



Burford School and the Marlow Education Trust

FAQs re: Finance

Does this mean Burford is not in a stable financial position?

We don't believe there are many schools in the country that are in a good financial position at the moment. There are national issues with school funding not keeping pace with rising costs, and we also have the problem of falling birth rates in the area (fewer pupils equals less money). Burford is not alone: all the local schools will be facing the same financial challenges. But thanks to prudent financial management over the last few years we are in a better position than some schools will be. Our exploration of the possibility of joining a multi-academy trust has not been driven by financial concerns; our focus is more on the opportunities for school improvement enabled by close collaboration with local schools.

Would the school be better off financially as part of the MET?

Our detailed financial discussions with the MET during due diligence lead us to believe that we *would* be better off. We would receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as we do currently. At the moment, a percentage of that funding goes to the Local Authority (the 'top slice'). We also have to pay the LA out of our remaining budget for some services such as HR, Finance and School Improvement support. If we became an academy, a similar 'top slice' would go to the MET instead of to the LA, but that would cover all of the central services including the ones that we currently pay for separately. Becoming an academy would also open up additional capital funding opportunities for us to explore. In the future, there is the potential for further financial efficiencies as the MET continues to grow, through the sharing of more services and resources across more schools.

What are the expected financial savings or efficiencies, and how would they be reinvested into the school?

As noted above, we believe we would be slightly better off financially. But school budgets nationally will continue to be challenging so it would just help us to stay afloat rather than leaving us with lots of surplus cash.

What is the 'top slice' that the MET would take, as a percentage of our budget?

It's not possible to make a direct comparison between the MET's top slice and the top slice currently taken by the LA, as the LA do not share this information. It's also difficult to compare top slices charged by different multi-academy trusts, as the number and quality of central services provided differs. As a percentage, the MET's top slice is relatively high, but we believe it offers good value for money for the comprehensive central services we would receive. The MET would also only take the

top slice from our 'basic entitlement'. This differs from most other MATs, who take a top slice of the whole of the school's General Annual Grant (GAG).

What services would we receive in return for any top slicing? Are these services we would normally choose to purchase?

The top slice would pay for the following MET central services: HR, Finance, IT, Estates management, School improvement, online CPD, Audit, GDPR support and Governance clerking. (You can see more details in the MET's [Core Offer](#).) At the moment, we pay for most of those services ourselves from our school budget. The only MET central services that we do not currently choose to purchase are Audit and GDPR support. The MET believes that their central services are superior to those of the LA in terms of quality and responsiveness.

Would the MET make a profit from the school?

No. Academy trusts are charities, and any surplus or other income must be used to benefit pupils.

Would any current financial reserves be protected? Would we retain the funds we have worked hard to build up?

As with most MATs, the MET operates a reserves policy: all schools are required to hold reserves which is the higher of one month's staffing cost or 5% of their General Annual Grant (GAG). Any surplus left after meeting the reserves policy would be retained by Burford.

Are there any upfront costs or risks in transitioning into the MET?

As noted above, we would have to put some money into the MET's central reserves. This is affordable within our current finances. And the reserves exist to support the schools in the Trust.

Would our school retain control over its own budget? Who would have the final sign-off on spending decisions?

We would lose a degree of autonomy in this area. At the moment, the Burford Governors have final sign-off on significant spending decisions. If we joined, it would be the MET who would make those decisions instead. But to balance that we would have slightly more money than we do currently and we would also receive a higher level of expert advice and support with managing our finances than we currently get from the LA.

How would Burford ensure that all of the money allocated to it is spent on Burford and not on the other schools within the MET? / How is funding allocated across the Trust? Are

funds ever redistributed between schools? If so, what is the process for making those decisions and would we be consulted? / If schools with falling rolls or financial difficulty join the MAT, would stronger schools like ours be expected to provide support? For example, would our surplus be used to cover a deficit elsewhere? What financial support or risk-sharing arrangements are in place if a school in the MET requires significant investment or falls into deficit?

Our budget would be ours, and it would not be possible for part of it to be allocated to another school. The DfE would pay our funding directly to the MET, they would take their top slice for central services, and the rest would go straight to Burford. However, as noted above, all schools have to meet the MET's reserves policy, and these reserves are pooled and are available to support schools in their development. The reserves are not ring-fenced for each individual school, and should a school require investment or fall into deficit then the reserves could be used at the discretion of the MET Trustees. If significant investment is needed for capital projects (i.e. involving physical assets such as the school buildings or equipment), academies can request additional funding from the government via the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF).

Would the funds raised by Friends of Burford be spread across the other schools?

No. Any funds raised by FoB or other school fundraising would continue to go into our Voluntary School Fund and could only be used for Burford.

What is the current financial situation of the MET? / Have Burford governors and SLT been given access to recent audits and financial reports for all schools in the trust, including those with low pupil numbers such as Beechview?

This has been discussed with the MET during due diligence; they have shared their financial details and we have assurance that they are in a comfortable position. We cannot share the details publicly, but the MET's accounts for years ending '21, '22, '23 and '24 are available on the [MET website](#), and these include financial reports for Beechview and Borlase. (GMS's most recent financial reports are available on the GMS website, as they only joined the MET in June 2025.) MATs are subject to considerable financial scrutiny; they are subject to external audits every year and they also have to do termly internal audits.

Are any of the academies in the trust currently in deficit? If so, how is the Trust managing that?

This has been discussed with the MET during due diligence, and we have been assured that any deficit for a school currently in the MET would not have a negative impact on any other schools.

What is the MET's long-term financial plan for schools with low pupil numbers and limited income? How is long-term viability managed without placing pressure on other schools?

It is the responsibility of the Trustees to ensure that the 'public purse' is managed with diligence and competence. In the event that a school was unlikely to recover then the Trust would have to make decisions that may historically have not been made at a Local Authority level.

Have either Borlase or Beechview had to make any redundancies in the last few years?

No.