



Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Frequently Asked Questions

Westwood's school leadership team and governors are committed to providing the highest standard of education to all pupils, present and future. To this end, we are considering changing the financial, legal and governance structure of the school so that we can collaborate and share resources with more schools within the Kenilworth Multi Academy Trust (KMAT). The implications of this, on a day to day basis for parents and pupils, will be minimal. However critically, we expect a positive impact on teaching and learning for pupils and the school's specialist resources.

We would like to hear your views on our proposal to convert from a (single) Academy Trust to joining a Multi Academy Trust. Further information and details of how to do this are below at the end of this document.

As you are aware, the Westwood Academy has been a stand-alone academy since August 2011, led by the Westwood Academy Trust. It is proposed that from April 2018 the academy trust will join the KMAT Trust to be the second member of that MAT alongside Kenilworth School. Other schools in the future can apply to join the trust, whether or not they are already academies.

What is a MAT?

A MAT is a formal linking of schools to work under one trust arrangement. The MAT takes overall responsibility for the performance of the schools in the trust, and provides support to enable ongoing school improvements. Each individual school will have a separate Ofsted inspection.

Why is this being proposed?

The main reason for joining the MAT is for the opportunity to work closely with other schools to help drive the educational standards and learning experience we can offer our young people. This is in the context of central government's encouragement of school collaboration, and changes to the level of support that local authorities are able to give to schools.

Does this change how the schools are funded?

Westwood will continue to have its own Local Governing Body (similar to the existing Academy board for the day to day management of the school) with full delegation of powers to run the school. Each school in the trust will continue to receive its own separate budget allowance from the Education Funding Agency. However, the Trust is responsible for the overall accounts across the school(s) and we will retain our auditors to ensure that all financial procedures are kept to a high standard within each school.

What will becoming a MAT mean for the Westwood Academy?

Currently Westwood is supported by its own academy trust, the Westwood Academy Trust. If the Westwood Academy Trust joins the KMAT, the governance structure for the academy will change slightly. In reality pupils and parents will not see any significant difference in the day to day running of the school.

Who runs the MAT (Governance)?

The MAT is led by the MAT Board which is very similar to a board of governors. The Board is made up of “Members” (effectively Governors) who will be drawn from different skill areas such as finance, education, etc. The Board oversees MAT strategic plans and overall finance and is the employer. Each school within the MAT will have a Local Governing Body (LGB). This will fulfil the traditional role of a Board of Governors other than overall finance which will be dealt with by a committee of the MAT Board. As Westwood is joining KMAT at the inception it is likely that we will have representation at Board level.

Who decides who can join the MAT in the future?

For the first school (which Westwood would be) to join Kenilworth School in their MAT, Westwood’s governing body would have to agree, as well as the governors of the MAT Board. Thereafter, the governors of the MAT Board would make final decisions, having first consulted with the local governing bodies of existing member schools. N.B. A school cannot demand to be part of the MAT, nor can the MAT be forced to take any other school by any other body.

How does the school local governing body work?

For good and outstanding schools the local governing body (LGB) will continue to take responsibility for the appointment and appraisal of its own staff, curriculum decisions, holding the school to account for the quality of teaching and student outcomes. The LGB would also have considerable delegated responsibility for finance and premises, although the ultimate responsibility in these areas would sit with the MAT, as the legal accountable body. Currently Westwood is a “good” school (OFSTED 2013).

How does the school apply to join the MAT?

Any school interested in joining the MAT will have informal discussions with representatives of the MAT about practicalities and the extent to which a common educational philosophy is shared. We have already been working closely with the Head Teacher of Kenilworth School this year which has allowed us to explore the potential for partnership working and we believe that we can work well with them.

A working group has been formed to work with representatives from both Kenilworth and Westwood schools to reassure each other of the finances and healthy performance of both the school and the MAT (this is known as due diligence).

What are the benefits of being a MAT?

In our opinion the benefits are numerous:

Schools in a MAT will benefit from being part of a larger organisation. Examples would include:

- Developing shared resources where this will enhance teaching and learning, such as employing specialists across schools to support pupils with particular needs
- Sharing administrative resources such as business management and human resources expertise
- Sharing staff development to ensure best practice
- System leadership across schools, i.e. schools supporting each other to continuously improve
- Better purchasing power; having a larger organisation allows economies of scale, e.g. ICT and consumables. Greater economies of scale will mean more resources can go directly into the classroom to support pupils
- Developing a greater resilience to the many and varied expected changes ahead from Government policies and future school funding arrangements.

Are there any disadvantages to becoming a MAT?

As a MAT, the Board of Trustees will be accountable for any other academies or schools that join the MAT, not just Westwood and Kenilworth Schools. This means increased responsibility; however, as part of the conversion process, the MAT Board will ensure that careful decisions are taken to ensure that the right governance structure and systems are in place to successfully operate more than one academy. This will include recruiting Governors (also known as directors, trustees and members) with expertise in specific areas useful to the MAT, such as education, finance, human resources, law, etc.

What else will change?

We do not intend to change anything else about the day to day operation of the Westwood Academy as a result of converting to join a MAT. For most pupils and parents there will be very little that will obviously change. Over time the sharing of best practice and resources will help to secure continued improvement in student achievement, high quality teaching and learning and good use of resources.

Looking further into the future of England's education system, it is increasingly likely that cooperative working between schools and academies will become "normal". The shape of educational provision is rapidly changing and the governors want to be sure that Westwood will continue to flourish and thrive, and to offer excellent education to its pupils well beyond our own lifetimes.

How can I find out more?

There is more information about Multi Academy Trusts on the DfE (Department of Education) website: <http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>. If you can't find the answer to your question here, or on the DfE website, please email the Head Teacher, Ms Benton, at consultation@thewestwoodacademy.co.uk

How can I make my views known?

The closing date for comments to be made is Monday 16th October 2017

Comments can also be made in writing to:

Mr P Harris, Chair of Governors
C/O the Westwood Academy
Mitchell Avenue
Coventry
CV4 8DY

Or by email to: consultation@thewestwoodacademy.co.uk

