

Proposal to become an academy and join Enlighten Learning Trust

Frequently Asked Questions

This document has been issued by the Governors Riverview C of E Primary and Nursery School Voluntary Aided Schools as part of the consultation about whether the schools should become part of the family of the Enlighten Learning Trust (ELT).

What is an Academy?

An academy is a state school, funded directly from central government rather than through a local authority.

Legislation requires that an academy has the following characteristics:

- That it offers a balanced and broadly based curriculum;
- That it provides education for pupils of different abilities; and
- That it provides education for pupils who are wholly or, mainly drawn from the area in which the school is situated.
- Curriculum – an academy has to offer a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils of differing abilities, including maths, English and science, but it does not have to follow the National Curriculum; the Funding Agreement requires that an academy teaches Religious Education. Schools that are not academies have to follow the National Curriculum. In reality, our schools would continue to follow the National Curriculum. The leadership team will continue to be responsible for the curriculum at Riverview to deliver high quality education to all of our children, empowering our staff with the flexibility to adjust lessons to the particular needs and interests of a class (as appropriate) to enhance the educational outcomes for our pupils.
- Funding – the Academy receives its existing schools' budgets and also its share of the funding that is retained by the Local Authority for maintained schools.

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A charitable company limited by guarantee (the Academy Trust) is responsible for the academy, the Academy Trust signs the Funding Agreement (the contract) with the Secretary of State as part of the establishment of the academy.

Enlighten Learning Trust (ELT) would be responsible for all the schools within the Trust. Local Governing Bodies provide local governance, support and challenge to the Heads of Schools and leadership team, and retain representatives from the Church, parents and staff.

What are the potential benefits of being part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

- As a family of schools MATs improve children's education by sharing ideas and expertise with each other. The family of schools share good practice on curriculum, assessment and behaviour.
- Collectively MATs offer even greater and more structured career pathways for staff supported by high quality professional development opportunities.
- As a family of schools MATs help teachers and leaders spend more of their time focused on the one thing that counts the most – the education of children.
- The support the trust provides to schools – HR, finance, and school improvement services, make this possible.

Why is the Governing body proposing to be part of Enlighten Learning Trust versus another academy?

- Enlighten Learning Trust (ELT) is a good fit with Riverview. We believe their vision, moral purpose and ethos is aligned with ours in getting the very best outcomes for all children. We already have a strong relationship as Diocesan schools with Esher High Church of England School, St Andrew's Church of England School and St Martins Infant and Junior schools, and all parties are keen to strengthen this relationship by making it formal.
- As a diocesan school we can only join academy trusts with 'Articles of Association' which support the Church of England Education. Many academies do not fulfil this criteria.

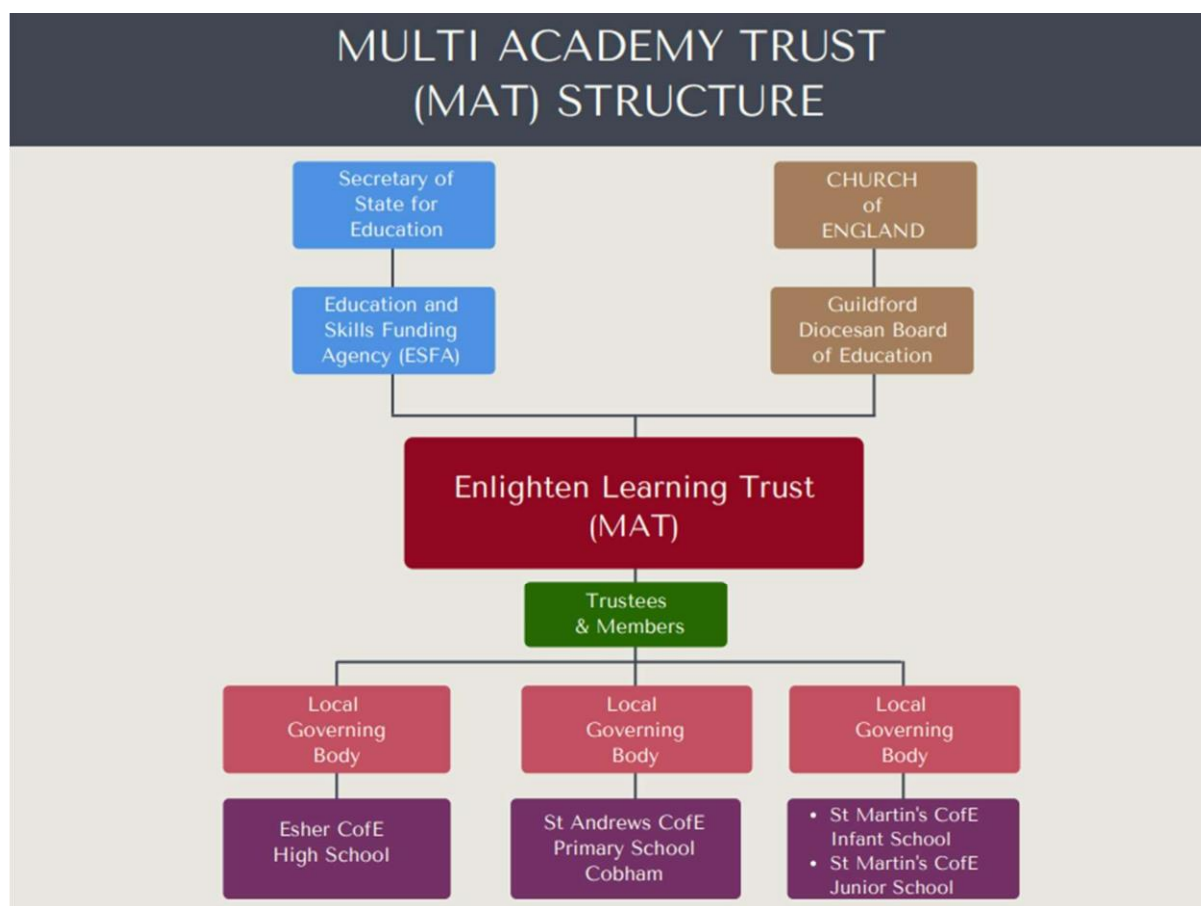
Will Riverview remain an CofE school?

Yes

Will the school operate under a different leadership team?

No

Multi Academy Trust Structure – April 2022



Will my child still I have the same teacher?

Joining an Academy does not influence this, as such decisions will remain with the school's leadership team. Staffing could of course change if a staff member leaves the schools. Staff recruitment (with the exception of the Head Teacher) remains the responsibility of the school.

How are the children affected?

The children will not notice any immediate difference. 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 staff, the sharing of best practice across schools within the Trust, and wider opportunities for children across the Trust such as music and sports festivals.

How will being an Academy effect staff?

Currently, the employer for staff is our Full Governing Body. After conversion, all staff at all 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.

Does OFSTED inspect academies?

Yes, in exactly the same way as for maintained schools.

Does SIAMS inspect academies?

Following conversion to academy status, Riverview would continue to operate as schools with religious designation. Therefore, they will still be required to undergo SIAMS inspections, to evaluate their Christian character and effectiveness.

How would the academy be governed?

Enlighten Learning Trust (ELT) is already a Multi Academy Trust. The Academy Trust signs a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for each school within the Academy Trust.

ELT has a Board of Trustees that is legally responsible for all of the schools within the Trust.

Each school within ELT has a Local Governing Body to provide local governance, support and challenge to the Heads of Schools and leadership team, and includes elected parent and staff representatives.

An Academy Trust also has a small number of Members. These Members have a similar role to 'shareholders' in a private company limited by shares (although there is no dividend), with the ability to appoint some of the Trustees.

How would parents become part of the Local Governing Body?

The same process applies as for the school currently. When there is a vacancy, applications are sought from the parents at the school, which may outline particular skillsets that would be useful to the Local Governing Body. If there are the same number or fewer applications as the vacancies, then those individuals who applied are appointed. If there are more applications than vacancies the parents vote to decide who becomes a governor.

Do academies receive extra funding?

No. Academies receive their funding from the Government rather than via their local authority. The budget is calculated in the same way as now, with a few (fairly small) technical changes for areas such as rates. The academy financial year runs from September to August.

Will Riverview receive less funding as a result?

No we will receive exactly the same funding as we currently do under the national funding formula.

Do Academy Trusts make money?

Academies are schools run by charitable trusts via a contract with the government. The Trusts are private in that the state does not own them, but they cannot run schools for profit.

Would there be changes to the numbers of pupils admitted to Riverview or to the admissions criteria?

There are no plans to do this, however our admission numbers will continue to be considered in light of local demand. We exist to serve our local community whose needs may change over time.

What are the safeguards for vulnerable pupils?

Under the terms of the Funding Agreement (which is the contract between the Academy and the Secretary of State), an academy has to act in exactly the same way as a maintained school in relation to Special Education Needs, behaviour and exclusions.

Who is responsible for deciding if a student needs an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

The process doesn't change and the award of an EHCP remains a local authority's statutory duty.

How does an academy access capital funding?

Academies receive some capital funding, called Devolved Formula Capital, according to the same methodology as maintained schools. This funding is provided directly to the academy. In addition, academies can bid directly to Government for School Improvement Funding (SIF).

How can the Secretary of State intervene in an academy?

The Secretary of State has the ability to terminate the Funding Agreement for each of the schools within Academy Trust if specified situations, predominantly if a school is in 'special measures' or 'requires significant improvement' following an OFSTED inspection, student performance is unacceptably low, there has been a serious breakdown in the governance or management of the academy, or the safety of pupils or staff is threatened. In this situation the Secretary of State would be able to enter into a Funding Agreement with another Academy Trust to take over the governance and management of the academy.

Who would own the land and the buildings?

Our building and land are currently owned by the diocese and this will remain the case if our schools were to convert to academy status.

What will happen to Riverview if we do not become an academy?

Riverview, for the time being, remain maintained, Voluntary Aided, Church of England school as they are currently. However, should the position of the government accelerate with regards to academisation, it is conceivable that the Governing Body may in the future be pushed towards joining an academy trust which may or may not be our first choice.