

Proposal Statement

Kineton C of E Primary School Joining The Stour Federation Multi Academy Trust

There have been many national and local announcements about the benefits of schools working formally together and the future of Local Authorities. At the forefront of these national plans is the growth of 'Multi Academy Trusts' or 'MATs' as they are more commonly known.

Acorns Primary School and Shipston-on-Stour Primary School created The Stour Federation Multi Academy Trust in September 2014, with Brailes CofE Primary School joining in August 2021, having worked formally with the MAT since September 2015.

The Stour Federation and Kineton C of E Primary School are now proposing that Kineton School converts to an academy and formally joins The Stour Federation Multi Academy Trust.

WHAT IS AN ACADEMY?

An academy is a state-funded school, independent of the Local Authority and held accountable by the Department for Education (DfE) by a legally binding Funding Agreement. Academies receive their funding directly from central government so that all of the money allocated goes directly to that school. Academies retain the same responsibilities as any maintained school, as part of the learning community. Academies should not be confused with schools that need to improve. Whilst this may have been the case a number of years ago, since the Academies Act 2010, all schools are now able to become academies, and indeed are actively being encouraged to do so. Kineton High School is an academy, as are several local primary schools.

WHAT IS A MULTI ACADEMY TRUST?

A Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is a group of academy schools who agree to work together, overseen by an overarching charitable trust. Our proposal is for each school to retain a local governance structure (Local Academy Council) and therefore a local decision making function. Each Local Academy Council will report to an overarching Trust Board of Directors (Trustees). This Board will initially consist of current serving governors from each respective school. The Board will also have the opportunity to appoint roles that will bring a skills set that will further support the schools in the partnership.

WHY THE STOUR FEDERATION MAT?

Vision

The vision of the Stour Federation MAT is to achieve the very best outcomes for children and staff and that by working together, we are stronger. Through partnership and collaboration, the MAT aims to develop a group of inspirational and ethical schools which instil ambition and determination in children and staff, open their minds, widen their horizons and equip them to succeed in a challenging world.

The Stour Federation believes that to be a high-performing multi academy trust schools should be aligned around a common model of school improvement; schools that are the most harmonious are the highest performing, whilst respecting earned autonomy - a powerful caveat for individual schools to be able to innovate and showcase specific strengths and areas of interest.

In order to provide exciting world class, evidence-based opportunities for all our children, the MAT places children at the centre of all it does, maintaining a climate where excellence flourishes as a result of outstanding leadership, brilliant teaching and high quality learning. It aims to:

- Ensure the highest standards for safeguarding and pastoral care.
- Develop a collective focus on well being and personal development, working together to support physical and mental health and build resilience, character, confidence and independence.
- Develop coordinated provision to offer the most effective support to our most vulnerable children, such as those with special educational needs, and their families.
- Through collaboration, provide enrichment with a focus on achieving outstanding outcomes across the full curriculum.
- Provide excellent professional learning for staff, drawing on the best quality support from within and outside the Trust, to develop best practice in all aspects of their work, particularly teaching.
- Further develop a central resource to manage school finances, combining shared services such as payroll, insurance and tendering, and bringing together a team to deliver services including legal, HR, IT, utilities, buildings and grounds work as well as purchasing. This team will achieve efficiencies and reduce burdens on the leadership team, so they can focus on education.
- Provide effective strategic Trust governance, working openly and collaboratively with Local Academy Councils to enable successful local leaders to continue to deliver effective school improvement.

Building on Success

- All four schools are strong and successful. The advantages of expanding a locally established educational partnership together is one that we feel will provide even more opportunities for our children.
- All four schools are distinctly unique and individual and we wish to maintain and strengthen this through formalising and continuing to develop our own local partnership rather than an externally controlled one.
- All four schools already work through the local consortium of schools, this is an opportunity to develop collaboration further.

School Improvement

A key aspect of the drive to be part of a MAT nationally is the focus on school improvement and the significantly increased capacity that this gives to schools to support each other. All partner schools have a strong record over time, high standards and good performance, which will only be enhanced further through partnership and formal collaboration.

Financial Security

With the ongoing pressures on school funding, the cost savings of schools maximising economies of scale together is another significant advantage of working together. We have a responsibility to get value for money for every penny spent in school.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF BECOMING AN ACADEMY AND JOINING A MAT, AND HOW HAVE THEY BEEN ADDRESSED?

Would Kineton Primary School have to change its name and its uniform?

No, both of these would remain the same.

Will the ethos of each individual school be lost?

No, in fact quite the opposite would be expected. The Stour Federation MAT is a good 'fit' for our school as we already share many aspects of our ethos. Continuing to build this further will provide an opportunity for our ethos to be further embedded across the partnership.

WHY DO THIS NOW?

Kineton C of E Primary School is considering academisation for four main reasons:

1. Our school has worked with a range of primary schools as a local consortium in recent years, and schools in the Stour Federation MAT are among those.
2. Coventry Diocese and the Department of Education are now actively encouraging schools to formalise such arrangements by working together in a MAT.
3. Kineton Primary School is currently in a very strong position and as such is ideally placed to take this next important step to develop our school for the benefit of pupils and staff alike.
4. Joining the MAT would provide further opportunities for pupils and for staff development and progression in the MAT.
5. The Stour Federation MAT has been successfully established and is well placed to expand further.

WOULD OUR SCHOOL CHANGE?

The day to day life of our school would remain largely unchanged by Kineton Primary joining The Stour Federation MAT. Yes, there will be changes but they will be positive changes that strengthen our operations over time. Therefore the changes will not necessarily be obvious to see initially unless you work in the school in certain roles. The teaching in the classroom and the curriculum experience that the children and families have will continue to develop and will benefit from increased liaison between teachers. Children will continue to wear the same uniform and continue to experience day to day life in our school as they would have done prior to the change.

Kineton will retain its current leadership structure. Kineton staff contracts will be transferred across to the MAT with the same employment terms and conditions that they currently have and points of contact will not change for families. Therefore, the change to an academy within a MAT, for the vast majority of people, will not result in any obvious immediate changes. We want to continue to be a great school where every child is valued and will only look to change in the future what we think will improve our school even further.

WHO WILL RUN OUR MAT?

The proposed leadership structure is outlined below. The fundamental principle behind this proposal is that local people, based in and around rural south Warwickshire, will run The Stour Federation MAT.

The Trust Board of Directors

The Trust Board of Directors sits above the Local Academy Councils. They are the overall decision-making group and accountable for all partners within the Trust. The Board of Directors consists of existing governors, specifically selected for their skills and tasked with ensuring the excellence of all schools and the delegation of powers to the Local Academy Councils. The Board composition would also ensure that Kineton Primary is represented with membership coming from its Local Academy Council.

The Local Academy Council would then have responsibilities delegated to them by the Board through a 'Scheme of Delegation'. The allocation of budgets to each school will be unaltered.

School Leadership

Operationally, the proposal is for the current Headteacher/ Heads of School model to continue, contributing to the daily leadership and strategic development of the MAT, under the directorship of the Trust Board of Directors. An Executive Headteacher is supported by the Headteacher / Head of School in each academy.

WOULD THE ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS CHANGE?

As an academy, Kineton Primary School would continue to be responsible for our own admissions procedures. We would continue to follow the Warwickshire Admissions arrangements (as do the other schools in The Stour Federation MAT) and therefore there would be no change. If for some reason the MAT wanted to change its admissions arrangements in the future, consultation would be required.

WOULD CHANGES BE MADE TO THE LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL DAY AND TO TERM DATES?

No, in our proposal we would not seek to make changes to the length of the school day or to term or holiday dates.

WOULD CHANGES BE MADE TO THE SCHOOLS' RELIGIOUS DESIGNATION?

No, in our proposal this would not change. As a church school, Kineton C of E Primary School must continue to be able to demonstrate that they are a distinctively and recognisable Christian institution and will undergo inspection under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) to evaluate the effectiveness of religious church schools, as currently. This will include the impact of collective worship, the effectiveness of religious education and how well the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meets the needs of all learners. This is already made explicit in the Trust's Articles of Association as Brailes School is a Church of England school.

Non-church schools will retain their own individual character and ethos through protections in the legal documents.

WOULD CHANGES BE MADE TO THE CURRICULUM?

Academies do not have to follow the National Curriculum and can set a curriculum that is more relevant to the needs of our students and the community. However, our proposal is to maintain the current approach and deliver the National Curriculum. Our schools

already have strong and effective aligned curriculum frameworks and there would be no plan to alter these at this point.

HOW WOULD THE SCHOOL BE FUNDED?

Funding to the schools within a MAT is allocated on an individual academy basis. Funding is governed through a master funding agreement between the Secretary of State and the MAT and a supplemental agreement between the Secretary of State and each school within the MAT.

Most funding for the running of academies comes from the general annual grant (GAG). This is paid to academies by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), based on a formula provided by the local authority. All schools continue to receive capital funding. Academies can apply for additional capital funding through the Condition Improvement Fund. In recent years, this fund has supported the building of a new Nursery and Reception building for Acorns and a new heating system for Shipston Primary.

WOULD ACADEMY STATUS AFFECT THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION?

No, SEND services would stay the same. The Academies Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 (part 3) require academies to follow the same statutory framework for special needs as local authority schools.

Schools will continue to receive funding for children with existing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) in the same way, whether they are academies or local authority schools. Where children have special needs, but do not have an EHCP, academies are required to have regard for the SEND Code of Practice 2014, in exactly the same way as local authority schools. This means that in both types of school, children will be supported according to the level of need and involvement of external agencies. Our school will continue to use our best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEND receives the support they need.

However, The Stour Federation MAT would ensure an even closer and effective partnership approach to SEND services and there is ambition and vision for a specialist resourced provision as part of the Trust.

WOULD THE SCHOOL CONTINUE TO ACCESS SERVICES FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY?

The schools in the MAT would still have the option, as they currently do, to 'buy in' a number of services from the Local Authority. As more schools become MATs, the provision of services from the Local Authority is decreasing. The Central Finance Team in the MAT will be focused on purchasing the best services for our children at the best value. Services offered by the Local Authority will continue to be considered as part of our proposal.

WHO WOULD OWN THE LAND AND BUILDINGS?

At the point of the academy conversion, the school would take over a 125 year lease for the land and buildings from the relevant freeholder, in this case the freeholders would be Warwickshire Local Authority and the Church.

WHO MAKES THE FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER KINETON C OF E PRIMARY CONVERTS TO AN ACADEMY AND JOINS THE STOUR FEDERATION MULTI ACADEMY TRUST?

Kineton Governing Board and The Stour Federation Trust Board of Directors have already separately agreed to move forward with Kineton Primary School joining The Stour Federation MAT. Coventry Diocesan Board of Education has also agreed. Consultation is the next step, with a final consideration when the consultation period has finished and due diligence completed.

COULD OTHER SCHOOLS JOIN THE GROUP AND HOW WOULD THE DECISION BE MADE TO DO THIS?

Any decision on additional schools joining our group would be made by the Trust Board of Directors. Further schools wishing to join The Stour Federation MAT would need to abide by the MAT's vision, ethos and governance structure. They will also be required to contribute and learn from other schools in the group. Any school joining would not necessitate any change to the MAT structure unless the Trust Board of Directors determined otherwise.

Any school interested in joining The Stour Federation MAT in the future would talk to representatives of the Trust about practicalities of how this would work, and check that the school and the Trust hold common values in their approach to education. If there were an interest in exploring this further, then the MAT would form a working group to work with representatives of the applying school for both parties to reassure each other of the financial, site and performance health of both the applicant school and the existing Trust.

WHAT COSTS ARE INVOLVED FOR CONVERSION?

A conversion grant of £25,000 will be given to Kineton C of E Primary School by the Department for Education. This will cover the costs of conversion such as legal fees, due diligence and accountancy processes.

IF KINETON PRIMARY WERE NO LONGER PART OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY, WHO WOULD THEY BE ACCOUNTABLE TO?

All schools in The Stour Federation MAT are accountable directly to the Department for Education and financial accounts are audited on an annual basis by external auditors and publicly available.

The Stour Federation MAT is overseen by the West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner and would continue to be subject to separate Ofsted inspections.

CAN SCHOOLS WITHDRAW FROM THE CONVERSION PROCESS?

Kineton CofE Primary School and/or The Stour Federation would be able to withdraw right up to the point that the Funding Agreement is signed. Once this is signed, there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the partners.

WHAT IS THE TIMESCALE FOR CONVERSION?

Both Kineton Primary School's Governing Board and The Stour Federation Trust Board have voted individually to formally confirm that they would proceed with consultation on

Kineton Primary School joining The Stour Federation MAT. Over the next few weeks we are consulting all relevant groups - staff, parents and the local community. Following this, consultation responses will be fully considered by the governing board of Kineton Primary School and a decision taken on whether to proceed. If it is agreed, the Funding Agreement will be signed, which is the legally binding agreement.

The entire process from start to finish is expected to take a few months. If agreed, it is likely that Kineton would officially become part of The Stour Federation MAT before the end of this academic year or at the beginning of the next academic year. Throughout the process of consultation and conversion, if agreed, there will be no impact on the smooth running of the school day.

We welcome your comments which can be registered on the GoogleForm available on the following link: <https://forms.gle/JtXgFFdtkLorHwo78>