



As you are aware, the Governing Board at Ewell Grove have agreed to actively pursue joining a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), with Early Years and Primary Education at its core. This would enable us to work in partnership with other schools to make our collective educational offer even stronger for all children.

## Seven Steps to Joining a Trust



### What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

The aim of a MAT is to improve and maintain high educational standards across several schools through shared resources, best practices, and expertise.

Schools within a MAT share common values and ethos, fostering a collaborative environment to improve educational outcomes for all students within the trust.

#### What is a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)?



A MAT is an academy trust that operates more than one UK state-funded school with direct funding from the Department for Education (DfE).

They are inspected by OfSTED

They are free to attend

Children attending them take the same assessments

The group of schools operates under central Board of Directors

They have greater freedom over their curriculum, budgeting and staffing

Academy schools are state-funded but run independently

Multi Academy trusts are charities that cannot be run for financial profit; any surplus must be reinvested in the trust.

Working in partnership schools within a trust can share curriculum expertise and effective teaching practices, and work together to deliver the best outcomes for pupils.

## **What is the current national policy on academies?**

In March 2022 the government published the 'Opportunity for all' education white paper, where it proposed to deliver "a fully trust-led system with a single regulatory approach" by 2030. However, in December 2022 the education secretary, Gillian Keegan, said that the bill would not make further progress because the government was prioritising other areas for parliamentary time.

In the government's subsequent 'Academies regulatory and commissioning review', published in March 2023, the government reiterated that it wanted "to ensure all pupils and schools benefit from being in a high-quality multi-academy trust". It said that while it would not introduce legislation to replicate clauses on standards in the dropped bill, it would "take forward their intent" in its commissioning approach.

Currently approximately 60% of all schools in Surrey are academies.

## **What Ewell Grove is looking for from a strong Trust?**

- ❖ A Trust that connects partners – resulting in joint enterprise, rather than tribalism
- ❖ Continually help Ewell Grove to improve whilst maintaining our school culture of supporting others
- ❖ Deep investment in people to retain our current staff and help future recruitment
- ❖ Creation of a stronger education system – with a focus on social mobility that can ultimately makes 'disadvantage' disappear

We will seek evidence of systemic and sustained influence of the Trust on performance and provision so that our community has confidence.

## **What is the difference between a Maintained School and an Academy?**

As a maintained school Surrey County Council are the employer and ultimately responsible for the quality of education at Ewell Grove. If Ewell Grove were to join a MAT then they would take over these responsibilities.

Currently Ewell Grove has a Board of Governors who oversee and are held to account by Surrey CC for the work of the school. In a MAT a board of directors/trustees work at a top level and are accountable for all the schools within the trust. Schools within the trust often maintain Local Governing Boards (LGBs) which considers issues relevant to the individual school.

## **What is the difference for children and families**

On a day-to-day basis they are unlikely to feel any significant material difference to their school experience and education. Overtime, the benefits of both collaborative and sharing of staff expertise will see enhancements to our current excellent offering.

## **What is the difference for staff**

If Ewell Grove joins a MAT, all staff currently employed by the school will automatically transfer to the new academy on their current pay and conditions.

## **Are there any risks to joining a MAT?**

There could be, but that is why getting the 'match' right is so important. Ewell Grove's Governing Board considered:

- ❖ Values match – belief that education is about the 'whole' child, not just 'academic' subjects
- ❖ Shared belief in great aspirations and high expectations for our children's futures
- ❖ Shared approach in willingness to 'think different, do different' in order to get it right for our children
- ❖ A belief that every school, even the very best, must be prepared to be both a giver and receiver of capacity and support
- ❖ Retaining every one of our talented staff, whilst working in partnership to widen the collective talent pool can only benefit ALL our children

## **Are there any risks of not becoming a MAT?**

The Governors are acutely aware that 'doing nothing' could ultimately result in someone externally deciding on behalf of our school. The Governing Board believe we owe it to our school to be in control of our destiny and that doing nothing is no longer an option.

## **Are there alternatives for Ewell Grove, other than joining a MAT?**

Yes, the Governors have researched alternatives which include:

- 1) Seeking if it is possible to form a new MAT (this would require several other schools)
- 2) Remaining as we are and waiting for an external factor e.g. Government Policy to force us into a solution

## **Why is Ewell Grove considering this now?**

There will probably never be a perfect time, but we know that working with likeminded schools, who also wish to retain their own identities but are keen for collaboration, will provide the strongest opportunities for success.

## **What else will change?**

We do not intend to change Ewell Grove School except in ways which we think will improve the school even more. Any change is unlikely to be immediate, but schools are constantly evolving whether they are part of a MAT or not.

## **Who makes the decision?**

The appointed Governing Board Members of Ewell Grove school decide which MAT they would like to undertake due diligence on. They have currently agreed that this will be Lumen Learning Trust.

## **How can I find out more?**

There is more information about MAT academies on the DfE website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/academies>

There is more information about the Lumen Learning Trust on their website:

<https://www.lumenlearningtrust.co.uk/>

If you have any questions specific to Ewell Grove's plans please email [info@ewell-grove.surrey.sch.uk](mailto:info@ewell-grove.surrey.sch.uk)

If you would like an informal chat, Mrs Keane, Mrs Gardiner and Miss Rising are regularly on the gates at morning drop offs. They are more than happy to talk with parents/carers to answer or take away your questions.

## **What is next?**

Ewell Grove's application to join Lumen Learning Trust was approved by the South East Advisory Board on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Advisory Board Members help inform the decision-making that is ultimately taken by the DfE's appointed Regional Director.

Stakeholders (staff, parents and community) have the right to be consulted on the Governing Boards decision to join a MAT. Stakeholders do not take part in the decision making about which specific Trust. The parent body have delegated this responsibility to their appointed representatives of the elected Governing Board. The views of stakeholders on joining a MAT, or not, will be taken into account by the Governing Board.

This formal process of due diligence activities and consultation will now start.