

ACADEMY CONVERSION - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Introduction

Lealands was judged to be Good in May 2013 and again in March 2017. Ofsted report that since joining the school in 2011, the headteacher has led the school very well and in 2017 reported that the school leaders had shaped an inclusive school, where there are high expectations of what all pupils can achieve, and where every individual pupil receives strong levels of support, guidance and care. As a result, almost all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and the most vulnerable, move successfully to the next stage of their education or employment.



Lealands
High School

In addition, many of you will be aware that in December 2018 Ofsted judged Leagrave Primary to be outstanding, with exceptional leadership and very strong pupil outcomes. The school continues to deliver outstanding results as well as providing extensive support for other schools in Luton, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

Lealands and Leagrave have worked together for some time; along with other local primary schools in our Lea Springs Partnership, to support transition and better consistency of high quality education between phases.

Leagrave and Lealands have received overtures in the past to join other academy trusts but because of the combined strength of our schools and outstanding judgement for Leagrave Primary, we feel well placed to determine our own destiny working together in the best interests of the community we serve. As schools, we share a common ethos and a strong local accountability model. We believe that working more closely together, we can build on the strengths of both schools to ensure the very best opportunities and outcomes for our students.

We believe that together we will enable local schools, their governors and leaders and the communities that they serve, to come together and take responsibility to provide an even better education in the Luton education community, rather than just in their individual schools. The MAT would continue to support, to draw upon and contribute towards the work of Luton Borough Council and the local teaching school alliances.

The Frequently Asked Questions attached have gathered together the questions that staff and governors, and the experience of parents from other schools that have converted recently. We will also publish the presentations that the school will be making to staff, governors and parents and carers.

What has happened so far?

- This Governing Body decided to consider academy status in a resolution on 3rd February with the ambition to form a MAT in Luton with other secondary and primary schools.

- The Governing Body believes that this is the best way of sustaining standards in the future and to acknowledge the excellent work the school already does beyond the school gates.
- The application process has commenced and the first step would be to obtain an academy order. The process is very thorough and the Department for Education has agreed in principle to the school applying to become an academy.
- It is also very important that we listen to the views of parents and carers and we have arranged for an open meeting as well as posting frequently asked questions on our website.
- Following the consultation period, the Governing Body will meet to consider the outcome of the meetings held with parents, carers and staff to come to a final decision.

What are academies?

- Academies are free, state-funded schools which are run by charitable trusts. They cannot be run for profit, charity law would expressly prevent this. There are already strict rules in place which prevent individuals and companies profiting from their relationship with an academy. As with local-authority schools, academies cannot sell or change the use of publicly funded school land without government approval.
- There are two types of academies: **converter academies**, those deemed to be performing exceptionally well, and **sponsored academies** that are mostly underperforming schools and run by a sponsor.
- In January 2019, nearly 3.8 million pupils attended academies and free schools in England. This means 72.3% of secondary pupils and 29.7% of primary pupils attended academies and free schools.

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

- Within a MAT all schools are governed by one academy trust. Each school retains its own local governing body, which is represented on the Trust. The schools' governing bodies would operate within a scheme of delegated authority from the Trust.
- The MAT would be accountable and responsible for the performance of each of the academy schools. This structure would allow the MAT to respond to the needs of its schools rapidly with tailored support and challenge.
- Funding would come directly from central government, not through the local authority, which would provide additional capital and revenue funds. This would help to give us greater freedom to spend our money where we think it would most benefit our children, including those high quality services offered by Luton.
- The MAT would be very closely held to account for its expenditure decisions by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
- Our growth strategy would be to grow with a blend of primary and secondary schools to about 3,000 pupils.

Why are we making these proposals?

- In recent times, the school has been approached by other MATs with a view to joining them but we were unconvinced of the benefits for our pupils. As a consequence, we set out to demonstrate that we are ready to shape a MAT with other primary and secondary schools for the mutual benefit of our school and other local schools that want to benefit from working even more closely together.
- By forming a MAT with other schools we would be able to work more collaboratively to raise standards of achievement and expand the range of curriculum and enrichment opportunities we can offer our children.
- As the MAT would be a single entity, it is envisaged that schools would achieve strong collaboration and drive up standards by providing a consistent and shared strategy and vision
- We would be able to provide greater opportunities for professional and career development for teachers, support staff, governors and school leaders, while recognising the unions and maintaining the current terms and conditions of staff. This would help with both the recruitment and retention of staff.
- We would have the opportunity to bid for capital money to further improve our school environment, including much needed improvements to the infrastructure.
- We would be able to choose the partner schools who we want to work with that share our values and ethos and mutually benefit from the already outstanding leadership from all levels of the school.
- By forming a MAT with other schools we would be able to work more collaboratively to raise standards of achievement.
- We will expand the range of curriculum and enrichment opportunities we offer our children and, ensure that our transition arrangements prepare the pupils really well for the next stage of their education.

Would the school lose its independence by becoming part of a multi-academy trust?

- There would be no plans to alter the admissions policy for Lealands High School or for other schools in the MAT and each would preserve its individual identities and traditions where these add value.
- We would continue to adhere to the locally determined school term dates, length of the school day and the number of days open to pupils during the academic year.
- The government has stressed that the MAT model allows schools to benefit from working together while retaining a level of autonomy and unique identity.
- Although there will be a single board to oversee the MAT, each school will maintain a local governing body. The governors on this local board are there to represent the interests of their school and will have delegated authority from the Board for a range of school-based concerns.

- In addition, headteachers continue to lead their own schools in the MAT, but are more able to focus on teaching and learning as many of the operational aspects of school management will be dealt with across the trust.
- Lealands High School is a foundation school governed by the Governing Body. All staff are already employed by the foundation, not the local authority.
- The foundation is also responsible for the freehold of the school buildings and land, held in trust for the community.
- Employment rights and land freehold would be transferred to the MAT from the foundation.

Would being in a multi-academy trust have an impact on the curriculum?

- Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum, so they have much more flexibility about what they choose to cover.
- However, academies do have to teach a broad and balanced curriculum, including English, mathematics, science and religious education.
- Ofsted will inspect this just as it would in a maintained school.
- Children in academies have to take part in national tests assessments, such as GCSEs and SATs.
- For these reasons, many academies choose to follow much of the prescribed National Curriculum.
- When a school joins a multi-academy trust, the staff currently employed by the school transfer into the employment of the MAT so they would continue to teach and support the pupils as they do currently.

What are the TUPE regulations?

- The Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) is a piece of legislation designed to protect the rights of employees who may be subject to a change in the legal identity of their employer.
- All staff would automatically transfer to the new Academy Trust, on their current pay and conditions.
- All new staff would be employed under current national pay and conditions agreements.
- These regulations set out that employee terms and conditions such as pay, pension and policies are protected at the point of transfer, and the Academy inherits all rights, liabilities and obligations in relation to them.
- As part of the process of setting up an academy, staff have to transfer to the employment of the new academy trust. Under TUPE, staff and their representatives have to be provided with information by their current employer about the transfer.

How does multi-academy trust governance work?

- A MAT runs multiple academies, as opposed to a single academy trust which runs only one.
- While all academy trusts have two layers of governance (the members of the MAT and the board of trustees), a MAT may have further layers of governance in the form of local governing bodies or other committees which may relate to one or more academy.

- Boards are free to determine their governance structure as they see fit and Boards of trustees decide what to delegate.
- There is no requirement for MATs to have local governing bodies and the board may decide to appoint an advisory that oversees and brings together groups of local governing bodies.
- The members of the MAT are the subscribers to the trust's memorandum of association. They have a limited financial liability to the MAT and can appoint and remove trustees. Trustees are accountable to the members of the MAT and the secretary of state.
- The trustees oversee the running of the MAT and determine its strategic direction. They are also responsible for ensuring compliance with charity and company law and the academy trust's funding agreement.
- Some MATs decide to delegate based on the strength of their schools. For example, a strong school might be given a high level of autonomy, whereas a struggling school may not be delegated as many responsibilities.

Acronyms

MAT – multi-academy trust

DfE – Department for Education

TUPE - Transfer of Undertakings

ESFA - Education and Skills Funding Agency

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