

Staff Questions

What can Robin Hood offer Yenton that hasn't already been done?

RH MAT can offer Yenton further consistency and continuity. Along with Paul Smith, the MAT has worked hard to support Yenton to the position they are in now - many of the systems and structures introduced to Yenton were developed at Robin Hood MAT and took significant time to develop. In terms of Yenton's journey, we are only at the beginning and there is still more that can be done to continue to develop and embed the success of the last two years. The challenge of Yenton and the MAT is to move the school past the point where it is fighting for 'good' at every OFSTED and to push it onto becoming an outstanding school. To help the school do this in a sustainable way that truly benefits children then external help from the MAT is needed.

If we no longer want to be with RH MAT, does Yenton get to keep the existing head teacher, Paul Smith?

Paul Smith is a MAT employee so if the partnership was to end, then Paul would return to continue his MAT work elsewhere. If Paul were to stay then he would need to resign from Robin Hood MAT and apply for a job that was advertised by Yenton.

Succession planning - if Paul leaves - will we be able to find a suitable head for the school in the future?

If the school is part of the MAT and Paul was to leave, the appointment of a suitable Head Teacher would be of the utmost importance to the MAT. All options would be considered and a strength of the MAT is to develop leaders from within. Within the MAT model we can assure all staff that a HT of similar values and quality would be recruited. If the school were to remain a BCC school then it could be that the next HT who comes in takes the school in a completely different direction - with the MAT this will not happen.

If the school was not part of the MAT, then it would have to follow LA recruitment processes for headteachers. There is no guarantee that the school would find a suitable headteacher as evidenced by its inability to appoint a headteacher prior to asking Robin Hood MAT to support

With OfSTED looking more closely at the curriculum, in coming months, will the RH MAT still follow and adhere to the National Curriculum? If not why?

RH MAT will continue to work alongside the National Curriculum. The MAT embraces the new Ofsted directive as a broad and balanced curriculum is one of the driving factors of the MAT. To quote Ofsted: 'We need to assess a school's curriculum in a way that is valid, fair and reliable, and that recognises the importance of schools' autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches.' This gives us the flexibility to find the best approach for our children. The MAT is constantly looking at curriculum offer and how best to provide a rich learning experience for all of our children.

Other than collaboration for INSET, what other benefits will we gain as a professionals?

Collaboration is a fundamental benefit throughout the MAT and not just on INSET days. We have tiered networks throughout from teaching specialisms to School Business Managers (SBMs) and senior leaders to SENDCO's.

There is an increased focus on CPD which can be delivered by staff visiting different schools in the MAT, evidencing best practice whether in the classroom or support departments as we have similar approaches and a larger network to share ideas with.

Another success story to date is where staff have been given opportunities to second to different schools. This has enabled them to work with different SLT's and peers with the security of being able to return to their school.

Has a funding agreement been signed?

The funding agreement has not been signed.

Why does the RH MAT opt out of union backing support?

The MAT does not have a viewpoint on 'union backing support'. This is left to the individual school to determine. In this case Yenton have made it clear that they will continue to pay into this.

Will services be checked for 'value for money'?

All services are checked for 'value-for-money'. Our experience as a MAT so far is that more of an emphasis is placed on this than a local authority school.

The Curee Routemaps training was awful, boring - all schools doing it (LA would have researched this more thoroughly, which would've reduced workload)

We agree that the presentation wasn't up to the standard that we expect. In the vetting process Steve Taylor, Paul Smith, Joe Purnell and Julia Moxon (all HTs within the MAT) travelled to the Curee offices, met with the team and discussed the needs of the MAT. We left the meeting with the view that Curee Routemaps were a way forward in handing CPD control back to staff and would help us create a learning culture. Unfortunately, we were not able to see Bart present and we acknowledge that this led to his poor presentation coming a surprise. We did feed this back to Curee and Steve Taylor acknowledged the poor standard in an email to all staff. As with anything in life there will be mistakes made but we want to use this as an opportunity to learn from the process and ensure the next MAT CPD is of a very high quality.

It is our understanding that not 'all schools are doing it' and with senior leaders having worked in a number of schools where this hasn't been offered by the LA we'd be willing to be proved wrong if this is the case. However, like many other schools, we maintain that Curee Route maps bring essential evidence about effective teaching strategies.

Lack of security regarding future pay and conditions - we're aware these can change after the honeymoon year period - will future pay and conditions be safeguarded?

Future pay and conditions can never be safeguarded by **any** organisation and we are no different. Like local authorities, we can't forecast economic situations in 10, 20 or 30 years time. However, protecting pay and conditions has always been at the heart of our decision-making and over the past five years of academy standing we have evidence to demonstrate doing the right thing. We have not changed pay or conditions to the detriment of our staff. Any change we have made has been to improve conditions for staff (e.g continuing to pay support staff increments when BCC have not). It is worth highlighting that Birmingham LA, like any organisation cannot make any guarantee about terms and conditions, and that they have the same ability to change terms and conditions as academies do

Will you create your own or follow Birmingham LA?

We have mirrored Birmingham's and/or national pay and conditions wherever possible. The only example to date where we have been different to Birmingham is where we have IMPROVED Support Staff Pay. Under Local Authority Performance Management processes, Support Staff have been restricted to lump sum increases before reverting to their original pay; the MAT has continued to give increments instead (where applicable).

How can you reassure us of no negative changes?

We can't give any guarantees as per the points above but our legacy since becoming an academy trust is that we have always offered identical terms to the LA/National recommendations or improved them.

Will term dates change?

We have always mirrored Birmingham term dates since the trust was incepted five years ago and there are no plans to change this in the foreseeable future.

We will lose good staff if term dates change?

As per the above point, there are no plans to move away from the Birmingham term dates.

Do we pay into the Facilities Pot? If not, why? It's only £3 per pupil and will give teachers added security if unions need to be brought in

This decision is left to each individual school. If Yenton wish to continue to pay in then that is a school-based decision. We also encourage staff to join a union. Yenton has indicated that it would continue to pay into the Facilities Pot

Would we be asked to move to another school?

We try and promote MAT vacancies internally to encourage opportunities for staff to work elsewhere if they choose with the security of returning to their school. No member of staff has been asked to move to another school without their agreement and we would never seek to enforce a move. Staff development is about working with people and in EVERY single case where a staff member has been seconded it has been after they applied for an opportunity to work in another school within the MAT to develop their career. Nobody has ever been forced to change settings.

What maternity packages will you follow if you don't follow the Burgundy Book?

The MAT follows the Burgundy Book.

What paternity rights will staff have?

Our staff have the same paternity rights as Local Authority schools.

Increased workload for head and bursars

With the same systems being used within the MAT and closer opportunities to work together, we find that there is a stronger support network which helps to share or reduce workload. There is a clear focus on wellbeing which has aimed to reduce the workload on teachers through mindfulness/wellbeing days and no-marking days.

Will the MAT follow the Burgundy Book?

The MAT follows the Burgundy Book.

How will funds be shared?

There is no fund-sharing agreement in the MAT. Government funds are passed onto each school and school-generated income is received directly by the school.

Will it be equal?

Not applicable (see above).

Will it be fair across all schools?

Not applicable (see above).

How is this calculated? Per pupil? By pupil premium children?

Not applicable (see above).

Have the risks involved in the transferred responsibility of pensions - esp for support staff - accurately been assessed and reviewed? What proof of this do staff have?

Pension Position for Teachers

The Trust will contact Teachers Pensions to register with them and transfer the administration of the Teachers' Pensions Scheme (TPS) for the teaching staff. The pension scheme will be unaffected for teachers on conversion and will remain the same for all teachers, LA or Academy

Pension Position for Support Staff

At the date of conversion, all support staff will continue to be eligible for the LGPS, in the same way as they were immediately before the conversion date. The academy must automatically enter all new support staff that have a contract of three months or more into the scheme. After conversion, any non-teaching staff that have previously opted out will be brought back into the LGPS from day one of conversion, but with the option to opt back out again.

All members who transfer under TUPE will have continuous pensionable service on the employment(s) that transfer.

Employee contribution bands remain the same across the LGPS, regardless of a change in employer.

In summary, there is no significant change from a member's perspective.

Any risk over Local Government Pension Scheme lies with the Employer as they take on the overall liability (shortfall in funds). This is a valuation by an independent actuary. All Local Authority schools have to do this as well. Every three years the independent actuary reviews all schools and schools then have to pay an additional contribution into the pension scheme based on this. This will be the same for all schools, LA or academy schools

If money is coming straight from the government, who in the trust decides how it's spent?

The scheme of delegation will determine the spending limits from Head Teacher to GB to the MAT similar to the Local Authority model. The funding for academies in RH MAT is devolved to individual schools - it is up to the headteacher and governing board of each school to decide how the funds are spent

Will we become a sponsored academy? If so, who's going to sponsor us? Or will we be deemed successful enough to be a converted academy with increased autonomy?

The conversion application is for a convertor academy and not a sponsored academy. A convertor academy has greater autonomy than a sponsored academy.

What happens if the academy falls into financial problems?

As per the local authority, schools will be required to set balanced budgets and will have to produce regular budget reports. These will be reviewed by the Head Teacher, the Governing Body, the MAT Finance Team and the MAT Board so there is additional scrutiny to prevent this happening. If the school is unable to set a balanced budget, the MAT will look to work with the school.

No back up from LA

The MAT will support the school in the same way the Local Authority does.

How much will academy trust heads be paid?

This is determined by the Individual Salary Range (ISR) based primarily on the size of the school. This criteria can be found in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.

Who decides the salaries?

The ISR's are reviewed when the school joins the MAT to ensure the correct processes have been followed by the school. The Head Teacher must undergo a thorough Performance Management exercise to qualify for an increment. This is overseen by the Executive Head Teacher and signed off by the MAT Pay Committee.

Will these be different to the salaries now?

There is no expectation that salaries will change. If the size of the school changes then the ISR's may be reviewed.

How will becoming an academy add extra value to the lives and learning the Yenton family of pupils, parents and staff? Can we revert back to a maintained school once we're an academy? If no, why?

We have now worked with Yenton for going into the third year. When the MAT began working with the school there were real concerns that the school might drop into RI. The reality is that Yenton has some talented staff and the job of the MAT was to stabilise the school and grow confidence in the staff. The next task is to develop a strategy for moving towards outstanding - the MAT will play a key role within this. The MAT will also be keen to offer further networking within the trust between schools and the sharing of best practice - Yenton now has a key role to play within the trust.

It is highly unlikely that an academy can revert to a maintained school (unless a change in the political outlook allows this). Schools occasionally leave one multi-academy trust to join another. They can be rebrokered for a number of reasons: failures of educational performance, management and governance, or those responsible for them might ask the regional schools commissioner to rebroker them for another reason.

What might happen after the TUPE process?

As stated above, the MAT has no plans to change any terms or conditions after conversion or after the TUPE process. If there were any changes proposed, the MAT would have to consult with all stakeholders including the unions and follow due procedure. This is the same as would happen if the school was a LA school. The TUPE process is there to protect employees.

A different head will be free to make different choices for the school and therefore the staff are in a more vulnerable position.

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It is in the MAT's best interests for Yenton to succeed as much as possible and the MAT would want to build on the positive progress made rather than make unnecessary changes.

Will the school be paying into the union facility fund?

Yes

Will the school be better off financially as an academy?

In terms of funding, there is very little difference between schools and academies. Academies can bid for additional funding that schools can't such as Condition Improvement Funding (for capital projects).

Financial management can also be improved as academy. There is more financial scrutiny on budgets as an academy than a school. The Academies Financial Handbook places further financial rigour and probity on academies. Integrated financial systems and stronger financial acumen within trusts along with external audits support better internal assurance. Procurement frameworks are used more often to enable schools within the MAT to get better deals. Financial benchmarking is improved as it is easier to compare costs between schools. Economies of scale can be realised where specialist staffing posts can be shared between schools rather than more costly service level agreements or schools can reduce costs on contracts through increased purchasing power.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS OR WOULD LIKE MORE CLARITY THEN PLEASE
GET IN TOUCH WITH STEVE TAYLOR OR PAUL SMITH**