

10 November 2015		ITEM: 6
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Multi Academy Trust Relationships		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: All	
Report of: Carmel Littleton - Director of Children's Services Roger Edwardson – Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills		
Accountable Head of Service: Roger Edwardson, Interim Strategic Leader School Improvement, Learning and Skills		
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

There are thirty-six academies in Thurrock, fourteen of which are sponsored and two are Free Schools. There are currently no schools in the process of converting. The Children's Business and Improvement Team in Children's Services, provide a service to schools to support them through the process efficiently and professionally.

The Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) Model

A Multi Agency Trust is formed when a number of schools who wish to convert or have already converted to academy status, come together as one legal entity, either in a cluster or as part of a bigger existing organisation. The MAT is a single legal entirety with two layers of governance; an overarching academy trust governed by foundation members and a board of directors or governors.

There are ten Multi-Academy Trusts as well as 8 academies that are either part of an 'empty MAT' or are stand alone. An 'empty MAT' has yet to recruit academies to join, either because the MAT founder school decides it is not yet ready to support another school or have not yet approached. E.g. Belmont Castle Academy and Tudor Court Primary.

- Harris Federation Multi-Academy Trust
- Ormiston Multi-Academy Trust
- Olive Academies
- REAch2 Multi-academy trust
- St. Clere's Co-operative Multi-Academy Trust

- Stanford & Corringham Schools Trust
- The Academy Transformation Trust
- The Catalyst Academies Trust
- Umbrella Trust
- William Edwards Academy Trust

The MAT has responsibility for the performance of all the academies within the group, and the board of directors oversees the operation of the individual schools.

Any group of schools applying to become a MAT will need at least one member to be judged 'outstanding' or 'good' with performance in line with national standards and this school will need to be able to demonstrate it has sufficient capacity to support other schools in the proposed MAT.

Schools applying to become a MAT do not have to be already in a federation before applying. The DfE states that "each application will be considered on its merits, and the Secretary of State will only approve those where he is satisfied the schools have the capacity to enjoy academy freedoms, and where there are mechanisms in place to help weaker schools in the chain improve." Schools judged inadequate wishing to join the MAT cannot join unless sponsored.

What are the potential benefits?

- The MAT can set a strong, shared strategic vision across all the schools in the partnership.
- Because the MAT is accountable for the outcomes for all pupils in the partnership it can be an excellent mechanism for ensuring that support and challenge is directed to where it is needed most.
- The MAT has flexibility about how much or how little power it delegates to individual schools. This enables tailoring to the individual circumstances of the partnership.
- The MAT is the employer of all the staff. This makes it easier to deploy staff flexibly, draw on a wider pool of opportunities for CPD, and develop a trust-wide approach to staff development and succession planning.
- The central funding agreement can make it easier to pool resources and achieve economies of scale in contracting.

However, the MAT can delegate some or even most of its powers to governing bodies of individual academies to enable more focused local control, though it remains legally responsible for standards across all schools in the chain.

Thurrock schools have been forward thinking and proactive in converting to Academies, with 70% now having converted. Twenty-seven of these academies are in MATs.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the current organisation of schools and the contribution of the multi academy trusts to raising standards across the borough.

2. Introduction and Background:

There has been a considerable improvement in the educational achievement of pupils in Thurrock over the past six years. It has been faster than the national rate of improvement. From lagging well behind national average attainment levels, Thurrock is now generally around or ahead of the national average at each of the primary key stages. This is an impressive achievement.

Many of the existing MATs are partners in one or more of the three teaching school alliances that operate within Thurrock. These alliances allow for partner working, school improvement and teacher continuing professional development (CPD). (Appendix 3- List of Teaching School Alliances)

The proportion of schools that have become academies is high (70%) relative to the rest of the country where approximately 60 per cent of secondary schools and 10 percent of primary schools have become academies. In part, this is because the local authority has supported and facilitated schools to convert to academy status. Thurrock is open in welcoming academy sponsors to play a significant role in school improvement and has been supportive of strong schools in the borough sponsoring other schools that need improvement support.

There is strong joint working in Thurrock which engages the Teaching Schools, MATs, stand-alone academies, free schools and maintained schools with effective heads groups (Thurrock Association of Secondary Schools (TASS) and Thurrock Primary Heads Association (TPHA). These are well represented at the Thurrock Education Alliance chaired by the Leader of the Council. The Education Alliance is supported by an executive Thurrock Excellence Network a partnership of the Director of Children's Services, school leaders, governors and the three teaching school alliances in the borough. The excellence network is developing its commissioning role for school improvement.

All schools and academies purchase the service from the LA Performance, Quality and Business Support. (PQBS) This high quality service allows schools and academies to share performance data and hold open and honest conversations regarding the performance of schools. Academies, MATs and schools can also benchmark themselves against similar schools in the Borough. This is a well-developed process and is also used at School Standards and Progress Boards and meeting with the Teaching Schools to identify schools/ academies in need of support.

The LA School Improvement Team works closely with the teaching schools to ensure targeted Continuing Professional Development, school to school support and deployment of SLEs is effective.

The Regional Schools Commissioner works with The Director of Children's Services and Interim Strategic Lead for School Improvement to promote and monitor free schools and academies. The School Improvement Officer also attends regional RSC meetings with other LAs in the Eastern region to develop good practice

Together, there has been a significant improvement in performance, and outcomes for children and young people are significantly higher. This is particularly noticeable in the primary sector where there are now almost 75 percent of schools good or better. Together, 80 percent of pupils now attend good or better Primary, Secondary and Special schools in Thurrock.

Appendix 1: Education Priorities for 2015/16 in the form of a "Plan on a Page" which has been consulted and agreed with all Thurrock schools and academies.

Appendix 2: list of the Multi Academy Trusts

2.1 **Harris Federation Multi-Academy Trust**

This Trust has three schools in Thurrock; Harris Academy Chafford Hundred, Harris Primary Academy Chafford Hundred and Mayflower Free School. Harris Primary became a sponsored academy in 2012. In 2014 the primary academy achieved a 'good' Ofsted judgement and some of the most positive Early Years and end of Key Stage outcomes in the borough.

The Mayflower Free School opened in 2014 and has already made a very positive start with better than national average outcomes for their first cohort of Early Years Pupils.

All of the Harris Federation Schools in Thurrock benefit from the MAT as well as the expertise found in the teaching school.

The teaching school also has a wider impact in Thurrock due to the high quality CPD and support to schools on offer.

2.2 **Ormiston Trust / Ormiston Academies Trust/ The Gateway Learning Community**

The Gateway Academy was the first school in Thurrock to become a sponsored academy by Ormiston Trust. Ormiston Academies Trust was later formed and sponsored Ormiston Park Academy. The Gateway Learning Community which is sponsored by Ormiston also sponsors Lansdowne Primary Academy and Tilbury Pioneer Primary Academy. Herringham joined the trust as a converter academy. The Gateway Free School is also part of this trust.

The Gateway Academy achieved an outstanding Ofsted inspection judgement in 2011. The free school and Herringham Primary Academy are judged to be 'good'.

The senior leaders the academies and the free school work collaboratively to improve the outcomes for the pupils in the Tilbury and Chadwell St Mary area. The deputy CEO has worked across the primary schools to ensure consistency of practice and the academies regularly pool resources to ensure effectiveness and efficiencies.

Ormiston Park Academy is a strategic partner of the Thurrock Teaching School Alliance (TTSA).

2.3 **Olive Academies**

Olive is one of the first Academy Sponsors to specialise in alternative provision in England. They formed in 2013 and have sponsored the Pupil Referral Unit (primary & secondary) since April 2015. Olive continues to support the pupils in Thurrock who require alternative or medical tuition.

2.4 **REAch2 Multi-Academy Trust**

Purfleet Primary Academy is the only Thurrock sponsored academy within the REAch2 Multi-Academy Trust. The sponsor has worked closely with their newly appointed Headteacher to improve outcomes for the pupils in Purfleet. The school was in special measures when it became a sponsored academy but has improved rapidly and is now an improving school.

2.5 **St Clere's Co-operative Multi-Academy Trust**

St Clere's became the first Multi-Academy Trust in the country to have Co-operative Articles of Association with East Tilbury Infant and East Tilbury Junior School. The infant and junior schools became the first academies to amalgamate in 2012.

The trust members also now include Thameside Primary School and Stanford Le Hope Primary, which are both sponsored by St Clere's Academy.

All five schools have benefitted from being part of the MAT. Thameside has now been judged to be a 'good' school (Ofsted 2014) and has improved the outcomes for pupils in all key stages. Stanford has been able to recruit a head of school from within the trust and data is improving.

The trust is able to recruit more strategically and the schools support each other in school improvement and teacher development.

St Clere's is also a strategic partner of the Thurrock Teaching Schools Alliance, delivering amongst others Newly Qualified Teacher CPD, subject leader support and Initial Teacher Training.

The academy trust collaborates well with other local schools and St Clere's has also worked in collaboration with Hassenbrook and Gable Hall to run the Stanford and Corringham Sixth Form Centre.

2.6 **The Academy Transformation Trust**

The Hathaway Academy, which became a sponsored academy in July 2013, is the only Thurrock school to be sponsored by the Academy Transformation Trust. The academy was judged to be a 'good' school by Ofsted in June 2015. The inspection report recognised the support from the sponsor for leaders at all levels.

2.7 **The Catalyst Academies Trust**

The trust was set up by Dilkes Primary School and sponsors Benyon Primary and Quarry Hill Primary. The trust works across all three schools to deliver school improvement in its role as sponsor. The trust has a number of outreach staff who are deployed across the borough through identification of need by the incoming school's headteacher.

Benyon Primary joined the MAT as a sponsored academy in April 2013 and was judged to be 'good' by Ofsted in March 2015.

Quarry Hill became a sponsored academy in July 2013 and was judged to have good leadership in June 2015.

Dilkes Primary Teaching School Alliance (DPTSA) is led by the Interim Headteacher at Dilkes Primary. DPTSA works closely with the other teaching schools and the School Improvement Team in Thurrock to deliver the six core functions of the teaching schools.

2.8 **Stanford & Corringham Trust**

Stanford and Corringham Trust is made up of Gable Hall School and Corringham Primary as a sponsored academy.

Corringham Primary was a school in 'special measures' before it converted to become a sponsored academy in 2013. The LA worked to install a progress board and improve governance of the school as well as brokering interim leadership arrangements before the school became a sponsored academy.

The school has benefitted from the support of Gable Hall, especially in recruiting effective leadership (new HT was recruited in March 2014) and improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils. The most recent inspection recognised the difference the new headteacher and the trust had made to the school. The leadership and management were graded as 'good' and a recent visit from a senior HMI also recognised the improvements in the school.

2.9 **Umbrella Trust – Essex**

The Umbrella Trust is made up of 3 converter academies, Hassenbrook, Academy, Abbots Hall Primary and Graham James Primary Academies.

2.10 **William Edwards School**

The William Edwards Academy Trust comprises William Edwards and Deneholm as converter academies with Stifford Clays as a sponsored academy (from April 2015).

William Edwards is the strategic partner delivering the TTSA on behalf of Treetops. TTSA works closely with the other teaching schools and LA School Improvement Team to deliver the core functions of the teaching schools.

3 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

None.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

None.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

None.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

None.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Corporate Finance, Quality Assurance Team

This report is for consideration only. The Committee is not required to make any decisions.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell,**
Education Lawyer

This report is for consideration only. The Committee is not required to make any decisions.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development

The author notes the positive contribution cross school collaboration can bring to supporting a positive learning environment for all children and young people in Thurrock.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- 9.1 Education Strategic Priorities 2015-2016
- 9.2 Thurrock schools by form of governance
- 9.3 List of Teaching School Alliances

Report Author:

Andrea Winstone

School Improvement Officer

Children's Services