



WISE
ACADEMIES
We Inspire Success and Excellence

WISE ACADEMIES

BECOMING A MIXED MAT

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

FOREWORD

WISE Academies is a successful Multi Academy Trust operating throughout the North-East of England including Sunderland, Newcastle upon Tyne and Northumberland.

This booklet outlines our proposal to making a significant change by amending the MAT constitution to allow Church of England schools to join WISE Academies. This would become known as a Mixed MAT. As you will read further on in this consultation document it does not mean that all academies within the Trust would become Church of England schools. The ethos and operation of existing academies in the Trust would be unaffected by this proposed change.

One of the requirements when making a significant change to a MAT, is to hold a fair and open consultation with all those who could be affected by the proposed change. This consultation exercise will run from **Friday 24th May 2019 until Friday 28th June 2019**. This document sets out the proposal and how interested parties can contribute to the consultation process.

We very much look forward to working closely with you as we take our vision forward into the future.



Zoe Carr O.B.E.
CEO of WISE Academies



Margaret Wright-Stephenson
Chair of Trustees of WISE Academies

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Like all Multi-Academy Trusts, it is important that WISE Academies continues to thrive and flourish. The proposal outlined in this document will afford opportunities to expand the WISE Academies' commitment to ensuring success and excellence across the North East of England.

The advantage of becoming a Mixed MAT would be to allow greater scope for future growth of the Trust as well as enable greater diversity across its academies. The Church of England are an important provider of education and there are C.E. schools in all Local Authority areas where WISE already operates.

The Trustees of WISE Academies have already begun to work in partnership with the Church of England Diocesan Education Boards (Durham and Newcastle) who have given their full support to the proposal that WISE Academies becomes a Mixed MAT. With the support of the Trustees, Diocesan Education Boards and that of all interested parties, WISE Academies would like to become a Mixed MAT by late 2019 subject to the relevant approvals.

We understand there may be questions you would like answered as you consider the effects of WISE Academies becoming a Mixed MAT. This booklet will hopefully answer these questions and the consultation exercise will give you the opportunity to make any comments you may have with regard the proposed change. Information on how you can make representations is available at the end of this booklet.

At the end of the four week consultation period, WISE Academies will ensure comments have been considered and a response given. The comments and responses will then be provided to the Department for Education alongside a significant change application to be considered by the Regional Schools Commissioner with final approval to be given by the Secretary of State.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

1. What is the rationale for changing to become a Mixed MAT?

WISE Academies exists to serve local communities where there are different types of schools who co-exist, and often work in partnership with one another. It is therefore sensible to be able to welcome church schools into the Trust, should they wish to join the WISE Academies family of schools. The additional option of working with church schools will further enrich the diversity of the Trust. WISE Academies' mission is not restricted to one sector and is committed to providing inspirational learning opportunities to all children.

2. Will becoming a Mixed MAT add any additional religious aspect to the existing academies that wasn't previously there?

No. Those academies that already form part of the Trust will be unaffected in any way by the change.

3. Will it result in any watering down of the Christian nature of church schools which may join the Trust in the future as a result of this change?

No, it will not. The Diocesan Board of Education oversees the Christian provision in Church of England schools and this relationship will continue if church schools were to join WISE Academies.

4. Will there be any additional religious symbolism evident in the current academies as a result of this closer relationship with the Church of England at Trust level?

There will not be any additional religious symbolism evident in any of the academies. Parents, pupils, staff and visitors should see no differences to how the academies are currently set up and operated.

5. Will governance change in any noticeable way as a result of the re-shaping of the constitution to reflect the Mixed MAT?

WISE Academies already has individuals at both Company level and Board of Trustee level who have been agreed by the Diocesan Education Boards as able to represent them in a Mixed MAT constitution. The company documents will need to be amended in respect of the company members so that out of the five Members, two of these individuals are no longer named as individuals but act as representatives nominated by the Diocesan Bishops for both Durham and Newcastle. A third existing member will also be agreed jointly between the Diocesan Boards of Education and Wise Academies. The fourth and fifth members will remain the same as currently. This structure will enable both voluntary controlled and voluntary aided Church of England schools to join the Trust. Like WISE Academies the Diocese expects that the Board of Trustees is appointed on the basis of their skills with nine Trustees considered the optimum number of Trustees. This understanding will be reflected in a Members agreement ensuring that Trustees continue to be appointed on the basis of the skills they can bring. One of these Trustees will be expected to have an understanding of Church schools and the SIAMs inspection framework for Church schools so that any Church schools who join the Trust can be assured that there is this experience on the Trust board. It has been agreed that this Trustee can be an existing Trustee who currently sits on the Trust board and also brings extensive primary education experience to the board.

At local governance level, the constitution of the Local Governing Body in existing academies will not change. These will continue to have representation from parents, staff, community and the Trust.

Similarly, it is recognised that the constitution of any Local Governing Bodies for church schools that join the Trust in the future will need to reflect the appropriate level of Church of England representation for a voluntary controlled or voluntary aided school.

6. What is the relationship like with the Diocese? Have they been supportive? Have they tried / been able to influence matters at all in any of the schools?

WISE Academies already has a positive working relationship with the Diocese of Durham and Diocese of Newcastle, both of which have shown enthusiasm for the proposed change.

The partnership between WISE Academies and the Diocese is mutually supportive and will bring exciting opportunities for both organisations as this develops further. Both share common values and, by working together the Church of England and WISE Academies will form an influential and powerful partnership for promoting the highest standard of education across the communities which they serve.

7. Will any policies / procedures needed to change? e.g. curriculum, RE provision, PHSE provision

No, the current policies and procedures within the existing academies will not change.

8. Will inspection arrangements change as a result of becoming a Mixed MAT?

The frequency of Ofsted inspections for all schools with the Trust will remain the same.

Church schools however are also subject to an additional SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection. SIAMS inspection involve looking at the school's Christian vision, the provision the school makes because of this vision and how effective this is in enabling all pupils to flourish. The Diocese will assist in SIAMS inspections and the existing Trustee with experience of SIAMS inspections will offer oversight of this requirement at board level when necessary.

Academies which are not schools of religious character within the Trust will not become subject to these additional SIAMS inspections.

9. Who is being consulted about the proposed change to become a mixed MAT?

All interested parties are being consulted, this includes: parents/guardians of pupils in WISE Academies' schools, all WISE Academies staff, WISE Local Governing Body members, the Diocese of Durham, Diocese of Newcastle, local schools, Parochial Church Councils and Local Authorities in the areas in which WISE Academies currently operates and trade union representatives.

10. Will the admission criteria change at the existing academies in any way?

No. The admissions criteria will not change at any of the existing academies as a result of becoming a Mixed MAT. WISE Academies must comply with the Admissions Code and although WISE is its own Admission Authority, the Trust will continue to participate in the co-ordinated admission arrangements operated by the Local Authorities where it operates.

11. What is the process in becoming a Mixed MAT?

A significant change application will be submitted to the Department for Education along with evidence of a fair and open consultation. This will be considered by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and their local Head Teacher Board. Should approval be granted by the RSC, the application will be forwarded to the Secretary of State for final approval.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

WISE Academies considers that this proposal is in the best interests of the Trust and the communities it serves. If you would like to comment on the proposal or raise any additional questions please get in touch.

You can respond in any of the following ways:

- By email to consultations@wiseacademies.co.uk
- By writing to: WISE Academies Head Office, Consultations, Borodin Avenue, Sunderland SR5 4NX

Responses to be received by Friday 28th June 2019.