

Consultation on proposal for Turves Green Girls' School to join King Edward's VI Academy Trust

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is an academy?

Academies are independent, state-funded schools, which receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through a local authority. They control their own admissions process and have more freedom than other schools to innovate. They do not have to follow the National Curriculum, but do have to ensure that their curriculum is broad and balanced and that it includes the core subjects of mathematics and English. They are subject to inspection by Ofsted.

2. How many are there?

At the end of 2016, 61% of secondary schools were academies. By February 2018 that had become 72%. By January 2019 that had become 75%, as the rate slowed slightly due to DFE capacity issues as increasing numbers civil service personnel were devoted to Brexit issues. At current rates, academies will account for around 90% of secondary schools by the end of the current parliament, even assuming that the government does not use their large majority in Parliament to accelerate the programme. The Anti Academies Alliance believes the current government will take steps toward full academisation of all schools. We support this analysis and therefore believe that our room to choose a MAT which meets our criteria (see 10) will narrow.

3. Aren't academies all about improving failing schools?

They were once. The policy, which originated under Labour in 2000, aimed to improve struggling schools, primarily in deprived areas. This continues under the sponsored-academy model, where failing schools are taken over and run by an academy trust. But it has changed radically to embrace all types of schools - successful or otherwise. All schools - primary as well as secondary - have been invited to convert to academy status, with priority being given to the best performers.

4. What is the future of "academisation"?

When he was Chancellor, George Osborne announced a forced academisation plan, under which all schools in England would either have to convert to academies by 2020 or be committed to converting by 2022. This would have, in effect, ended the link between local authorities and schools that began in 1902. However, the plans aroused strong criticism from teaching unions and others, including Conservative MPs and councillors, and were abandoned. However the "goal" of academising all schools remains but forced academisation or sponsored-academy trusts will now focus on schools that are "clearly failing". This definition could include any school which had a 'dip' in results or an OFSTED judgement beneath 'Good'. The Education and Adoption Act states:

‘The Secretary of State **must** make an Academy order in respect of a maintained school in England that is eligible for intervention by virtue of section 61 or 62 EIA 2006 (**schools requiring significant improvement** or schools requiring special measures)’

5. What is a "Multi-academy Trust"?

Multi-academy trusts (MATs) are groups of academies that have chosen or have been forced to come together to form a charitable company, with a single group of "members" (who have an overview of the governance arrangements) and a single board of "trustees".

6. What are the benefits of this proposed change?

Association with the King Edward VI 'brand' will help ensure that our school remains over-subscribed when pupil numbers dip in the area in future years. This 'future-proofing' ensures that our spending and staffing plans can be made with relative security and help avoid future restructures and job losses.

By working with a number of other successful schools we can add another layer to our existing collaboration with the other Oaks schools. In addition, the MAT employs specific school improvement staff who will help us to improve from our strong starting points.

We anticipate that the King Edward VI badge may also assist in the recruitment of new staff.

The MAT benefits from centralised services including governance support, estates management, HR, payroll, finance and procurement. The quality of services is monitored through Key Performance Indicators to ensure that the benefits of being in a MAT are realised for schools.

7. What are the benefits to the community?

An important benefit of joining this MAT is that the MAT shares our vision of keeping the schools as key hubs of their local communities, retaining their individual identities but working in partnership. We also feel the local community will benefit from having a highly desirable school in the area, which will be easier to achieve with the King Edward's branding, advertising, school improvement and central services.

8. Will the school be financially better or worse off?

The legal costs for conversion to an Academy within a MAT will be met via a £25,000 grant from central government. The school will receive its own yearly funding on the same per-pupil basis as the Local Authority does for maintained schools, direct from the Education Funding Agency and the MAT itself will receive funds from a "top slice" from the school's funding. The percentage of this top slice is 1.75%, rising to 2.5% in two years which we expect to be less than is currently kept back by the LA, and substantially less than the top slice in other MATs which tends to be between 6% and 15%.

One factor in why this MAT is so much more cost effective than the alternatives is because their MAT team is largely funded by the King Edward VI Foundation rather than through the contribution of the schools.

9. What are the disadvantages of conversion?

Greater freedoms do bring additional responsibilities and accountabilities including statutory duties as an academy trust company, but the size and established expertise of the King Edward VI Academy Trust mean this poses no concern.

A number of criticisms of the move toward academies and away from local authorities as a national government policy can be made and they are quite convincing. However this consultation does not seek to defend or promote government policy, merely to ensure that our governors are able to make a decision about how best to protect and promote our school, our staff and our ethos within the current environment.

1) Academy Chains do not reflect local context and needs. We believe that the King Edward VI Academy Trust, by devolving responsibility for school performance to the Local Governing Board, will enable us to continue to tailor what we do to the community we serve. The MAT is geographically

Birmingham based, and explicitly devoted to improving educational outcomes for Birmingham based pupils.

2) Academies can ignore national and local agreements on pay and conditions. We have chosen our MAT carefully with this factor in mind and indeed protecting staff pay and pensions is a key priority for the Governing Board. The King Edward VI Academy Trust support staff are part of the Local Government Pension scheme. The King Edward VI Academy Trust has implemented local and national pay agreements to date.

3) Academy chains top-slice money from schools to spend on executive salaries. We have carefully chosen a MAT with a comparatively small top-slice - 1.75%. rising to 2.5%. Executive positions with this MAT are partly or wholly funded by the King Edward VI Foundation which exists separately from the MAT whilst supporting the MAT's work.

4) Evidence that Academies achieve better outcomes is mixed at best. We agree. This MAT may provide a framework to better support children and young people by sharing expertise and combining resources. However, our key interest to join a MAT where the model we have built – of strong specialist teaching supported by excellent pastoral care – and which is already working, can be maintained and built upon, reducing our current vulnerabilities.

5) The process of joining a MAT can lead to school leaders 'taking their eye off the ball' and neglecting school improvement. The size, experience and expertise of this MAT means that our school leaders can maintain their focus on school issues rather than legal issues.

Both the NASUWT website and the Anti-Academies Alliance website (linked at the bottom of this document), explain their opposition to academisation in greater detail.

10. Why have we chosen King Edward VI Academy Trust?

In looking for a MAT we wanted to find one with the following qualities:

- high levels of devolved control, without centralised teaching rubrics etc
- good record on pay and conditions of staff (specifically Local Government Pension for support staff protected, LA support staff pay structure maintained and national teacher pay and conditions respected). Staff are encouraged to be part of a union and consultation takes place through a staff liaison committee.
- geographically based (not a national chain)
- aspects of shared ethos / vision
- low level of top-slice
- freedom to continue working with external partners (Oaks and Birmingham Education Partnership)
- a large enough MAT to minimise the risk of being 're-brokered' in the future
- no centralised curriculum – we continue to tailor what we do for the children we teach
- Local Governing Board responsible for school and headteacher performance

King Edward VI Academy Trust is the best fit we can find by a huge margin, as it meets every criteria.

11. Will other schools be joining the MAT in the future?

Yes. In total we would expect another two comprehensive schools to join the MAT at some stage in their future, as the MAT reaches its planned expansion to 12 schools. We are aware that the King Edward VI Academy Trust has been approached regarding other schools and that the MAT has turned some opportunities away at this stage because they were not the right fit. The fact that King

Edward VI Academy Trust wishes to work with us reflects the strength and reputation of our school, but we should be under no illusion that King Edward VI Academy Trust will have far more schools interested in joining than they have places, and if we turn away at this stage, it is likely that the option will be gone permanently in the medium term. We may also find ourselves in competition for pupil numbers with local schools who subsequently join KEVI.

12. Will the composition of the local board change?

Our Local Governing Board membership will not change, and will continue to reflect the skills an effective board requires whilst including stakeholders. The Trust will be able to assist if and when vacancies arise which we are unable to fill, which protects the current strength of our governance into the future.

13. What happens to the leadership of the school?

There will be no changes to the leadership team as an immediate result of joining the MAT and the performance of the headteacher will be managed by our Local Governing Board.

14. What about other school staff?

School staff would be employed by the MAT rather than the Local Authority and their employment terms and conditions will be transferred under a standard process known as TUPE. Union memberships and pensions would be unaffected. As our budget will be in the hands of our Local Governing Board, we do not foresee any necessity for restructuring or redundancy.

15. What would happen regarding provision for children with Special Educational Needs?

Effectively nothing would change; the schools would still have to comply with the Admissions Code and any SEN obligations as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice. The LA would retain responsibility for pupils with an Educational Health Care Plan in an academy on the same basis as in maintained schools. The school will retain our excellent ethos of inclusion through which there is a strong commitment to providing the best possible education for the young people of all abilities and backgrounds from our community.

16. Will there be new school names and uniforms?

There are no specific plans to introduce a new design of school uniform, although badging may change and we will review our uniform, perhaps with a view to abandoning the KS3 blue uniform, so both key stages wear black. We would consider changing our name to King Edward VI Northfield Girls' School (KENGs), King Edward VI Girls' South Birmingham (KEGSB) or some other variation, or we could continue with King Edward VI Turves Green Girls' School (KETGGS), but that may be somewhat unwieldy. Comments on this open question would be welcome as part of the consultation.

17. Will there be any changes to term dates and school hours?

There are no plans to change the length of the school day or term dates as a result of this proposal. Academies can implement such changes if they believe it to be beneficial to the education of the children at the schools but any such change would require a full consultation process.

18. Will any changes to the School be made as a result of conversion?

We do not intend to make any changes to the School as a result of the conversion, apart from taking advantage of the opportunities outlined above to work more closely with other schools in the MAT.

We anticipate that this opportunity to work within a supportive Multi-Academy Trust would further strengthen and support the School's ethos and high standards. The roles potentially effected in school would be the finance team (which is a central service of the MAT), but our intention would be for the relevant staff to be employed directly by the MAT whilst continuing to be based in our school. We have a clear determination to protect and advance the interests of these outstanding members of the staff team.

19. How do I take part in the consultation process?

This consultation begins on 24th February. At this stage, we are not committing the School to conversion to Academy status within KING EDWARD VI ACADEMY TRUST. We are consulting with everyone associated with our school before Governors meet again to make a final decision. We would like to know what you think of this proposal and are inviting you to take part in this consultation. Your views are important to us. In addition to attending the meeting at either our school, or if you are unable to attend, we would also welcome comments e-mailed to:

TGGSMATconsultation@gmail.com

If you wish, letters can be handed to the school office for the attention of the Chair Of Governors marked – "Confidential: Multi-Academy Trust proposal" to ensure prompt attention.

10th March – 3.20pm – Staff meeting will takes place at TGGGS (Main Hall), chaired by Sam Ryder (TGGGS Chair of Governors). At this meeting a positive case for MAT formation is made, but people are given plenty of time to ask questions and make comments.

10th March – 5pm - an open meeting for stakeholders of TGGGS – including pupils. The meeting follows the same format as the staff meeting, and in the same location.

20. When and how will the decision be made?

The consultation process concludes on **20th March, after which all responses to the consultation will be collated and forwarded to all governors.** Our Governing Board will meet on 23rd March to review the issues raised during the consultation and decide whether or not that school wishes to proceed with joining KING EDWARD VI ACADEMY TRUST.

21. If the decision is taken to proceed, when will the change happen?

Before the legal process can start, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the regional Headteachers' Board will discuss the proposal and either approve it or not.

22. If a Governing Board decides to join / for a MAT, can it later withdraw or revert to Local Authority control?

Not under current legislation. Once the decision is made it cannot be reversed by a school's local Governing Board. During the last General election, the Labour Party suggested measures whereby a school could revert to LA control, but without a change in government policy this will not be possible.

23. If our school joins KING EDWARD VI ACADEMY TRUST is that the end to the possibility of being taken over by an academy chain which we have not chosen?

Not with absolute certainty. However the risk would be far higher if the MAT we were proposing to join was small, as the DFE sees small MATs as unsustainable and requiring consolidation. The risk

would also be higher in a MAT without a critical mass of good and outstanding schools, which were less credible at sustaining school improvement.

24. If we form a MAT will we continue working with the Local Authority?

Yes – close working relationships would continue. However the powers and role of the Local Authority continues to be diminished, with responsibility limited to SEND provision and Admissions. The experience of Birmingham local authority schools who receive a poor inspection outcome is not a happy one. Either they are directed into a MAT with no element of choice regarding the MAT or they are left largely to their own devices if no MAT wants them, struggling with staffing collapse, reputational damage, declining pupil numbers and financial woes.

25. Would the powers of the current Governing Bodies change?

Very little would change in practice as the KEVI structure places the Local Governing Board as the board is responsible for all aspects of a school's performance.

26. Will there still be parent governors?

The Local Governing Board will maintain parent representation. The powers of the Local Governing Board are delegated so there is no legal guarantee that this parental representation will be maintained, however the experience of LGBs in the MAT have been very positive and they have maintained parent representation.

27. To what extent does our ethos align with KEVI?

Our motto is 'together we succeed' and we have tried to operate within the cooperative ethos. KING EDWARD VI ACADEMY TRUST is not a cooperative MAT. However, the autonomy given to schools within the KING EDWARD VI ACADEMY TRUST (delegated but not legally guaranteed) means that the way we function may be able to continue largely unchanged, in terms of inclusivity and consultation.

The King Edward VI Academy Trust includes a number of grammar schools. As our values place the academic achievement of all children, not least from disadvantaged backgrounds, at the heart of what we do, joining a MAT containing grammar schools is not an obvious match for our school. However, we believe this apparent dissonance is countered by the advantages of joining this particular MAT (see 10).

KING EDWARD VI ACADEMY TRUST have taken concrete steps to increase the numbers of disadvantaged children in their schools (a minimum of 25% of places are set aside at each of the grammar schools for children attracting the Pupil Premium) and by actively expanding their MAT to include schools serving more disadvantaged communities they seem to be putting their vision into action. And there is nothing in their vision which we cannot subscribe to – on the contrary there is a clear correlation with our own:

Mission statement:

Our mission is to make Birmingham the best place to be educated in the UK

The King Edward VI Foundation in Birmingham

With eleven schools in the city, The King Edward VI Foundation is the largest provider of secondary school places in Birmingham outside the city council, educating more than 10,000 young people between the ages of 11 and 18.

Whilst each school has its own individual characteristics and heritage, each subscribes to the same mission: that of making Birmingham the best place to be educated in the UK.

The Foundation's roots in education go back to the 16th century with the establishment of King Edward's School in 1552. Its approach has been consistent throughout - recognising that an excellent education opens doors and changes futures.

Its goal is to enable students to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to society based on strong shared values, and care and respect for others.

It is committed to developing curiosity, independence of mind and a love of learning, with every student enjoying a range of activities within and beyond the classroom. These include sport, music, drama, outdoor pursuits and involvement in the community, whether at home or further afield.

The Foundation's diverse range of schools – independent, state selective and comprehensive – ensures that every young person, regardless of background or circumstances, can benefit from educational excellence.

Finding out more:

KING EDWARD VI ACADEMY TRUST: <https://www.schoolsofkingedwardvi.co.uk/what-is-mat/>

Department for Education: www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies

Anti-Academies Alliance: <http://antiacademies.org.uk/>

NASUWT: <https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice/academies.html>