

Proposal and frequently asked questions about forming a Multi-Academy Trust

What is being proposed?

The Governing Body of Cottingham High School is considering a proposal to form a formal partnership, known as a MAT, with Wolfreton School and Sixth Form College, Hessle High School and Peshurst Primary School. This new partnership will be known as 'The Consortium Academy Trust' and will be formed using the existing Hessle Community Trust MAT.

What is an academy?

Academies are state schools which receive their funding directly from the Department for Education and not the Local Authority. Cottingham High School is already an academy, after converting in March 2011.

Why is Cottingham considering joining a Multi-Academy Trust?

Although there are still a large number of standalone academies, this model is not considered to be the most effective. The Department for Education prefers groups of academies to work together through a formal partnership. This this is considered the most efficient model since it pools funding and expertise, which can then be used in a cost-effective manner for the benefit of all students.

Multi-Academy Trusts also provide a framework that enables schools within the partnership to support each other and drive up educational standards.

What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A **multi-academy trust** (MAT) is a single entity established to undertake a strategic collaboration to improve and maintain high educational standards across a number of schools. A group of schools form a single MAT, which has overarching responsibility for their governance through the Board of Trustees/Directors, who are appointed to govern the MAT and delegate responsibilities to Local Governing Bodies.

What are the benefits?

Schools are being encouraged to enter into Multi-Academy Trusts and it is important for all four schools to ensure they have control over whom they collaborate with, to ensure that the unique qualities and traditions of all the schools are maintained.

All four schools have strong leadership and a solid academic record across a number of years. The three secondary schools also have a long history of collaborative working at sixth form level. This partnership, which has been in existence for over 25 years and is known as 'The Consortium', has ensured that post 16 students from all three schools have access to a broad, balanced and diverse curriculum offer that meets their needs and future aspirations. The success of The Consortium over a long period provides an excellent platform on which to grow, through a more formal structure.

This proposed collaboration will bring significant additional benefits as the schools work together more closely. The founding schools will each bring their own separate and strong identities, ethos and values to the partnership, allowing each to learn from the others.

Benefits include:

- sharing best practice in teaching, learning and assessment, leading to improved outcomes for all students
- joint training and development of staff at all levels that will lead to a richer experience for staff and students
- developing and challenging leadership and retaining talented staff in the trust
- sharing expertise in HR, finance and estates, allowing schools to focus rigorously on teaching and learning and student support.

What are the arguments against becoming an academy and joining a MAT?

When a school joins a MAT, it does mean that its Governing Body will lose some control over the future development of the academy. Joining a MAT should be seen as a long-term commitment between schools and the governance arrangements need to ensure that effective schools within the MAT retain decision making powers.

In the proposed MAT, although the Board of Trustees/Directors retains ultimate accountability for each academy, it is intended that decision-making powers are delegated to Local Governing Bodies for the day to day running of each school. This will be detailed through a document known as the **Scheme of Delegation**.

Will the individual schools still have their own governors?

Yes. The role of **Local Governing Bodies** (LGB) is seen as central to the vision and ethos of the MAT. Each school will therefore retain governors and membership will continue to include parents, staff and members of the local community.

In the proposed MAT, all schools will retain their individual budget allocations and the LGB will have responsibility for the oversight of their school.

Will individual schools maintain their own identities/values?

It is recognised that each of the schools in the proposed MAT has its own unique identity which is based on its history, place in the community and influenced by the students who attend. It is seen as vital that this is maintained by all four schools and each school will keep its own name, logo, website and uniform. There are no plans to change the school day or the school year. Students and parents should notice very little change. A MAT website will be developed in the future, but this will be linked to individual school websites and will mainly contain the required regulatory and legal documentation.

One of the main aims of the MAT is to improve student outcomes in all schools but this will not be achieved if individual schools lose their own identity, customs or values.

Will there be any changes to the curriculum?

All schools are currently implementing the National Curriculum changes that have been introduced by the Department for Education and this includes the examination reforms. Any further changes will be decided by the Local Governing Body and will be based on student choice and need in a particular school.

Will there be any changes made to admissions or catchment areas?

There are no plans to change catchment areas and the admission procedure will continue to be managed by the Local Authority.

Will there be any change to the school uniform?

No, Cottingham High School will keep its logo, colour scheme and uniform.

Will there be any change to the funding my child's school receives?

Each school will continue to receive funding based on pupil numbers, pupil need and location. This money can only be used by the school where the child is based and the Trust Board is responsible for ensuring that the funds are used effectively and appropriately. It must ensure that there are robust financial operating procedures and that these are adhered to throughout the Trust. The Local Governing Body will set the school budget.

Will my child's teacher change?

There are no planned changes made to the allocation of teaching staff in an individual school as a result of the school joining the MAT, but it is inevitable that some staff will continue to seek other opportunities, either within or outside of the MAT. It is anticipated, however, that the MAT will be able to enhance professional development opportunities for all staff as a consequence of its size and this should allow staff to continue their career within the Trust.

Will there be any staffing changes?

Staff will be employed by the Trust and existing staff will transfer from the Cottingham Trust through the TUPE process. It is not expected that there will be any job losses as a consequence of this process. The intention is that staff will transfer to the Trust on their current terms and conditions. Consultation will take place with staff and recognised trade unions to address any concerns that may be raised.

Will there be any changes to the Leadership Team at Cottingham High School?

There will be no change to the substantive Leadership Teams of any of the schools. Scott Ratheram will remain as Headteacher at Cottingham High School. However, Dave McCready, the Head at Wolfreton has been identified as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the proposed MAT and will take on this role 2 days per week. He will remain as Headteacher of Wolfreton supported by Susanne Kukuc, who will be responsible for the day to day running of the school.

What consultation will there be?

As Cottingham is already an academy, there will be very little difference seen by students, parents or staff. However, the decision to join a Multi-Academy Trust is an important one for the school and we want to provide all parties associated with the school have the opportunity to engage in the process.

To facilitate this there will be a consultation period which will run from now until 24 February 2017 and during this time consultation will take place with students, staff and parents/carers.

There will be an opportunity for all interested parties to engage in consultation about the proposed creation of the Consortium Academy Trust either by writing directly to the school, or by emailing the school on the dedicated email address of consultation@cottinghamhigh.net during this consultation period.

If there are any questions that remain un-answered then there will also be an opportunity to come into the school and meet informally with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors on the evening of Wednesday 8 February 2017 at 6.30pm.

Who will make the decision?

Following the consultation period, the Governing Body of Cottingham High School will meet on Thursday 9 March 2017 to make the final decision whether to convert to a MAT, although it is the responsibility of the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Department for Education to decide which schools are eligible to work together within a Multi-Academy Trust. The final approval can then only be given by the Secretary of State.

If the Governors decide to convert to a MAT and the Regional Schools Commissioner supports the application, then the school would seek to convert to a MAT within the Consortium Academy Trust no earlier than 1 June 2017 and by 1 September 2017 at the latest.



Scott Ratheram
Headteacher



Prof John Greenman
Chair of Governors