

Joining Two Cathedrals Trust – Parent Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

We are very keen to answer your questions and are happy to receive them by email or talk on a 1-1 basis with parents on 10th July at our Open Afternoon. To help your thinking, we have put together a list of FAQs.

1. What is a Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) is a collaboration between several Church of England schools within a diocese (a diocese is like a county in the Church of England). It is a legal entity that provides support, governance, and shared resources to member schools while preserving their individual identities and Christian ethos.

Two Cathedrals Trust will be slightly different as it is a joint project between Hereford and Lichfield Dioceses which reflects the fact that Shropshire as a county has both Hereford and Lichfield church schools which are already working together as they are currently maintained schools looked after by Shropshire Council.

2. Why is our primary school considering joining a MAT?

Joining a MAT offers several advantages, including access to a wider network of support, expertise, and resources. It promotes collaborative working between the schools in the MAT, facilitates sharing best practices, and enables stronger governance and financial stability. This all used to be provided by the Local Authority (Shropshire Council) but Government policy for a long while now has been to promote MATs as the best vehicles for school improvement and so Councils now receive a lot less funding for school improvement and are not able to offer services that they used to offer to schools.

Governors have looked very carefully at the risks and advantages of joining a MAT generally and being part of a new MAT in particular. They have carried out a process called 'due diligence' which means they have considered this matter in detail, asked questions and it has been on the agenda of a number of meetings. It is only after this careful process that they have recommended that it is a good time for us.

3. Will our child's teachers and TAs remain the same after joining the MAT?

Yes. The intention is to retain our dedicated and talented teachers and support staff. Being part of a strong MAT will help us retain our teachers as they will have access to more support, more professional development opportunities and chance to meet with a wider number of colleagues when we have MAT training and meetings.

4. Will joining a MAT have any impact on the school's relationships with the local community?

Joining a MAT should not negatively impact the school's relationships with the local community. In fact, the MAT can provide opportunities for further community engagement and collaboration. Our school will continue to be an active and valued member of the local community, maintaining connections with local churches and other



schools. We will still work closely with William Brookes as our feeder secondary school and collaborate with other schools not in the MAT, where it is in the interests of our children to do so. We will still collaborate with groups we use now such as Shrewsbury Town Foundation, Shropshire Music Service and the National Trust.

5. Will our school uniform or name change?

No.

6. How will joining a MAT impact the curriculum and teaching methods at our school?

From the point of view of a pupil's experience at Christ Church, they will not notice great changes. Joining a MAT will not significantly impact the curriculum and teaching methods at Christ Church. Two Cathedrals Trust will respect the autonomy of its member schools to decide their own curriculum. However, opportunities for sharing best practices and accessing additional resources may arise through collaboration within the MAT. We may also move to some joint practices – such as using the same termly assessments in Reading and Maths across member schools.

7. Will our school's extracurricular activities and plans for wrap around and nursery care be affected by joining the MAT?

No. The MAT aims to support and enhance the extracurricular activities that our school currently offers. By joining the MAT, we may have opportunities to expand and enrich our extracurricular provision through collaboration with other schools within the trust, sharing best practices, and accessing additional resources. For example, other schools in the MAT have well-established wrap around care and integrated nurseries within their schools and so we will be able to learn from them.

8. How will the MAT ensure that our child's individual needs and well-being are supported?

The MAT is committed to providing high-quality support for the individual needs and well-being of every child. Through shared expertise and resources, the MAT can enhance the provision of special educational needs and disability (SEND) support, pastoral care, and well-being initiatives. One of the areas that the Headteachers of interested schools have already talked about, is how we can share expertise with SEND provision or buy in some of our own specialist support, particularly as parents can find it hard to access services.

9. How will joining a MAT impact our relationships with parents?

We hope we are a good school at communicating with our parents – your feedback from the Parents Survey supports that view. We will continue to communicate in the ways we do now. From the parents' perspective not a lot will change. Christ Church should look and feel the same (same uniform, name and curriculum) but we will have a lot more support behind us as a school to give children the great education they deserve.

10. How many schools will be part of Two Cathedrals Trust?



It is likely that 5 schools will join at the same time as we are proposing to join (April 2024) and then every three months a further number of schools will join. At the moment up to 25 schools have expressed an interest in joining. At this point I cannot name those schools, as all schools are going through consultation with their Governors, staff and parents. But the Headteachers of the first phase of schools have met and shared information about their schools and their strengths and opportunities. Headteachers from the wider group are also part of a Working Group which has put together the application for Two Cathedrals Trust. More information about the other schools will become available over the next term as schools complete their consultation processes and we can share details with each other.

11. How will joining a MAT affect the quality of education at our school?

Joining a MAT aims to enhance the quality of education at our school. By becoming part of a larger network of schools, we will have access to additional resources, expertise, and support, which can contribute to further improvements in teaching and learning.

12. How will joining a MAT affect the governance and management of our school?

Joining a MAT will involve a change in the school's governance structure. The school's local governing body will be replaced by a trust board or local governing body accountable to the MAT. The MAT will provide strategic direction and oversight while empowering individual schools to maintain their unique characteristics and values.

One of the reasons we are looking at Two Cathedrals Trust is that its vision is for schools to serve their local communities and so in the Scheme of Delegation (the powers that the trust board gives to the local governing body), the local governing body will still retain responsibility for ensuring that the school is living out its values and ethos.

13. Will our school retain its Church of England ethos and values if we join a MAT?

Yes, joining a MAT ensures that we retain its Church of England ethos and values. Two Cathedrals Trust will be committed to supporting the religious character and spiritual development of member schools.

14. What benefits can our school expect to gain from joining a MAT?

Joining a MAT can provide various benefits, such as improved collaboration and professional development opportunities for staff, enhanced access to resources and specialist support, greater financial stability, shared procurement and administrative efficiencies, and a stronger voice in educational policy matters.

As part of our plans for Two Cathedrals Trust we have looked at how we can support staff development through joint training, opportunity for career development and networking across the schools. Research shows that developing staff and investing in their training and subject knowledge leads to improved outcomes for children.

15. Will our staff members' roles and responsibilities change if we join a MAT?



Day-to-day roles and responsibilities of staff members will remain largely unchanged. For the Headteacher – there will be senior colleagues to collaborate with and a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) to report to – so greater support and accountability. For office staff there will be a CFO (Chief Finance Officer) to report to on financial administration. But for other staff there will be little change in day-to-day working. However, joining a MAT will offer additional opportunities for professional development and collaboration with colleagues from other schools within the trust.

16. Will our school maintain its existing admissions policy after joining a MAT?

Generally, schools joining a MAT can maintain their existing admissions policy. However, it's essential to review and align the admissions policy with the MAT's overarching policies to ensure consistency and compliance with legal requirements.

17. What level of financial support and resources can our school expect to receive from the MAT?

The level of financial support and resources provided by MATs vary. As Two Cathedral Trust is setting up we are looking at financial modelling whereby the MAT provides central services, such as finance, HR, and procurement, which will alleviate administrative burdens on individual schools. Additionally, the MAT hopes to offer support in areas like curriculum development, school improvement, professional development, and capital projects based on the needs of member schools.