

Bickley Primary School



Multi-Academy Trust: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Multi-Academy Trust?

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a group of academy schools overseen by an educational charity. It is a legal entity that governs a group of schools through a single set of directors. The day to day running of the individual schools within the MAT is delegated to 'local committees' which are similar to governing bodies.

2. What does the local and national educational landscape look like?

Changes in the educational landscape now mean that many schools are no longer under local authority control. The Local Authority and the Government see the long term future for schools as developing collaboratively through local groupings.

Schools can use the strong collaboration and accountability afforded by a Multi Academy Trust to drive up standards and share best practice and services across the trust. The Government believes that all schools, including those performing well, will benefit from being in a multi-academy trust. They want schools to operate in strong, resilient structures which raise standards.

Multi-academy trusts bring together leadership, autonomy, funding and accountability in a single structure, and are the best long-term formal arrangement for schools to collaborate and support each other. Because of these benefits, the Government expects that most schools will form or join multi-academy trusts as they become academies, helping to secure their long term success.

3. How many schools are academies in our Local Authority?

Bromley Local Authority has a policy of encouraging schools to attain academy status. Presently (September 2017) there are only eleven Primary schools and one secondary that are maintained by the Local Authority, all other schools are academy schools (approximately 75 schools).

4. Is there a set model for how a MAT has to operate?

No. There are rules regarding how a MAT is funded as well as legal requirements but the way in which the MAT operates, its governance, structures, vision and ethos are defined by the MAT directors. Nexus Education Schools Trust (NEST) encourages local autonomy and collaborative working.

5. What has been happening so far?

Over the past year, the governors have been considering the advantages of joining a multi-academy trust. They have been working with other schools to explore the best fit for their school within a MAT structure.

6. Which MAT have Governors consider the best fit for Bickley Primary School?

After careful consideration it has been agreed that Nexus Education Schools Trust will be our preferred MAT partner.

The Nexus Education Schools Trust (NEST) has been formed from many forward looking schools which joined to share the same strong ethos and values of NEST.

- NEST allows a collaborative ethos through the structure within the MAT.
- NEST believes that schools working together can transform and make a difference for children, families, staff and our communities.
- NEST schools believe that they have a moral purpose to provide excellence and opportunity for all to enable lives to be transformed.
- We share the NEST values of 'learning, inclusion, trust, integrity, enjoyment, success, leadership, collaboration, opportunity, commitment and responsibility.'
- NEST values co-operation and interaction with stakeholders, so that they will have pride and a desire to be involved in its work. Key partnerships with other organisations will offer further opportunities to enhance teaching and learning across its schools.

7. Which Schools are NEST partners?

Alexandra Junior School
Farnborough Primary School
Highfield Infants' School
Highfield Junior School
Manor Oak Primary School
Perry Hall Primary School
Pickhurst Infant School
Worsley Bridge Primary School

8. What will happen next?

The next stage is to inform staff and parents and other stakeholders, a process that will take place over the coming months. NEST will conduct due diligence for the schools joining the MAT and the application for Bickley Primary School to join NEST will be made to the Regional Schools' Commissioner for approval.

9. How is funding organised within the MAT?

Funding for schools within the MAT is allocated on an individual academy basis, governed by a master funding agreement between the Secretary of State and the MAT, and supplemental agreements between the Secretary of State and each school within the MAT. The schools will ultimately receive the same level of funding as they do as individual academies. However, a percentage of each school's General Annual grant (GAG) will be paid into a central pot to support central services such as school improvement services, assessment, finance, payroll, accountancy, HR, legal, premises etc.

10. Will each school retain its financial independence and its ability to manage its own finances?

There would be common financial procedures and an agreed scheme of delegation shared amongst all of the schools. Each school will maintain their own accounts, prioritising spending on local needs and a long term development plan, as we do now. The Local Committee (governors) will be accountable for the delegated budget.

NEST will provide support and monitoring of financial planning and monthly expenditure. The Nexus Education Schools Trust will be audited annually and its schools termly. All accounts for NEST will be registered at Companies House annually.

The accounts will be externally audited by an accountancy firm. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will also monitor the financial effectiveness of the Trust. Over time there is likely to be some centralisation of service level agreements and financial procedures, resulting in possible economies of scale.

NEST is accountable to the Department of Education and ESFA for monitoring, financial probity and standards.

11. Would Bickley Primary School keep its individuality/identity?

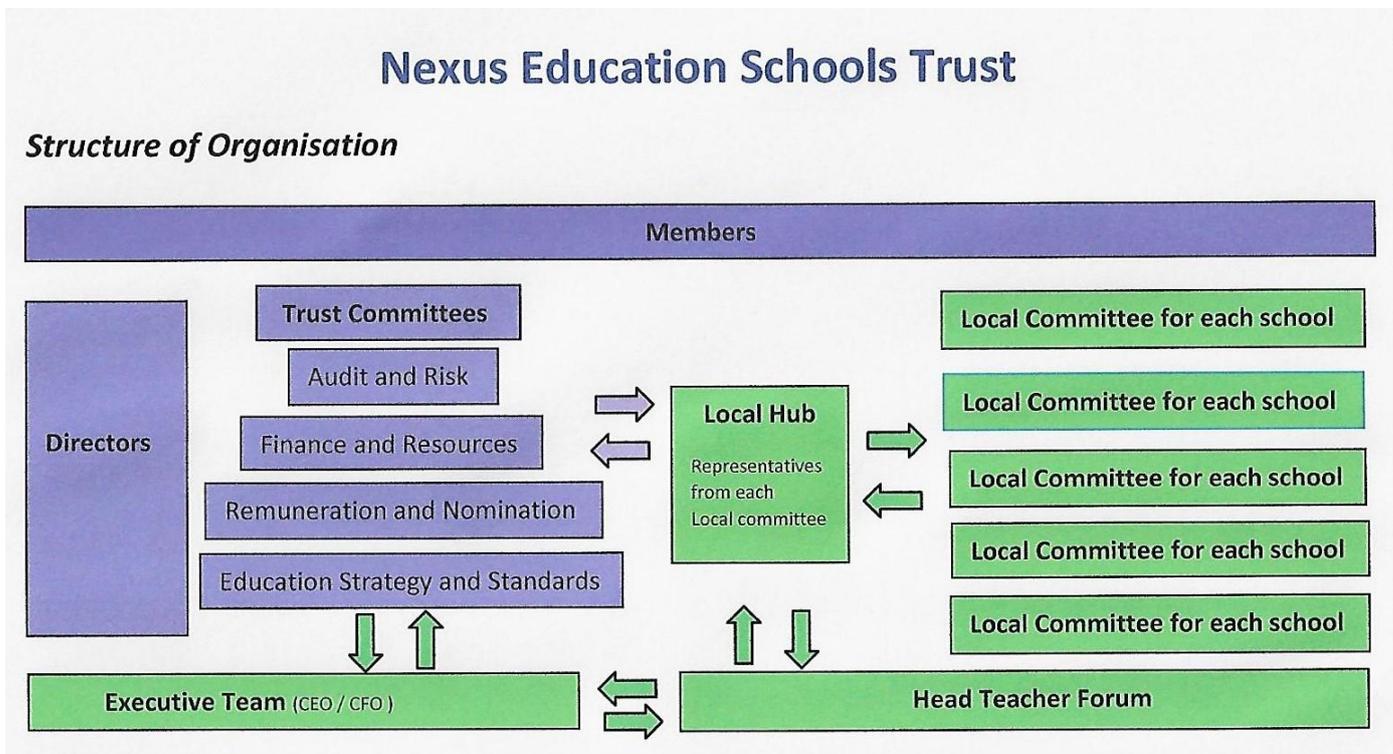
Yes. NEST fully supports the distinguishing characteristics and independence of its academies. Bickley Primary School will therefore retain its identity, keeping its own uniform, and school name.

12. Will a poor Ofsted rating in one of the schools affect the others within the MAT?

The purpose and strength of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) organisation is to provide support and monitoring across the group of schools. Regular monitoring visits provides early identification of small issues and mechanisms to support which can be quickly implemented to ensure school standards are maintained and improving to ensure that schools are not vulnerable. The structure of the organisation will enable schools to work together to raise standards. There is a strong programme of school support with half-termly visits and termly external evaluation of the performance of all NEST schools.

13. How will Nexus Education Schools Trust be governed so that all schools continue to improve and will Local Committees retain their autonomy?

NEST is committed to effective governance at all levels within the organisation.



NEST has layers of Governance throughout the organisation:

- **The Members:** The Guardians of the constitution who monitor the vision and values of the organisation. Their role is to appoint Directors and to ensure the moral purpose of the organisation.
- **The Trust Board:** Has overall responsibility and ultimate decision making authority for all the work of the Academy Trust, including the establishment and maintenance of the Academies. It has a statutory responsibility for the financial probity of each school as well as the overall organisation and the educational stands across the trust group of schools.
- **Area Hub** provides members from each Local committee who sit on the sub committees of the Trust Board.

Key functions:

1. Provide overview, scrutiny and will challenge education and financial performance; to include pay & conditions, audit, and standards.

2. Support academy leaders and Local Committee members to shape and influence the Trust in achieving its mission: 'Excellence and Opportunity for all, enabling lives to be transformed.'
3. Provide a structure of support and challenge to enable effective development of school improvement initiatives, monitoring and quality assurance through external services and forums.
4. Ensure an effective flow of communication between the Local Committees, Area Hub Boards and the Trust Board.

14. How will the Governance arrangement work at Bickley Primary School?

The Governing Body will become known as the Local Committee. The Local Committee will be delegated the relevant authority to oversee the strategic direction and accountability of the school. The Local Committee will nominate suitably skilled representatives to the Local Hub to be allocated to the Trust Board sub-committees. Their role is to hold the Trust to account and contribute to the development of the wider organisation.

The Local Committee's role:-

- To oversee the effectiveness of the school and together with the Headteacher to provide strategic direction for the work and improvement of the school.
- To support, monitor, and evaluate the effectiveness of the school and monitor the budget.
- To hold the school to account for the standards achieved and the quality of education.
- To positively promote the Academy to prospective parents, staff and key stakeholders.
- To support the Academy in attaining the educational goals it sets and in keeping pupils and staff safe at all time.
- Provide drive and challenge, through the implementation of School Improvement Plan and self-evaluation framework within the school.
- To contribute and fulfil the vision and ethos of NEST, to achieve the aims and ambitions for all our pupils and workforce and to uphold the benefit of collaboration and mutual support.
- Contribute to the strategic aims and development of the Nexus Education Schools Trust.

Local Committee members will also be part of Forums across the Trust, whose role is to:-

- Generate new ideas.
- Provide networking and build relationships.
- Promote the values and work within the Trust group of schools.
- Provide challenge and support.
- Influence policy and development.
- Provide a voice within the organisation.

15. Will there be any changes to the PTA?

Each NEST school will retain their own PTA and funds raised. PTAs will also have the opportunity to work collaboratively and to share ideas for fundraising.

16. Would the admissions arrangements change?

All schools will follow the common admission framework as agreed with the Local Authority. Each school's admissions criteria will continue to apply.

17. How will working with other schools in NEST impact on our own standards and resources?

As explained in the accompanying letter, it is by working collaboratively in a multiplicity of partnerships and networks that Bickley Primary School will continue to grow and flourish. As education funding comes under increased pressure and resources are reduced, being part of a larger organisation will work to our advantage. The economies of scale afforded by working in a wider partnership will help us to save money on services and suppliers, with improved service delivery at all levels. In the present climate where there are shortages of teachers and leaders nationally, we will be able to recruit, train and retain the highest quality of staff. We will make our budgets go further so that we can maintain and improve upon the educational outcomes of all of NEST pupils. Decisions relating to staff and resources will remain with the Headteacher of each school.

18. What would the changes mean for staff?

Staff would not notice significant changes in their everyday working lives. It is the intention of the Trust that staff will benefit from the advantages of partnership work across schools. Terms and conditions for existing staff would remain the same and pensions would transfer (including pension contributions). As a maintained school staff contracts would TUPE across from the Local Authority to the Trust. NEST is committed to following the union agreed national pay and conditions for staff. Professional development would further expand and there would be a greater range of opportunities for advancement.

19. Who makes the final decision on whether Bickley Primary School joins NEST?

The Governing Body, after consultation with stakeholders will agree their preferred option of Academy Trust and will apply to the Department of Education, who make the final decision for a school to transfer to academy status within a Multi Academy Trust.

20. How do stakeholders take part in the consultation?

All stakeholders can access the letter plus Q&As informing stakeholders of the school's intention to join a multi academy trust, these documents are available on the website via the school mailing system. The governors would welcome your views and comments on the proposals which can be submitted via the school office for the attention of Tracey Mortimer-Brown, Chair of Governors.

Any questions and responses will be added to the Q and A document on the website.

The **closing date** for comments is **3/11/2017**