



HUNSBURY PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Staff & Representatives Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Why are we considering joining a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a group of academy schools who agree to work together, overseen by an overarching charitable trust.

By becoming a MAT we can secure economies of scale, as well as provide more opportunities for staff development and collaborative work.

Why now?

We want to shape and secure the best possible future for the children in our school, as well as those who will join our school in the future. We feel the Orbis Education Trust is the right Trust for us to join so that we can determine, as far as possible, what our formation of primary schools will look like, protecting our unique characteristics, and established vision and ethos.

The direction of travel indicated by the government is such that all schools will be expected to join a MAT or form a MAT in the near future – we want to be in control of this process and choose our direction rather than be dictated to.

What are the benefits of joining a MAT?

In our opinion the benefits are numerous; the key ones are outlined below:

- Optimising pupil outcomes for all member schools.
- Increasing opportunities to improve the life chances of all pupils across the Trust.
- Opportunities for sharing best practice amongst all staff (both teaching and support) across member schools through enhanced continuous professional development and collaboration.
- Enhanced opportunities for professional advancement through membership of a larger organisation, alongside a greater positive influence over staff retention and recruitment.
- Access to more funding.
- Spreading overheads to achieve economies of scale and, potentially, an enhancement of levels of support.
- Enhanced opportunities for income generation.
- Enhanced organisational resilience.
- The opportunity to collaborate with other schools that share the same ethos and values.
- Opportunities for pupils to share enrichment activities.

What are the risks of becoming a MAT?

Some stakeholders may be concerned about the financial arrangements which will be put in place in case these adversely affect our own school, about the degree of independence their school will have in managing



and recruiting staff, in setting a curriculum and about the way that leadership and governance will function within a MAT.

The Trust has a good track record in managing these risks in their respective schools with experienced and knowledgeable staff at senior leadership.

With the upcoming general election, there are also risks relating to the uncertainty of government education policy which means the future for academisation and formation of MATs is unclear. No political party has, however, indicated that they would abolish existing academies or MATs.

Why are we consulting on our proposals?

The views of all stakeholders are of paramount importance to us. We welcome your input to the consultation process.

We are committed to full transparency throughout the process, and this consultation period is a time when we will share information and invite feedback as we move towards a final decision. This Q&A section will be continually updated, and you can send any additional questions and comments to the following contact: academyconsultation@hunsburypark.org

Following consultation, if the proposed MAT is approved, consultation on the transfer of staff to the new Multi Academy Trust will commence.

Why can't we stay as we are?

As a stand-alone academy opportunities for collaborative working, sharing best practice and enrichment are significantly reduced. There are less funding and economies of scale opportunities.

What is the length of the consultation process and who will be involved?

The consultation period will run from 12th January 2024 to 12 pm on 16th February 2024.

We are consulting with:

- staff working at the school and any staff due to be employed at the school from the next academic year
- recognised unions and workplace representatives
- parents/carers of pupils at the school
- pupils at the school
- the local authority
- the wider community

How is the decision made?

Hunsbury Park School will consult with their stakeholders and their views will be considered. Alongside consultation the Due Diligence process will take place. This is the process of investigating an organisation prior to entering into a contract with it. This is to ensure all parties have confidence in the merits of the proposal to join Orbis Education Trust.

What factors will be considered during the due diligence period?

The following aspects will be considered during the due diligence process:

- Finance
- HR
- Buildings
- Educational Standards
- Organisational Structures
- Legal and regulatory compliance
- Commercial
- IT

If we join will we lose our individuality?

We recognise that schools have their own unique identity, and we want to celebrate this. We see this as a key benefit of being part of the Orbis Education Trust and there is no expectation that Hunsbury Park would alter its name or its distinctiveness as a result of our school joining the Trust.

What will happen to the Hunsbury Park governing body?

It will become an Academy (local) Governing Body. It will still maintain authority for many aspects of the school's activity, particularly around teaching and learning, but will have accountability to the MAT Board of Trustees on more long-term strategic matters.

What would the changes mean for existing staff?

Staff employed by the school will be protected by statutory regulations known as the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE).

TUPE operates to ensure that staff working in the school, who have a contract of employment or a similar working relationship with the employer, automatically transfer. They will remain on their existing terms and conditions. These terms and conditions will include those set out in their contracts of employment before the transfer took place and may include those set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and the Conditions of Service for School Teachers in England and Wales (the 'Burgundy Book').

Under TUPE, existing staff become employees of the new employer, and all rights, powers, duties and liabilities connected to the employment relationship then transfer from the old employer to the new employer. Any action taken by the old employer in respect of the employee is treated as having been taken by the new employer.

How will the TUPE process happen?

We are committed to consulting with staff and recognised unions on the TUPE process.

There is a statutory obligation on the current employer to inform representatives of certain matters in writing. These are:

- the fact that the transfer is to take place;
- the date of the transfer and the reasons for it; and
- the legal, economic and social implications of the transfer for any affected employees and the measures which the employer envisages it will, in connection with the transfer, take in relation to any affected employees or, if it envisages that no measures will be so taken.

Will there be a change in the salary scales our school employees are currently on?

Staff will transfer on no less favourable terms and conditions. Any proposed amendments in the future would only be following consultation with staff and unions.

What will be the process for staff progression – performance management? Will there be other opportunities?

It is envisaged the MAT will bring opportunities for staff training and staff progression, and we see this as a major advantage of joining the Orbis Education Trust.

What is the situation regarding teacher and support staff pensions once our school becomes an academy?

Teachers working in a Local Authority maintained school fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). Staff transferring would simply continue their membership of the Scheme. As the employer, Orbis Education Trust will be responsible for remitting contributions to the TPS and for all other administrative responsibilities that fall to employers who employ teachers who are subject to the teachers' pensions regulations.

Orbis Education Trust will also ensure that the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) arrangements stay in place for non-teaching staff. As part of the conversion process, the LGPS scheme's administrators will undertake an actuarial assessment to determine how much Orbis Education Trust will need to contribute and the terms of that contribution. This may be higher than at present. In short, your school's staff will not see any impact on their pensions because of the conversion. The MAT's funding agreement requires it to ensure that all staff employed by it have access to the TPS or the LGPS (as applicable).

What about continuous service?

All previous service at Hunsbury Park Primary School will count as continuous service when a member of staff transfers to Orbis Education Trust.

Would staff be expected to work in the other schools?

No. Whilst staff would not be required to move around the MAT, there may be opportunities for staff to work at other schools within the Trust, or for staff to seek a more challenging role across more than one school, as part of their career development. There may also be occasions when one of the schools in the MAT urgently needs a member of staff for a short period of time. This would have to be agreed upon by all parties. There would also be opportunities for staff to cross-fertilise ideas and share good practice. There is no intent to alter staff contracts or to force them to work at other sites. It is more about sharing and developing expertise.

How will students be affected?

Students will not notice any differences to their daily routine. They will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms, with the same staff. However, through greater opportunities for collaboration, sharing of ideas and resources, we expect that joining Orbis Education Trust will allow us to further develop and provide an exceptional educational experience for students.

Will students be expected to attend lessons at another school?

No, students will continue to be taught at their own school, but greater opportunities will be available to collaborate with enrichment activities.

Would changes be made to the length of the school day and to term dates?

No, we would not seek to make changes to the length of the school day or to term or holiday dates. If this was something that we felt in the future could benefit the students, we would consult with all stakeholders.

Would we have to change our name?

No, you would retain your name and uniform policy.

How much say will individual schools have in their own budgets?

Individual schools are significantly involved in setting their own budgets with assistance from the MAT. Budgets will need to be signed off by the Trust Board, prior to formal submission to the ESFA.

Will all the schools in the MAT have the same policies?

Many policies will be Trust policies. One advantage to each school within the Trust is that policies are managed centrally and this free up leadership time within schools.

There will be some school specific policies that will be retained such as the; Behaviour Policy, Uniform Policy, SEND Policy, Health & Safety Policy amongst others will remain the responsibility of the school itself.

What will be the process should our school's results drop, or an Ofsted report identifies areas for improvement?

The MAT is responsible for overall school performance and will continually monitor standards, aiming to intervene before an Ofsted inspection if students were not making the required progress.

Orbis would support the school's action plan to improve outcomes for students and broker external support, if required. Equally, this is a two-way process and we would expect schools to notify the MAT of any issues. The MAT would assist in the process to ensure that areas for developments listed in an Ofsted report and section 48 report are followed up.

Will admissions arrangements change?

The Trustees would hold overall responsibility for Admissions and would consult with the LGB and School leadership in this regard.

Who is Orbis accountable to?

We are accountable to the Secretary of State. As a company limited by guarantee, we must prepare and file an independently audited annual report and accounts with Companies House.

How large could Orbis become?

The intention is that Orbis remains a local Trust, supporting schools in our area. Any growth will be carefully managed and any schools wishing to join in the future will be considered thoroughly. Above all else, alignment between culture, ethos and values will be the non-negotiable factor.

How are schools funded in a MAT?

Funding would still come to the school via the Department for Education. The school would still be responsible for their own budget. The school would pay a 'top slice' to the MAT to cover shared costs.

How will SEN funding work?

Special educational needs remain the responsibility of the Local Authority, so the LA is obliged to deliver the same levels of support to academies as they do to Local Authority maintained schools. This includes access to high tariff needs funding as well as access to specialist provision via the same systems and procedures that maintained schools are subject to.

Who makes the final decision on whether each school joins the MAT?

The Members/Governing Bodies of the school will make the final decision.

Would other schools join the group and how would the decision be made to do this?

Any decision on additional schools joining our group would be made by the Board of Trustees. Any school that joins us moving forward would be expected to abide by our vision, ethos, and governance structure. They would also be required to contribute to and learn from the other schools within the group.

Would a sponsor be appointed to oversee the schools now or in the future?

No, this is a school-led process and we have existing expertise within our group to continue building on the journey that our schools are on. Sponsors have been traditionally used where a school is deemed to be in need of making rapid improvement and is in difficulty.

What would be the timescale and process for conversion?

The DfE estimates that it usually takes between 4-5 months for a school to convert to a MAT. Conversion can take place at any time during the year on the 1st of a month.

Can the school withdraw from the MAT?

Schools are able to withdraw right up to the point that they sign the Funding Agreement. Once this is signed there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy, and the termination process would require a long notice period.

How can I find out more?

There is more information about MATs and academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

How can I make representations and when is the closing date?

The closing date for representations to be made is 12pm on 16th February 2024.

Representations can be sent to: Academyconsultation@hunsburypark.org