



Fulford School

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Headteacher: Ms. L. Savage, BA, NPQH
Deputies: Mr D. Bodey BSc, Mr. T. Johnson, BA

11 January 2017

Dear Colleague,

Following the recent decisions of the schools involved in the MAT consultation and subsequent discussions with the Local Authority, the Diocese and the DfE concerning our MAT conversion programme, we now write to update you on these discussions and to seek expressions of interest for posts as Members and Trustees in the new MAT. These roles are open to all parties in the consultation and who will join the MAT and not just those schools involved in the first phase of the MAT development.

In line with school size and status, LA and Diocesan capacity to support academy conversion and the likely pace and ease of the conversion process, the plan is for Fulford, Wheldrake with Thorganby, Dunnington and Danesgate to convert in the first wave. This would be followed by a further three schools converting and joining the MAT within a six month timescale with the remaining schools, including St Oswald's PFI, conversion being completed by September 2018. This would establish the initial MAT within a twelve month time period. The plan for Danesgate to now join the MAT is based upon fresh advice on how best to support their academy conversion and their free school application to create a special school for students with social, emotional and mental health issues.

Given the philosophy underpinning our MAT, our desire to build on the strength of our current partnership working and our commitment to keep the MAT strongly linked to our community, our hope is to fill the two vacant Member positions and as many Trustees as possible from the skilled and experienced governors already serving so effectively within our school communities.

The establishment of the MAT and the drafting of its leadership structure offers a unique opportunity for us to shape the vision and operation of the MAT by having our existing expertise and values built into its core at the start. Given the significance of this opportunity, and in light of the information below, we very much hope that some of you will feel able and willing to undertake roles of Members or Trustees or to potentially act as a Member and the Chair of Trustees within our central MAT governance at its inception and early development phase.

In a multi-academy trust, the MAT governance broadly operates as follows:

Members

This role sits at the apex of the MAT structure and is often compared to the shareholders of a company. The Members have ultimate control over the academy trust, with the ability to appoint some of the Trustees and the right to amend the trust's articles of association. Members also sign off the financial statement and annual report for the MAT.

Normally the Members will meet on an annual/bi-annual basis although they will meet more frequently during the establishment and early development of the MAT.

There will be five signatory Members who will found the MAT. Two of these posts will be appointed by the Diocese with a further post drawn from York St John University. The membership of other two posts will be determined by the schools forming the MAT and we hope these Members can be drawn from the governance of our school communities. Given the Mixed MAT structure of our MAT, and the existence of two Diocesan appointed Members, ideally these posts would be held by Members without CoE affiliation.

Trustees

The Trustees are responsible for the same three core functions performed by the governing body in a maintained school in setting the strategic direction, holding the CEO and schools to account and in ensuring sound financial management.

In addition to this, Trustees must also ensure that they are complying with charity law requirements given MATs are charitable companies. Their key responsibilities are: -

- To ensure quality of educational provision
- To challenge and monitor performance
- To manage finances and property
- To manage the CEO and Headteachers
- To exercise reasonable skill and care in carrying out their duties
- To ensure compliance with charity and company law
- To ensure operation in accordance with Funding Agreement
- To report to Members at AGM on progress for the year and to present financial statements and annual report

The model articles state that the Chair of the Board of Trustees will also be a Member, thereby ensuring a link between the two layers of MAT governance. However, given that the Members are responsible for holding the Trustees to account, separation beyond this post between those serving as Trustees and those serving as Members is required to ensure accountability.

There will be 9 or 11 Trustees within the MAT with the total number to be finalised. Again it is hoped that Trustees will largely be recruited from the governance of our school communities.

Trustees will be appointed on the basis of skills required rather than on a stakeholder basis. Given this the requirement is to recruit people with finance, business, legal, HR and educational experience to these posts. The National College for Teaching and Learning drafted the following attitudinal and skills requirements to guide the appointment of MAT Trustees. These reflect the skilled membership of many of our current governing bodies.

Trustees should have the skills and attributes to:

- constantly focus on what's best for the school and pupils by challenging in a constructive manner, asking probing questions and visualising the strategic picture, in terms of both the MAT and the academies within it
- understand and effectively carry out their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, with the ability to take risks and consider dynamic and innovative options
- measure and lead school improvement and drive the necessary changes
- understand the financial and the business elements of leading a MAT, as well as the legal aspects of the role and how the trust and the business work
- work as part of a team and accept shared responsibility and accountability, as well as undertaking frequent self-evaluation in order to remain effective
- act with a strong moral purpose, integrity and honesty, and as an advocate for the MAT's values, ethos and philosophy
- express disagreement in a rational and professional manner
- adopt an entrepreneurial mind-set in order to see and make the most of opportunities that are outside the day-to-day practices of the MAT or academy
- be innovative, creative and open-minded by engaging in futures thinking and 'horizon scanning'
- ensure that they have the commitment and stamina to drive forward the MAT, as well as the will to abandon the 'good' in order to find the 'outstanding'

Details of the relationship between the trust and the Secretary of State for Education is set out in a legal document known as the funding agreement. The funding agreement and the Academies Financial Handbook are two key documents that all Trustees need to be aware of.

Local Governing Bodies

The Governing Bodies of individual schools in the MAT are referred to as Local Governing Bodies (LGBs). The Trustees have discretion over what is delegated to each LGB and this will be specified in the Scheme/s of Delegation that will be drafted when the MAT is formed and when new schools join the MAT. In the interests of accountability Members and Trustees will not serve as members of Local Governing Bodies.

We are committed to our MAT model enabling our schools to retain their own unique characteristics and to each maintain its own local governing body wherever this is possible. This will be in line with the principle of 'earned autonomy' where maximum control and decision making is delegated to effective schools. The final structure and membership of the Local Governing Bodies will be determined by the Board of Trustees in conjunction with the founding schools.

We very much hope that you will continue to play a part in the governance of our school communities either through working as a Member of the MAT, by serving as a Trustee or by working within the local Governing Bodies. If you are interested in working as either a Member or as a Trustee then please contact me at ls@fulford.york.sch.uk . Please indicate which role you are interested in and give a brief description of how your skills and experience relate to this role. Please do this in a maximum of 200 words and return this to me by Friday 20th January. Expressions of interest will then be reviewed by the MAT working group.

In establishing our MAT we are keen to control our own destiny. The key to this and in ensuring a successful future for our MAT is ensuring that we base it on our shared ethos, that we root it in our community and that we build it upon the strengths within our existing governance arrangements. In the light of this we very much hope that we can recruit many of these new roles from within our existing school communities.

Yours faithfully,



Lorna Savage (on behalf of the schools involved in the consultation and MAT development)