

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs)?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools, free from local authority control. Other freedoms include setting their own pay and conditions for staff, freedoms concerning the delivery of the curriculum, and the ability to change the length of their terms and school days. The Primary Academies Trust formed as a multi-academy trust in November 2011.

A multi-academy trust is where a group of individual schools become academies in their own right, retain their separate identity, and yet legally join together through an overarching Trust.

A multi-academy trust is a formal collaboration between schools. It is important that the individual schools remain separate organisations, retaining a distinctive identity, which is reflective of and centred in the school's local community.

Why should The Primary Academies Trust as currently a Primary only MAT explore working with a Secondary School?

Working within a Multi Academy Trust offers the opportunity to maximise expertise and best practice for the benefit of all schools and the ability to use resources more efficiently and effectively for the benefit of all children.

The addition of a secondary school to The Primary Academies Trust would strengthen this ability to maximise expertise and best practice across a greater age range and offer greater pupil and staff experience. Colleagues from a primary only perspective would be supported to develop an enhanced knowledge of the demands of secondary education thus supporting their ability to help pupils develop the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in secondary school. Similarly, secondary colleagues would understand to a greater depth the quality of work and the approaches that primary schools take with pupils.

The following benefits would be strengthened by the addition of a secondary school, namely:

1. Increased resilience that comes from being part of a wider organisation;
2. Increased support with teaching and learning;
3. Minimising the Nationally recognised transition “dip” that exists across the country, as we work closely with secondary colleagues and help children make uninterrupted progress as they move from Year 6 to Year 7;
4. Improved training and development opportunities for staff;
5. Less professional isolation: working closely with other schools, all of whom have mutual accountability for the success of every setting in the organisation;
6. Improved access to funds for capital maintenance and development;
7. Improved staff recruitment possibilities.

Do we need to get permission for Pilton to join The Primary Academies Trust?

Yes, both The Primary Academies Trust and Pilton Community College need to obtain the permission of the Secretary of State for Education.

What is the process for Pilton joining The Primary Academies Trust?

Throughout this process, we will need to comply with Department for Education (DfE) guidance on making significant changes.

Both The Primary Academies Trust and Pilton Community College will need to obtain the permission of the Secretary of State for Education via the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The EFA will want us to prepare a business plan. A typical business plan sets out:

- the details of the change, including any potential issues/risks relating to the proposals and evidence of demand;
- when is the change to be implemented and how;
- the effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the local authority and an overview of the responses to the consultation;
- the degree of local authority support and what the academy has done in response to any consultation responses from them;
- any indicative costings and an indication of how these might be met, including how the change will be sustained in terms of capacity and value for money;
- any suggested changes to the admission arrangements.

The Secretary of State delegates the approval process to the Regional Schools' Commissioner (RSC), who works closely with a regional Headteacher Board.

In the event that the Headteacher Board and RSC approve the change, the following steps will need to be taken:

- Pilton Academy Trust will enter into a deed of termination which will terminate the existing Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State;
- PAT will enter into a supplemental funding agreement on behalf of Pilton;
- the employment of Pilton staff will transfer to PAT in accordance with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 ('TUPE');
- Pilton's assets and contracts will be transferred from the single academy trust to PAT under a commercial transfer agreement;
- PAT will be given use of Pilton's land and buildings, usually either by way of a 125 year lease with the local authority or the transfer of the freehold of the land, as applicable.

Once the conversion has taken place, Pilton academy trust company may be wound up.

Does The Primary Academies Trust need to consult before accepting Pilton as an academy into the Multi-Academy Trust?

Yes. This counts legally as a "significant change" and as such consultation is required. The statutory consultation period is 4 weeks. The precise mechanism of consultation is not specified, but it is recommended that there be a meeting, held at the school if possible, in order to maximise the involvement of stakeholders. We will be holding a consultation meeting at Pilton on Monday 1st Feb 2016. We will consult parents and other local schools (both secondary and our primary feeder schools), as well as the wider community via notices in the local press and by letter.

Does The Primary Academies Trust need to change its name?

The Directors of The Primary Academies Trust are currently considering a suitable name that will more accurately describe a mixed phased Trust. It is recognised that The Primary Academies Trust though has a strong and clear identity would not be an appropriate title for a mixed phased Multi-Academy Trust and we are currently considering options with regard to a name change.

When is this change likely to take place?

The Directors of The Primary Academies Trust intending if Pilton were to join the Trust, that they do so during the Summer Term 2016.

What will this mean for Orchard Vale?

Orchard Vale will continue to work closely with both Pilton Community College and The Park Community School when it comes to our year 6 pupils secondary transfer. We will also continue to develop our relationship with both schools through workshop and activity days as is the current arrangements.

If Pilton are to join the Primary Academies Trust, this does NOT mean that our year 6 pupils will have to go to Pilton, the decision making process will remain the same as it is now and will rest entirely with parent and pupil. The admission process to a secondary school of choice will not change in the light of Pilton joining the Trust.