

The Severn Federation of Schools

'Learning together, with minds that think and hearts that care'



Lydney and Aylburton C of E Primary Schools

Trust, Friendship, Respect, Forgiveness, Courage, Truthfulness

Background

The Governing Body has been considering the Federation's future in a fast changing and increasingly challenging educational landscape. Our priority is to enable our schools to continue to provide an excellent education for our children while protecting the Federation's role at the heart of our communities and retaining its unique qualities and strengths.

We believe forming a multi academy trust will give the Federation stability in the current educational climate and will allow us to benefit from longer term opportunities previously afforded to us through the Teaching School and short-term partnership arrangements.

Consultation

We are now seeking the views of our parents, carers, and the wider school community. Due to the current restrictions we are not holding in person meetings, but you are welcome to submit your thoughts to the Executive Headteacher of the Chair of Governors by 21st July.

Below we set out the answers to some frequently asked questions which we have prepared to help answer some of the questions we anticipate you may have.

FAQs

What is a multi-academy trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a group of academy schools overseen by a charitable trust, and governed by a board of trustees. Rather than being financed by the local authority, a MAT is directly funded by, and accountable to, the Department for Education. While the schools that make up the trust are still firmly part of their community, the trust is there to support the schools and help them work together for the benefit of all children.

Why are schools grouped in a Multi-Academy Trust?

Grouping schools within a multi-academy trust affects the quality of education we can provide for your child in a beneficial way. Improved learning outcomes are behind everything we do. The MAT provides collaboration opportunities for pupils and staff and an efficient Central Team and effective Executive Team to provide challenge and support.

What other benefits are there to a multi-academy trust?

A significant benefit of becoming a MAT is the ability to collaborate and share expertise across the Trust.

Children can benefit from a wide range of specialist staff; a particular feature of the trust is that it employs many qualified and experienced teachers who share expertise across the Trust. This allows us to deliver both a broad curriculum and a range of enriched extra-curricular activities to children across all the schools.

These benefits will develop further as the trust grows.

Do The Severn Federation Academies have to follow the national curriculum?

Although academies are not required to follow the national curriculum, The Severn Federation Academy Trust fulfil all the requirements of the national curriculum. The Trust provide a curriculum which is, relevant, exciting and dynamic way and tailored to each local setting.

Are the schools still inspected by Ofsted?

Yes, academies are still subject to Ofsted inspections.

Do you have to be a Church of England school to join the Trust?

No, The Severn Federation Academy Trust is a mixed MAT which enable non-faith schools to join. However, schools would need to engage with the Trust Christian distinctiveness.

Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?

No, there is no intention for any school becoming part of the Severn Federation Academy Trust to change their uniform, name or logo. A school's individual identity and place within the local community is incredibly important.

How are the children affected?

In many ways the children will not notice any immediate difference. They will be in the same uniform, in the same school in the same classrooms. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the pupil experience.

Does becoming an academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?

No, academies must ensure that they continue to be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community. We will continue to work with other schools locally and from further afield. Our links with the West Gloucestershire School Partnership, GLOW Maths Hub, Mangotsfield English Hub and the Teaching School Association will continue and strengthen. The work as lead school in the Forest of Dean TSA and as the lead in the School Direct Initial Teacher Training program will continue, providing outstanding CPD opportunities to all staff across the Trust.

Will we get more funding as an academy?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. They also receive additional funding in the form of the Education Services Grant to cover the services that are no longer provided for them by County Council and to cover the costs of academy status.

How will the money raised by the Parents/ fundraising be used?

Each school will continue to have its own autonomous mechanism for fundraising, although they will be free to collaborate if they wish. The money raised by each school's fundraising efforts will only be used for its own school and will continue to be independent of the school, raising money for agreed resources or projects that have been asked for by the schools leadership.

Will the term dates change?

All schools have the ability to set their own term dates. We currently work with our network schools and the local high school to try and provide term dates that suit both the needs of our children and parents/carers. There is no intention to alter the current arrangements.

Will our responsibilities in relation to SEND and exclusions change?

No, responsibilities as part of The Severn Federation Academy Trust in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

Can a child with a statement nominate an academy as their school of choice?

Yes, these arrangements and related processes must at all times comply with the School Admissions Code.

How will joining a MAT affect staff?

Conversations have taken place between the Senior Leadership Teams and staff within the Trust and Governors have discussed in detail the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a Trust and sponsoring another school. Teaching staff would benefit from having greater opportunities for career developments and training. Members of staff could choose to work in different members schools to support school improvement or as career development opportunities.

Will staff levels change?

Moving to Academy status will not dictate the number or make-up of staff. Decisions on staffing depend on need as well as the resources available. The only exception might be an increase to 'front office' type staff (particularly in finance, or areas previously undertaken by the local authority) that might be needed to help manage increased workloads with the increased responsibility.

Is there a hierarchy of funding within the MAT?

No. Trustees have an obligation to act in the best interest of the Trust as a whole and therefore in the best interests of all schools within the Trust. There must be due regard to the funding needs and allocations for each individual school.

Could you see further additional schools joining the MAT?

It is hoped that over time the Trust can share its expertise more widely and work collaboratively to benefit all in the Trust. If the opportunity to grow the Trust is in the best interests of those involved, then the Trust members and Trustees would consider this on a case-by-case basis.

What are the implications of not forming a MAT?

There is a direction of travel within UK education which indicates a large growth in the number of Multi Academy Trusts. Currently schools have a free choice in the selection of working with a selected MAT or collaborating with other schools to form a new MAT. However, in the future, schools who have not joined a MAT on a voluntary basis could be directed to join another Trust, not of their own free choice. We thought it far better to establish a new MAT which understands and meets the needs of our communities.

Do the large schools have larger voting rights when it comes to decision making?

MATs do not operate on a one vote one school principle. The Trust has a board of Trustees which have the responsibility of running all the schools within the MAT, in relation to the financial position, operational management and the risk management of the organisation. The day to day running of the school is carried out by the relevant headteacher. A 'local governing body' known as the 'school experience committee' would be set up for each school which would have a focus on educational standards and outcomes.

What are the estimated costs of conversion?

We don't yet know this for certain but the DfE pays a flat-rate grant of £25,000 to a school after an Academy Order has been issued and this is expected to more than meet the costs of conversion. In exceptional circumstances support above this level may be agreed. To reduce potential legal costs the DfE has produced model legal documentation.
