

## **Frequently asked questions - responses from the consultation of staff and parents at The Mease Federation.**

The CEO (Chief Executive Officer) at TSSMAT (The Staffordshire Schools Multi Academy Trust) and the Mease Federation's Governing Body have worked together in order to respond to the most common questions when outlining our intention to academise and potentially join TSSMAT. There were a range of excellent questions from the response forms received. We offer the following Q&A (Questions and Answers) sheet which we can add to as more questions are posed and meetings are held. Thank you.

Questions common to all stakeholders - <i>in no particular order</i>	
What is an Academy?	An Academy 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 the Academy. The Academy is funded directly by the Government and is no longer run by the Local Authority. The Trust is charitable, which means it must operate much like a charity and not for the profit of individuals or businesses.
What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?	A MAT is when 2 or more Academies come together in partnership.  As a charitable company, they have a single group of 'members' (who have an overview of the governance arrangements) and a single board of trustees (at TSSMAT they are called Directors). TSSMAT have a structure document which helps explain their Trust structure. <a href="https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XaoMe4RRaeDfIGsxx2U9a-b70a3Va6KR&amp;authuser=ceo%40tssmat.staffs.sch.uk&amp;usp=drive_fs">https://drive.google.com/open?id=1XaoMe4RRaeDfIGsxx2U9a-b70a3Va6KR&amp;authuser=ceo%40tssmat.staffs.sch.uk&amp;usp=drive_fs</a>  Each school will remain focussed on delivering excellent teaching and learning within its local community.
Can we learn more about TSSMAT?	Threaded through the answers is a range of information about TSSMAT. We will have some face to face meetings organised by The Mease in the not too distant future and look forward to meeting you.
Will this change our admissions policies?	The admissions criteria will remain the same. Any changes to admissions must be reviewed in consultation with a long lead time and we have no intention to change admissions except to meet Government requirements.
Will the schools' faith status be protected?	Absolutely. As a church Trust TSSMATs Articles of Association are 'majority.' The protection of faith status is written into these Articles of Association and we have a majority of diocese officials on the member's board. They have to vote to change the Articles and faith status cannot be changed without a unanimous vote.
What will be the impact on RE and Christian values as not all schools are SIAMS registered?	There should be no impact or indeed only a positive one with a continued focus and improvement on RE and Christian distinctiveness. The strength in working with 3 other church schools, our support from the Diocese and, as a Church Trust, should only strengthen provision.
Will this change have an impact on our current school hours and term dates?	Initially the answer is no and term dates will remain in line with Staffordshire County Council (SCC). TSSMATs current schools have slightly altered Term Dates with two weeks at Whitsun and staff return back to school a week prior to the SCC in August in order to have 4 of the INSET days together as a Trust. The rest of the term dates are in line with SCC. This is not an expectation of joining schools but may seem prudent as relationships and collaborative working develops but if there were to be a suggested change it would always be in conjunction with full and thorough consultation.  School hours will remain the recommendation of the local governing committee (LGC) and a decision of TSSMAT Trust Board. TSSMAT school days are slightly longer. As above, any changes are not automatic on joining and would be considered with consultation.
Will Mary Howard and St Andrews be run as two separate schools under	The main answer is you shouldn't see any changes at all. The schools will run as they currently do in many, many ways. There are some 'back office' tasks that the

the Governance of TSSMAT or will they still share some of their back office operations.	Trust undertake in order to streamline and support school administration but these are all agreed with the LGC and office/administrative staff.
Will the school still have a Headteacher?	Yes – an Executive Headteacher across the Federation.
Who will the Governors be?	The school will retain its Local Governing Body who will have delegated responsibilities and ask questions of and make recommendations to the Board. TSSMATs Governing Boards are called Local Governing Committees.
How will the running of the school change?	Fundamentally it won't. In summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each school will continue to have its local Headteacher / Executive Headteacher with less administration and more time to focus on the teaching and learning within their school</li> <li>- Each school would continue to have its Local Governing Body called Local Governing Committees</li> <li>- Schools will work together to improve education and learning in all the schools</li> <li>- The Directors provide oversight of the academic and financial performance of each school and ensure effective investment in improvements across all schools.</li> </ul>
Will the schools maintain their identity? How will the personal and small feel be preserved?	All schools in the MAT have their own unique contexts and identities, it is imperative that these are maintained within the MAT structure. All heritage and traditions are preserved and celebrated.
Would the school have to change its name, logo or uniform?	No. There is no obligation for a school to change its name. The school will not be changing its uniform as this would be an unnecessary expense for parents.
Will the teachers be at the same school or move around?	Fundamentally, staff will stay at the federation and are certainly not just moved around by the Trust. That said, as a Trust we work with staff to explore their career stage expectations and what they might like to do in order to grow and develop their own career and take on more responsibility etc. This may mean that they take on an opportunity that becomes available within the MAT.
Can you confirm the continuation of wrap around provision at Mary Howard?	Yes, we are passionate about wrap around provision in order to maintain support for working parents, carers and those who feel their children benefit from this provision. All our schools have effective wrap around provision.
How are the children affected?  How are experiences for our children improved as a direct result of the school they attend joining TSSMAT?	In many ways the children 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, resulting from the greater training opportunities given to teaching staff to innovate and improve the children's learning. <i>At child level</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joint trips</li> <li>- Joint events i.e. world book day, camerarta, sports tournaments</li> <li>- Joint learning – specific joint lessons movement across the trust e.g. Science teaching, access to visitors or bookings on one site</li> <li>- Competitions and entrepreneurship (Green Power, music, physical education, art)</li> <li>- Residential together</li> <li>- Outdoor learning</li> <li>- Virtual learning and connections – shared work, texts, editing work across schools etc.</li> <li>- Worship/assemblies/joint delivery</li> </ul>
What is TSSMAT's approach to SEND (special educational needs and disabilities)? What will the impact on the SENDCO (special educational needs and	The Trust has an appointed SENDCO across the 4 schools. This is a model which we would love to continue to roll out but would be considered in consultation with staff and the LGC and no changes would be made without prudent checks and appropriate processes. This may not happen for several years, if at all. It's about looking at the excellent practices there and ensuring we are getting the best for the school's children and families. Responsibilities as an Academy in relation to SEND will be just the same as they are at your school currently.

disabilities coordinator) be?	
What are the views of the staff and do we risk losing staff due to academisation?	We have sought the views of the staff and Ms Evans and the Governing Body has taken the staff on this journey with them. It is naive to say that losing staff isn't a possibility but we hope it is unlikely due to the opportunities we can offer them at our academy.
Will there be changes to the curriculum and what will the advantages be?	TSSMAT is not a Trust which imposes a curriculum. When a school is good or outstanding the LGC will maintain autonomy of the schools' curriculum should they wish. There will be scrutiny of the schools' success and part of this will be to ensure the curriculum remains effective and at a high standard. Often, even where a schools own curriculum is maintained there are gains to have for shared planning and resources in order to enhance the curriculum provision and support teaching and learning. There will be shared events within and across TSSMAT.
How will the future of the school be protected if the Trust struggles? Will the smallest school be sacrificed?	Our approach is sustainable - we do not see growth as being 'successful' in terms of the number of schools in our Trust but in terms of the quality of education in all Trust schools. No school should fall behind as a result of more schools joining the Trust and the future of all schools in the Trust will be protected and prioritised by need whether that be financial, standards, capacity or staffing issues etc. which are mitigated as a family of schools and impact should be limited, no school is sacrificed.
How long will transition take?	Whilst timescales are uncertain it is anticipated that, if all due diligence is successful, it may be between Easter and September 2024. Please note, this is a guide and it could be quicker or more slowly.
How big does the MAT intend to become?	TSSMAT is a Trust which is passionate about retaining the success and viability of small, rural and church schools. The Government White Paper requires Trusts to have a minimum of 10 schools – and a significantly larger number of children than are seen in small, rural schools. We have a growth strategy which we are happy to share but principally, it is TSSMAT's intention to be a Trust for geographically local schools. We currently span Stafford to the Tamworth area. We are certainly not going to grow too quickly or too widely. Schools who join us must share our vision, values and ethos and desire to work in a family of schools for the good of all.
Will both schools stay open or will the Federation be moved into shared buildings to save costs?	It is our intention that both schools will remain open as viable entities in their own right. Whilst the future and educational landscape, funding futures etc. are not certain and this cannot be a promise, it is our intention.
What are the risks of becoming an Academy?	<p>There are risks associated with not changing to Academy status. At some stage in the future, as outlined in the White Paper, any school might be influenced to become part of a broader Academy chain. We believe that the ability to create a local MAT, under local direction, offers the best opportunity to sustain vibrant, successful local schools.</p> <p>Joining a MAT trust remains a positive choice for schools. They enable the strongest leaders to take responsibility for supporting more schools, develop great teachers and allow schools to focus on what really matters – teaching, learning and a curriculum that is based on what works well.</p>

We have a full document which outlines more about TSSMAT at <https://www.tssmat.staffs.sch.uk/join-us/join-our-mat> or visit our website. <https://www.tssmat.staffs.sch.uk/>

Thank you for taking the time to read this Q&A. Our Directors, Governors, Leadership Team and TSSMAT are committed to ensuring our schools continue to flourish, serving all members of their communities. It is our duty to explore every opportunity to maintain and improve our already high standards. Your feedback and views really do count and we will keep you fully informed of future developments. Thank you for your continued support.

Kind regards,

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Chair of LGB

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