

May 2024

Frequently Asked Questions about MATs for Parents and Carers

What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is a Multi-Academy Trust. It is a legal entity that governs a group of schools through a single set of directors. It is set up by a group of schools, sometimes a local collaboration, that share a common ethos and vision.

What is the new MAT called?

The new MAT is called The People's Learning Trust

Who will be in it?

Bidston Avenue Primary

Everton Free School

Impact Sefton

Meadow Primary

Oldfield Primary

The Bridge Short Stay School

Wincham Primary

Why are schools joining MATs both locally and nationally?

Across the country Local Authorities are being eroded in terms of size and power. Both Conservative and Labour Parties have indicated that Academies as part of MATs is their preferred educational structure. Schools can use the strong collaboration and accountability afforded by the MAT to drive up standards and share best practice and services across the trust, replacing aspects of former local authority support.

What are the potential benefits of Impact joining a MAT?

There are several reasons why a school may want to join/form a MAT:

- Further developing the effective teaching and learning practices across schools.
- To continue to develop and sustain a high-quality inclusive education for all pupils.
- Access to a bespoke professional development programme (CPD) that adds real value to the education of the young people, further developing our skilled workforce.
- Efficiencies in administrative functions and joint procurement; this will help in these more financially challenging times to advantage our pupils.
- Further developing governance with a clear focus on strategic development, teaching and learning, and accountability.
- Enhanced reputation for excellence, due to collaboration with other schools in the Trust.
- Further develop leadership, management and governance that impacts directly upon the students.
- Effective recruitment, retention, and growth of excellent staff.
- Improve and sustain academic standards.
- Ensure that decisions about the school are influenced at a local school-based level; and,
- Secure the long-term future of the school.

What are the benefits of being a founder school?

- A founder school is a school that initiates or joins a MAT at its inception, and plays a key role in shaping its vision, values, and culture.

- A founder school has more influence and input in the decision- making and governance of the MAT and can ensure that its ethos and identity are reflected and respected in the MAT.
- A founder school can also benefit from the support and expertise of the other founder schools, and from the opportunity to create a MAT that meets its needs and aspirations.

Do we need to consult?

Although there is no requirement for the MAT or the school to consult generally with stakeholders, it is considered good practice for schools to inform parents, staff and other key stakeholders about the proposals and give them the opportunity to respond. Parents can email admin@pru.sefton.school with any questions.

Is there a set model for how a MAT must operate?

There are rules regarding how a MAT is funded, but the way in which a MAT operates, its governance structure and vision/ethos are defined by the academy or academies that set up the MAT.

What will happen to our land and buildings?

All land and buildings currently owned by the LA on behalf of the school will transfer to the new MAT on a 125-year lease.

How is funding organised within the MAT?

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

Will the school lose its financial independence and its ability to manage its own finances?

There will be a common financial procedures manual to be shared between schools, but each school will be expected to maintain their own accounts. However, there is likely to be some centralisation of finances where these make sense and result in possible economies of scale. MAT Structures. MATs are governed by one set of Members and Board of Directors who delegate certain responsibilities to individual Local Governing Bodies.

Will the governors' role change when we become a MAT?

When the school initially converts to become an academy trust the existing governors of the maintained schools will retain their status and some have an opportunity to become the directors of the academy trust.

What is the new structure?

When the school converts to a MAT, there will be three tiers of governance. These three tiers will be:

1. Members of the MAT - responsible for fundamental decisions such as constitution of the academy trust – most strategic decisions are delegated to the Directors.
2. Board of Directors of the MAT ('the board'), also known as trustees. These are the individuals who run the MAT on a day-to-day basis and will decide on what and where support is offered. They will also potentially offer centralised services such as HR, IT, Finance etc. The directors will be ultimately responsible for all the academies in the Trust.
3. Local Governing Bodies (LGB) for each academy school. In multi academy trusts, each academy will have its own LGB. These have a similar status to committees of a maintained

governing body and the powers they have are those that are delegated to them by the board.

Will working with other schools mean lowering our own standards or possibly detracting resources from our own school?

We have chosen to work together with the other founder schools to ensure that the vision, values and culture of our schools is central to everything that we do. Collaboration and sharing ideas and expertise can only help us improve.

What changes will children and parents see?

There will be very little visible change as a direct result of forming the MAT. The Headteacher, staff, premises and curriculum will all continue to be very much unchanged. The changes you'll see will be a sustained improvement in the performance and running of the school and hopefully some new and improved resources and options for our pupils to benefit from.

We will attempt to coordinate our school calendar with that of our High Schools.

Will there be financial implications for parents and carers?

There will be no additional financial implications for parents and carers.

How will joining a MAT improve standards for our children?

It will enable us to utilise the expertise of staff from schools in a MAT to accelerate progress for our children. We will create a set of specialists which will operate over schools within a MAT, releasing staff to focus on developing wider opportunities and exciting experiences in a new and broad curriculum. This could be in middle and senior leadership, as well as with support staff. The experience and talent of all the schools together become greater than the sum of their parts. An example would see year group teachers working together rather than being the only year group teacher at the school. There will be opportunities for SENDCos, Early Years staff, subject leaders, safeguarding leads, Bursars, and other staff to work together for the benefit of the children and school.

Will teachers work at different schools?

Staff will remain in their own schools. Being part of a MAT will provide many professional development opportunities. Staff from schools who are part of a MAT may attend joint training, skills will be shared, and good practice will spread between the schools. There will be some exchange of staff for training and professional development purposes, but Impact staff will remain Impact staff. As a school we already support and benefit from support from other schools, being part of a MAT will strengthen opportunities for us to develop our workforce.

How does the admissions process work for academies?

Academies within a MAT are required to comply with the Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes of Practice as if they were maintained schools. They must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. They are also required to participate in Local Authority co-ordination of admissions processes and the Local Authority's Fair Access Protocol. Any change to our current admissions protocols will always be communicated to parents and carers.

What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies have to provide?

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools. As a MAT, all schools will continue to be inspected as separate schools. However, this is not to say that in the future that the whole MAT could be inspected to assess its overall performance. Results are reported in performance tables in the same way as they are now, i.e. against the school where tests were conducted.

Do MAT schools have to follow the National Curriculum?

Academies within MATs are not required to teach the National Curriculum but rather a broad and balanced one that includes English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of children preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of later life. Most schools within MATs continue to broadly follow the National Curriculum with little deviation. We are hoping to sustain our present curriculum and provide more enrichment opportunities through the MAT. This could include visits, visitors and resources used within and beyond the curriculum we have.

Who is in charge?

Each school leadership team will remain in charge of their school. The MAT board and members will take on the Local Authority role and will oversee activities and standards across all schools in the MAT. There will be a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and new Chief Financial & Operations Officer (CFOO). These roles will have corporate accountability for all MAT operations. Mr Steve Baker is the new CEO and Mrs Linda McMullen is the new CFOO.

Will we be changing the school's name?

Yes – From September the school will be known as Waterside Academy

Will you be changing the uniform?

Yes – We will be changing to a sports-based uniform. All current students will be supplied with a uniform, as will new pupils to the school. Parents will be able to purchase further items of uniform at specified points in the year.

Will you be changing the holidays or length of the school day?

No – These will remain the same but could change in the future following discussion with staff, parents, and other stakeholders.

When will the conversion to academy take place?

The scheduled start date is Sunday 1st September 2024.