

# Questions and answers from the staff consultation

**Q) The Academy Trust as employers is new. We have concerns as we are currently employed by the Local Authority.**

A) Not true – all staff are employed by the Governing Body of Tavistock College as a foundation school. This happened when we converted from a maintained school to a Trust school.

**Q) How is the Academy Board chosen?**

A) We will use the expertise within the current Governing Body and may draw on the wider community. We will adopt the Co-operative Articles of Association (currently draft and with the DFE).

**Q) Is the Academy Board paid?**

A) No. This is forbidden for all MATs (although expenses will be paid).

**Q) Could resources be taken from schools within the MAT to help others?**

A) Yes, but not to the detriment of the school giving the resources.

**Q) If successful, do Ofsted leave you alone?**

A) Ofsted inspects all schools, regardless of status. Usually converter academies are not inspected in the first 12 months following conversion. This would not apply if a risk assessment shows there is a drop in results (below floor targets) or a serious safeguarding concern.

**Q) Is support for SEND the same?**

A) Yes, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to provide for all children with SEND and LAC (Looked After Children).

**Q) Calendar dates – will they change or remain the same? Can they be synced with local authority term dates?**

A) We have published our next two academic years. However, currently term dates cannot be synced as there is variation between local authorities, for example Plymouth may be different to Devon as it stands at the moment.

**Q) What Type of academy are we seeking to become?**

A) A multi academy trust (MAT) with a view to attract other co-operative schools into the MAT. These could be secondary or primary schools.

**Q) What is the 45 minute rule about?**

A) It was born out of a need to travel to other MAT schools in a lunch time, therefore MAT schools could only partner with other schools that were 45 Minutes away. However this 45 minute rule is not from the main MAT school but the nearest school involved in that MAT.

**Q) Would it affect Sixth Form entry requirements or our ability to run courses?**

A) No, however it is important to remember that post-16 provision are all under pressure due to financial constraints being placed upon them.

**Q) What is the difference between being a partnered MAT school or being sponsored?**

A) If we were a partnered MAT school we would control our staffing, budgets, curriculum, land and assets. If we were being sponsored we would lose such controls. However, it is the Academy Trust that has this new responsibility, but much is delegated to the governing bodies (called 'local governing bodies' in the MAT arrangements) of the schools in the MAT.

**Q) Are there other schools actively seeking to sponsor us / have us in their MAT?**

A) Not at present as we are in strong position and do not fall into the risk categories.

**Q) Are our primary feeder school happy about this? Have they been consulted? Are they possible partner schools?**

A) Co-operative trust schools would be able to apply to join the MAT. Primary schools are aware. Sarah has met with the Headteachers of the Tavistock Co-operative Learning Trust.

**Q) Is there a time limit to forming a multi school MAT?**

A) No there is no limit (yet). The DfE need to be convinced we have viable possibilities for partnering with other schools. The RSC cannot insist that we take a particular school, maybe with a different foundation in to the MAT as they would need to be a co-operative school. There is a 45 minute travelling time rule between schools in a MAT.

**Q) Could staff be made to change schools to other schools in the MAT?**

A) The sharing of resources, including human resources, is a real opportunity for schools in MATs. Often this means leadership development as well as other kinds of support. Forced arrangements are not anticipated.

**Q) Do we know if we are under danger of being sponsored by other schools?**

A) We are not in danger. If we were in special measures it would be likely that we would be a sponsored academy. Once the funding agreement has been signed the school closes and reopens as an academy.

**Q) As a parent and a teacher I do not want this school to turn in to an exam factory like other schools have done since they have converted. Will the priorities change?**

A) This has nothing to do with converting to an academy. The quality of leadership in a school and the quality of teaching and learning drives this agenda.

**Q) Does a MAT mean different heads or one person in charge?**

A) Not necessarily. All MATs have an executive headteacher or CEO. That person is usually the existing headteacher in one of the schools in the MAT.

**Q) Where does the extra income come from to pay for an executive head?**

A) There is no requirement to pay the Executive headteacher any more money

**Q) Will new board of governors positions become available if some move up to the academy trust board?**

A) Possibly. This depends on how the Academy Trust sets up local governing body arrangements.

**Q) Is there a time period where pay and conditions cannot be changed?**

A) Technically no, but there are no plans to work outside current agreements. It would not be in the best interests of Tavistock College to make changes to these which make it less attractive to work here.

**Q) Can we have a guarantee that this is an ethical conversion?**

A) Yes it is guaranteed. The co-operative identity is formalised in the Articles of Association (legal contract with the DfE). The governing body of Tavistock College voted unanimously to convert to a co-operative MAT. This means the principles and values of the International Co-operative Alliance will be fostered and underpin decisions and actions, as they currently do.

**Q) How much involvement would each school have in the MAT? Would there be a dominant school?**

A) Schools will share the co-operative values and mutually support each other. Such support would be decided upon by the schools. It is different from being a "sponsored" academy, in which a school could lose some of the power to control itself and make decisions.

**Q) What is the nature of support and cooperation between schools?**

A) Schools can decide upon this but it could be about sharing expertise, facilities and resources, through economy of scale.

**Q) Would becoming an Academy effect a teacher's ability to source training beyond the MAT, group of schools?**

A) No, training arrangements would remain the same, sometimes sourced from colleagues and sometimes from outside providers, depending on need.

**Q) Is there a geographical requirement or rule for organising a MAT?**

A) The driving motivation to link together will be because schools share cooperative values. It is entirely possible that existing Local Authority or county boundaries could be crossed, however, no school in a MAT can be more than a 45

minute drive from at least one other school. In this way, a MAT, can cover a wide area as schools are linked in a chain with each 45 minutes from the other.

**Q) Are term times likely to change?**

A) Such decisions are not related to whether the school is an Academy or not.

**Q) How long does TUPE last?**

A) This is decided with consultation following the application for Academy Order. However, the motivation to become an Academy is by no means to introduce any change in pay and conditions.

**Q) How can staff contact Governors to ask questions?**

A) Contact can be made by sending an E mail to Sarah Jones who will pass on any requests.

**Q) What happens to our pensions?**

A) You will transfer over, no changes in the first instance. If staff have opted out, they will need to opt out again after transfer.

**Q) Will conditions of employment change?**

A) There will be no changes at the time of conversion. There are no plans in place at this time to make changes in the future.

**Q) Is there a length of time for / to which pay and conditions will apply?**

A) No intentions to impose one. The Governing Body took the decision to seek the order only once they were satisfied that all matters would be held in a status quo. TUPE equates to 'as is' transfer. It is transparent. Of course external forces could change employment circumstances (political etc) but the governing body has no intentions to initiate changes to anything.

**Q) Can the primary schools join?**

A) Yes, can be a mix of secondary and primary schools but they would have to be co-operative schools.