

Batheaston Primary School Parent Meeting Q&A

28-March-2017

Batheaston Primary School becoming part of a Multi Academy Trust

This table summarises some of the questions and answers that were asked at both the morning and evening meeting, and some that have been asked individually since.

Question	Answer
Is the academisation of Schools a financial decision or is it in the pursuit of excellence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Batheaston is going through this process because BANES is no longer able to provides the services and support that our school needs. • Batheaston is unlikely to save money, or to lose money with this decision. • The governors' intention is to choose a MAT that best enables the whole school community – staff, leadership team, governors and above all the children - use the opportunity of becoming a MAT to improve the educational opportunities and learning experiences of all children at the school.
Why is it only now that we are being told about Batheaston becoming an Academy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the last 3-4 years, governors regularly reviewed the option of becoming an Academy, as government policies have changed, and as financial support for Academisation has fluctuated. • However, up until last year, however, as a small school, without viable options of joining a MAT at the time, and given the continued availability (if reduced) of BANES services, this was never a serious option. • Batheaston, <u>along with all primary schools in BANES</u>, has been involved in a complex, fluid and uncertain decision-making environment for around one year, where the timescales, options, and reasons for becoming an Academy were unclear, and during most of which time there were no viable MATs for Batheaston to join. • In anticipation of the need to Academise during 2017, from 2016, Batheaston was deeply involved with our existing partner schools in Bath in trying to develop a MAT independently. • This option became clearly unviable only in February 2017. • Until autumn 2016, NEITHER the Palladian Academy Trust NOR the Bath & Wells Bath hub existed. • It was only in the most recent months that it has become clear that BANES will definitely be completely withdrawing key services to primary schools in autumn 2017, which means that the school must find alternatives that are financially sustainably and support the education of children at the school. • The certainty of this development is very recent and (due to the length of time it takes to formally join a MAT), it has significantly increased the time pressure on our decisionmaking.
Do the Trustees and Members of the	No. The Member and Trustee positions are voluntary & unpaid, nor do they receive expenses. But the CEO

MAT receive a salary?	and administrative staff of the MAT receive a salary.
Who are the kinds of people who are MAT Members? And Directors / Trustees?	MAT members are like shareholders, who the board report to once a year. Members appoint the Trustees. These would typically be executive individuals such as the CEO of Dyson, Dept VC of a University etc who have agreed values and visions that support the overall ethos of the Trust, can commit time and uphold principles of integrity and ethical behaviour in public service.
Can parents be trustees?	Yes. However, they are not appointed <i>because</i> they are parents. A trustee board needs to have a particular set of skills/experiences (e.g. law, finance, safeguarding & education). As long as these requirements are met, the question of whether trustees are parents comes second.
What does the Trust Board do?	The Trust board has oversight of the performance of the MAT, and holds the CEO to account for this performance (including the performance of individual schools). The Board might expect to meet 6 times a year. The Board also has sub-committees that have more regular oversight of key issues, like pupil progress, safeguarding, estates, pay/HR.
How is the Trust organized?	This varies by MAT (e.g. the extent to which school governors have a role to play, or if HTs are part of the educational leadership team). (See powerpoint slides from the meeting.)
Can Batheaston leave a MAT once it has joined one?	No. This is why there is such a strong emphasis on choosing the right MAT that reflects Batheastons ethos.
Can the MATs ToR change once we have joined one?	Yes potentially. The Trust may evolve over time. This is why it is important for us to be confident in the governance & organisation in a MAT and its ability to manage the interests, concerns and ethos of its different member Academies (like Batheaston).
Will Batheaston be able to follow its own curriculum?	Yes. Both BAWMAT and PAT delegate the curriculum, so Batheaston, as an Academy will still have the ability to develop its own curriculum. Other MATS are more prescriptive with their 'powers' and could stipulate the curriculum.
Will Batheaston be able to develop its own policies?	Yes. Both BAWMAT and PAT delegate policies to individual Academies (e.g. homework, behaviour, exclusion). Being part of a MAT should give us the opportunities to learn from other schools to improve policies.
What are the timescales for the School becoming an Academy?	It is expected that by Autumn 2017 Batheaston will be part of a MAT.
What will happen if Batheaston does not make a MAT decision?	BANES will assign the School to a MAT of its choice and the Governors will lose any control over making this very important decision.
What is the percentage 'slice' that the MAT receives directly from the Government?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national government funds schools through a grant, called GAG. At the moment, some of the GAG is 'top-sliced' to BANES to contribute to the services they provide to school (school improvement officers,

<p>And what does this pay for?</p>	<p>pay, HR, advice on policies).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both MATs that we are considering approaching will receive around 5% of the GAG • Both MATs that we are considering approaching delegate the remaining budget to the individual Academies, under the advice of the Financial and other officers within the MAT (just like it currently does from BANES). • The ‘top slice’ pays for the CEO, and administrative staff, as well as school improvement and continuing professional development opportunities for staff. It will also pay for support in, for example, applying for additional funds to improve the school estate (buildings and land).
<p>Can a MAT turn down our application?</p>	<p>Yes. However Batheaston is a very attractive School. The Secretary of State will shut a MAT down if a number of schools in the MAT start to underperform.</p>
<p>Would an underperforming School take funds away from Batheaston School?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is more helpful to think about ‘vulnerable’ schools, as any school can become vulnerable e.g. over the long-term with financial issues, or in the short-term with staffing, or in relation to pupil progress. • Any vulnerable School may require additional funds, or other resources (e.g. visiting Head) to help it improve, just as happens now in the local authority. • Governors want to be sure that if Batheaston were at any point to become ‘vulnerable’, that proper support systems and practices are in place in any MAT we join. • Even more, we would like to join MAT where we feel confident in the ability of the MAT support to identify emerging problems.
<p>Are schools still assessed in the same way?</p>	<p>Academies are OFSTED inspected, and pupils are still assessed by the same national tests (SATs). But the choice of the curriculum and flexibility remains that of the School.</p>
<p>Would Batheaston School continue to receive more funding due to Sarah Weber’s work as a National Leader of Education</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Would Batheaston keep ownership of any FOBS fundraising?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Do we stay a VC status?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Do we receive diocese funding?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>Why do we stay as a VC school? Can we become a free school?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a VC school is a legal status. We cannot change Batheaston into a ‘non-VC school’. • Batheaston is already connected to the diocese as a VC school; its ethos will still be a matter for school

	<p>(not the MAT) even if we join the B&WMAT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The diocese sees the MAT as part of its role to provide education for all children in the community.
What happens with admissions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once an Academy, Batheaston is in charge of own Admissions policy. • BANES still supports the collective BANES admissions process (e.g. by GPS measurements)
Are Primary Schools in PAT automatic feeders to Ralph Allen?	No. There are no primary schools priorities to feed into Ralph Allen. Other MATS are the same.
Can a MAT control number of pupils in a class?	We are capped at a PAN of 30, controlled by the LA – we think – Question for the MAT. Funding from the government (GAG) is dependent on number of pupils, so to reduce number = less cash.
Will MATs still cater for children with SENs?	BANES would still be legally responsible for this and schools will have to take those high priority children.
Does Education and Health Care Plan funding go to school or MAT?	The school. This funding is to support particular children and their needs. Batheaston will protect its inclusive ethos, and both MATs expect schools to maintain their ethos.
Are there any key positives/negatives for choosing a MAT with different ratios of primary/secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No real evidence due to the infancy of the Palladian Academy Trust. • There is potentially a conflict of interest with the PAT CEO being the Head of Ralph Allen, although he will move to full-time CEO in due course. • There is a risk that secondary Schools may dominate decision making if primary is in the minority.
What about local schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAWMAT has a 'Bath hub' context that gives us that localized network we are used to. • PAT emphasizes the importance of locality in having schools to join.
What schools are interested in joining the Bath HUB of BAWMAT?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are aware of local schools decisions but they haven't told their parents yet, so cannot share this. • Part of the decision-making will be to consider what existing local partner schools are doing. • We need to focus on what is best for Batheaston.
Who appoints the head teacher and deputy head?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In both MATs, the Batheaston governors would still have responsibility to appoint to these roles, but jointly with the CEO of the MAT.