



Fulbourn Primary School

School Lane

Fulbourn

Cambridge

CB21 5BH

Multi-Academy Trust formal consultation letter

Dear Parents, Carers and Members of our Community,

In the changing educational environment the Governing Body's priority is to enable our school to continue to provide an excellent education for our students, whilst protecting our school's individual qualities and strengths. We believe that working together with other local schools in a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) could offer many benefits. As a strong and successful school, the governors would like Fulbourn to be at the forefront of the process by founding a new MAT in partnership with like-minded schools who share our core aims and values and have expertise in primary teaching. This would enable us to create a MAT that fits our own ethos and successful practice.

As you know from previous correspondence, the Governing Body of Fulbourn Primary School has been working towards forming a Multi-Academy Trust with two other local primaries: The Spinney School and Mayfield Primary School. The Multi-Academy Trust would be known as Cambridgeshire Innovation Trust (CIT). The sponsoring school of CIT is The Spinney School, an Outstanding school with National Teaching School status. The Head teacher, Rachel Snape, would become the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the MAT. However, there would not be a 'lead' school and all of the schools would be contributing their own expertise. Further details about The Spinney School and Mayfield Primary School can be found here: <https://www.cambridgeinnovationtrust.com/trust-schools>

As a member of CIT, Fulbourn would keep its own name and would retain much of its independence. Each school would continue to be run by its own Head teacher(s) with less administration and more time to focus upon developing teaching and learning within the school. Fulbourn children will continue to wear the same uniform and be taught by the same teachers. There would be increased opportunities for staff professional development and training across the schools. The Governing Body of Fulbourn Primary School would focus on teaching and learning and the welfare of staff and pupils. The Board of Directors (Trustees) would be responsible for holding the CEO and Head teachers to account and ensuring that the finances of the academies are properly managed and audited.

The final decision on whether or not to seek academy status and enter the MAT will be taken by our Governing Body based on what is considered best for our school, children, staff and wider community. As part of the decision-making process, the Governing Body is committed to undertaking a full consultation and wants to hear your views as they will be taken into account when making a final decision. More information on the structure of the Trust and more details about our proposals can be found in the Appendix at the end of this letter.

The Governing Body and Head teachers will also hold a consultation meeting to share our vision of the proposed MAT and to give you the chance to present your views, voice concerns or ask questions. This meeting will take place on **Tuesday 6th February at 3.30pm and 7pm** in our school hall. Views expressed at this meeting will be captured and included in the final considerations of the Governing Body. Where possible it would be really helpful if you could send in questions beforehand to office@fulbourn.cambs.sch.uk. Alternatively, post your feedback in a sealed envelope clearly marked 'MAT consultation' through the office letter box. The formal consultation period will close at 5pm on **Monday 19th February 2018**. Many thanks in advance and we look forward to hearing from you.

We wish you all a wonderful Christmas break and look forward to hearing from you in the New Year.

David Boyd on behalf of The Governing Body

Glossary

The following terms will be used below:

MAT	Multi Academy Trust.
Members	Responsible for the MAT vision, ethos, values and strategic direction.
Trustees	Set the leadership direction for the MAT. They lead the implementation of the vision and values, agree policies, oversee finance, facilities development and educational outcomes and review academy performance.
AGB	Local Academy Governing Body.
TUPE	The transfer of undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations 2006 (TUPE) places rights, responsibilities and liabilities on both the old and new employers, as well as providing protection for employees during and after the process of becoming an academy or joining a MAT.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an Academy?

An Academy is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust and not the Local Authority. The Academy Trust is a charitable body, which enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government not through the Local Authority. Like other trusts, CIT will be set up as a company and will have the status of a charity.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is where a number of schools join together and form a single Trust with a Board of Trustees answerable to the Trust's Members. Members of the Trust are a group of independent people who are responsible for the strategic overview of all academies within the Trust. They are the conscience of the Trust, ensuring that the objectives are upheld and they monitor the effectiveness of the individual academies and report to the Secretary of State. They work to ensure that individual academies are performing to the best of their ability and that they receive the support and challenge that they require.

The MAT will have a Board of Directors (Trustees) including individuals from our school Governing Bodies as well as independent volunteers with appropriate expertise. They must have the best interests of the Academies at the forefront of their decision making at all times, and have a duty of compliance, ensuring that all relevant laws and regulations are followed. They are collectively responsible for holding the CEO and Head teachers to account and ensuring that the finances of the academies are properly managed and audited. These are the same duties that school governors have now.

The local Academy Governing Bodies (AGBs) which will have responsibility for community relations and for monitoring standards and pupil and staff wellbeing. Initially the AGB will consist of the same governors as we have now.

Why convert to Multi-Academy Trust?

Schools have always operated within a changing educational landscape and in 2016 the government expanded the Academies programme with the vision that all schools in England would convert to Academy status and would cease to be 'maintained' by their Local Authority by 2022. Since the latest election this has been relaxed for Good and Outstanding schools but the direction of travel is still for schools to become Academies and to join MATs and many Good and Outstanding schools are choosing to convert. For example, in September this year there were 992 schools in the process of academy conversion with the vast majority of these being primary schools. As conversion proceeds the level of support from the Local Authority is diminishing. With this in mind, the Governing Body have considered the following:

- Seeking Academy status and setting up a new MAT with like-minded schools.
- Joining an established MAT led by a secondary school.
- Remaining a Local Authority maintained school until we are required to convert to Academy status and join an existing MAT.

As a strong and successful school, the governors would like Fulbourn to be at the forefront of the process by founding a MAT in partnership with like-minded schools who share our core aims and values and have expertise in primary teaching. This would enable us to create a MAT that fits our own ethos and successful practice.

What advantages would creating the MAT bring?

There will be a number of benefits to our school:

- Protecting the school's ethos and inclusive philosophy by forming a MAT with like-minded schools;
- Schools would support and challenge each other to deliver excellence in all aspects of the education of our pupils;
- Further opportunities to develop teaching and learning practices across all schools through sharing best practice and continuing professional development;
- Opportunities for sports, arts and science festivals across the schools and for children to broaden their horizons;
- Recruit staff through opportunities to work across all schools in a strong and supportive MAT;
- More opportunities for staff retention, deployment and promotion, by keeping good staff within the Trust who might otherwise further their career elsewhere;
- Strong mutual support for leaders across the schools and from the CEO;
- Managerial efficiencies across the schools that will free up time to concentrate on teaching and learning;
- Increased economies of scale in the running of central services such as finance (purchasing and resourcing), HR, and premises.

What are the associated risks of joining a MAT?

- Some loss of autonomy, e.g. the Trust board will set some policies across all of the schools.
- The need to fulfil all employer and company liabilities, many of which are currently provided by the Local Authority, e.g. MATs need to appoint their own auditors.
- Increased statutory requirements and costs e.g. MATs take out their own insurance.
- Unchartered territory for our schools.

Who will be responsible for running our school?

The newly formed Trust will have a Board of Directors including individuals from the current School Governing bodies. The Trust Board will delegate some powers to the new Academy Governing Bodies. Please visit www.cambridgeinnovationtrust.com for more information about the CIT designate Members and Directors.

What is involved in becoming an Academy?

The school will complete a consultation with parents, pupils, staff and the wider community which the Governors will take into account in reaching its decision. The Secretary of State for Education has approved our initial application and each school has been given £25,000 to convert, although the vast majority of this will be used in the conversion process including legal fees etc. Following the consultations and legal and financial due diligence the Governing Body will vote on whether to proceed to conversion.

Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?

No, under the proposed MAT plans, the Governors have no plans to change the name, logo, uniform or individual identity of each school. We are proud of our identity as Fulbourn Primary. Letter headings may change slightly to reflect our participation in a MAT but little else will change.

How are the children affected?

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupils' learning. They may also start to notice the increased opportunities for participation in events across the MAT.

How will being part of the MAT improve standards for our children?

Being part of a MAT will enable us to utilise the expertise of staff from all of the schools in the MAT. This will raise the educational achievement of all children through collaborative working and shared training where appropriate. The talents of schools together become greater than the sum of their parts.

How would children with SEN, especially those with EHCPs, be affected by joining a MAT?

No changes are planned to how we admit children. Our three founding schools remain committed to access for all children.

How will being an Academy affect staff?

Currently, the employer for staff is Cambridgeshire County Council. After conversion, all staff at all the schools will be employed by the Trust. Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected, and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

Will teachers work at different schools?

In most cases staff will remain in their own schools. However, being part of the MAT will provide many professional development opportunities. Staff from schools who are part of the MAT will attend joint training, skills will be shared and good practice will be spread between the schools. There will be the opportunity for some exchange of staff for training and professional development purposes but this will not be enforced for existing staff.

Will we get more money as an academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. Currently the Local Authority 'top slices' each school's budget for shared services, some of which we use and some we don't. This money will be available and used by the MAT to fund shared services. Each school

does not necessarily have more money, but as a group the schools have better control of the budget, although this does mean more accountability for the Board of Directors.

Will there be any changes to the curriculum?

There are no envisaged changes to the curriculum as a result of joining the MAT. Within a MAT, individual academies will normally be responsible for their own curriculum development. Senior leaders will report to their Local Governing Bodies on their curriculum on a yearly basis as currently. However, it is envisaged that teachers across academies may work together more closely to encourage the sharing of good practice and new ideas which may inform individual academy curriculum decisions.

How does the admissions process work for academies in the MAT?

Nothing really changes regarding admissions. All academies have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places. Academies are required to comply with the Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes of Practice, as if they were maintained schools. They are also required to participate in Local Authority coordination of admissions processes and the Local Authority's Fair Access Protocol. All Local Authorities are required to coordinate admissions in their area. All schools, whether Local Authority schools or academies, must participate in the scheme.

What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies in a MAT have to provide?

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools. As a MAT, all schools will continue to be inspected as separate schools. However, this is not to say that in the future the MAT could be inspected as a whole in line with government policy. For those schools becoming academies by joining the MAT, they will still have to take part in national tests and in teacher assessments of students' performance as they apply to maintained schools. The results are reported in performance tables in the same way as they are now.