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14<sup>th</sup> February 2019

## Consultation process – Forming a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)

Following the joint communication in June 2018 (available on websites), the Governing Bodies of Thornden and Hiltingbury Junior Schools are now starting a formal consultation process ahead of making final decisions on whether to apply to become a MAT. Consultation is required under the Academies Act 2010 if a maintained school (Hiltingbury) is considering joining a MAT. While no requirement exists for a Single Academy Trust (Thornden) to consult to change to a MAT, both governing bodies wish to be transparent and to consult as widely as possible with all of our students, parents, teachers, wider community and stakeholders.

Both governing bodies continue to explore the potential benefits of Thornden and Hiltingbury joining formally within a MAT, while considering any potential disadvantages. Both schools will take feedback and questions before separately making decisions.

During the consultation period, which will take place for 5 weeks from **Thursday 14 February to Friday 22 March 2019**, we will attempt to answer any questions that are raised, adding to the frequently asked questions on both school websites. Both schools will hold a meeting for parents and interested members of the local community to provide as much information as possible and attempt to answer questions that are raised. Meetings will take place at **Hiltingbury Junior School on Tuesday 12 March at 7:00pm** and at **Thornden on Thursday 14 March at 7.00pm**, after which all responses and comments will be formally considered. If a significant number of responses are received, they will be summarised in a report which will be shared via both websites.

Currently both schools are supported by their own governing bodies. If a MAT is established one trust board would have responsibility for the trust, while maintaining local governing bodies with designated responsibilities at school level. There is no intention to make noticeable changes to the day-to-day running of either school. While Academies have additional freedoms, our intention would be to continue to do the things that make our two strong schools stay strong.

The specific advantages of a MAT with both of our schools would be to provide children and young people with a first class education that enables and inspires them to realise their potential within an environment that is committed to working together with enthusiasm, creativity, ambition, reflection and enquiry.

During the consultation period the governing bodies will continue to ask questions and explore all aspects of both schools to ensure that they collectively and separately have all information that is needed to make a decision about whether to proceed.

Please see below a list of frequently asked questions, and details of how to get in contact with further comments of questions. An updated list of frequently asked questions is available on both school websites.

Judith Rutherford  
Chair of Governors, Hiltingbury Junior School

Derek Boden  
Chair of Governors, Thornden School

Roisin Philip  
Headteacher, Hiltingbury Junior School

Su Whelan  
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## **Frequently Asked Questions that are often asked about MATs (Multi Academy Trusts)**

### ***What is an Academy Trust?***

An Academy Trust is a charitable company limited by Guarantee. It receives its funding directly from the Secretary of State rather than via the Local Authority

### ***What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?***

A MAT is formed when two or more academy schools join together as one legal entity.

### ***What is the current status of Thornden and Hiltingbury Junior Schools?***

Thornden has been an academy trust since 2011 and Hiltingbury Junior School is a Hampshire Local Authority school.

### ***Are there different types of academy?***

There are two types of academy – a sponsored academy and a converter academy. A sponsored academy is formerly maintained school that has been transformed to academy status as part of a government intervention strategy. They are consequently run by a Government-approved sponsor. Converter academies are usually high performing or outstanding schools that apply to the government to become academies. Thornden is one of the latter and the proposed new MAT would also be in this category.

### ***How many children are taught in academies?***

We know that over 50% of students in state funded schools are now taught in academies (Damien Hinds 23/1/19).

### ***Why are Hiltingbury Junior School and Thornden School considering this?***

Forming a MAT could enable our schools to work together even more closely with a commitment to do so with enthusiasm, creativity, ambition, reflection and enquiry. This shared ethos and accountability, along with a reduction in bureaucratic barriers, could strengthen transition to support a consistent and enhanced educational experience.

### ***Would one school be taking over the other?***

Both outstanding schools have a unique character and identity and this would be maintained and embraced. Neither school would be 'taking over'; a MAT would be formed which would oversee both schools.

### ***What could this do to the catchment of both schools?***

The schools would retain their own catchment areas and admissions criteria. A student being in Hiltingbury Junior School would not have preference over students from other linked primary schools when it came to admission into Thornden.

### ***Would the students from other primary schools be at a disadvantage?***

No. One of the positive factors in this option is that Thornden could develop even greater insight as to how students are working at the primary stage. Students from all primary schools could then be supported to develop and achieve to the best of their potential. Thornden draws students predominantly from linked schools but also takes individuals who are in a larger number of junior schools.

### ***Can other schools join the MAT?***

At this stage, consideration is being made only to Hiltingbury Junior and Thornden forming a MAT. Logically in the future other schools could consider joining this or any other MAT.

### ***Can the MAT continue to work with the Local Authority?***

Yes. We will have the option to continue to work with Hampshire County Council, and will be able to continue to access services on a contractual basis. Alternatively, the MAT could source services from other providers if this would be in the better interests of the schools and pupils, or if financially it would be better to do so.

### ***What impact would this have on the relationship between Hiltingbury Infant and Junior Schools?***

There is a strong, positive relationship between the two schools which we will maintain and continue to build upon irrespective of any decision to form a MAT. As part of the due diligence work a joint project team between the two schools is looking in detail at all aspects of this area.

### ***How will governance be structured?***

In academies and MATs, the structure includes a group of Members who are similar to shareholders in a company; they can appoint Trustees and amend the Articles of Association. Generally, there are 5 Members. The Trustees are responsible for any academy operating individually or within a MAT (generally 9 Trustees). In a MAT each school will have a Local Governing Body with delegated powers for the specific school. Within the MAT we are proposing, the Local Governing Bodies would retain the strength and involvement one would expect to see in an outstanding school. Both staff and parental representation would be visible on the Local Governing Bodies. The exact structure of Governance would be decided prior to making a formal application.

### ***Autonomy in relation to school leadership?***

The Headteachers and Senior Leaders in each school are best placed to make decisions relating to students and the day to day running of each school. This would not change.

### ***How is funding allocated in a MAT?***

Each student in a school or academy draws a fixed amount based on the area the school is in, the age and phase of the school. Broadly speaking, best practice would see money spent in the area it is designed to go to. The MAT would have the best interests of all of its students and would, therefore, allocate and spend funding in the most appropriate way.

### ***Who employs the staff?***

In an academy/MAT, the staff are employed by the academy rather than the Local Authority. Thornden staff are employed by the academy. When Thornden became an academy, the staff moved from the LA to Thornden through a TUPE process. If a MAT is formed, staff would be employed by the MAT, but as most teachers have a background in an age related area, it is logical they would be linked to one school or the other. The same would apply to many of the non-teaching roles.

### ***Who will own the land?***

MATs/academies lease the land (generally from the Local Authority) on a long term lease (125 years), but the MAT/academies take responsibility and liability for the buildings and maintenance.

### **Contact details for further questions**

If you have comments or questions, please submit them using the contact details below.

[matconsultation@thornden.hants.sch.uk](mailto:matconsultation@thornden.hants.sch.uk)

[matconsultation@hiltingburyjuniorschool.co.uk](mailto:matconsultation@hiltingburyjuniorschool.co.uk)

### **How can I find out more?**

Both school websites have additional information relating to this process.

[https://www.hiltingbury-jun.hants.sch.uk/](https://www.hiltingbury-jun.hants.sch.uk)

<https://www.thornden.hants.sch.uk/>