

Growing multi-academy trusts in the East of England and North East London

Suggestions for ambitious trusts
Summer 2016



Foreword

Educational Excellence Everywhere – across the East of England and North East London

The Government's White Paper (March 2016) set an ambition of educational excellence everywhere because education is the hallmark of a civilised society.

It makes clear that education:

- Is the engine of productivity
- Is the foundation of our culture
- Is the underpinning of the success of this country.

The paper also makes clear that every child deserves and has an entitlement to world class education.

It joins up many aspects of Government policy, including reforms to school funding, recruitment of and professional development for teachers, accountability measures and the development of a world class curriculum.

Our role in the Regional Schools Commissioner team is to support the development of a school system where every school is an academy. This involves growing the current academy sector with care and seeing academies fulfil the opportunity to raise standards for children and young people across the region.

Of particular importance is the successful growth of the best multi-academy trusts. We expect that single standalone academies will continue to exist. We are encouraging groups of schools to join or establish multi-academy trusts. Where groups of primary schools come together, we will encourage them to look to grow to at least 1200 children, even though many will start at a smaller size. We see the many trusts of 2-5 schools that already exist growing, over time, to 10-15 schools.

This is not for the faint-hearted and there is risk of becoming distracted by process and structure rather than maintaining a focus on the most effective practice and pupil outcomes. While many trusts are still in their infancy or still to be born, there are also others across the region that have been through the initial start-up cycle, learned some hard lessons and are now operating highly successfully. This guide is intended to share some of these lessons.

Tim Coulson

**Regional Schools Commissioner, East of
England and North East London**

Preface

This booklet is intended for dipping into for ideas that may be of help at different times.

You will see that several trusts have been generous in sharing their work. One objective of this work is to foster further collaboration between trusts.

Always keep the latest edition of the Academies Financial Handbook by your side as it has the definitive expectations of academy trusts.



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1

Strategic and business planning

1. Strategic and business planning

Five reasons to have a business plan:

- 1 To map out the future plan for the development of the organisation
- 2 To set key strategic priorities as a focus for effort and monitoring
- 3 To develop and communicate a course of action to stakeholders
- 4 To set out priorities for investment in additional resources
- 5 As a means to secure additional investment where available.

Why does it matter?

In 2014 the turnover of the average-size business in the UK was just over £500,000 per annum¹. The revenue for a multi-academy trust (MAT) of 2000 pupils is likely to be in excess of £12 million per annum². Running an organisation of this size provides the platform and opportunity for system leadership to deliver the vision and mission of the trust but also many of the wider statutory responsibilities of running such a company.

An academy trust is a charity, with the obligation that brings to deliver its charitable objects as set out in its articles of association.

Unlike a commercial business it is not there to make a profit but it still has many of the same obligations: to plan for the future, manage risk, and deliver the best possible outcomes for those to whom it is accountable.

What is important to note is that a business or strategic plan is not simply a school development plan or a collection of school development plans – it is the plan for the overall operation of the company and how it will move forward in the educational landscape to deliver what it set out to achieve.

¹ ICAEW Business Advice Service

² Bishop Fleming 2015 Academy Benchmarking report

Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT)

CMAT was formed in 2011 and currently comprises six academies with another one in the process of joining. The trust operates from hubs in Cambridge and Peterborough, covering both rural villages and inner city estates. The current annual operating revenue of the trust is £26 million, with 14 staff employed entirely in the central team.

The business plan is designed to translate the trust's vision and values into reality. The trust put a lot of time and effort into honing its values and vision. All strategic decisions are made with this in mind. For example, the trust's plans for growth include a mixed but balanced portfolio of outstanding schools and schools in great need. All schools will be in the same geographical area, that is, they must be within 15 miles of Peterborough or Cambridge or the main transport links between to allow for easy transfer of staff. Local hubs should be within a break time's journey and all schools should be accessible within an hour i.e. a lunchtime break.

The MAT, through clear strategic planning, also capitalises on economies of scale; for example, central IT services have been developed. These are now run as a commercial business (sold outside the trust) and have resulted in removing duplication of effort and resources; for example, some schools now have no servers.

What are the lessons learned?

Effective business plans are developed collaboratively by those who are going to have to implement them. So avoid one person going away to write it; instead make it the output of a process of engagement and review. Plans written in isolation tend to sit in a drawer and add little value to the trust.

In the early years of a trust there will be a real focus on developing the trust culture, creating a sense of collective identity and working through the benefits all are seeking to realise by being part of the trust.

Business plans will:

- Be focused on delivering for pupils and parents
- Start from a clear statement and understanding of where you are now, and where you are trying to get to
- Clearly define the environment in which you are operating - its opportunities and constraints
- Identify key strategic risks and the strategies to mitigate them
- Have some scenario modelling to understand the range of possible outcomes the business plan may deliver.

Key objectives should be limited to a handful. They should be about the strategic issues for the trust and cover the breadth of its operation from improving education performance through to people development and financial sustainability.

A business plan does not replace or duplicate individual academy improvement and development planning.

Academy-level planning gives the detailed objectives, outcomes and activity to drive forward school improvement. However it should be aligned with the overall priorities as a trust. For example, if the trust has a key objective to improve the performance of specific vulnerable groups, individual academy improvement plans should include how they are helping to address this issue.

Active Learning Trust

Since its inception in 2012, the trust has grown to 14 schools; of these 10 were sponsored, two were voluntary converters and two opened as new schools following local competition. Four out of six schools joining in the first year were sponsored. These schools operate out of three hubs in Cambridgeshire, Lowestoft and Ipswich. These hubs support both excellence in teaching and in leadership and governance. In 2014-15 the trust had an annual operating revenue of around £27.6 million from its educational and fund-generating activity.

The original business plan was written for three years with the purpose of 'getting everyone on board'. A revised business plan has the following strategic priorities:

- Ensure unrelenting focus on improvement in our schools, through our leadership, challenge and support role
- Transform the leadership and governance arrangements in our schools, ensuring that staff have access to high quality support, advice and challenge with a focus on school improvement
- Maximise the use of new technology to develop and sustain a stimulating curriculum and learning environment in school and beyond
- Unlock the potential to highlight and share excellent practice through professional collaboration
- Support our school leaders through the provision of high quality advice and well-targeted staff CPD, particularly through our Leading Active Learning Programme
- Further strengthen the use of the hub model, building on our review in 2015, to aid improvement and communication
- Seek opportunities to provide new schools, particularly in demand for new places, where they add to existing hubs
- Ensure that budgetary control is strong and budget planning for the longer term is secure.

The trust is looking to develop two to three free schools, two new sponsored and three converter academies, all linked to the current three hubs to build to hubs of about eight academies each.

What might be in a business plan?

Typical content would include:

- Summary of the vision
- Summary of a strategic review of the current state of the organisation (not just in terms of performance metrics, but also the environment around you and what your 'customers' say)
- Key objectives and outcomes for the period the plan covers
- Strategies and responsibilities to deliver the desired outcomes
- Growth plans
- The organisational structure and resources needed to deliver the plan
- Funding requirements and sources
- Financial model including scenario planning (three- to five-year view)
- Risk analysis.



2

Delegation and local governance

2. Delegation and local governance

Ensure everyone knows who is responsible for what. ('Everyone' includes Ofsted inspectors.)

It is important to remember that governance is not just about decision making; a good governance framework will include how the systems, processes, cultures and values of the whole organisation work together.

Why does it matter?

There is a temptation to build a trust board with people from the governing bodies of component schools. The first point to acknowledge is that no trustee is a representative of the school or organisation they have come from – they are required to exercise independent judgment and act in the best interests of the whole trust. For some people this can be a challenge and they often feel better suited to remain in a role that allows them to focus on an individual academy. It is much better to draw up a skills profile of the dream trust, take from existing governors where those skills are available and complete the board by making use of other networks, such as local employers or by contacting Academy Ambassadors or InspiringGovernors.org for trustees with skills particularly needed. The Governance Handbook also sets out the advantage of governing a group of schools. While the board of larger MATs may delegate governance functions to committees that oversee clusters of schools, it is not always necessary or advantageous to delegate governance functions to the individual school level.

More trusts are starting to make the decision that local bodies at the individual school level will be formed to act in an advisory capacity only (something that is permissible under the current model articles published by the Department), with no delegated decision-making authority. As set out in Education Excellence Everywhere, this approach does have the advantage of clearly putting MAT professionals in the lead to oversee the performance of individual schools (themselves overseen by the board, or in larger MATs by committees of the board overseeing clusters of schools), while creating genuine stakeholder forums at local level. This avoids the potential tension between a desire to engage stakeholders and the need for skills-based governance that can sometimes challenge local governing bodies. Although only acting in an advisory capacity the local body is nevertheless a formal part of the governance structure, and can therefore offer a forum for meaningful and structured engagement with stakeholders, particularly parents, to listen to their views and feedback and enable them to identify and escalate issues and risks to the board.

Paradigm Trust

Paradigm Trust has successfully grown from its initial base in London to operating now in Ipswich as well. The CEO points to her strong board, which meets monthly and challenges her and the principals on the operations of the trust as key to their development journey. They have recently revised their committee structure to three committees: Audit & Risk which meets at least termly and monitors all risks including Safeguarding; Education which meets every six weeks and scrutinises assessment points and end of year data (attended by all the principals); and Operations & Finance which meets monthly. They have moved away from local governing bodies to a model of academy councils for each school which provide a forum for parents/carers to express their views and ask questions. Academy councils meet every half term, both morning and evening, with an agenda developed by the academy council chair and the principal. Every parent/carer is asked through the newsletter whether there is anything that they want to have discussed.

How do you delegate?

There are three main ways in which the board delegates decision-making, but it is important to note none of these is a delegation of responsibility – that always remains with the board. The Department for Education (DfE) holds the trust accountable for all the schools in its trust.

- **Job descriptions:** many decision-making powers are delegated to senior staff such as the chief executive, chief financial officer, headteachers or principals.
- **Policies:** these set out the process to be followed, who is involved and the range of decisions they can reach.
- **Scheme of delegation:** This is the document that sets out the delegation of governance activity and needs to be published on the trust's and schools' websites. One by-product of this will be that an inspection team will understand who they need to speak to during an inspection.

All three of these need to be considered holistically to create a cohesive and coherent picture.

Key things to remember from the model articles of association³ about delegation:

- All delegation needs to be written (Article 105)
- Where delegated powers are used then it must be reported back to the board at its next meeting (Article 106)
- Any scheme of delegation can be amended by the board of trustees, and reviewed annually
- The way in which these committees operate, their procedures and membership are determined by the trustees (Article 101).

³ Academy Articles of Association: Model One for use by mainstream, special, 16-19, alternative provision academies and free schools; and studio schools, February 2016, Department for Education

What are the lessons learned?

- The design of the scheme of delegation is a matter for the discretion of the trustees and can be amended at any time. It is important that the scheme of delegation is in place at the outset and understood by all, so that, for example, a new school joining the MAT knows exactly what governance will be exercised at the school level. The most important question that everyone in the MAT must understand is ‘What are we trying to achieve together and therefore where is the decision making function best placed?’
- Where responsibilities are delegated by the trust board, there need to be clear protocols for when these responsibilities may be taken back by the board.
- A process of interview and or application for members of local governing bodies, even in the case of good or outstanding schools, can be a very good way to start the building of effective relationships. It can provide an early opportunity to discuss and explore the difference that being the trust will mean for individuals and their roles.
- Beware of using the phrase ‘earned autonomy’. Why would a trust condone a school having poorer practice in one area of school life just because it has effective practice in another? It is also important not to create additional barriers to achieving the collective ambition by allowing individual academies to choose to go their own way. An example might be the desire to make efficiency savings through collective procurement. This requires all to be party to the process. Therefore delegating the decision-making to a local level as to whether or not they participate has the potential to prevent any benefits being realised.
- It is now becoming unusual for the board of trustees not to retain the ultimate approval of:
 - The trust’s budget (and therefore its component parts)
 - Appointment of senior staff (typically those being appointed to lead individual academies)
 - HR and employment policies
 - Choice of school improvement support.

- Trusts need leadership and each trust needs to be clear about the oversight of the trust, to whom headteachers report and the function of the accounting officer. For most this will mean the development of a CEO role. The senior executive in the trust is also the Accounting Officer.⁴ Current policy in the East of England and North East London region would not see the Headteacher Board approve MATs without clear executive leadership.
- The difference between the remit of the local governing body and the role of a standalone maintained school governing body is clearly understood by all – and there is honesty from the outset about it.
- Care is taken to avoid the duplication of activity so any other committees established by the board, or executives employed by the board, are not undertaking the same scrutiny as that expected of local governing bodies. Each committee and MAT executive should have a clear remit that can be easily explained and understood in terms of how their role fits into the overall governance structure.
- Each trust needs a well-developed reporting structure through its key staff, and also a level of independent quality assurance and oversight of performance by trustees.
- Procedures and practices carried forward from predecessor governing bodies should be reviewed to see whether they are necessary, add value or could be more efficient. The way in which local governing bodies conduct their business, the protocols and proceedings are determined by the trustees.
- Effective and efficient reporting in both directions is critical to a successful governance system. Just sending minutes between groups is not the best way to achieve this. Highlight reports or reporting by exception are far more efficient in distilling things to the key issues that need to be shared or escalated, combined with regular conversation.



Appendix A contains an example of how the Inspiration Trust has split its roles and responsibilities in terms of delegated authority and decision-making.

⁴ The Academies Financial Handbook says: Each academy trust **must** designate, in writing, a named individual as its accounting officer. The individual **must** be a fit and suitable person for the role. The accounting officer should be the senior executive leader of the trust. In trusts comprising a single academy this should be the principal. In multi-academy trusts it should be the chief executive or equivalent.



3

Structure, roles and responsibilities of central trust teams

3. Structure, roles and responsibilities of central trust teams

Trusts need leadership. Some trusts may encounter initial challenges with the perception of a ‘them and us’ culture – those working at a local level may feel remote and distinct from those working in the centre. Early and regular engagement to explore, explain and reinforce the key purpose of any structure, its accountability and future development is seen as essential to addressing these issues.

Why does it matter?

While there are many variations in the structures of academy trusts, there is consistently the common theme of accountability.

In their evidence to the Education Select Committee in 2014⁵ the DfE stated:

“Autonomy and accountability are the two key pillars of academies reform. PISA Results in Focus (2013)⁶ found that autonomous schools perform better than schools with less autonomy when they are part of school systems with more accountability arrangements.”

The single line of accountability has been further emphasised by Sir David Carter, National Schools Commissioner. He has outlined the importance of a clear accountability framework from the RSC, through the executive leadership of the trust and the chair of the board to the individual leaders of each academy⁷.

It is also important to consider the additional responsibility a trust needs to manage in how it organises its structures and the resources it needs.

While there is a lot of freedom over the roles and responsibilities you create, there are two executive posts (held by staff employed by the trust) you must have:

- **Accounting Officer** - the individual personally responsible to Parliament for the appropriate use of public funds. This should be the Executive Principal (EP) or CEO
- **Chief Financial Officer (CFO)** - the person who oversees the financial functions of the trust. They can have many different titles, such as a Business Manager, Finance Director or Head of Finance, but typically they should hold an accountancy qualification.

⁵ Academies and free schools, Fourth Report of Session 2014-15, House of Commons Education Committee

⁶ OECD (2013) - PISA 2012 Results in Focus - What 15-year-olds know and what they can do with what they know.

⁷ United We Stand – an Insight into Multi-Academy Trusts, Sir David Carter, ASCL Conference, March 2016

Top five questions to consider when reviewing your structure

- Which one member of the executive is responsible for performance and standards across all the academies in the trust, and do they have the authority to address issues when they arise?
- Does the accounting officer have sufficient authority and complete oversight of the use of trust funds to allow them to meet their responsibilities and obligations?
- Are employment matters being addressed consistently across the trust and is the board able to manage its role efficiently as the employer of all staff in all academies?
- Who is the line manager of the individual academy leaders; are they aware and how does this affect performance management processes?
- What is the cost of the central structure? Is it sustainable in the medium to long term?

What are the lessons learned?

- It is important to set out who is responsible for what, the lines of reporting and methods of ensuring appropriate scrutiny and accountability.
- Trusts of course have the freedom to establish with their staff, subject to appropriate due process and consultation, pay and conditions that are most appropriate for a school.
- There is growing consistency in the use of the term 'Executive Principal' versus 'Chief Executive Officer', with the former being used where there is a more explicit hands-on focus on school improvement and leadership support at an individual academy level, and the latter to denote a post where there is greater emphasis on the overall strategic leadership of the organisation. Emerging consensus would suggest that an Executive Principal role is a role that can work for up to three schools.
- As a trust grows its central team, consideration needs to be given to the pay scales and pay progression for these central staff, e. g. what pay scale is your CFO on, and how do they progress? Many trusts look to establish a 'Remuneration Committee of the Board' to manage the performance and progression of the executive leaders.
- The cost of staff in the central management structure can be a significant proportion of any pooled funding or 'top slice'. It is important that it delivers value, not only now, but also in the medium to long term. Therefore consider how flexible and adaptable your structure is; for example, will it work when all your schools are good? If it is only sustainable with growth what happens if that growth doesn't come? How will it evolve as you grow and is this determined by the type of schools that enter the MAT?
- Trusts that look to entice schools into joining by having a very low 'top slice' need to take real care in assessing whether they are putting at risk the success of the trust through a lack of investment in collaborative infrastructure and leadership.

Parallel Learning Trust

This trust specialises in primary, special and alternative provision. The trust believes their principals and vice-principals should have a high profile working on school improvement and should not be distracted by running the services of the school. The trust therefore uses the capacity within the trust, as well as other strategic partners, to offer a range of core services to their schools through their own subsidiary community interest company. Services include: school improvement, professional development, finance, HR and payroll, legal, catering, IT and MIS support, facilities and academy estates management. School improvement is at the heart of everything the trust does and informs all their decisions.

The trust decided to set up a community interest company – Logic School Services

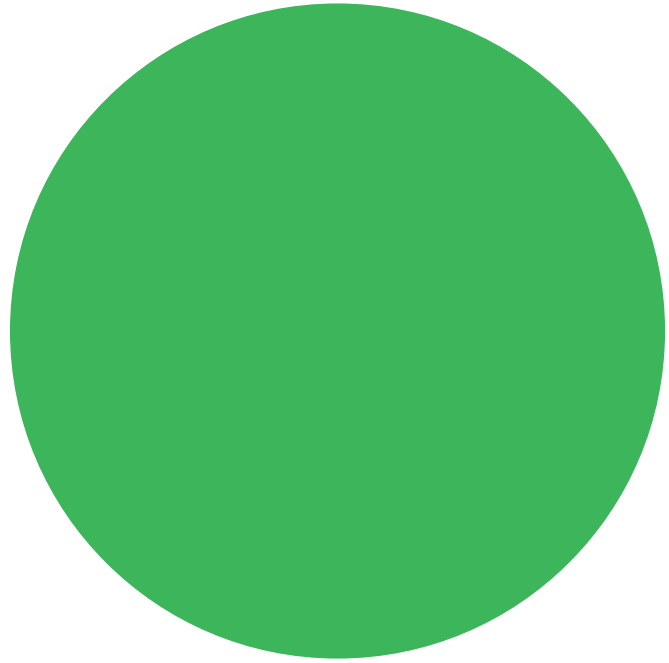
www.logicschools.com.

This uses both the capacity within the trust and a growing associate model to trade to schools both inside and outside the trust. A community interest company is a business with primarily social objectives and a community focus, rather than one being driven by a need to maximise profits.

This company is a potential income stream as well as providing a wide range of services to the trust. It now has a turnover of over £500,000. The CEO of the trust is also on the Board of Directors for Logic School Services.

The trust keeps its central team very small i.e. one full time equivalent (FTE) CEO, one FTE Business support, one FTE Finance Director and one FTE Commercial Director.

The trust has developed a schools hub in south Essex, Southend, Medway (Kent) and south east London. With the agreement of the RSC, the trust has growth plans to extend its sponsored capacity beyond alternative provision and special schools, and will look to sponsoring mainstream primary schools. The trust will provide the core services but all the support will be provided locally through the schools themselves or through Logic School Services. The hub model provides economies of scale; for example each school will no longer require its own business manager and Logic School Services will build a bank of trusted associates around them in each of the service areas. Logic will provide all other services required such as facilities management and catering.



4

**Training and
development for trust
board directors and
local governors**

4. Training and development for trust board directors and local governors

The DfE is working on further standards for governance of academy trusts and more will be available in due course.

REAch2

The trust recognises that good and well understood governance has been a key part of its success. However they also recognise that good governance develops over time and needs to be constructed and doesn't 'just happen'. This trust has worked hard at making sure it is well understood and key to this understanding is their Governance Charter. This charter sets out the principles and formal arrangements for governance across the REAch2 Academy Trust. However the current model of governance has taken time to develop. The trust see the quality and effectiveness of their governance as pivotal to ensuring all resources are used effectively in delivering exceptional learning opportunities for children and best value to the tax payer.

A key principle in developing their governance model has been that all levels of governance understand their complementary roles and duplication of activity is avoided. At its heart lie the principles of scrutiny and challenge. There is a common understanding across the organisation about the functions of the board, the role of trustees and divisional board Ambassadors articulated in its Roles and Functions Matrix (publicly available at <http://reach2.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Roles-and-functions-overview.pdf>). There is one board with four regional boards. There are over 30 Ambassadors who sit on regional boards but are not trustees. They bring independence to the trust which is seen as critical. All these roles are reflected in the scheme of delegation.

Why does it matter?

The principles of effective governance are well established and increasingly understood. But governing a group of schools is different from governing a single school. Tools a trust board can use to self-evaluate include:

- Using the [Twenty-One Questions for Multi-academy Trusts: Key questions a MAT board should ask itself](#)⁸
- Using the [Characteristics of Successful Multi-Academy Trusts](#)⁹
- Commissioning a focused peer review from another trust to identify areas for development.



What are the lessons learned?

Trustees need to be given information in a format that allows them to understand, challenge and debate the strengths and weaknesses of all their academies.

- Time and effort needs to be made to bring people together to build and develop trusting and effective relationships.
- Involving both trustees and local governors in the development of reporting formats and processes helps to support all parts in efficiently and effectively undertaking their duties.
- Developing both person specifications and role descriptions for trustees and local governors helps to identify differences in each role and can help to make sure people are in the right roles.
- In some cases, trusts are moving to have regional governance across a number of geographically close academies.
- Robust and compulsory induction programmes for new trustees and local governors are being seen to deliver significant benefits in improving the effectiveness of governance.
- Each trust has its own schemes of delegation and ways of operating; therefore the development of bespoke programmes is increasingly seen as necessary for supporting them in their roles.
- There is typically significant expertise across those involved in all levels of governance in a trust. Creating formal ways in which best practice is shared between local governing bodies is as important as creating networks for sharing practice between the professionals employed in the trust.
- Typically a different balance of skills is needed at different levels of governance. This should be documented so that effective reviews can be undertaken at all levels. The trend is for a more school-improvement-focused local governing body, with more business skills needed at trustee level.

⁸ All Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership, March 2015

<http://www.nga.org.uk/About-Us/APPG/Home/21Questions.aspx>

⁹ <http://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/schools1/academies/academy-status-characteristics-of-successful-multi-academy-trusts>

5

School improvement structures and methodology

5. School improvement structures and methodology

Creating formal groups for the sharing of practice and development of collective trust wide education policy is becoming commonplace – covering leadership, SENCOs, phase and subject leaders.

What do we know about effective improvement strategies for groups of schools?

- Forms of support that are effective for school improvement vary depending on the point the school has reached in its school improvement journey.
- There is a role for a team of school improvement experts – every school can be the giver and receiver of support.
- The system leadership role of National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and Local Leaders of Education can be important.
- Arrangements that enable school leaders and teachers to share effective practice and work rather than just talk together.
- The most effective strategies to improve teaching and learning take place in schools and involve observing excellent teaching; opportunities to reflect with colleagues; and coaching in the teacher's own classroom.
- Weak leaders can be supported through coaching, mentoring and other development opportunities encouraged.

What are the lessons learned?

- Trusts need one data system.
- Some form of external 'quality assurance' process to confirm the views of the academy leaders and the trust is needed.



Samuel Ward Academy Trust

Currently comprising eight schools, with a planned increase to 13, this is a trust based on the Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire borders, integrated with the Suffolk Borders Teaching School Alliance, led by Samuel Ward Academy. Of the eight schools two are judged outstanding, one good, four are awaiting their Ofsted inspection and the eighth is not yet open.

The focus for the trust has been on school improvement and educational teaching and learning. The trust has appointed excellent full time people to work centrally on school improvement, including the CEO on teaching and learning, (who works in a team with the head of the teaching school), and two outstanding headteachers to lead on primary and secondary improvement. This focus has had a very positive effect; however it was at the expense of developing several back office functions, such as HR, which were outsourced. This meant that the development of the infrastructure of the trust has lagged behind the school improvement. However the trust would make this decision again.

As the trust has grown, its structures have changed to make them more sustainable. Initially the primary and secondary improvement teams worked mostly within their phase but there is now a lot more

generic working across trust schools. Initially the trust went for a model of appointing an executive headteacher. However there was a lack of clarity in this role that led to some de-skilling for headteachers by weakening their accountability for their effectiveness. A better way of developing was to increase the capacity of existing staff in school, rather than adding in additional layers of leadership. The trust has therefore now created a set of subject advisers who operate as centrally directed resources across the trust. These advisers are not accountable for the outcomes in their subject in all departments (the schools remain accountable for this), but are expected to raise standards of teaching and learning. Over time the numbers of these advisers will grow.

The trust has also created a group of 'Trust Leaders in Education' (modelled on NLEs), who will develop generic aspects of leadership across all trust schools. Originally this work was led by headteachers; however this was found to be unsuccessful as they could not devote enough time to it.

The trust trained over 50 leaders for two days to carry out the reviews, and each review is quality assured before being passed to the headteacher.

6

Succession planning and leadership development

6. Succession planning and leadership development

As an academy trust there is an opportunity to look in a more holistic way at the idea of succession planning and how you grow your own leaders, holding on to your best assets and providing a structured route for development.

Why does it matter?

We know that the best school leaders have always supported the development of those coming up behind them.

Tips for getting started with succession planning

- Make use of the 'rule of three' for key posts in the trust:
 - Who is the three week replacement? (Someone is off sick)
 - Who is the three month replacement? (Someone has handed in their notice)
 - Who is the three year replacement? (What is your long term development plan?)
- Introduce questions around individuals' career aspirations into the appraisal process; this information can be used to match individuals' goals with the business need.
- Use this information to help identify opportunities for people to gain the skills they may need to progress in their chosen direction.
- Consider creating a central tool to map and manage this information.
- A key part of succession planning is also recognising that no organisation can rely on individual characters for its success; it is about creating a culture, systems and processes that allow people to develop, progress and move on while the organisation continues to be successful and progress.
- Many individual academies have in place excellent leadership development programmes, often in partnership with teaching schools. Those that have moved to developing this as a trust-wide offer are finding it of real benefit in building the capacity of leadership in the trust.
- Succession planning is something that tends to come into focus when a crisis looms; however it is most effective when it is planned and developed as part of the overall strategic management of the trust.

Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT)

OAT sponsored its first academy in 2006 and now has a family of academies across England. It is the sponsor of Ormiston Venture Academy in Norfolk which has made huge strides, taking a 'requires improvement' school to 'outstanding' in three years.

OAT has a staff pledge that applies across all its schools. Two elements of this are that it will recognise and nurture the talents and aspirations in its staff and encourage innovation and learning from one another.

The trust is therefore flexible in using staff across academies, which staff regard as excellent CPD. As an example, in Ormiston Venture Academy there was a vacancy for a careers guidance teacher to lead improvement across the school. The trust arranged a one-year secondment to fill this role from a Leader with experience in careers from another school.

Ormiston Venture Academy worked with this teacher to develop and begin to implement a thorough and clear plan which someone else could easily pick up (knowing the secondment would end in a year).

The school also took this opportunity to fulfil its commitment to the staff pledge and saw this secondment as an opportunity to invest in the seconded teacher who then joined the SLT as an Assistant Principal. As a result, after a year the school has a high quality, sustainable plan which provides an excellent model for Venture to build on once the secondment ends. The seconded teacher has also been further professionally developed and will be moving to a secondment with another OAT school from September as a Vice Principal.

Teachers in the trust recognise and highly value this commitment to invest in their own development. As the trust has grown, building a sustainable model of developing talent in its own staff has been seen as critical to its success.

Creating capacity through providing opportunities across all its schools has enabled it to find highly effective and trusted leaders in a geographical area where such people are hard to find.





7

**Performance
management**

7. Performance management

Why does it matter?

Key principles that underpin an effective performance management model:

- It is a strategic process in that it is aligned to the organisation's wider objectives
- It should link together different aspects of human resource management, such as professional development, employee reward and organisational development, into a coherent approach to people management and development
- Performance improvement must be supported by the development of employees' capabilities
- It must be based on an agreement between a manager and an individual, a shared understanding of and continuing dialogue about an individual's goals, the standards expected and the competencies needed, together with an appreciation of the organisation's wider mission, values and objectives.

What are the lessons learned?

- Consideration should be given to the line management of individual academy leaders. While, historically, this would have been a function of the governing body and an external advisor, staff are now likely to have a line manager and, as such, it should be this person who leads the performance management process. Many trusts invite members of the local governing body for the relevant academy to be part of a panel, alongside the Executive Principal or CEO – but the final decision rests with the line manager.
- It is important to consider how the wider strategic objectives of the trust cascade down through the performance management and appraisal process. For example, are the targets set for the CEO/EP based on the strategic/business plan for the trust, and do they then cascade relevant targets down to other senior leaders (including the CFO) in the trust?
- How robust is the relationship between performance management and employee rewards in your policy? How are judgements moderated to ensure consistent application?
- Is the performance management/appraisal policy one that is contractual for staff who transferred into the trust, and therefore subject to TUPE protection in respect of any amendments?

Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust (CMAT)

Performance management is never left to the CEO alone.

They are always accompanied by the chair of the relevant committee or external personnel to ensure assessment is unbiased, fair and well informed. This also prevents accountability judgements being made in an 'over-friendly' atmosphere. Benchmarking and moderation take place centrally. Each principal presents to the personnel committee, who interrogate recommendations and apply benchmarking.

8

Building trusts of ‘good’ schools

8. Building trusts of ‘good’ schools

For existing trusts, bringing in other good schools can increase their leadership capacity and bring additional expertise and further capacity to improve practice across the trust.

Why does it matter?

While the academies programme originated as a policy to turn around underperformance, in 2010 the opportunity for good and outstanding schools to take advantage of the freedoms was made available through voluntary conversion.

With the rise of the ‘academy trust’ model many schools are now beginning to look at the benefits of coming together in a formal group – taking to the next stage the ideas of collaboration, staff development and economies of scale for the benefit of the young people in their schools.

In a world of ongoing change, bringing together leaders to shape and drive the educational ambition and operational management of a group of schools provides a powerful way to chart a successful path into the future.

It should also be acknowledged that for many schools the decision to convert will be the most significant decision that the school governing body has ever had to make, and it is right that time and consideration should be given as to how it best supports the education of the communities it serves.

Why do good schools come together?

Some of the most common reasons given are:

- More effective sharing of practice and collective school improvement
- Cost-efficiency through collaboration (not just purchasing, but shared staff and resources)
- Being part of a formal support network with collective responsibility
- To take control of shaping the local education landscape for a group of schools
- Developing more effective support services, tailored to the needs of the schools.

What are the lessons learned?

For **groups of schools coming together to form their own trust** the following are important to consider before progressing:

- Discussion and agreement of the common expectations regarding what will be gained by forming a trust
- Each school is clear on what they need and what they can offer
- Clear and honest understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses.

For **existing trusts looking to grow through good schools joining**:

- Consideration needs to be given to what is the clear and compelling offer to schools that will make them want to join you
- There is a need for proactive effort - having someone with the responsibility for talking and engaging with schools to promote your trust.

Have a clear process for identifying the executive leadership of the trust; for example establish a shadow board to develop person specifications for the executive roles and invite applications from the existing leadership within the individual schools.

Anglian Learning Trust

Three separate trusts of secondary schools in Cambridgeshire consisting of four schools, three of which are good or outstanding, are establishing the Anglian Learning Trust.

Sawston Village College and Bassingbourn Village College, both of which have been single academy trusts, are joining with Bottisham Village College and Netherhall School, which have been in a trust together. The four schools will be in the Anglian Learning Multi-Academy Trust. The trust will build on already existing partnerships, which have been underpinned by trust and mutual respect, a shared ethos and vision and a history of being rooted in the community.

'The purpose of Anglian Learning is to create a community of schools able to strengthen and sustain the quality of education we provide for our students through effective collaboration, whilst retaining our individual ethos and approach.'

The trust see many educational opportunities arising from this new trust:

- Benchmarking of performance – as well as educational standards, also on staff absence, well-being, finance and pupil attendance
- Peer review and Ofsted readiness
- Deployment of leading practitioners across the trust
- Sharing of planning and resources for English and maths
- Leadership secondments
- Enrichment opportunities – debating, computing showcases, photography competitions
- Residential visits
- Joint research into teaching and learning
- Sharing of staff to build expertise and plug gaps.



9

Risk and risk management

9. Risk and risk management

Why does it matter?

As an academy trust is a UK charitable company its trustees should pay appropriate attention to the expectation that legislation places on such a role. The Education Funding Agency, through such publications as the **Academies Financial Handbook** and its ongoing requirements for financial reporting, provides a greater level of scrutiny and regulation than many other companies. The principles in respect of risk management need to be fully understood by those charged with the responsibility of managing it.

Charities that are required by law to have their accounts audited must make a risk management statement in their trustees' annual report confirming that

'...the charity trustees have given consideration to the major risks to which the charity is exposed and satisfied themselves that systems or procedures are established in order to manage those risks'.

Trusts will look at health and safety - accident and near-miss reporting statistics and progress against health and safety objectives or outstanding audit actions; an internal audit schedule and progress; and safeguarding annual audits.

Trusts will have in place a risk management policy, owned by the board of trustees, that includes how risks are identified, a framework for assessing risks, evaluation of what action needs to be taken on risks and the monitoring and assessment of identified risks.



So what are the responsibilities of the board of trustees¹⁰?

The responsibility for the management and control of a charity rests with the trustee body and therefore their involvement in the key aspects of the risk management process is essential, particularly in setting the parameters of the process and reviewing and considering the results.

This should not be interpreted as meaning that the trustees must undertake each aspect of the process themselves. In all but the smallest charities, the trustees are likely to delegate elements of the risk management process to staff or professional advisers. The trustees should review and consider the key aspects of the process and results. The level of involvement should be such that the trustees can make the required risk management statement with reasonable confidence.



REAch2

Sir Steve Lancashire is clear in his view that an organisation's ability to manage its risk will determine its success. The larger the organisation the larger the potential risk and the more robust risk management systems, procedures and practices must be, which escalate and de-escalate risk appropriately.

Risk management is therefore embedded in the trust's systems and processes

Risks are reported on by Regional Executive Principals in their school visit reports and reports to the Deputy CEO. Local governing bodies report on risk by exception (i.e. only new risks, or where the status has changed to a level necessary for the next level up to be informed) to regional boards and regional boards to the main trust board. Risks are prioritised and colour-coded and included in their SOAP (School on a Page) summary reports.

¹⁰ Guidance: Charities and risk management (CC26), Charity Commission (referred to in the Academies Financial Handbook)

[illegible]

Example from REAch2 of its School on a Page Report continued...

QUALITY OF TEACHING										
(Based on triangulated evidence)	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2	Autumn Target	Spring Target	Summer Target	
% of Good or better teaching										
% of RI teaching										
% of Inadequate teaching										
BEHAVIOUR AND SAFETY OF PUPILS										
ATTENDANCE (%)	Previous year	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2	Target	Latest national	Attendance Judgement
% attendance										
% authorised absence										
% unauthorised										
% persistent absentees										
EXCLUSIONS										
Permanent (no. pupils)										
Fixed term (days)										
Fixed term (no. pupils)										
SEF JUDGEMENTS										
Ofsted Section	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2	Comment			
Achievement of pupils										
Quality of teaching										
Behaviour and safety of pupils										
Leadership and management										
EYFS										
OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS										
OVERALL SCHOOL PERFORMANCE RISK										
	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2	Comment			
Risk level of inadequate grade										
Risk level of RI grade										
SPECIFIC ISSUES										
Issue ref	Comment									

10

**Due diligence and
growth**

10. Due diligence and growth

Why does it matter?

‘Due diligence’ is the phrase given to the review of the potential new joiner in order to assess the risk in light of all the information.

Ultimately the amount of time and effort a trust wishes to spend on due diligence will be related to the level of risk it is willing to take. This is likely to be driven by the level of resources it has to hand (both financially and also capacity) to address any problems that could arise.

Factors to consider

- What is our rationale, purpose and strategy for growth?
- Does this opportunity fit with this strategy?
- What are the key differences in terms of risk profile of taking on different types of school (for example, converters, sponsored, new build, all through) and where does this one sit?
- Who is going to undertake the due diligence and how will they report back to the board to allow them to make the final decision?

The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi Academy Trust

The St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan MAT is a growing MAT for church primary schools in Suffolk. The CEO meets schools which are considering joining, sharing the vision and values of the trust and answering questions. The due diligence process is critical and ensures that the MAT is clear about the school’s position. Schools are asked to provide similar information to that required by the DfE, which minimises duplication e.g. pupil numbers, budget outturn and forecasts, attainment and progress for the past three years and the number of teaching and support staff employed. The MAT also examines building condition surveys.

As the MAT grows, it is important to ensure that there is a sufficient infrastructure dedicated to providing school improvement and back office support. Schools work closely together to support each other and identify future areas of work. MAT directors monitor progress and regularly review what needs to happen next to support schools further.

The West Norfolk Academies Trust

The West Norfolk Academies Trust is a small locally-based MAT working with only primary and secondary schools in the West Norfolk area. The trust has had two main aims:

- To raise standards in West Norfolk
- To recruit and, more importantly, retain excellent staff by ensuring there are career opportunities within the trust. 'Recruit/retain/develop' is a founding principle.

From the outset the trust has been very clear that it wants to be a small, local trust defined by its geography. No school will be more than a lunchtime's drive away and small primary schools will be closer than that. Any new school wishing to join the trust will be carefully scrutinised through a documented due diligence process involving a review of finance, achievement, staffing, health & safety, facilities.

The trust will soon reach its ambition for growth in secondary schools (three at the time of writing with the academy order for the fourth expected imminently,) and will consider all feeder primary schools for these schools. The feeder primaries are often very small rural primary schools (50 pupils being the smallest). To make these schools sustainable the trust has developed a model where two or three schools 'share' one headteacher. It is essential the schools are very close geographically to allow the head to be in any school in less than half an hour. For one small school that wanted to join the trust, another local small school agreed to pair with it (itself a career opportunity for the head) and both schools converted to academies to join the trust to make this happen.



Appendix A:

Inspiration Trust Scheme of delegation

Appendix A: Inspiration Trust Scheme of delegation

KEY

Level 1: Trust Board

Level 2: Trust Board, in consultation with Local Governing Body where appropriate

Level 3: CEO

Level 4: Local Governing Body

Level 5: Chair of Governors (COG) of Local Governing Body in consultation with Trust CEO

Level 6: Executive Principal (in consultation with CEO and Local COG where appropriate)

Level 7: Principal

Although decisions may be delegated to the Local Governing Body or the Executive Principal, the Trust Board as a whole remains responsible for any decision made under delegation and may overrule the Local Governing Body/principal where appropriate

Key function	Ref	Tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comment
Budget	1	To approve the first formal budget plan in each financial year		x						
	2	To monitor monthly expenditure							x	
	3	To establish a charging and remissions policy	x							
	4	To enter into contracts			x					
	5	To make payments			x					
	6	Miscellaneous financial decisions			x					
Key function	Ref	Tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comment
Staffing	7	Principal appointments (selection panel)			x					
	8	Deputy appointments (selection panel)						x		
	9	Appointment of school based teaching and all support staff							x	
	10	Appointment of central Trust staff (shared services)			x					
	11	Agree a pay policy	x							
	12	Implement pay policy			x					
	13	Receive annual recommendations on salary					x			
	14	Decisions/appeals arising out of pay and performance management policies				x				
	15	Undertake Principal's performance review		x						
	16	Establish staff disciplinary and capability procedure	x							
	17	Dismissal of principal			x					
	18	Dismissal of other school based staff							x	
	19	Suspension of principal/executive principal			x					
	20	Suspension of school based staff					x			
	21	Suspension of central Trust staff			x					
	22	Ending suspension of principal/ executive principal			x					
	23	Ending suspension of school based staff (except principal)					x			
	22	Ending suspension of principal/ executive principal			x					
	23	Ending suspension of school based staff (except principal)					x			

Appendix A: Inspiration Trust Scheme of delegation

Key function	Ref	Tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comment
Staffing cont.	24	Ending suspension of central staff			x					
	25	Determining staff complement in each school					x			
	26	Determining staff complement – central Trust services			x					
	27	Determining dismissal payments/ early retirement (school based staff)			x					
	28	Determining dismissal payments/early retirement (Trust central staff)			x					
	29	Formal meetings for school based staff re discipline, sickness absence and capability, grievance, special leave of absence, staffing adjustment				x				
	30	Lead Academy case where principal has a grievance					x			
	31	Formal meetings for central shared service staff re discipline, sickness absence, capability, grievance adjustment			x					
	32	Formal warnings and dismissal decisions			x				x	
	33	Receive concerns from whistle blowers			x		x		x	
	34	Determine whether a whistle blowing investigation is appropriate			x		x		x	
	35	Determine application from employee for special leave for revision				x			x	
	36	Determine pay policy for unqualified teachers and support staff	x							
	37	Staffing adjustment decision to consult -school staff; consider response				x				
	38	Staffing adjustment decision to consult – central staff; consider response	x							
	39	Staffing adjustment decisions following consultation – school staff							x	
	40	Staffing adjustment decisions following consultation – central staff			x					
Key function	Ref	Tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comment
Curriculum	41	Ensuring national curriculum taught to all students and to consider any disapplication		x						
	42	Establish a curriculum policy				x				
	43	Implement curriculum policy							x	
	44	Monitor implementation of curriculum policy				x				
	45	Implement action to maintain teaching standards							x	
	46	Monitor action to maintain teaching standards				x				
	47	Determination of which subject options are to be taught, given the available resources							x	
	48	Responsibility for each child's education							x	
	49	Determine sex education policy for each school				x				
	50	Monitor implementation of sex education policy				x				
	51	To monitor for any political indoctrination				x				

Appendix A: Inspiration Trust Scheme of delegation

Key function	Ref	Tasks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comment
Gov Body procedures	80	Determine terms of reference and any amendments	x							
	81	Appoint/remove Gov Body chair and Vice chair	x							
	82	Appoint local governors	x							
	83	Appoint/dismiss local clerk to Governors			x					
	84	Convene at least three Trust Board meetings in any year	x							
	85	Establish and maintain Trust register of business interests	x							
	86	To approve and set up a Governors Expenses Policy	x							
	87	To monitor SEN provision				x				
	88	To consider whether or not to exercise delegation of functions to individuals or committees					x			
	89	To regulate the GB procedures (where not set out in law)	x							
	90	Establish LGB code of conduct	x							
	91	Establish complaints policy	x							
	92	Monitor implementation of complaints policy		x						
	93	Establish FOI request policy	x							
	94	Implement FOI policy where relevant			x					
Equalities Act	95	Monitor implementation of FOI request policy	x							
	96	Establish single Equality Act policy	x							
	97	Implement single equality act policy (and objectives) at Trust level via equality action plan			x					
	98	Implement single equality act policy at school level via academy equality action plan							x	
Data Protection	99	Monitor implementation of equality act policy at Trust and local level			x		x			
	100	Establish data protection policy	x							
	101	Implement data protection policy in each school							x	
Safeguarding	102	Monitor implementation of data protection policy in each school	x							
	103	Establish a safeguarding policy				x				
	104	Implement safeguarding policy and procedures							x	
	105	Monitor implementation of safeguarding policy				x				
IT	106	Refer allegations of abuse against staff to LADO							x	
	107	Establish acceptable use policy	x							
	108	Implement acceptable use policy			x					
Social media usage	109	Monitor implementation of acceptable use policy	x							
	110	Establish social media policy	x							
	111	Implement social media policy			x					
	112	Monitor implementation of social media policy	x							

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Postscript

The idea of changing the structural systems in which schools operate to drive innovation is not a new one. The birth of the academies movement in England has its origins in the Education Reform Act of 1988 with the creation of City Technology Colleges as a way of increasing autonomy and bringing new thinking to improve the quality of education in our cities. A few years later, on the other side of the Atlantic, the Charter School movement, which started in Minnesota in 1992, was gaining ground and by the late 1990s began to show some success in areas where schools had been failing their communities. What both of these programmes had in common was the move away from local political control to new organisations under contract to the state.

The Learning and Skills Act (2000) created City Academies and the Education Act (2002) created the sponsor model of academies that is still familiar today. However, this programme was focused on addressing failure and, as such, was only ever going to be targeted at a small percentage of schools.

Pockets of outstanding practice began to develop and many schools achieved levels of success that had previously eluded them but it remained a relatively isolated part of the education sector and certainly not part of the broader education conversation.

Fast forward to 2010, and the coalition administration opened up voluntary conversion to good and outstanding schools without the need to be sponsored. This saw an acceleration of the programme, with schools starting to consider the benefits that could be achieved by becoming part of a wider family of schools under the multi-academy trust model. Undoubtedly, since the election of the Conservative government in 2015, a clear policy direction in terms of its future vision for school governance and the role of local authorities in education improvement has been set.

Postscript continued...

So why look back at history? Firstly, as a sector, we have a lot of lessons we can learn from those who have gone before – both in terms of what works, but also what doesn't. Secondly, to acknowledge that being an academy has moved from the minority into the mainstream and, as such, there are many people around us experiencing the same challenges and questions that we are.

While there is consensus beginning to emerge on key areas of good practice, there is also great variety and innovation in the approaches taken by different trusts. This makes for an exciting time to learn from each other in a culture of continual improvement. While I don't believe there is a single 'right' answer to a lot of the issues explored in this guide, I do think we need to reflect on how we reduce the time and energy spent on reaching the same point as others ahead of us on the journey have already found. Evidence-based decision-making implies that successful models and approaches will become more prevalent, but they will come from the innovation and ideas developed by the sector itself.

In many places what we have lost are the more formal structures that were provided by local authorities to support sharing of practice between trusts. This has meant that we, as a sector, are left to decide how best to make use of our collective knowledge to achieve improved outcomes for the pupils in our trusts. The Regional Schools Commissioners and Headteacher Boards have brought a welcome drive to this agenda, but it is also up to you as system leaders to help shape the collective future for education in England.

The willingness of those who have contributed to this guide shows that the appetite and expertise is there. I am confident that this guide is just part of the wider movement towards greater dialogue between us all to make sure we build a new landscape that will sustain the world-class education system in which we all so passionately believe.

Andy Guest

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Cambridge Education

This guidance has been produced by Cambridge Education for the East of England and North East London Regional Schools Commissioner. It is the basis of guidance that will in due course be made available electronically and refreshed with additional examples of the work of multi-academy trusts.

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