements/EHCPs and 'Looked After children' will still be provided by the LA who have a statutory responsibility for this and would continue to monitor us to ensure that we are doing all we should.

**Do we need a sponsor for the school to become an academy?**

Schools who Ofsted judge to be 'good' or 'outstanding' do not need a sponsor. All the partners will be working together as equals.

**Will the school still have Ofsted inspections?**

Academies are subject to exactly the same system of Ofsted inspections as Local Authority schools.

**Has the decision to convert to academy status already been taken?**

The legal process to becoming an academy has started with a special resolution, made by the Governing Body, to make an application to convert. This has triggered a full consultation across the school community. A final decision to convert will only be taken once the consultation has been concluded. It is feasible that the Governors could reverse their current thinking and they will be carefully considering the responses to the consultation.

**Who are we consulting with?**

We are consulting with parents and carers, staff and their representatives, the children, the Local Authority, other local schools and local community groups

**Have members of staff been consulted?**

We are consulting with the staff.

**Will staff terms and conditions of employment change?**

Staff will transfer across under normal TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) rules. Terms and conditions would remain the same. If the partnership wished to change any conditions of employment in the future it would have to go through a further consultation process.

**Do the school leadership and governing body have the capacity and expertise to take on the additional responsibilities of academy status?**

The governing body and school leadership has strong experience in leading a successful school. By operating as a multi-academy trust the non-educational functions can be shared with other schools.

**Why do we need to change?**

We don't need to change. However, in the current financial and educational climate, where the landscapes of education are rapidly changing, we feel that we would like to be in control of our own destiny and make a positive choice about the partner schools that we would wish to work with. The Governors feel that the opportunity to become a partner in a locally based trust directly benefits our children.

**Where can I find out more about academies?**

There is a large amount of information available from the Department for Education. You can also access more information on our school website. Please note the difference between schools that are being required by government to become academies, and those successful schools, like our schools, which are positively opting to become academies.