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Consultation to join a Multi Academy Trust

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi-Academy Trust is a legal entity that governs a group of schools through a single set of Directors. It is set up by a group of schools, often in close geographical proximity to each other and they share a common ethos and vision.

Why are schools forming MATs both locally and nationally?

Changes in the educational landscape mean that very little remains of the Local Education Authority in Oxfordshire. Oxfordshire County Council and the Government see the long term future for schools as working together through local groupings. Schools can use the strong collaboration and accountability afforded by the MAT to drive up standards and share best practice and services across the trust, replacing aspects of former local authority support.

What will change?

Governance at local school level will remain largely unchanged – individual governors would be appointed at school level and there would be staff and parent representation as now. Local Governance responsibility is set out in a scheme of delegation. By joining the MAT we aim to collaborate and work with other schools in order to continue our school improvement journey.

What will not change?

We will retain all the aspects of our school that are unique to Gosford Hill School: our name; our values; our identity; our uniform; our teachers; our support staff; our buildings – will all stay the same.

The school retains lots of local decision making, some things are aligned which are educationally beneficial and some are the same across the Trust. (e.g. HR policies)

The culture, ethos, vision and values of Gosford Hill School are really special and unique to us, and there will be no compromise on this at any stage.

Why do we want to join a MAT?

Through joining a MAT with other local schools we stand to gain through:

- Having a partner that has the capacity, expertise, infra-structure and quality of staff to improve us as a school and help us on our journey towards becoming genuinely good and outstanding;
- Being part of an larger organisation that can provide professional development opportunities for all of our staff and greater opportunities for our students;
- Helping us to continue to both recruit and retain quality staff;
- Sharing expertise, resources and best practice and raising standards and improving outcomes across all key stages;
- Greater purchasing power for contracts and cost savings through economies of scale, thus helping us to secure our medium and long-term financial future.



What has been happening so far?

The Governing Body has considered in detail the opportunities and challenges that may arise through the formation of or joining a MAT. The Governing Body looked at all MATs currently operating in Oxfordshire, invited five in to talk with us, followed this up with three and have now decided that River Learning is the best way forward for our school. The Governing Body now feel ready to open the discussion to a wider audience and begin a formal period of consultation with the staff, parents, carers and other stakeholders.

Would a MAT affect admission arrangements for Gosford Hill School?

No. There are no plans to change the admissions criteria.

How will this impact our feeder Primary Schools?

We will continue to work in close partnership with all of our feeder primary schools. We will continue to meet regularly as a partnership and our excellent transition arrangements will not be changed.

Will a poor Ofsted rating in one of the schools affect the others within the MAT?

At present each school in a Trust is inspected separately and has its own judgement. Schools within the MAT will be supporting each other to raise standards.

Will the staff be expected to work in other schools or provide cover in other schools?

No. Nobody would be asked to work in a partner school if they do not wish to do so, although having the ability to move staff between schools could provide a great opportunity for career development if it was needed and also help to retain excellent staff and leaders within our family of schools.

How is funding organised within the MAT?

Funding for schools within a MAT is allocated on an individual academy basis. It is governed through a master funding agreement between the Secretary of State and the MAT and supplementary agreements between the Secretary of State and each school within the MAT.

Will each school lose its financial independence and its ability to manage its own finances?

There would be common financial procedures across schools within the MAT, but each school will be expected to manage their own budget.

Will there be a loss of autonomy for the local Governing Bodies?

It will be up to the trust board of the MAT to decide how much (or how little) power is delegated back to the local governing bodies, so ultimately they may lose some autonomy, but not for the day to day operation of the school. The scheme of delegations for schools for RLT can be found here <http://www.riverlearningtrust.org/information/> and demonstrates that in the majority of areas the local governing body will continue with its current functions. We will also continue to have Governors for a range of stakeholders: parents, community and staff.

What happens to The Friends of Gosford Hill School?

Each school within the MAT retains their own PTA and fundraising ideas. The Friends of Gosford Hill School are successful and proactive in supporting school events and fundraising for the school and we hope that this will continue to grow.

Will working with other schools mean lowering our own standards or possibly detracting resources from our own school?

All schools within our proposed MAT are committed to high standards and excellent outcomes for all their pupils. Some schools are high performing, local schools that will allow us to share



expertise that can only serve to improve us further. We would also look to share our excellent practice with our partner schools too.

What will happen to our land and buildings?

All land and buildings will be leased by the MAT rather than by the individual academies.

Who will lead the MAT?

The Trust Board, with the Chief Executive Officer (Paul James), will be responsible for the Governance of the Trust. Our Headteacher, Nigel Sellars, would continue to run Gosford Hill School along with his existing Leadership Team. In addition, our Headteacher will sit on the RLT Education Board, our Chair of Governors on the RLT Governance Board, our lead Finance and Resources Governor on the RLT Resources committee and one of our staff Governors on the RLT Staff Board. Further details about these groups can be found in RLT's constitution available here: <http://www.riverlearningtrust.org/information/>

