



Multi Academy Trust Development Programme Frequently Asked Questions

The MAT Steering Group has prepared this document in response to the comments and questions arising from the meetings with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors January – February 2021. It should be read in conjunction with the document “Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021”.

Last updated: 23 February 2021

Q 1. What are the overall objectives of creating the MATs?

We have summarised our shared vision in the document “Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021”. This explains why the MAT model is key to securing Catholic Education for the long term. This is supported by the letter from Bishop Ralph Heskett January 2021 setting out his intentions for all schools in the Diocese and is consistent with previous correspondence from the Bishop and the strategic direction shared with all schools by the Schools Department webinar last year.

Q 2. Why is this being done now, in the middle of a worldwide pandemic?

The drivers for the vision are set out in the document “Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021”. We understand the current pressures on schools and have prioritised Wellbeing as a theme for the project, not only in recognition of the current Covid challenges but because the wellbeing of staff and pupils will be a foundation stone of the new MATs. The work of the Wellbeing theme group will start after February half term and Headteachers and Governors are invited to take part.

Q 3. Where is the business case to outline the viability of creating the MATs?

The viability of the model will be tested against a range of criteria including: capacity to support school improvement, compliance, affordability and financial sustainability. Current work is underway looking at due diligence which will inform proposals. The work of the theme groups will inform proposals for structure, particularly the work of the School Improvement Strategy Group who will propose a bespoke delivery mechanism. Structures will be proposed to meet Diocese of Hallam context and needs, affordability and sustainability rather than a structure being pre-determined which then turns out to be unsustainable. We will be following the latest DfE guidance and model documents for the creation of MATs.

Q 4. Will the Diocese look to create a MAT with another diocese?

No, we have no such plans.

Q 5. Will schools in the same family be in the same MAT?

Yes – see MAT lists in the document “Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021”.

Q 6. Are we joining a MAT or are we forming one?

We are forming two new MATs.

Q 7. How will the decision be made around which schools will be in which MAT – is this a financial matter?

The list of schools in each MAT is unchanged – see MAT lists in the document “Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021”. The financial status of each school is not a determining factor. Each MAT contains a balance of schools and is aligned with Deaneries.

Q 8. What does the term vulnerable school mean?



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The term vulnerable covers a range of factors which may lead to remedial interventions and/or sanctions being taken by a third party such as the RSC, DfE or the Local Authority and where these interventions are outside of the control of the school, academy or Diocese. Examples of triggers for interventions may include:

- *Ofsted inspections resulting in a school moving into a category*
- *Double RI judgements*
- *Safeguarding concerns*
- *Complaints brought to the attention of Ofsted*
- *Financial difficulties, either immediate or predicted for future years*
- *Compliance issues*
- *Governance concerns*

Examples of the measures which may be taken by third parties include: Termination Warning Notice, Financial Notice to Improve, Rebrokerage, forced academisation within RSC's timescales, loss of delegated authorities.

Q 9. What is the timeline for decision-making of final detailed plans to share with the RSC?

The RSC Headteacher Board meets on 29th April 2021 to receive an update on proposals. The outline plans will draw on the work of the theme groups, particularly the School Improvement Strategy Group, the outcome of the initial due diligence, discussions with Headteachers with oversight from the Schools Department. The outline plans will be shared with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors prior to the meeting. These plans will not be "final" as detail around staffing structure, central services and systems will not have been proposed by that date. The purpose of the meeting is for the RSC to receive an outline and provide support/challenge so that timescales can be agreed. Following the meeting we will share outcomes with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.

Q 10. What is the timeline for joining a new MAT?

This has yet to be determined and is for discussion with the RSC being informed by our analysis of due diligence, discussions with Headteachers, overview by the Schools Department and logistical considerations of the legal work required. We know we need to move at pace but this will not be at the expense of getting the model right.

Q 11. How will different stakeholders have the opportunity to respond to proposals for the new MATs?

The proposals are in part evolving from stakeholders, particularly from school leaders, who will be working on one of the key foundations of the MAT, the school improvement model. The work of the theme groups will be shared and will evolve to arrive at a bespoke model for the Diocese of Hallam. Governors will be involved in the Governance Theme Group looking at the roles and responsibilities of governors as will prospective directors. Proposals will evolve from within the prescribed legal framework and accountability expectations. Involvement of stakeholders in the work of the theme groups and feeding in proposals will ensure that a wide range of views are taken into account. We encourage you to take part in theme group discussions.

Q 12. As we know that we will all be in one of two large MATs, when will we be involved with determining the vision for our particular MAT?

Whereas we are clear that there will be two large MATs, we will arrive at the "road map" for each school later this term taking account of the "MAT Readiness" for each school. This will be based on a range of due diligence



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factors and discussions with each Headteacher to ensure that your road map is tailored for your context. The 1-2-1 discussions with Headteachers will start after we have met all Family Clusters (last one on 9th Feb). The vision for each MAT will evolve with the project with the involvement of all stakeholders. We will find out more about key milestones at the Headteacher Board meeting on 29th April 2021. The overall vision for each MAT will then be taken forward by the CEO and MAT Board in collaboration with Schools Leaders.

- Q 13. What arrangements will be put in place for school leaders in a family cluster to come together with other school leaders in the same MAT to meet, discuss and share in their common way forward with Headteachers, governors and clergy?

As part of our engagement strategy we will be setting up “themed groups” to share ideas on a range of topics. We will be looking to announce these after February half term. Thank you to those school leaders who have already indicated key skills and capacity to be a part of this. We know that family clusters are already coming together to discuss the proposals and we welcome this.

- Q 14. Why has there not been a consultation?

Proposals to develop one or more MATs in the Diocese of Hallam has been ongoing since November 2017 with many meetings and discussions having taken place with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors. These plans have been evolving over time and events such as webinars and family cluster group meeting have been the vehicles for communication and sharing up to this point. The document “Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021” explains how we are engaging and communicating with stakeholders and sets out when formal consultation will take place, which will be as part of the academy conversion process. This is a statutory requirement and will be co-ordinated centrally.

- Q 15. At what point in the process will the CEO be appointed, and who will be involved in the recruitment process? To what extent will Headteacher representation be included in the recruitment process?

Recruitment for the two CEOs will start at least 6 months in advance with the intention of having a CEO for each MAT in place prior to the launch date for each MAT. The process will be fair, open and transparent and be through external advertisement. Headteachers will be included in the process. Funding for the salaries in advance is part of overall project costs.

- Q 16. How will you ensure that the CEO is a Catholic?

The post of CEO in a Catholic MAT is a reserved post for practising Catholics. The eligibility criteria will be set as part of the recruitment process. The Bishop has discretion in exceptional circumstances, for example to cover short term interim needs, to appoint a non-Catholic. However where the post is a permanent position, which the CEO posts for our new MATs are, then they will be Catholic. This is set out in the Bishops’ Memorandum on Appointment of Teachers to Catholic Schools.

- Q 17. Which other posts will be Catholic?

The requirements are set out in the Bishops’ Memorandum on the appointment of teachers to Catholic schools”. The reserved posts are: CEO, Exec Headteachers/Headteachers, Deputy Heads, Heads of Religious Education in Secondary Schools, Lay Chaplains. However, in joint Church schools we will have different arrangements which are to be agreed with the relevant Anglican Dioceses.

- Q 18. How will you ensure that the Catholic ethos of the individual schools remain?

All VA schools and academies within the Diocese of Hallam are designated Catholic schools. As part of the MAT project a Catholic Life & Ethos theme group will be set up drawing on a range of stakeholders to propose ways



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to further strengthen and embed our ethos throughout the MATs and in partnership with local parishes. The new MATs will, as are current VA schools and academies, all be under the control and direction of the Bishop of Hallam.

Q 19. How will schools retain their identity?

We acknowledge the importance of individuality for Catholic schools. There are no plans to change the name of a school (other than to remove the term Voluntary Aided). Schools can keep the term “school” or change it to academy. Uniforms will not be changed. Signage will not be changed although over time there will be the addition of the MAT name on stationery and signs etc.

Q 20. Who will form the Vision and Strategic Priorities for the new MATs and for each school?

The CEO with the Board of Directors will set the vision and strategic priorities taking account of the context, needs and priorities for their particular MATs. This is usually done in collaboration with school leaders. Schools leaders will usually set their own priorities in line with the overall MAT strategic priorities. However, the CEO will determine how this will work in practice and how schools will be involved.

Q 21. Who will be the Members of the two MATs?

The Members will all be appointed by the Bishop. Further details will be shared once the names have been confirmed.

Q 22. Who will be the Directors of the two MATs?

The Directors will be appointed according to the Articles of Association. Appointments will be skills based. Recruitment for Directors will be through an open and robust process to ensure that those with appropriate skills and expertise are appointed. Further details about recruitment will follow.

Q 23. What is the very first thing a governing body should do before they consider joining a MAT?

In the Diocese of Hallam, the Bishop has set out his intention for all schools which gives clarity of direction for everyone. The first action for a governing body would therefore be to understand the rationale for the decision and to make preparations for the next stage. Governing Bodies will be supported throughout the process by the MAT Development Group who will provide wording for consultation purposes, resolutions and the necessary legal support.

Q 24. What will be the role of governing bodies in the new MATs?

In the MAT legal model, there is no requirement to have committees at the local level (ie current governing bodies). However, we are committed to retaining committees at the local level as they are vital to preserving the ethos and individuality of our schools and their sense of place in their local communities. In the new MAT model, governing bodies will be known as Academy Committees to reflect that they are a committee of the academy trust and members of those committees will continue to be referred to as local governors. The work of the Governance Theme group will explore further the membership, role, remit, skills and codes of conduct for Academy Committees in addition to proposing an initial Scheme of Delegation.

Q 25. Will there be a governing body for every school?

We are committed to retaining Governing Bodies – to be known as Academy Committees – in the new MAT model. As is currently the case, there are groups of schools who share a governing body. This may continue in the new MATs if that arrangement meets the needs of the schools.

Q 26. Could you please outline to what extent our governing bodies will change in their responsibilities?



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There will be a change in focus of the role of local governors to reflect the legal status and accountability arrangements for the new MATs. We are working on a document to go alongside the accountability arrangements which will make clear the roles and responsibilities of each layer of governance in the MAT.

Q 27. Who will Chair the local Academy Committees?

The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected from the Local Foundation Governors.

Q 28. How will you retain the expertise and local intelligence of current governors?

Current governors will become local governors on the Academy Committees and their terms of office will continue. We have no plans to reduce the number of foundation governors. Foundation governors will be in the majority on Academy Committees. New appointments will continue to be made on a skills basis deriving from the skills audit.

Q 29. Who has authority and power in the new MATs?

The Multi Academy Trust is the legal entity. It is a Company and an exempt Charity. The MAT is the employer of all staff. The CEO is the Accounting Officer and as such is accountable for the performance of every school in the MAT and its finances. The structure of a MAT is illustrated in the document "Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021". The Board of Directors delegates functions to committees and individuals, including the CEO and Academy Committees through a Scheme of Delegation (SoD). The SoD will detail the extent to which each tier is involved in the decision-making process, which could be to approve, recommend or be consulted/informed. The SoD is reviewed annually by the MAT and may be changed at any time by the MAT. The terminology will be discussed in the governance theme group. However, accountability will always remain with the MAT.

Q 30. Will governing bodies be able to appoint their own staff?

The MAT will be the employer of all staff. The Board of Directors may delegate functions to the Academy Committee. The scheme of delegation will make clear how the Academy Committee will be involved in recruitment decisions.

Q 31. Who holds those in executive positions to account?

The CEO is held to account by the Board of Directors. Senior members of the executive team are held to account by the CEO.

Q 32. Will directors be appointed to cover all key stages in the MAT?

Director appointments will be skills based and will include those with a background in education. Directors will ensure that executive appointments have the necessary expertise to oversee all key stages in the MAT.

Q 33. What does the line management structure look like?

There is no pre-defined staffing structure. This will evolve as the project progresses. The accountability for performance of the MAT and therefore for staff, rests with the CEO. The CEO may delegate line management responsibilities to other executive team members depending on the structure. Headteachers will be ultimately accountable to the CEO.

Q 34. Please could you outline any intended changes in Headteacher accountability upon conversion to academy status.



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For every school and academy moving to one of the MATs there will be a defined accountability structure which will apply both to VA schools converting and joining the MAT and to existing academies transferring to the new MAT. This is a reflection of the status of the MATs as legal entities and charities. We are currently working on a document to explain fully the accountability arrangements for our MATs and this will be shared with everyone before Easter.

Q 35. Will Headteachers decide their curriculum/teaching and learning methods?

This will be set out in the Scheme of Delegation initially. However the CEO of the new MATs together with those in the MAT responsible for School Improvement will work with Headteachers on this area.

Q 36. In the spirit of partnership, please could you share your/the Diocese perceptions of what the transition to academy status will provide us with in terms of “freedoms from constraints” and “freedoms to move in new directions”.

We recognise that operating as a VA school will be very different to operating as an academy as part of a large MAT. Please see the document “Update from the MAT Steering Group February 2021” which sets out the benefits of being part of a MAT. Please be assured that our role is to support you to become ready to join the MAT and then to co-ordinate and manage the academy conversion process at each stage. Project Leads will discuss freedoms and new directions on a 121 basis as we will need specific examples in order to respond.

Q 37. Please outline how all stakeholders, ie local clergy will be invited/involved in the academisation process and what will happen following consultation

We have already engaged with our Clergy and they are also now included on the Newsletter distribution list. The Clergy are welcoming of these developments and they will be involved in theme groups to look at Catholic Life & Ethos including links between schools and parish communities. Local Clergy will be included as part of the formal academisation consultation process. We will provide separate documentation about the academisation process explaining how this will be funded and supported.

Q 38. How can we ensure total transparency in this process? This has been prompted by the fact that some Headteachers appear to know far more than others, particularly around appointments for example (as at 19.1.2021)

As we have said in every Family Cluster meeting, our communications with you will be consistent. We will use the newsletter to make announcements and sign post to key documents. We have a standing agenda item at all our meetings which asks “what decisions have been made”, “who needs to know” and “how do we communicate the message”.

Q 39. With regard to the newsletter, how can we all within the diocese be 100% confident that we all know as much as one another at the same time, especially regarding proposed funding and budgetary matters, ie top slicing and funding arrangements between schools in differing contexts and categories, for example in HSPAT.

Please see response to Q38. above. We should also point out that HSPAT is an existing MAT with its own Board of Directors. The decisions taken by HSPAT relating to funding, budget management and top-slicing will apply to the academies within that MAT for as long as those academies remain in that MAT. We are working closely with HSPAT Board of Directors to ensure that the academies within HSPAT are fully part of the wider MAT Development Project and will be ready to join their respective new MATs when the time is right.

Q 40. How should we proceed with contract renewals or new contracts? Should we consult with our project lead on all of them going forward?



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We will be looking at contracts in more detail in the Procurement Theme Group. In the meantime if you have queries about contract renewals please do discuss these with your Project Lead.

- Q 41. Can meetings with colleagues be held during the working day rather than in the evening as we are all mindful of the crucial nature of our wellbeing during this demanding period?

We can be flexible with meeting times to fit in with your work schedules and when we invite groups of you to meetings we will prioritise times during the working day. Thank you – this will support wellbeing for us too.

- Q 42. How will the top slice work and how much will it be?

There will be a top slice which will fund central services, including the school improvement model. The exact % will be determined through due diligence, the work of the theme groups and the funds required to deliver the central services. The top-slice will be no more than 5%.

- Q 43. How will schools afford to pay the top slice on top of the services they already buy in?

There will be services which schools and academies currently buy into which will be provided centrally by the MAT and so there will be a process of giving notice on those contracts to avoid double funding prior to the set-up of the MAT. There will also be significant savings to be made from central procurement of services such as audit where currently every Single Academy Trust pays for an annual audit. In the MAT, there is one set of financial statements and one audit company.

- Q 44. Will we still need to pay the Diocesan per pupil contribution?

This will be paid by the MAT as part of the top slice.

- Q 45. Will schools keep their surpluses when they transfer?

Yes, these transfer as part of the Commercial Transfer Agreement.

- Q 46. Will schools be able to keep their self-generated income?

Income generated by the school through lettings etc will be retained by the schools.

- Q 47. Will there be a transition phase where schools can get ready and adjust staffing and budgets if necessary?

Yes, there is already work being carried out on financial forecasting based on initial due diligence information and this will be shared with Headteachers during March and will inform discussions about budgets and staffing. Leading up to the start-up of the new MATs when we know more about staffing structures we will plan recruitment strategies with each school.

- Q 48. What does the academisation and academy transfer process look like?

We will produce separate documents to outline the processes. The processes will be centralised and supported by the MAT Development Group and by our legal team.

- Q 49. What legal support do we get?

The legal support has been procured as a single contract to cover the academisation, academy transfer and setting up of the MATs. This is cost effective and means that the legal processes will be co-ordinated centrally by the MAT Development Group. Schools and academies will be provided with template documents for consultation and for governing body resolutions. This is to reduce burdens on schools and academies. Schools and academies will not be using separate legal advice.

- Q 50. When will schools be informed about redundancies?



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Reviewing staffing structures is an ongoing responsibility for Headteachers and Governing Bodies and regardless of the set-up of the new MATs this process must continue. For example, if a school has falling roles then the expectation is that staffing needs will be adjusted accordingly and necessary action taken. Also, if staff have been employed on the basis of separate project funding which is coming to an end then action needs to be taken to address this. The new MATs cannot be expected to take on staff who would have been surplus had the MAT not existed. The MAT Development Group will support schools with this work. The MAT project aims to minimise redundancies through natural wastage and through aligning roles to the new structure.

Q 51. How will staff contracts be protected?

Employees are protected when their business transfers to another employer under TUPE. This means that employees of schools and academies will transfer to their new employer (one of the new MATs) with their contracts of employment, holiday entitlement and continuous service. There will be more information available on TUPE as part of the academisation process and transfer of academies to MATs.

Q 52. Will there be new pay scales in the new MATs?

The new MATs may at some point introduce new terms and conditions which would then apply to new staff joining (not those transferred under TUPE) or staff applying for promotion or other change of role. Any change of contract for a member of staff who transferred under TUPE must be negotiated. We are committed to following the Teachers Pay and Conditions document for Teaching Staff and the Green Book for support staff.

Q 53. How do schools in the MAT carry out maintenance, repairs, and capital works?

There are no set proposals for routine maintenance and repairs which are usually funded from Devolved Formula Capital. These will be under discussion as the project evolves. However, for capital works each MAT will receive an annual sum from the DfE's Schools Condition Allocation which will be held at Diocesan level. Projects will be allocated funding on the basis of latest condition data and through prioritisation against MAT criteria.

Q 54. How could the MATs fail and what happens if they do?

Very rarely MATs fail. When this happens it is usually because of serious failures in governance and/or financial mismanagement. If a MAT was to fail then the RSC would intervene, in the same way that it intervenes in failing schools or academies, by removing the Master Funding Agreement and rebrokering the academies into other MATs. We have prioritised compliance and ensuring that the governance structures are robust in the proposed model to mitigate risks. We will also ensure that the recruitment process for key executive posts, the CEO and CFO, is robust and will result in highly skilled and experienced personnel leading our MATs. The appointment of Directors to the Board will also be rigorous and skills based to ensure that they can apply scrutiny to the work of the executive team and hold them to account for the performance of the MATs.

Q 55. How will schools who are not financially sound be managed in the new MAT?

As part of the transition process and alignment to the new MATs the MAT Development Group will be working with schools to address budget issues and a plan to balance the budget will be agreed. Once in the new MATs, the finances of all schools will be closely monitored and support will be available from the CFO.

Q 56. Will schools that are not financially viable be closed?

We do not have plans to close any of our Catholic schools at this point. The MAT Development Group will continue to work with schools in challenging financial circumstances so that plans are in place to address the deficits. Long term financial sustainability will be the responsibility of the new MAT.



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Q 57. Is there a Risk Register in place for the project?

Yes, the MAT Development Group has a risk register for this project. We expect that all schools and academies will have a risk register in place or equivalent document which demonstrates that governors have a clear overview of the risks facing their schools and that they are taking appropriate mitigating actions. We will share with schools any risks identified by the project where action may be required at school level. This will be discussed with schools during the 121 meetings.

Q 58. Will schools keep their PTAs?

PTAs are separate from schools and their funds are not part of the MAT budgets. PTAs are a vital part of school life and we encourage all schools to work with their PTAs to strengthen those links and increase potential for fund raising.

Q 59. Can the MAT Development Group help us set up gift aid schemes?

Yes – please speak with your Project Lead.

Q 60. How is this project being funded?

The project is being funded by a combination of Diocesan resources and the academy conversion grants. We are exploring further sources of funding with the RSC. There are no grants for academy transfers. Individual schools will not be asked to pay the costs of academy conversion or academy transfer.

Q 61. Questions about HSPAT

HSPAT is a multi-academy trust with its own board of directors. The leadership and governance arrangements for HSPAT are determined by their board of directors. However, Trustees and the MAT Development Group are working alongside HSPAT Board to co-ordinate the road maps for the academies currently within HSPAT who are very much part of the overall MAT programme for the Diocese. Headteachers of academies within HSPAT will also have 121 conversations about their roadmaps within the context of HSPAT and with oversight from the HSPAT Board.

Q 62. What happens if we don't want to academise or wish to remain as a stand-alone academy?

We hope that through continued dialogue and an understanding of the benefits of the MAT model for all our schools that Headteachers and Governing Bodies will be persuaded that being part of the Diocesan MATs is a positive step. We welcome the positive discussions that have taken place so far and the dialogue around the questions raised which will help us to address those concerns as we move forward.

We are fortunate in the Diocese of Hallam to have the clarity of direction provided by the Bishop and the ability to respond as a Diocese to act for the Common Good where we may not as individual schools fully realise the risks that doing nothing would create.

We take seriously our duties to safeguard Catholic Education which is why the governance structures of all our VA schools, academies and MATs have the Bishop with overall control of each school through the appointment of Foundation Governors and Foundation Directors.

The document Governance of a Catholic School: A Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities for England & Wales which derives from Canon 803 reminds us that the role of a Foundation Governor or Foundation Director is to:

“Know and implement the bishop’s policies on education, including religious education; represent those policies to the governing body; understand and promote the distinctive nature of Catholic education; act for



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the good of Catholic education as a whole within the diocese, considering not only the interests of the individual school or college, but the interests of other schools and colleges; respond to the needs of the Catholic community as a whole, as represented by the bishop; secure the long-term future of Catholic education; always act in accordance with the mind of the bishop.”

We look forward to continuing to work with all schools to achieve this vision for the benefit of all.

Q 63. What are the accountability arrangements for this project in the Diocese?

The Bishop has issued a letter setting out the intention for all schools in the Diocese which reflects work which has been ongoing since November 2017. The Bishop through the Diocese of Hallam Trustee has set up the MAT Steering Group. The MAT Steering Group has commissioned the MAT Development Group to support the MAT Programme, working alongside the Schools Department.

The MAT Development Group is accountable to the MAT Steering Group. The MAT Development Group consultants are selected for their skills mix, experience of delivering successful large scale MAT projects in other Diocese and in non-faith contexts, their knowledge of DfE and RSC processes and their commitment to Catholic Education.