

CONVERTING TO AN ACADEMY - FAQs

WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT CONVERTING TO ACADEMY STATUS AND BECOMING PART OF A MULTI ACADEMY TRUST?

- 1. What is an academy?** Academy schools are state funded schools in England, which are directly funded by central government (specifically, the Department for Education) and independent of direct funding and control by the Local Authority. Academies are inspected by Ofsted under the same framework as maintained schools. Academies are self-governing.
- 2. 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 the Trust.
- 3. What are the benefits of being a MAT?**
In the school's opinion the benefits include:
 - Closer collaborative working between strong schools and a strong Trust team, so that staff can build upon sharing their expertise and have staff development opportunities, in order to raise standards for our children even further.
 - Securing best value for money on products and services, therefore, achieving greater economies of scale, so that we can spend as much as possible in classrooms and support our curriculum.
 - Expert and effective support from the Trust's support teams at a time when Local Authority capacity and services to schools are increasingly limited, due to Local Authority budgetary pressures.
 - Retaining our identity and autonomy, so that the nature and effectiveness of our school does not change.
 - Benefiting from opportunities for the Trust to apply for grants and bids that schools, under Local Authority control, do not have access to.
 - Greater collaborative working with a wide range of schools across other Trusts and Local Authority areas to develop professional development opportunities and improve the quality of education for all local children.
- 4. Why are we considering converting to an academy and becoming part of MAT now?**
The current educational climate is changing and many schools nationally are choosing to take advantage of academy status. Many schools wish to make the move now to determine their own destiny and to make the changes when it is right for their own school. Governors feel that now is the right time to take this forward.
- 5. 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 Board will continue to run the school daily as they do now, and parents will continue to be represented on the Governing Board.
 - The name of the school and the uniform will not change.
 - Children with special needs will continue to receive additional support in the way they do now.
 - The MAT 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 MAT will work very closely and co-operatively with local partners, including other schools, community groups and organisations, and the local authority.
 - The MAT will work closely with GFM, the building management company who manage the site on behalf of PFI.
- 6. Is an academy like a business?**
No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit.

7. Who makes the decision to become an academy?

The school's Governing board and the Board of Trustees of the MAT. The Department for Education then approve the request.

8. 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.

9. How does governance work?

The Altus Education Partnership Trust Board has overall responsibility for the operation of the academies. It delegates functions that are specific to each academy to the Local Governing Boards and it delegates certain of its functions that relate to the Trust as a whole to other committees of the Trust Board.

The Trust supports individual academies by taking on some of the responsibilities and functions that detract from the focus on learning. Scrutiny and oversight of these areas are reserved to the Trust Board and its committees.

Individual schools and their Local Governing Boards need to have delegated autonomy and authority and drive improvement within their own institution. Staff and parent members are elected by their peers to serve on each Local Governing Board.

Local Governing Boards' delegated responsibilities require them to monitor and report to the Trust Board on the overall performance of the academy.

10. What is the role of the MAT Chief Executive Officer?

They are the Accounting Officer for the Trust and the strategic support for schools. They have the responsibility for informing and supporting the work of the board – including the board's strategy of the Trust's vision and strategy. The CEO is responsible for delivering the agreed strategy and overseeing all operations of the Trust. 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.

WHAT DAY-TO-DAY CHANGES WILL HAPPEN?

11. Will a move to academy status mean a new name for the academy? No. The school will continue to be called Hamer Community Primary School.

12. Would becoming an academy mean a new uniform? No. Parents will not need to buy a new uniform.

13. What will be the impact on our children with special needs? There will be no change to the level of support provided. EHCPs will be funded in the same way. Hamer Community Primary School will continue to recognise that every child is different and has the right to be included as a valued, respected and equal member of the school community.

14. Will the school hours be any different as an academy?

No. The Multi Academy Trust Board will have the power to make changes but this decision is usually delegated to the local governing board of an academy and we have no intention to make changes. As is the case now, parents would be consulted prior to any change in school hours, although no change is envisaged.

15. Will there be any changes to the Curriculum?

No, we will continue to offer our high-quality curriculum and the full range of National Curriculum subjects.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR OUR SCHOOL FINANCES?

16. 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 would have some greater freedom to procure services from other providers. In a MAT there are further opportunities to realise cost efficiencies across the MAT and school 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.

17. 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.

18. Does this improve on current funding arrangements?

Converting to an academy will not be to our detriment financially. There may be the potential for some financial gain; however, any decision taken is not motivated by money. In addition, the MAT board has access to capacity funding from the Department for Education as well as opportunities to bid for capital funding on an annual basis.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF?

19. What are the terms and conditions for staff? On conversion to academy status, teachers and staff employed by Rochdale LA will transfer with the same terms and conditions, via a formal TUPE (transfer of undertakings protection of employment) process. In addition, conversion will not affect any union memberships.

20. Who will employ teachers and staff following conversion? At present, Hamer Community Primary School teachers and staff are employed by Rochdale LA. Following academy conversion to The Altus Education Partnership MAT, teachers and staff will be employed directly by the MAT.

WHAT WILL THIS MEAN FOR STANDARDS?

21. Will Altus Education Partnership have the capacity to support our educational standards?

The Altus Education Partnership has its own school improvement capacity for schools in the Trust, through a Head of Primary School Improvement, who is experienced and qualified to support and challenge schools in data analysis, teaching, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, special educational needs and disabilities, and leadership and management. The school improvement package will include support and challenge for governance. Additionally, we are part of a partnership group with other local schools, who are considering becoming part of Altus education Partnership, with whom we work collaboratively to improve provision across a range of areas for our children.