

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee – 6 September 2016

**Subject:** Academisation of Schools

**Report of:** Director of Education and Skills

---

**Summary**

This report sets out a brief summary of the current position with regards to the academisation of schools in Manchester and considers the implications for the City. It also provides a brief summary of the current status and activities of the Manchester Schools' Alliance

**Recommendations**

The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the contents of the report. This is an information report. There are no additional proposals or recommendations made within the report.

---

**Wards Affected:** All

---

**Contact Officers:**

Name: John Edwards  
Position: Director of Education and Skills  
Telephone: 0161 234 4314  
Email: j.edwards@manchester.gov.uk

**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

None

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Academy schools are a type of state-funded school directly funded by the Department for Education (DfE). A self-governing non-profit charitable trust is responsible either for a single academy (a Single Academy Trust, or SAT) or for several academies (a Multi Academy Trust, or MAT).
- 1.2 The first academies were introduced in the early part of this century, initially as City Academies in areas of significant socio-economic deprivation and educational underachievement; a sponsor (a successful organisation or individual, often from outside the field of education) was required for all academies until 2010.
- 1.3 Since 2010, it has been possible for a local authority maintained school to seek to become an academy through converting its status, a process in which a new charitable trust is formed, usually drawing on the governors of the maintained school. Initially, this opportunity was only available to schools judged outstanding by Ofsted, but more recently the opportunity has been extended to good schools to convert in their own right. Schools that are judged to be less than good can convert through joining an existing academy trust or through being sponsored. The government has directly and through policy changes encouraged schools to become academies.
- 1.4 For some time the DfE has used forced academisation as an intervention tool for school improvement, a process in which an inadequate school is forced to join an existing academy trust as a sponsored academy. Since April of this year, it is now a legal requirement that any maintained school deemed inadequate by Ofsted becomes an academy, and the DfE, through the Regional Schools Commissioners, has the power to issue Warning Notices followed, if deemed appropriate, by Directive Academy Orders to force a change to academy status of underperforming schools.
- 1.5 Alongside the development of academies, the government from 2010 created the opportunity for new schools to be established by groups of parents, teachers, or by existing trusts through the free school process. Such free schools are, in effect, a form of academy.
- 1.6 The previous government also introduced new rules governing the creation of new schools, in which there is a legal presumption that new schools will be academies or free schools. The processes underlying this have changed over time, with all new schools now deemed free schools and created either through the government's national free schools programme (with submissions dates for proposed new schools every six months) or through a local free school presumption process, in which a local authority provides the site and capital for a new school and publishes the opportunity to be its provider; the

local authority can then inform the DfE of its preferred provider and the DfE will make the final decision on the provider for the new school.

- 1.7 All schools operate in an increasingly school-led system, in which the responsibility for improving outcomes rests with individual schools and their providers. Local authorities have statutory responsibility for improving outcomes in maintained schools; the DfE has overall responsibility for improving outcomes in academy schools, exercising this function through its Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) – who have the power to require academies to improve or risk ‘rebrokering’ in which the school is removed from its existing academy trust and is taken over by an alternative academy trust. RSCs also have a range of responsibilities relating to approving expansions and changes in open academies, giving advice to ministers regarding free school approvals and a range of other matters.
- 1.8 In the early years of academisation, there was substantial financial advantage to a school becoming an academy; additional revenue funding was provided (and revenue funding to the local authority reduced) to enable academies to undertake the additional responsibilities associated with the status. More recently, and looking ahead, this financial difference has been reduced to a much lower level.

## **2.0 The White Paper – Educational Excellence Everywhere**

- 2.1 In March this year, the government published a White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere. In a wide ranging paper, a key policy proposal was for all schools to become academies, with an expectation that all remaining maintained schools would be on a clear pathway to becoming an academy by 2020 and would have changed status by 2022.
- 2.2 Subsequently, in May, the government published ‘next steps’ for the White Paper, in which it reiterated its commitment to a fully academised school system by 2022, but stated that it would not seek legislation to enable forced academisation of successful schools. However, the government did suggest that it would seek an approach in which it had the power to force all schools in a local authority area to become academies where either the performance of maintained schools was weak or where the proportion of maintained schools was too low for the local authority to be able effectively to maintain them. Further clarity on these conditions has yet to emerge, and with a new education secretary appointed since these announcements, the direction of travel in this policy area remains unclear.

## **3.0 Academies in Manchester**

- 3.1 Manchester City Council sought to work proactively with the academies agenda from its inception, linked initially to investment in new school buildings

and the creation of strong partnerships with key business sectors through the Manchester Model Academies programme. Subsequently, in the early part of the last government, a small number of schools in the City became academies following intervention by the DfE where they were deemed to be substantially underperforming; this process introduced a small number of national and regional academy trusts to the City.

- 3.2 More recently, the Council has been proactive in a number of situations where schools deemed inadequate were required to be sponsored by a successful trust; this approach has led to the creation (through initial conversion of a successful school) of a number of locally-based trusts, based around one or more successful Manchester schools, which have been able to fulfil a key role in keeping as many academies as possible in the City governed locally and with a focus on successful outcomes for the City's children and young people.
- 3.3 A number of schools in Manchester have also taken advantage of the opportunity to convert voluntarily to academy status. To date, no schools within the Catholic Diocese of Salford have converted to academy status, although the Diocese has indicated a change in its position with regard to academies. The Dioceses of Manchester and Shrewsbury have adopted a case by case approach to academisation.
- 3.4 As more schools have become academies, and in response to financial pressures and the opportunities created by groups of schools working together in structured partnerships to create school improvement capacity, more schools have considered forming or joining MATs. Whilst many of the advantages of structured groups can be achieved through non-academised models (such as federations), the government's preference for schools to become academies and the presence in the City of a significant number of academies already established, has led to some schools planning to form or join MATs in the near future. The government has presented to schools nationally a number of challenges with regard to the future size and geographical scope of MATs; with their direct relationship to the RSC, their role is significant and there is a great deal of work to be done locally and nationally if the system is to progress over time to a series of structured groups of schools, many of them MATs, with responsibility for school improvement.
- 3.5 The position expected from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 with regard to academies and maintained schools in Manchester is as follows:

Type	All-through	Nursery	Primary	PRU	Secondary	Special
Academy	1		30		19	2
Community	1	2	45	2		11
Foundation			2		1	
Free School			5		1	
Voluntary Aided			39		5	
Voluntary Controlled			13			
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>13</b>

Type	% of Y0 Places 16/17	% of Y7 Places 16/17
Academy	26.91%	72.45%
Community	38.15%	4.71%
Foundation	2.01%	6.80%
Free School	3.21%	0.00%
Voluntary Aided	21.08%	16.04%
Voluntary Controlled	8.63%	0.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

With approximately 42% of pupils in Manchester attending an academy, Manchester has one of the highest proportions of academisation in the North West.

#### 4.0 The implications for the City Council

- 4.1 As noted above, the Council has sought throughout the development of the academies agenda to take a pragmatic approach focussed on achieving the best outcomes for children and young people in the City.
- 4.2 During 2013, the City Council worked closely with headteachers to establish the Manchester Schools' Alliance and create the Strategic Education Partnership Board. These arrangements have continued since, creating a focus across the City on a single school system in which, despite the legal differences between schools of different types, all schools are part of a single family of schools serving the City. The Council has sustained capacity for maintaining relationships, including a focus on the quality of provision, with all schools regardless of status and this has resulted in strong partnership

approaches to a number of key challenges facing the school system in the City, including the need to expand to meet the growing population of the City.

- 4.3 Most recently, this has included proactive conversations with MATs operating in the City, to understand their intentions for the future with regard to expansion, including applying to open new schools through the free school process or a free school presumption, capacity to sponsor schools and openness to additional schools joining the MAT, governance arrangements and the development of school improvement capacity. Such discussions will enable information to be shared in the form of an information booklet with all schools to ensure that they have as full an understanding as possible of the current position in the City.
- 4.4 It has also been important for the Council to develop the working relationship with the DfE, particularly through the RSC. To fulfil its statutory duties with regard to outcomes for children and young people and ensuring a sufficiency of school places the Council is significantly dependent on the decisions made by the RSC regarding improvement and capacity. This interdependency is continuing to evolve, and the Council will continue to develop strong relationships with the RSC and her office to support the development of provision in the City.
- 4.5 In July 2016, the City Council passed a motion opposing the forced academisation of successful schools, and stating that Good or Outstanding schools should be allowed to determine their own future.

## **5.0 The Manchester Schools' Alliance**

- 5.1 As noted above, the Manchester Schools' Alliance (MSA) was formed in 2013 as a school-led partnership for all schools in the City, with the City Council as a member of the partnership. Subsequently, the Alliance has become established as an independent legal entity and acts as an umbrella organisation for headteacher and other school partnerships in the City. The majority of schools are formally members of the Alliance and this includes maintained schools, free schools and academies.
- 5.2 The MSA has been very active in a number of areas in support of improving capacity and outcomes in the school system in the City. These include:
- working with the DfE to ensure headteachers can engage directly with key officials
  - developing a programme for school governors in partnership with City Council and the Manchester Governors' Association
  - holding conferences for headteachers focussed on key priorities for improvement (eg reading)
  - working to support its Teaching School Alliance: Teach Manchester has established, including in partnership with the other locally based teaching

school alliance, a range of capacities and approaches in support of school improvement and the development of the current and future teacher workforce - engaging directly on behalf of schools in strategic discussions across the City on a range of key topics, including safeguarding in schools

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 At a time of considerable change within the schools system nationally and locally, the City Council has sought, including through the Manchester Schools' Alliance, to maintain a focus on the key priorities of securing sufficient high quality school places for all the children and young people of the City and securing improving outcomes to secure future success and prosperity for the children and young people of the City. Working with the developing academy school system has been, and will remain, central to achieving these goals.