



St George's
Primary School

Weatherhead
High School

Proposal for St George's Primary School to Join the Peninsula Multi Academy Trust (MAT)

Key information for all stakeholders. Question and Answer Format

We have informed parents, carers and employees of St George's Primary's proposal to convert to academy status and join the Peninsula MAT. We are hoping to join the Trust on **1 April 2026**. **However that decision is subject to extensive consultation and due diligence checks.**

Weatherhead High School is currently the only school in the Peninsula MAT and we are intending to join along with Liscard Primary School.. Although the Trust has existed for several years, this is really the start of its journey to creating a strong family of schools that serve our local communities. As a founder school of Peninsula MAT, alongside Weatherhead and Liscard Primary School we will form a small group of like-minded schools, committed to delivering the very best opportunities for children and young people in North East Wirral (Wallasey and Wirral Waters area), focused on achieving excellence through challenge, collaboration and innovation.

Trust schools will be dedicated to ensuring all members of our community feel they belong.

Whilst working together will be important, within the trust, there is a commitment to individual schools retaining their unique identity and continuing to run in the best interests of their children and communities.

To help you understand why the school's leaders and Governing Body intend to make this change and the impact it will have, please take some time to read the answers to the **Frequently Asked Questions** below.

What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A MAT is a legal entity and a not-for-profit organisation that oversees two or more academies (schools). It is governed by a Board of Trustees whose work is overseen by the Members. Often, a MAT is set up by a group of schools, sometimes a local collaboration, that share a common ethos and vision, and are committed to improving and maintaining high standards of education. They are not controlled by the Local Authority and receive funding for the schools within the Trust directly from the Department for Education.

What is the MAT called?

The new MAT is called **The Peninsula Multi Academy Trust**. You can find out information about the Trust at its website: www.pensinsulamat.co.uk.

Which schools will be founder members of the Trust?

- Liscard Primary School
- Weatherhead High School
- St George's Primary School

Why are schools becoming academies and joining MATs both locally and nationally?

43% of all primary schools and 82% of secondary schools are now academies with most belonging to a MAT. This means that over half of the children educated in England now attend an academy (rather than a local authority controlled school). Promoting academies and encouraging schools to join MATs has been the preferred approach of both Labour and Conservative governments in recent times.

Across the country, local authorities are eroding in terms of size, capacity and influence, and this is the case locally. As more schools become academies and join MATs the local authority is able to fund less support for schools that remain. For schools that choose to join a MAT, they can use strong collaboration and support

afforded by the MAT to drive up standards and share best practice and services across the Trust, replacing aspects of former local authority support.

Why would a local authority maintained school such as St George's Primary School want to join a MAT?

There are several reasons why a school may want to join a MAT:

- To allow for partnership working that has genuine benefits for the local community
- To further develop effective teaching and learning practices across schools
- To continue to develop and sustain a high-quality inclusive education for all pupils
- To improve and sustain overall academic standards
- To access to a bespoke professional development programme (CPD) that adds real value to the education of the young people, further developing our skilled workforce
- To enable local issues and challenges to be addressed collaboratively rather than in isolation
- To provide a strong network of support and challenge for headteachers and other school leaders
- To allow for efficiencies in administrative functions and joint procurement, helping to ensure that schools can navigate the challenging financial landscape together and can continue to spend for the benefit of the pupils
- To further develop governance with a clear focus on strategic development, teaching and learning, and accountability
- To enhance the school's reputation for excellence through collaboration and sharing best practice with other schools in the Trust
- To improve the recruitment, retention and growth of excellent staff
- To secure the long-term future of the school

What are the benefits of being a founder school?

- A founder school is a school that initiates or joins a MAT at its inception, and plays a key role in shaping its vision, values, and culture.
- A founder school has more influence and input in the decision-making and governance of the MAT and can ensure that its ethos and identity are reflected and respected in the MAT.
- A founder school can also benefit from the support and expertise of the other founder schools, and from the opportunity to create a MAT that meets its needs and aspirations.

How do we know we will get along with the two other founder schools?

St George's Primary School has been working in close partnership with Liscard and Weatherhead for several years. Recently, cross-school projects have given opportunities to develop teaching in Maths and strengthen support for children with anxiety across the three schools. These projects, and the close working of the Headteachers, has allowed the partnership to be tried out with very positive results. In addition to this, many girls from St George's and Liscard progress to Weatherhead at the end of Year 6 and many of our families will also have children who attend Weatherhead.

Do we need permission to convert to a MAT?

Yes. The school has had to obtain the permission of the Secretary of State for Education via the Regional Director. We received approval from the Regional Director earlier this year. This permission has allowed us to enter into meaningful planning and consultation.

Is there a set model for how a MAT has to operate?

There are strict rules regarding how a MAT is funded and how its funds have to be managed, but the way in which a MAT operates, its governance structure and vision and ethos are defined by the academy or academies that set up the MAT. Peninsula Multi Academy Trust (PMAT) has developed proposed values and schemes of delegation for the three schools. These can be read on the PMAT's website: www.pensinsulammat.co.uk.

How is funding organised within the MAT (updated)?

The funding from the Department for Education for each school within the MAT is determined on an individual basis in the way that funding is determined for local authority controlled schools.

St George's has a delegated budget of over £4.8 million including Early years funding.

In addition to this we also generate a lot of funds through services that we provide (catering, Dragon Club etc) our partnership and outreach work. That budget is over £1 million pounds.

Funding will continue to follow this model. Funding is allocated to each school by the MAT and it will be agreed that some funds will be used to fund the services and support that the MAT provides to schools.

Funding is governed through a master Funding Agreement between the Secretary of State and the MAT and supplemental agreements between the Secretary of State and each school within the MAT.

Will the MAT require additional funds (new)?

We already provide funding for Local Authority and other services that the MAT would provide. For example, St George delegates about £80,000 towards central local Authority funding and buys central services for finance, HR, health and safety etc for another £60,000. That £140,00 will fund the central service required in PMAT.

We do not envisage more funds being required unless that is desirable. For example the three schools could purchase services (HR advice, payroll etc) or staffing (Educational Psychologist) together if that improves effectiveness and is more efficient.

Will the school lose its financial independence and its ability to manage its own finances (updated)?

No. We already follow agreed local authority budget policies and processes. It is essential that all schools are subject to audit and financial controls.

There will be a common financial procedures manual to be shared between schools in PMAT but each school will be expected to manage their own budget. Schools have autonomy to spend their budget in a way that best meets the educational needs of the children at the school. As mentioned above, there is likely to be some centralisation of finances where these make sense and result in possible economies of scale – this is similar to the financial process used by local authorities.

What will happen to our land and buildings?

All land and buildings currently owned by the Local Authority on behalf of the school will transfer to Peninsula MAT on a 125-year lease and they will become the responsibility of the MAT to maintain.

How are MATs structured (updated)?

The overall governance of the Trust is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees who set the strategic direction of the Trust, have oversight of standards across the Trust and monitor whether the Trust is meeting its objectives.

The work of the Board of Trustees is overseen by the Members who hold the Trustees to account but, otherwise, play a very 'hands off' role.

Members and trustees are all volunteers. Information about PMAT members and trustees can be read on the PMAT website: www.pensinsulamat.co.uk

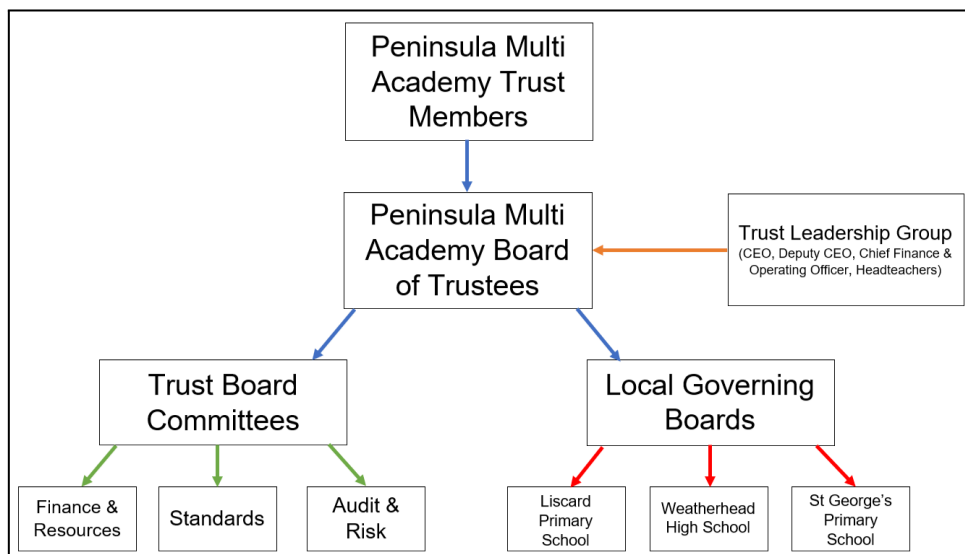
The Board of Trustees will continue to delegate certain responsibilities to the individual Local Governing Body (LGB) of each school. That is similar to the way that the school currently works.

Will the Governors' role change when we become an academy and join a MAT?

When the school initially converts the existing Governors will stay in post and the Local Governing Body will retain many of its existing responsibilities. These are set out in the Trust's Scheme of Delegation which can be found on the Peninsula MAT website.

What is the new structure (updated)?

The structure of Peninsula MAT is set out in the diagram below:



Members – from a distance, they ensure the Trust is being run effectively and its Trustees are governing the Trust effectively so it meets its wider aims.

Board of Trustees – these are the individuals who have a strategic overview of the MAT and some of their work is delegated to committees.

Members and trustees are all volunteers. Information about PMAT members and trustees can be read on the PMAT website: www.pensinsulammat.co.uk

Trust Leadership Group – comprises the Central Team (Executive Leader, Deputy Executive Leader and Chief Finance and Operations Officer as well as the Headteachers from each school within the Trust. The Central Team works alongside schools to manage finance and compliance, support school development and improvement, and enable school leaders to focus on what matters most – the quality of education and managing staff and pupils within their schools.

As the Trust is only very small, the trust leadership positions will be dual roles to ensure this does not remove funds from the school budget. For example:

- Dominic Mackenzie is CEO of Peninsula MAT and is also Headteacher of Weatherhead High School.
- Bernard Cassidy, role as Deputy CEO and lead for Primary Education would also continue to be headteacher of St George's Primary School.

Local Governing Bodies (LGB) – there is one for each school in the trust and they have powers that have been delegated to them by the Board of Trustees.

Will working with other schools mean lowering our own standards or possibly detracting resources from our own school?

We have chosen to work together with the other founder schools to ensure that all we do is in the best interest of the schools' children, families and communities. Collaboration, sharing ideas and expertise, and pooling resources can only help us improve and deliver on the commitment to excellence

What changes will children and parents see?

There will be very little visible change as a direct result of joining the MAT. The Headteacher, staff, uniform, premises and curriculum will all continue to be very much unchanged. We will promote that we are part of the Peninsula MAT on our website and in signage but no real physical change beyond that.

The changes that we hope you'll see, will be a general continued improvement in the performance and running of the school and, hopefully, some new and improved resources and opportunities from which our pupils, staff and families will benefit.

How will joining a MAT improve standards for our children?

It will enable us to utilise the expertise of staff from schools across the MAT to accelerate progress for our children and to work collaboratively to address the barriers to children's achievement. The experience and talent of all the schools together become greater than the sum of their parts.

Training and leadership development across the Trust will enable the development of the next generation of exceptional teachers and leaders, committed to delivering excellence locally.

We will have the capacity to develop partnerships with other organisations, including educational researchers, universities and local businesses.

Will teachers work at different schools?

There will be opportunities for staff for training and professional development purposes, but staff will generally remain constant and will not be expected to work elsewhere.

Whilst staff will remain in their own schools, being part of a MAT will provide many professional development opportunities and teachers may attend joint training, share ideas and good practice, and support one another in developing their teaching skills.

How does the admissions process work for academies?

We do not anticipate any significant changes.

Academies within a MAT are required to comply with the Admissions and Admission Appeals Codes of Practice as if they were maintained schools. They must have admission arrangements that clearly set out how children will be admitted, including the criteria that will be applied if there are more applications than available places.

They are also required to participate in the Local Authority's coordination of admissions processes and the Local Authority's Fair Access Protocol.

Any change to our current admissions protocols will always be communicated to parents and carers.

What inspection regimes and assessment data information do academies have to provide?

All academies are inspected by Ofsted using the same framework and timescales as for maintained schools.

All schools within the MAT will continue to be inspected as separate schools.

Results (for example, Key Stage 2 SATs results) would be reported in performance tables in the same way as they are now.

Do academies have to follow the National Curriculum?

Currently, academies are not required to teach the National Curriculum but do have to provide rather a broad and balanced curriculum that includes English, Mathematics, Science and Religious Education and promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of children, preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Peninsula MAT recognises the value of the National Curriculum and all schools within the MAT intend to continue following the National Curriculum. Furthermore, it is likely that the government will change the law in the future to make it a requirement for academies to follow the National Curriculum.

Who is in charge?

Each Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will remain in charge of their school.

The Board of Trustees will take on the Local Authority role and will oversee activities and standards across all schools in the MAT.

There will be a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO) and Chief Financial and Operations Officer (CFOO) who are accountable to the Board of Trustees for the performance of the Trust and who will provide support and challenge to the Headteachers.

As the Trust is only very small, people will hold dual roles. For example:

- Dominic Mackenzie is CEO of Peninsula MAT and is also Headteacher of Weatherhead High School.
- Bernard Cassidy, role as Deputy CEO and lead for Primary Education would also continue to be headteacher of St George's Primary School.

Will the school be changing name?

No – we will still be St George's Primary School

Will the school be changing its uniform?

No – the uniform and logo will remain the same as now.

Will joining Peninsula MAT mean changes to holidays and/or the timings of the school day?

There are no plans to make changes to these and any changes would only come about following discussion with staff, parents, pupils and other stakeholders.

When will our school transfer to the new MAT?

The scheduled start date is 1st April 2026 but this relies on many external factors and may change.

How can I comment on the proposed changes to St George's Primary School?

We have set up an online survey for parents and carers. We will also be sending out a consultation survey to parents and carers on 3rd of September.

We've set up a dedicated email address for questions and comments in relation to this proposal. You can email these to consultation@stgeorges.wirral.sch.uk

All the emailed comments will be seen by Mr Cassidy and the current Governing Body when the consultation ends on 3rd October.

We are also hosting a consultation meeting for parents and carers on Thursday 11th September at 5.30pm in the school hall.

Have the pros and cons of joining PMAT been properly considered (new)?

Yes. We have diligently evaluated the benefits and risks of joining an academy over the last five years. The Governing Body's minutes are a matter of public record. We have chosen the PMAT option after looking at other academy options over a prolonged period.

Before coming to consultation, the governing body and senior leaders have ensured that the values, relationships and systems are in place to make this academy successful. The biggest drivers for us are the community focus and good working relationships between the three founder schools (Weatherhead, St George's and Liscard).

How can governors ensure that this process is democratic (new)?

Firstly, the Governing Board is a democratic institution that is composed of elected parent governors, staff governors and community governors. They have been working diligently on this matter for many years. All records of their meetings are public documents and can be read on the school's website.

Secondly, we have put in significant steps to ensure that this process is transparent and can involve stakeholders through surveys, e-mails, meetings and high quality communication. We actively encourage all staff and parents/carers to share their feedback.

Will Other Schools Be Able to Join PMAT (new)?

Eventually, yes, if they chose to do this. The trust aims to benefit the children and families of Wallasey and Wirral Waters area. However the three founder schools will initially have to work together to ensure that:

1. Our schools are not adversely affected by the transition to the Trust.
2. That we set up effective systems to improve our schools.
3. That we have the capacity to improve other schools before we expand.

However, we will continue to work closely with all our partner secondary schools, primary schools, special schools and Wirral LA regardless of which schools join PMAT.

Further FAQs In response to Specific Questions from Liscard and St George's Staff

Governance and Leadership

1. **Will we still have our own governing body after becoming an academy?**

Yes. St George's will have a Local Governing Body and its responsibilities are set out in the Trust scheme of delegation.

2. **Will Dominic remain as Headteacher of Weatherhead as well as CEO of the academy?**

Yes.

3. **Will the Headteacher of Weatherhead always also be the Headteacher of the academy, or could Headteachers from other schools in the MAT take on this role?**

This is a decision to be made by the Trust Board but I don't envisage that it would always be the Headteacher of Weatherhead. In time, the Headteacher and CEO roles may be separated.

4. **Our Head teacher is designated in the new structure at Deputy CEO and Primary Lead. Will he be able to sustain both roles?**

Yes and that is part of our strategy to keep the trust lean. We currently work in lots of external roles and arrangements such as SIPs for other schools and lead in LA projects. We would streamline this work. Envisage 20 days a year needed (10% of time for this role).

5. **Does our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) remain the same?**

Yes.

5. **What long-term safeguards will be in place to protect school autonomy if SLT members change?**

There is a Trust scheme of delegation. Headteachers and SLTs are responsibility for the running of their schools.

6. **Will any leadership roles within the school (e.g., Year Leader roles) be under threat if we adopt a different model?**

No. Staffing structures will remain the same across the schools.

7. **How will decisions be made about allowing other schools to join the MAT?**

This is the decision of the Trust Board but will always be done in consultation with stakeholder groups such as the LGBs and will be based on the principle that it would not diminish the quality of education of any school currently in the Trust.

8. **What is the timescale for the conversion into an academy?**

We are working to a 1 April 2026 deadline but this is not set in stone and conversion will take place when the school and Trust are ready.

Staffing, Roles, and Rights

9. **Will the TUPE process be followed, protecting our rights by automatically transferring them to a new employer with existing terms and conditions?**

Yes.

10. Who will pay us?

You would be employed by the PMAT and PMAT will pay staff salaries. Pay dates will remain the same.

11. When staff return from maternity leave, could they be placed at another school in the academy?

I think this is highly unlikely. Employees would be typically employed to work in one of the schools and this will be their primary place of employment.

12. If leadership opportunities are limited within our school, could we be required to take on roles or projects at other schools?

There may be opportunities to work across the Trust or at other schools within the Trust which some people may very well welcome in terms of career progression and professional development. This would only happen through discussion with those concerned. If new Trust-wide roles are created over time they would be open to employees from across the schools to apply.

13. Will staff be used to cover absences in other schools?

I don't envisage this will be the case. The schools currently have their own arrangements for covering absence and this would continue. On occasion, it might be the best solution for all concerned but I don't envisage this being a regular occurrence.

14. In the 'constitution', does it explicitly state commitments (e.g., not redeploying staff, maintaining pay structure, following the curriculum), or does it only state an 'intention' to do so?

All teachers will be employed according to the terms and conditions set out in the STPCD. All non-teaching staff will be employed in accordance with local terms and conditions. It is in the best interest of the children who attend each school that the Headteacher, SLT and teachers in that school determine the curriculum and how it is taught and the Trust advocates the delivery of the National Curriculum. As mentioned above, staffing structures will not be changed as a result of conversion.

15. Will the Local Authority still be obligated to find us a job if we are made redundant?

No. However, the benefit of being part of a family of schools is that it may be possible to redeploy any employee at risk of losing their job across the Trust.

Finance and Resources

16. Who funds the academy?

The DfE in exactly the same way that LA maintained schools are funded.

17. Will we retain autonomy over our own budgets and be free to spend funds as we see fit (e.g., sports coaches)?

Yes. The budget is calculated by the DfE taking into account the number of children on the school census. The budget is calculated for each school in the MAT and passported to each school. The Local Governing Body, in partnership with the Headteacher set the budget for each school. The budget spend is monitored by the CFO and CEO with the Trust Board having strategic oversight.

- 18. What additional costs will there be for CEOs, consultants, and management roles? Who will decide whether these roles are needed, and will their pay align with the teacher pay scale?**

The Trust Board and Executive Team determine the central roles which are funded by contributions from all schools. The level of contribution has been calculated at slightly less than the contribution currently paid to the LA. Where teaching staff belong to the central team, they would be paid in accordance with teacher pay scales.

- 19. If we are saving money, how will it be spent? For example, could it go towards reducing class sizes?**

Understanding that all schools operate in a climate in which budgets are shrinking in real terms, where possible, cost savings through financial efficiencies will be directed to support the quality of education provided.

- 20. Will we be given figures showing how much money we are expected to save by becoming an academy, and assurances that savings will go to schools rather than central management?**

The Trust has developed a very lean central structure to ensure that the contributions that schools make is minimal. Comparing the cost model of the Trust with the contribution St George's currently makes to the LA and what is currently being paid for SLAs, there will be a saving overall. Information about projected costs and savings have been shared with the Headteachers.

- 21. Will we be responsible for maintaining the school building?**

As is currently the case, the school will allocate a proportion of its budget to day-to-day maintenance and cosmetic improvements. For bigger capital projects, the Trust will apply for DfE capital funds and manage any projects for which funding is received.

Curriculum and Teaching

- 22. Will we still follow the National Curriculum? Who will ensure compliance, and what safeguards will ensure this continues long term?**

Yes. There is currently a bill passing through parliament that will compel all academies to follow the National Curriculum. The school's leadership will ensure compliance with the National Curriculum as is currently the case.

- 23. Will we still follow the Local Authority moderation process for writing?**

Yes.

- 24. Within Weatherhead there are currently subject leads and subject directors (e.g., Maths Lead and Maths Director). Is the Maths Director role an academy position? If so, will these posts be open to all staff in founding schools? Does this structure impact school autonomy?**

This is a Weatherhead role that was created to build leadership capacity into the Maths department. Trust-wide Director roles have not been considered and, as mentioned above, staffing structures will remain the same on conversion.

Accountability and Safeguarding

- 25. How often can we expect visits from MAT representatives? Will the CEO take part in observation and learning walk cycles?**

The CEO will look forward to the opportunity to visit St George's on a regular basis but is not an expert in primary education. The school will maintain its own quality assurance procedures and, in addition to this, there will be an annual 'standards review' which is conducted collaboratively by the Trust and school's Senior Leadership Team.

- 26. What happens if there is a major safeguarding incident or a significant drop in data at another school? Could this trigger an Ofsted inspection for the whole MAT?**

No.

- 27. If one of the schools in the MAT receives an 'RI' judgment from Ofsted, how will that affect the rest of the MAT?**

If inspected and concerns emerge, the school will receive a higher level of support which will be determined according to the identified areas of concern. The Trust's approach to this situation is set out in the School Improvement Policy.

- 28. If the MAT were to fail, what would happen? Would we be absorbed into another MAT, or could we return to the Local Authority?**

Hopefully that won't be the case but, from time-to-time, schools do move from one MAT to another and there have been cases where poorly performing trusts are taken over by another trust.

SEND and Inclusion

- 29. What will replace SEND support from the Local Authority?**

SEND will continue to be supported by the LA.

- 30. Will the Local Authority still approve our EHCP requests?**

Yes. It will also continue to provide high needs funding.

- 31. Is there an intention to add a Special School to the MAT? If so, which schools are being considered?**

This is not currently being considered.

Community and Pupils

- 32. One of the MAT's stated aims is to improve education and community links in the local area. What is the plan for boys when they move on to secondary schools?**

There is currently no specific plan. The Trust is conscious that Weatherhead is an all-girls school but the priority for the foreseeable future is to develop, consolidate and strengthen the MAT on the basis of the three founding schools.

Founding School Status

- 33. What rights will we have as a founding school?**

A lot of work has taken place involving leaders from the three schools over the last 18 months to shape vision, goals and way of working for the MAT – this has been done with each school's leaders having

equal influence. The MAT is being grown from the ground and the three schools will continue to have the same influence over its future developments. This is a unique and privileged position and if other schools were to join further down the line, they would be expected to align with the MATs approach rather than shaping the MATs approach as it currently the case.

34. Are we truly a founding school if we are joining an empty MAT?

Yes. Although a MAT was established in 2017, it has only ever had one school and operated largely as a single academy trust. Now is the opportunity for the schools working in partnership to develop it as a multi-academy trust.

35. Do we have to follow decisions made by other schools in the MAT (e.g., by a 2:1 vote) even if our staff strongly disagree?

Decisions are made by the Trust Board and the Executive Team, and all schools are represented on the Executive Team. This will remain the case moving forward even though St George's has recently had a change of Headteacher. Decisions will only ever be made that are for the common good rather than in the interest of only one or two schools in the Trust. Remember also that the schools will continue to have autonomy and the freedom to make many decisions that are in the best interest of their students and staff.