



Academy Frequently Asked Questions

The information in this fact sheet is intended to help answer the questions which may arise when considering a transfer to a Multi Academy Trust and has been produced in conjunction with SMART Multi-Academy Trust. This information cannot in any way replace the informal conversations and formal consultation that takes place during the transfer process.

What is an academy?

An academy is an all-ability school that is directly funded by central government and independent of direct control by local government. Academies are inspected by Ofsted under the same framework as maintained schools. Academies are self-governing. We are already an academy (known as a Single Academy Trust or SAT) having converted in September 2012.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a charitable company limited by guarantee which is formed to oversee a group of schools who are academies. The MAT is the employer of staff and holds the land and buildings of each academy in Trust.

How long does an academy transfer take and how will the process affect the day-to-day running of the school?

This will usually take several months. As part of the process, legal advisers and a project manager have been appointed to provide day-to-day support to assist with the transfer process.

How does governance work?

There will be a Board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the work of the trust and the academies. However, they devolve much of the responsibility to the individual academies and their respective local governing body. Each academy has its own governing body who work with the academy Headteacher to check that the academy is making good progress and add additional challenge and scrutiny to the work of the school. The academy Headteacher is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role. The governing board works with the Senior Team to set the vision for the academy in line with the overall commitment of the multi academy trust. The governing body in partnership with the Senior Team produce a draft improvement plan for approval by the Trust Board. The governing body has delegated powers from the Trust Board including the management of property and the appointment of staff. A representative of the governing body will represent the school in Trust discussions over Finance and keep other members of the board up to date.



What is the role of the MAT Chief Executive Officer?

They are the Accounting Officer for the trust and the strategic support for schools. The CEO is the key contact for the Regional Director and the DfE and acts as the point of first contact to ensure schools are not distracted from their core purpose of teaching and learning.

The priority for our school is the education of young people. How will you ensure that the transfer to a Multi Academy Trust does not distract us from this?

Part of the work of the MAT, is to carry out 'due diligence' exercises which will make clear which schools need extra support to convert and not be distracted and which schools can move quickly through the process. It's important that all schools are open about the amount of support they might need to enter into and go through the process.

What is the main motivation for joining a Multi-Academy Trust?

- We continue to remain in charge of our destiny
- To shape the provision to meet the future needs of our children, families and community based on a local and collaborative proposal of working together and building on existing good practice
- The Local Authority (LA) capacity is limited. Pooling the resources of a number of schools means we can re-create some of the services once received from the LA
- To develop the expertise of all staff to further improve effectiveness and outcomes for children
- To generate financial efficiencies to invest back into the classroom for the benefit of the children
- To create opportunities to secure investment in school buildings and educational facilities for the benefit of current and future pupils, for example, the opportunity to apply for funding for refurbishment of our buildings

What parents and carers need to know?

- The school is not proposing to change its character and will continue to look, feel and be the same as it is now
- The School Leadership Team and Governing Body will continue to run the school daily as they do now, and parents will continue to be represented on the Governing Body
- The name of the school will not change, and the school will not change its admissions policy
- Children with special needs will continue to receive additional support in the way they do now
- Our local schools will continue to work very closely together for each other as well as your children, and will be provided with more support to help them become even better
- The multi-academy trust arrangements will share some central services across the schools which will help them be more efficient and make sure that funding is focused on teaching, learning and support for children
- The multi-academy trust will work very closely and co-operatively with local partners, including other schools, community groups and organisations, and the local authority.
- SMART Multi-Academy Trust was established in 2016 and currently runs 8 schools in Newcastle upon Tyne, providing wide ranging support and educational opportunities for pupils in the area.

Is an academy like a business?

No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.



Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.

Will there be any changes to the Curriculum?

No, the work we have done with our curriculum will continue. We will continue to ensure that what we teach is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs and continues to be broad and balanced.

Does joining a MAT change our relationship with local schools and the community?

No. Academy funding agreements state that academies must ensure that they will be at the heart of the community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community. By being part of a MAT there is further support to ensure that we achieve our aims.

As an academy, will it still work with the local authority (LA)?

Academies are independent of the local authority. Even as part of a MAT we will continue working with the LA, other local schools, and local partners.

What about funding?

The Department for Education via the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) meets the running costs for an academy. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore, the academy will have a similar budget to when it was a maintained school. We already have greater freedom to procure services from other providers. In a MAT there are further opportunities to realise cost efficiencies across the network and the academy will be able to make more efficient use of resources to support school improvement. Like other schools, an academy cannot run at a loss or agree a deficit budget, i.e., it has to break-even.

How will the school be accountable financially?

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts and company law, e.g. we will be required to produce and file accounts and trustees cannot be paid. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor.

What functions would remain the statutory responsibility of the LA?



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- Home to school transport
- Education psychology, SEND statementing and assessment
- Monitoring of SEND provision
- Prosecution of parents for non-attendance
- Assigned SEND resources for pupils/students with rare conditions needing individually tailored provision
- Provision of specialist facilities for a student who is no longer registered at a school.

Who will be responsible, and pay for assessments of pupils/students with additional needs?

The LA retains the same statutory responsibility for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in academies as they would for a maintained school. We would continue to work closely with the LA to ensure that our SEND pupils are well provided for and to ensure that the LA meets their statutory commitments with regard to pupils.

Will the staff stay the same?

When a single academy joins a MAT, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it under the same employment terms and conditions.

Will you consult with staff, community and parents?

As we are already an academy there is no obligation to undertake further consultation. However, we will engage with all key stakeholder groups during the transition phase. This will include the sharing of our plans and an opportunity to gather feedback and suggestions, as well as addressing any questions or concerns.

Will the school remain non-selective?

Yes - academies are non-selective schools. Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, SEND and exclusions as if they were maintained schools. It is the aim of the trust to ensure that our academies provide high quality, inclusive education for all local children.

Will the school need to change its name?

We will not change our name.



Can the academy work with the council and other schools?

Yes. As part of a MAT, we will collaborate in order to be more effective in the use of our resources. If appropriate, the academy will buy back services to/from the local authority. The academy can work with any schools it wishes if this makes a difference to the education of the children.

Will there be a new uniform?

No. SMART MAT encourage the individuality of each school therefore there are no plans to change the Uniform or current logo.