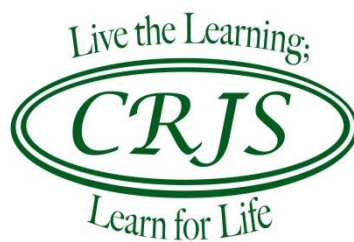


MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST CONSULTATION



Introduction

Over several years, education funding and resources have moved away from local authority control towards academy trusts. During this period, local leaders and governing bodies have worked carefully together to consider the very best way forward.

Five founding schools are now in a position to propose a more formal partnership within a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The Governing Bodies have agreed in principle to the conversion, but the final decision on whether or not to create the MAT will be taken by each Governing Body based on what is considered best for each school, its children, staff and wider community. As Connaught is the only school to have academy status amongst the founding partnership, it was decided to use their company registration as a matter of convenience and to reduce costs. The Multi- Academy Trust will have a new name, mission and vision that is agreed by all.

As part of the decision making process, each Governing Body is committed to undertaking a consultation with stakeholders and will take their views into account before any conversion is formalised and the funding agreements are signed. The purpose of this statement therefore, is to introduce the proposals to you, signpost you to additional information and explain how you can take part in the consultation process.

The Consultation Process

This consultation will be carried out with as many stakeholders, staff, parents and students as possible to provide the Governors with a clear picture of each school community's views about this potential change.

Having registered an interest with the Department for Education, we have been able to receive more information about the process to convert. The final decision on whether or not to become part of a MAT lies entirely with each Governing Body. Please note that the formal consultation process will be held until 3.00pm Friday 31st March 2017 and we would encourage you to present your support, views, concerns and questions. All submissions received by this date will be considered at a meeting of each school's full Governing Body. Please submit your views either by email or in writing to your school:

Windlesham Village Infant School: office@windlesham.surrey.sch.uk

Holy Trinity C of E Primary School: info@holy-trinity-pri.surrey.sch.uk

Crawley Ridge Infant School: staff@crawley-ridge-inf.surrey.sch.uk

Crawley Ridge Junior School: office@crawleyridge-jun.surrey.sch.uk

Connaught Junior School: school@connaught.surrey.sch.uk

Please mark letters or title emails with 'Academy Consultation', so that they can be quickly forwarded.

There will be three identical meetings for parents and carers from all five schools to come and find out more about our proposals. The Headteachers from each school will join together to share a presentation and answer questions. We look forward to seeing you there.

Identical meetings will be hosted at the following venues:

- **Crawley Ridge Junior School on Monday 20th March at 19:30**
- **Windlesham Village Infant School on Wednesday 22nd March at 09:30**
- **Holy Trinity C of E Primary School on Tuesday 28th March 2017 at 19:30**

In order to inform you as fully as possible, an outline of academies is included on the following pages. We have also set out our thinking on why we believe becoming a Multi-Academy Trust is right for each school and have answered some of the most common questions which might arise.

We hope that you find this document useful and we look forward to reading your responses.



Mrs Ezzard
Windlesham
Village Infants



Mr Hills
Holy Trinity
Primary



Mrs Hope
Crawley Ridge
Infants



Mrs Knight
Crawley Ridge
Juniors

Mr Sales
Connaught
Juniors

OUR MISSION

Our MAT will be created to bring together local like-minded schools within collaborative reach, to achieve even greater outcomes for every child than would be individually possible. We will place learning at the heart of our communities. We will pool our resources for deepening and nourishing education for fullness of life. We aim to improve the life chances of all our children, by helping them develop wisdom, hope, a sense of community and dignity.

Each schools' unique ethos and values, whether secular or faith, are strengths to be celebrated and enrich the whole MAT. Fundamental to all schools within our MAT is a belief in a child-centred approach to education and a commitment to raising the aspirations, achievements and well-being of every one of our children, our staff and our communities.

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We believe that the following are fundamental to the success of our MAT:

- Develop outstanding leadership at all levels within the MAT and beyond
- Develop and share excellence in teaching and learning
- Enable a culture of collaboration, challenge, support and shared accountability
- Drive an agenda of continuous school improvement through robust self-evaluation and quality assurance
- Commit to tailored investment in continuous professional development that attracts, develops and retains the best
- Provide financial expertise, strength and resilience, driving probity and compliance.

INITIAL STEPS IN ESTABLISHING THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Establish five founding members of the Trust
- Establish an outstanding board of trustees with necessary skills and experience
- Establish a Board of Headteachers
- Agree appropriate delegation of authority from trust to individual schools
- Develop Leadership, business and teaching networks between schools

VISION

In 5 years' time, our MAT will comprise of a network of ten to twelve like-minded and collaborative schools, all of which are at least good or outstanding, with the capacity to support schools which require improvement. Our MAT will become an organisation of excellence, which is the first choice for schools, staff, parents and children. It will be recognised at national level in support for other schools and will be sharing and drawing upon excellence internationally.

Academy Questions

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust and not the Local Authority. The Academy Trust is a charitable body which enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and not from the Local Authority.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is created when a charitable trust is set up and partnership schools join the Trust and work collaboratively together to gain the very best outcomes for children. Each Trust is structured in a slightly different way. If the conversion is successful then a model of Governance we are considering could consist of:

- Members (Who are guardians of the governance of the trust)
- Trustees (Who are responsible for the effective running of all the schools within the Trust)
- Local Governing Bodies (Created at each school working closely with children, parents and staff)

The Trust aims to delegate many powers to the Local Governing Body (LGB) which will have a role similar to that of the current School Governing Body. Initially the LGB at each school will consist of the same governors as they have now.

Why convert to a Multi-Academy Trust?

Schools have always operated within an ever-changing educational landscape. The current direction of travel is towards converting schools to be academies and a number of local schools have either already done this or are considering their options to convert. A number of our schools have already been used to support others. This work is proving to be very productive for all involved; we would like this to continue.

Each Governing Body considered three main options regarding the future of our schools:

1. Stay as we are and continue as either a Local Authority maintained school or Single Academy Trust.
2. Look to convert to Academy status and become part of an existing Multi-Academy Trust.
3. Use our expertise and skills to create our own Multi-Academy Trust.

The Governors from each school considered the three options very carefully. Many governors have attended numerous training events over the past few years to gather as much information as possible regarding academy conversion. When considering Option 1 it was thought that four of the schools could be at risk of being left behind as more and more schools join MATs or create their own trusts. Option 2 would potentially be easier in the first instance but it was deemed that each school could lose too much autonomy and not be in control of its own destiny. The governors concluded that as a strong partnership of schools

we are in a prime position to build an Academy Trust and influence the improvement and development of other schools. We also believe that we will be able to learn from partnership schools, share expertise, resources and buying power.

Will Connaught take over the trust as an existing Academy?

No, the trust will be reconstituted, re-named and only the company number will be kept to ease administration costs. The Board of Trustees is based on a skill set with representation from every school and a Chair that is not from Connaught. We intend to benefit from the experience that Connaught provides as an existing single academy.

Will Holy Trinity's Christian ethos be assured?

This will be protected in law through the Articles of Association and a supplemental agreement. Careful secular and faith links have been made between the MAT's mission and the Church of England Vision for Education. The Diocese of Guildford has been extremely supportive of this local trust and has worked closely with all schools to make sure we adhere to the requirements of The National Society's *Memorandum of Understanding*. The multi-faith or secular nature of other schools within the trust will also be protected.

The positive aspects of creating a MAT

The governors believe that these are positive reasons to convert:

- Through working together as a group of closely aligned schools, a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) can have a significant impact on raising outcomes for children by utilising the considerable expertise available from a much larger staff team.
- Children will be able to work together with fellow MAT students on collaborative projects and events.

- Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum as long as the curriculum remains 'broad and balanced'. This will provide our MAT with greater flexibility to determine what best suits our children in each different school, within the framework of the National Curriculum.
- Academies receive funding directly from central government instead of via the Local Authority. This will include money that would previously have been held back by the LA for central services. It is important to note that we would still have to purchase services but we would be able to freely choose who we wanted. An academy may also accumulate funds from private sources should it choose to.
- Academies are responsible for drawing up their own admissions criteria in line with the Admissions Code and SEN Code of Practice (the law). Academies are required to cater for children of all abilities (unless they were already selective) which we are not.
- Academies are free to set the length of its terms and school days.
- The Academy is responsible for agreeing levels of pay, conditions of service, staffing structures, career development and appraisal. However all existing staff will transfer from the local authority under legislation known as TUPE regulations which will protect their current pay and conditions.

What are the associated risks of creating a MAT and strategies to mitigate these?

The governors believe that:

- We would see a reduction in support from the Local Authority, but this has already happened.
- The burden on business staff could increase with the need to fulfil all employer and company liabilities. The Trust will appoint an experienced Accounting Officer and Finance Director to support and guide local business teams.

Who makes the decision to become an Academy?

The Governing Bodies of each school.

Is an Academy like a business?

In some ways it does need to run as a business, but it is a charitable trust which can only use its monies for the purposes of the schools which it operates.

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.

Will the Academy follow the National Curriculum?

Yes, but it will have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum and make sure that what is taught is relevant to the pupils who attend our MAT schools and their specific needs.

Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?

No. Academy funding agreements state that they must ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.

As an Academy, will it still work with the Local Authority (LA)?

Academies are independent of the Local Authority. However, we have a strong relationship with the LA and we wish to continue working with them, other local schools and local partners.

How does governance work?

It is expected that we will have a board of Trustees who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and the Academies within the MAT. However, we will devolve as much responsibility as possible to individual Academies.

It is expected that each Academy has its own LGB which will work with the Academy senior leaders to check that the Academy is making good progress. The Academy Headteacher/Head of School is always a governor for the time they are employed in that role. The LGB will set the vision for the Academy in line with the overall commitment of Multi- Academy Trust.

The LGB will have delegated powers from the Trustees who will set the schedule of delegation in consultation with each Academy.

What will happen to our school's funding?

The Department for Education meets the running costs for an academy in full. Academy funding is calculated on a like-for-like basis with local authority schools. Therefore the Academy will have a similar budget to that of its predecessor maintained school. With greater freedom to procure services from other providers and to realise cost efficiencies across the network, the Academy 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.

How will the school be accountable financially?

An academy is governed by the rules and regulations for charitable trusts, e.g. we are required to produce and file accounts and limitations on the payment of Trustees. There will be robust systems with an audit conducted by an external independent auditor and the Trust will be subject to the oversight of the Education Funding Agency.

How does Academy status affect SEN funding?

SEN funding will come directly from the government through the Education Funding Agency. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the Local Authority.

Does it cost to become an Academy?

Yes. There are legal and other costs associated with becoming an academy. The government gives each converting Academy £25,000 to contribute towards these costs. This should be sufficient to cover the likely costs of conversion.

Who will own the school building and land?

The Local Authority will be required to grant a 125 year lease to the MAT. In the case of Holy Trinity, the Diocese will continue to hold the school site and will, as now, continue to permit Holy Trinity to use the site.

Will the staff stay the same?

When a school converts from a Local Authority maintained school to a new Academy, all permanent staff are entitled to transfer to it under the same employment terms and conditions.

Will the terms of employment for staff change?

As part of TUPE arrangements, staff are entitled to transfer to the new Academy under the same employment terms and conditions. However, it is essential that the Academy is able to respond to the changing curriculum requirements and educational demands. This may therefore require consultation with staff and trade unions, once the Academy has been established, on changes to terms and conditions of employment. This would be necessary if, for example, the Trust wished to introduce a particular organisational change to the Academy's term dates, or if curriculum demands and the need for improved educational outcomes required a different leadership and organisational structure.

What will happen with regard to staff pensions?

If you are a teacher in the current school, your pension will continue as part of the Teacher's Pension Scheme, with the Trust continuing with the same employer responsibilities as the predecessor school. Non-teaching staff will usually be members of the local government pension scheme and the Trust will secure 'scheme employer' status with the local pension authority to protect the pension rights of employees and take on employer responsibility, both for contributions and administration of the scheme. Staff can opt out of either if they wish to make alternative provision. The Department for Education now underwrites all pension liabilities for support staff within academy trusts.

Will you consult with staff, community and parents?

Yes, this document is a core part of our formal consultation.

Will the trust recognise and engage with trade unions?

Yes, our trust will recognise the role of trade unions and sees positive engagement as critical to the transition process and ongoing success of the Academy. Trade unions will play an important role in the consultation process on TUPE for staff.

Will the school remain non-selective?

Yes – primary academies are non-selective schools. Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were maintained schools. It will be the aim of the trust to ensure that all our Academies provide high quality, inclusive education for local children.

Can the Academy work with the council and other schools?

Yes, where these provide best value, the Academy will buy back services from the Local Authority. The Academy can work with any schools it wishes if this makes a positive difference to the education of the children. During the journey towards conversion several other local schools have shown an interest in joining this MAT but the timing or circumstances have not been right, however the invitation remains open.

Will there be a new uniform?

No. As before, it will be up to each school's local governing body to decide on changes to school uniform in consultation with parents.

In addition to the information above you can find more useful articles on the Gov.uk website

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/academies-and-free-schools>

Reminder:

The consultation closes on Friday 31st March at 3.00pm