

Stakeholder Frequently Asked Questions about Academy Conversion

The Governing Body are currently considering joining The Prospect Trust (TPT)

The purpose of these FAQs is to provide information as part of our consultation process.

What is an Academy?

Academies are independent, state-funded schools, which receive their funding directly from central government, rather than through a local authority (in our case Surrey County Council). They control their own admissions process and have more freedom than other schools to innovate.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is a single central entity which oversees the strategic collaboration across a number of schools. The MAT will ensure that the schools are committed to working together to continue to improve and maintain high educational standards. The MAT is ultimately responsible for the performance of all schools, although each school will still maintain its unique identity and their own governing body known as a Local Governing Body.

What is The Prospect Trust?

The Prospect Trust is a local trust serving the communities of Farnborough and Frimley. It currently has three schools: Farnborough Sixth Form College, Tomlinscote School and Frimley C of E Junior School. More information about TPT can be found on their website: www.theprospecttrust.org.uk

What are the benefits of joining a MAT?

The Department for Education (DFE) promotes MATs as evidence shows that good schools are the best organisations to maintain standards and help and support other schools.

MATs formally bring together leadership, autonomy, funding and accountability across a group of schools in an enduring way. A group of schools who are committed to collaborative working would offer greater opportunities for all, developing and supporting improved outcomes and pupil experience.

The benefits for us include:

- Quality of Education- continued shared curriculum planning across the schools in TPT rather than within the Local Authority, shared practice and challenge on standards in the school
- Trust-wide pool of expertise to help deliver local improvement
- Opportunities to work with teachers cross-phase, leading to improved understanding of teaching, learning and curriculum across the key stages

- Being part of stronger/bigger 'pan-Trust' curriculum subject teams who will meet regularly
- Opportunities to develop subject expertise across the key stages with the possible development of Trust Subject Leads
- Teaching staff will also benefit from TPT's strong commitment to investing in the development of teaching skills.
- Career progression opportunities across the Trust (i.e. beyond our School)
- Apple Distinguished School expertise to support the deployment of i-Pads across the School

What will stay the same?

- The values of our School will be unchanged within TPT
- There will be no change to the School's name, 'brand' and ethos
- St Marks will continue to manage its relationships with feeder/partner schools
- The Executive Headteacher (Clare Wright) will continue to be responsible for all agreed staffing, pastoral care, safeguarding and progress of pupils plus performance management of staff.
- St Marks will still be responsible for admissions in September, securing pupil numbers in line with agreed targets
- All staff will transfer from Hampshire County Council to be employed by The Prospect Trust on the same terms and conditions of service

And what will change in our School if this conversion happens?

- Future appointments to the Senior Leadership Team will be approved by the Trust Board
- A number of support services (currently HR, Payroll, Finance, Estates with IT and Careers Information Advice & Guidance in progress) will be accessed from and managed by central TPT services rather than Hampshire, as at present. One advantage of this approach is that the Headteacher and her staff will be able to concentrate on teaching and learning rather than the myriad of other duties expected of School staff
- Members of the existing Governing Body will form the School's initial Academy Quality Council
- Significant capital spend will be funded by the Trust

If the school does join TPT will the school change their name?

No -The name of the school will not change.

What input do the staff have in the decision and how it will change their way of working?

Staff are part of the consultation process and their views will be taken into account but we do not anticipate that there will be any significant changes to their way of working.

Staff will continue to benefit from opportunities to share best practice and from enhanced opportunities for professional development.

Will staff be moved between the schools?

Staff are always encouraged to further their careers and all schools have a certain amount of natural movement. Should a member of staff wish to move to another school then this would be considered if there was an appropriate position. This flexibility may enable us to retain outstanding staff within the 'family' of schools.

Will there be a new uniform?

No – St Marks Primary will retain our individuality and the uniform won't be changed.

Will other schools be joining the MAT?

Yes - we do envisage other schools joining TPT in future. However, schools will only be able to join following an in-depth due diligence process to ensure their needs can be met without compromising curriculum delivery at the existing schools.

Will admissions arrangements change?

There are no current plans to change the admissions criteria. If we decided to change this in the future, we would have to consult with parents.

How will pupils be affected if their school becomes an Academy?

The children will not notice any immediate changes to their current school experience.

What are the safeguards for vulnerable students?

An academy has to act in exactly the same way as a maintained school in relation to SEN, behaviour and exclusions.

Will Ofsted still inspect schools within the MAT?

Yes. All schools will be subject to an Ofsted inspection in exactly the same way as they do currently.

Where can I get further information?

The Department for Education website has information about academies, including an extensive set of themed questions and answers: www.education.gov.uk/academies

What are the next steps?

The formal consultation begins on 2nd December 2024 and will conclude on the 31st of January 2025.

During this period, we are inviting you to comment in writing to either the Chair or Vice Chair of Governors via: m.hartley@st-marks.hants.sch.uk and/or l.dale@st-marks.hants.sch.uk

Opportunities can be given to ask questions in person, and please do mention this in your communication if you would like to take up this opportunity.

Following this consultation Governors will meet to consider how to proceed. You will be kept updated via our usual communication channels.