

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MAT

1. What are the aspirations and long term aims for the MAT?

This is written as a 'Vision for the MAT' on our website. Essentially, we want to be a strong and vibrant Diocesan school led MAT. We are not set up to create 'School in a box' and have schools which are cloned from each other. We are set up to reflect the distinctiveness and uniqueness of each school and this is reflected in our mission and all our documentation. The MAT is a vehicle through which each school can become the best version of itself. Abbey MAT has been genuinely set up to offer a real 'family' solution to the changing landscape of education provision in both the Diocese and nationally. We genuinely wish to live up to our mission to work 'In partnership to educate, nurture and empower' and would want each academy to 'buy in' to this vision so that we develop the 'whole child' and individual staff in the context of a school-led Church of England MAT. Using the Principle of Subsidiarity our vision is to ensure that we build local distinctiveness in each school; it is through decisions being made at the most locally appropriate level, rather than being imposed from above, that this vision can be allowed to thrive.

2. What strategies would you employ to ensure a successful partnership with a Primary setting? Do you anticipate any issues?

We would continue to work as we have with St Chad's CE Primary: the starting point would always be what do you want; where do you think there are needs? We were set up, with Diocesan blessing, in 2014 precisely to offer a strong partnership between primary and secondary. The MAT has not grown from a secondary basis wishing to expand into primary. The set-up of the MAT from its inauguration has been to provide an offer from 3-19 (St Chad's has a nursery).

The Executive Group (with Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the TB) is a group of equal partners of Principals and this has and will ensure successful partnerships for all.

3. What are the 'non negotiables' for the MAT?

Other than accepting the current set up of Trust Board and its legal terms (which is under review) and consistency and high quality around those areas required by the EFA's Academies Financial Handbook such as Finance, HR, insurance, risk management and Governance practices (including finance and payroll systems), and Trust-wide statutory policies, there are none.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MAT AND YOUR SCHOOL

4. How would our school benefit by joining your MAT?

You will be joining an established but adaptable MAT. We are well considered both regionally and locally and in particular with the Diocese so you will benefit from this immediately. Our ethos and provision for our Christian foundation is at the heart of all we do. Abbey Grange was judged as Outstanding in its most recent Section 48 (SIAMS) report in October 2016. Our Trust Board is established and experienced. It is a very personable body with a wealth of skills.

We are able to offer both a regional and local benefits. This can be as simple as offering use of facilities for any curriculum or staffing needs, to developing curriculum and transition links. This is open for the schools to discuss and grow together but some of the already existing transition links

which have benefited all schools can become more developed, and link throughout the curriculum for all Key Stages if that is what is desired.

Our Academy Effectiveness Directorate offers both support and challenge and is a unique and innovative offer as it is built from within, not dictated by any national agenda and responsive to the identified needs of the schools within the MAT. We can adapt to suit each school's setting and needs and support both the school's own improvement. Within this central service is PEARL (Performance Enhancement and Research Leadership – an acronym deliberately chosen for its biblical connotations). We have a team of Lead Practitioners in place who all work out of their own schools but also offer support to the whole. We wish to develop this team as we grow and would be looking to good and outstanding schools to be part of the lead practitioner offer and not just be receivers of it. We would hope that staff at all academies in the MAT would be keen to become part of this offer, sharing their experience and expertise across the MAT.

We are keen that as the MAT grows each school can benefit from a range of staff opportunities and benefits. For example, we have created a bespoke offer for MA with Leeds Beckett University, built around developments, such as research projects, at the home school. We have already seen that staff in the existing schools, have been able to enhance their own careers and support development in their own schools at the same time. This has been welcomed by staff and leadership in the schools as succession planning alongside staff development is bespoke and supportive.

Our Directorate of Performance and Standards give support and advice from a practising Ofsted Inspector. Quality assurance of all aspects of teaching and learning as well as accuracy and appropriateness of self-evaluation process and documentation are available to all members of the MAT from our own team.

As a strategic partner of a Calderdale Teaching School (Teamworks) we are also able to support with any developments through a Teaching School Alliance. We also have our own Schools Direct offer for Initial Teacher Training for primary teachers from September 2017.

There are also other benefits in terms of economies of scale, e.g. back office services, utilities, curriculum resources, which would be the case in any MAT you join. Dependent on your needs or requests, this could include grounds maintenance, catering and use of building and other facilities and resources we ensure that our Central offer is responsive to our schools' needs.

We have our own support for websites and links to the growing trust website which will support a multitude of developments and offer cost savings in such matters as recruitment.

5. What are the proposed timescales for consultation/conversion if we wish to proceed?

Much of the timescales around conversion are dictated by others, not least the DfE and EFA. This can vary according to demand. Consent from the DBE will obviously be required also. There are minimal periods needed for consultation, including TUPE which cannot be escaped or reduced. At the moment, a realistic timescale is about 4 months though this can be accelerated or delayed according to what is found during due diligence or legal process.

6. What support systems would be in place during the conversion phase?

We have a team of Project Managers and lawyers who support us through the process. We will build a time line with you, supporting you through every step and holding project meetings at

approximately 3 week intervals. This ensures that we keep progress and momentum and that everyone is aware of current status and requirements for further progress. We have a well-honed machine (with a human face) for the sometimes anxious time of TUPE. We recognise how this can be stressful particularly for staff and our aim will always be to ensure that we minimise this, make it personal and, very importantly, don't let the work in classrooms be clouded or adversely affected in any way. It would be our aim to make the process as painless and supportive as possible. All the support that is provided will be covered by the conversion funds provided by the DfE.

7. What level of autonomy would our school have as part of the MAT?

As already stated, operating under the Principle of Subsidiarity, schools which are not in an Ofsted category would retain its own autonomy. Our aim is make each school distinctive and true to its own community and we believe this is best achieved at a very local level. Though the Trust Board clearly have nationally set and legal responsibilities, their aim is to be as unobtrusive as possible whilst still taking seriously their responsibilities for accountability. Where schools are Good and Outstanding each Local Governing Body will be expected to continue operating as it currently operates – there is no particular structure or requirement for this from the Trust Board. This is laid out in the MAT's Scheme of Delegation which sets out the terms of reference for each Local Governing Body. Clearly this is different for schools in Special Measures where an Advisory Board is appointed by the Trust Board and the Trust Board retains direct accountability.

We have set up 2 Executive Groups – Principals and Chairs. Each group has its own MoU and feeds directly into the TB. The Chair and Head of your school would be automatically members of their respective groups and therefore have a direct link into the Trust Board and able to influence any central decisions though these are minimal. In addition to this we have a well-established Virtual Governing Office which enhances the support offered across the MAT to all Local Governing Bodies and ensures that everyone feels part of the whole.

8. Would our school have any influence over the MAT strategy?

Absolutely. The MAT has been set up to reflect what its members wish to achieve, within the vision already determined. We have Memorandums of Understanding and Terms of Reference to ensure that this is not just paying lip service to this but a requirement. As already stated in question 9 there is direct access to the Trust Board.

9. Please confirm the % contribution our school would have to make into the MAT. What services would be provided in return?

We review this per school and do not set up a rigid system. It is our aim to be as transparent as possible so we set our costs according to the school's needs and would be negotiated dependent on the services needed. We do not believe it is fair to charge schools who have minimal need for improvement services the same as a school who have intensive needs for this, so that good schools are effectively subsidising others. Currently our charge is approximately 3.5 - 4% but with additional charges for intensive improvement services. It will never exceed the maximum as determined by the DfE. Central Services included in the charge are for: CEO; Finance Director & central accounts; HR services; ICT management; Facilities and Estates services (including Health and Safety); services of Director of Academy effectiveness and members of the PEARL team. We would seek to gain a full understanding of the payments you make now for such services and look at comparing current costs with the proposed MAT costs, and demonstrate value for money. We have developed Key

Performance Indicators (KPIs) for our Central Services team so that there is ongoing transparency and accountability in terms of the return on investment for the contribution made by each academy.

10. What support could the MAT offer in terms of provision of services e.g. Payroll, HR, Finance, Facilities & Project Management?

We have Central Services which can cover all of this and we would ensure that the current staff of the school are supported and trained to move as seamlessly as possible in the service. Our Head of Facilities and Estates is experienced in bidding and supporting development including currently supporting a £4 million fund project at Abbey Grange for a new hall and 8 classroom block and will work alongside the school for any capital project bids.

Being part of the local community is not something we are just paying lip service to – we have included it in our curriculum offer our secondary academies through PSHCE and also through the Archbishop's Young Leaders' Award where there is a requirement to work in the local community.

Abbey MAT already has two outstanding providers for SIAMS and, as we grow, we see this aspect of our work critical to the development of the MAT. We have been applauded for our work on all sorts of levels from many external providers. Abbey Grange is currently part of a research project looking at the 10 best national providers for Christian ethos and we are using this experience to enhance our provision across the MAT. We have a lay Chaplain who is innovative and experienced who is willing to work across the MAT and the Diocese to support the development of Christian ethos in all our schools. There is a huge range of work going on: links with international Christian groups and partnerships (e.g. Nyamatre at Lightcliffe Academy, Ethiopia at Abbey Grange, Partners for Change in Africa).

There is a strong offer for music and all the expressive and performing arts within the MAT and something we delight in sharing together. This includes concert bands, worship groups, jazz ensembles, art exhibitions in public spaces and a range of performances from musicals and light opera to Shakespeare.

GOVERNING BODY

11. Will the Governing Body remain in place with the same constitution?

This will be dependent on the current numbers and skills of the present Governing Body. The DfE will require an understanding of the proposed skills-mix as part of the application process – there will be Terms of reference for each LGB according to the Ofsted status of the school, though essentially this gives full devolved powers to the LGB.

12. Will the Headteacher and/or Chair of our GB sit on the MAT Board of Directors?

The Trust Board is there to ensure compliance with overall legal responsibility for standards and financial regularity. The DfE, though giving some discretion, expects the size of each Multi Academy Trust Board to be about the size of our current constitution. So that we don't just have growth of the TB as the MAT grows and to ensure we have equitable input from schools as they join we have set up the Executive Groups with MoUs as described before with the Headteacher and the Chair of the LGB being a member of each respective group. Though the initial set up of the MAT had the 2 principals of the original partner schools (common for MATS at the time) this is being changed to remove this requirement.

The Articles of the Trust Board have been amended so that it more fairly represents the growth and expectations of new schools as they join us and to fairly reflect the responsibilities of the Trust Board of the MAT with Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding. This is to ensure that each LGB feels able to be involved in the overall direction of the TB. The make-up of the TB is dependent on skills and experience and we have already determined that, as vacancies arise, the first 'port-of-call' to fill vacancies will be from the LGBs.

13. Would a representative of the MAT sit on the Governing Body?

No – not automatically, unless it is for an Advisory Board being set up because a school is in Special Measures. A member of the Trust Board or the CEO would, of course, be willing to attend meetings as invited, and legally all Trustees are allowed to attend any LGB should they wish. Knowledge of Governance and leadership at each school will be essential though so that the Trust Board can properly support the needs of the school to ensure its growth and to support in times of need, such as during an Ofsted inspection.

14. Would the Governing Body retain control of admissions including setting of the policy?

Yes – the school retains total control over this as this will be a delegated responsibility to the LGB.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

15. How would the Executive Headteacher work with the Headteacher (in the short and long term)?

If the current post holder is appointed with statutory responsibilities, this will be retained and not alter. The CEO would work alongside the Headteacher to support wherever needed and this would be agreed between the Headteacher and CEO. The Headteacher will be accountable to the Local Governing Body and ultimately to the Trust Board via the CEO. For primary schools we have an Executive Primary Head who works supportively alongside primary Headteachers ensuring that all can mutually benefit from shared practice.

16. What support systems would be in place for the Headteacher/SMT?

The Principals of all schools meet on a regular basis as an Executive Group operating with its own MoU and reporting to the relevant LGB and to the Trust Board. As well as sharing good practice, they offer mutual support and development, peer review and develop and oversee the development and implementation of Trust wide policies. We have developed a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for primary and secondary sectors and this is used to drive forward school improvement within the strong and mutually supportive group, working collectively for each other's benefit. We also have links into a range of other supportive groups for example SSAT (we are a Leading edge member) and NCTL. Support will be determined by needs and it is the belief of the MAT that without strong leadership we will not thrive, so bespoke packages will be developed on a needs basis. We operate in a shared collegiate approach and the CEO would operate as a 'critical friend' both supporting and challenging.

17. What could the MAT bring to enable our school to move from 'good' to 'outstanding'?

We would not wish to be presumptuous about what your needs are. Without knowing where there are gaps and strengths then it is difficult to say. However, we do have the resources and support to

offer, and will find them if they are not currently available. Your school will undoubtedly already have outstanding practice and we would look to share this across the MAT and then find matches for any areas which need development. We believe this is one of the strengths of the MAT as it grows – we have links across different authorities.

18. How would our pupils benefit by joining your MAT?

Some of this has already been mentioned, for example in direct student leadership opportunities locally. Our ambition is a MAT is to ensure that the pupil experience is at the heart of what we do. Though we want each child and each school to achieve the highest attainment possible, we are determined that we do not lose sight of the whole child. This is central to all we do and all we offer. We are determined that we do not become ‘an exams factory’ but that we offer experiences which mean that all pupils love being at school and that prepare them to be outward facing individuals with experiences and skills which properly prepare them for life in an ever changing world.

Currently students across the MAT are enjoying working together on a variety of projects which link them physically and virtually – the development of our unique and innovative ‘Virtual Middle Academy’ is an example of one benefit. Students are thriving on opportunities to work on MAT – wide projects such as ‘wearable technology’ with the support of local employers, Music concerts for all Key Stages or Maths Challenges with Leeds University. Our established work through Investors in Pupils, Members of the Prince’s Teaching Institute and the Archbishop’s Young Leaders’ Award (Abbey Grange is considered and outstanding provider and used for a range of developments in this award, including being recently asked to be the first ‘partner’ school with the Archbishop’s Trust) are all opportunities for your students to be part of genuine collaborative activities across the Trust.

19. How would the MAT, use and develop our school’s strengths?

There are a multitude of ways in which this could be grown. As has already been stated, we would be looking to use your strengths in staffing and curriculum provision to support the development of the MAT whilst still enhancing your school for everyone’s mutual development

STAFF ORGANISATION, PAY AND CONDITIONS

20. Can you confirm that our staff terms and conditions will remain unaltered?

We use Teachers’ Pay & Conditions and have agreed that teachers and support staff Terms and Conditions will be honoured and would TUPE.

21. Does the MAT adhere to national pay scales or have their own pay structure?

National Pay Scales and Teachers’ Terms and Conditions are used and national and local pay and conditions for support staff.

22. Will existing staff of our school be employed by the school or by the MAT? What happens to new staff?

The MAT is the employer for all schools within it but the staff at your school would be retained by the school and not expected or required to work at other schools. Any new staff will be appointed to the school and the school will be responsible for the identification of new posts and appointment to these posts.

23. Will our staff be required to work between other schools in the MAT – could they be moved?

There is no requirement and they will not be moved, unless it is a mutually agreed move.

24. What opportunities might there be for our staff as part of the MAT?

This has already been mentioned in other answers but one particular example would be for staff to join the team of Lead Practitioners, gaining accreditation as Lead Practitioners or SLE's (Specialist Leaders of Education) and developing their own CPD as well as supporting staff in other settings. We also have joint training opportunities and look to enhance provision by getting small teams to work together for example, developing schemes of work or standardising and assessing.

25. Does the MAT have a staff cost formula that our school would have to work to?

No – this is for each school to determine within the guidelines set by the EFA.