



Taking the Next Step: Considering forming or joining a group of schools

Guidance at a glance

This updated guidance is for senior leaders, trustees and governors of local authority-maintained schools and single academy trusts in England as they consider the future of their school in a system likely to consist largely of academies in multi-academy trusts (MATs). It is designed to help school leaders, trustees and governors better understand the current policy landscape, to consider their options, and to make the best long-term decision for their school.

This paper links to two other guidance papers: *Taking the Next Step: Joining a multi-academy trust* and *Taking the Next Step: Forming a multi-academy trust*.

This paper will look in more detail at the following:

Section 1 Overview

Section 2 The benefits of collaboration

Section 3 The current picture

Section 4 Structures and terminology

Section 5 Leadership and governance in academy trusts

Section 6 Lessons so far

Section 7 How can we make the right decision for our school?

Section 8 What happens next?

Section 9 Additional considerations for existing academy trusts: growth and mergers

Section 10 Additional help and further information

1 Overview

The national context for schools in England continues to change at a rapid pace. As more schools convert to academy status, the role that local authorities play in providing school improvement and other services is decreasing, and schools are increasingly looking to each other for support and challenge.

At the same time, many MATs are looking to grow in order to provide more services and support to their schools. We are therefore experiencing a period where not only are maintained schools joining MATs to provide stability and support, but single academy trusts and MATs are also actively seeking to merge with other similar organisations.

In the three years since this guidance was first published, the political landscape has shifted significantly. The concept of compulsory academisation of all schools, as proposed in the abandoned white paper *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, is now long forgotten. The Government's emphasis now appears to be on encouraging schools to decide on the academy route as a positive way of entering into formal partnerships.

This was first signalled in a speech given by the Secretary of State, Damian Hinds, soon after his appointment, in which he confirmed his belief that becoming an academy in a MAT can bring benefits to schools and their pupils. These benefits come about, he said as a result of working collaboratively and driving improvements. He used this speech to confirm, however, that the Government would no longer be forcing schools to become academies unless they had received an Ofsted Inadequate judgement.

Despite this relaxation of pressure, schools continue to convert at pace, in most cases actively choosing this route because they believe it is the best way to secure their long-term future. The current numbers of academies and MATs, and the size of those MATs can be found on the DfE's [website](#).

2 The benefits of collaboration

Although there is no clear evidence to suggest that academisation in itself leads to better outcomes for children and young people, there is an increasing body of evidence which indicates that formal collaborations between schools can bring substantial benefits, particularly those in federations or MATs where collaboration is consolidated through cross-school governance arrangements and shared accountability. These include the following:

- Shared accountability can lead to better progress and attainment for pupils, and help schools meet rising expectations.
- School leaders and teachers can share thinking and planning to spread expertise and tackle challenges together.
- Governors and trustees can work more strategically, especially during challenging times.
- School leaders, teachers and other staff can be shared across more than one school, enabling schools to find different solutions to recruitment challenges, to retain staff by providing new opportunities within the group, and to plan succession more effectively.
- Groups of schools can find it easier to find and fund specialist expertise (both specialist teachers and specialists in areas such as data analysis, finance, health and safety), and provide richer curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- Shared professional development can more easily be arranged, whether led by staff from one of the partner schools or an outside body.

3 | Taking the Next Step: Considering forming or joining a group of schools

- The economies of scale through group business management and collective purchasing made possible within larger groups can help schools cope better with shrinking budgets.

3 The current picture

The number of single academy trusts is reducing as the sector matures. Increasing numbers of standalone trusts are becoming MATs by taking on more schools or merging with other trusts.

The MAT sector is currently dominated by smaller MATs (of two to five schools). However, the picture is changing as these groups grow. The percentage of medium-sized MATs (of six to twenty schools) is increasing as trusts realise the potential to make savings and benefit from the collective resources of groups of this size.

4 Structures and terminology

The language used to describe different school types, forms of collaboration and bodies with an oversight role in the state sector in England can be confusing. This section sets out to define these terms, before moving on to consider specific collaborative models.

Types of school

Maintained schools are overseen, or 'maintained', by the local authority (LA). Maintained schools must follow the National Curriculum and national teacher pay and conditions. There are four main types of maintained school:

- **Community schools:** the LA (through the school's governing body) employs the staff, owns the land and buildings and determines the admissions arrangements.
- **Foundation or trust schools:** the governing body employs the staff and sets admissions criteria. The land and buildings are usually owned by the governing body or a charity.
- **Voluntary-aided (VA) schools:** set up and owned by a voluntary board, usually a church board, largely financed by the LA. The governing board employs the staff and controls pupil admissions and religious education. The school's buildings and land (apart from playing fields) will normally be owned by a diocese or charitable foundation.
- **Voluntary-controlled (VC) schools:** nearly all VC schools are Church of England (CofE) schools. They are funded and run by the LA. The LA employs the staff and sets admissions criteria. The CofE may own some of the land and buildings, and usually forms a quarter of the governing body.

Academies are publicly-funded schools, independent of the LA, and held accountable through a legally binding funding agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). Staff are employed by the academy trust. Academies have more control over curriculum design and staff pay and conditions. There are three different routes to becoming an academy:

- 1 **Sponsored academies:** Underperforming maintained schools taken out of LA oversight and given to an academy sponsor to provide support in improving pupil achievement and attainment. The first academies were all sponsored academies. Examples of sponsors include other schools, universities, businesses, individuals, charities and faith communities. While early sponsors were initially asked to provide schools with financial support, the role is now primarily based on providing school improvement support.
- 2 **Converter academies:** These are schools deemed by the DfE as performing sufficiently well that they can choose to opt out of LA oversight and become an academy (usually now as part of a MAT, as single academy trusts are now discouraged).

4 | Taking the Next Step: Considering forming or joining a group of schools

- Free schools:** Free schools are essentially new academies, and this is now the only way in which new schools can be created. Free schools can be set up by groups such as charities (including MATs), universities, community and faith groups, parents or businesses. Sometimes these groups are invited to tender to set up a new school by a LA as a way of meeting the need for more school places in their area.

Types of collaboration

Federations

A federation is where a number of maintained schools come together with formalised cross-school governance under one governing body. Historically, the term ‘hard federation’ has sometimes been used for groups with a formalized single governing body, and ‘soft federation’ for more informal partnerships in which schools retain separate governing bodies. The legal definition of a federation is based on the former, where “at least two governing bodies propose to federate”, thus forming one governing body.

Federations have much in common with MATs. Indeed, much of the existing research showing the benefits of formal collaboration is based on the advantages of being part of a small and local federation. The main differences are that federations don't need to be set up as charitable companies, and they continue to be overseen by their LA. While the government preference is clearly for schools to join in formal partnership as part of a MAT, federation continues to be a valid option for maintained schools wishing to come together.

Joining or forming a MAT can seem like a huge challenge for schools, especially where they have not previously worked in close collaboration with other schools and are anxious about formal collaboration. Schools can potentially access the benefits of a formalised group by federating before they take the more complicated and permanent step of converting to academy status and either forming or joining a MAT. This can enable governors and school leaders to focus on forming relationships between schools without having to focus on the legal costs and pressures of forming a MAT.

This approach will not necessarily be right for everyone, and the government continues to support the creation and development of academies within MATs as their preferred way of promoting school improvement and stability. For this reason, the rest of this paper concentrates on MATs. School leaders and governors wishing to find out more about federation can do so via the in-depth guidance contained in the NGA 2016 Federations Q&A in the Federations section of the NGA Guidance Centre.

Multi-academy trusts

Academies can operate as standalone schools (known as single academy trusts or SATs), or as part of a group of academies within a MAT. In either case, the academy trust is a charitable company (of a particular type, known as an ‘exempt charity’ as they are not registered by the Charities Commission), which enters into a legally binding agreement (called a funding agreement) with the DfE to run the school(s).

It is important to recognise that, although a MAT is responsible for more than one school, it is a single organisation. Being part of a MAT therefore brings an intrinsic change to the accountability structure of its individual schools which, despite retaining their own DfE number, no longer exist as an individual legal entity.

Academies are accountable to their trust board, which is in turn accountable to the Secretary of State for Education. This oversight is exercised through the National Schools Commissioner and eight Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs).

The RSCs' responsibilities include taking action when an academy is underperforming, making recommendations to the DfE on new free school applications and brokering agreements between underperforming maintained schools and academy sponsors.

5 Leadership and governance in academy trusts

As charitable companies, academy trusts, whether SATs or MATs, are required to agree and abide by memorandum and articles of association based on a model prepared by the DfE. These are legal documents that set out the governance composition and procedures for the trust.

Academy trusts are required to have at least two groups of people to govern the trust (members and trustees) and an executive leader. Some also choose to create additional committees to focus on specific issues or schools.

This section should be read in conjunction with the *Academies Financial Handbook*, which sets out in more detail the financial framework for academy trusts, reflecting their status as companies, charities and public bodies.

The members of the trust

When the trust is established, the signatories to the memorandum are the first members of the trust (usually there will be between three and five members). The role of members is significant, as they act as the guardians of the governance of the trust. They are responsible for agreeing the trust's first articles of association and approving any future changes. They are usually able to appoint and remove trustees.

The members will, in a hands-off manner, monitor the work of the trust (including through reviewing its yearly audited accounts and annual report). If the trust is underperforming, and therefore not fulfilling its purpose, the members may choose to appoint different or additional trustees.

Whilst members are allowed also to be trustees, the numbers that take on both roles should be limited to deliver clear differentiation between these two distinct layers of governance. This separation of powers is an important part of the objectivity of the group, to avoid power becoming concentrated in the hands of a small number of people.

The board of trustees

The board of trustees is the accountable body of the trust and is responsible for the conduct and standards of all the schools within it. Trustees are both charity trustees and company directors, and have responsibilities arising from each of these roles.

The board must fulfil the following three core governance functions, as described in the *Governance Handbook*:

- 1 Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- 2 Hold the executive to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff.
- 3 Oversee the financial performance of the organisation and make sure its money is well spent.

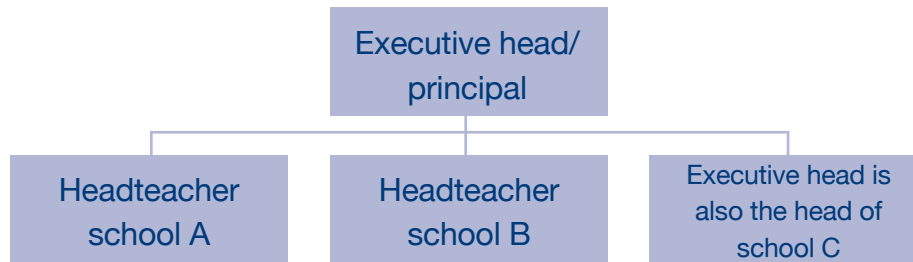
The senior executive leader

The *Academies Financial Handbook* makes it clear that all academy trusts must have a senior executive leader, and that this should be a permanent role, not a rotating one (ie proposals for models in which, for example, leaders in the trust each take on the role of senior executive leader for a year at a time will not be approved). This person should also be nominated as the trust's 'accounting officer', a role which includes personal responsibility for the financial resources under the trust's control.

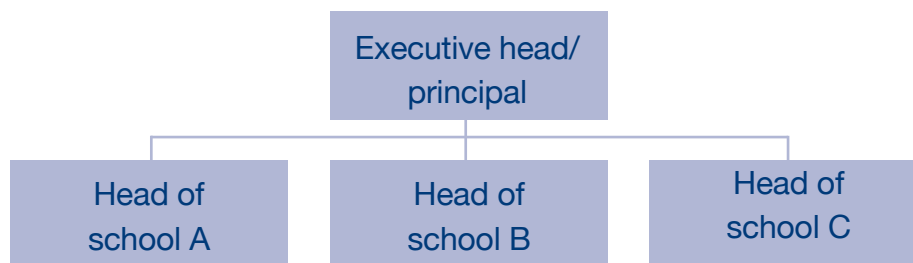
6 | Taking the Next Step: Considering forming or joining a group of schools

This is relatively straightforward in single academy trusts. Most of these, like most maintained schools, have a single headteacher or principal supported by a senior leadership team.

Within the parameters set out above, MATs can adopt a number of different leadership structures. In a small MAT, for example, the senior executive leader can retain the role of substantive head of one of the schools alongside their role as CEO or executive head of the trust:



In other situations, the senior executive leader may be the substantive head of all the schools in the MAT, with day-to-day responsibility delegated to heads of school:



The RSCs will want to be sure that the proposed approach to leadership demonstrates robust oversight and clear lines of accountability.

Committees

Academy trusts may choose to establish additional committees to support the main board, and to which they can delegate some functions. There are two main types of committee:

- Board-level committees (which focus on issues such as standards or resources across the trust as a whole).
- School-based committees (which focus on issues specific to an individual academy).

MATs with an annual income over £50 million must have a dedicated audit committee at board level (smaller MATs may choose to include the functions of an audit committee within another committee).

School-based committees are often known as local governing bodies, but they do not govern in the way that maintained school governors do because they are committees of the main board, rather than governing bodies in their own right. In the models 1 to 4 which follow this section, we refer to such committees as ‘academy committees’.

All MATs are required to produce and publish a ‘scheme of delegation’ which outlines what decisions are taken by whom, and at what level of the organisation.

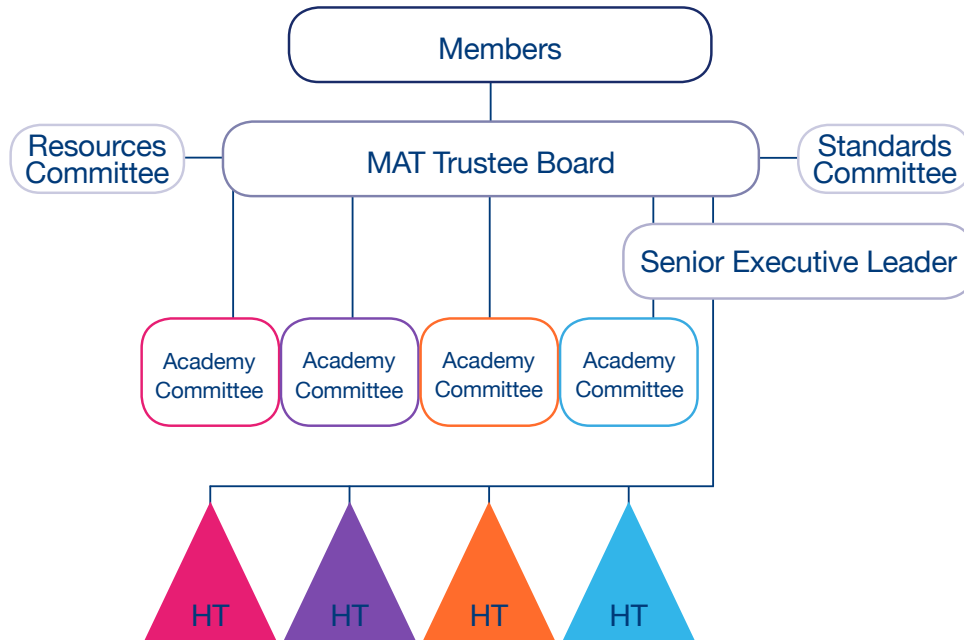
Leadership and governance models

The National Governance Association has produced the following model leadership and governance structures, which schools might find useful. These are by no means exhaustive, but demonstrate some common approaches. Any scheme should be adapted for your own situation.

7 | Taking the Next Step: Considering forming or joining a group of schools

In every case, the responsibility for the actual performance of all the academies within the trust is delegated to the senior executive leader. However, it is important to remember that, while responsibility has been delegated, the board of trustees remains accountable for the trust's overall performance. The senior executive leader of the trust, whether called a CEO or an executive head, is therefore managed by the chair of the trust, and held to account by the trust board.

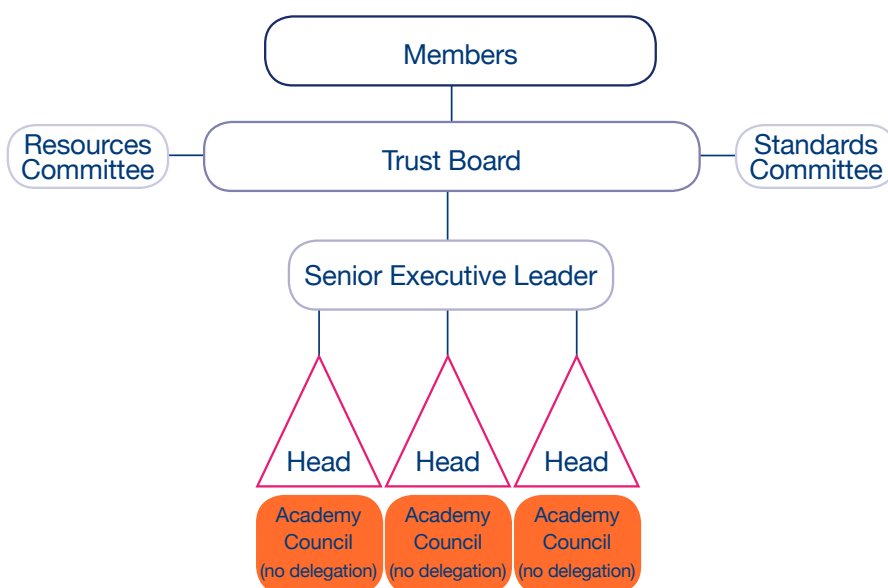
Model leadership and governance structure 1



In this model the board of trustees has established board-level committees which focus on standards and resources across the trust as a whole. They have also chosen to delegate some functions to academy committees. These functions may include panel work (eg reviewing exclusions), monitoring the implementation of policies, monitoring standards and budgets, being consulted on trust-wide issues and feeding back to the trust on local issues.

The senior executive leader, here called the Chief Executive Officer, line manages the headteachers of each school.

Model leadership and governance structure 2

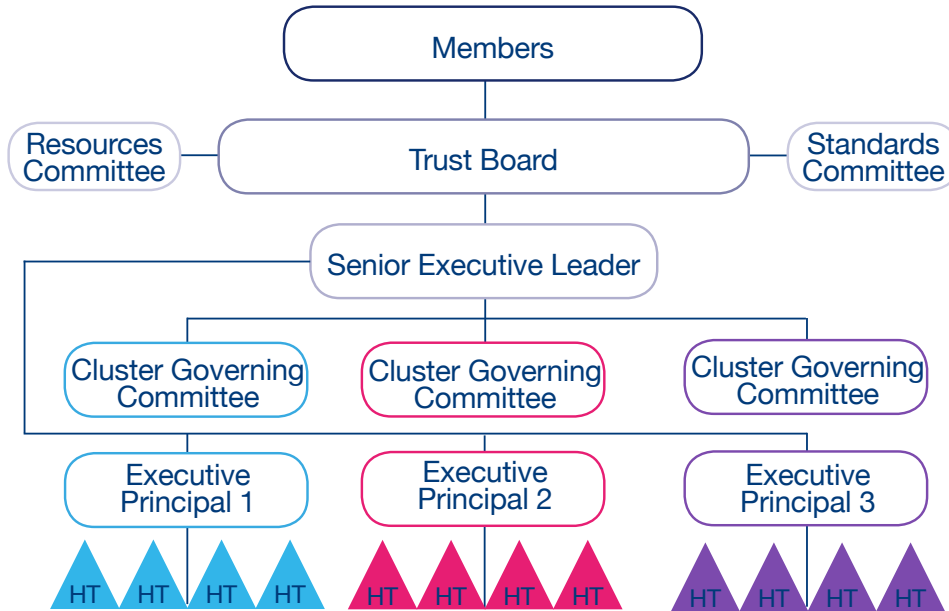


8 | Taking the Next Step: Considering forming or joining a group of schools

In this model, the board has chosen to establish school-level advisory councils, rather than academy committees. As the name suggests, these councils are wholly advisory, with their role focused on monitoring, although they may influence decision-making by acting as the eyes and ears of the school community.

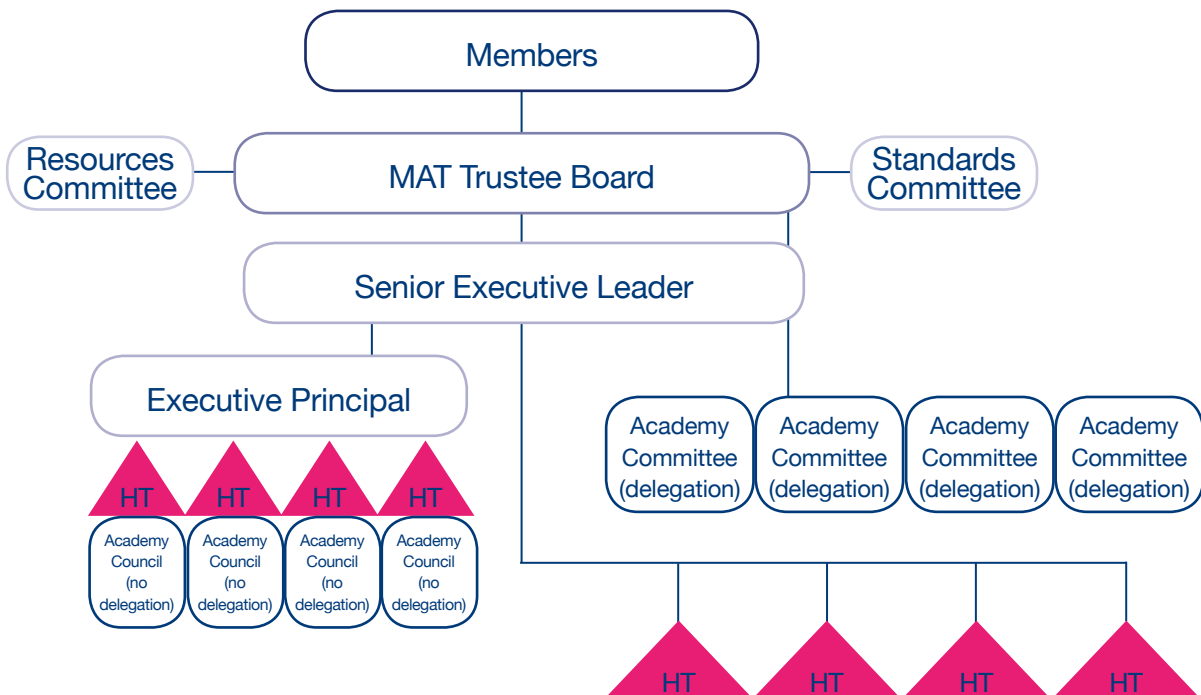
As in Model 1, headteachers are line-managed by the CEO.

Model leadership and governance structure 3



In this model, for larger MATs, some of the governance functions (as described in Model 1) are delegated to a regional or cluster committee. Executive principals have been appointed to lead each cluster. The headteachers of each school report to one of the executive principals, and the executive principals to the CEO.

Model leadership and governance structure 4



9 | Taking the Next Step: Considering forming or joining a group of schools

It is also possible (and often desirable) to have different approaches to schools within a group, as shown in model 4. This provides an opportunity for the board of trustees to delegate more decision-making to high-performing schools than to struggling schools (sometimes referred to as an 'earned autonomy' or 'asymmetrical local governance' model).

In this example, the trust has been divided into two groups of schools. The schools in the group on the left have less delegated decision-making authority, with headteachers reporting to an executive principal and advisory boards with no delegated school-level governance functions. The schools in the group on the right have more delegated decision-making authority, with headteachers potentially reporting directly to the CEO, and local governing committees to which some functions have been delegated.

It is advisable not to have too many different variations within a group; more than two different approaches are likely to lead to confusion and an unhelpful lack of clarity.

6 Lessons so far

While there is no 'one size fits all' model for MATs, there is a growing body of evidence around how the most effective MATs operate. Each of these will be explored in more detail in the linked guidance papers [Taking the next step: joining a multi-academy trust](#) and [Taking the next step: forming a multi-academy trust](#). However, drawing on this evidence and our own experience of working with MATs, the following characteristics emerge:

Vision, ethos and strategic plan

Successful MATs have:

- a shared ethos and vision, which is focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for the children and young people in the MAT as a whole. This vision is clearly understood by, and embodied within, the schools in the trust. The main focus of the board of trustees is on the outcomes for pupils across the MAT
- a clear strategy for delivering their vision. Any growth is in line with this plan, with carefully planned expansion taking into account capacity based not just on the number of schools, but primarily on the number of pupils within the trust
- a limited number of non-negotiables (these may relate, for example, to floor standards or aspects of behaviour) that are understood by all
- a culture of continuous review, adapting their strategy as events demand, recognising that they are part of an evolving system and seeing adaption not as failure but as a timely response to change in context and an opportunity to move on from outdated and ineffective structures and ways of working
- the ability to recognise that their trust is part of a wider local and national education system, and a commitment to working for the good of all pupils, not just those in their schools

Diversity and geography

Successful MATs have:

- a diverse group of schools. While there are examples of successful groups which specialise in particular types of schools, many MATs benefit from the experience and opportunity afforded by including both primary and secondary schools, special schools, schools with different socio-economic intakes, as just some of many possibilities

- considered carefully the time and distance between schools. There is evidence to suggest that groups of schools within close geographical proximity are able to more effectively utilise the benefits of collaboration such as sharing staff and enabling staff to move between schools. Smaller MATs can achieve this by focusing exclusively on a particular area; larger MATs will often build local 'hubs' of geographically close schools, with a designated layer of governance and oversight

The right people with the right skills in the right roles

Successful MATs have:

- diverse trustee boards with a range of skills, experience and views, the time and attitude to govern well and a commitment to self-development
- a clear understanding of the significant differences between governing a maintained school and governing an academy trust
- appointed trustees and executive leaders with expertise in finance and commerce
- a clear leadership structure, understood by all, with a single point of accountability and strong, distributed leadership below the senior executive leader
- a strong commitment to developing staff, using the benefits of being part of a larger group to talent-spot individuals, move staff around schools within the group and retain strong staff through providing ongoing opportunities. There is a clear succession plan for the key posts within the MAT

School improvement and support

Successful MATs have:

- a trust-wide school improvement strategy that recognises, in a timely manner, the different interventions needed by schools at different stages on the improvement journey
- a systematic programme of school-to-school support that is focused on the needs of individual academies and which is quality assured for both quality and impact

Accountability

Successful MATs have:

- a clear framework for governance that makes the responsibilities of the members, the trust board, the executive leader and any academy committees explicit
- clear performance management arrangements that ensure all staff understand how their role contributes towards how the trust achieves its vision, and are held to account accordingly
- a real commitment to transparency and to building a culture of openness

Risk management

Successful MATs have:

- clear quality assurance systems which improve consistency and performance
- a board which manages risk effectively, and balances risk and opportunity appropriately and effectively

Communication

Successful MATs have:

- clear communication pathways between all parties which contribute to the sense of shared endeavour and responsibility

7 How can we make the right decision for our school?

Whether to convert to academy status, to form or join a MAT or federation and, if so, with whom, are big decisions for any school governing board. And they are decisions that, once implemented, are either impossible or very difficult to reverse. There is no mechanism for an academy to revert to being a maintained school again, and moving from one MAT to another (generally known as re-brokering) is currently only possible if the RSC agrees.

The path to the right decision will be different for every school. Our work with hundreds of schools that have embarked on this journey, however, suggests that a process along the following lines can help to scaffold decision-making. Your discussions will undoubtedly be less linear and more iterative than this process implies, but most schools find the overall structure helpful.

Step 1: Horizon-scan: make time to discuss the changing landscape and the implications for your school at a full governing board meeting

Some trustees and governors will undoubtedly be more familiar with education policy and research than others. You might find it useful to share some of the information in this paper with the board in advance. Questions you might want to explore in the meeting include:

- What is our vision for our school?
- What will be our biggest challenges in delivering that vision over the next few years?
- How is this likely to be impacted by our funding?
- Might partnering with other schools help?
- What opportunities might this create?
- What concerns do we have about this?
- What might happen if we did nothing?
- Are there other local schools that we might like to work more closely with, or existing MATs that we might consider joining?
- What restrictions might there be on our school partnering with others?

Step 2: Set up a working group of interested governors and staff to explore possibilities

This group can:

- research and identify different options open to you
- consider the pros and cons of these options
- consult bodies with authority over your school, such as your LA and, for schools with a religious character, your diocese
- meet potential partners, discuss whether they might be interested in partnering with you and, if appropriate, start to consider what a partnership might look like
- consult informally with key stakeholders, including staff, pupils, parents and the wider community, to explore their views on possible options

You may wish to include your business manager in this group to provide input on how the 'business' of managing a school will change.

Step 3: Convene a full governing board meeting for the working group to report back on its work and to agree your preferred way forward

The agenda might include:

- a presentation of the group's findings, followed by an opportunity for questions
- a recommendation on the way forward, with an explanation of the likely implications for pupils, parents, staff and governors
- an explanation of why the group thinks this would be the best decision for your school
- time for discussion and debate

If possible, end the meeting with an agreement on the preferred option and next steps, with a clearly defined timeframe.

8 What happens next?

There are a number of likely outcomes of this decision-making process, depending on whether you decide that becoming an academy is the right path for your school.

You might decide to:

- 1 stay as you are for now, see how things develop in your area, and revisit the discussion later
- 2 work more closely with other like-minded schools, with a view to possibly partnering with them at some point in the future
- 3 look to create some form of partnership arrangement with other schools, reinforced by a Memorandum of Understanding. Such partnerships are explored more fully in **recent guidance** from the DfE.
- 4 seek to convert to academy status (if you're currently a maintained school) and join an existing MAT
- 5 seek to convert to academy status (if you're currently a maintained school) and set up a new MAT with other schools. Note, it is now unlikely that a maintained school will obtain permission from the RSC to create a single academy trust
- 6 seek to convert to academy status (if you're currently a maintained school) and set up an 'empty' or 'shadow' MAT on your own, with the potential to sponsor other schools or invite other schools to join it later. Again, this option is now less likely to be approved as it resembles a single academy trust

The final decision on whether a school will be permitted to undertake any of options 4 to 6 above will be taken by your Regional Schools Commissioner. It's worth bearing in mind that they won't approve all applications, and that, as noted above, new single academy trusts or 'empty' MATs are now rarely being approved.

All proposals to create new MATs will be considered very carefully by the RSC teams. There is now a large number of MATs already in existence, and there is a preference towards building capacity in these MATs rather than creating new ones. RSCs will take many factors into account when making a decision, and there are no set criteria used to do so. The following observations may, however, be helpful.

Performance

A school in an Ofsted category below 'good', or which has performance below the floor standard (while this measure still exists), should carefully consider the performance of any proposed partner schools or trusts. If a school in this position plans to join an existing MAT or form a new MAT with other schools, the RSC will want

to feel confident in the capacity of that MAT to support the school to improve. In some cases, the RSC may direct an underperforming school to join a particular MAT, or be sponsored by a particular sponsor, though they should always be willing to listen to a compelling alternative proposal.

Size

Small schools wishing to form a MAT together should consider the viability of any proposals and the likelihood of acceptance by the RSC. MATs with fewer than 1200 pupils are unlikely to be viewed as sustainable in the long term by the RSC.

Finances

Schools with a current or predicted deficit budget, or which are deemed lacking in financial expertise, will need to talk to their RSC about how they can form or join a MAT in a way which is fair both to them and to their new partners. The RSC will expect to see a credible recovery plan to address the deficit before approving the proposed change.

Religious character

The DfE has agreed memoranda of understanding¹² with both the Church of England and the Catholic Church which determine what options are available to schools with these religious characters. These documents include a great deal of detail, but the main message is that, in the vast majority of cases, Catholic schools will only be permitted to form or join Catholic-led trusts, and CofE schools will only be permitted to form or join trusts “with governance arrangements that reflect, at member and director level, no dilution of the level of church governance and involvement as it was immediately prior to conversion”. In most cases, for voluntary controlled CofE schools wishing to join MATs, this means the church will require a minimum of 25% representation among the MAT’s members and trustees. It is expected that voluntary aided CofE schools will usually join church-led MATs.

9 Additional considerations for existing academy trusts: growth and mergers

Just as maintained schools are considering their next steps in terms of collaboration and partnering opportunities, so too are existing academy trusts, both SATs and MATs. The current climate is as challenging for academies as for maintained schools, and the benefits of formal collaboration with other organisations are apparent to many small trusts. Here, the opportunities include loose partnering agreements, growing organically by adding schools incrementally, or deciding to merge with other trusts.

Each trust’s own motivation and objectives for growth will depend on individual circumstance, but typical drivers will include:

- financial considerations - the benefits of being part of a larger organisation, able to smooth out funding issues and collectively able to fund provision of services that a smaller entity would struggle to afford
- collective expertise and experience – adding significant capacity across the schools and thereby enabling the larger trust to benefit from a greater pool of expertise and capacity

Trusts will already be familiar with the workings of academies and the legal framework in which they operate. However, implementing effective leadership and management of a larger trust can be just as significant a change as setting up a trust in the first place.

Trust boards considering mergers should be looking, in particular, at:

- 1 What are their drivers for a potential merger? Does their proposed partner satisfy those drivers in terms of providing capacity, funding, etc?
- 2 What is the proposed vision and ethos of the new organisation, and how can this be created and maintained?
- 3 What are the short-, medium- and long-term objectives, and how can these be formalised, implemented and measured?
- 4 Who will take up the main roles in the new trust, such as members, trustees, committees,? Often there can be sensitivities surrounding these appointments, and a fear of a 'takeover' by one trust of another.
- 5 Due diligence. The board is, in effect, handing over their trust to a larger organisation. What investigations need to be carried out to ensure their current academy or academies will be in safe hands?

All the parties to a trust merger should consider the model leadership and governance structures referred to earlier in this document, as the merger may lead to the need for a different structure.

10 Additional help and further information

Schools interested in either joining an existing MAT or forming a new MAT can find detailed advice on the next steps they'll need to take in the joint ASCL, NGA and Browne Jacobson guidance papers: *Taking the next step: joining a multi-academy trust* and *Taking the next step: forming a multi-academy trust*.

Further information

This section lists additional useful information and documents.

ASCL, NGA and Browne Jacobson, *Taking the next step: joining a multi-academy trust*

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/utilities/document-summary.html?id=2C23281E-ACF2-43A1-A8AFD737CFE53EB3>

ASCL, NGA and Browne Jacobson, *Taking the next step: forming a multi-academy trust*

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/utilities/document-summary.html?id=887DA3F2-5F24-49DC-86C36A6CE3E845B6>

DfE, *Academies Financial Handbook*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook>

DfE, *Guidance on converting to an academy*

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/convert-to-an-academy-information-for-schools>

DfE, *Due diligence in academies and maintained schools*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/due-diligence-in-academies-and-maintained-schools>

DfE, *Guide to setting up partnerships*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-school-partnerships/guide-to-setting-up-partnerships>

House of Commons Education Committee, *Schools Partnerships and Cooperation*

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmeduc/269/269.pdf>

House of Commons Education Committee, *Academies and Free Schools*

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmeduc/258/258.pdf>

Ofsted, *Leadership of More Than One School: an evaluation of the impact of federated schools*

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413388/Leadership_of_more_than_one_school.pdf

National Governance Association (NGA), *Information on federations*

<http://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/School-structures-and-constitution/Federations.aspx>

