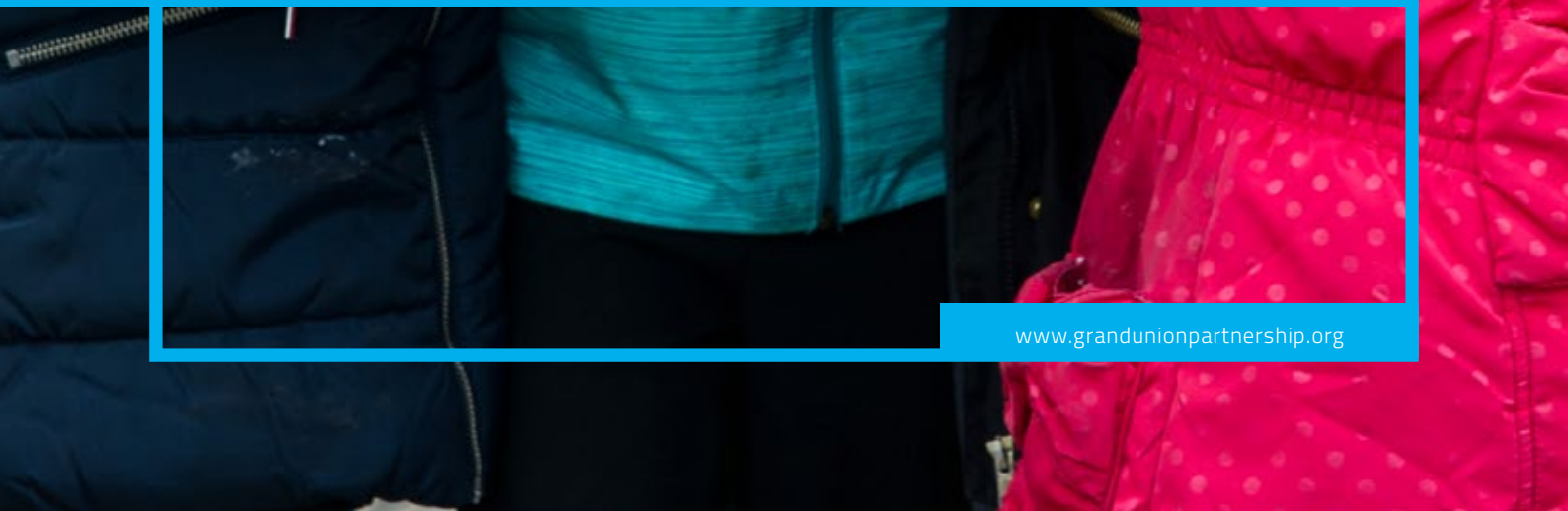




**TOGETHER WE MAKE
THE DIFFERENCE**



Introduction

The Grand Union Partnership was established in September 2017 with the aim of joining schools together with the same values, for the benefit of all children within the trust.

The trust is a response to wanting to create partnerships and build a strong community of schools that will support each other in the current and future educational landscapes.

The trustees believe that creating a local group of schools would help build the capacity to promote high quality teaching and learning and enhance the experiences we can provide to children.

The trust also wants to work with other partners, including the Local Authority, to provide the best education for children and provide them with the best chances to move on to their next stage of learning.

We are also working to achieve economies of scale so as much money as possible goes back into the children of the schools within the trust.

We are excited about the journey we have begun and look forward to combining the skills of different schools for the benefit of all.

Being a new trust is an exciting opportunity and we are already seeing the benefits for children and staff alike. Initially we have seen improvements in developing a new curriculum across the trust, monitoring strategies and using data across the trust to ensure funding goes to the right group of children. We are constantly monitoring the improvements from our starting points and have set challenging improvements for the future.

However we know this is a growing trust and are looking for schools that want to be involved in developing with us into the future and be excited about the potential of the challenges ahead.

We hope this brochure gives you a flavour of where the trust is heading and we would welcome the chance to come and talk to your school if you feel this is something you would like to explore more.



"The trustees believe that creating a local group of schools would help build the capacity to promote high quality teaching and learning and enhance the experiences we can provide to children."

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is the structure that allows more than one academy to work together under an academy trust. It has one overall board of directors which runs the trust, with each academy having its own local governing body.

The MAT gives us the chance to share knowledge and teaching and learning between schools. It gives the schools within the trust the opportunity to make collective decisions about contracts with strategic partners thereby releasing more money for teaching and learning.

What is an Academy?

An Academy is an independent state school, funded directly from central government rather than through the Local Authority. A charitable company limited by guarantee (the Academy Trust) is responsible for the academy, and the Academy Trust signs the Funding Agreement (the contract) with the Secretary of State as part of the establishment of the academy.



Visions & Aims



*Children will
always come first.*

The Grand Union Partnership wants those willing to dare and those daring enough to do. Education is an exciting adventure, but is also a challenge. Every great success has been achieved by those who are willing to dare and every school has set backs.

Learning within our MAT requires ambition, integrity, audacity, and the will to succeed.

It requires a drive to be different. It is escaping from old ideas and patterns and breaking the barriers of accepted ways of doing things, involving a systematic pursuit to plunge, to speculate, to inquire, to imagine, to doubt and to explore.

It requires a healthy impatience, unencumbered by standard procedures and undissipated by the bonds of custom and restraint. Eccentric experimentation and radical departure are the rule. The one who learns is willing to forge the unknown and place new ideas in confrontation with the old. It is an adventurous journey. It takes a spirit which welcomes nonconformity, filled with zeal, an exuberance, and an ardour for the unexplored. The travel is worthy of the effort.

Failure is not final or fatal when learning, but not to make the attempt is the greatest failure. The one who is unafraid of making mistakes, willing to take the calculated risk and act on the belief in his or her own ideas will make the biggest impact on children.

The Grand Union Partnership will need fortitude and the resolution of disciplined enthusiasm. It develops from within and is rooted in a strong mental and moral fibre. Its partnerships will toughen the spirit. It requires the strength to endure the burden and rigours of the unknown and the heart to expand new horizons and extend new frontiers.

The Grand Union Partnership requires an abhorrence for everything that is dull, motionless and risk-free. There must be no tolerance of a curriculum that is rigid or the fear of attempting the bold and the new. Schools should throw themselves into the partnership, take the unconventional position, and give their heart and spirit to the journey, the surprise, the fear, and the exhilaration of unexplored learning.





We are **Responsive** to the context of each academy and its particular needs and adapt our strategies as circumstances change

We are **Resilient** in persevering with improvement despite challenges and set backs

We are **Respectful** of the identity and character of individual academies and of the school's strengths, as well as understanding where they need to make improvements

We are **Resourceful** in that we do whatever it takes to mobilise the support needed to bring about improvement

We are **Resonant** with one voice about the areas we can work on together to support improvement

Governance

The diagram opposite sets out the levels of responsibility within the Trust:

It refers to:

Members

establish the trust and set out its constitution, through signing its memorandum and articles of association. They can appoint and dismiss trustees/governors;

Trustees

set the strategic direction for the MAT and are accountable to the Secretary of State for the performance of the schools within it. The creation of a Finance Committee will include the MAT Finance Officer and selected Trustees

Local Governing Boards

oversee different functions of schools within the Trust, depending on the responsibility delegated to them by Trustees.

Chief Executive

provides the professional leadership of the Trust;

Heads of School

are responsible for the day-to-day running of each school in the MAT and who are accountable to the Trustees/LGBs, depending on where responsibility is delegated within the MAT. The CEO may also be a Head of School.





Members



Trustees

CEO



Local Governing Board

Local Governing Board

Local Governing Board

Local Governing Board



Head of School

Head of School

Head of School

Head of School



The Grand Union Partnership's approach to school improvement is to strive for excellence, recognising individual school autonomy and being committed to working in a professional partnership together

Successful Schools

Successful schools in the Trust are best placed to plan for and manage their own improvement, engaging in self-evaluation to ensure their effectiveness in raising standards and improving rates of progress for all groups of learners.

Support and Intervention

Less successful schools will receive a greater degree of support and intervention so that the school is able to move rapidly to being at least a 'good' school..



Challenge, Support & Intervention

Ofsted categories will be broadly used to determine levels of support and intervention.



The Grand Union Partnership's approach to school improvement is to strive for excellence, recognising individual school autonomy and being committed to working in a professional partnership together. There is a shared moral imperative to support improved outcomes for all children in the Trust. The challenge, support and intervention for partner schools is embedded in the Trust aims and objectives.

All schools in the Trust will be challenged to continuously find areas to improve. However, the degree of support and intervention would normally be the direct inverse to the level of success of each school. Successful schools in the Trust are best placed to plan for and manage their own improvement, engaging in self-evaluation to ensure their effectiveness in raising standards and improving rates of progress for all groups of learners. Less successful schools will receive a greater degree of support and intervention so that the school is able to move rapidly to being at least a 'good' school.

Ofsted categories will be broadly used to determine levels of support and intervention. These will be further informed by the use of the following:

- Monitoring visits and meetings;
- Scrutiny of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- Schools deemed at risk of not improving or retaining current Ofsted designation;
- Outcomes of Ofsted inspections;
- Attainment below national or Trust floor standards;
- Progress data are persistently low across a range of national indicators and the school has been unable to respond effectively;
- School leadership has not responded effectively to Partnership challenge or demonstrated the capacity to secure the necessary improvements;
- Members of the leadership team are recently appointed or there has been senior leadership absence for significant periods of time;
- Parental view concerns;
- Behaviour, safeguarding or attendance concerns;
- HR concerns;
- Financial concerns;

Challenge, Support & Intervention



Good/Outstanding Schools

will have a light touch approach. Discussions and challenge at head meetings and monitoring visits will further develop these schools. If a school is showing concern of falling into an Ofsted category the trust will investigate further and steps (as if a 'requires improvement' school) may be used to support the school to move back to good. Financial budgets and spending plan will be agreed by the trustees annually.

Requires Improvement Schools:

Support will be offered through joint weekly visits between the CEO and the head of the school. Development plans will need to be agreed and reviewed at trust level. The Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Local Governing Body (LGB) of the school, with support from the CEO, will be challenging poor performance of staff and trust staff may be used to support day to day teaching. Weaknesses in SMT will be replaced with strong leaders from across the trust if the head and CEO agree it is needed. Half termly assessment will be monitored to ensure progress to the targets of the trust. Financial budget and spending plans will be reviewed and agreed by the trust every six months. Failure to see improvement against the KPI's will result in the same steps as needed for an 'Inadequate' school.

Inadequate Schools:

Senior roles will be evaluated and staff may have to re-apply for their roles or new roles created by the trust. This will ensure trust structures are put in place. During this period the trust reserves the right to replace the LGB and senior staff if these are the reasons for inadequacy given during the most recent Ofsted report/monitoring visits. The CEO will be at the school on a regular basis and will bring in staff from across the trust to support the improvement of the school. The emergency action plan will be written and agreed by the trust. This will be monitored on a two/three weekly cycle with teaching and learning walks and observations. Weak staff will be challenged and appropriate standards promoted across the school. The school will take on all the trusts policies. The financial budget and spending plan will be taken over directly by the trust.







School to School Support and Central Services

The Trust's approach to school improvement is based on partnership where expertise is shared for better outcomes for children. The approach is founded on the principles of collegiality, transparency, honesty, integrity and respect.

These outcomes are clearly defined through a number of key performance indicators used by the Trust.

Central Service & Support Includes:

- Robust Trust-level governance.
- CEO support and challenge time through an annual cycle of monitoring, evaluation and review.
- Curriculum support and school improvement expertise.
- Joint training and other continuing professional development days and opportunities.
- Data sharing and analysis through Arbor.
- Finance support, monitoring and assurance.
- ICT support.
- Governor/Clerking support.
- Facilities support.
- HR/Payroll support.
- Schools meal provision – if required.
- Building projects.
- To seek economies of scale opportunities to streamline some support functions so that they are efficient and cost effective and increase our joint negotiating powers when purchasing or agreeing contracts for services; the savings will release additional funding to support teaching and learning.

School to School Support and Central Services



Schools contribution to the partnership

The contribution to the cost of central services is calculated on an annual basis and may vary depending on the number of schools in the Trust and the services offered.

The level of contribution made by schools is based on the identified needs of the different schools and the central services that are considered necessary for school improvement across the partnership.

School to School Support Includes:

- Working together to make a difference.
- Leadership peer reviews
- Leadership support network for Head, Deputies, Senco's and Team Leaders
- Governor support network
- Shared governance and leadership to ensure accountability for maintaining/improving school performance.
- Ongoing collaboration and sharing of good practice for improvement.
- Monitoring visits.
- Joint curriculum support and initiatives.
- Joint events planned.



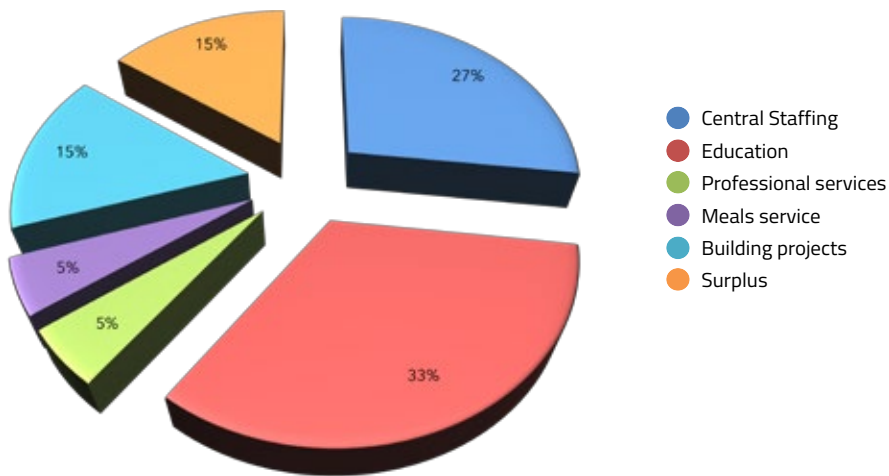
“

The Trust's approach to school improvement is based on partnership where expertise is shared for better outcomes for children.

Financial Management

The trust wants each school to be financially independent and receive all the funding allocated to it by the Education Funding Agency. Local Governing Bodies are responsible for determining its priorities and setting balanced budgets. The trust's chief finance officer and trustees scrutinise the trust's and each school's individual budget which are approved by the board of trustees.

Currently schools in the trust contribute 5% of their budget to cover central expenditure.





Currently schools in the trust contribute 5% of their budget to cover central expenditure.

Would we receive more money as an academy?

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools receive from the LA, but they also receive an additional amount called the education services grant which is currently retained by the LA to pay for some services which the LA provide.

The Government states that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school.

Academies do have greater freedom over how they use their budgets.

Do schools have to cover the costs of conversion to academy status?

No. The DfE pays a flat-rate grant of £25,000 into each school's bank account after an application has been approved and academy order has been issued.

This grant is provided for the detailed exploration of academy status and, if the school decides to proceed, the implementation costs. There are costs relating to the legal conversion (i.e. setting up the Trust, preparing the lease and Funding Agreement, and the TUPE process) and other 'one-off' costs relating to preparing each academy for successful operation. To reduce potential legal costs, the DfE has produced model legal documentation.



Frequently Asked Questions



What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is the structure that allows more than one academy to work together under an academy trust. It has one overall board of directors which runs the trust, with each academy having its own local governing body.

The MAT gives us the chance to share knowledge and teaching and learning between schools. It gives the schools within the trust the opportunity to make collective decisions about contracts with strategic partners thereby releasing more money for teaching and learning.

What is an Academy?

An Academy is an independent state school, funded directly from central government rather than through the Local Authority. A charitable company limited by guarantee (the Academy Trust) is responsible for the academy, and the Academy Trust signs the Funding Agreement (the contract) with the Secretary of State as part of the establishment of the academy.

Legislation requires that an academy has the following characteristics: that it offers a balanced and broadly based curriculum, that it provides education for students of different abilities and that it provides education for students who are wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the school is situated.

Becoming an academy means that we would have greater freedom to innovate and raise standards. We would have much greater freedom around the delivery of the curriculum, using our budget to work with the best partners available.

We would still be subject to Ofsted inspection and the children would still be prepared for SATs in the same way as they are now.

Is this privatisation?

No. The Academy Trust is a charitable trust and is not a profit-making organisation. The only objective of the Trust is to promote education for public benefit.



Frequently Asked Questions



Why should we consider becoming an academy?

In addition to the fact that we believe the greater freedoms and flexibilities will enable us to raise educational standards, there are other factors which are pointing towards conversion to an academy. As central services provided by the LA are already considerably reduced and the services which we receive are much more limited than they were a few years ago, all schools are being urged to give serious consideration to pursuing conversion to academy status.

The Government's policy is to encourage conversion and they are currently providing funding to assist with the costs of doing so. The governing body therefore feels that we need to engage actively with this issue; if we wait and ignore the changes that are happening around us, we may lose our choices and have a model of academy conversion imposed upon us.

Nationally, the majority of secondary schools (60%+) are now academies and there are already well over 2,000 primary school academies – about one in every ten primary schools and this figure is increasing month by month. The trend is for schools to convert as part of a MAT – more than two thirds of converters last year did this.

How accountable are academies?

Academies are subject to inspections by the schools' inspectorate, Ofsted, in the same way as other schools are. SATs results will continue to be published as at present, alongside those of other state schools in league tables. Academies are accountable directly to the Secretary of State for Education.

Would conversion to academy status affect our admissions policy?

Academies are subject to the same admissions code as other state schools. This sets the rules for fair admissions. We plan to continue to use the authority admissions team to administer the process as we do now but we would be able to represent ourselves at appeals.



Frequently Asked Questions



Would we receive more money as an academy?

Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools receive from the LA, but they also receive an additional amount called the education services grant which is currently retained by the LA to pay for some services which the LA provide. However, out of this money we would have to purchase some services which are currently provided by the LA.

The Government states that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. The main change is that academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets. As an academy, we would therefore have more freedom to buy the services we need from a range of providers and obtain best value for money and the best quality services for the benefit of the children.

What about the way in which the school is governed?

Would that change?

A new 'Academy Trust' would be established with a small number of Members (only 3 to 5) who have a substantial interest in and knowledge of the school and its local community. In addition there would be a committee of Trustees who would be a group made up of people with specific skills to provide the overall strategic direction of the MAT. Each school in the MAT would then have a Local Governing Body to oversee the day to day running of the school in the same way as they do now.

Would staff remain the same after conversion?

All current school staff would transfer to employment with the Multi Academy Trust (MAT) on academy conversion and there are no plans to change the staffing structure. The governing body is committed to continuing to recruit and retain high quality staff and will support existing staff through the transition and beyond if the school does convert to academy status.



Frequently Asked Questions



Would staff pay and conditions change?

When a school converts to academy status, members of staff transfer to the academy trust with their existing employment terms and conditions under the TUPE regulations which means that their terms and conditions of employment and pension arrangements, including continuity of service, are protected on conversion. When a School becomes an academy, a commitment is made that staff terms and conditions would be no less favourable than they would be if staff were employed by the Local Authority and this assurance remains for all the schools in the MAT.

What does the process of converting to academy status entail?

Initially, schools register their interest in becoming an academy online with the DfE. A school then completes and submits an application to become an academy to the DfE. A school must also consult with parents, staff and all other stakeholders before a funding agreement is entered into between the academy trust and the Secretary of State for Education.

When the Secretary of State for Education approves the school's application to convert, they issue an academy order. An academy trust is then set up to operate the schools in the MAT as academies and enter into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State to run the academies. The MAT also employs the staff and owns the assets of the schools in the MAT and will enter into arrangements to enable it to occupy the school sites after academy conversion.

The final stage is the signing of the funding agreements with the Secretary of State for Education.

Do schools have to cover the costs of conversion to academy status?

No. The DfE pays a flat-rate grant of £25,000 into each school's bank account after an application has been approved and academy order has been issued. This grant is provided for the detailed exploration of academy status and, if the school decides to proceed, the implementation costs. There are costs relating to the legal conversion (i.e. setting up the Trust, preparing the lease and Funding Agreement, and the TUPE process) and other 'one-off' costs relating to preparing each academy for successful operation. To reduce potential legal costs, the DfE has produced model legal documentation.



Frequently Asked Questions



What else would change?

There will be very little that obviously changes in the day to day running of our school. Keeping all that is special about our school whilst allowing us to continue to grow and develop is one of the drivers for academy conversion.

Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions, as in maintained schools. Academies have to ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

Would the school day and school year change?

Would the school name change?

Would the school uniform change?

None of these would change

What services would remain with the local authority?

The following duties remain with the local authority and do not become our responsibility:

- education psychology, SEN statements and assessment,
- assigning SEN resources for pupils who require high levels of additional resource (this is a top- up to formula funding under a separate contract with the local authority),
- monitoring of SEN provision and parent partnerships,
- prosecuting parents for non-attendance,
- provision of pupil referral units for a pupil no longer registered at an academy.

What are the safeguards for vulnerable students?

Under the terms of the Funding Agreement (which is the contract between the Academy Trust and the Secretary of State), an academy has to act in exactly the same way as a maintained school in relation to Special Education Needs, behaviour, and exclusions.

The Department for Education website has information about academies, including an extensive set of themed questions and answers:

www.education.gov.uk/academies







Contact Us:

Office:

*Grand Union Partnership
C/O New Bradwell Primary School
Bounty Street
Milton Keynes
MK13 0BQ*

Email:

ceo@grandunionpartnership.org

Phone:

01908 312244

Grand Union Partnership
TOGETHER WE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE 