



Further Questions from parents around proposed MAT – 27th March 2018

1. Will our staff be expected to work in other schools across the MAT?

Current staff cannot be compelled to work in any school other than Mayfield and we would want to retain our excellent teachers. In addition we realise that the schools are not geographically very close and we would not expect staff to suddenly have a longer commute to work, so future employees would have a voluntary mobility clause which would mean they could refuse to move schools. However, some staff may occasionally want to move for career reasons and being employed by the Trust would facilitate that. A few specialist jobs may be specifically designed and advertised to be worked across all schools.

It is not true that school to school improvement requires teachers being moved to other schools. Rachel Snape is already involved in helping schools to improve and she does that by visiting, establishing what help is needed, applying for funding on behalf of the school and using that funding to buy in services. Any schools 'requiring improvement' that join the MAT would come with money already allocated. There is no intention or any need to undermine the success of the founder schools.

There could well be the opportunity for some joint training e.g. on Inset days, and staff may wish to visit each other's schools to look at and share best practice, but their jobs would remain at Mayfield.

2. What is the evidence that schools are heading towards the MAT system?

The latest policy statement on academisation was from Nicky Morgan in 2016. "I am today reaffirming our determination to see all schools become academies. However, having listened to the feedback from parliamentary colleagues and the education sector, we will now change the path to reaching that goal." Under the current system Good and Outstanding schools can choose to remain under the LA but underperforming schools can be forced to join a MAT which has school improvement capacity. As of January 2018 all of the secondary schools in Cambridgeshire were academies or Free Schools. Of the 204 Primary schools, 65 were already academies (54 in MATs), the LA were processing another 21 and we know that other primary schools are actively looking to join MATs. The LA is currently unable to process applications in the normal time frame because of the high number of applications. Meanwhile it continues to make cuts in its services e.g. to Children's Centres and to CREDS.

It may be that a new status quo is reached with a stable number of maintained schools supported by the LA at a reduced but steady level. An alternative scenario is that the LA is unable to continue maintaining the remaining schools and they are all switched over to academies. We do not know which of these will happen.

3. What are the main advantages of forming our own MAT rather than joining the local secondary?

Forming our own MAT gives us the opportunity to create an organisation based around our own vision and values. In addition, a primary MAT gives us the greatest benefits for school improvement and professional development of staff teaching all age ranges including EYFS. Joining with a secondary MAT may have some advantages for the oldest children in the school. It would be easier from the financial point of view as more pupils are involved.

4. What is the strategy for adding more schools to the MAT? Will the MAT have expertise in raising standards?

There would first be discussions to establish what a joining school is looking for and to establish if the school and MAT would be a good fit for each other. If the school went on to apply to join it would go through the same due diligence process as we are currently experiencing i.e. the MAT Board would want to see data on performance, finances, reputation, ethos, land and legal issues, governance etc. The Innovation Trust is recognised by the DfE as having strong school improvement capacity – several examples/references were included in the application including work performed by The Spinney as a National Teaching School and Mayfield around Maths Mastery, mentoring of Head Teachers and NQT's.

5. Will the MAT be allowed to recruit paid consultants that are former headteachers and governors?

We already pay consultants as School Improvement Partners and for training who are former headteachers and this is also allowed in MATs. Some schools use consultants who have been teachers. Governance roles (Members and Trustees) are all voluntary in the MAT (the only paid Trustee is the CEO).

6. What does “fully represented at Trust improvement Level” mean?

It means that as a founder school our headteachers would be part of the Trust Improvement Group. It also means that we would have the opportunity to nominate suitably qualified governors from our school to sit on the Trust Board of Directors. This is not guaranteed for schools which join later.

7. Will children benefit significantly? Will teaching and learning benefit significantly?

The Trust Improvement Group would take a formal approach to analysing the data from all of the schools and would take steps methodically to address any areas of weakness. The schools all have different strengths and could advise on a variety of areas or would seek independent advice/training and share that knowledge.

In addition, the administrative burdens for senior staff would decrease significantly as work on policies (there are currently >50), premises/IT contracts etc. could be shared between the Trust Board and the three schools. This would increase time available for Heads to concentrate on teaching and learning i.e. children. Teachers at the three schools have met each other at Mayfield and our teachers have visited Fulbourn and The Spinney and positive relationships are already being formed. Ideas for planning, problem solving, specific concerns etc. could be quickly shared by email or more formal initiatives could be shared on training days. The aim of the Trust is to be outward looking – bringing in the latest ideas to share and sending out its own good practice to other schools.

Excellent teaching practice leads to excellent learning and that benefits all children.

8. What happens if one school in a MAT underperforms academically or on another non-financial issue?

A school in a MAT	A school in a LA
This would be a multi-step process:	same
The School Improvement Group would be monitoring data from the schools and putting interventions in place. This should maintain performance at a high level.	Same with the School Improvement Group being the LA
If the school itself failed to make the necessary changes to improve performance, the CEO would be instructed by the Board to take a more prescriptive role and would impose changes. In extreme cases this could mean replacing the local governing body with other experienced governors.	Same with the LA instructing the school
If the Trust persistently failed to improve performance it would receive a 'Letter of Concern' from the Regional Schools Commissioner and a number of visits would be performed. The school and Trust would be told what needs to be done to improve performance.	same
Failure to act effectively at this stage results in a 'Pre-warning notice' from the DfE – the academy would have to respond to the DfE with assurances about changes. There are nine of these on the DfE website issued in 2017 and include warnings about poor management, safeguarding and performance.	same
The DfE can also issue 'Warning notices' in which they advise a school that they will terminate the funding agreement unless specific measures (such as working with another Trust) are put in place. There are ten of these on the DfE website issued in 2017.	same
Should the schools fail to respond to all of these warnings the DfE can 'rebroker' a school (move it to another Trust) or close it. These examples make the press and tend to be cases of extreme mismanagement including, for example, huge overpayment of the CEO (Durand Academy) and/or serious safeguarding issues and/or poor performance. https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/letters-to-academies-about-poor-performance	Same – with the re-brokering being to a MAT

9. What happens if one or all schools in a MAT or the MAT itself underperforms financially?

A school in a MAT	A school in a LA
If Trust schools were running a deficit they would have to make savings, including potentially restructuring to ensure that they work within their budget. They are also able to look for additional funding e.g. grants.	same
If Trust schools and/or the Trust fail to control their finances the Education Funding Agency will intervene and advise on putting appropriate financial controls in place. Single academies are increasingly moving towards forming MATs to improve their financial position. Failure to respond can potentially lead to funding being withdrawn.	Same with the LA intervening
The founder schools and the prospective Trust Board are looking to see a sustainable financial plan before a decision to proceed is made.	Same with the LA replacing the founder schools and prospective Trust Board

10. Do Directors have the power to change the amount of responsibility delegated to the school's local governing body?

Yes that is possible. Some roles and responsibilities are statutory for Trust Boards and others would be determined initially by the Local GB's of the three founder schools and set out in the Terms of Reference of the Trust. It seems likely that over time the Local Governing Body would be asked to take on more responsibility in some areas and less in others as the MAT evolves and the requirements for outstanding governance become clear. The Trust Board has representation from all of the founder schools and would want to develop a positive and productive partnership.

11. Will consultation responses be assessed for tone in order to try to gauge parents' opinions?

We continue to collate, consider and respond to parents' opinions and questions and these will be included in our decision making process.

12. Have staff had a consultation on whether or not the school converts as well as a consultation on TUPE?

Staff have had some open, come and discuss and ask question type meetings as well as a formal meeting for all categories of staff with the 2 other schools. The current priority is the TUPE consultation. A further meeting will be arranged following this, early next term, when we have fuller clarity about some of the questions.