

Alsager Multi Academy Trust (AMAT)
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Proposed 3 Shires Trust Academy Transfer/Merger
Frequently Asked Questions
For Parents, Pupils & Community

1. Who/What is AMAT?

AMAT stands for Alsager Multi Academy Trust. It is the name of the organisation which consists of 3 schools; Alsager Highfields Primary, Alsager School and Weston Village Primary. Mr Middlebrook (as Chief Executive Officer) oversees all 3 schools and has overall responsibility for the organisation but the leadership and management of each school is delivered by the three Heads (Mrs Woollam at Highfields; Mrs O'Neill at Alsager and Mr Cutts at Weston). Similarly, AMAT's Board of Trustees have overall governance responsibility for the organisation but much of this is delegated to the local governing body at each school. Further details about AMAT can be found at <https://www.alsagerschool.org/school-governors/alsager-mat-multi-academy-trust/>

2. Who/What is Brine MAT?

Brine MAT is the organisation which consists of 2 schools' Audlem St James Primary and Brine Leas School, both in Nantwich. Mr Middlebrook is interim CEO for this organisation too and the principles outlined above apply here. Further details about Brine MAT can be found at www.brinemat.co.uk

3. When is this planned transfer/merge due to happen?

It is hoped the transfer and merged 3 Shires Trust will be in place on 1/9/2022.

4. Can a school transfer without the support of the Members and Trustees?

The Members and Trustees for MAT must approve the transfer/merger. The local governing body of each school have been kept informed throughout this process.

5. What is the role of the Local Governing Bodies in a larger Trust?

As now, the merged Trust will retain a full scheme of delegation to each local governing body. The Trustees retain overall accountability, but Headteachers and local governors remain responsible for leading and managing each school.

6. Do Trusts' need to consult before transferring/merging?

Yes, all Trusts' are required to inform, and if necessary consult with, staff, parents and carers, community stakeholders and Trade Unions when we can. For the Brine MAT staff, whose employment will transfer under TUPE (The Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations), there is a consultation process to undertake. There is no specified length of time for this process and schools/ Trusts have flexibility in how it is conducted. This formal process is now underway.

7. Do we have to cover the cost to Transfer/Merger?

Yes. Unlike an academy conversion, there is no money provided by the DfE for transfer/mergers. There will be some legal costs which will be met by both Trusts.

8. What is the timeframe for this deadline of 1/9/22 to be met?

- ❖ Information sharing period to run from 24/1/22 – 28/2/22
- ❖ Trustees vote on whether to submit an application to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) on transferring/merging the two Trusts in March '22.
- ❖ By 1/4/22 – application is submitted
- ❖ If approved by the RSC, the appointment of new Members, Trustees, CEO and other key positions will be confirmed (by June 2022)
- ❖ Revised legal Articles for the Trust agreed (by June/July 2022)
- ❖ All legal transfer work completed (Funding Agreements, Transfer Agreements, TUPE etc) - by June/July 2022
- ❖ Brine MAT is wound up during the autumn term '22.
- ❖ The 3 Shires Trust opens – 1/9/22

9. Can a Trust withdraw from the Transfer/Merger process?

Trusts' are able to withdraw right up until the point that they sign the Funding Agreement, (this would happen in the summer term, if the vote was to proceed). Once this is signed it is a legally binding agreement.

10. Will any of the schools change their individual names, or identity or uniforms, as a result of this transfer/merger?

No. The individuality of each school will be celebrated and retained. We will be a family not a chain. Under the Trust's scheme of delegation, this would be a decision for the local governing body (as it is now).

11. Would we have greater freedom over admissions?

We still have to comply with the Schools Admissions Code. Our current admissions procedures would continue.

12. Would academies be part of the coordinated admissions with the Local Authority?

Yes, we would continue to be within coordination i.e. the process for allocating school places to children.

13. Will Local Authorities still have the responsibility for planning for additional places when there is a growth in student numbers within an area?

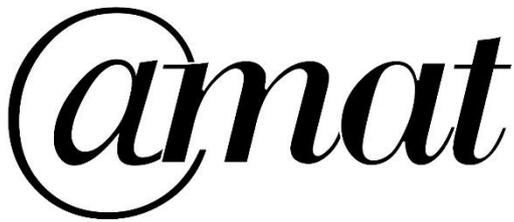
Local authorities will still have overall responsibility for ensuring that there are sufficient places to meet demand locally.

14. What will happen to Special Educational Needs (SEN) support?

All schools will remain as now, so in that respect merger/transfer will make no difference.

15. Will schools/the Trust still be able to access funding for Capital projects/building improvements?

Yes. However, due to our size this will no longer be through applying to the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), when we might not be successful. We would now be eligible for the School Condition Allocation (SCA) which would give the Trust a guaranteed sum of money each year to be spent on capital work across all 5 schools.



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16. What are the reasons for working to merge/transfer?

By becoming one Trust of 5 schools, it will give us the ability and capacity to

- ❖ Further improve the educational expertise for all our young people
- ❖ To share best practice, improve outcomes for children and develop staff
- ❖ Share and benefit from areas of expertise bespoke to each school
- ❖ Establish succession planning programmes and develop staff and leaders
- ❖ Support staff recruitment and retention through increased professional development opportunities across the Trust
- ❖ Be more financially effective by centralising services where and when possible
- ❖ Focus funds where they are most needed and work collaboratively to meet need more effectively and with greater speed

17. What process of financial audit will be demanded of academies and to whom will the auditors be responsible?

As now, the main audit will be conducted by an external independent auditor, appointed by the Trust. In addition, we have termly internal audits too. The ESFA monitors Trust's finances and can audit at any time if it wishes.

18. To whom are the Trust/Trustees/schools accountable?

We will remain responsible and accountable to the various organisations, governing bodies and government appointed officials as we are now.

19. Are there plans to extend/grow the 3 Shires Trust any further?

We will always be a local Trust, providing local support and solution to local need. The 3 Shires are Cheshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire – we do not intend to grow beyond these local geographical areas. However, we do hope to grow further in our locality, including applying to sponsor two new primary schools in Nantwich (Kingsley Fields) and near Weston (Basford East). We hope other local schools will choose to join us in the near future too.

END OF FAQS FOR PARENTS, PUPILS & COMMUNITY