

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is a Multi Academy Trust?

A group of academies who are working together to achieve the best outcomes for children. The schools are linked formally through governance and legal status and are built upon a shared ethos and vision.



## What are the Key Benefits of being in a MAT?

- Sharing of expertise and joint staff professional development
- Freeing up Headteachers to focus on the bits that really matter
- Improved career progression for talented staff, allowing the recruitment and retention of high quality people
- Financial savings around procurement due to bulk purchasing of goods and services
- Shared back line support, saving money and providing financial security

## How are academies funded?

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) calculates funding using a local authority (LA) formula for mainstream provision or place-led funding for high needs institutions. Most funding for academies comes from the general annual grant (GAG). Capital and pupil premium allocations are paid outside the GAG. The financial year for academies runs from 1st September to 31st August.



## Who receives the funding for an academy within a MAT?

Under a MAT structure, the general annual grant (GAG) in respect of each academy would be received by the MAT and would be under the control of the trustees. It would then be allocated down to the schools and the headteacher will work with their SBM or the CFO to allocate the budget share accordingly.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Will the school lose control of its own budget?

Greater Manchester Academies Trust has a CFO and a COO who has the overview of all financial matters and is expected to provide savings through procurement, income generation and efficiency. At a local level, schools still make decisions about how they spend their own budget.

## What happens if the academy cannot fund things going forward, i.e the government cuts the funding what happens then?

Government funding is allocated to academies in exactly the same way as to Local Authorities. Therefore, any Government cuts will impact on all schools in exactly the same way.

## Are MATs profit- driven

Absolutely not! MATs are registered charities and as such, cannot be run for profit. Any surplus funds have to be reinvested in the Trust and there are no shareholders receiving dividends. At GMAT we prioritise excellence in financial management and this is to ensure the long term viability of our schools and ensure all funds are spent intelligently on the education of the young people in our care.

## Our school is running with a surplus budget. Will the MAT take this money from us?

Your surplus budget remains with the school to save or spend as they see fit (within a loose framework of due diligence guidelines that will ensure transparency and probity).

## Can a school with a deficit budget convert?

Conversion with a deficit is subject to the DfE's guidelines. A school with any size deficit would need to have a recovery plan in place and agreed by the DfE before they would allow its conversion.

## How does capital funding work?

Capital works at MAT schools are funded by a combination of DFC (as in a maintained school) and the

DfE Academies Condition Improvement Fund (CIF). DFC will be automatically calculated based on pupil numbers and paid once a year, whereas the CIF is accessed through a bidding process (which the MAT would assist with).

Capital funds will be held and administered by the MAT, just as the Diocese currently holds DFC for VA schools, but spending decisions will be taken at a local level. Voluntary Aided schools will no longer have access to the Locally Co-ordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP), nor will they have the 10% liability towards capital costs that currently applies. The MAT can apply to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for specific capital projects – as can individual schools. All this comes within the terms of the Funding Agreement.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What about the conversion grant?

The £25,000 conversion grant is made payable to the MAT. This can be spent on the legal and other costs of conversion of each school that joins the MAT.

## What about the money which the LA currently retains?

Most of the schools' block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is delegated to schools though the funding formula, but some is de-delegated from schools to the LA for functions such as Trade Union cover, behaviour support, and the landlord's part of property maintenance, as agreed by Schools Forum. This de-delegated sum is available to academies, which become responsible for providing those services themselves.

## Will the ethos and values of the schools change on becoming an Academy?

No. The ethos and values of the schools will continue as they always have done. The vision may alter as it will be a more collaborative shared vision taking into account each partner school.

## Will the schools' names change if we became an Academy?

No. The only change made will to use 'Academy' rather than 'School' in its name.

## How will SEN funding work?

Special needs remains the responsibility of the Local Authority so the LA is obliged to deliver the same levels of support to academies as they do to Local Authority maintained schools. This includes access to high tariff needs funding as well as access to specialist provision via the same systems and procedures that maintained schools are subject to.

## Does the LA still have responsibilities for academies within the MAT?

Yes, the LA still has responsibility for the following:

- Home to school transport, including transport for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- Education psychology, SEN statements and assessment
- Assigning SEN resources for pupils who require high levels of additional resource (this is a top-up to formula funding under a separate contract with the LA)
- Monitoring of SEN provision and parent partnerships
- Prosecuting parents for non-attendance
- Provision of pupil referral units for a pupil no longer registered at an academy.

## For those services we have to pay for separately, will we have to use suppliers recommended by the MAT, or will our school be able to buy in services from elsewhere if they chose?

The MAT academies will be free to choose their own suppliers for services outside of the MAT's core responsibilities, but will be expected to follow the MAT's financial regulations on purchasing (i.e. like for like quotes above a specified value etc). The MAT will be able to broker relationships on behalf of its academies that offer reduced costs and a single point of contact.

In due course, it may be appropriate to consider whether there are any areas where jointly procured services might be beneficial to the MAT and its academies both financially and in terms of quality of service.

## Will staff be able to work in other schools within the MAT? Will they have to?

Staff will have the opportunity to work in other schools within the MAT within reasonable travelling distance. Consultation will take place on any proposed changes in the light of the needs of schools within the MAT.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Is there still a need for a bursar in each school?

Individual staffing models will be specific for each school and led by need. It is envisaged that the MAT will be supporting, as opposed to replacing, the many and varied responsibilities of a school bursar.

## Will there be a change in the salary scales our school employees are currently on?

Staff will transfer on no less favourable terms and conditions. Any necessary amendments in the future would only be following consultation with staff and unions.

## Who decides the pay & conditions for each school?

As discussed above, your school staff would transfer to the MAT on no less favourable terms and conditions and any necessary amendments in the future would only be following consultation with staff and unions. No changes to terms and conditions will be made as a result of your school becoming part of our MAT. Of course, we all recognise that things can change in any school (academy or not) over time.

## What is the situation regarding teacher and support staff pensions once our school becomes an academy?

Teachers working in an academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), just as if they were employed in a Local Authority maintained school. Staff transferring from a maintained predecessor would simply continue their membership of the Scheme. As the employer, the MAT would be responsible for remitting contributions to the TPS and for all other administrative responsibilities that fall to employers who employ teachers who are subject to the teachers' pensions regulations.

The MAT will also ensure that the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) arrangements stay in place for non-teaching staff. As part of the conversion process, the LGPS scheme's administrators will undertake an actuarial assessment to determine how much the MAT will need to contribute and the terms of that contribution. This may be higher than at present. In short, your school's staff will not see any impact on their pensions because of the conversion to academy status. The MAT's funding agreement requires it to ensure that all staff employed by it have access to the TPS or the LGPS (as applicable).



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What about continuous service?

All previous service will count as continuous service when a member of staff transfers to the MAT.

## Will the schools' uniforms change?

No, it is important to us that the school maintain their own identity and community links that they have built up over many years.

## Can schools in a MAT set their own curriculums?

Yes, as academies, schools within a MAT do not have to follow the national curriculum. They have greater autonomy to offer teaching and learning that best suits their individual community's needs. Being part of a MAT means that those setting the curriculum in their school have extensive support and expertise in doing that most effectively. Of course, pupils still have to follow the criteria laid out by exam boards and the Department of Education to meet the levels when it comes to exams and national testing so, in practice, a lot of the work done in academies is the same as that in maintained schools.

## If the school becomes an Academy and part of a Multi-Academy Trust when is this likely to take place?

September 2023 is most likely, though both applications have to be approved by the Regional School Commissioner after taking advice from a Local Head Teacher Board.

## What would be the timescale and process for conversion?

The DfE estimates that it usually takes between 4-5 months for a school to convert to an academy. Conversion can take place at any time during the year from the 1st of a month.

## Do we need to get permission to convert to an academy and join a MAT?

Yes. Existing schools looking to convert to an academy and join a Multi Academy Trust will need to apply to the

Department for Education (DfE) and gain the approval of the Regional Schools Commissioner.

When the academy converts to a MAT, there will be three tiers of governance rather than two. These three tiers will be:

- Members of the MAT - responsible for fundamental decisions such as constitution of the academy trust – most strategic decisions delegated to the Trustees.
- Board of Trustees of the MAT ('the board'). These are the individuals who run the MAT on a day to day basis and will decide on what and where support is offered. They will also potentially offer centralised services such as HR, IT, Finance etc. The role of the board is likely to be more strategic than a board of a single school and the trustees will be ultimately responsible for all of the academies it runs.
- Local Governing Bodies ('LGBs') for each academy school. In multi academy trusts, each academy will have its own LGB. These have a similar status to committees of a maintained governing body and have powers delegated to them by the board. This is formalised into a scheme of delegation. Individuals serving on a LGB may or may not be trustees of the academy trust.

## What will happen to our land and buildings?

All land and buildings currently owned by the LA on behalf of the school will transfer to the new MAT on a 125 year lease.

## Who is Greater Manchester Academies trust?

Greater Manchester Academies Trust (GMAT) is a multi-academy Trust which currently provides nursery, primary and secondary education in North Manchester, with schools opening as new Academies. It also provides associate leadership and management support to Collyhurst Nursery, a Local Authority maintained nursery.

GMAT serves a diverse community and all our policy and procedures are focused on enabling transformational change for our pupils, their families and their communities leading to deep social impact and excellent educational outcomes.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who is Greater Manchester Academies Trust?

### GMAT also operates:

- A school centred initial teaching training (SCITT) provision: North Manchester Initial Teacher Training (NMITTP)
- A National Research School, providing support and training on behalf of the EEF across 100 schools in the North West

### Our Founding Academies:

**Manchester Communication Academy (MCA).** Open since September 2010 and currently has around 1200 students.

#### Manchester Communication Academy

Inspection dates: 24–25 April 2019.

- Overall effectiveness: Good
- Effectiveness of leadership and management: Good
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment: Good
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare: Good (Personal development and welfare is 'outstanding').
- Behaviour is 'good' and therefore the overall grade here is 'good'.)
- Outcomes for pupils: Good

**Manchester Communication Primary Academy (MCPA).** Open since September 2015 and has over 420 pupils.

#### Manchester Communication Primary Academy

Inspection dates: 10–11 October 2017.

- Overall effectiveness: Good
- Effectiveness of leadership and management: Good
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment Good
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare: Good
- Outcomes for pupils: Good

• Early years provision: Good  
In both schools, attainment and progress data is typically at or above national averages with a cohort of pupil premium of around 60%. Where attainment data is lower than national averages, most pupils have made excellent progress from their starting points, often without any English speaking skills and not having been previously educated in England. Furthermore, we provide an inclusive education that supports all pupils and both schools have high mobility rates of approximately 20%.

Both Academies demonstrate how GMAT has both success and relevant experience in setting up new schools.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who is Greater Manchester Academies Trust?

GMAT also runs two other organisations:

- **North Manchester Initial Teacher Training Partnership (NMITTP).** NMITTP is a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) organisation, the purpose of which is to train, develop and assess trainee teachers towards qualified teacher status. NMITTP was awarded ITT status in 2014 and works with a range of partner schools to support the pipeline of committed professionals to North Manchester and beyond. NMITTP will partner with the Teaching School Hub, Bright Futures from September 2023.
- **Manchester Communication Research School.** In July 2019, we were one of 10 new Research Schools to be designated by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and this will continue to at least 2026. The Research Schools Network is a collaboration between the EEF and the Institute for Effective Education (IEE) to fund a network of schools which support the use of evidence to inform practice within their own school and in other schools locally and nationally. The EEF is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family achievement and educational outcomes.

The main goals and requirements of research schools are:

- To be a bridge between academic research and classroom practice
- Provide school-led support for use of evidence to improve teaching practice and leadership
- Provide practical support for schools including training, events and resources
- Work to identify both what's likely to have an impact for schools and what we know works
- Mobilise information to people who have the most use for it
- Build effective partnerships with local schools to share what works and support schools with implementation

## Central Service Teams

The Trust operates a centralised model whilst ensuring schools can work autonomously. This improves efficiency and effectiveness and this has developed into a strong centralised team that supports financial management, staff recruitment and deployment, IT, HR, site and building management, staff training and development. This has provided effective backbone support which allows Headteachers to focus on the main thing, school improvement and excellence in the classroom.

Governance at the Trust has developed with local governing bodies holding Headteachers to account in collaboration with the CEO for outcomes and the quality of their provision. The board holds the CEO to account for the performance of the Trust.

To provide high quality teaching & learning through a supportive framework for academic success which engages local communities, mitigates the effects of disadvantage and positively impacts social mobility

## What is the trust's vision?

Our ambition is to provide the highest quality education for children and young people in the urban context of Manchester. We believe passionately in the power of an excellent education to transform lives and futures and feel that we can build on our social investment activities, local knowledge, community relationships and strong partnerships to make this happen. We seek to be the place of first choice for children to learn and staff to work. Through an extensive challenging curriculum and best practice in teaching and learning, informed by research and the experiences of our staff, we will enhance children's life chances by maximising their educational outcomes. The Trust's ability to look and work cross phase will enable us to become a centre of excellence in transition. We will invest in families, develop strong curriculum and pedagogy to ensure enhanced progression in children's learning from nursery, to primary to secondary and beyond.

We will embrace the opportunity to take responsibility for a child's education, engaging meaningfully with their family throughout their whole school life, providing them with the best opportunity for a successful future.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Which schools are in the MAT?

GMAT is made up of two academies. Manchester Communication Academy and Manchester Communication Primary academy. There are 1660 children in the Trust.

## What does the trust care about and how do the values match up?

We care about people and looking after each other, be it staff our children, their families and the wider community. We believe in being the best we can be and ensuring that people are supported.

### Values

- **We are committed to excellence**, supporting the ambitions of young people and their families
- **We collaborate effectively** with our local community and local schools to improve life chances for all
- **We create the conditions** to deliver transformational deep social impact
- We are inclusive, collaborative and ambitious whilst **inspiring** others and demonstrating **heart** and **integrity**

Through these values, our ambition is to:

- Make a positive difference to the lives of the children, their families and the communities we serve.
- Have an unflinching commitment to closing the gap between all groups of students so that no child is left behind.
- Build a positive, inclusive culture that fosters open and honest communication so that barriers to our vision can be removed.
- Provide a working environment to enable our staff to develop and flourish, working for an employer of choice that supports them personally as well as professionally.

## What will be the process should our school's results drop, or an OfSTED report identify areas for improvement?

The MAT is responsible for overall school performance and will continually monitor standards, aiming to intervene before an OfSTED inspection if students were not making the required progress.

The MAT would support the school's action plan to improve outcomes for students and broker external support, if required. Equally, this is a two-way process and we would expect schools to notify the MAT of any issues.

It would also be the responsibility of the MAT to ensure that areas for developments listed in an OfSTED report and section 48 report are followed up.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## How much autonomy will we retain?

The Local Governing Board and the school leadership work alongside the Trust team to maintain or improve standards. There has to be an appetite for any joining school to collaborate and share their own best practice as well as a willingness to themselves embrace better practice if this is identified. One of the main benefits of joining a Trust is access to a network of like-minded professionals who can work co-operatively in support of each other, for example in curriculum implementation and assessment. This leads to less duplication and a lighter workload.

The individual circumstance of the school will be the main consideration:

Performance Category	Descriptor	Expectation
EXEMPLIFY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Schools that are currently judged by the Trust to be securely good or better.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These schools will be expected to share best practice and deliver school-to-school support within the Trust</li><li>Continues to develop and grow their own effectiveness</li><li>Grows leaders at every level</li><li>Attainment and progress measures are likely to be consistently above average or well above average in all phases</li></ul>
SUSTAIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Schools that are currently judged by the Trust as good, but may have new leadership or a dip in performance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These schools will be expected to have the capacity to bring about improvement in their own organisations, with Trust support, and may also have the capacity to support others within the Trust</li></ul>
REFINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Schools that are currently judged by the Trust as good, but are at risk of being judged as requiring improvement.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These schools have the capacity to improve with support from within the Trust</li><li>These schools must submit an Action Plan for approval to the identified school improvement leads (SILs) and provide a termly update</li><li>These schools require support and will work with the Trust CEO and identified School Improvement Leads</li></ul>
REINFORCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Schools that are currently judged by the Trust as requiring improvement, but are making rapid progress.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These schools require support and will work with the Trust CEO and identified School Improvement Leads</li><li>These schools must implement an Action Plan drawn up jointly by the Trust CEO/ SILs and Headteacher, for approval by the LGB and the Trust</li><li>These schools must provide a half- termly update on the Action Plan to the Trust CEO/SILs</li></ul>
RENEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Schools that are currently judged by the Trust as requiring improvement, but are at risk of going into a category because they are making slow or limited progress.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These schools require significant external support and will work with the Trust CEO and identified School Improvement Leads</li><li>These schools must implement an Action Plan drawn up jointly by the CEO/ SILs and Headteacher, for approval by a specially convened Trust Standards Focus Group</li><li>These schools must provide a half- termly update on the Action Plan to the Trust CEO/SILs</li></ul>

## Who is responsible for standards?

In a trust, the CEO is the accounting officer. The board is held to account by the DfE for standards, financial oversight and the quality of governance. This has to be part of a seamless relationship between the schools and the trust. The trust cannot fulfil the expectations of the funding agreement without good practice at the school level. Therefore, the leaders and local governors have to be accountable to the CEO and the board for standards in their schools. This collaborative approach should be one of mutual benefit for both parties

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## How will you improve our school?

GMATs approach to school improvement is around leveraging sustainable change and is focused on developing high quality evidence informed practitioners that translate proven strategies into academic success. At the heart of our improvement strategy is a commitment to working in partnership with all our schools, and in supporting all schools in being self-improving, committed to achieving a school-led system. As a research school, we are well placed through our effective partnership with the EEF to implement effectively a tiered model approach to school improvement that focuses on high quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies to improve student outcomes and to evaluate the impact of curricula implementation.

Where academies are demonstrating a high level of success and strong capacity for further improvement, it is important that they are able to operate in conditions that enable them to continue this journey. There is also a moral imperative for such academies to share their expertise for the good of the Trust and the wider education system as a whole. Such academies will have much to share for the benefit of others. Some academies will be in more challenging positions. Where this is the case, the Trust will maintain a higher degree of involvement and ensure that appropriate steps are being taken to strengthen capacity and effect rapid improvement. These schools will receive additional support from the Trust Executive Team.

Diagnostic assessment and identifying the right professionals to support and lead change ensure we can give capacity where it is most needed to bring about optimum success. Through the Executive Principal, CEO, Director of Research and both internal and externally commissioned EEF Lead Teacher Educators and wider Lead Practitioners, we have a committed team well positioned to support school improvement.

Our approach is always contextual, what works in one school may not in another. A culture of high expectation, an understanding of front line contextual and professional knowledge and a clear awareness of where each school is on their journey towards improvement is the starting point that underpins our

school improvement strategy.

Additionally, we understand that, as a growing MAT, we need our dedicated colleagues to grow with us and therefore we must develop talent effectively so we can deploy expertise strategically without compromising elsewhere. Our middle leaders today are our senior leaders tomorrow and their ability must be harnessed in school improvement. Also, we seek where those that work with us from other schools can themselves be 'capacity givers' in pure collaboration. Therefore having a shared sense of purpose but also ownership requires a clearly articulated and collaborative model for school improvement and capacity building. Leadership is a crucial factor in school renewal and improvement and therefore startegic peer to peer support in leading improvements in the quality of teaching is the best determinant of improving student outcomes and improving schools.

All schools have areas to develop and the Trust aims to add capacity to improve more quickly those areas of challenge than has been possible before. As a research school, many of our approaches are evidenced informed and all schools will have access to such practice. There is a committed team to support in all areas of school improvement from curriculum impact to financial planning. Depending on the circumstance in an individual school, we would anticipate that any school joining the Trust will be a 'capacity giver' and therefore make the Trust stronger.

When a school is graded as 'Good' or 'Outstanding', the level of support through day-to-day supervision by the Trust will be limited to those areas of agreed need and improvement. It would be expected that the LGB will operate with maximum autonomy applied through the Trust's scheme of Local Governing Body delegation.

It will be a requirement that schools graded in a category and/or categorised as a red RAG rating will be subject to close supervision of all aspects of governance, leadership, financial management and curriculum delivery through the Trust Leadership team. The LGB will have restricted delegated powers. It would be normal practice for members to be appointed by the Trust Board.

The Trust's School Improvement resources will be used to provide the different levels of support required, as set out below as a guide:

Performance Category	Support provided beyond the core offer (over the academic year)
GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 /2 day per term (Trust CEO/ Executive Leadership Team- (ELT))</li> <li>• Annual Trust Peer Review</li> </ul>
AMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two days per half term (Trust ELT)</li> <li>• Support from the ELT to implement an agreed action plan (up to 20 days)</li> <li>• Progress against Action Plan monitored termly by the Standards Focus Group and Trust CEO</li> <li>• Annual Trust Peer Review</li> </ul>
RED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly visits by the CEO/ Executive team/ SILs</li> <li>• Support from Trust Lead Practitioners</li> <li>• Weekly direction and support from an Executive Lead provided by the Trust (at least 0.25FTE)</li> <li>• Direct Intervention by Chief Executive Officer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure effective senior leadership, including the engagement of Directors of Education and additional governors</li> <li>• Implement a robust and rigorous Academy Improvement Plan and monitoring and evaluation schedule, underpinned by 6 weekly Rapid Improvement Plans</li> <li>• Ensure that leadership at all levels can bring about sustained improvement</li> <li>• Secure quality first teaching across the school using expertise from across the Trust</li> <li>• Rapidly raise standards of attainment and accelerate progress across the school</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Additional support provided as necessary (for example, Lead Teacher support, additional support from Teaching &amp; Learning Specialists) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Termly quality assurance of pupil progress and attainment</li> <li>• Full involvement in Partnership Meetings</li> <li>• External reviews if required including Governance, SEND and Pupil Premium</li> <li>• Support from other schools across the Trust to secure improvement</li> <li>• Directors of Education support in place to secure rapid improvement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## How can we support other schools in the Trust?

We want our good schools to be incubators of great practice and become a lead school in a particular area of improvement that may recognize a strength that the trust does not have embedded. There is not a top down approach, leaders and teachers work together as peers to deliver the end goal.

## What role do you see our local academy board of governors playing?

There is a scheme of delegation in place that sets out the role of the local academy board and how it delivers its function as a sub-committee of the board of trustees. The areas to pursue are in four pillars of strong local governance in a trust. The four areas that, no matter how good the board is, they cannot fulfil.

- The experience of a child in a trust school. Are they happy, safe and well educated?
- The experience of an adult employed by the trust to work in a trust school? How are they supported and developed?
- The experience of a parent or carer who chooses to send their child to a trust school. How are they communicated with? What are their views? How do they articulate concerns?
- The role of the school as an ambassador for the trust. How does a model that will be very different for the community (the MAT) become something that is seen as a positive force for good?

Our local governing boards are best placed to understand their community and therefore have the ability to lead appropriately.

## How will the trust communicate with the school and how can we inform the trust and the board of our challenges and successes?

This is a two way process. The chair of the local board may also have a seat on the Trust Board. Each board has a work schedule and school matters are communicated strategically to the Trust Board. Key headlines from each school are standing agenda items at Trust meetings.

The different board members are able to meet and attend training sessions together. We want our schools to influence key strategic decision making and therefore communication and synergy between the trust and school is of vital importance.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What will the trust be like in 3 year time?

We aim to bring about placed based change, responding appropriately to local need, reaching more families and serving the community as effectively as we can. Understanding our community is key, that is why we aim to grow within north Manchester initially, gaining strength through the partner schools that share our vision and values.

## How will the Trust support our community?

Our ambition for the community we serve shapes our approach at all levels of the Trust. As such, we have developed a 'Family Zone' to better support our impact and influence within North Manchester. The Family Zone is situated within the geographical 'neighbourhood' of four wards in North Manchester. The boundaries were determined by a group of 17 schools which were already working together on a number of initiatives and which eventually expressed the wish to be 'loosely affiliated' as the Family Zone in their aim to mitigate the impact of disadvantage.

There have also been agreed seven key underpinning principles which ensure that the Family Zone ushers in an entirely new approach to minimising or eradicating the impact of disadvantage. These key principles are:

- **Principle 1** - Conjoined partners. The Family Zone is driven by a group of 21 conjoined agencies known as Project 10 Ltd
- **Principle 2** - Asset based community development (ABCD)
- **Principle 3** - The pipeline. The Family Zone offers a holistic programme which supports the child from 'cradle to career' (0-19 years)
- **Principle 4** - Child oriented outcomes. Evaluation is based on realistic child oriented outcomes that have been specified at the outset
- **Principle 5** - Asset building. There is much evidence of resilient children living in the most difficult circumstances who, against the odds, are very successful. The reason for their success often seems to be their ability to draw strength from positive factors in their lives
- **Principle 6** - Children in the driving seat. A feature of the resilient child is their ability to navigate their way through difficulties to adulthood and the level of responsibility they are able to take for their own lives at a very early age
- **Principle 7** - Theoretical context. The Family Zone works closely with Manchester University, which provides robust evaluation of its work with our approach shaped by EEF research

As part of the Family Zone initiative, we have established The Social Investment Department (SID) within the Trust which plays a central role in the 'Family Hub'

This SID has identified four key strategic priority areas:

- Securing social change/tackling disadvantage.  
Current focus areas:
  - Health
  - Poverty and homelessness
  - Safeguarding
- Developing knowledge based policy and practice.  
Current focus areas:
  - Contextual professional knowledge
  - Social research
- Sustainable programme/project development.  
Current focus areas:
  - Partnerships
  - Team
- Capacity building.  
Current focus areas:
  - Community programmes
  - Social context

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is your GMAT's Growth Strategy?

The Trust ambition is, over time, to create a strong, sustainable family of local schools working together in a locality model to meet the needs of children and their families to bring about place based change. Whilst the Trust aims to be a 'capacity giver' to the locality, we aim to harness the strengths of local schools joining us that can take us further, reaching more families and widening impact. We have a track- record of successfully supporting other schools to improve, as evidenced through our support of other areas within our family zone and through our Research School.

We believe we can bring about transformational change to the community/ies we serve and we are passionate about making a long term commitment to families, giving consistent seamless transitional and family support from birth to school leaving age. By working cross phase and through real partnership with multi agencies, we can harness the expertise of front line professionals in evidence informed approaches that identifies long term holistic solutions to the barriers to our vision.

Our Growth Strategy is therefore anchored in our belief that our community strategy is of equal importance to our educational approach. GMAT's community strategy is located within a set of moral and policy imperatives to tackle seemingly intractable issues of inequalities arising from poverty and disadvantage. While the average standard of living of UK citizens is amongst the highest in the world, there are many individuals who experience multiple forms of interrelated disadvantage, for instance, poverty, ill health, unemployment and family breakdown. Most of our students live in areas within Manchester which have high concentrations of multiple forms of disadvantage across their resident populations, which are compounded by the area's physical and service features, such as poor housing and transport infrastructure, and poorly performing public services. The strategy has a two-fold purpose - first, to develop a profound understanding of the locality of North Manchester including the particular area challenges and second, to further understand how those challenges might best be mitigated.

The GMAT community strategy responds to this challenge by promoting a profound understanding

of the locality; working collaboratively with eighteen local schools; utilising a social mapping system and synthesising knowledge across sectors in order to mitigate against complex, interrelated and mutually reinforcing presentations of disadvantage.

We, therefore, have the ambition to increase the number of schools in the Trust within a geographical area where we already have a shared vision, shared networks and a strategic working relationship seeking to improve educational and life outcomes for children across our community. We feel a sense of responsibility and obligation to expand. We will only expand when we have the capacity to do so and therefore building on our central service teams and maintaining our good and better schools is essential. It is the responsibility of the Trust to build capacity as it develops.

Our Vision for growth is therefore based on a place based model within a locality where front line professionals can operate strategically across a family of schools, demonstrating economies of scale, multi-agency and partnership working and a family first approach. With this alignment, we believe, we can provide the best platform for our schools to thrive.

As a result, we continue to be keen to invite good or outstanding primary, secondary and special schools to join us in order to strengthen the school improvement model. This may also include merging or taking on other Trusts and all their schools. We recognise the many benefits of a cross phase Trust, offering seamless progression and optimising learners' progress.

When a school is proposed to be part of our MAT we consider:

- Our prior knowledge of locality and community.
- Moral obligation.
- Size of school and designation.
- Financial position of school.
- Distance between schools.
- Ofsted category of the school.
- Leadership Capacity

However, our moral obligation to meet the needs of the schools and pupils in the Trust and to raise standards and address underperformance remains the overriding consideration and this must be considered in terms

of ensuring no existing children are detrimentally impacted.

The Trust will serve a range of communities including those with relatively high levels of deprivation.

What we will not do:

- Put competition before collaboration.
- Expand through sponsorship without all existing academies being in a strong position.
- Any act that would be detrimental to any young person, staff or school in a neighboring community.

The Trust will apply these principles in context, not rigidly ruling out schools wishing to join who do not meet all of the criteria. In considering any application to join, the Trust will complete a careful due diligence process. Any new school joining the Trust will be asked to fully commit to the Trust's ethos, aims and operational model.

In time, we aim to recruit further School Improvement Leaders to support schools joining the Trust and enhance our capacity to bring about rapid improvement where required without compromising on residual capacity. The School Improvement Leaders will work closely with the CEO and Directors of Education to develop the school improvement model ensuring that key cross phase elements such as teaching, learning, assessment and professional development are highly effective.

Geographical isolation of schools within the Trust will be avoided. The Trust has no current plans to expand outside of North Manchester, however in the midterm (3-5 years), establishing a Hub B model is an aspirational objective. Isolation makes it more difficult to reap many of the collaborative benefits of being in a MAT with such coherent community intelligence, and it becomes difficult for leaders and staff to work together in person. Ultimately, we would hope to grow a series of local hubs, making it easier to communicate, share good practice, and create a common ethos within the Trust. Our belief is that pupils will benefit most from geographical hubs of between 5 to 8 schools. We would expect to grow more hubs throughout Greater Manchester.

