

## Academy Conversion Frequently Asked Questions

### Pool Hayes Primary School

#### Frequently Asked Questions – Academy Status

Our school is consulting with our parents, carers, students, staff, trade unions and the local community on the proposals to convert to 'Academy' school status and join a multi academy trust (MAT) along with likeminded schools.

To learn more about what this will mean for you, your child and the wider community, we have provided over the next few pages, some frequently asked questions and answers about Academies.

The closing date for responses is **5pm Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2025** and details of how to respond are included in the consultation letter and the end of these FAQs.

#### What is an academy?

Academies are publicly funded, independent schools, free from local authority control. Funding is received directly from the Department for Education, instead of the Local Authority, giving the school more control over its spending and decision making.

Originally, underperforming schools were turned into academies to help the school improve rapidly, however in 2010 the Government extended the opportunity to convert to academy status to all schools that are successful and performing well, and as a result, there are now over 6,000 academies in the country.

An Academy Trust is a charitable trust run by a board of trustees. Academies are expected to work with and support other schools, including lower-performing schools.

#### So, what is different?

Academy Trusts have additional responsibilities and freedoms that 'maintained' schools do not enjoy. These include:

- Freedom from Local Authority control;
- Greater control over school budgets;
- Access to dedicated capital funding
- Freedom from following the National Curriculum;
- Ability to change length of term and school days

#### Why are the Governing Body and Leadership Team of the school considering Academy status?

The Government signalled their desire to see all schools move to academy status in time, to enjoy greater freedom and flexibility in how they can deliver education. Like many other schools both locally and nationally, our school has looked at the benefits and freedoms Academy status can bring and feel it is something we should explore.

#### Why are we joining Matrix Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

Effective collaboration can benefit everyone. Through the sharing of excellent practice, shared resources and training opportunities and future economies of scale we can further improve the provision for our learners.

- Improved teaching and learning for our pupils, because:
  - Teaching expertise and resources can be shared across the trust
  - There will be more training opportunities for our staff
- Greater freedom in deciding how to spend government funding

- The opportunity to collaborate
  - So we can have more or better extra-curricular activities
- Greater financial efficiency
  - By procuring goods and services at a larger scale across the trust
  - By sharing staff, including specialist staff who work centrally for the trust, like a school improvement team or pastoral team

### **Which other schools are part of Matrix MAT?**

Matrix Multi Academy Trust currently includes the following schools:

- Barr Beacon School
- Bloxwich Academy
- Dame Elizabeth Cadbury School
- Etone College
- Smestow Academy
- Turves Green Boys' School
- Wednesfield Academy
- Elmwood School

### **A message from Matrix CEO Lynsey Draycott:**

“Collaboration is one of our five trust values, at the heart of everything we do. It is our firm belief that schools are stronger together. Each school we have taken into our trust family has brought something new to Matrix, contributing to realising our vision of Education Without Exception.

“We would welcome the opportunity to learn from Pool Hayes Primary in the same way that Pool Hayes Primary would expect to learn from schools currently in our trust.

“For instance, all of our schools have a unique curriculum, tailored to the needs of their pupils. Pool Hayes has made ambitious curriculum choices, including teaching Latin, which provides a strong foundation for all romance languages, whatever secondary school Pool Hayes pupils progress to. We seek to learn from the specific curriculum expertise of Pool Hayes Primary. Your use of outdoor spaces is also particularly innovative and something we could seek to emulate at our other schools. Not only do we envision Pool Hayes Primary enhancing the provision of our current primary school, but we always say secondary has a lot to learn from primary; our secondaries would no doubt benefit from your expertise too.

“Regarding teaching and learning, we know that Pool Hayes has some fantastic classroom practitioners. These teachers and support staff are well versed in using cues to promote pupil participation and thinking. We are currently expanding our use of cueing across our schools, using some of the same practices already embedded at Pool Hayes Primary. Having a school in our trust who are already some way ahead of us on this journey would be highly beneficial.

“Education Without Exception means every child having an exceptional education, wherever they are from and whichever of our schools they attend. It means everyone thriving in a caring and collaborative culture, to become confident, successful and resilient individuals. We know Pool Hayes already do so much to create this kind of culture and we would love to have you join our family.”

## **How will the Governance Model for the MAT and our School operate?**

Matrix has a highly skilled Board of Trustees, approved by the Department for Education. They will ensure that the needs of each school are monitored closely. Our school will have its own dedicated Parent Advisory Forum which will help Pool Hayes Primary leaders shape our school's future.

The MAT has a very small group of Members who are named for legal purposes but don't have a great deal to do with the daily running of the schools. The MAT Board of Trustees has overall responsibility and accountability in law for the performance, site and overall running of the Trust and each of the schools.

## **What about working with other schools?**

Our school requires strong partnerships with other local schools. We are therefore very interested in models that allow us to build on these partnerships through academy status. For this reason, we are seeking to join a multi academy trust.

This will allow us to continue with the partnerships we already have, provide better opportunities for our learners and save money by benefitting from economies of scale. We shall continue to build and strengthen our existing school partnerships with schools outside the proposed MAT.

## **What do the Members do?**

The standard company structure for multi-academy trusts is five members who are similar to shareholders in a company, there is then also a Board of Trustees who are responsible for the strategic running of the trust. The Members sign the company documents for the company (which set out its core purpose, i.e. provision of education etc.), they also have the power to appoint the Trustees and amend the company documents. The Members should attend one annual general meeting each year and sign off the audited company accounts. The chairperson of the Board of Trustees is also a member of the company to ensure a link between the two layers.

## **Role and basis for appointment of Trustees**

The core governance functions of the Multi-Academy Trust (i.e. setting the direction of the Trust, holding the CEO and head teachers to account and ensuring sound use of finances) are carried out by the multi-academy trust Board of Trustees.

Within Matrix Academy Trust, Trustees have been appointed on the basis of the skills they can bring to the Trust Board, as it is essential that this is made up of skilled individuals to ensure the success, both academically and financially, of the trust and the best outcomes for the learners within the trust.

## **Legal protections of our unique school character**

We are committed to ensuring each school's own unique ethos and character is protected, i.e. that the community schools cannot be turned into church schools and vice versa. The Academy Trust company documents make it clear that the MAT Board of Trustees must protect the individual ethos of any school within the MAT and this is the legal responsibility of all Trustees.

The local governing bodies, set up for each of the schools within the MAT, maintain their existing representation and are tasked with protecting the individual ethos of the school. Parents are elected to these local governing bodies and so maintain an input into the governance of their school. However, as mentioned above it will also be the responsibility of the MAT Board of Trustees to ensure it protects the individual ethos of each school within the MAT in accordance with the company documents.

## **Does it mean more money?**

Academies are funded in a similar way to other schools. However, becoming an academy would open up additional capital funding opportunities for us to explore. Joining a MAT will allow us to achieve

savings through the sharing of services and resources across the academies within the MAT. The best value protocols currently in place in our schools will be further developed in order to improve the quality of provision at a much more competitive cost. Economies of scale will be sought.

### **Will admissions arrangements change?**

The governing body would remain responsible for setting the admissions arrangements for our school. The Local Authority would continue to co-ordinate admissions.

It should be stressed however, that the admissions criteria must have regard to the national Admissions Code of Practice.

### **When would the school change to become an Academy?**

Schools can change to Academy status within 3-4 months of consulting with families. Following the decision from our Governing Body we would aim to become an academy and join Matrix MAT on from Easter 2026.

### **What does it mean for staff?**

All staff would transfer their employment under TUPE legislation from their current employer, to Matrix Multi Academy Trust. We are also consulting with our staff and trade unions to seek their views.

### **How will it affect my child's education?**

The conversion to academy status will not mean any changes to your child's education, other than it will allow our Head Teacher more flexibility around protecting our successful curriculum and ensuring that we have high quality support services for all our children. We will be free to deliver and/or commission our own support for children with additional and special educational needs.

### **What will happen to the uniform?**

There will be no change to uniform. Parents would not be expected to buy new uniform at the time of conversion.

### **Will the name of the school change?**

We do not intend to change the name of our school and we are strongly committed to retaining the identity of our school within the Multi Academy Trust.

### **Will the times of the school day and holidays change?**

We have no plans to change the times of the school day or the terms dates. Any future changes would be subject to extensive consultation with parents and carers.

### **Are academies still accountable for their performance and are performance targets set?**

Like all schools, academies are in the first instance accountable to the learners they serve and their respective parents / carers. Academies still have to meet government performance targets concerning progress of all children across all key stages, and will still be inspected by Ofsted. Although Academies can innovate and change the curriculum, they still must ensure students leave having achieved their full potential across a broad and balanced range of subjects.

### **What services would remain under the control of the Local Authority?**

The Local Authority would still have responsibility for a number of services including:

- Home to school transport
- Assessing learners' needs (SEN)
- Coordinating school admissions
- Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

## **What are the potential benefits for our school in joining Matrix MAT?**

The main benefits of academy status include:

- Ensuring all learners make better than expected progress, raising their aspirations and preparing them to be successful in a modern world.
- Staying in control of our own destiny and preserving the unique identity of our school within the MAT.
- The MAT model provides for a more formalised approach for our schools, with the opportunity to secure more tangible benefits as a result of being a single employer etc.
- Ability to access capital funding via the Academy Condition Improvement Fund, which is only available to academies.
- Removal of the requirement to pay a 10% contribution for capital projects.
- Removal of the requirement to follow the National Curriculum allows for greater flexibility and creativity when planning the school curriculum.
- In joining a MAT, we are responding to the Government's policy for providing school-to-school support.
- In joining a MAT, we are better able to respond to the budget pressures all schools are facing and will continue to face due to cost pressures exceeding levels of income, by securing economies of scale.
- The opportunity to offer more formalised support to other schools will provide professional development opportunities for staff, which will assist with the retention of high quality staff and succession planning.
- We will be better able to respond to any future reduction in LA services by developing our own capacity to meet the needs of our learners, or commission our own specialist support services e.g. to support learners with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).
- We may make a saving on our current insurance costs by joining the Academy Risk Protection Scheme.

## **What changes will academy status bring?**

- Some additional financial and legal responsibilities outlined in the Academies Financial Handbook, which will mainly fall on the Academy Trust Board as the accountable body.
- Matrix Multi Academy Trust would employ our staff.
- Matrix Multi Academy Trust would enter into a 125-year lease for the land currently owned by the Local Authority. We already have responsibility for the cost of maintaining the land and buildings.

## **Have your say**

- Complete the response form at <https://www.poolhayesprimary.co.uk/academy-conversion-consultation.html>
- Attend a drop-in session to speak to Matrix Academy Trust at PHP on October the 15<sup>th</sup> at either 8:45am or 2pm
- Wider information on the Academies programme is available on the Department for Education website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academy-conversion-process>