

The image features a minimalist, abstract design. A large, dark grey, curved shape occupies the lower half of the frame, resembling a stylized letter 'C' or a partial circle. A thin white line forms a circle that overlaps the bottom right corner of this dark shape. The text 'September 2023' is centered within the white circle. In the upper left quadrant, there is a small, light grey dot. The top right corner shows a portion of a light grey circular shape. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

September 2023

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Chapter 1

# High-quality trusts and the wider school system

This chapter covers:

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There are likely to be a number of motivating factors for schools deciding the right time to join or form a trust. The case for a fully trust-led system, published alongside the 2022 Opportunity for All white paper, may be useful to refer to. Regardless of the motivation behind whom to join that should always be the central focus of that decision.

A MAT is recognised as a single legal entity and as such should be seen as one organisation driven by a common purpose. A MAT that meets the needs of its pupils and community, the Department has built a focus on trust activities

- z a formal framework for sharing knowledge and progression and retention within the organisation
- z the opportunity for enhancing strategic governance structure
- z activities
- z

### Sponsors

A 'sponsor' is an organisation that assumes responsibility for a challenging school, and in most cases this is an already established academy trust. Sponsored academies are generally those schools that are deemed 'underperforming' and that the DfE has determined must be converted to academy status or rebrokered. If a school is sponsored by a MAT, its governance will be determined by that MAT's trust board.

### How MATs are governed

Every MAT consists of at least two layers, or tiers of governance. However, the vast majority of MATs have a third tier of governance. It is the trust board that carries the overall collective responsibility and accountability for the MAT. This means the trust board is ultimately responsible for all of the schools within the trust.

Those sitting on the trust board are both charity trustees and company directors and have responsibilities under both the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006. These two sets of responsibilities result in similar but distinct duties that we cover later in this chapter. Trust boards will delegate responsibilities to committees, including the local tier. The role of the trust board is covered in detail in Chapter 6.

### What does 'high-quality' trusts mean?

- 1. High-Quality and Inclusive Education
- 2. School Improvement
- 3. Workforce
- 4. Financial Sustainability
- 5. Governance

The focus on trust strength and quality is aimed at equipping the department to make decisions on how trusts grow and take on schools based on their proven capacity and improvement record, as well as identifying sustained educational failures.

### Trust identity

Trust identity is defined as the challenges and considerations based on the identity and make-up of their trust.

Trust size tends to be about in terms of the size of the trust. Trust size tends to be about in terms of the size of the trust. Trust size tends to be about in terms of the size of the trust.

School phase within the MAT will also impact the overall size in terms of pupil numbers. A MAT that only consists of primary schools will likely have fewer pupils per school but may cover more sites when compared to a MAT that only