
The 10 Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Trusts

The ten characteristics below establish a definition that categorises the development of each characteristic against four possible stages of maturity.

- **Beginning**-this could as the definition suggests, just be an indicator that the trust is new and that whilst the characteristic has been identified as being important, the progress is embryonic and developmental
- **Developing**-this moves beyond the recognition that the Trust has to develop this area and that it has made a strong start. It also suggests that this stage of development is starting to embed stronger and better practice in the schools to sustain their improvement
- **Embedding**-This is the stage of development that would suggest that the characteristic is moving from being developed and embedded to producing sustained quality
- **Leading**-As the definition implies, a MAT that was leading in all characteristics we would be confident that the organisation was strong, sustainable and ready to expand or support other MATS if that was desirable. One of the most effective organisations in its region and a leading player nationally.

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MAT Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
<p style="text-align: center;">OVERALL PERFORMANCE SELF ASSESSMENT</p> <p>There is clear evidence that the outcomes for young people who are educated within the MAT are exceeding previous performance and national expectations</p>	<p><i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are not yet at national averages in more than half of the academies in the trust.</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are in line with national averages in more than half of the academies in the trust.</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are above national averages in more than half of the academies in the trust.</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4 are significantly above national averages in all of the academies in the trust.</i></p>
<p>Step 1-There is a well communicated strategic vision & plan that moves seamlessly from implementation into impact. The school improvement plan can only be delivered through support from the trust and the trust priorities can only be delivered through the schools</p>	<p><i>The Trust has identified their key priorities & there is a strategic plan but it is too soon to see evidence of impact. The academies are not yet using the plan to inform their own improvement planning</i></p>	<p><i>Each Academy has links in their improvement plan to the Trust strategic plan showing the contribution they make to the trust and the academy priorities</i></p>	<p><i>The academies can provide some evidence that through their delivery of their school based plan at least 2-3 of the trust priorities are also being delivered</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust has a strategic plan that seamlessly sits within the school plans. There is clear evidence that all of the trust priorities are being delivered by the school. It is impossible to tell who takes the credit as the delivery and QA is united and done by both</i></p>

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<p>Step 2-There is a clearly set out accountability framework that everyone understands including what happens when key staff under-perform</p>	<p><i>The accountability is linked to line management where local academy board members hold the Principals to account. The CEO and Board are not directly involved in these discussions. The CEO is not fully held to account. Performance Management is embryonic at trust level</i></p>	<p><i>The CEO holds the Principals to account and is held to account by the Board for the performance of the trust. The CEO is accountable for standards in the academies. Performance Management of the CEO is emerging as a strength</i></p>	<p><i>The Chair of Board and the CEO hold the Principals and the chairs of academy boards to account. There is a collective responsibility for standards across the trust. Performance across the academies is not as strong as it is at senior level where it is excellent</i></p>	<p><i>There is a clear path of accountability that enables discussions to take place from the Board Chair to the CEO, the Board Chair to the Academy Board Chair, the CEO to Principals and Principals to their team members that improves standards. Performance Management is excellent trust wide</i></p>

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<p>Step 3-There are clear quality assurance systems in place to improve consistency and performance</p>	<p><i>The trust has started to explore the elements of common practice that it believes will lead to greater consistency across the trust. Examples include shared CPD and agreed data collection points and common educational policies across the trust</i></p>	<p><i>The trust has moved towards a stronger commitment to shared approaches that are improving practice. Shared CPD & data collection points are extended by peer reviews with frequent element of external challenge</i></p>	<p><i>The trust has ensured that there is a pattern of consistent practice that is now recognised as more efficient than each Academy working independently. Academies are suggesting new areas of common working practice of their own for the Trust</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust has a common understanding of what outstanding performance is. All of the chief operating systems are consistently applied by the academies who welcome this level of effective practice development</i></p>
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<p>Step 4- There is a clear delegated framework for Governance at Trust Board and Local Academy level that makes explicit the accountabilities of both boards</p>	<p><i>The governance structure lacks clarity and there is a single governing board for the whole trust. The role of members and directors is unclear in the structure and to the people involved. No academy boards are in place. All decisions for all schools are taken at board level</i></p>	<p><i>There is a MAT board where the distinction between the role of members and directors is clear. A skills audit has enabled the board to recruit skilled professionals capable of fulfilling their roles. There is clarity in terms of the roles of both boards but the structure is at an early stage of development. The values of the organisation are driven by the uniqueness of the schools not the Trust</i></p>	<p><i>The MAT board is a strength of the organisation and has been developed over time following review into a stronger unit that reflects the scale and development of the trust. The delegated authority is clear and both boards are clear in their responsibilities. The MAT board protects and extends the values of the organisation</i></p>	<p><i>The board has a clear plan for delegated authority and regularly checks that it is fit for purpose. Local Academy boards are effective at quality assuring standards at their school and the CEO and central team are subject to the same scrutiny. The trust is successful as a result of the school's performance and the schools are good because of the trust. There is top-down and bottom-up accountability</i></p>
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<p>Step 5- There are clear and transparent models of financial and resource management accountability across the trust</p>	<p><i>The internal systems of financial control give too much authority to the schools in the trust. The senior financial employee is not a qualified accountant. The consequence is that the board cannot hold the schools fully to account as the systems are not set up to enable this. HR policies are inconsistent across the trust and staff could be treated differently as a result. External audit has identified a number of areas for improvement</i></p>	<p><i>The internal systems of financial control are in place and there is a clear management responsibility being enacted by the board. The schools are clear about the processes they must comply with. A Qualified accountant oversees the trust financial strategy. HR policies are common to all schools but are not being consistently implemented yet. External audit is positive but has identified a small number of areas for improvement</i></p>	<p><i>There are strong internal systems of audit that have improved over time and are now highly effective. A well-qualified central team ensures that the trust operates well as a single business. External audit has identified no significant areas of improvement</i></p>	<p><i>There are strong internal systems of audit that are exemplary in the eyes of external auditors and the EFA. The non-educational oversight of the trust is robust and underpins excellent educational delivery. The trust is the local employer of choice</i></p>

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<p>Step 6-There is a trustwide school improvement strategy that recognises the different interventions needed at different stages of the improvement journey that a school undertakes.</p>	<p><i>There is an embryonic trust wide school improvement strategy that is focused on the performance improvement in schools in significant difficulties. The trust has embedded effective attendance, behaviour and performance tracking systems to rapidly improve the schools in the early years of membership</i></p>	<p><i>The trust has a school improvement strategy that is becoming embedded and has progressed beyond the day to day core improvement needs. Systems to track data, the collection of regular KPI and a stronger performance management system are sustaining improvement in the schools.</i></p>	<p><i>The school improvement strategy is sustaining improved performance and standards are rising and improvement is rapid. The self-evaluation of the academies is maturing so that they have greater ownership of their own requirements and make more bespoke support demands of the Trust</i></p>	<p><i>The trust has improved the majority of its schools to the point at which those that were once weak now have capacity and strength to support new schools joining the MAT or schools beyond the trust. They can also peer review with confidence other schools in the trust. MAT leaders can articulate their school improvement repertoire</i></p>

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Step 7-There is a systematic programme of school to school support that is focused on the need of individual academies	<i>The trust is starting to develop a school to school support strategy. Support is delivered by talented teachers and leaders in their own schools and is framed around core improvement themes and the skills of the staff</i>	<i>The trust ensures that more teachers and leaders are making a contribution to school to school support beyond their own schools. The practice is good but needs to be more impact driven classroom support.</i>	<i>The trust's school improvement strategy balances the generic needs of the schools with the facilitation of smaller learning communities of teaching leaders who develop coaching groups with colleagues needing help</i>	<i>The trust's school improvement strategy is built around an emerging pool of talented teachers and leaders who know the impact of their work and can name it and describe it</i>
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Step 8-There is evidence of skilled management of Trust Risk indicators	<i>There is little or no evidence that risk management is structured in the Trust. Risks are managed on an individual basis and whilst successfully mitigated, do not enable the board to prevent them re-occurring</i>	<i>The Trust has a risk register in place and it is used to monitor risks that the Trust has identified as possible threats to the organisation. There is some but as yet unstructured relationships between the Trust Risk plan and those in the academies</i>	<i>The Board risk register is used to drive all improvement priorities and is the framework for agenda setting across the Trust. Each Academy has its own Register which indicates the risks that are linked to their academy as well as the ways in which board risks are mitigated</i>	<i>The Board risk is managed well and there is a clear relationship between risk and mitigation. The board has a structure in place that ensures that not only current risks are managed well but that there is a 3-5 year risk anticipation plan in place that is under regular review</i>

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<p>Step 9-There is a clear succession plan for the key posts within the MAT (CEO, FD, HR, Chair of Board, members and directors, Principals and Vice Principals)</p>	<p><i>The Trust knows that there are posts in the organisation that require a succession plan. It has not yet been able to grow capacity from within the organisation to address this. The Trust would rely on external recruitment or some internal secondments to resolve succession issues</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust has a talent management programme that supports and develops talented teachers and leaders and equips them to work effectively across the trust in different schools and roles. These blend CPD opportunities with wider leadership experience</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust has a talent management plan for emerging and senior leaders in the organisation that means the trust can deploy its most talented staff to work in more than one school on secondments or permanent transfers, creating career development and succession solutions</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust has a talent management plan that has matured and now includes staff at all levels across the trust. Senior leaders have worked in more than one trust school and middle leaders and the best teachers are deployed across the trust to sustain and deepen impact</i></p>
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<p>Step 10-There is a trust wide commitment to making a contribution to local, regional and national educational networks beyond the MAT</p>	<p><i>The schools in the Trust continue to participate in local and national networks but these are the continuation of previous practice and there is little evidence that these relationships contribute to Trust improvement or support for other schools</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust has developed partnerships with external groups beyond those that the schools have sustained. These partnerships enable the Trust to be better connected to regional and national networks that benefit children and staff</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust and the Academies play a key role in wider system leadership through membership of Teaching School Alliances, supporting other schools, leading and participating in local partnerships and sharing expertise widely. The Trust learns from and contributes to the practice of other MATs in their region</i></p>	<p><i>The Trust has a teaching school alliance, NLE, NLG and SLE who provide support across the Trust but also to schools beyond the trust. The Trust is a key part of the regional System leadership capacity to improve standards for all and works to support and challenges new and experienced MATS</i></p>
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