



Frequently Asked Questions - Joining the LAAT

These FAQs aim to provide you with the relevant information of what joining the Lincoln Anglican Academy Trust will mean to your school.

Converting to Academy Status

Academies are independent state-funded schools which receive their funding directly from central government, directly through the Education Funding Agency (EFA), rather than a local authority, If your school is a church school and it converts to be an academy it will automatically retain its religious designation.

What is a Multi Academy Trust?

LAAT is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) which has been approved by the DfE (Department for Education) to operate a number of academies under a single charitable company and to be an academy sponsor.

The Board of Directors for LAAT are responsible for the financial and strategic direction of the Trust.

The Directors key responsibilities are:

- 1. to challenge and monitor the performance of the academies operated by the LAAT*
- 2. to comply with the terms of its Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education; and*
- 3. to manage the LAAT finances, property and assets*

The Board of Directors for LAAT will ultimately be accountable and responsible for the performance of your school to the DfE, through the Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education.

Each school which joins the Trust would have a Local Governing Board to which functions are delegated by the Board of Directors (more detail below).

If we convert will we lose our individuality?

We recognise that every school has their own identity and we want to celebrate this. We see this as a key benefit of being part of the LAAT. There is no expectation that your school uniform, name or distinctiveness would be altered, unless you wish it to, as a result of the conversion. The different traditions in our schools are important to the communities which they serve and to us.

What is the Constitution of the LAAT?

Academies are constituted as companies limited by guarantee. They are also charities. The constitution of the LAAT is contained within its Articles of Association, which regulate how it manages its formal business.

What are the benefits of converting to an academy and joining the LAAT?

LAAT can set a strong, shared strategic vision across all the academies within its group, and can enable its academies to have better access to resources and support through economies of scale. Other benefits of joining LAAT include:

- LAAT's structure is a strong and uses a collaborative structure which aids academies to be mutually supportive in raising educational attainment and standards;*
- LAAT's structure allows for an increase in shared knowledge and good practice across the academies within LAAT, so that all can strive for excellence together;*

- *Consolidation and forward planning - your school's formal commitment to join LAAT allows for the adoption of long-lasting arrangements leading to long-term viability and effectiveness;*
- *Help and support between staff at LAAT academies which releases time for strategic planning, better use of resources and benefits of economies of scale. Each LAAT academy maintains its own unique identity but we believe that by working together we can achieve more than one academy working alone. Our academies seek to serve their local communities; they are inclusively welcoming children of the Christian Faith, of other faiths or of no faith, children from all backgrounds and of all abilities. We believe in the infinite worth of each person. Children deserve the very best education and staff deserve the support to deliver this.*

Research has shown the following benefits of the MAT structures:

- *Financial savings through economies of scale and improved recruitment and retention of staff;*
- *Improved qualities of leadership/creative leadership and increased quality of specialist support;*
- *Enhanced opportunities for CPD (staff peer observations between academies can improve CPD);*
- *The MAT structure can create a climate of further innovation.*

What would be the timescale and process for conversion?

The DfE estimates that it usually takes between four and five months for a school to convert to an academy. Should your school decide to join the LAAT, we would work closely with you throughout the conversion process providing project management and support to make the conversion process as seamless as possible for your school.

What would happen to ownership of our School land and building if we converted to an academy?

For church schools the land and buildings remain with the site trustees, usually the Diocese. The playing fields are typically held by the LA (Local Authority) and a long lease (125 years) based on the DfE model would be granted by the LA to the MAT.

What will the conversion mean in terms of the running and management of our school?

If your school joins the LAAT, the Trust would become your employer and be responsible for the overall effectiveness of your school. LAAT is accountable to the DfE and must meet certain defined standards. As an academy you would continue to be monitored by Ofsted and SIAMs.

What changes will there be to the constitution of our Governing Body?

All Academy trusts have at least two layers of governance, the members (equivalent to shareholders) and the Directors who are responsible for making sure that the Academy Trust achieves its objectives. The Members are responsible for the strategic oversight of the MAT. They are the conscience ensuring the MAT's objectives are upheld.

The Members of LAAT are a range of professionals covering the areas of finance, education, clergy, HR and education.

The Directors determine the policies of the MAT, make judgments about the effectiveness of individual academies within the MAT, manage central services and report to the Secretary of State. The Directors work with academies with the MAT to ensure they are performing to their best ability and that the academies get the support they require. LAAT also has a third layer of governance with the Academy's Local Governing Body. The LGB will have certain powers for the day to day running of the academy. LGBs have a similar status to committees of a maintained school's governing body. Powers are delegated to it by the Board on an earned autonomy basis

i.e. we envisage good and outstanding schools having a greater degree of delegated powers than weaker schools which would gain increasing powers and autonomy as they improve.

How would admission arrangements change once our school became an academy with the LAAT?

LAAT becomes the Admission Authority for the Academy. This means the admission criteria can be altered (providing they are in accordance with the Admissions Code). In relation to the administration of admissions, Academies are in the same position as a VC (Voluntary Controlled) school. For the main September intake, the LA continues to co-ordinate the process. All applications are sent to and received by them and they rank admission in accordance with admission criteria. The LA send out all offer letters to parents informing the academy of the number of places awarded.

If our school converts and joins the LAAT will staff be employed by our school or will staff contracts be with the LAAT?

The conversion to MAT status will involve a transfer of staff under TUPE. If your school joins the LAAT, LAAT will become the employer and all staff contracts will be with the LAAT. LAAT will be involved in all appointments of senior and key staff but we envisage other appointments being delegated to your academy's Local Governing Body.

Is there still a need for a Bursar in each Academy following Conversion?

Individual staffing models will be specific to each school and led by need. It is envisaged that LAAT will be supporting, rather than replacing, the many and varied support roles within school.

Will there be a change to the salary grades of our employees?

Staff will transfer on no less favourable terms and conditions. Any necessary amendments in the future would only follow consultation with staff and unions.

Who decides the Pay & Conditions for each school within the LAAT?

As above, your staff would transfer to the LAAT on no less favourable terms and conditions and any necessary amendments in the future would only be following consultation with staff and unions. No changes to terms and conditions would be as a result of your school becoming part of our MAT. Of course, we all recognise that things need to change in any school over time.

What is the situation regarding employee pensions once our school has become a LAAT academy?

Teachers working in an academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme just as they were when employed by the LA. Staff transferring from a maintained predecessor would simply continue their membership of that Scheme. As the employer, the LAAT would be responsible for remitting contributions to the TPA and for all administrative procedures that fall to employers. LAAT will also ensure that the LGPS (Local Government Pension Scheme) arrangements stay in place for support staff. As part of the conversion process, the LGPS Scheme Administrators will undertake an actuarial assessment to determine how much LAAT will need to contribute and the terms of that contribution. In short, your staff will not see any impact on their pensions because of the conversion to academy status. Continuity of service is retained when staff transfer to an academy through conversion. LAAT's Funding Agreement requires it to ensure that all staff employed have access to the TPA or the LGPS (as applicable).