



Q&A



Leadership, Finance and Governance

Will our leaders' personal leadership style be preserved / respected?	Yes. We embrace differences across our Trust and know there are huge benefits to individuality and how these will help to shape our future.
How much access does the leadership team at school have to different levels of the Board?	Headteachers will have regular contact with our CEO, Deputy CEO. There are termly meetings between the Chair of the Local Governing Body and the Chair of the Trust and DMAT team members.
What is DMAT'S approach to inclusion?	Inclusion and diversity are key aspects of our work. We welcome inclusive and diverse schools striving for the best possible outcomes for every child.
Why should we academise now?	Schools joining us now will become key co-constructive partners, helping to shape the next stage of our development, but also taking control of their own destinies. It is possible local authorities will begin to further reduce capacity as the number of LA schools reduce.
Why would you want my school to join DMAT?	We want to work with like-minded partners with whom we share a similar ethos and vision, this is something for us to explore through more detailed individual conversations.
To what extent is DMAT different to the LA?	We are highly credible and proactive, with a broad range of expertise across the DMAT team and board. The Trust's leadership are all school based, We have our own Research School and SCITT allowing direct access and benefit to schools and staff, this supports recruitment and retention. .
What is the earliest / fastest a school could join?	This varies and is dependent on individual circumstances but the norm would be six to nine months, including initial discussions with governing bodies.
What are the different steps involved and the timeline to joining?	This is dependent on a wide range of factors which are individual to each school, but generally the process includes the following steps: Initial discussions and 'getting to know' Agreement/ consent in principle from the LGB and Trust Board Online application Consultation process Due diligence/ Information gathering Legal transfers of land, contracts etc.
As a member of staff, will my work-life balance be better or worse?	Our staff are our greatest asset. We want all children in DMAT to achieve the best possible outcomes. We ensure that staff are able to focus on delivering and supporting excellent teaching and learning. We use evidence informed approaches to ensure staff time is used effectively and unnecessary burdens are removed. We believe that staff with a good work life balance will contribute positively to our schools and will stay with us.
Staff job security changes in contract / restructure?	Contracts will be transferred under TUPE, DMAT would take over employees' contracts including all previous terms and conditions of employment. Some conditions could be enhanced. DMAT is committed to retaining staff.
What level of autonomy over admission / inclusion?	Academies are their own admissions authority but they are state-funded and must therefore abide by the School Admissions Code.
Are you looking for primaries that can be system leaders or ones to support?	We welcome and support schools from a range of settings and will work with leaders to meet individual need. We believe in the power of school to school support and we welcome both system leaders and like-minded schools that require support and are on a journey of improvement to becoming future system leaders.
Do you offer national pay and conditions?	We at least match the national pay scales, conditions and terms of employment.
Which pension scheme are you in?	Teachers Pensions, and Local Government Pensions for associate staff.

How are the academy accounts?	We are in a strong and healthy position. This has been the case since DMAT was formed.
How much does it cost to join?	There are costs involved but these are covered through DFE grants and DMAT contributions. Individual schools would not be negatively financially impacted.
Will you accept a school with a deficit budget?	We would need to look at the individual circumstances that have led to the position. Our overarching priority would be to ensure all other schools/areas of the Trust are in a strong position and that the acceptance of an additional school could not risk this position. If the school with a deficit did seek to join us, we would work closely with that school and the local authority to ensure financial stability moving forward.
Does joining reduce headcount but not budget?	The budgets allocated to schools do not change. DMAT is committed to protecting all existing staff. If there is the opportunity to centralise/share particular roles as opportunities arise, these will, of course, be explored.
To what extent does the amount of funding per child differ to a LA school?	Pupil funding is set by the DFE for all schools and will not change upon conversion.
How is funding allocated between schools within the Trust? What happens to any budget surplus? Do you operate with contribution rates or pooled funds? Are pupil premium funds pooled or returned to the school?	Each school will receive funding in the same way it does with the local authority. DMAT does not centrally pool funding or reserves. We operate with contribution rates. We do not GAG pool or take schools' reserves. Pupil Premium funds remain with the school.
How is funding for school development prioritised and allocated?	Priorities are discussed and agreed with each school and across the MAT. Staff development to support school development is rich and varied. Retention of staff and leadership development are trust priorities. The physical development of individual schools is planned through their own budgets. DMAT can support this process. If schools aspire to carry out significant projects DMAT will support with long term budget planning to deliver the annual savings needed to build up reserves, and can also support with funding applications. In the medium to long term, and as DMAT grows, there may be the potential for some central contributions, this will be dependent on MAT finances and need.
Do you operate any needs-based budget?	DMAT use schools' basic funding (AWPU) to calculate contributions to the running of DMAT. This protects the needs-based elements of school funding. Many MATs will calculate contributions on GAG funding which will encompass all elements of the budget. We will always work with schools who have particular demands on their budgets to maximise staff and pupil support.
To what extent are new schools able to influence policy & practice?	We are always open to, and encourage co-construction across the Trust. Collaborative working is really important to us. Schools which join us in the first year or so of our growth will be actively involved in shaping future policy and practice.
What's the growth strategy directed by the Board of Trustees?	DMAT and the trustees wish to focus on growing with the South East including West Sussex, Easy Sussex and Kent. Building strong relationships with our schools, their staff and pupils so that we understand the individual contexts and needs is really important to us. We aim to grow at a sustainable level over the next ten years, ensuring all existing, and new schools, are fully supported through our journey together.
Will the school's governing body remain intact?	Yes, local governing bodies/ local committees will remain and are seen as an integral part of our Trust. However, some of their workload /accountabilities are reduced/simplified, this allows them to focus on pupils, staff and teaching and learning.

Which policies are DMAT level?	Broadly speaking any policy for which the Board/CEO are accountable or policies which need to be consistent across the trust are produced by DMAT. Examples include: Staff policies eg capability, discipline etc, accepting gifts and hospitality; data protection, protection of biometric information.
What happens about premises, particularly if we have building work taking place?	Schools will continue to manage their own premises. Support will be available if needed. Generally speaking, schools would retain their premises teams. In the event of colleagues leaving we can look at options to increase efficiencies.
Does everyone have to follow the same phonics scheme, for example?	No, you have autonomy over teaching and learning. All DMAT schools follow the Six Teaching Principles. If not already in place, schools joining DMAT would adopt these principles: Challenge Modelling explanation Practice Questioning Feedback We believe that when teachers implement these principles effectively, students learn well, have high aspirations of what they can achieve and so develop into confident and resilient learners.
Who in the Trust leadership understands Primary practice?	Niki Thomas, Chair of the Trust, was a primary headteacher and works nationally and locally with primary leaders and governors. Helen Horsley, a trustee, was a primary headteacher, secondary senior leader and is the Director of the Sussex Schools Coast Alliance. One of our members is Chair of governors at two primary schools. Our CEO has worked cross-phase and was the interim head at the Laurels, until we could appoint. The Research School and SCITT are partnered with schools across all phases.
Are you prepared to come to a governors meeting?	Of course. We would welcome the opportunity. This is a really important part of us getting to know each other.
What is the offer in terms of school improvement?	The offer regarding school improvement will be a bespoke one, dependent on the information gathering in the academisation process and discussions with school leadership teams. The school improvement offer to each school will evolve over time as needs are reviewed.
What would career progression look like?	We strongly believe in internal development and progression for both teaching and associate colleagues. Being part of a growing Trust presents opportunities beyond individual schools. We would work with headteachers to identify talent pipelines for their school and the wider Trust.
How will DMAT maintain its ethos as it grows?	We do not envisage becoming a huge Trust, covering different regions of the country, whereby ethos can become diluted. We wish to maintain close working relationships with our schools. We are clear in our intention to join with like-minded schools who share our ethos, values and vision.

Benefits of Joining DMAT

Why DMAT above any of the other MATS?	We want to work with like-minded people who share our values and vision. We are looking for schools to join us on our journey and to help shape our future. This is a fantastic time to join our Trust. Our Research School and SCITT also offer unique advantages to DMAT that leaves us well placed to support in ways other trusts cannot.
How do staff access CPD training?	DMAT subscribes to online training provision offering a wide variety of self-driven CPD for both teaching and associate staff. Access to training events offered through the Research School are free for schools within the Trust. DMAT is able to support with bespoke CPD for staff leadership groups or key colleagues.

How does 'research' translate into practice?	The research school is not an action research centre. It provides training and support with evidence- informed approaches to teaching and learning. The research school provides CPD across the south east to a large number of providers both face- to- face and virtually.
Which elements are common across the Trust?	Shared values, ambition for all pupils, high quality teaching and learning.
How much autonomy and influence do schools have in developing policy?	Autonomy within your school is really important to us. We will also value your input within our central policies. We can provide templates for general policies and full policies for some areas of school life.
What are DMAT's views on having an all- through educational mixed MAT?	DMATs currently include The Laurels Primary School, Durrington High School, The Research School and The South Downs SCITT. A primary school in Burgess Hill will be joining us in summer 2024. We welcome schools from all phases and denominations, believing that the breadth and experience of different educational settings and areas of educational expertise is a real strength.
Are schools able to retain individual identity?	Yes. Autonomy and identity are really important in any school. Schools are there to support their local communities and no two communities are identical.
What supervision offer is there for HTs / DSLs	The support available will be based on individual need and circumstance. No leaders will be left to work in isolation and as the Trust develops the opportunities for collaboration and support will increase.
Wellbeing package for staff?	We want to look after all our staff. There are a variety of opportunities to enhance well-being within our schools and all DMAT staff have access to an assistance programme. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is an important aspect of our approach.
What are the benefits for the children?	Children are at the heart of everything we do and every decision we make. We strongly believe every child should have the opportunity to receive a fantastic education regardless of their starting point. Access to evidence- informed teaching practice through the Research School, recruitment of high-quality teaching staff through our SCITT and the shared vision and expertise of DMAT's central teams offer huge benefits to our schools and their children. Recruitment, and then retention of great staff are what all children need. Leaders in schools are then able to focus on providing high quality education.
What would career progression look like?	We strongly believe in internal development and progression for both teaching and associate colleagues. Being part of a growing trust presents opportunities outside of individual schools. We would work with headteachers to identify talent pipelines for their school and the wider Trust.

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Durrington Multi Academy Trust
The Boulevard
Worthing
West Sussex
BN13 1JX

dmat.education
admin@dmat.education

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