

Multi Academy Trust

Consultation on whether or not the five schools named below should join a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) which will be known as The Mercian Trust.



1. Name, ethos and approach

1.1 The proposed new Multi-Academy Trust is a group of schools working together under a common banner and an over-arching structure of governance. Each school will retain its autonomy and its unique brand. Each school will be the custodian of its heritage, distinct identity and successful operation.

The new Trust will be taking on some of the roles that might have been played in the past by a Local Authority. It is neither the Queen Mary's Foundation, nor the Vine Trust Group in a new guise; it is a new company with a new and distinct purpose. For this reason, we propose a name that is both rooted in history and which expresses a geographical identity and ambition: The Mercian Trust. Mercia was an ancient kingdom comprising Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and, crucially for us, what we now call the Black Country. It was in Mercia that St Chad established an association of small monasteries which fostered unity through *bonds of kinship*. We intend, a thousand years later, to adopt the same spirit in our approach to a Multi-Academy Trust.

1.2 Our ethos and approach reflects the diverse nature of the schools that will join in September and in the future. Our schools prepare pupils to enjoy life to the full by inspiring them to:

- Realise their full potential as learners
- Thrive in the world of work
- Make a positive contribution to the local, national and international community

1.3 The Trust respects the autonomy of its member schools but, through collaboration, fosters strengths that are greater than the sum of its parts. It provides a framework for robust challenge and accountability and a framework for sharing expertise and enthusiasm.

For the students in the Trust's schools, we have a strong focus on pastoral care and family values. We recognise that good relationships underpin successful education. We aim to ensure that excellent teaching and learning are complemented by care and support which value and applaud each student's gifts and abilities.

2. What is Multi Academy Trust status?

2.1 A **multi-academy trust** is where a group of schools is governed through a single set of Members and trustees.

2.2 The five Schools behind this proposal are all Academies. They are operated by charitable companies which are generally referred to as 'Academy Trusts'. Each school currently has its own single Academy Trust.

Across the country, many schools are considering how they can best work together and offer each other school to school support. Multi Academy Trust status is the most effective way to encourage these working relationships and to ensure that the funds that we have are deployed to maximum advantage.

We also believe that it is in the best interests of our pupils.

3. What changes will there be if the MAT goes ahead?

3.1 The following will **not** change:

- The schools' names
- The schools' day to day operation (including day and term times)
- Uniform
- Admissions arrangements
- Terms and Conditions of employment for existing staff

3.2 The key change will be to governance:

- The new MAT will have its own Members and Trustees (who will be responsible for the strategic oversight of the new Trust).
- Current Governors of each School will remain as Governors, but they will no longer be Charity Trustees and Members. They will have delegated powers similar to the ones they enjoy now and will be free to concentrate on *educational* matters.
- Funding will continue to come from Central Government, but via the Multi Academy trust. The budget for each school will be ring fenced.

4. What are the advantages of forming a MAT?

4.1 Creating a MAT structure will allow the five schools to work more closely together, to pool resources where appropriate and to ensure the best possible education for all their students.

4.2 The MAT will foster strong governance at the school level and at the Central Trust level.

4.3 It will enable the schools to create efficiencies in how we buy and minimise the impact of cuts in government funding on our pupils.

4.4 It will increase opportunities for career development and training for staff

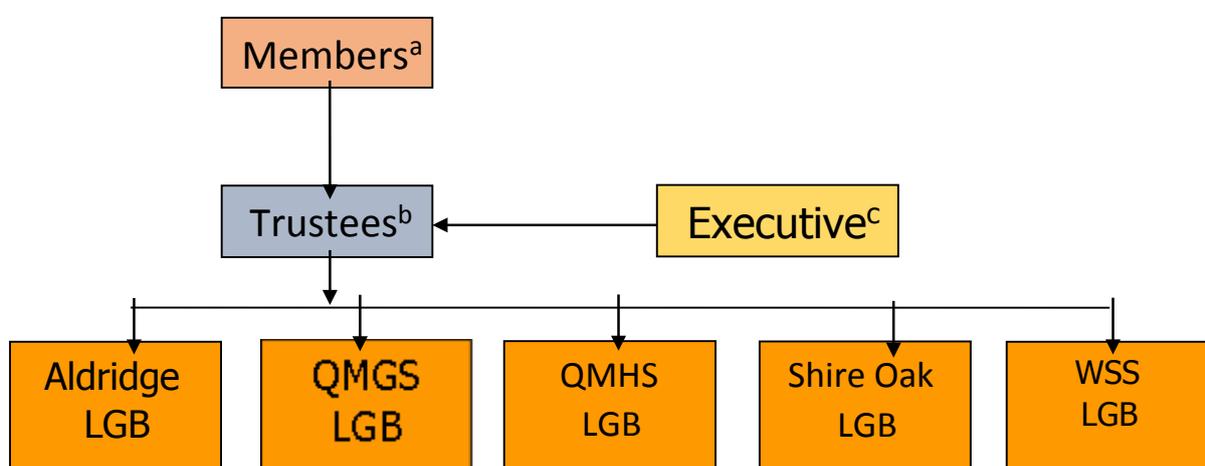
4.5 It will help us to ensure that each pupil receives the programme of education for which he or she is best suited. Working together will allow us to maintain a broad and balanced curriculum (particularly for post 16 students) at a time when cuts in government funding are bringing into question the long-term viability of some subjects.

5. What are the arrangements for Governance?

5.1 The work of the Trust itself will be led and managed by a Board of Trustees. The Trustees will be responsible for setting the strategic direction and policies of the MAT. These responsibilities will also include, for example, setting the yearly contribution to the central services of the MAT and monitoring and challenging the performance of the schools.

Formal governance functions are performed by the Board of Trustees and local governing bodies (LGBs), operating under a formal scheme of delegated powers.

In the initial cohort of five schools, we expect Local Governing bodies to have strong formal delegated powers, including over their budgets. Different levels of delegation may be required in the future (if the circumstances of a particular school change or new schools join the Trust, for example)



- a. There are five Members (who effectively act as shareholders), as follows:
 - The Queen Mary's Foundation will be a Corporate member, with responsibility for appointing two additional individual Members
 - The Vine Trust Group will be a Corporate member, with responsibility for appointing one additional individual Member
- b. There are 9 Trustees to include representatives of the Governors of the five schools.
- c. It is proposed that the founding Executive Board will comprise the Headteachers of the founding Schools, together with the Chief Finance Officer.

6. Staff

6.1 Each School's staff would transfer to the new MAT under the TUPE regulations. TUPE is The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment). These regulations ensure that staff transfer on their existing terms and conditions. Pensions for staff would remain unaffected.

The transfer would be under the same processes as those used when each school became an Academy.

6.2 Within the new MAT, existing staff could choose to work in different schools with a view to:

- Raising standards
- Securing economies of scale
- Increasing staff development
- Allowing greater enrichment opportunities.

They will **not** be obliged to do so.

7. Key Information

7.1 This consultation will be open on Tuesday 08 March 2016 and will close on Wednesday 13 April 2016.

7.2 You can respond to the consultation by sending an email to the school with the subject line "MAT Consultation". Alternatively, you can send a written response by post. Each school will also make arrangements for a consultation evening when you can come along and find out more.

7.3 The Governing Bodies will not take a final decision until the consultation process is complete.