



GREATER MANCHESTER ACADEMIES TRUST FAQ



With you...for you...about you...

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL

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?

Numerous, such as; 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



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 local governors and leaders can decide whether to change to 'Academy' rather than 'School' in its name.



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.

As the MAT grows, our ambition is to create some cross-school leadership roles called 'standards leads', in consultation with our partner schools. It's likely that these roles would involve teachers or leaders from our MAT partner schools being seconded for a period (e.g. 1 day a week) to fulfil this role across other schools.

Is there still a need for a business manager in each school?

Yes! Of course, individual staffing models will be specific for each school and led by need. But it is envisaged that the MAT will be supporting, as opposed to replacing, the many and varied responsibilities of an SBM - and we know how essential they are!

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.

GMAT Teaching scales are in line with national pay scales, including leadership and TLR points. 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.

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).

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 build 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?

Both applications have to be approved by the Regional School Commissioner after taking advice from a Local Head Teacher Board. This means that the time-scale for becoming an academy and joining a MAT is usually around a year from initial conversation.

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 from the point of application.

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.

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

FINANCIAL

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.

How are academies funded?

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.

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 (Devolved Formula Capital) (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 DfE for specific capital projects – as can individual schools. All this comes within the terms of the Funding Agreement.



What about the money which the LA currently retains?

Most of the schools' block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is delegated to schools through 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, and others, themselves.

How will SEN funding work?

Special needs remains the responsibility of the Local Authority (for now) 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. However, as a Trust we would want to develop a more specialised approach and appoint our own Speech and Language Therapists. We currently have one operating Trust wide.

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.

GMAT enjoys a positive and purposeful relationship with Manchester's Local Authority. We are open and transparent with the LA about our growth ambition, and the kinds of schools who would be well suited as GMAT partners. The Local Authority are supportive of the trust and our growth with similar inclusive schools who serve our community.

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.

What is being charged and what is being offered for this?

Please refer to the Shared Services Service Level Agreement (SLA) for detailed information regarding the charges and the services being provided. The SLA outlines the scope of services offered by GMAT to its schools

What is the reserves position?

The reserves position is detailed in the attached financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2025. Please refer to those statements for a comprehensive breakdown of the reserve balances and related financial information

Three-year budget forecasts:

Greater Manchester Academies Trust show budgetary challenge in the coming years:

- 2025-2026: surplus of £50,551.
- 2026-2027: deficit of £108,653.
- 2027-2028: Projects a deficit of £67,858.

While total income is expected to grow, rising expenditure, particularly in pay costs, outpaces this growth. Crucially, these projected deficits are driven by strategic investments: specifically, significant spending on a new building project and essential student catch-up initiatives, these deficits are the direct result of vital investments in new building projects and student catch-up programs.

Greater Manchester Academies Trust Consolidated 2025/26			
	FY 2025-2026 £	FY 2026-2027 £	FY 2027-2028 £
Total Income Budgeted	17,039,777.62	17,380,573.17	17,721,368.72
Total Pay costs budgeted	13,556,428.75	14,056,428.75	14,356,428.75
Total Non pay budgeted	3,432,797.86	3,432,797.86	3,432,797.86
Total Exp budgeted	16,989,226.61	17,489,226.61	17,789,226.61
Operational Surplus / Deficit	50,551	(108,653)	(67,858)

While these are essential for the trust's long-term success, tracking the rising pay costs alongside them will be key. Pupil growth funding received 2027-2 onwards will ease the deficit. The Trust remains in strong financial position.

What percentage of the top-slice goes into central reserves vs. operational services?

All of the top-slice is allocated to operational services. Central services aim to build their own reserves through other internally generated funds. As part of the Trust, schools benefit from shared financial reserves, which act as a safety net for unexpected challenges, including:

- Emergency repairs or unforeseen capital expenditures
- Temporary reductions in pupil numbers
- Rising operational costs due to external factors

This collective approach helps to mitigate risk and maintain financial stability, ensuring that individual schools are protected from potential financial pressures.

Can GMAT provide a detailed breakdown of what services are included and which are optional?

We understand that GMAT academies have different financial/operational contexts, strengths, and challenges. Our approach to this is not "one-size-fits-all"; we tailor our support to meet the specific needs of each school while ensuring they remain financially robust and compliant. We would utilise the expertise that currently exists within the Trust whilst looking to enhance provision and develop synergy.

Key Actions for GMAT Schools:

- **Initial Assessment:** Conduct a detailed review of each school's financial position to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. This would be sensitive and collaborative.
- **Bespoke Plans:** Develop tailored financial strategies for each academy, aligned with their current improvement priorities and future aspirations.
- **Collaboration:** Involve school leaders in financial decision-making, ensuring transparency and ownership of financial plans.

Are there additional charges for services outside the top-slice?

Please refer to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for full details.

As the Trust has grown, many services are managed centrally, which is reflected in the current charges across all schools. For new schools joining the Trust, existing on-site staff allow many services to be provided locally, reducing central charges and enhancing operational efficiency.

This structure allows for an annual review of services, staffing, and school needs, while the top-slice contribution remains broadly within the range of 4.5% to 6.5% of the annual GAG

What are each of the member schools' financial positions? (Deficits? Surpluses?)

Year-to-date, both schools are operating with surpluses and are performing positively against their budgets. Forecasts indicate that this strong financial position is expected to continue through to year-end,

Does the trust hold any loans or financial liabilities?

The Trust does not currently hold any loans or other financial liabilities.

What is the process for approving large expenditure or capital works?

All large expenditure and capital projects are governed by the Trust's Financial Control Policy and Procurement Policy (see attached). These policies set out the required approval routes, including:

- Submission of a detailed business case outlining the purpose, costs, and expected benefits
- Review and endorsement by the appropriate budget holders or senior leadership
- Oversight and approval by the Trust Board or designated committee for high-value items
- Compliance with procurement thresholds, competitive tendering, and contract management requirements

This structured process ensures transparency, accountability, and alignment with the Trust's strategic objectives while maintaining robust financial controls.

What is the trust's current reserves strategy? (E.g., % of GAG kept)

Our financial approach is centred on supporting schools and students as effectively as possible, while ensuring that all decisions are made within the constraints of individual school budgets. We are committed to ensuring that resources are used strategically to drive improvement, enhance pupil outcomes, and maintain financial stability across the trust.

Reserves Policy

The trust centrally manages reserves for all schools, allowing for a strategic overview of available funds and their allocation. In line with policy guidance schools are encouraged to submit business cases to access reserves for specific projects, ensuring that all spending aligns with school improvement priorities and trust-wide objectives. This process provides transparency, equity, and the opportunity to maximise the impact of available funds.

We recognise that GMAT is currently in a healthy financial position, with schools having worked hard to build up their reserves. If your school were to join, we would work closely with all stakeholders to fully understand and honour the plans that have been put in place to utilise these reserves. This would involve:

- Analysing asset management plans to understand priorities and long-term needs.
- Review of key risks which may require investment
- Evaluating the educational estates to identify key areas for investment, improvement, or maintenance.
- Reviewing planned preventative maintenance (PPM) records to ensure continuity in essential upkeep and repairs.
- Reviews of any existing contracts and financial commitments.

This detailed analysis would allow us to align existing plans with the trust's strategic vision while ensuring that reserves are spent effectively for the benefit of pupils and staff. Also allowing a steady reserve fund for future planning and forecasting.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ESTATES

Estates management – how/ who will do this?

On joining Greater Manchester Academies Trust (GMAT), the trust becomes the Responsible Body for the School. As the Responsible Body, GMAT holds full accountability for the safety, compliance, strategic planning, and long-term management of the school estate in line with expectations set by the Department for Education (DfE).

Estates management will therefore be delivered through a centralised, trust-led model, overseen by GMAT's professional estates team. This includes responsibility for:

- Developing and maintaining a bespoke 5-year estate strategy and asset management plan for the school
- Managing all statutory compliance and planned preventative maintenance (PPM)
- Commissioning, managing, and assuring contractors and professional services
- Maintaining a central compliance register and digital estate data systems
- Completing all required DfE estate returns and data submissions
- Prioritising and delivering maintenance, improvement, and capital projects
- Securing and managing capital funding bids on behalf of the school

Headteachers and school leaders remain closely involved and work in partnership with the trust estates team, providing local knowledge, identifying issues, and supporting prioritisation. However, the legal, technical, and compliance responsibility sits with the trust.

This model provides:

- Clear legal accountability as required by the DfE
- Professional oversight and consistent standards
- Reduced operational burden on school leaders
- Assurance to governors that the estate is safe, compliant, and strategically managed

In summary, GMAT becomes the Responsible Body and takes full responsibility for estates management, allowing the school to focus on its core educational mission while benefiting from expert, trust-wide support.

How will estates decisions be prioritised between schools?

Each school within GMAT has its own bespoke estate strategy and asset management plan, aligned to its educational vision and condition priorities. GMAT will develop this with new school joining the trust so that all state holders have an input. These individual plans feed into a trust-wide estates strategy.

Prioritisation is informed by:

- Condition survey data
- Health and safety risk
- Educational impact
- Compliance with national standards

The asset management plan is the primary tool used to prioritise work objectively and transparently. GMAT also undertakes all capital funding bids for additional investment, ensuring projects are aligned with both school-level need and the estates standards set out by the Department for Education (DfE). GMAT will formulate an assessment management plan for each school joining the trust so no additional work is needed from the school .

Does GMAT hold a long-term estates strategy?

Yes. GMAT holds a long-term, trust-wide estates strategy that aligns with national expectations and the DfE's Education Estates Strategy. Every school also has its own estate strategy, which feeds directly into the trust's overarching plan.

No school is automatically prioritised over another. Decisions are evidence-led and based on need. Where urgent decisions are required, these are always taken with educational impact and pupil safety as the primary considerations.

How are capital funds allocated?

The DfE has introduced changes to how capital funding is informed and allocated, with an increasing emphasis on accurate condition data and estate intelligence.

GMAT is fully prepared for this shift. The trust ensures that:

- All condition surveys are up to date
- Asset data is accurate and robust
- Required data returns are completed on time

This includes readiness for the autumn estate data return to the DfE, which directly supports fair and effective allocation of capital funding. This proactive approach helps ensure estates funding is targeted where it is most needed to maintain safe, warm, and well-functioning buildings.

Aside from this funding stream each academy is awarded a capital fund each year as part of its funding agreement with the DfE the central team will work alongside the SLT team of each school to prioritise how this funding is to be spent and the central estates team will manage this work.

Who prioritises urgent works across schools?

Urgent works are prioritised collaboratively. The Chief Operating Officer works in close partnership with each school's Headteacher to assess risk, urgency, and educational impact.

This ensures:

- Swift decision-making
- Clear accountability
- A balance between trust-wide oversight and local knowledge

Health and safety issues are escalated immediately, with resolution prioritised ahead of non-urgent planned works.

Will existing contractors and arrangements remain in place?

Existing contractors and arrangements can remain in place where they:

- Offer good value for money
- Are competent and compliant
- Meet current DfE and trust standards

GMAT manages estates centrally through its professional estates team, providing compliance oversight, planned maintenance, and strategic planning. Where a different contractor or arrangement could deliver a better, safer, or more cost-effective service, GMAT will explore this collaboratively with the school before any changes are made.

The aim is not change for its own sake, but improved quality, assurance, and value.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

What is your school improvement strategy?

Our school improvement strategy centres on providing appropriate, targeted support to schools, working alongside leaders. It follows a typical school development cycle of self evaluation by the school's leaders with the support/QA of true leaders; The formation of development plan and mapped support. All support is agreed with school leaders and brokered by trust leaders. It is however our vision that wherever possible, support will be peer to peer between the schools in the trust. This does mean that the schools expert staff would be asked at times to work with other schools. Where schools have common developmental objectives, they will work collaboratively on them.

It's also important to consider the wider trust offer as part of the school improvement strategy- the level of back-office support provided does reduce the burden on school leaders, enabling and empowering them to work more on aspects such as teaching and learning.

What is the quality assurance offer/ expectation?

Schools will engage with a scheduled QA activity twice a half-term. One will be school-led and the other supported by the trust (either by a trust leader or working with another trust school leader). School leaders will of course continue to conduct their own regular QA and are welcome to request support with any of this.

What is the leadership capacity in the trust?

Leadership capacity is good but not over-developed for a trust of our size. This means that we are well set-up to support 3-4 schools but as the trust grows, we will need to recruit further. We would aim to do this from the schools within the trust, with an emphasis on new joining schools where possible and appropriate.

Our current executive team is: CEO, COO, CFO, MCA Headteacher, MCPA Headteacher/Education Director & an Executive Safeguarding Lead.

Who performance manages the CEO?

The CEO is performance managed by a sub committee of trustees which includes the chair of the board and is supported by an external partner.

Is there external scrutiny e.g. external SIP? Governance review?

Yes, the trust engages with external partners for specific aspect reviews such as governance. Schools broker their own SIP as they feel needed. There is no requirement for the trust to do this as the SIP function is provided by trust leaders, so it is down to the headteacher's preference. All our schools engage with MCC's QAPs. This year, the following reviews have/ will be completed: Behaviour, SEND, Attendance and Governance. There is also an extensive internal audit approach, the focus of which changes annually, for example, Cyber Security Review was a recent focus.

How is school improvement support prioritised across the trust?

Prioritisation is based on a risk assessment methodology. Areas of best practice are also mapped to identify opportunities to build on the expertise of skills across the trust.

How much autonomy will our school retain over pedagogy and CPD?

Schools are supported to develop and lead their own curricula and CPD aligned with their pupils' needs. This support includes our research school who support with CPD planning and delivery as appropriate. CPD aligns to the school's own development plan. Compliance based CPD (safeguarding etc) is centrally tracked and co-ordinated but locally delivered.

There is no central or trust curriculum. Autonomy of curriculum is based on success as per the school improvement strategy.

What is the trust's model for developing subject leadership?

Subject leader development is centred on collaboration, engagement with local networks, the formation of trust networks and mentoring. Subject leaders work to a supported schedule of activities which is locally devised but centrally supported. Central support can be modelling QA processes, joint learning walks, cross school moderation and Ofsted support.

How many school improvement staff are employed, and what are their roles?

We believe in empowering schools in our trust. As we grow, we anticipate roles developing for highly talented school colleagues to contribute across the trust.

Our current school improvement team is:

CEO - currently providing RISE support to schools in other trusts with a focus on improving outcomes. Has overall responsibility for school performance.

Education Director - MCPA's head, works as an OFSTED inspector and SIP in Rochdale, with experience of 2 successful exec head roles. Responsible for school improvement.

Trust Headteacher: Pupil support - An experienced primary head working in a central role with oversight of safeguarding and personal development.

Research school director - leads on the research school and provides support with training and research informed practice.

How often will external quality assurance happen?

This can vary depending on developmental needs and self evaluation but is expected to be a minimum of biennially.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GROWTH

What is our growth plan?

We have outline our growth strategy earlier within the document, in summary;

Schools who want to partner with us must be:

- Inclusive
- Community focused
- Keen to collaborate
- Serving our community - within 5 miles of MCA

Our ambition is to partner with a small number of schools in 2026-27 to form the nucleus of the trust's growth strategy. These schools will help to shape our offer and model going forwards and will need to be in a developmental position to be able to contribute to the trust's offer potentially with colleagues who can grow into trust-wide roles. Our ambition is that this initial growth phase takes us to 5 schools in the next 2-3 years.

Beyond that, the schools who then join the trust will do so with a more 'set' offer. At this point, the trust would also be positioned to be able to support schools which are less successful and are in need of intensive school improvement.

We are careful of setting maximum numbers, because if a school is a good fit for us, and we are a good fit for them, we would want to be able to partner with them. But we do not anticipate being any larger than ten schools at any point.

We believe that our strength is in our contextually-informed and locality based model. If growth were to occur outside of our local radius, this would see the formation of a new 'hub' school within Greater Manchester with a similar model and local facilities. The need for such a model given the presence and growth of existing trusts is however unlikely.

SCHOOL CULTURE/ETHOS AND IDENTITY

Will our school keep its curriculum model and pedagogy after conversion?

Yes - we have no desire to change things which work well. There is no vision for a centralised curriculum.

Can the school retain its branding, uniform, logo, website etc.?

Yes there is no expectation to rebrand. The governors would decide whether the school name should include the word 'academy' or remain unchanged; there are plenty of academies who haven't changed their names at all and still include the word school.

How does the trust ensure that each school maintains its unique character rather than adopting a single MAT-wide model?

By allowing the schools in the trust to make the decisions which best serve their pupils. Trust leaders work as 'sounding boards' for heads and provide support and challenge. But it's extremely rare that they mandate certain approaches across trust schools. As stated above, this is of course dependent on success - but essentially if something works for the school and has a positive impact, they should be able to continue doing it.

How does the trust work with culturally diverse communities like ours?

By being both culturally aware and diverse ourselves. We draw on the expertise of our diverse staff bodies and leadership teams as well as any external consultants and training to ensure that we best serve all of our communities.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

POLICIES

What shared policies will we be expected to adopt?

The Trust maintains a Scheme of Delegation which defines the responsibilities for each tier of governance (it is a requirement for all MATs to do this). The information below is drawn from the Scheme of Delegation, which is available on the GMAT website.

Since the Trust employs all staff, HR policies are determined by the Board of Trustees. These include:

- Appraisal policy
- Capability of staff policy
- Family Policy
- Allegations against staff
- Grievance Policy
- Menopause Policy
- Pay Policy
- Probation policy
- Safer recruitment policy
- Social Media staff Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Discipline policy
- Staff Sickness and Attendance
- Visitors and volunteers (low level concerns) Policy
- Whistleblowing policy

Section C of the Scheme of Delegation (especially C1.14) gives more details here.

Although not HR policies, the Trust also oversees a Health and Safety Policy (including, for example, Moving and Handling), a Business Continuity Plan, and an EDI policy.

Since the Trust oversees the finances of all schools in the Trust, policies in this area are also determined by the Board of Trustees. These include:

- Anti fraud bribery and corruption policy
- Investment policy
- Charging and remissions policy
- Financial Control policy
- Gifts and Hospitality policy
- LGPS discretions policy
- Procurement policy
- Reserves policy

Section F of the Scheme of Delegation gives more detail here. The only financial aspect for which Local Governing Bodies are accountable is the Pupil Premium/PE and Sport Premium (F12).

The Trust provides IT services to its schools, so the following policies also fall to the Board of Trustees:

- Access Control Policy
- AI Policy
- Cyber Response Plan
- Cyber Security Policy
- Data backup policy
- Data protection policy
- Data Retention Policy
- Freedom of information complaints policy
- Freedom of information policy
- GDPR Privacy notices Governor
- GDPR Privacy notices Parent
- GDPR Privacy notices staff
- GDPR Privacy notices Recruitment
- GDPR Privacy notices student
- ICT Incident Management
- Information Security Policy
- IT Acceptable Usage policy,
- Protection of biometric information of children in schools and colleges policy

The Scheme of Delegation has less to say about these policies, but some are covered in Section B4.23.

Which policies must be standardised?

All policies must be consistent with the Trust's Vision and Values. For example, the Trust has a Safeguarding Statement of Intent, and school safeguarding policies must be consistent with this. In practice, it is unlikely there would be any in-principle disagreements about such matters. Other policies that fall in the same category include:

- Admission arrangements
- Allegations against staff and low level concerns
- Child protection policy and procedures
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school
- Online safety
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions

The Scheme of Delegation refers to these policies at various points (eg Admissions can be found at Section D2).

Which policies can remain school-based?

In practice, GMAT schools retain considerable autonomy over many areas, including:

- Accessibility plan
- Anti-bullying
- Assessment,
- Attendance
- Behaviour for learning (including Exclusions)
- Collective Worship Policy
- Early years foundation stage (EYFS) policies
- Examination contingency plan First aid, administering medicine
- Intimate care
- Lockdown procedures
- Positive Handling policy
- Pupil Premium
- Trips and Visits Policy
- SEND Policy (including any internal inclusion arrangements)
- Sex and Relationships Education Policy
- Sports premium report
- Uniform Policy

Section D of the Scheme of Delegation gives more detail about this.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE & SCHEME OF DELEGATION

What meaningful oversight with the LGB maintain?

The Local Governing Body (LGB) maintains meaningful oversight by acting as a critical link between the academy and its stakeholders while holding accountability for various academy-level and governance functions.

Further details can be found in the scheme of delegation.

Local Governing Bodies have responsibility for:

- Serving as the key link between the academy, parents/carers and the local community.
- Approving and monitoring policy and strategy for curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment and student welfare.
- Ensure effective implementation of Trust policies and procedures.
- Ensuring the Trust's culture, values and strategic aims are delivered in the academy
- Promoting, oversee and monitor academy safeguarding arrangements.
- Promoting, oversee and monitor support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

Are there representatives on the board of trustees who truly understand our community?

We have a dedicated Family Partnership and Community group which is responsible to the Board around the delivery of our Community impact and partnership strategy. This is formed of 3 Trustees and holds wider community representation. Reports for this Committee are prepared by Vicki Leigh. Minutes and Papers from this meeting are available on request.

Additionally, our Trustee Chair has over 25 years education experience and was a Senior Leader at Abraham Moss school for over 10 years as well as being born in the area.

We share a deep respect for the individuality of schools, their strong community connections, and the leadership of their headteachers. We believe that schools thrive when they remain rooted in their local context, and we are committed to protecting this as a core principle within our trust

Can our school be represented on the board of trustees?

The Board is structured in line with our Articles of Association (available on the website). Governors can attend meetings on request and by invite. There is a Chairs meeting prior to the meeting cycle when the Chairs of LGB, committees and the Trust Board meet to discuss local matters and this is reported back to Trustee level. Whilst it is possible for Governors to be Trustees, this will be unrealistic as we continue to grow.

How is accountability shared between the trust board, executive team, and LGB?

As per the Scheme of Delegation. There are delegated functions throughout the Trust with the Trust Leader/ CEO charged by the Trust Board for day-to-day management. The CEO will be responsible for the leadership and management of the Central Executive Team and the academy Headteachers and will report to the Trust Board and its Committees alongside the Chair of Governors.

How often does the Scheme of Delegation get reviewed, and who decides changes?

The Scheme will be subject to formal review, annually. However, if the Trust Board deems it appropriate, changes may be made at any time the Board sees fit.

The Trust Board has the absolute discretion to review, amend and/or terminate parts of the Scheme at any time and as it sees fit (subject to complying with the legal requirements upon it).

As the Trust and the academies develop, so may the governance arrangements and accordingly the delegations that are in place. For example, (and without limitation):

- Changes may need to be made as a result of lessons learned and development of best practice.
- Where weaknesses develop in an academy's leadership and governance, or in particular areas, the Trust Board may need to intervene and remove delegations.

What decisions will our school definitely retain? (Curriculum, staffing, SEND, behaviour?)

As per the Scheme of Delegation. The Local Governing Body (LGB) retains accountability for a wide range of academy-level decisions and oversight functions, meaning the board are ultimately answerable for the task or decision, even if they delegate the actual work to others.

The specific decisions and areas where the LGB holds accountability include:

Governance and Leadership

- Internal Appointments: Appointing the LGB Vice Chair and allocating specific lead Governor roles.
- Strategic Planning: Determining the Academy Development Plan and completing the Academy Self Evaluation Form (SEF) to reflect progress against that plan.
- Operational Setting: Such as the timing of the school day and uniform

Education and Curriculum

- Curriculum Delivery: Setting and delivering the academy curriculum and assessment framework, ensuring it aligns with the Trust's overarching approach.
- Standards and Provision: Maintaining standards of teaching and providing oversight of pupil progress and attainment.
- Policy Approvals: Approving specific academy policies, including:
 - Religious Education and Collective Worship policies.
 - SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) and Sex and Relationships policies.
 - Off-site Visits policy.
- Operational Education: Managing the arrangement of examinations, careers guidance, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) delivery, and the provision of school meals.

Pupil Welfare and Inclusion

- Safeguarding: Monitoring safeguarding issues within the academy and keeping pupil attendance registers.
- SEND and Accessibility: Approving and implementing the academy's Accessibility Plan, determining SEND and inclusion policies, and approving the SEN Information Report.
- Support Strategies: Approving the Pupil Premium Strategy for publication.

Staffing

- Structure: Approving the academy staff structure framework, though this requires CEO approval and must remain within budget.
- Performance: Conducting the performance management of the Headteacher alongside the CEO.

What are the expectations for governor training and time commitment?

The meeting calendar will be very similar to the structure as it is currently. In addition, Governors will be invited to attend strategic meetings with other boards and Trustees prior to the first meeting of the year (and usually at an 'away' afternoon in January). Training is tailored around the individual requirements with statutory training usually completed online.

What are the escalation routes if the school disagrees with trust-level decisions?

Whilst we would anticipate this not to be the case, such occurrence would normally be reviewed through the following process:

Internal Escalation within the Trust:

A) Formal Representation to the Trust Board

- The LGB can formally minute its disagreement
- A written paper can be submitted to the Trust Board
- The Chair of Governors can request to attend and speak at a Trust Board meeting
- Evidence, local impact analysis, and stakeholder feedback can be presented.

This is usually the first and most appropriate route.

B) Escalation via the Chair-to-Chair Route

- LGB Chair raises the issue directly with the Trust Board Chair.
- May include mediation discussions before formal board reconsideration.
- Useful for resolving misunderstandings or clarifying delegated powers

C) CEO / Executive Leadership Review

If the issue relates to operational implementation:

- The LGB can request a review meeting with the CEO.
- Additional data or impact assessments may be commissioned.
- Decisions are paused pending review

Review Against Governance Documents

The LGB can check whether the decision:

- Breaches the Scheme of Delegation
- Conflicts with the Articles of Association
- Exceeds delegated authority
- Creates legal or compliance risk

If procedural irregularity is identified, the LGB may request formal reconsideration on governance grounds

Beyond that, representation could be made to the Members Board. Through collaboration, communication and knowledge sharing it is anticipated that this event would be extremely rare.

How will local governance be supported—clerking, training, development?

The Governance Professional will clerk all meetings and prepare the agenda and support planning and organisation of papers. Additionally, the Clerk will manage actions arising from the meeting and assign tasks. The schedule of work for governors will be developed into an annual plan to ensure governors can demonstrate strategic influence within their delegated functions whilst maintaining key community advocacy. A training programme for governors will be agreed based on skill level analysis and all new governors will be inducted effectively.

There are opportunities for governors to join Trust subcommittees.

There is at least one annual session where all governors and trustees work together to shape Trust vision or key priorities.

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

A growing team, a shared commitment and community based professional knowledge will enable us to truly groundbreaking in our approach to community impact.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

STAFF & TUPE

What will the shared services be and what will this mean for roles of some staff? Will there be staff optimisation and how will this affect people's jobs at ?

Our shared services model centralises specialist and administrative HR functions to reduce duplication and strengthen support for the school. When a school joins the Trust, staff would transfer under TUPE with their existing terms and conditions protected, and we then undertake a careful review to align structures and ensure sustainability. While there can sometimes be adjustments, particularly in back-office roles where services are centralised, our aim is not staff reduction for its own sake but to deploy resources effectively. Any proposed changes would follow full consultation and be managed sensitively, with a focus on maintaining stability for pupils and supporting staff through the transition, while also creating wider professional development and career progression opportunities across the Trust. We very much see growth as adding capacity and developing pathways for existing staff and this is our commitment.

What assurances will we be able to offer staff about the security of their jobs?

We understand that one of the biggest concerns when a school joins a Multi Academy Trust is the security of staff roles. We want to be absolutely clear: our intention is to retain and invest in the existing staff team. Your school's greatest strength is its people. We are not looking to replace that strength — we are looking to build on it.

When schools join our Trust, staff transfer under TUPE regulations, meaning existing terms and conditions are protected. We respect the professional expertise, experience, and commitment already within the school, and our priority is continuity and stability for both staff and pupils.

Our approach is about:

- Retention, not redundancy – We do not join with schools to reduce staffing. We join to strengthen them.
- Building workforce capacity – We bring additional central support in areas such as HR, finance, curriculum development, and professional development, so teachers and leaders can focus on teaching and learning.
- Career development opportunities – As part of a Trust, staff gain access to wider networks, leadership pathways, cross-school collaboration, and high-quality CPD that may not be available in a standalone setting.
- Collaboration, not takeover – We work alongside existing leaders and staff to develop a shared improvement plan. Your school's identity, culture, and strengths matter.

We would look to prioritise stability, morale, and professional growth. Change is managed carefully, transparently, and in consultation with staff and unions.

Our goal is long-term sustainability. That means strengthening leadership at every level, supporting workload reduction through shared services, and creating an environment where staff feel secure, valued, and able to thrive.

Ultimately, joining our Trust should feel like gaining support, not losing security.

Will pensions be kept the same?

GMAT uses the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS),

How many men/ women hold senior leadership roles in GMAT currently?

GMAT Central Service Team- 3 male* 3 female* (2 male and 2 female also hold other substantive roles in Trust schools

MCA- 2 male, 6 female* 2 male*

MCPA- 2 male*, 3 female

Will staff remain on their current pay and conditions beyond the TUPE transfer date?

Yes. On transfer into the Trust, all staff move under TUPE regulations, which protect existing terms and conditions, including pay, continuity of service, and contractual rights.

Beyond the transfer date, there is no automatic change to pay or conditions. Any future proposals that could affect terms and conditions would only ever be considered following full consultation with staff and recognised trade unions.

As a Trust, our intention is to provide stability and fairness. We recognise the importance of maintaining staff confidence and morale and we are committed to being transparent about any future developments.

Our priority is continuity, security, and ensuring staff feel valued and supported as part of the Trust.

Will policies like appraisal, capability, and staff code of conduct be trust-wide?

Yes, GMAT has Trust-wide frameworks for key policies, including appraisal, capability, and the staff code of conduct. These frameworks ensure consistency across schools, promote fairness, and uphold high professional standards.

They are also designed to be flexible, allowing each school to implement them in a way that reflects its own culture and context, while maintaining the benefits of shared guidance, best practice, and legal compliance.

The overall aim is to support staff development, maintain clear expectations, and create a consistent, positive environment for both staff and pupils. For a more detailed overview, please refer to the Policies FAQ section.

What is GMAT's approach to flexible working and reasonable adjustments?

Please see attached our Flexible working policy currently being reviewed for new employment laws to align to from April 2026 and April 2027

What are staff turnover rates in the trust over the last 3 years?

- FY 24/25: 17% (2% of the 17% were end of FTC contracts)
- FY 23/24: 22% (3% of staff leavers were due to end of FTC contracts)
- FY 22/23: 24% (3% of staff leavers were due to end of FTC contracts)

Turnover is most significant at support staff part time employment level.

What opportunities exist for staff development and progression?

We are committed to developing talent from within and creating clear, accessible pathways for career progression at every stage.

As a Trust, we offer:

- Internal progression routes – We actively grow our own talent. We have supported staff to progress from Teaching Assistants into teaching roles and from classroom teachers into middle and senior leadership positions.
- SCITT partnership – Through our School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) partnership, we provide high-quality routes into teaching, enabling support staff and career changers to train and qualify while remaining within our school community.

- Trust-wide CPD – Access to structured professional development, instructional coaching, subject networks, and leadership programmes across our schools.
- Cross-school opportunities – Staff can collaborate beyond their own setting, lead Trust-wide initiatives, or take on secondment opportunities to broaden experience.
- Succession planning and leadership development – We identify and nurture future leaders, providing mentoring and clear development pathways.

Our approach is simple: we invest in our people, recognise potential, and provide real opportunities to progress – whether that means entering the profession, deepening expertise, or stepping into leadership

What is the trust's approach to wellbeing and workload?

Staff wellbeing and manageable workload are central to our approach. We believe sustainable school improvement depends on a supported and valued workforce.

As part of the Trust, staff benefit from:

- Reduced duplication of work through shared curriculum resources, streamlined policies, and proportionate data collection.
- Centralised support services (HR, finance, estates, compliance), allowing school leaders and teachers to focus on teaching and learning.
- Professional collaboration through Trust-wide networks and shared expertise.
- High-quality CPD and career pathways across multiple schools.
- Policies informed by work assessment

We are committed to listening to staff voice and regularly reviewing workload to ensure expectations remain realistic and purposeful.

Our aim is simple: to maintain high standards for pupils while creating a positive, sustainable working environment for all staff.

Will the trust pay into the Teachers Pension Scheme and LGPS exactly as the local authority does?

Yes. All eligible staff will continue to have their pensions contributions paid into the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) or Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) exactly as they were under the local authority. There will be no reduction in benefits or contributions as a result of joining the Trust. Staff can continue to accrue service and enjoy the same pension rights and protections they have now.

GMAT is fully committed to maintaining these arrangements to ensure financial security and continuity for all staff.

What are the employer contribution rates across the MAT?

TP is 28.68% till March 2027 – no further information on rates has been advised from this date onwards. LGPS/GMPF March 2026 valuation is 15% from April 2026 to March 2029.

Can we continue to performance manage staff using our values or will this be centralised?

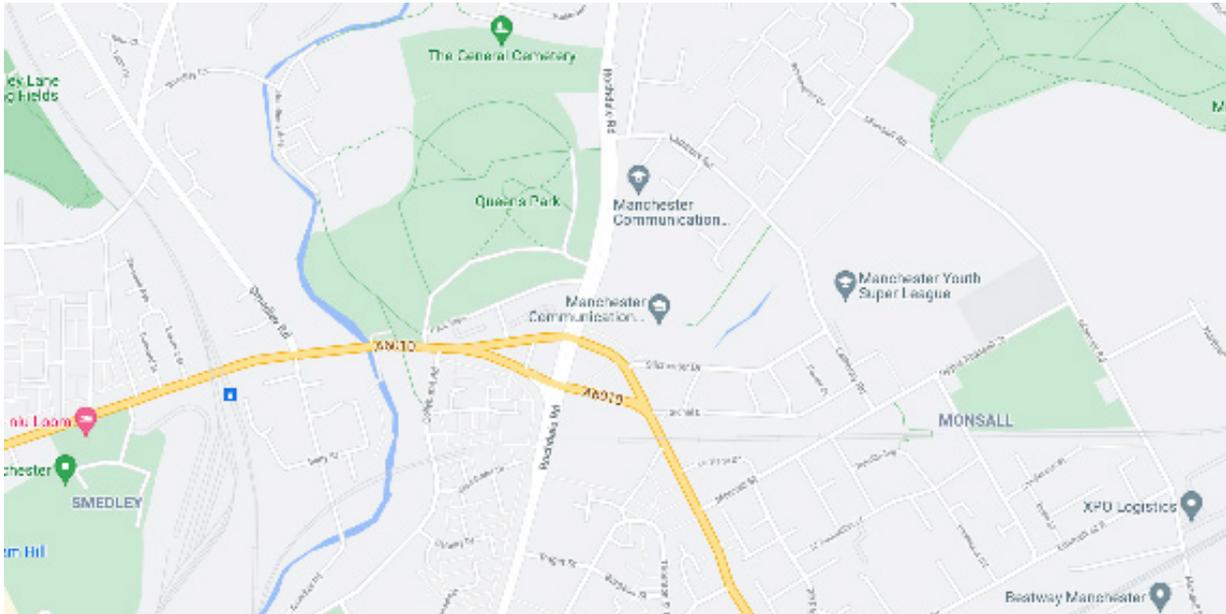
The Appraisal Policy is centralised however currently there are different approaches in both our schools which are determined by the Headteacher. Whilst the principles are consistent the approach may differ.

Are there plans to harmonise pay scales across the trust?

Pay scales for all Teaching staff are consistent with national pay scales. We have a Trust Wide approach to support staff which is loosely aligned to national pay scales but affords us greater opportunity for staff progression, particularly with Trust Wide roles.

Anything else GMAT would want us to know?

With the publication of the white paper last week, it appears that all schools will be expected to be part of a trust in the coming years. Whilst it's likely that this will have quite a long implementation timeline, what it also means is that trusts are likely to become larger and thus have more centralised offers. We see now as a great time for a small number of schools to join GMAT to help formulate and shape our offer rather than sign-up to one which is 'done-to' the school.



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CHILDREN AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO

If you are interested in finding out more information about Greater Manchester Academies Trust or you are considering joining our Trust please email JoinUs@GMATrust.co.uk and a member of our Executive Leadership Team will be in touch with you

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