

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions about Academies

What is an academy?

An academy is an independent, state-funded school. It still has to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools. An academy receives money direct from the government, not via the local authority. It is owned and operated by an academy trust (often a multi-academy trust, being one company operating a number of academies). We will maintain links with the Local Authority who will remain responsible for place allocation.

What is a multi-academy trust?

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a charitable trust which is responsible for the operation of more than one academy.

The people in charge of running the Multi-Academy Trust are the company directors, who are responsible for strategic oversight and management. They are also charity trustees and must comply with duties under company law, charity law and education law to promote the success of the academy trust. They determine the policies of the trust, monitor the effectiveness of each academy within the MAT, manage central services where appropriate and report to the Secretary of State. They work to ensure that each academy is performing to the best of its ability and gets the support it requires. We have established a shadow advisory group that has Governor representation from each of the schools involved.

The role of the Members of the MAT is largely limited to appointing and removing directors and making key decisions such as amendments to the Articles of Association and changing the name of the academy trust.

Each of the academies in the trust usually has its own local advisory board which has authority delegated to it by the Trust Board.

Consultation and Decision Making

Whose decision is it whether or not to join a MAT?

The decision to join a MAT and which MAT to join rests with the Trust Board/Governing Body of each school, with approval also being needed from the Regional Directors that act on behalf of Secretary of State for Education. (This is the advisory board meeting that will take place Feb 2025). The decision at this point is to agree in principle to us moving forwards with this project.

Has the decision already been made to join a MAT?

No. The Trust Board/Governing Body are currently seeking views from all stakeholders and these views will be considered before any final decision is made.

Who will the Trust Board/Governing Body be consulting?

The Trust Board/Governing Body will be consulting with all staff at the school, parents and various other stakeholders, other local schools and other community members.

How can I share my views?

The consultation process will start on Monday 20th January 2025 and run for 4 weeks. Questions and comments regarding the consultation can be submitted as follows:

e-mail: consultation@threeways.co.uk

Letters: marked 'Private and Confidential – MAT Consultation' and handed (or posted) to: School Office, Three Ways School, 180 Frome Road, Bath BA2 5RF.

Why do the Trust Board/Governing Body/Senior Leadership Team think that it is in the best interests of the school to join a MAT?

There are a number of benefits in forming a MAT:

- Opportunities to share expertise and best practice;
- Security of belonging to a larger organisation and having a collective voice on SEND development locally and nationally
- Protection of the values, culture and uniqueness of the school;
- Opportunities for financial support and capital investment;
- Opportunities for teaching staff and associate staff to share good practice and to benefit from a wider Continuing Professional Development programme that adds value to the educational experience of the pupils;
- Efficiencies in whole school systems

Joining with other schools within a MAT provides opportunities for good and outstanding schools to consolidate their position and enhance the educational experience for all pupils, as well as providing wider personal development opportunities for pupils and staff.

The benefits of forming ACHIEVE in particular include:

- The security of belonging to a larger, sustainable organisation;
- The schools looking to join ACHIEVE are similar special schools, so there is an opportunity to share best practice to each school's benefit;
- Opportunities to achieve efficiencies through economies of scale and sharing resources and expertise.
- Support to apply for Government led expansion opportunities, which are only available to Multi Academy Trusts

Can other schools join the MAT at a later date?

Yes, other schools can join at a later date.

Impact on Pupils and Parents

Will our school retain its own identity?

Yes, schools will retain their own Headteacher and will have a local advisory board. The school will keep its existing name and uniform.

What changes will parents/carers see?

There will be very little visible change as a direct result of a MAT, with the school continuing in much the same way as it does now with the same Headteacher and senior staff, teachers and support staff.

Will there be any changes to the existing admission arrangements?

There are currently no proposals to change the existing admission arrangements for any of the Schools. Any future changes would be consulted upon in accordance with the School Admissions Code. As a special school the Local Authority is responsible for admissions. There would be no change to the current arrangements.

If we proceed, when will the change be made?

If the proposals do go ahead, subject to all the necessary approvals, it is proposed that the new arrangements would be in place for September/October 2025 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Would the Headteacher have the same powers for decision making if the school were part of a MAT?

The day to day operation of the school would continue to be the responsibility of the Headteacher. Decision regarding staffing, classes, curriculum would lie with the headteacher as they do now. The Headteacher will need to report to the trust on a regular basis. The trust would only intervene with the daily running of the school if there

were an issue of concern. There may be projects which will be run by the trust on behalf of all schools within the trust, the headteacher would have input into these but it would be the trust's responsibility overall.

How involved would the MAT be in the running of the school?

The day to day running of the school would continue to be the responsibility of the Headteacher.

Would there be added layers of bureaucracy which could alienate parents?

The Headteacher would still be responsible for the day to day running of the school. The staff at the school (Teachers/ Support Staff/ Office/Site Staff/Catering teams where employed by the school) would remain the same. Parents will be able to contact school in exactly the same way they can now.

How would funding for our school be affected? Would the trust absorb funding and delegate to the school?

MATs receive their funding direct from Department for Education. MATs normally require a central service charge from the schools within their MAT, which is an agreed proportion of the budget to fund central services, such as finance and HR. As part of MAT some services could be delivered centrally and therefore schools would need to pay for this. The Trust Board/Governing Body of schools would look to ensure that any services and benefits we receive would equal or exceed the figure we pay.

Can we leave the MAT if it is not working for us?

The due diligence process which is currently ongoing, which includes this consultation process, will be thorough and the Trust Board /Governing Body will not make a final decision until this process is complete. The Trust Board/Governing Body would hope that following a thorough due diligence process, if the decision is to join ACHIEVE this will be a successful partnership. Once in a MAT an academy transfer to another trust is rare and can only happen with the approval of the Regional Directors who act on behalf of the Department for Education.

Impact on Staff

Will Terms and Conditions of Employment change for Staff?

Academies and Multi-Academy Trusts do have the freedom to adopt their own conditions of work for staff, the Trustees/Governors of the Schools are committed to maintaining national pay and conditions for its school employees.

If the Schools were to join a MAT, then the MAT would become the employer. Staff would transfer to the MAT via a Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE). TUPE regulations protect employee rights when they transfer to a new employer. Staff from the LA schools would be subject to TUPE arrangements. Staff currently employed at Three Ways School would not be subject to TUPE as they are already employed by the Single Academy Trust, however the name of their employer would change from Three Ways School Trust to ACHIEVE Multi-Academy Trust.

What effect would joining a MAT have on continuous service benefits of staff?

Staff would retain their continuous service on transfer to a MAT.

Will joining a MAT affect staff Pensions?

Single Academy Trusts and Multi Academy Trusts automatically have access to Teachers Pensions Scheme and the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Will staff have to reapply for their jobs on transfer to a MAT?

No. Staff will transfer automatically to the MAT and would not have to reapply for their jobs.

Would the MAT have power over the Headteacher/school/and if so what would they be?

The MAT would become the employer for all staff. The MAT Trustees would be responsible for setting the strategic direction of the MAT; holding senior school leadership to account; Overseeing the MAT's financial performance. The Headteachers would still be responsible for the day to day running of each school site.

