



Abbas and Templecombe
Church of England
Primary School



Becoming an Academy



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Background

Why now

- **Governors discussing since July 2021 following Government announcements.**
- **The government has now said it wants all schools to either have become academies or be in the process of joining a multi-academy trust (MAT) by 2030 – March 2022 White Paper.**
- **Better to have some say in our future.**
- **The direction is not likely to change (Labour also support the academisation agenda).**
- **We are in a good place – between Ofsted and SIAMS.**




A young boy with brown hair is sitting on a stack of four clear plastic crates. He is wearing a blue and red Spider-Man long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. He is holding an open book and looking down at it. On his head is a white graduation cap with a tassel. The background is a dark, textured wall, and the floor is made of wooden planks.

What is an academy?

An academy is an independent state-funded school. This means it's funded directly by the government (the Education Funding Agency, EFA) rather than by a local authority as maintained schools are.

How are academies different from LA schools?

As local authorities do not fund academies, academies have more freedom to decide certain things for themselves. For example, they can control their own curriculum and finances, and decide how long terms and school days will be. They do though now have to join a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), which depending on the organisational structure have policies in place to guide schools.



What is a
MAT?

- When a group of schools become part of a trust, governed by a single board of members and directors, that is known as a multi-academy trust.
- The trust employs staff as opposed to a local authority in the case of state-funded schools, CEO / School Improvement Team / HR / Finance / etc.
- The head Teacher, or principal, at each academy school is responsible for its day-to-day running. Sometimes trusts prefer a leadership model that involves an Executive Head across 2 or more schools (Strategic) and Heads of School for day to day running (Operational).
- Schools are then overseen by the academy trust, which provides support and advice.
- Expertise is also shared among the schools which belong to an academy trust and its directors are responsible for strategic overviews of those schools under its umbrella.

How is a
MAT
structured?



MAT Members
(Foundation Members)

MAT Board of Directors/Trustees and CEO
(Foundation trustees)

Local Governing Board e.g.
Former VC Governing Body

A young boy is sitting on a stack of books, wearing a graduation cap and gown. He is holding an open book and looking down at it. The background is a dark, textured wall.

Advantages?

- **Flexibility:** Head teachers have more freedom to run academies, by setting their own term dates, not having to follow the national curriculum and getting access to extra funding through sponsorship. Although BWMAT have decided many of these elements in advance.
- **Innovation:** Staff can be more innovative in academy schools to try new things and think outside the box in the way they teach their children and the curriculum they follow.
- **Funding:** Academies have access to extra funding through sponsorship which can enable them to improve facilities and offer a wider range of educational visits and trips to their students.
- **Shared expertise and resources:** Schools in a multi-academy trust benefit from being able to share money, best practices and even their staff, who can be deployed at sister schools who might be short-staffed or in need of a fresh teaching approach. Struggling schools can also be supported by others in their trust to help them improve.

A young boy is sitting on a stack of books, wearing a graduation cap and reading a book. He is wearing a blue and red Spider-Man t-shirt and blue jeans. The background is a dark, textured wall.

Disadvantages?

- **Schools are run more like businesses:** Some parents are concerned that education is becoming privatised as more schools become academies. Critics say there is too much of a focus on money and financial return, rather than what is best for the children who attend academies. Academies though are not allowed to make a profit.
- **Trusts can get too big too soon:** There have been some fears voiced that some academy trusts have taken on too many schools too quickly and are unable to cope as a result. When trusts increase in size, it has been argued, some of their schools lose out because of a shortage of resources to manage them effectively.
- **Flexibility is not always a good thing:** Parents who send their children to a local authority run school can be certain that they will be taught National Curriculum subjects. There is not the same certainty with academy schools, whose head teachers have the option to follow a different curriculum. Academies can also set their own term dates which could cause childcare issues for parents who have different children at an academy and a state-funded school.

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Our journey

- Finding the best fit for our school – matching our values and offering local support – taking our time to get it right
- Research began in July 2021 – supported by Diocese Education Team
- Identified four MATs (BWMAT, SAST, Quantock and DSAT)
- Four became two and we met the CEOs of these trusts (BWMAT and SAST) – due to geography of the trust and capacity to support
- Governors and staff visited MAT schools from both trusts and I spoke informally to many more Heads
- Two became one when we voted in late November to join BWMAT
- This is the culmination of 18 months' fact finding and the decision has not been taken lightly - we feel this is the absolute best fit on offer for our school and believe they will value us for who we are, whilst helping us to keep improving

Bath and Wells MAT?

Number of Schools

35 Schools

Number of church/non church schools

34/1

Diocese Areas

Bath and Wells Diocesan MAT

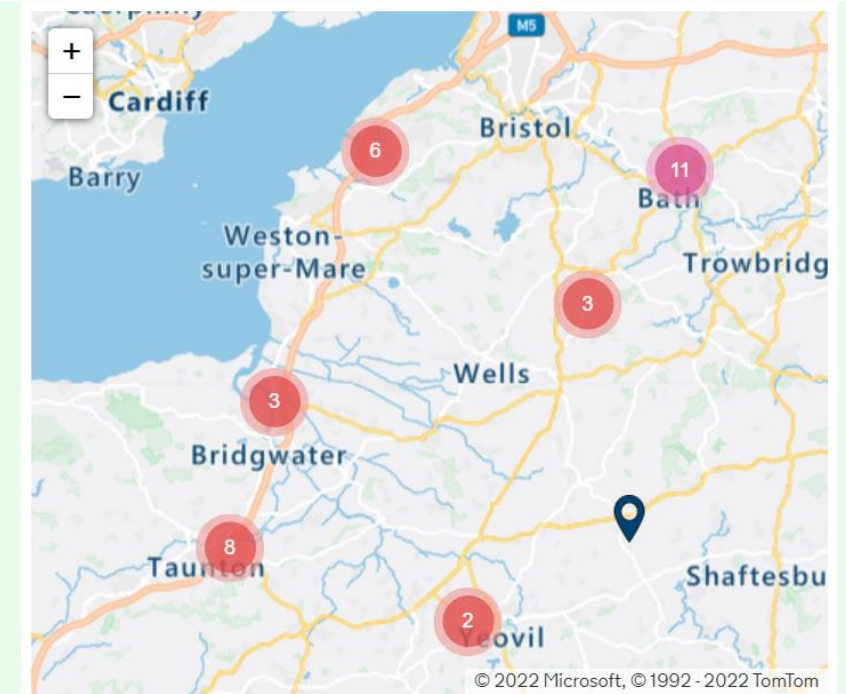
LA Areas

B&NES, North Somerset, Somerset

Primary / Secondary

All Primary

School locations



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What next

- ✓ **MAT ensures we are a good educational and geographical fit**
- ✓ **Complete application form for Conditional Consent from Diocese**
- ✓ **Inform DfE of interest in academising – through Regional Directors Office (they make final academisation decision)**
 - **Informal consultation with parents and staff (information sharing / answering questions and concerns)**
 - **Complete LA process for consent**
 - **Tidy up ownership of land / buildings – Diocese to support**
 - **Meetings with Trust to complete process of due diligence**
 - **Many more legal steps and processes, including formal consultation with parents...**

Typical questions

- **Does academising mean staff will lose their jobs?** No all staff will be moved over to the MAT under the same terms and conditions.
- **Will academising change our school** – Yes, but generally for the better – more support for staff CPD (meaning better trained staff) and more modern / better supported back office systems, like online payments for parents. Generally though the biggest impact initially is on leadership, office and Governance.
- **Is an academy like a business?** No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An academy is a charitable trust which cannot make a profit.
- **Who makes the decision to become an academy?** The governing body.
- **Will the school need to change its name?** No – Abbas and Templecombe Church School rather than Abbas and Templecombe CE VC Primary School.
- **Will there be a new uniform/logo?** No – we will just change the name on our existing logo. So parents should just purchase uniform with an updated logo as, and when, required.





Typical questions

- **Are academies bound by the same rules and regulations as other schools?** Academies are required to follow the law and guidance on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.
- **Will the academy follow the National Curriculum?** Mostly yes, but we will have more freedom to try different things in the curriculum and make sure that what is taught is relevant to our pupils and their specific needs. Anything we don't teach from the NC we will have to justify why not to Ofsted.
- **Does becoming an academy change the relationship with local schools and the community?** No. Academy funding agreements state that trusts must ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other local schools and the wider community.
- **How does academy status affect SEN funding?** SEN funding will come directly from the government through the Education Funding Agency. Funding allocated to a named child would continue to be funded directly by the local authority, as it is now.



Your Questions...