

CASE *briefing*

A Briefing from Campaign for State Education

WHAT IS A "MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST"?

Academies were introduced by Tony Blair's Labour Government. The plan was to open a few hundred new schools intended to raise standards in deprived areas.

In August 2015, David Cameron announced that every school in England should become an academy, including the vast majority of primary schools which had so far chosen not to change.

This was to be achieved by allowing "academy chains" or "Multi-Academy Trusts" to take over existing schools.

How is a MAT organised?

MATs are "charitable trusts/businesses", each run by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and a small group of trustees. The Trust also has members who, like the shareholders of a company, have ultimate control, including the power to appoint other trustees and amend the Trust's own rules or "articles of association".

What happens to any schools they take over?

Any such schools cease to exist in law and their funds are channelled directly to the MAT. Although the school's name may continue above the gate, the existing governing body is abolished. The Trust may appoint a new governing body but its role may be purely advisory.

How are they run?

Funding for the schools is provided directly by the Government and managed by the CEO. There is a direct relationship between the Trust and the Secretary of State which is contained in a "funding agreement" and which is managed through the [Education Funding Agency](#) (part of the Department for Education).

Not more than 20% of the trustees may be appointed directly or indirectly by the local authority. Two parents may be elected as trustees of the MAT.

Worryingly, responsibility for schools can be passed between MATs without local consultation, so there is no guarantee that any local agreements will be honoured if schools "change hands".

What are Trusts responsible for?

Trusts oversee the running and financing of a number of schools. Academy trusts are responsible for making their own spending decisions, including what they pay staff.

An [Academies Financial Handbook](#) is published by the Education Funding Agency that sets out their duties and obligations.

The trustees are responsible for the same three core governance functions performed by the governing body of a maintained school: setting the direction, holding the headteacher to account and ensuring financial probity.

CASE believes in a fully comprehensive, locally accountable and democratic education system.

What are Trusts accountable for?

As charitable trusts, they must ensure that they are complying with charity law.
As public bodies, they must secure value for money.

What about "governing bodies"?

Although each individual school may have a Governing Body after the MAT takes over, the MAT trustees have complete discretion over what is delegated to each Governing Body.

For instance, one MAT, E-Act, has replaced its 23 governing bodies with "academy ambassadorial advisory bodies" and two MATs, Bright Tribe and Adventure Learning Academy Trust, are replacing the governing bodies at their 11 schools with a "drive team of parent, student, staff and community representatives".

How can I find out more details?

The relationship between the Secretary of State for Education and the Trust is contained in a "funding agreement" which can be obtained from the Education Funding Agency.

The details of what has been delegated from the trustees to local governors should be detailed in a Scheme of Delegation for each Governing Body.

The Governing Bodies of the schools have to produce an annual governance statement explaining their governance structures. They must also publish annual accounts which, among other things, should make it clear how much they pay school leaders.

How can I find out how existing MATs are doing?

The findings of Ofsted inspections of some Multi Academy Trusts can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/outcome-letters-from-ofsted-inspections-of-multi-academy-trusts) -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/outcome-letters-from-ofsted-inspections-of-multi-academy-trusts>

Where Academies have got into financial trouble, the official "financial notices to improve" can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-financial-notices-to-improve):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/academies-financial-notices-to-improve>

To see how well children in MATs are progressing, you can view the average value added scores for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/multi-academy-trust-performance-measures-2014-to-2015):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/multi-academy-trust-performance-measures-2014-to-2015>.

What does CASE think?

CASE believes that Multi-Academy Trusts are intended to be the nail-in-the-coffin of a democratic and publicly-accountable service educating children in England.

We believe that MATs may represent the penultimate step before fully privatising state schools. **This is because they are, in essence, private companies.**

While they are not officially allowed to be run for profit, in that they don't have shareholders who are paid dividends out of your taxes, they are only a hair's breadth from that. Currently, they are able to pay senior managers salaries that exceed the Prime Minister's and they can channel business to other, profit-making companies with impunity.

All this at a time when most schools' budgets are not able to keep up with increased costs and front-line staff are being cut.

Published by Campaign for State Education

11 Wilderton Road, London N16 5QY www.campaignforstateeducation.org.uk

© CASE 2016