

South Bank Multi Academy Trust

South Bank MAT joining South York MAT General FAQs

- **What benefit is there to the two Trusts in merging?**

The schools in our trusts have served the community of York and its surrounding areas for very many years. We have a firm commitment to providing the highest levels of care and academic achievement for all our children and young people, irrespective of their starting points or any disadvantage they may have. A set of shared values lead to the foundation of both trusts. We work with likeminded people following a common core vision. Both trusts grew from close partnership working and we believe that a commonality of belief in the power of high quality education and the growth of the children and young people within our schools means that the impact a bigger trust, with its associated resource, would bring about improvements in all our schools. Despite an increase in size the geographical spread of our trust means the decision making within the trust would maintain the essential close connections our schools have to their local communities.

Trustees have studied the medium term financial situation and believe combining both MAT would ensure long term sustainability of all the schools. We also believe increased partnership working and greater shared buying power would benefit all of our schools whilst allowing each to retain their own unique ethos within our own community. Our ambition is that all of our schools would benefit from shared networks and forums and systems as well as building on existing strong working relationships.

- **How would the governance arrangements work and would there be any representation from South Bank MAT board**

Currently each Trust has a board of Trustees. This structure would change and there would be one Trust board across the newly merged MAT with individual local governing bodies for each school. As now, LGBs would operate under a scheme of delegation which would be discussed as part of the plans for merging the two MATs.

The newly formed Trust board would be made up of skilled individuals and would comprise of some existing Trustees from the South Bank Trust board and some from

the South York Trust board, with the addition of new individuals to add independence and experience.

It is important to remember that the Trust board would be responsible for all schools and must not be biased towards any particular school in a Trust, they would have strategic oversight for the educational success, ethos and finances of the whole Trust with the LGBs working at school level to support this oversight.

Certain decision making has to be at board level to comply with the academies financial handbook, employment law obligations and education law but LGBs would be very much focussed on their own school with continued input of elected parents and staff.

- **What would the leadership structure be in the new MAT?**

The Trust would be lead by the CEO (Chief Executive Officer). They would lead a multidisciplinary team including the CFO (Chief Financial Officer) that would focus on ensuring school improvement and development as well as effective corporate function.

- **South York MAT has some church schools, how would this affect the other schools?**

Each school within the Trust supports the values of the Trust. All our schools have their own distinctive character. We celebrate the diversity of our schools and would protect their individuality whether that be faith based or not.

- **Financial implications - how financially secure is the MAT, what happens if one of the schools in the MAT gets into financial difficulty**

Each Trust is currently financially secure and has its own reserve. Budget setting is always carried out well in advance so that any changes which need to be made can be implemented in good time to seek to achieve a balanced budget for every school. Budget monitoring would continue throughout the year by the Trust board, and they would receive monthly update reports. If a school in the MAT is projecting an in year deficit the Trust Board would work with the school to look at cost savings and if appropriate may permit an in year deficit provided there was a financial recovery plan and the central reserve could allow this. This could result in financial delegation being limited under the scheme of delegation if this was not an agreed position so that Trustees have even more oversight of the position.

- **How would catering work in the MAT?**

Current catering contracts would continue to run.

- **How would finance, HR and premises work in the MAT?**

The new MAT would have expertise in all these areas. We would analyse the needs of all schools within the MAT and put in place appropriate functions to support the effective running of the school and ensure they are functioning at maximum efficiency.

- **What are plans for future growth and what would the impact of this be (geographical region, how big, does that mean we avoid another merger)?**

Bishopthorpe Infants school is due to join the South York MAT this academic year.

The Trust is always open to discussions with other local schools if they wish to formalise partnership working for the benefit of all pupils. Each opportunity would be considered fully and a similar consultation exercise would be undertaken before any decisions were made.

- **What happens if a school in the MAT has a dip in standards?**

The purpose of a Trust is to provide educational support and increased capacity. The oversight from the Trust Board would mean that the trust would know about possible problems at an early stage and prevent this becoming significant through interventions and increased support. However, if this happened we would draw on existing capacity in the trust and where necessary external consultants.

The benefit of an expanded MAT would be the additional resource we were able to provide for school improvement. The strength of the teaching in the schools within the MAT mean that we have a great basis to learn from each other and adapt practice in line with what is evidence based best practice.

- **Does Ofsted consider each school on an individual basis or inspect the MAT as a whole?**

Ofsted considers each school on an individual basis currently but they would look at the MAT board as the accountable body for any individual school. It is likely MATs are soon going to be inspected as a whole too but we don't know how this would look at this stage.

- **Would staff be required to work at both sites?**

Staff who currently have a defined place of work in their contract could not be asked to work elsewhere without their agreement. For new staff who join after any change it may be that their place of work covers different sites or the MAT as a whole as part of their job role.

- **Would admissions arrangements change?**

We would not expect any of the current admission arrangements to change. The Local Authority would continue to co-ordinate the application process for admissions.

It should be stressed however, that the admissions criteria must have regard to the national Admissions Code of Practice.

- **What would happen to the uniform?**

We don't propose to make any changes to the current school uniforms of any of our schools.

- **Would the name of the school change?**

We do not intend to change the name of any school and we are strongly committed to retaining the identity of each school within the Multi Academy Trust.

- **Would the name of the MAT change?**

Although none of the school names would change, we would like to have a new name for the merged MAT. We have not made any decisions about what the new name would be, but we would like to hear your suggestions as part of this consultation process.

- **Would the times of the school day and holidays change?**

We have no plans to change the times of the school day or the term dates. Any future changes would be subject to extensive consultation with parents and carers.

- **What happens next, what is the timescale of any change?**

Trustees would need to consider all of the feedback and outcome of this consultation process and then meet to discuss whether they wish to proceed. If they do then they would need to apply for permission to the Regional Schools Commissioner (part of the Department for Education) to go ahead and if that is granted lawyers would need to carry out the legal work involved in dissolving South Bank Multi Academy Trust so the schools and staff can transfer into the South York Multi Academy Trust.

Staff and parents would be updated at each stage and staff from South Bank Multi Academy Trust would be part of a separate consultation process under the TUPE regulations which is more specific and would give them a further opportunity to ask questions and understand how, if at all, their role would be affected.

The earliest this is likely to be able to be implemented is September 2022 and we are keen to continue to take on board the views of staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider community throughout the process.