

## **MAT Consultation Questions & Answers**

### **STRUCTURE & POSITIONS**

#### **Q. Can you explain the structure?**

A: There will be five members, acting as the shareholders, whose role is defined in our Articles of Association.

There will be nine directors on the board, who will be volunteers. We are hoping that there will be at least 1 governor from each school. The board will be skills based, with a number of independent directors from commerce and education.

There will be two part-time employed roles. There will be a Chief Finance Officer, which will be a part-time salaried role, working closely alongside School Business Managers and Bursars. Mr Sales has been proposed to fulfil the role of CEO, as he has plenty of experience in this role for Connaught Academy Trust. He will also be the Accounting Officer.

#### **Q: The structure looks top-heavy with CFO, CEO and Board of Trustees?**

A: All the directors are volunteers, very much like governors work for schools currently. The CFO and CEO roles will be part-time initially. We have looked at a specific skills set to build the board of directors around. The CEO/CFO role will be employed by the Board of Trustees and there will be a salary range and job specification. We are looking to keep costs down. There is clear guidance in the EFA financial handbook for both these roles and the trust accounts and financial statements are audited in line with these requirements. The EFA does not allow trusts to post liabilities, in the same way the local authority would step in if schools post deficit budgets. As part of the termly audit process, the CFO will report to the board with management accounts.

#### **Q: Why haven't all SHLP schools joined?**

Some schools are already part of a MAT and this has happened over the last couple of years. For some church schools who are Voluntary Aided for example, they do not have the same freedoms as maintained schools because the Diocese looks to protect their church foundation and the ownership of the land.

#### **Q: What will happen if one of the 5 schools decides not to join-will the MAT be formed anyway?**

A: It does remain up to the governing bodies of each individual school and there is still a process that each school needs to go through in responding to the consultation. We all feel that the real risk is in not doing it; the restructuring from the Local Authority and spending cuts are a motivating factor for us. We recognise that not all of our local schools are ready to join a MAT, but we wish to pave the way for others. Generally we've been well-supported by Surrey, but we are reaching a tipping point.

#### **Q: How will Mr Sales manage his role as CEO and Executive Headteacher of Connaught and Crawley Ridge Junior Schools?**

A: The CEO is to be a champion for all of our schools to ensure that the Heads get the best deal for all of the children. Mr Sales has a good track record of supporting schools as well as fulfilling the CEO role. The CEO will be answerable to a skilled Board of Directors. There will also be a Board of Headteachers, who will work together to get the very best teaching and learning in all schools in the partnership.

**Q: Aspiration is all well and good, but how will you ensure that you don't grow too fast and the MAT de-stabilises?**

A: It is important to have aspirations. Initially we want to have a "settling in" period when we bed-in the changes that academisation will introduce behind the scenes, in terms of our systems and procedures. We share your concerns and do not want to grow too quickly-there is a balance to be had. Financially, we recognise that a bigger group will bring bigger financial gain. We do want to stay local and we will consider carefully who joins. MATs that have grown too quickly, without the financial mechanisms to cope, do struggle. Connaught has these mechanisms in place and so we can consolidate. Some other Surrey Heath schools are not yet ready to join a MAT, but they are welcome to join later if the conditions are right and we want to leave that door open for them. We have no appetite to run before we can walk.

**Q. Can you give us any idea about timescales?**

A. We are aiming for the Autumn Term, but the announcement of the General Election may well slow this process down, because government departments tend to shut down at this time. We are keen to get each school's application submitted to Dominic Herrington, the Regional Schools' Commissioner, who in turn is very keen to help us to launch this MAT, particularly as it is cross-phase and contains faith and community schools together. Having said this, we don't want to rush the process and we want to get things right and be transparent.

**Q What mechanisms would there be in ensuring continued parental oversight and accountability to parents and students once Holy Trinity is an independent school, and would these be as rigorous and transparent as those currently in place via the Board of Governors and the Local Council?**

Holy Trinity will have representation on the Board of Trustees and the local governing body, which includes parent governors, will continue to provide strategic support and challenge to leaders. The level of rigour and transparency required for academies is extremely high from both educational and financial standards.

**Q What mechanisms would there be for ensuring that funds allocated for school development will not be directed towards trust directors' remuneration, and will there be full transparency over allocation of funds in a regular report?**

All funds are audited and financial statements are published on the Trust website. There is complete transparency and a much higher degree of diligence involved for academy accounts than the maintained sector.

**Q Has the Diocesan Board of Education agreed that Holy Trinity can join the MAT?**

Representatives from the Diocese Board of Education (DBE) have been involved from the start, as it is important to meet the diocese criteria in protecting the Christian distinctiveness. At each stage of moving forward these representatives have either been part of meetings or have been kept in the loop and they have been very positive. As this is the first mixed MAT for Guildford diocese the DBE is rightly being cautious to ensure the MAT is set up to meet DBE criteria. Jon Hills & Seb Sales have presented to DBE.

**Q Have the members and directors representing the Diocese been appointed? What criteria are, or will be used, to identify those people?**

There is a mix of independent, school and diocese based proposed members and trustees. These have been drawn up through skills audits and against clear criteria. Of the five members, two will have church links. Of the Trustees, Holy Trinity will have two representatives on a board of nine and there will be three in total with church links. All appointments are skills based. There will also be three independent trustees.

**Q What influence will the church and diocese have over the non-faith schools?**

The uniqueness of each school will be protected through the funding agreement, articles of association and supplementary agreements. Each school has appropriate skills based representation and we see this as a strong partnership of faith and community schools.

**Q What will be done to prevent the dilution of Holy Trinity's Christian distinctiveness? How will Holy Trinity be protected as a Church of England school?**

Through the articles of association, funding agreement and supplementary agreements and by strong representation on the members and board. If through a SIAMS inspection, it was felt that the school was losing its influence there are powers to intervene.

**Q How will the MAT guarantee that directors and members will have a wide experience and knowledge of governance and school leadership?**

Through robust due diligence, recommendations from each school's FGB on suitable candidates with skills set. The trust is in weekly correspondence with the RSC who are very positive about the combined strength of this MAT.

**Q How will the MAT ensure quality school improvement across all of its schools?**

Through buying best school improvement support rather than relying on what Babcock gives us. Jon Hills as Ofsted Inspector and wide leadership experience is likely to be Director of Standards to oversee school improvement support in all five schools. There is also a proposed School Improvement Director with county and national experience.

**Q How will the MAT ensure that standards are raised in every school?**

Making best use of expertise within the five schools, sharing good practice with an agenda that all schools are aiming to be outstanding.

**Q Will schools' benefit financially from joining the MAT?**

The schools will share CPD and teacher development between the MAT and through links with the outside such as the Maths Hub. There will be opportunities to make use of economies of scale on purchasing. The MAT is already been recommended for future bidding rounds in relation to sponsorship and CIF funding.

**Q If new schools join would they follow the lead of the schools or would they try and take them in another direction?**

New schools will have to fit into the existing governance, mission and priorities of the trust. However, they would be able to add value and bring ideas and improvements to the trust.

**Q Would only good or outstanding schools join as not clear in the presentation?**

No, trusts are set up to support all schools and Mr Sales and Mr Hills have a strong record in supporting other schools to make sure they deliver effective education to children.

**Q How is Ofsted managed for academies and how would this impact on the group?**

A: Presently Ofsted inspects academies in the same way and under the same common assessment framework as maintained schools. For convertor academies, there is usually a three year window from their conversion date to their next inspection. Outstanding schools are exempt from routine inspection and schools that are not good receive monitoring visits from Her Majesty's Inspectors and a re-inspection within 2 years of their last inspection.

**Q What is in it for Connaught as a school? I understand that there is a broader benefit in being able to share resources and benefit from economies of scale, but our concern is that Connaught (being a large, successful school) ends up subsidising the others? Connaught is already established as a single academy, so I don't see any upside for Connaught - it can only lead to compromise, and less control over spending within the school. The benefit for the other schools is clear, but the benefit for Connaught is not.**

Connaught has indeed established a very effective single academy trust. However, it has also benefitted from partnership work between schools that has added value in both leadership and teaching. This is a way of making some of those partnerships more formal. From a financial point of view, funding is far more available to multi-academy trusts than single academy trusts and this can be used for the benefit of all pupils.

**Q Is any element of the MAT being enforced (i.e. any of the schools being forced to join a MAT), or is it a complete voluntary arrangement?**

This is a completely voluntary arrangement and partnership between like-minded schools. In the end, each governing body will decide whether this partnership is in the best interest of their school.

**The consultation doc explicitly states that the Chair of the Trust will not be from Connaught (but doesn't make the same stipulation about the other schools). This is a good example of where it appears that the influence of Connaught will be diluted.**

This has not been decided on, but each school will have an equal representation and there will also be a high level of independence within the board. This is something required by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

**The aspiration to expand over the next 5 years to a network of 10-12 schools of good or outstanding rating - this is probably the most concerning aspect. I just don't see how a MAT that large can do anything other than lead to an averaging out of the schools (resources and the best staff being moved to support under-performing/struggling schools). In this case, it would mean a levelling down for Connaught.**

Evidence over the last three years would strongly support the fact that support for other schools has only strengthened Connaught and led to strong leadership throughout the school, something that was recognised in Connaught's latest inspection. A MAT of about 10 to 12 schools is precisely the number that is recommended by the RSC at the moment because it maintains locality and direction.

**5. Linked to 4, I note that Crawley Ridge Junior School has recently been rated as Requires Improvement by Ofsted. Having read the report, this seems like a good example of where resources may be diverted from Connaught to bring that school back up to the level it should be.**

Mr Sales is providing support to Crawley Ridge Junior School, which is identical to support provided to Knaphill Junior School and the Hythe Primary School. Connaught's most recent inspection provides clear evidence that there has been no dilution or diversion of resources and that Connaught has continued to develop and improve.

## **FUNDING**

**Q: Funding: do all the school budgets in the MAT get pooled into one pot? If one school were to get into financial difficulties, how would that impact on the schools?**

A: The funds go directly to the school and then we will all pay in an amount to the central pot. The financial year will run alongside the academic year. The CFO working with Business Managers and Bursars will ensure that each school balances the books. The Scheme of Delegation will define the roles and responsibilities of each school. There will be a "top slice" paid into the central pot and the 5 schools will decide on the % of funding to be paid in. We intend to keep this % to a minimum. The local authority already top slices a % from each school, which will now go directly to the schools.

**Q: Relating to share of funding - would there be an overall budget for the whole group where you need to fight for what you need or individual budgets for each school? How would this be formulated / on what principles? Would it be transparent?**

A: There would be complete transparency over funding and this would be clear in our set of financial statements that would be published each year. Each school would receive its budget directly and then there would be an agreed percentage that is held by the trust for central services.

**Q: Finance is the biggest risk for the MAT; as just 5 schools this is tiny as purchasing power with many responsibilities regarding pensions, buildings management and IT, for example. How will you manage that risk?**

A: The Commercial Investment Fund will be available to us as a MAT in terms of capital funding for building projects and the RSC would decide the priority. This is not available to maintained schools. It is estimated that we could save £50,000 by buying better services than those available solely from existing buy-backs. We will maintain a risk register. Traditionally, SCC has under-funded per-pupil funding. The National Funding Formula should mean that we are slightly better funded. The

pension liability is on existing pensions for support staff only. These are under-written by government. Good terms have been negotiated with the DfE for MATs.

**Q: Is there a financial benefit/incentive?**

A: Each new school converting to Academy Status will receive a £25,000 grant to cover the cost of conversion. We would hope not to use all of this grant to convert, which would then benefit the school's budget. The RSC is really excited about our proposals. The trust will be seeking extra funds which can be placed centrally to reduce costs to schools.

**Q: In terms of funding, 5 years down the line, how will you engage with business interests and secure additional funding for the financial health of the MAT?**

A: Economies of scale would be best achieved with a membership of 10-12 schools because this is more sustainable, particularly in accessing CIF/SCA funding. We need to look at ways to generate income from school-to-school support, for example. Joining a MAT does not guarantee a large income, but equally small schools are going to be worse off alone when the National Funding Formula is introduced. We'll have a reserve policy to protect against the risk of flat-line funding against rising costs. We'll always look to spend additional money for the benefit of the children. For example, Connaught has managed to build an IT Suite and an outdoor gym. We'll be looking at funding bids and sponsorship. We have very astute governors and SBMs.

**Q: What if, in the near future, additional funding that is currently available dries up?**

A: That is a real possibility as government policy changes and cuts are made. We have to apply for additional funding when we get the opportunity and try to make savings in all areas of spending. We need to be cost-effective and look to get the best people we possibly can on board. It will be a competitive market and we need to be shrewd. We can't run into a deficit and must maintain our risk register. With funding cuts looming, it is likely to be even harder for those schools that do not come together.

**Q. What percentage of the CEO salary will be paid by each school?**

A. This hasn't been decided yet, but we want to keep that percentage as low as possible. If we think how county Service Level Agreements have increased dramatically in cost, we expect to make savings as a MAT by buying in services from different providers, giving better service for less money. It has been clarified by the DfE that there has to be one person who is Executive Leader of the MAT who is answerable and responsible for the smooth running of the MAT. The CFO can be drawn from within personnel working in the MAT, but have to be qualified and experienced to a certain level. Ultimately it comes down to affordability and Mr Sales already generates income for his school by working to support other schools. As a MAT we would be able to apply for funding and grants from the DfE which isn't available to you as a maintained school. For example the Sponsor Capacity Grant supports MATs in supporting other schools.

**Q. Surely in the first three or four years there will not be so many economies of scale?**

A. Connaught has made savings as a single academy. For example, we waited years for county to replace our old windows, to no avail; as an academy we were able to apply for a grant to replace them successfully.

The Kite Trust, another local MAT, started off with one of the Headteachers working as CEO part-time; she now works just as CEO. The CEO needs to keep the plates spinning and we intend to be outward facing.

**Q What is the estimate on the increase in budget/funding that a typical school like Holy Trinity would get for the day-to-day operations of the school for books, equipment, etc by moving to the MAT model?**

This is something that will be built into the business plan. Simple things like the cost of paper can be brought down with the purchasing power of five schools instead of one.

**Q This question is in two parts relating to how the pooled budget of the MAT is used:**

- 1. a) Will a portion of the budget be used to hire a new leader (a CEO type role) to manage the new organisation and will any additional staff (PA, assistants, etc) be hired to manage the overall group. If so, how much is expected to be used for such a management team?**

There is a requirement to have a Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer, but as explained above we would want to keep central costs down. Mr Sales has been extremely successful in bringing funds into the Trust which more than covered this expense over the last three years.

- 2. b) Could any redundancies and consequential savings be made by forming the MAT by merging of roles such as office administration, payroll, SEN etc. If so, what approximate savings could be expected?**

This is something the Trustees and Directors will be looking at with the schools. However there is a TUPE process to protect the rights of existing staff. As a partnership we want to support the best staff to do the very best for our children

## **STAFFING AND PROVISION**

**Q: Is there scope for competition to raise standards?**

A: A recent example of how we have worked together is the Maths Mastery Project, supported by SJB Maths Hub. We came together to observe a Maths Mastery lesson in a Year 2 class, led by a specialist teacher. We were able to discuss the teaching we saw and how to bring this into our own schools. It is about sharing excellence and working together to support each other.

**Q: How will SEND provision work?**

A: SCC will keep control of SEND, Social Care and Admissions. SEND funding for pupils remains a decision for local authorities.

**Q: Will there be a change in admissions policies regarding feeder schools?**

A: Surrey County Council retains control of central admissions and any changes will go to consultation at least one and a half years before they come into implementation. The trust will become its own admissions authority and is likely to handle in year admissions in consultation with Surrey to save money.

**Q: Will there be a change in the feeder priority between Windlesham and Connaught? Bagshot feed in first currently.**

A: Connaught's Admissions Policy for 2018-19 places Bagshot, Windlesham and Valley End on equal priority. However, this is decided, as it has always been, by distance from home to school. Connaught will continue to serve local children and families.

**Q. Will there be job losses? You hear a lot in the press about MATs cutting staffing to cut costs.**

A. We value people and job cuts certainly haven't happened at Connaught- in fact we have bucked that trend and increased staffing. We will be looking to maintain the best service we can. It could be argued that Surrey schools have been under-funded and it is hoped that the National Funding Formula will improve this. Any long-term issues with staffing would exist whether we are part of a MAT or not. Connaught is seeking equal partnership and we haven't decided what percentage of each school's budget will be paid centrally to the MAT because we will be looking at that over the next few months. Staying as maintained schools would probably have more financial problems.

By having a group of schools working so closely together, we can provide opportunities for staff. For example, there may be a specialist Maths teacher who would be looking to work across the schools. We are looking at nurturing our staff and retain the talent within the MAT.

We are interested in opportunities to work with schools abroad and learn from an exchange of ideas and pedagogy.

**Q. Can you tell us more about the TUPE process?**

This meeting is the first step. TUPE stands for the "Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006" as amended by the "Collective Redundancies and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) Regulations 2014". The TUPE rules apply to organisations of all sizes and protect employees' rights when the organisation or service they work for transfers to a new employer. TUPE has impacts for the employer who is making the transfer (also known as the **outgoing employer** or the transferor) and the employer who is taking on the transfer (also known as the **incoming employer**, the 'new employer' or the transferee).

There will be meetings in each individual school, closer to the point of conversion to academy status. Union representatives will attend, to represent staff and to raise any concerns that you may have, so as to ensure that there will be no change to their terms and conditions of employment at the point of transfer. Any future changes will be subject to a detailed consultation.



**Q Will staff on fixed term and bank contracts be transferred over to the Trust along with the permanent staff and if not please explain the process here?**

This will be looked at as part of the TUPE process in negotiation with staff from each school. Please see the prior detailed response.

**Q. What about our pensions?**

A. Teachers are part of the Teachers' Pension Scheme and this is unaffected.

For all support staff, you will remain as part of the local government scheme; new staff will also be offered membership. Staff will pay the same contribution and will receive the same benefits of the existing scheme. Currently, the scheme is underwritten by Surrey CC, which takes its risk profile from all staff who work for Surrey (refuse collectors, librarians, admin staff...) The Multi-Academy Trust becomes the Scheme Employer and the risk profile is made up of only our MAT staff, meaning that the risk profile may change to that of SCC as a whole and may lead to different contribution rates paid by MAT schools. The scheme will be underwritten by central government as SCC will no longer be responsible. The pension scheme deficit liabilities will sit on the MAT accounts. This works in a similar way to a mortgage and if one school were to close in the future, the DfE would pay the pension liability for that school and not the other schools in the MAT.

**Q. I had read that schools' pension contributions could rise from 25.1% to 32%; how realistic is that, or is it scare-mongering?**

A. Presently, whatever rate schools currently pay, that rate will continue at conversion to academy; it will then be re-assessed within 3 years. Connaught currently pay only 20%.

**Q. How about pay-scales; will the schools continue to use Surrey pay-scales?**

A. We would look at affordability and consult; Connaught did choose to use its own pay-scales to allow for better pay. This would need to be decided by all schools in the fullness of time.

**Q How is Ofsted managed for academies and how would this impact on the group?**

Convertor Academies are dealt with in the same way by Ofsted as maintained schools. Outstanding academy schools are exempt from routine inspection and good academy schools are inspected when three years have elapsed from the point of conversion. Schools that require improvement or schools that may be sponsored will be given time to improve with support from the Trust. This is usually within a two year period.

**Q: When the staff contracts are transferred to the academy do the terms and conditions remain the same meaning that staff employed at the current school and there is no requirement for them to work in another?**

Answer: Yes, there is a proper TUPE process as detailed previously. However, there could be opportunities for existing staff to work in other schools if they wished to apply just as they can now.

**Q: If there is a variation of any kind to the original contract - eg an increase of hours from 92/100 to 100/100 then there would be a completely new contract with different terms and conditions that could require staff to work anywhere in the trust?**

A: That would be up to the trust to decide, but it would have to be agreement of the staff member as this would be a variation of an existing contract. It is likely that they would continue to work at the initial school only.

**Q: Would any completely new employee, not previously employed at one of the trust schools, have a new contract with the trust and be required to work at any of the schools at any point?**

A: Contractual obligations for new staff joining the Trust will be determined by the Trust in consultation for the schools. The Trust would replace the local authority as the employer and there is likely to be a usual place of work within a contract which stipulates the school

**Q Would the individuality of school uniforms be retained?**

Yes absolutely, as this is integral to the individual identity of each school.

**Q What happens to school meals?**

Schools would continue to provide these and continue to explore the best possible service and food for the children.

**Q Would we sort out assessment and have a system common to all in the group?**

Absolutely, this is one area we see huge financial and educational benefits.

**Q How will the MAT affect the Traveling Showmen that you have already in your school at the moment and any that may attend in the future?**

This will be a decision for individual schools and Headteachers.