

## Academisation - Frequently Asked Questions

A MAT is a partnership of schools working collaboratively to share expertise and support each other in order to provide the very best education to all children. Schools in a MAT retain their own leadership and day-to-day decision making as well as having greater freedom to choose how they apply their funding and resources and design their curriculum.

### ***What is an academy?***

An academy is a state school which is funded directly by the Department for Education rather than being directly controlled by the Local Authority. Academies have greater independence and freedom to enhance the curriculum, and deploy resources for the benefit of their pupils.

### ***What is a multi academy trust (MAT)?***

In recent years the government has changed the way funding is given to schools, which also means that local authorities are no longer able to provide the support and services for schools that they used to. In a MAT, schools work together as a group. In Pathfinder, all schools have their own local governing committees and retain their individual characteristics, ethos and values. Joining a MAT means that we can benefit from the services and expertise provided by the MAT's Operations Team allowing the school to concentrate on the teaching and welfare of pupils. Some of the benefits of joining Pathfinder include the following:

- Pathfinder has a strong track record of improved pupil progress and outcomes as a result of the close collaboration and support which exists between schools.
- Shared buying power and economies of scale allow schools in the trust to save money on purchasing and contracts.
- Teaching and support staff benefit from the professional development and training provided through Pathfinder's career pathways programme.
- All schools have access to the services provided by Pathfinder's Operations Team which include Finance, HR, Payroll, Estates and Facilities and Communications.

### ***Are all MATs the same?***

No, they vary in size and the types of schools (e.g. church school, community school, primary or secondary). Each MAT has its own vision and values and will offer different services to its school depending on their size and setup. MATs have a legal structure which includes having a board of trustees who are responsible for the overall direction and performance of the MAT and its schools.

### ***Can we just stay as we are and not become an academy?***

In March 2022, the government published a white paper setting out targets to level up education. This included wanting all schools to be part of a strong MAT by 2030. As more schools leave their local authority it is becoming more difficult for them to support schools effectively. Joining a MAT at this time allows us to make an informed decision on which MAT is right for our school.

### ***Who is Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust?***

Pathfinder Multi Academy Trust was founded in August 2016 initially between four schools. Today, Pathfinder is made up of 14 schools (two secondary schools and 12 primary schools) serving more than 6,000 children and their families across York.

Pathfinder is an inclusive partnership of church and community schools underpinned by a shared vision, common values and a commitment to providing an excellent education to all the young people they serve. Evidence shows that successful MATs meet the following criteria:

- Focussed on a geographical area with the right balance of schools
- Have a clear educational vision and a strong skill set
- Offer increased support and challenge for school improvement
- Promote consistency and innovation
- Articulate and live out shared values and ethos

Governors are confident that Pathfinder meets all of the above criteria and that Welburn would continue to flourish as part of Pathfinder, working with like-minded schools, whilst retaining our unique ethos and values.

### ***Which schools are in Pathfinder MAT?***

- Archbishop Holgate's School
- Acomb Primary School
- Badger Hill Primary School
- Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School
- Hempland Primary School
- Heworth CE Primary School
- Huntington Primary Academy
- Malton School (joining May 2024)
- New Earswick Primary School
- Poppleton Road Primary School
- Rufforth Primary School
- St Barnabas CE Primary School (in the process of joining Pathfinder)
- St Lawrence's CE Primary School
- Tang Hall Primary School

### ***Will our funding change?***

We will have more control over our funding and decision-making. An academy receives its money directly from the government. This means the school has greater freedom to spend its money in a way which better meets the needs of its pupils by paying only for services which are used by the school. By becoming part of a MAT we will be able to pool our resources with other schools and choose the best way to use our funds for our children and community. Although it is not the main reason behind the proposal, any opportunity for additional funding and cost saving cannot be ignored - our school will receive:

- An initial grant to convert to an academy
- Additional per-pupil funding of approximately 2%
- The power of joint purchasing to reduce costs of services
- The opportunity to bid for grants from a central government pot, only open to academies

### ***What will the changes be for my child?***

It is very unlikely that you or your child will notice any difference in their day-to-day schooling and there will be no changes to the ethos and values of our school. However, we envisage that we will be able to offer more opportunities within school and through extra-curricular opportunities due to our new collaborations with other schools.

### ***Will teaching standards change?***

Joining a MAT will enhance the continued training and development of our staff, enabling us to achieve even higher standards, and widen curriculum opportunities.

### ***Are academies inspected by Ofsted?***

Yes, academies are inspected exactly the same way as maintained schools.

### ***Are there any rules about pupil admissions for academies?***

Yes. Academies have to follow the law for school admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as if they were a maintained school. Academies cannot select pupils on the basis of ability. There will be no changes to the availability of free school meals for children.

### ***Who deals with complaints when schools have become academies?***

Parents or carers who have a complaint concerning their child's school would contact the headteacher directly, as they would normally do, in accordance with the school's complaints policy. If a parent is not happy with the response, they would then contact the MAT. If the parent is not happy with the MAT's response, they would contact the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

### ***Will the school name or uniform change?***

No. There is no obligation for a school to change its name or uniform on joining a MAT and there are no plans to do so.

***Would staff pay and conditions change?***

School staff will transfer to the MAT on their existing terms and conditions of employment. Both teaching and support staff will enjoy the same pension rights as they do now and continuity of service in local government will be recognised for employees.

***Has a decision already been made?***

No. As governors, we are exploring the pros and cons of converting to an academy as part of a MAT. Governors will not make a decision until parents, carers, staff and others with an interest in our school have been consulted. The governing board will then meet to assess the feedback and make an appropriate decision.

***If a decision is made to academise, how long would it take for the school to become an academy?***

If governors make a decision to academise and join a MAT, it could take between 6 and 12 months for the school to formally become an academy within a MAT.

***How do I have my say?***

There will be period of consultation where all parents, carers, staff and wider stakeholders will be able to give their opinions, ask any questions and raise any concerns. In the meantime, to find out more about academies, you can visit the webpage on academies on the Department for Education website at [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk).