



Using the trust development statements

[Trust development statements](#) (TDS) set out a summary of the educational context and the department's priorities for developing a system led by high-quality trusts to transform underperforming schools within each [education investment areas](#) (EIAs). These have been informed by regional planning discussions with local authorities and dioceses and signal a change in the way we engage with the sector, with the department being more transparent on the needs of an area and the opportunities for trusts to grow and develop.

High-quality academy trusts are the key vehicle for improving educational outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged. Our best trusts are able to mobilise the power of collaboration, sharing expertise and curricular resources, and providing evidence-based teacher development to improve outcomes for children. To help achieve this, we have been working with local partners to develop a set of multi-academy trust (MAT) development priorities. We are starting this process with each of the 55 [EIAs](#) – those areas of the country where educational outcomes are weakest.

The TDS outline how we want the trust landscape to develop and set out, for example:

- where we would like to encourage local-authority-maintained schools to form or join trusts
- where we want high-quality trusts to move into an area
- where we want to make local provision more coherent through trust mergers as well as trust development.

In particular, these statements clearly signpost the types of trust growth project we want to encourage within each area. Together with local partners, the statements will enable us to establish a coherent organisation of schools in high-quality trusts to raise standards.

The statements reflect the different challenges and opportunities within each EIA. Therefore, each of the statements has a different focus depending on the local context. For example:

- the areas for further improvement
- how far a local authority area has progressed towards a fully trust-led system
- whether there are opportunities for MAT growth in specific setting types.

While each statement has been developed following engagement with local partners – including trusts, local authorities, and dioceses – the priorities represent the view of the DfE regional team. We will seek continued engagement with stakeholders as part of this

process. We also recognise that the Catholic Church and Church of England are England's largest providers of schools, and individual dioceses will have their own academy strategies. Regional directors will continue to work with dioceses to implement their academy strategies.

We are now inviting the sector to consider the statements and develop proposals on how to meet the challenges and opportunities in a given area. This includes established trusts or schools, dioceses or other groups looking to form a new trust or to join and strengthen existing trusts. We want to ensure that underperforming schools can improve and that trusts within each EIA continue to strengthen with the addition of capacity from good and outstanding schools. Increasingly, regional directors will also want to take decisions about groups of schools joining or transferring into trusts rather than on a school-by-school basis, which will help strategic planning for all partners.

We particularly welcome proposals from high-quality academy trusts that:

- offer high-quality and inclusive education
- have effective school improvement strategies
- train, recruit, develop, deploy and retain great teachers and leaders
- have effective and robust strategic governance
- have strong and effective financial management.

We actively discourage proposals that rely on unplanned incremental growth, and we anticipate that there will be smaller MATs who will want to consider merging or joining larger MATs. Where possible, any proposals should also seek to incorporate schools and single-academy trusts (SATs) with less than good Ofsted judgements and schools that, if not in a high-quality MAT, are at risk of becoming isolated.

Going forward regional directors will use these statements to inform decisions about trust growth. To sit alongside TDS is the [Trust Establishment and Growth Fund](#) (TEG) which forms part of an enhanced package of support to the trust sector to support growth, particularly in EIAs and areas of priority as determined by regional directors. Both TEG and [Trust Capacity Fund](#) (TCaF) are designed to enable trusts to grow sustainably and well, TEG through providing start-up funding for projects in their initial stages and TCaF for trusts, once growth projects are approved (please see the TCaF guidance for a description of growth projects), to increase their capacity to further support growth.

We would encourage any established trust, or a school or group looking to form a new trust or join an existing trust, to contact their local [regional director's office](#) for a discussion where we can provide more information on what opportunities may be available in each EIA and what support we can offer. We would also encourage trusts and schools to discuss their plans, where applicable, with their local authority and/or diocese.