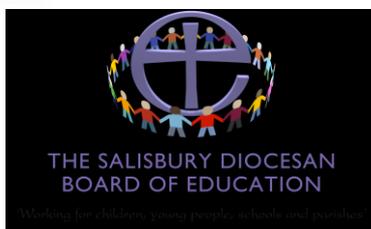


The Diocese of Salisbury Multi-Academy Trust

Putting children, young people & families at the heart of our mission



Diocese of Salisbury Multi-Academy Trust

BECOMING AN ACADEMY: FAQs

General:

What is an Academy?

Academies are state-funded independent local schools that aim to provide a free, first-class education for pupils of all abilities through a fresh approach to school leadership, teaching and learning. They offer a full, broad and balanced curriculum.

Independent sponsors such as universities, businesses, the charitable sector, educational foundations, trusts and faith communities manage the academies.

All of them bring skills and expertise in other fields which they are able to apply to their academies to deliver forward-thinking educational opportunities for all and encourage regeneration of communities.

For more information on academies, visit:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies>

Who is in charge of the Academy?

The sponsor, in this case the Diocese of Salisbury Multi Academy Trust made up of representatives from the Salisbury Diocese Board of Education and Cambridge Education/Mott MacDonald Ltd.

Sponsorship

What does being a sponsor involve?

Being a sponsor of an academy provides the opportunity and freedom to apply visionary and innovative methods to reverse the cycle of failing schools. This includes designing and implementing distinctive values to set a direction for the academy and helping articulate a clear educational vision that champions the ability of all children to achieve their potential. It includes making sure the leadership and

teachers at the academy provide the best possible learning environment for the children – recruiting, retaining and developing successful leaders, as well as providing leadership to new governance arrangements to support and challenge the academy. And sponsors take control of strategic planning for the future development of the academy, including sound financial management and pursuing value for money.

What are the main responsibilities of the sponsor once the academy has 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)

- Chairing regular meetings of the Academy Trust and/or Governing Body
- Challenging progress in all areas of the school's operation whilst providing support and guidance aimed at promoting success
- Responsibility for the performance of the academy, including monitoring and where necessary establishing a plan of action to improve performance
- Setting up committees with a specific focus to monitor aspects of academy life
- Leading involvement with parents and the wider community, to promote the academy 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 academy in the wider community in order to bring new resources to the academy, for example through holding events, arranging mentoring and building links with business.

Are sponsors required to make a financial contribution?

No. Academies are funded directly by central Government, replacing the funding previously provided through the local authority. Some sponsors choose to support academies financially in order to provide opportunities for pupils that are not supported through Government funding, but this is not a requirement. There is however an expectation that sponsors will endeavour to raise additional funding to support future advancement of education development within the school /s

Conversion:

What does the conversion process involve and how long does it take?

The Diocese of Salisbury MAT (DSMAT) will provide support through the conversion process. The areas of work are related to any legal transfers of land or assets,

regularising any leases, financial review and budget setting, TUPE transfer and HR work.

In addition support to transition from a Governing Body to a Local Governing Board is also provided.

Most schools are able to convert in around four months. It can, however, take longer where there are further issues to resolve i.e. arrangements for running a nursery or complication relating to land ownership

Would the school have to cover the full cost to convert to an academy?

No. Total costs will vary from school to school but the DfE will pay a grant to the Trust to support the conversion.

Why should we become an academy?

You would have:

- as part of a Multi-Academy Trust far greater influence on decision making;
- the opportunity to improve staff pay and conditions, greater flexibility in the role staff can play both in your school and across the trust, all helping to improve recruitment and retention of staff;
- more effective use of funds. The entire budget for your school comes to Trust, rather than a proportion being retained by the local authority. This will vary from area to area but could be up to 10%. This will allow for you to work with the Trust to priorities spending based on your needs;
- the freedom to design your own curriculum. This is particularly important for small primaries. By joining a chain of academies you could increase the breadth of your curriculum offer; and
- the freedom to set the length of your school day, and allow local conditions to be taken into account.

Through collaboration with DSMAT, small primaries no longer have to depend solely on their local authority but can build arrangements that work best for them. Schools of all shapes and sizes can join together, share resources and work together to bring about an improvement in standards.

If our school becomes an academy, will we be able to spend the majority of time teaching or will we have to spend it on bureaucracy?

A fundamental principle of the Diocese of Salisbury Multi Academy Trust is to allow schools to focus on Teaching and Learning, allowing the Trust to handle all the bureaucracy.

Multi Academy Trust

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A Multi academy Trust (MAT) is where a number of schools are governed by a single Trust and Board of Directors – there is only one legal entity accountable for all schools within the Trust. There is one set of Articles which governs all the academies in that Trust. The Salisbury MAT has a Master Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State and each academy also has a Supplemental Funding Agreement. Each of the academies in the Salisbury MAT has its own local governing body or advisory body which deals with local issues.

The Salisbury MAT is accountable for all academies in the Trust. However, before any agreements are signed, the schools decide which matters will be handled by the Salisbury MAT and which will stay with the individual academy local governing bodies.

Why should our school join a Multi Academy Trust?

One of the key strengths of the Salisbury MAT for primary schools is the flexibility to manage resources and expertise. Funding to the schools within the Salisbury MAT continues to be allocated on an individual academy basis, but there are examples of MATs that have set up shared support services (e.g. HR, business support, etc.) through a central pool. It's also easier to share expertise as all staff in the Salisbury MAT are employed by the same employer and so can transfer more easily or work across more than one school.

The Salisbury MAT is accountable for all academies in the Trust and is expected to provide effective support in the form of expertise or extra resources for any school in the Salisbury MAT which is weaker or requires additional support.

How will the role of governors change if we became an academy?

The principles and responsibilities of governance are the same in all academies as they are in maintained schools but the governing body has greater autonomy.

The Salisbury MAT in effect becomes the statutory governing body, but can continue to delegate functions to a local governing body, the principal or any other holder of an executive office. Academies can choose how many committees to have and decide what to delegate to them. For example, a large secondary school may need to have more committees than a small primary school.

What will the responsibilities of the governing body be?

The governing body will be responsible for establishing the academy trust. The academy trust (a charitable company limited by guarantee) will then enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for the running of the academy. The academy trust (made up of members) has a strategic role in running the academy and will be responsible for appointing the governors (also known as directors or trustees) to the local governing body of the academy. It is the governing body that manages the academy on behalf of the members of the academy trust. The key responsibilities are to

- ensure the quality of educational provision
- challenge and monitor the performance of the academy
- manage the academy trust's finances and property; and
- employ staff.

It will be for the members of the local governing body of the school to decide and agree, in discussion with the Secretary of State, who among them would wish to be members of the academy trust and which of them would wish to be governors of the academy trust (note that it is possible to be both a member and governor).

What are the rules around appointing the governing body?

The local governing body will be appointed by the academy trust. The process for governor elections is set out in the articles of association and agreed between the academy trust and the Secretary of State.

Membership of the local governing body must include at least two parent governors and the principal, but academies are free to choose whether to have for example, one local authority governor, staff governors or co-opted governors. The majority of governors will be appointed by the sponsor (Salisbury MAT).

In addition, schools can choose to have additional categories of local governor such as a community or partnership governor. These are categories of governors in maintained schools so converting schools should be able to constitute a new academy local governing body with minimal disruption to their current governance arrangements.

If a school currently has 11 foundation governors, these could remain (if the new academy trust wanted them to remain). The remaining governors would be made up from at least two parents, one LA governor (optional) and co-opted governors.

What is the role of the MAT?

The Salisbury MAT is an academy trust and is a charitable company responsible for the running of the academy and has control over the land and other assets. It has a strategic role in running the academy but delegates management of the school to the governors.

If our school becomes an academy, how will this affect the governing body structure?

The flexibility of the academy governance model allows, in most cases, converting schools to replicate their existing governing body if they wish to do so. There are some minimum requirements. These are that an academy must have at least two parent governors, no more than a third of governors can be academy staff, and there no longer needs to be a LA governor.

Will the school be inspected by Ofsted?

Yes. Primary academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools.

What happens to the staff?

Regulations on the safeguarding of employment rights apply to staff employed at schools facing closure.

Staff working at the School immediately prior to the opening of the Academy would be covered by these regulations (normally referred to as the TUPE Regulations.).

This gives them the right of transfer from the existing school to the Academy, which also helps to minimise the disruption to pupils' education.

Who will employ the staff?

The Salisbury MAT will be the employer.

Do we need to conduct a consultation before converting?

Yes. All schools are required to carry out a consultation but it is up to them to decide whom and how to consult. Typically that will include staff, parents, the local community, and the parish council. The methods can vary from newsletters, questionnaires, features or adverts in local papers, and meetings. There is no specified length of time (although suggested is 6 weeks) for the consultation and schools have flexibility over how it is conducted. None of the schools which have converted to academy status have reported any problems with the process of consultation, which is very straightforward.

What does a consultation look like?

Consultation documents supplied (Questionnaire and letters)

Admissions:

What must admission arrangements contain?

Admission arrangements are any mechanism or process used to allocate places at a school. They will include:

- admission numbers for each 'relevant age group' (normal admission point);
- a commitment to admit any children with statements of special educational needs which name the academy;
- oversubscription criteria which prioritise looked-after children and children who were formerly looked-after and include a final tie-break (usually 'distance from school');
- any selection test (if a school is selective);

- supplementary application form;
- any catchment area; and
- waiting list arrangements.

What are the key admission changes a school will notice when it becomes an academy?

Academies are their own admission authorities. This means that:

- The academy trust will be responsible for consulting on and determining ('finalising') the school's admission arrangements in accordance with the School Admissions Code.
- The academy trust will consider applications to the school rather than the LA. The school will have to rank applicants against the oversubscription criteria and send ranked lists back to the LA as part of the local process for co-ordinating admissions over the winter. The LA sends out offers on 1 March for secondary schools or on or about 16 April for primaries.
- The academy trust becomes responsible for organising admission appeals in compliance with the School Admission Appeals Code, not the LA.

Foundation schools and voluntary-aided schools that were already their own admission authority prior to conversion will see no change. Community schools and voluntary-controlled schools will become admission authorities for the first time. Their academy trusts will need to familiarise themselves with the admission and appeals codes.