



Department
for Education

Annex B – Trust Quality Evidence

6 July 2023

Contents

Annex B – Trust Quality Evidence	3
Overarching data principles	3
Aggregating school High-Quality and Inclusive Education performance	3
Assessing school improvement using the change in attainment history for sponsored and converter schools before and after joining a trust	3
Assessing school improvement using changes in Ofsted ratings	4
Use of school, college and MAT performance table metrics	4
Leading indicators	5
High-Quality and Inclusive Education	6
Headline metrics:	6
Example verifiers:	7
Qualitative Information:	8
School Improvement	9
Headline metrics:	9
Example verifiers:	10
Qualitative Information:	11
Workforce	12
Example verifiers:	12
Examples of qualitative information	13
Finance and Operations	14
Initial checks	14
Additional Evidence	15
Qualitative information for Financial Effectiveness:	16
Qualitative information for Financial Oversight	16
Qualitative information for System Contribution	16
Governance and Leadership	17
Initial checks:	17
Qualitative evidence:	17

Annex B – Trust Quality Evidence

This section should be read alongside:

- Section 2 of the Commissioning High-Quality Trusts document, which explains how Regions Group will use the evidence outlined.
- Annex A – Trust Quality Descriptions document, which sets out the quality factors that Regions Group can consider when making decisions.

The metrics and qualitative evidence sources below represent a sample of measures that will be used to make commissioning decisions – they are not an exhaustive list.

As the sector matures and more data becomes available, we will refine our evidence base to ensure that we continue to make decisions based on the best available information.

Information on the evidence Regions Group will assess when making decisions about special and Alternative Provision schools is set out in section two of the main guidance document.

Overarching data principles

Aggregating school High-Quality and Inclusive Education performance

The Trust level metrics in the High-Quality and Inclusive Education pillar are taken from the multi-academy trust performance tables and follow the same aggregation methodology. In brief, trust-level metrics are produced for trusts:

- that have at least three schools with results at the relevant key stage, and
- where those schools have been with the MAT for at least three academic years.

Alongside these aggregation criteria, trust measures are also weighted for:

- the number of pupils at the end of the key stage; and
- the length of time the school has been with the academy trust.

Where trusts do not feature in the multi-academy trust performance tables, for example as they do not have enough schools in a phase, consideration will instead be given to the school-level data available for the trust.

Assessing school improvement using the change in attainment history for sponsored and converter schools before and after joining a trust

Regions Group will assess a trust's capacity for school improvement by looking at the trend in each school's attainment data before and after joining a trust. Regions Group will use conversations with trusts and human judgement to take into account consistency of impact, and performance relative to similar schools.

Assessing school improvement using changes in Ofsted ratings

The school improvement verifier metrics derived from changes in school Ofsted ratings aggregate school level changes to trust level, using two key inspections: (1) a school's Ofsted rating when it joined the trust, and (2) a school's current Ofsted rating. We log improvement as cases where schools move from Requires Improvement (RI) or Inadequate when they joined a trust, and are currently rated Good/Outstanding. Decline is the inverse, where a school joined as Good/Outstanding, but is currently RI/Inadequate. We will take a non-punitive approach to assessing changes within schools that have been with the trust for less than three full academic years.

Use of school, college and MAT performance table metrics

From 2022/23, performance data for key stage 2, key stage 4 and 16-18, will be published at both school and MAT level in performance tables and data for all key stages will be available to be considered by Regions Group. 2022/23 data can be used to make comparisons between schools, colleges and trusts, and with local authority and national averages.

We continue to use performance data with caution following the impact of the pandemic, which we know affected individual schools, colleges and pupils differently.

Decisions will continue to be informed by a range of factors and not simply a single year's test or assessment results. This is in line with the principles and range of possible evidence that we will use to make commissioning decisions, as set out in this guidance.

In all circumstances where we will be considering data from both 2021/22 and 2022/23:

- KS2 data for 2022/23 may be considered alongside data from 2021/22, as the standards maintenance approach was the same in both years, but any comparisons between years will be made with caution, given ongoing pandemic impacts.
- KS4 and 16-18 data which is based on qualification outcomes cannot be compared between 2021/22 and 2022/23. This is because for the majority of qualifications that count in performance measures, a different grading approach was used in 2021/22, to take account of the impact of the pandemic. Comparisons can therefore only be made to national and local averages from the same year, and these will be made with caution, given both ongoing pandemic impacts and methodological changes to how we calculate performance measures to omit qualification grades achieved in 2020 and 2021.

Leading indicators

Many of the metrics available to Regions Group are lagging indicators that measure historical performance, but commissioners also need to consider the likely future trajectory of a trust. Factors such as pupil attendance, staff turnover, or the appointment of a new CEO with an excellent track record may help them to do so. As our data strategy evolves, we hope to identify leading indicators that help predict performance.

Trusts determine their own approaches to internal data, in addition to the metrics available to Regions Group. Identification of the right leading indicators can support trusts to monitor progress in their schools and target improvement resources effectively. As part of a sector-led approach to trust improvement, we expect that many trusts will identify their own predictive and influenceable leading indicators.

High-Quality and Inclusive Education

The High-Quality and Inclusive Education pillar is our starting point for building a hypothesis about the trust's quality. The aim of the High-Quality and Inclusive Education metrics is to incentivise trusts to put high-quality teaching and ambition for all at their heart.

The headline metrics in this pillar are aligned with the Department's approach to performance tables. We expect to maintain alignment to performance tables over time and as such, expect to reflect any changes to performance tables in future versions of this guidance.

The headline metrics present data for commissioning decisions that cover the key areas of education performance for each stage.

Headline metrics:

- **Phonics pass rate (%)**: percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics (KS1)
- **RWM (%)**: the percentage of pupils meeting expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (KS2)
- **Progress 8**: progress across 8 qualifications (KS4)
- **EBacc entry rate (%)**: percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (KS4)
- **EBacc average point score**: English Baccalaureate average point score (KS4)
- **Average point score**: the average score for students taking A levels and other qualifications (KS5)
- **Good/Outstanding schools in trust (%)**: percentage of schools in the trust with a Good/Outstanding Ofsted judgement

To help form an initial picture, headline metrics will be plotted against key verifiers. These verifiers include disadvantage, SEND and English as an additional language (EAL). Regions Group will also be able to compare this data against similar schools or trusts.

Example verifiers:

- **Reading progress:** pupils' average progress in English reading (KS2)
 - **Writing progress:** pupils' average progress in English writing (KS2)
 - **Maths progress:** pupils' average progress in mathematics (KS2)
 - **Attainment 8:** attainment across the same eight qualifications as Progress 8 (KS4)
 - **EBacc 9-4 (%):** percentage of pupils achieving 9-4 grades across English Baccalaureate subjects (KS4)
 - **Disadvantaged pupils (%):** the percentage of disadvantaged pupils in the trust
 - **EAL (%):** the percentage of pupils in the trust with English as an additional language
 - **SEND (%):** the percentage of pupils in the trust with SEND support and EHCP
-

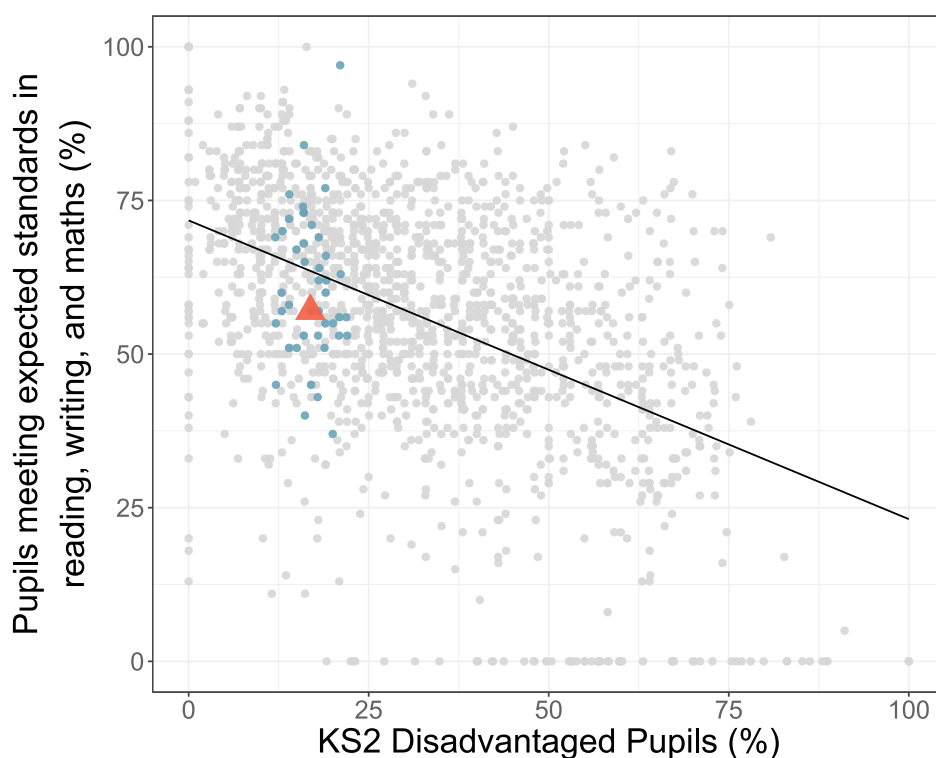


Figure 1. School-level Key Stage 2 (KS2) disadvantage pupils (%) against pupils meeting the expected standards of reading, writing and maths (RWM) (%). The school of interest is highlighted in red, and academies of similar size and levels of disadvantage are highlighted in blue. The trusts that preside over these similar schools could be compared and used to inform a longlist of trusts with a proven track record of performing well with similar schools.

Qualitative information can expand on the picture created by the headline and verifier metrics, where necessary, to deepen understanding and enable nuanced, human judgement that weights the relevant evidence against the respective needs of the schools, trusts and local areas.

Qualitative Information:

- **Ofsted reports:** provide us with a rounded assessment of the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management
 - **Regions Group conversations with both the Trust and LA:** can establish how well they collaborate in areas such as SEND/AP, admissions, sufficiency, safeguarding and attendance – these conversations will take place on a risk-based basis and will be informed by evidence
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Note: When assessing the quality of a trust with University Technical Colleges (UTCs), Regions Group will not consider Progress 8 and EBacc measures of its UTCs. This recognises that many UTCs recruit at 14 so are not responsible for KS3 progress, and also that UTCs have a technical KS4 pathway which is not compatible with the full EBacc.

School Improvement

Our ambition is for trusts to create a culture of continuous improvement in their schools, to take on challenging schools and deliver broad and sustainable improvement in previously underperforming schools.

Headline metrics:

- **Attainment trajectories:** changes in pupil attainment over time in trust schools. We will consider sponsored and converter schools separately and analyse the trajectory of performance pre and post joining the trust:
 - **RWM %:** the percentage of pupils meeting expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (KS2)
 - **Attainment 8:** attainment across eight qualifications (KS4)
 - **Average Point Score:** the average score for students taking A levels and other qualifications (KS5)
-

Regions Group will use trends in attainment over time to form an initial hypothesis of the trust's track record with school improvement. This will entail looking at the data for the trust across key attainment metrics, to identify patterns and areas for further exploration with verifier metrics. Consideration will be given to context, such as the uneven influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the consistency of impact that the trust has had.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we do not currently have a consistent timeseries of school attainment results, which is necessary to create metrics that systematically quantify changes in school attainment over time. We will start to introduce these measures from 2024/25.¹

Regions Group will refine the hypothesis by considering changes in Ofsted grade as a verifier metric. Changes are calculated by comparing a school's Ofsted rating before it joined a trust to its current Ofsted grade. Within this, we do not count changes between Good and Outstanding Ofsted grades. Where relevant we will consider the support that

¹ This may include:

All schools: Number of schools that have improved, maintained or declined in their attainment over a period of three years. We will explore how to account for the different circumstances trusts operate in.

Transformation: Improvement in pupil outcomes in schools that joined the trust with lower levels of attainment.

an incoming trust may have given to a school ahead of joining the trust which could have contributed to the change in grading.

We recognise the scale of difficulty involved in improving schools facing the toughest challenges. Verifier metrics in this pillar therefore allow for nuanced interpretation, for example by taking account of improvement from Inadequate to Requires Improvement where improvement to Good has not been possible in a single inspection cycle.

Other verifier metrics help to build a fuller picture of context and the trust's track record of taking on and improving challenging schools, for example by considering the success rate of a trust in improving schools, how quickly schools improve, the characteristics of schools that have improved, and how recently a trust has improved schools.

Example verifiers:

- **Improvement:** number of 2RI+³/Inadequate schools improved to Good/Outstanding
- **Prevention:** number of schools with a single Requires Improvement judgment improved to Good/Outstanding at first inspection
- **Maintenance:** number of Good/Outstanding schools declined to Requires Improvement/Inadequate
- **Success rate:** schools with Requires Improvement/Inadequate judgments improved to Good/Outstanding (%)
- **Trajectory:** number of schools with Requires Improvement/Inadequate judgments improved within first inspection in trust
- **Trajectory:** number of Inadequate schools improved to Requires Improvement
- **Context:** number of 2RI+/Inadequate schools that have joined the trust, taking account of how long they have been with the trust
- **Context:** characteristics of schools that have joined the trust (pupil composition and historical school-level data)
- **Recent track record:** number of schools with Requires Improvement/Inadequate judgments that have improved to Good/Outstanding under the trust in the past five years
- **Attendance:** trends in persistent absence in trust schools
- **Transfers:** number of schools transferred into and out of the trust

³ 2RI+ refers to a school with consecutive Requires Improvement Ofsted judgements.

Qualitative information also plays a role in decision-making. Additional intelligence requested from trusts may be used to add context to the assessment based on metrics. In particular, it will help to further contextualise the trusts' school improvement capacity, experience and strategy.

Qualitative Information:

- Current capacity to provide school improvement support
 - Experience with similar schools
 - Clear and effective school improvement strategy
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Workforce

Historically, Regions Group has generally not considered the metrics in this pillar within commissioning decisions. In an increasingly trust-led system, however, the role of trusts as employers responsible for training and developing high-quality teachers and leaders, is significant.

There are limitations to the trust-level workforce data currently available, and as a result some areas of the workforce trust quality descriptions will not immediately feature within commissioning decisions. Over time we expect the Department's approach to workforce data to better reflect the trust-led nature of the school system, and we will evolve our approach to workforce metrics accordingly. We will work with the sector with the intention to identify headline metrics for this pillar that can be used from 2024/25 academic year.

Example verifiers:

- **Teacher retention:** percentage of teachers leaving the state-funded school system
- **Teacher retention:** percentage of teachers leaving the trust
- **Leadership retention:** percentage of leaders leaving the state-funded school system
- **Leadership retention:** percentage of leaders leaving the trust
- **Teacher experience:** percentage of teachers with less than three years' experience
- **Continuing Professional Development:** percentage take-up of National Professional Qualifications

Our workforce metrics for 2023/24 aim to recognise the contribution of trusts to teacher and leader retention. It is important to understand these metrics in the context that they have been delivered, as factors such as deprivation and geography can have a significant influence on staff leaver rates.

The verifier metrics and relevant qualitative evidence will therefore be used as a starting point for supportive discussion with trusts, rather than being determining quality judgements on their own. This will provide trusts with the opportunity to present relevant evidence (to ensure that relevant context is factored in), and to outline any actions taken by the trust to influence outcomes.

Examples of qualitative information

- **Staff engagement:** for example, if a trust has internal people survey data
 - **Leaver destinations:** for example, if staff have moved between the state-funded and independent school sectors
 - **Workload:** how the trust is managing workload, prioritising wellbeing and supporting staff
 - **Ofsted reports:** where there is relevant information, for example within consideration of Leadership and Management
 - **Continuing Professional Development:** how the trust is improving quality in its workforce, especially the quality of teaching
-

Finance and Operations

Finance and operations metrics will be used to perform both an initial assessment of a trust's financial performance and an in-depth assessment to help inform the overall commissioning decision. Regions Group will use headline metrics and verifiers. If further information is required, a qualitative report using data already held by the ESFA will be produced to support commissioning decisions.

For example, when performing an initial check, Regions Group will look for any major financial management concerns which may preclude the trust from being further considered for growth at that time.

Initial checks

- **In receipt of a notice to improve (Ntl):** an Ntl is issued where the ESFA has major concerns about the financial management or financial governance of a trust. An Ntl describes what a trust must do to address these concerns.
- **The Academy Trust's current financial situation (deficit position):** deficit refers to instances where a trust is in a negative (cumulative) revenue reserves position as at the previous year-end 31 August. It will have no available reserves to draw upon in the current financial year.

When performing an assessment of a trust's quality under the finance and operations pillar, further information surrounding the financial performance of a trust will be considered.

Additional Evidence

- **Current and future financial trends through consideration of academy trusts Budget Forecast Returns and Account Returns:** this identifies trusts with either low or very low volatility over time, coupled with stable finances as evidence of financial strength.
 - **Low ratio of assets-to-liabilities:** this is a widely recognised financial indicator that looks at total-debt-to-total-assets ratio and compares the total amount of liabilities of a trust to all of its assets. Higher ratios indicate more debt.
 - **Current serious financial regulatory concern:** where a trust is not meeting its regulatory requirements within its Funding Agreement and/or Academy Trust Handbook, the ESFA will determine the severity of the breach and intervene appropriately.
-

If further information is required, then ESFA will provide qualitative evidence which will help to assess a trust's financial strengths and weaknesses. This will be used where appropriate to hold supportive conversations with academy trusts to help trusts strengthen their financial stability and capability allowing them to grow sustainably. The three main areas for consideration are as follows:

- Trusts' Financial Effectiveness
- Financial Oversight
- Trusts' System Contribution

Qualitative information for Financial Effectiveness:

- Trends in expenditure across key expenditure categories
- Maintaining healthy levels of reserves that can support growth
- Consideration of trusts financial operating model

Qualitative information for Financial Oversight

- Management letter feedback
- Trusts' overall financial oversight approach
- Other indicators of good oversight

Qualitative information for System Contribution

- Trusts' broader system contribution
 - Trusts' support across the sector
-

The qualitative report is designed to provide a broad overview of all three areas. As trusts have a variety of financial models and school types, it will not provide benchmarking. For example, expectations for larger trusts on how they provide system contribution will be different from smaller trusts.

Governance and Leadership

The Governance and Leadership pillar is made up of qualitative evidence only. We recognise that not all evidence included in this pillar will be considered for every commissioning decision. Regions Group will take a risk-based approach and consider evidence related to Governance and Leadership in more detail where necessary.

Initial checks:

- Trust is not in receipt of an open Notice to Improve in relation to Governance and no concerns have been raised regarding the trust's governance compliance
-

When performing an initial check, Regions Group will check that the trust is not in receipt of a Notice to Improve in relation to Governance and that no significant concerns regarding governance compliance have been raised. If any serious concerns are raised, trusts will not be considered for growth at that time.

When performing a detailed assessment of the trust's Leadership and Governance, Regions Group will make a judgement based on qualitative evidence held by the department or provided by the trust, focusing on the most significant factors. This might include the sources below.

Qualitative evidence:

- Governance data published on [Get Information About Schools](#) or on the trust's website
 - Scrutiny of board proceedings and key documents, e.g. scheme of delegation
 - Evidence of self-assessment, e.g. the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist, board skills audits
 - External assessments, e.g. External Reviews of Governance.
 - Conversations with CEO/chair/trustees/members
 - Evidence from Ofsted inspection reports relating to Leadership and Management
 - Evidence from the trust's internal audit annual summary report
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