

Frequently Asked Questions

Multi Academy Trusts (MAT)

What is a multi academy trust?

A MAT is a single charitable company which operates a group of schools. In this case, each school will continue to have a local advisory board/governing body to which the MAT will delegate certain functions. The MAT will ultimately be accountable and responsible for the performance of all schools in the trust.

Funding for the 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 operate so that, within the parameters of the funding agreement, some of the individual school's budget is combined and used to fund shared services such as contracts. This helps the chain to share best practice and achieve economies of scale.

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 underperforming schools in the chain, representation in the trust can ensure there is sufficient challenge and support to turn those schools around. Equally 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.

The MAT can also agree to delegate as much or as little power down to the local advisory boards or local governing bodies of the schools involved, which again allows each MAT to define where "power" should sit according to the circumstances of the schools involved.

Being part of a MAT can also help the 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 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.

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

Typical activities include:-

- Setting a strategic direction for improvement of educational attainment
- Ensuring that the right infrastructure is in place to deliver the necessary changes to support the educational improvement (leadership & management)
- Challenging progress in all areas of the schools' operations whilst providing support and guidance aimed at promoting success
- Responsibility for the performance of the academies, including monitoring and where necessary establishing a plan of action to improve performance

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- Setting up committees with a specific focus to monitor aspects of academy life
- Leading involvement with parents and the wider community, to promote the MAT and support community regeneration
- Ensuring value for money and good use of public funds, and leveraging in other finance and resources when needed
- Championing the MAT in the wider community in order to bring new resources to the schools and the trust, for example through holding events, arranging mentoring and building links with business.

The Governing Body

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/advisory board for each of its academies, to which it can delegate some of its functions. The MAT remains accountable for these functions.

Within *HEART Academies Trust*, every school will have a local governing body/advisory board. The steering group is currently planning how the governance model will work for the MAT and what functions it will delegate to the local governing body/advisory board of each school/academy within the MAT.

Governance of the Academy Trust

How will *HEART Academies Trust* be governed?

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

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 Company. The "Trustees" are those people who actually run, determine policy, and make decisions for the MAT. They are the statutory Governing Body of each academy within the MAT.

For *HEART Academies Trust* the steering board are currently developing and planning the make-up of the Members and Trustees and the delegation to the local governing bodies/advisory boards. Once the working details are finalised, they will share via the ongoing communications.

Finance

Funding to the 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 agreement between the Secretary of State and each school within the MAT.

How is academy funding calculated?

Most funding for the running of academies comes from the general annual grant (GAG). This is paid to academies by the Education Funding Agency (EFA), based on a formula provided by your local authority. The EFA will tell you how much GAG funding the Trust and the schools will get and how the grant has been calculated. The GAG is made up of:

- school budget share – calculated on a comparable basis to the running costs of maintained schools in the same local authority

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- education services grant – allocated to academies based on the number of pupils they are responsible for, to buy services no longer automatically provided by the local authority

What will happen to the various service contracts that the Academy has in place?

Academies will need to look at the contracts their schools hold with external suppliers and the local authority, for services such as catering, cleaning, security and ICT. If they want to keep a contract with an existing supplier, they will need to discuss with them how to transfer it to the academy trust. Software licenses will need to be renewed or transferred to the trust.

Academy trusts 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.

Admissions

Will the admissions arrangements change for our school?

HEART Academies Trust has no plans to change admission arrangements from those used by existing School.

As their own admissions authority, academies 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.
- The MAT 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 must 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).

The MAT may not decrease the "PAN" 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, so reducing your admissions to your reception year would prejudice the ability of the Local Authority to meet this statutory requirement).