

Newsletter

April 2016



Learn-AT

Dear friends, colleagues and members of our local communities

We have now completed the period of consultation about the proposal for our seven schools to work in partnership as The Learn Academies Trust (Learn-AT). We would like to thank all those who submitted questions, attended meetings, watched and listened to presentations, engaged in the online survey and took time to consider our plans. This newsletter brings together answers to your questions, the text of the presentation used at the meetings for those of you who may have missed them and the results of the survey.

As you will see, the results of the consultation show a clear consensus in favour of the proposal. For this reason, an application to the Department of Education has been submitted for the establishment of The Learn Academies Trust. We will keep you informed about its progress.

We are all very excited about the prospect of working closely together to develop truly great learning for all of our children. Thank you again for your support.

With best wishes,

The Headteachers and Governors of:

Great Bowden Academy

Meadowdale Primary School

Ridgeway Primary Academy

Husbands Bosworth C of E Primary School

St Andrew's C of E Primary School North Kilworth

Market Harborough C of E Primary Academy

Lubenham All Saints Primary School

Contents:

Learn-AT - Guiding Principles	2
Core Value and Core Purpose	3
Learn-AT Pioneers	4-6
Learn-AT Structure	6-8
Strategic Plan	9
Proposed Learn-AT Services	10
Learn-AT or Learn@...	10
Responses to the online survey	10
MAT Questions	13-16

Learn-AT: Our guiding principles

A Trust that works on behalf of all of its children in all of its schools.

We began by establishing a set of guiding principles that help to articulate some of the things we all feel strongly about, principles we feel are essential to underpin this new organisation, the reasons we would want to work in it or send our children to school in it. This principle has been there from the very start, and sums up a commitment to think outside the confines of our own schools.

A Trust unified by moral purpose – a belief in the power of education to transform life chances and choices.

All of us are in this business because of our moral purpose. This is a noble profession that has the capacity to make a genuine difference to the future of young people. Teachers play such a significant role in children's lives. Transformational education continues to be of crucial importance in today's changing and challenging world.

A Trust that celebrates and nurtures the distinctive and unique ethos, identity and character of each of its schools.

We are particularly excited that this Trust will be a partnership of Church of England and community schools. We want to demonstrate proudly that this partnership can help and support all schools to develop their own particular distinctiveness and ethos to benefit their pupils and staff.

Outward-looking

It is so important that schools do not become inward-looking 'silos'. Learn-AT can support the development of Trust-wide collaboration, but it is also crucial that relationships that support improving pedagogy are developed and maintained across the wider network. Of course Learn-AT will work to sustain and grow the panoply of other partnerships and relationships which help schools to thrive – with parents in local communities, with the LA, to support transition in the early years and on to secondary school and so on.

Partnerships:

Diocese of Leicester
Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust (DLAT)
Affinity Teaching School Alliance
University of Leicester
Parents
Residents
Local schools (primary and secondary)
Early Years education providers
Local Authority
Parish
Local businesses and charities

A Trust inspired by shared values, held in common, by all faiths and none.



This is a combination of Christian, British, Olympic, Paralympic and Humanist values – to generate a collection of values that in fact we all share. But the one that has a particularly crucial importance and significance in our context is Koinonia.

One core value: Koinonia (fellowship)

Community

Collaboration

Peer support

Peer challenge

Mutual respect

Honesty

Kindness

Care

One falls, we all fall

Koinonia is one of the Christian values, but it is not exclusively Christian – it is an ancient Greek word that loosely means 'fellowship' or 'community' and perfectly sums up the ethos of Learn-AT. This is a Trust that

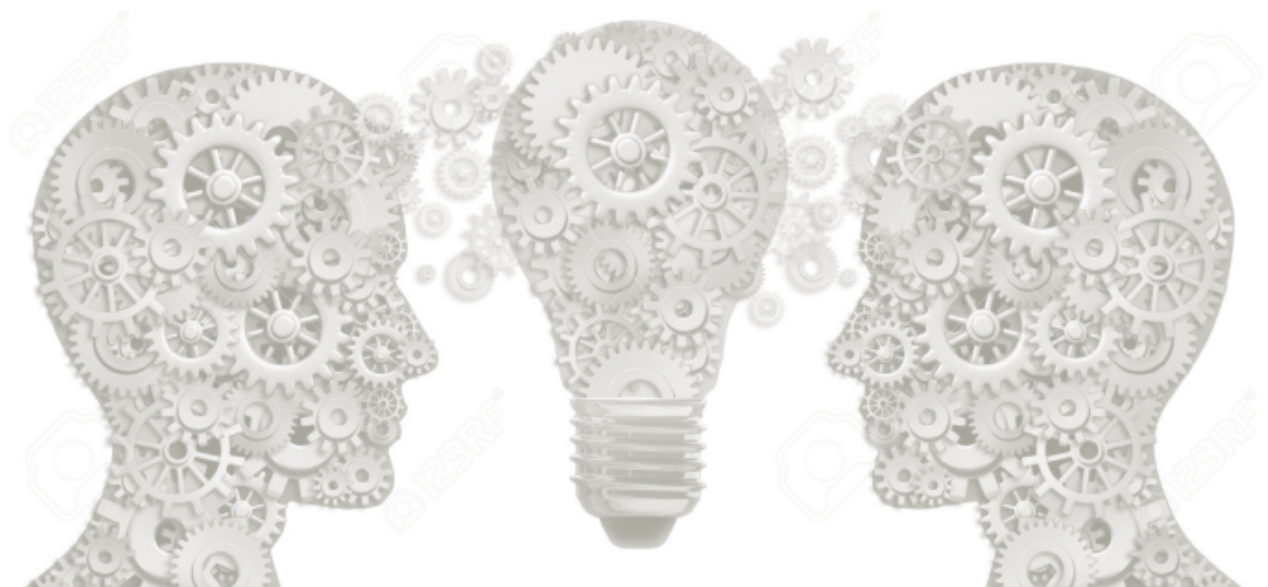
promotes collaboration and mutual support, doing things together - and respects its stakeholders as peers, partners and colleagues. We want to promote a 'Musketeer' commitment to each other – all for one and one for all – if one of us is vulnerable, then we are all vulnerable; if one of us is failing, then we are all failing.

And Vygotsky (one of the greatest educational psychologists and thinkers of the 20th Century) carried out studies of human cognition which suggest that human beings need to interact socially - in other words, to talk with other humans - in order to think and learn.



Collaboration is fundamental to learning and thinking. School improvement is all about finding out what things children need to get better at learning, then helping teachers learn how to teach those things better. Votsky would have loved Koinonia.

One core purpose: Learning



Vygotsky's theories of learning and the link to collaboration are also illustrated here. Learn-AT's core purpose is very simple.

Learn-AT is about learning.

**Everybody learning –
because when everybody is
learning, pupils learn too.**

Learn-AT pioneers

The pioneer group of seven founding members will be working together to establish the founding vision and principles, pioneer team and initial systems.

- **Great Bowden Academy**
- **Meadowdale Primary School**
- **St Andrew's North Kilworth**
- **Lubenham All Saints**
- **Market Harborough C of E Primary Academy**
- **Husbands Bosworth Primary**
- **Ridgeway Primary Academy**



Individuality

Minimal branding

Celebrate distinctive ethos and identity of each academy

with

Common purpose

Shared vision and values

Shared strategic leadership

Individuality with a presumption of maximum autonomy for good and outstanding schools. Where a school falls into an Ofsted category, or Trust monitoring systems reveal early warning signs that a school may need support, whether that is in academy business or finance, safeguarding or in relation to pupil outcomes, the Trust will take steps to intervene to provide support and to strengthen oversight and governance of the school until the problems are resolved.

Strong strategic leadership

Sir David Carter (National Schools Commissioner, 2015) set out the following nine characteristics of effective MATs. They provide a useful checklist for strategic planning and will support Trust self-evaluation.

1. **Well communicated strategic vision**
2. **Clear accountability framework**
3. **Clear quality assurance systems**
4. **Coherent framework for governance**
5. **Trust wide school improvement strategy**
6. **Systematic programme of school to school support**
7. **Robust risk management systems**
8. **Strong HR and succession planning**
9. **Outward looking system leadership**

Accountability

Mutual, Rigorous, Challenging, Transparent

The Trust will establish strong audit and monitoring systems and school to school support partnerships - it will know its academies qualitatively and quantitatively, understand and respond appropriately to the needs of each individual school and be able to evaluate the impact of its actions.

Professional learning community

Aspirational and reciprocal, collaborative and collegial, research-engaged, focused relentlessly on pupil learning, expert leaders who promote and participate in effective CPD

The Trust's core purpose - learning - will be at the heart of our approach to school improvement. We will develop a school improvement strategy underpinned by a deceptively simple philosophy:

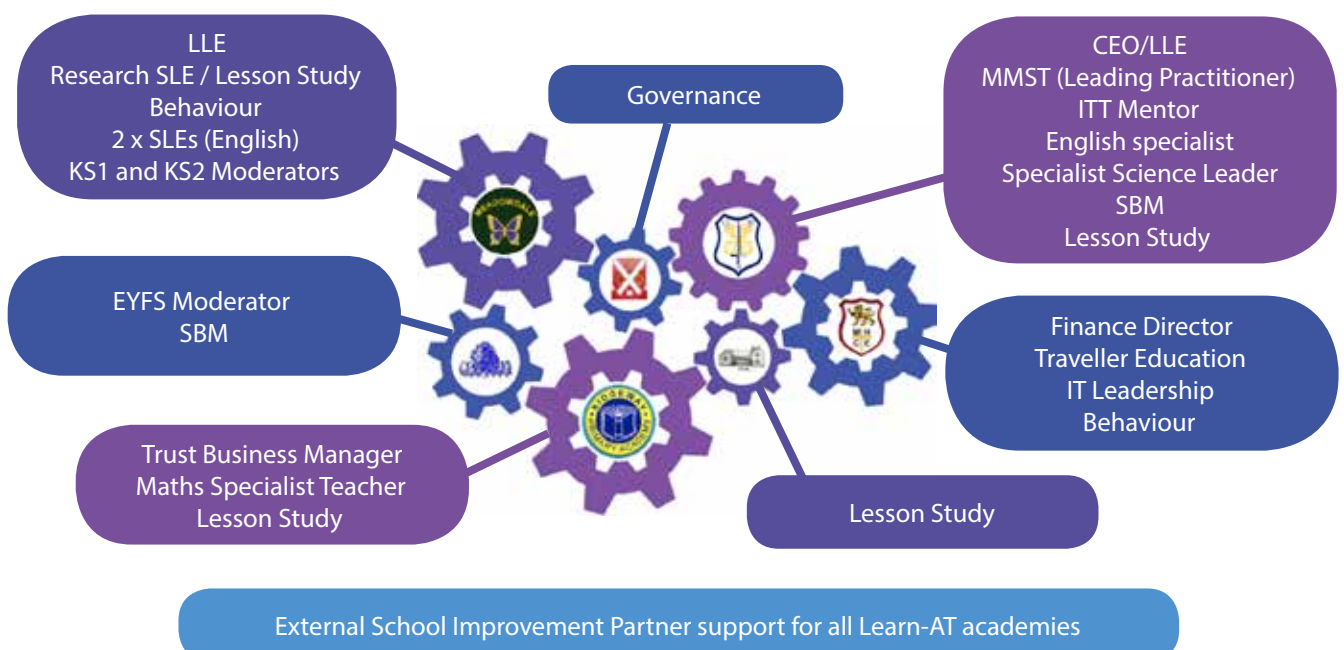
Robust Trust monitoring and evaluation systems will mean that we can find out what it is that our teachers are less good at teaching children how to learn. We will help them to learn how to teach children how to learn those things better.

Often that will mean finding people within our own Trust who can do that. Sometimes it will mean looking outward to find that support from our wider network, in the teaching school alliance, with DLAT or the Diocese. Often it will mean working together in lesson study teams, turning to research, with support from subject experts and discovering new knowledge about pedagogy and practice that helps us all to improve.

It will not only be teachers who benefit from a strong professional learning community – our leaders too will benefit from support to learn those leadership strategies that promote effective school improvement.

School-led school improvement

This is a strong group of schools with good capacity to collaborate on school to school support, joint professional development and school business services. Every school has expertise and experience to offer; every school will need support in one area or another from time to time. Our schools have a considerable reservoir of strength in many areas of school leadership, management and pedagogy. It will be the responsibility of Learn-AT's leadership team to facilitate effective ways to un-tap this enormous potential for the benefit of all our pupils.



Inspirational teaching and learning

Inspired pupils, inspired staff

inspired parents

innovative & creative, research evidence

informed

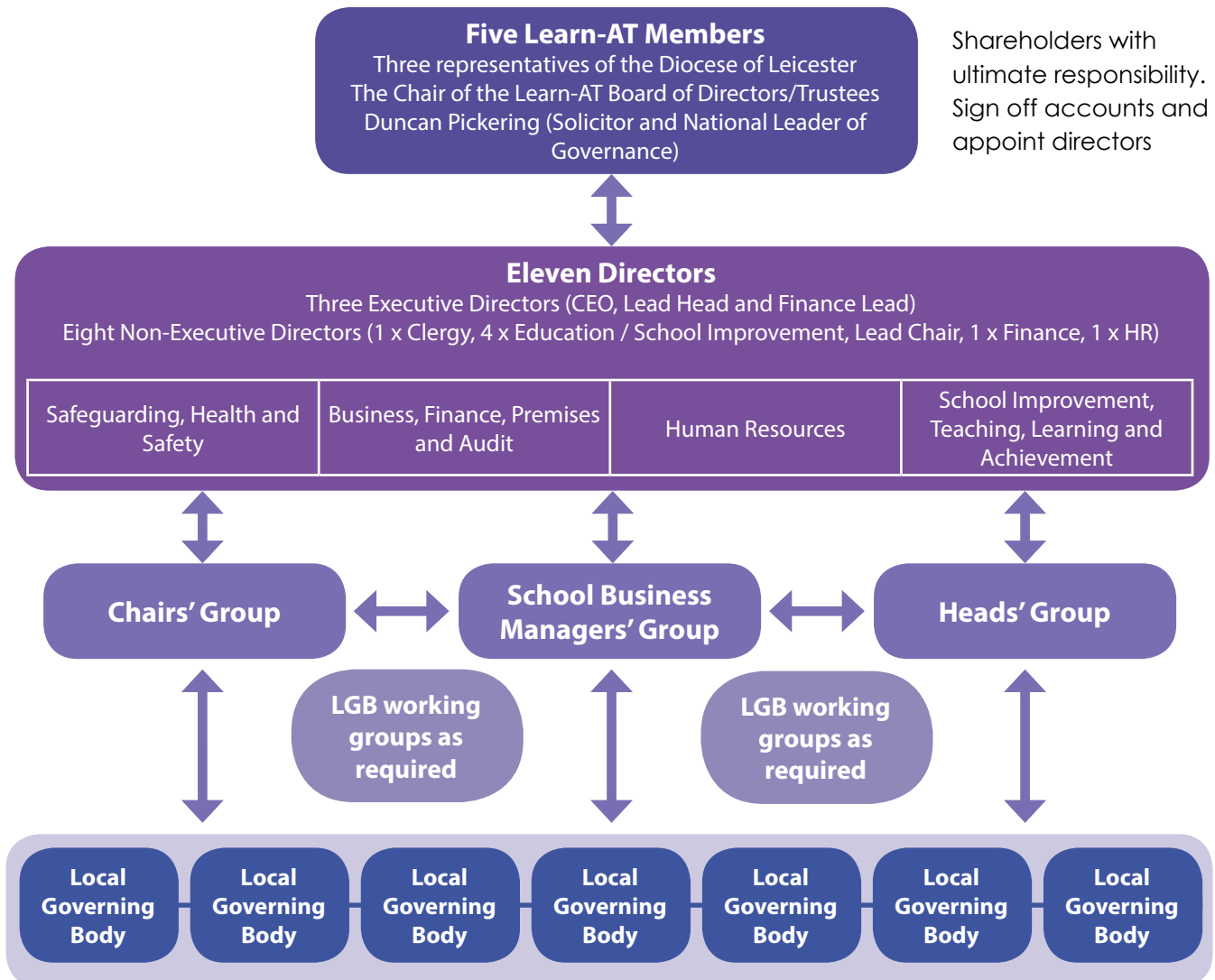
People who are inspired are engaged. When learning is engaging you think about it. When you think about something you remember it. When pupils are inspired by their learning they achieve and are happy at school – and that can inspire their parents. But schools that are effectively engaging parents can inspire

them to support their children at home, to support them to read, to talk, to think, to learn. This is the virtuous circle we aim to create across Learn-AT.

Some of our schools have begun already to develop lesson study as a means of supporting engagement with current educational research. We have seen how powerful it can be as a means of inspiring teachers', supporting their professional learning and ensuring that our children experience increasingly effective teaching and inspirational learning.

great professional learning → great teaching → great learning

Learn-AT: Structure



Non-executive directors/trustees:

Learn-AT will have eight non-executive directors: the Team Rector for Market Harborough and the Chair of the LGB Chairs' Group, together with four trustees with expertise in education/school improvement, a finance specialist and a human resources specialist.

Trustees with expertise in education/school improvement:

Sir John Dunford

Specialist Area of expertise: School Leadership

Sir John Dunford has over 42 years of experience of school leadership and has written and spoken extensively on the subject for the last 20 years. He is currently Chair of a number of organisations including Whole Education, South Gloucestershire Education Partnership Board, Step Forward Volunteering (charity), a Director of John Dunford Consulting Ltd, a speaker and consultant on school leadership and pupil premium and has been a Governor of St Andrew's since 2000. He has previously worked as a teacher and Headteacher, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, National Pupil Premium Champion and Chair of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors.

Professor David Pedder

Specialist Area of Expertise: Educational Improvement

Professor David Pedder has been Director of Research at University of Leicester School of Education since 2011. He has significant experience supporting and developing school-university partnerships aimed at promoting research-informed approaches to school improvement, teachers' and leaders' professional learning and development and classroom practice. He has previously worked as a researcher, lecturer and senior lecturer at University of Cambridge Faculty of Education (2001-2010) and was involved in developing the Essex-Cambridge school-university partnership aimed at promoting research-informed approaches to school improvement, teachers' and leaders' professional learning, development and classroom practice.

Gill Weston

Specialist Area of Expertise: School Improvement

Gill Weston is a freelance education consultant and OfSTED inspector. She was previously Assistant Director for Education, Learning and Skills at Leicestershire County Council with strategic oversight of 0-19 education, Early Years provision, school organisation and admissions, governor services, school improvement and SEN and alternative provision.

Jeremy Benson

Specialist Areas of Expertise: Leadership and Finance

Jeremy Benson is Executive Director (Vocational Qualifications) at Ofqual (and currently interim Principal Accounting Officer). He leads a Directorate of 45 people, including oversight of the legal team and responsibility for governance issues. Ofqual is a significant organisation in the education policy field, in relation to assessment and qualifications and Jeremy is its public face on vocational qualifications.

Previously at Ofqual he has been responsible for corporate services, including finance, and for policy, including relationships with DfE and establishing the GCSE/A level reform programme.

Finance Specialist:

Wayne Burbidge

Wayne Burbidge is currently a self-employed, freelance Interim Finance Director, specialising in mergers and acquisitions and business integration of all business functions. Typically his role involves financial and risk evaluation of business targets; managing internal and external teams through due diligence and contracts processes; preparation of detailed integration plans including all business functions (Finance, HR, IT, Commercial, Operations etc) with particular emphasis on the enhancement of financial reporting and governance of targets. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICAEW) and a governor of Great Bowden Academy. Previous roles include Director of Finance for EMEA, UK Finance Director of Lennox Industries, Director of Internal Audit EMEA, Project Manager for a large IT implementation in Scandinavia and Senior Manager Audit and Business Services at Price Waterhouse.

Human Resources Specialist:

Jane Kenyon

Jane Kenyon leads Business Support for Bedfordia Group, where she is responsible for the provision of Business Support to the operating businesses. She co-ordinates the deployment of resources and HR between departments and ensures health and safety policies and practices are adhered to. She is involved in the development of Health and Safety strategy, talent management, succession planning, Employee Relations, reward & compensation and training & development. She is a Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (MICPD). Jane is also a Director of the HR & Training Consultancy, Adding2it: A Big Hand for HR!. From recruitment through to organisational training, Adding 2it provides necessary policies and procedures, performance appraisal and performance management, employment relations and organisational transformation.

Executive directors/trustees:

There will be three executive directors/trustees: CEO, Chair of the Head's Group (tbc) and Chief Finance Officer

CEO (designate):

Stef Edwards

Specialist Areas of Expertise: school leadership and improvement, primary English and research-informed teacher professional learning.

Stef Edwards has been Headteacher of Great Bowden Academy for ten years and is an accredited National College of Teaching and Leadership Local Leader of Education which involves working with other school leaders to support school improvement. She chairs the Affinity Teaching School Alliance Research and Innovation Working Group. Stef was previously a Primary Strategy Literacy Consultant working with schools across Leicestershire, a Leading Literacy Teacher and a primary school class teacher.

Chief Finance Officer (Designate):

Maria Wood

Specialist Areas of Expertise: Financial Management

Maria Wood is School Business Manager at Market Harborough C of E Primary Academy. She is an Associate of the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ACA) and affiliated to CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy). Previously Maria was Senior Accountant at the University of Melbourne with a turnover in excess of AU\$1.8bn and Financial Accountant at Meriel NZ. She is committed to and passionate about financial management in the education environment, focusing resources on teaching and learning.

Strategic plan

<p>Strategic Aim 1: Learning Outcomes All pupils in Learn-AT academies achieve excellent learning outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proportions of pupils in Learn-AT schools who master age-related expectations and make excellent progress in core subjects, regardless of their circumstances and starting points exceeds the national average.• Teaching and learning in all Learn-AT academies is at least good and often better.
<p>Strategic Aim 2: School Improvement Robust, sustainable and effective school improvement secures excellent learning outcomes for all pupils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research-informed, effective professional learning underpins improvements to pupil learning in all Learn-AT academies.• Strong school to school support secures accurate and robust self –evaluation processes in all Learn-AT schools• Effective Trust systems facilitate accurate assessment data collection and analysis, which informs accurate self-evaluation and strategic planning
<p>Strategic Aim 3: Leadership Skilled and expert leadership and governance at Board and Academy level secures excellent learning outcomes for all pupils.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn-AT Trustees are highly skilled in the field of strategic school leadership, finance and business and work effectively on behalf of the Trust and all Learn-AT academies.• High quality, strong governance, focused clearly on excellent learning outcomes, is embedded on all Learn-AT academies' Local Governing Bodies.• Leaders at all levels across the Trust are supported to achieve skilled and effective leadership which focuses on excellent pupil learning outcomes.
<p>Strategic Aim 4: Business Strengthen the Trust by developing a secure foundation for sustainable growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learn-AT delivers high quality and cost-effective services to all of its academies.• Effective systems of audit and evaluation secure robust risk management and strategic planning.• Excellent financial and business planning underpins a strong Trust infrastructure and sustainable, measured and systematic growth.

Learn-AT Services - a balance between:

School improvement

Strong emphasis on professional learning: External evaluation, support and scrutiny from Headship Support

Learn-AT school-based System Leaders and Leading Practitioners (School leadership, subject leadership, research engaged/school centred Joint Professional Development (Lesson Study), Assessment, Behaviour, SEND...)

Extended Professional Learning Community with strategic partners (Affinity TSA/University of Leicester/DBE)

AND

Finance and business systems and services

Management and Support: Cost effective central services
Inter-school joint business management services

Proposed Learn-AT services (year 1)

Central services (common to all schools)

Central Trust Team: School Improvement and Operations

Education Services: Headship Support; Affinity TSA; O-Track; Assessment; EPIC&Well-being

HR and Payroll
Health & Safety

Insurance and Legal Services
Audit

Information and Finance Systems
Trust Finance/budget monitoring

Academy conversion support
Marketing

Governor Development Service

Centrally charged/administered services

Academy Business Management Services

Additional School to School Support

DBE Partnership Agreement

School meals/catering support

Web connectivity

Admissions

Parent Support Adviser

Traveller Liaison

Learn-AT or Learn@...



This is just a start for a potential design for a Learn-AT logo – schools could choose which Learn-AT/Learn@

they want to be depending on whether they are a church or a community school...

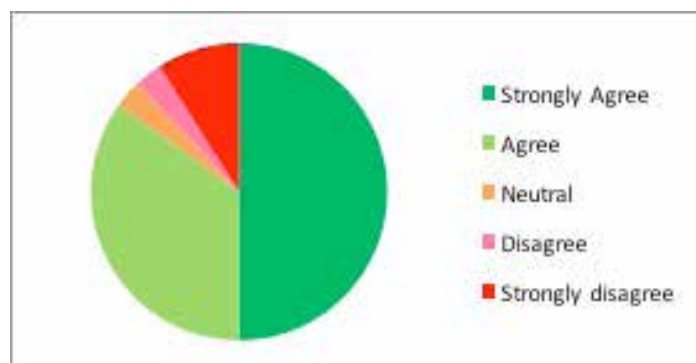
Responses to the online survey

Q1 said:

Thank you for your interest in our proposal to establish the Learn Academies Trust and for your school to join the Trust. Having considered all the information available, please say whether you agree that your school should move forward in this way.

Responses were:

	Number	%
Strongly Agree	17	50
Agree	12	35
Neutral	1	3
Disagree	1	3
Strongly disagree	3	9



This is clearly an overwhelmingly positive response.

Respondents by school are shown as follows:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Great Bowden	2	1				3
Husbands Bosworth	4	1			1	6
Lubenham		4				4
Market Harborough	1	1				2
Meadowdale	8	5	1	1	1	16
St Andrew's	1					1
Other	1				1	2

Ridgeway provided a consultation survey on paper and via e-mail. One parent strongly agreed, one agreed and one expressed no preference.

31 of the online respondents were parents, though one at Great Bowden and one at Meadowdale were also governors and another at Great Bowden was also a member of staff. A further respondent at Great Bowden described themselves as a member of the local community. The two other respondents were one anonymous respondent and the Director of a local Multi Academy Trust.

Respondents were also invited to leave comments if they wished to do so, including comments on "any aspect of the school's current provision which you think should be retained".

Broadly the comments reflect the nature of responses and even where respondents are supportive they express concern that schools should retain their individuality and local governance and that the Trust should enable a focus on teaching and learning and should not be a distraction.

The comments received, shown by school were as follows (none of the respondents for Lubenham, Market Harborough or St Andrews left a comment):

Great Bowden

Member of the local community who strongly agrees:
Individuality of schools

Parent governor who strongly agrees:
Local governance

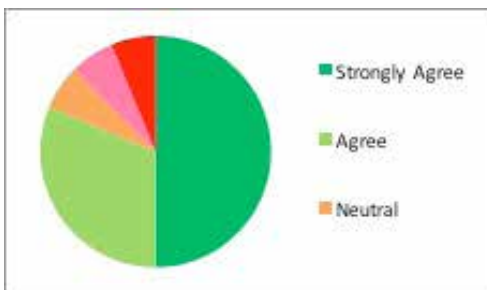
Husbands Bosworth

Parent who agrees:
Husbands Bosworth Primary has a strong sense of individuality and pride, and I hope this would be retained despite the change proposed.

Parent who strongly disagrees
I believe our parents and elected governors should make decisions about our school. What benefits does this bring for our kids?

Parent who strongly agrees
Sorry I couldn't make the meeting this evening. I think the advantages massively outweigh any disadvantages. With economies of scale in some of the services to the school as well as learning synergies I think it's a good idea.

Meadowdale



Parent who strongly agrees
I am happy that the Learn Academies Trust will work with individual schools on areas where they are not performing well

Parent who strongly disagrees
Control of school potentially lost to other schools

Parent who strongly agrees
The staff, they try so hard in often difficult circumstances

Parent who strongly agrees
Increase classroom resource - reduce support costs

Parent who agrees
School name, uniform, term dates

Parent who is neutral
In principle this sounds as though there may be benefits for the school. However I would seek reassurance that this won't mean more time spent by the Head and SLT on bureaucracy and MAT matters rather than to using on teaching and learning in their own school.

Other

An anonymous respondent who strongly disagrees
Moving to an Academy status was the wrong move and this will add in more costs to a school that is already under resourced

Director of a local Multi Academy Trust, who strongly agrees:
This is an excellent step forward for the education of children in South Leicestershire

MAT questions and answers

In addition to the online survey, stakeholders were also invited to submit questions as part of the consultation. The following questions represent those received by all the schools.

Q: There is obviously going to be a loss of autonomy through shared accountabilities - how can the school be protected? Can there be a range of veto clauses to cover some of more serious issues?

A: The responsibilities delegated to individual academies will be set out in the Trust's Scheme of Delegation. Learn-AT is committed to the principle of minimum intervention as long as the school is not failing its pupils. Academy performance in key areas such as achievement outcomes, quality of teaching, safeguarding, finance and business will be monitored regularly by the Board of Trustees and, provided everything is going well, LGBs will be responsible for the running of their school. Where things need to improve, the Trust Board will take steps to strengthen the Local Governing Body and support the school until the issue is rectified.

The Articles of Association provide the legal framework for the relationship between the school and the Trust – both parties are required by law to act within the remit outlined in this document – which will include provisions to protect the existing character of schools and academies joining the Trust.

All schools have been fully involved in the establishment of Learn-AT; this is not an existing multi academy trust seeking to “take over” but a development of our existing partnership.

Q: Looking nationally there are often serious short-term increases in costs (legal costs etc..) before longer-term benefits, what are the expected costs ?

A: There are likely to be set-up costs involved in the establishment of the Trust, eg purchase of a trust finance system, staff training, project management and legal fees. These should be met from a combination of the Primary Chain Grant

(£75K) – (application in process - intended for this purpose) for which this group of schools is eligible and the academy conversion grants (£25K per school) for which the maintained schools are eligible.

Q: Isolation from the rest of the school system must be considered an issue as we will be joining a structure that is effectively a mini LEA

A: One of the functions of multi-academy trusts is to prevent the isolation of single stand-alone academies and to facilitate effective collaboration. This strategy is part of major national reforms to the middle tier of education – meaning that MATs are replacing LAs. This Trust will maintain a relationship with the LA, just as HCT has over the past three years (academies buy back many of their support services from the LA). In addition Trust schools will remain strategic partners within the Affinity Teaching School Alliance – an alliance of about 50 schools across Leicestershire. We also have strong links with the Diocese of Leicester which supports all the C of E schools in Leicestershire and provides training for all schools in R.E. for example. These partnerships will strengthen and support the professional networks the Trust is able to offer staff and pupils in its member schools.

Q: Are incomes from added value assets pooled? Can the school protect the income from the sports hall now and going forward?

A: No, income will not be pooled. Money raised by individual schools and academies will remain with that academy. However, there will be robust systems in place to audit financial practices and to monitor income and expenditure; to ensure that schools' income is spent wisely on under-pinning excellent learning outcomes for their current pupils.

Q: Will the school's current multi-faith status be ring fenced and no changes be forced upon the school regarding religious education?

A: The Government will want to ensure that the existing character of academies joining Learn-AT is protected in the provisions of the Articles of Association of the new Trust and in its funding agreement with the Trust. No change to the current local arrangements for RE will be possible.

The LA Academies Department, supported by the legal service, has agreed to scrutinise the Articles of Association on behalf of the community academy members of the Trust to confirm that this is the case. However, the Diocese has been very clear from the outset that it has no interest in changing the distinctive character, ethos and identity of community schools and in fact would want to support those schools in protecting and celebrating their individuality. The teaching of Religious Education will continue to be underpinned by national guidance and legislation. In fact, C of E schools are not *faith* schools. They were set up in the 19th Century to provide education for all children in local communities (especially the poor who were denied access to education at all at that time). The motivation for doing this stems from faith in God.

Q: Will our school retain a veto to opt out of any potential super Chain MAT? For example, say the Bishop of Leicester decides to have all the C of E schools in a new company, a new super-chain MAT, can we veto that and agree to leave? These smaller MATs are companies that can be taken over by large super structures (that have failed) and if the C of E carries all the power at board level then we could be left in a very bad position.

A: The Trust will employ lawyers to ensure that the Articles of Association are fair and protect the interests of all of Learn-AT's pupils. However, the Trust Business Plan will include a well-considered growth

strategy. The government has a strategy for Trusts which is administered by the National Schools Commissioner and the Regional Schools Commissioners which envisages four tiers of Trusts, providing for optimum numbers of pupils which facilitate economies of scale and ensure that high quality services are provided. There is a national move away from large chain mats, towards more sustainable, local groupings. The Regional Schools' Commissioner is responsible to the Secretary of State to ensure the viability of any school or Trust. Moreover, Leicester Diocese Board of Education (DBE) already has its own MAT, the Diocese of Leicester Academies Trust (DLAT). The DBE is very supportive of Learn-AT and has been very generous in providing help and advice to us during the preparation of our application.

Notwithstanding the Trust's long term plans, no-one can force a Trust to take on schools they don't want to accept, or to grow beyond their plans.

Q: Can the board of the new company dismiss the school's board of governors? And how can we sure they cannot do that?

A: The ability of the Trust board to intervene when all is not well is an essential protection for pupils and families. For example, monitoring could reveal that the LGB is corrupt, engaging in fraudulent or even criminal activity. The school's Scheme of Delegation and the regular Trust monitoring systems of audit and review will guide the extent of delegation, which will always start with an assumption of full delegation of responsibility where everything is going well. The initial approach would always be to strengthen the school's LGB in any case in which additional support was required.

Q: Will the school have a pre-incorporation agreement with this MAT meaning that should a future government change this system the assets of the school return to the ownership of the school Academy?

A.: Any Government changing the system of governing schools in the future will need to bring forward legislation which determines how the change is to be made. But schools converting to academy status and joining Multi Academy Trusts already have some protection because ownership of their land and buildings does not transfer to the Trust. The land is made available by its owners - either the local authority or the Church - for the academy to occupy and the agreements which secure that will transfer to Learn-AT. Other assets, including equipment are transferred to the Academy Trust, but almost all of these are renewed over time. Just as the school retained those assets when it converted to academy status and has updated and renewed some of them, so the assets in place at a time of change would be expected to remain with the school so that it can continue to be used to benefit local children.

Q.: Will the school remain in control of curriculum development? Future governments may devolve more power to these MATs. Can the school's control of the curriculum be protected?

A.: As outlined above, Learn-AT is committed to celebrating its schools' individuality, identity and distinctiveness. Schools will be free to design and deliver their own curricula, within the guidelines of national statutory frameworks and assessment requirements, provided outcomes for pupils remain good or better.

Q.: In the interest of democracy and accountability, can parents get a vote on this suggestion? And can concerned parents get a platform to express their opinions and concerns in writing?

A.: Parents are represented on the school's governing body which has already voted in favour of moving forward with this proposal. The group of schools has decided unanimously to conduct a consultation process in order to ensure that

all stakeholders are fully informed and have an opportunity to ask questions and seek answers to their concerns. Each academy and school involved in this proposal is holding at least one information meeting to which parents and other interested stakeholders are invited to hear more about the plan, ask questions and make their views known.

Q.: Who will hire and fire head teachers? Will this be the responsibility of the board of the MAT or will governors of the individual schools remain in control? The worry being that over time the Diocese might co-opt its own people to senior posts.

A.: Recruitment will always be in line with employment law and best practice HR guidance. However the Scheme of Delegation will outline which recruitment responsibilities are retained at LGB level and which by the board of trustees. Headteacher recruitment will be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees, in close consultation with the LGB, similar to the way in which the LA would have been involved in Headteacher recruitment for maintained schools prior to academy conversion. While the Diocese has a majority at member level (3 of 5)– there is no such majority at trustee/director level. The board of trustees is responsible for the strategic direction of the Trust, including the recruitment of Headteachers – not the members.

Q.: What will be the management structure of the MAT?

A.: The management structure of the MAT will be outlined in the Trust's Business Plan, which is being written in full consultation with all stakeholders over the next two to three months and will be published on the Trust's website as soon as it is ready. In the first instance there will be a part time CEO, Finance Director, a Trust Business Manager and Leading Practitioner to lead development in mathematics across the Trust schools. This may evolve as the Trust becomes established and of course, if it grows. The Trust will also be

supported in the early days by an external School Improvement Partner. The Trust's governance structure is outlined on page 6. The establishment of the Chairs' Group and the Heads' Group means that each school will be represented in the decision-making processes of the Trust.

Q: **The failure of one school can potentially affect the whole Mat . In an article for Teaching Times, Elizabeth Davis, who heads the charities team at the law firm Blake Laphorn, says that MATs:**

“... need to ensure that risks of failure of one school do not affect the fortunes of another school within the same academy trust company.”

Funding arrangements will normally be ring-fenced to the benefit of individual schools, but there could be wider risk management issues that would need careful management by the board of directors. This will be crucial to ensuring the overall solvency of the MAT company. Furthermore, she said schools may find that joining a MAT lessens the feeling of independence which is seen as a key advantage of converting to academy status.

How are the governors of the school going to ensure we are not put at risk, and will there be opt out clauses in the memorandum of association for this new MAT?

A: The academies' landscape has changed significantly since that article was written in 2010. The best way for LGBs to protect the autonomy of their schools is to work effectively and in collaboration and partnership with Trust colleagues to ensure the success of their schools and good or better learning outcomes for all of

their pupils. The school is better protected by playing a full part in the establishment and running of Learn-AT than it would be if it remained a stand-alone academy. Learn-AT will provide support to help the school continue to develop and improve and will be able to step in if challenges arise. The alternative is for the school to remain a stand-alone academy and risk being forced into an external multi academy trust which is not rooted in supporting children and families in this area.

Local Governing Bodies can ensure their schools are not put at risk by working productively with the Board of Trustees and Trust leadership to implement the most effective Trust-wide systems of school to school support and financial oversight. The danger of individual schools negotiating opt-out clauses would be the likely impact that may have on the commitment of the Trust to equality of treatment of all member schools. Opt-out clauses would render the fair-handed management of the whole trust impossible and ineffective.

Q: **Is the school being paid to push this through? And is this about a bonus rather than what's best in long term for the school?**

A: No categorically not. No individual school or individual person will benefit in any way from this proposal. The Primary Chain Grant is intended to support Trust groups in managing the set up and initial running costs related to establishment of the MAT. Its use will be scrutinised in the course of the normal and robust financial audit procedures required by law. This project is a proactive response to a national government agenda, thoroughly and painstakingly considered with the best interests of local children at the forefront of all decision making.