

Shavington Academy and Holmes Chapel Academy Merger

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership. Within a multi-academy trust all schools are governed by one Academy trust. Each school retains its own governing body, which is represented on the multi-academy trust board. The school's governing bodies operate subject to the control of the trust which has ultimate responsibility for the running of the individual academies. The trust is accountable and responsible for the performance of each of the academies and may delegate its decision-making powers to the governing bodies of the individual academies. As the multi-academy trust is a single entity, it is envisaged that schools can achieve strong collaboration and drive-up standards by providing a cohesive strategy and vision across all of the schools working together.

Shavington Academy (SA) is currently an 'empty' Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

2. What is a Single Academy Trust (SAT)?

A Single Academy Trust is a state school that is run by an Academy Trust. The Academy Trust enters into an agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out its responsibilities and accountabilities for the effective running of one school. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and not through the Local Authority. The school's governing body has decision-making powers and is responsible for the running of the SAT. Holmes Chapel Comprehensive School (HCCS) is currently a Single Academy Trust (SAT)

3. Is this the right time to consider a merger of SA MAT and HCCS SAT?

Yes, both schools have been considering further MAT development and have spent considerable time looking into options. The close working relationship between both schools places this as a strong option for further development at this time. Other schools locally are progressing on MAT development journeys which reflects the climate we are in.

4. Has the decision to merger already been made?

No. Until the views of our parents and carer, staff, the local community, Trade Union and other stakeholders of our school have been obtained, a final decision will not be made. The formal consultation process is extremely important and will inform future decision making. The Trust and Governing Body has to weigh up both the pros and cons and then make a final decision as to whether to proceed. At anytime within the process, any party can withdraw, until the Funding Agreement is signed, as this is a legally binding document.

5. What is the time scale for the merger to happen?

It is expected that this would occur in the next academic year 2022/2023, assuming the Trustees and Governors finalise the decision to merger, after the consultation process.

6. Is there a cost to this process?

Yes, there will be costs as the DfE do not provide money for this process. Any costs for the merger will be met by both schools equally.

7. How will being an Academy affect staff?

All staff will automatically transfer to the new Academy Trust, on their current pay and conditions agreements. Strict TUPE arrangements would be followed.

After conversion all staff at the schools will be employed by the Trust, Staff are legally protected to transfer under the same employment terms and conditions, including pensions. Their continuity of service is protected and all staff will be consulted in accordance with the transfer of undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

8. What is TUPE transfer?

TUPE regulations protect your rights as an employee when you transfer to a new employer. TUPE stands for Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment).

A 'TUPE transfer happens when:

- An organisation or part of it is transferred from one employer to another
- A service is transferred to a new provider; for example, when another company takes over contracts for office cleaning

You may be affected by a TUPE transfer if:

- You're transferring from your current employer to a new employer
- Other employees are transferring to a new employer but you stayed employed with your current employer and do not transfer
- Other employees have been transferred to the organisation you work for

9. Who will be responsible for running our school?

The Headteachers of each school would still be responsible for running the school. The school would also retain its own governing body. The newly formed Trust will have a Board of Directors including individuals from each school's governing body. Headteachers from all the schools would be accountable to the Trust Board.

10. Will the Curriculum change?

We currently teach to the National Curriculum (last amended September 2014) and we already have the power to change this if we wish. Our main consideration is to continue with a broad and balanced curriculum that helps us to instil in children a lifelong love of learning.

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

No, there will be no change to the name, logo or uniform of either school. Each school is committed to the retention of its individual identity.

12. Would there be any changes to the admission policy/criteria?

No, there will be no changes to admission policy or criteria.

13. Will our responsibilities in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and exclusions change?

No, responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND and exclusions will be just the same as they are now.

14. Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?

Academies, free schools and voluntary aided schools are able to set their own term dates but are asked to set the same or similar dates in the interest of parents who may have children at different schools. Our calendars have always been very much in line with local schools and other schools locally and this will continue. Synced calendars allow us to potentially plan share training and development on the five-teacher training days each year.

15. How are pupils affected?

Pupils will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. 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 which will result from greater training opportunities for all staff and wider opportunities for all pupils.

16. Will we get more money through this process?

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school. All funding comes direct from Government to the Multi Academy Trust which controls the overall budget. Each school does not necessarily have more money, but as a group the schools are better able to control their part of the budget and seek economies of scale.

17. Does this merger change the relationship with other schools and the community?

No, we are both committed to being at the heart of our community, local schools for local children. We will continue to collaborate and share expertise with other schools outside of the proposed MAT and wider community.

18. What is the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)?

The responsibilities of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) include;

- Monitoring the performance of Academies and intervening where underperformance is found
- Making strategic decisions on the creation of MATs and granting academy orders
- Ensuring there are enough academy sponsors to meet local demand