



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?*

A MAT is a group of Academies which have joined together to work outside of Local Authority control. A MAT is a single legal entity with one set of Trustees under which schools operate collaboratively, but with considerable freedom to maintain their own character and ethos. All schools within the MAT share a common vision and work together to improve the educational experience and outcomes for all their pupils and students. A school which is currently controlled by the Local Authority would convert to become an Academy school as part of the process of joining a MAT.

2. *What is Westacre's current status?*

Westacre is currently a maintained school and is part of Worcestershire County Council.

3. *Why change to a MAT?*

Following a thorough period of research, reflection, and due diligence, the Governing Body believes that potentially joining a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) may be a strategic next step for the school.

This move could help us further protect and strengthen our vision, values, and ethos, ensuring the best possible education for our children. The direction of travel nationally has seen schools increasingly come together within MATs, and we are exploring this possibility as part of our long-term strategic planning.

4. *What are the advantages in becoming a MAT and joining the Worcestershire Hills Trust?*

The Governing Body believes that Westacre and its community may benefit from potential collaboration through a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) in the following ways:

- The values of the Trust align with Westacre's own values which would allow us to preserve the ethos of our school while striving for the best possible outcomes for all pupils.
- We would collaborate with like-minded schools, which would support our efforts to recruit, train, and retain our teachers and support staff.
- Our teachers would have greater opportunities to share best practice across different school phases, fostering professional development that would directly benefit our pupils.
- Our wellbeing services for pupils would be enhanced, ensuring we continue to prioritise the mental and emotional health of every child.
- We would secure our financial stability and access to government funding necessary to improve our facilities, further enriching our educational environment.



5. *If Westacre does not become an Academy, could the school be vulnerable?*

Many schools are already part of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and are experiencing a range of benefits from working collaboratively. Westacre is committed to making its own informed decision about potentially joining a MAT – one that aligns with and protects our school's unique vision, values, and ethos, while enabling close partnership with like-minded schools. Governors believe that joining a MAT which shares our educational philosophy could offer valuable opportunities, while still allowing us to operate in much the same way as we do now.

Within the Droitwich Cluster, there is currently one stand-alone academy and schools within three substantial MATs.

6. *Why has the Worcestershire Hills Trust been chosen?*

Over the past few years, we have engaged in discussions with a number of potential Multi Academy Trusts (MATs). Through these conversations, we have identified key priorities that would be essential if Westacre were to consider joining a MAT:

- Retaining our independence, identity, and vision as a school.
- Collaborating with schools that share our values and aspirations, ensuring alignment in ethos and educational goals.
- Enhancing the quality of education through meaningful collaboration and professional development for staff.
- Preserving our ethos as a community school, with inclusion at the heart of everything we do.

The Worcestershire Hills Trust presents a potential opportunity to continue operating in the way we currently do. It includes schools across the First, Middle, and High School phases, which supports a joined-up approach to education and transition.

However, no decision would be made without a full consultation process, involving staff, parents, and the wider community to ensure all voices are heard and considered.

7. *Which schools are already part of the Worcestershire Hills Trust?*

The founder schools and their current pyramids are as follows: Blackwell First School, Bromsgrove; Bredon Hill Middle School, Evesham; Charford First School, Bromsgrove; and Prince Henry's High School, Evesham.

8. *How much responsibility would remain with the school?*

The Multi Academy Trust is governed by a Trust Board which is comprised of representative governors from member schools, together with a CEO/Accounting Officer, as required by the Department for Education.

Reporting to the Trust Board is an Executive Board made up of all the Headteachers of schools in the Trust. They have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Worcestershire Hills Trust as well as their own schools. Each school would retain its Headteacher and Local Governing Body, who would also continue to have day-to-day responsibility for their school so that its unique role within its community is maintained.



9. *Would the school lose its individuality?*

We have chosen to explore the Worcestershire Hills Trust further as it would allow us to retain our identity, values and ethos.

10. *Would the school lose its place in the local community?*

The Trust is committed to ensuring that each school continues to serve its local community as it has always done according to its own unique context. In the current community, there are some schools that are already part of Trusts and others that stand alone. We have always worked with all schools within the cluster and would continue to do so.

11. *Would there be any change to school names and uniforms etc?*

With the Worcestershire Hills Trust there would be no noticeable change for the staff, children and parents/carers of each school. We would retain our school name and there would be no changes to our school uniform.

12. *Would term times change?*

We would continue to use Worcestershire term dates and align where possible with our local schools. We understand how important this is to families with children at more than one school within our community.

13. *Would there be any change to the admission policies?*

There would be no changes to our admission policy, catchment area or feeder schools. Parents would still apply for places at Westacre to the Local Authority as they currently do.

The catchment area and the admissions policy for Westacre Middle School would stay the same as at the point of conversion. There is absolutely no intention to change this if we were to join the Trust. Legally, Worcestershire Hills Trust is its own admissions authority, and the admissions arrangements would be delegated to the local governing body. The school would also continue to be bound by the National Admissions Code, Admissions Appeals Code and the Worcestershire Co-ordinated Admissions process. In terms of the role that the Local Authority plays regarding the co-ordination of the admissions process, everything would remain the same.

14. *How would parents/carers be affected?*

Parents/carers would not be affected; however, they may start to see and hear more information about the MAT. They may notice that correspondence sent by the academy, e.g. letters and emails, would include the MAT's logo.



15. Do local authorities retain responsibility for identifying and assessing SEN?

The Local Authority would retain responsibility for children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

16. Would the transport arrangements to and from school be affected by the possible conversion to a MAT?

The Local Authority would retain responsibility for this and transport arrangements already in place would continue. Parents would apply for school transport in the same way that they currently do.

17. Would the MAT take on schools that are in challenging circumstances, or which have financial issues?

For any school who wishes to join the MAT, there is a detailed evaluation called a 'Due Diligence' process, which would identify any weaknesses in the educational performance, financial position and conditions of buildings, to ensure that there are no significant liabilities which would be a drain on the resources of the MAT. If the Trustees feel that a school could be an appropriate partner, a plan would be developed to address any problems which are identified and we would only move forward with the school provided there is a robust and sustainable plan to support the school to address these issues. The final decision on whether a school can join the MAT is taken by the Regional Director at the DfE, and they would only allow a school to join a MAT if they are confident that the MAT can provide the required support to address a school in challenging circumstances or one with financial issues or liabilities.

18. How do the finances of a MAT work?

While the MAT would have oversight of the finances, all schools within the Trust would be responsible for managing their own finances.

The funding for Academies is calculated on the same basis as LA maintained schools, with the difference being that the funding comes directly from the Education Funding and Skills Agency (EFSA) who then issue the funding notifications. Schools which were previously LA-controlled benefit from conversion by being given the freedom to choose how their previously retained "Compulsory Local Authority Service Level Agreements" are now spent.

19. How would budgets work within individual schools?

Each school would still retain its own budget and make its own decisions on how to use this, and this has been a key consideration in our decision making. There would be no changes to the budget that the school currently receives, because of joining the trust.

20. Is this a money-making enterprise which seeks to make a profit?

The Trust's approach is very much about working together as a group of local schools, as a not-for-profit organisation, and not as part of a national chain. The MAT itself has charitable status and its finances are closely scrutinised and regularly audited by external auditors.



21. Would teachers and senior leaders be distracted from their work in school by joining the MAT?

Joining the MAT would not interfere with the day-to-day work of teachers, other senior leaders and support staff.

22. What is the governance structure of the MAT?

At individual school level, there is a Local Governing Body (LGB) with Governors including elected parent/carers, staff, and other stakeholders as per the school's existing structure. The LGB would have responsibility for matters affecting its own school. It is likely that the LGB would be smaller than the existing Governing Body, as some functions could be dealt with at MAT Board level. Governors are elected or appointed for a term of four years.

Above the LGB there is a Board of Trustees (MAT Board). This Board has been drawn from existing Governors of member schools with the addition of key people with relevant experience and skills. The Board oversees the strategic development of the MAT and issues affecting all schools in the MAT. The Board of Trustees meet several times a year. There are linked committees which may involve senior leadership of individual schools who ensure that the voice of each school is heard equitably at Board level. It is important to note that the Trustees are not representatives or delegates of individual schools – their function is to work at an overarching strategic level. Trustees are appointed for a term of four years.

The final accountability lies with the Members of the MAT. They are a small group of people with extensive experience, appropriate skills and commitment who have the power to appoint Trustees and amend the Articles of Association. The Members meet once or twice a year. There is no time limit to the Members' term of office.

None of the Governors, Trustees or Members are paid. The governance structure therefore would not take money which should be spent on teaching and resources.

23. Is the MAT still bound by the same legislation?

All schools in the MAT are still bound by statutory codes for Special Educational Needs and Admissions and would participate in the Fair Access Protocol. The MAT is also still bound by primary legislation such as employment law, health and safety and equalities legislation.

24. What about changes affecting staff pay and conditions?

There would be no changes to staff pay and conditions. All staff would transfer to the MAT under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings – Protection of Employment) regulations, maintaining continuous service and retaining all associated legal protections. The main change would be that staff are employed by the MAT rather than by the local authority. Trade Unions would continue to be recognised, and the MAT would welcome their ongoing support for their members.

All teachers are currently paid in accordance with the statutory provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and remain within the legal framework of relevant employment legislation, including equality, employment protection, and data protection. This would not change should we join the Worcestershire Hills Trust.

Support staff roles are linked to recognised national pay scales (NJC/LA), and this would continue.



25. Would staff be expected to move around the MAT?

Whilst staff would not be required to move round the MAT, there may be occasions when staff may wish to take the opportunity to work in one of the other schools in the MAT for professional development. However, this would have to be agreed upon by all parties.

26. Would the children be able to interact with the pupils from the other schools in The Worcestershire Hills Trust?

The MAT provides many Trust wide opportunities for collaboration between the pupils of schools in areas such as music concerts, sport and other extra-curricular activities.

27. Who would Westacre buy external services (e.g. Service Level Agreements) from?

Westacre would purchase SLAs from wherever is most appropriate and best value for the school. This is the current practice within school, Westacre has always chosen to buy services which are the most cost effective for the school.

28. What is the timescale if the proposal goes ahead?

Subject to due diligence and legal work the intention would be for Westacre to become part of The Worcestershire Hills Trust during this current academic year.

29. Can Westacre withdraw from the conversion process?

The Governing Body of the school is currently considering joining the Trust; however, the school is not obligated to join. Schools can withdraw right up to the point that they sign the Funding Agreement. Once this is signed there is a legally binding agreement between the Secretary of State and the academy, and the termination process would require a long notice period.

30. Who makes the final decision to join the Trust?

The Governing Board is consulting with staff members, parents and the local community in order to make an informed decision on whether to join the MAT. After collecting evidence, the final decision would be made by the Governing Board.

31. What would happen if the school does join?

Worcestershire County Council is presently responsible for Westacre and upon joining, the assets and staff of the school would be transferred to The Worcestershire Hills Trust. From the point of transfer, the Trustees of The Worcestershire Hills Trust would take over responsibility for Westacre Middle School from the local authority.



32. How can I make sure the Westacre Governing Body hears my views on the consultation process?

The consultation period will run from Monday 3rd November to Monday 1st December 2025. During this time, we want to hear the thoughts and opinions of our community, and the email address below is available for you to provide us with your feedback. A copy of this letter and the FAQ document can also be found on our website via our Parents Tab. Your involvement in helping us determine the next steps for our school community is incredibly important to us. We look forward to hearing your views during the consultation process, which will play a key role in shaping our final decision on whether to join the Worcestershire Hills Trust. Ultimately, we want to ensure that joining the Worcestershire Hills Trust would be the best decision for the continued success of our school and the future of our pupils.

To respond to this consultation, please send your comments or questions to the following email address:
consultation@westacre.worcs.sch.uk