



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Governance in multi-academy trusts

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Note: The approved Department for Education (DfE) terms have been used throughout this publication but you will notice that the case study academies use their own terms, and these have been retained where they arise.

Introduction

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Welcome to the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) and to this guide, which, through a series of case studies and accounts of practice, explores governance in multi-academy trusts (MATs). You will find this guide useful if you are involved in the governance or leadership of a school that:

- is considering becoming part of a MAT
- is considering converting to MAT status
- has been invited to become an academy
- is interested in finding out more about governance in MATs
- is reviewing governance in its MAT

The resource aims to offer support and guidance to governors of maintained schools, to trustees and local governors of existing MATs, as well as to school leaders. It will help them find out more about the MAT model by exploring the key benefits and opportunities that it offers. The resource also provides an overview of educational legislation relating to MATs, and looks at the skills and attributes that MAT trustees and chairs need for effective governance.

It also sets out a number of key questions that governors and school leaders in maintained schools need to ask as they consider the MAT model, and offers seven signposts to success.

The guide is relevant to all types of school in England, including church schools. It offers a brief overview of the unique implications for church schools considering a MAT model.

It can be used by governors and school leaders in a variety of ways, including:

- for personal reading and reference
- for discussions around specific sections or case studies with working parties, small governor groups or full governing bodies
- *Key governor skills and attributes* (see page 7), as a starting point for the development of a skills-based set of criteria for governor selection and recruitment
- *Key questions that governors in maintained schools should ask* (see page 8), to support research and the development of themed working parties, or as a checklist

Why a MAT model?

Sponsor headteachers and chairs of governors interviewed for this publication cited a strong sense of moral purpose and an aspiration to improve the quality of teaching and learning as key drivers for adopting a MAT model. It has enabled them to build on existing partnerships, work collaboratively and support schools to improve attainment.

The MAT model has also allowed them to capitalise on the benefits of this approach, including:

- sharing best practice
- economic benefits, such as centralised services
- the ability to focus funds where they are most needed
- increased and flexible staffing resources
- the opportunity to establish succession planning programmes and, in doing so, retain good staff who might otherwise move on – including headteachers

For some schools, a MAT model has enabled them to remain local but also to grow and expand, and support a wider network of schools. Equally, the MAT model offers a school the potential to retain its unique characteristics and maintain its own local governing body; it also offers headteachers a high degree of autonomy in leading their schools, whilst giving them the freedom to focus on teaching and learning.

Those schools invited to become academies all sought sponsors whose philosophy and values were strongly aligned with their own. They also valued the experience and expertise in school improvement that their sponsor offered. This support structure, time and expertise made a significant difference to principals and chairs of the local governing bodies by allowing them to maintain a strong focus on teaching and learning. Some schools are already seeing the benefits of being part of a MAT, including:

- high-quality staff development
- enrichment opportunities for students
- investment in school facilities
- greater community involvement
- a clearer identity and focus
- a stronger focus on teaching and learning
- a stronger focus on data and pupil attainment
- more effective governance

Many of the reasons and benefits outlined above for becoming or joining a MAT are reflected and expanded in the case studies included here.

Regulations

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There is nothing in education legislation that prescribes how MATs must be composed. Academies are governed through their articles of association. The Department for Education's MAT model articles and memorandum (available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-model-memorandum-and-articles-of-association) contains information about trustees and on how meetings are managed. The only prescriptions are as follows¹:

- There must be at least three signatory members.
- The CEO is a trustee, unless they themselves choose not to be.
- There will be two elected parent trustees or representatives, either on the board of the MAT or on each of the local governing bodies.
- The number of trustees that are local authority influenced cannot exceed 20% (see article 140).
- The number of members that are local authority influenced cannot exceed 19.9% (see article 139).

The relationship between the trust and the secretary of state for education is set out in a legal document known as the funding agreement. The funding agreement and the *Academies Financial Handbook* are two key documents that all trustees need to be aware of. The *Academies Financial Handbook* sets out the related duties and obligations of academy trusts, and non-compliance with the funding agreement could, ultimately, lead to the secretary of state rescinding the academy order.

Governors must also provide an annual governance statement, which is published by the Education Funding Agency (under the 'Academies Accounts Direction') and which should explain governance structures.

¹ Information correct as of April 2014. Refer to model articles and Governor's Handbook for current information.

Governance in MATs²

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In a multi-academy trust, a single trust is responsible for a number of academies. The MAT consists of the members and the trustees.

Members

The members are akin to the shareholders of a company. They have ultimate control over the academy trust, with the ability to appoint some of the trustees and the right to amend the trust's articles of association.

Trustees

The trustees are responsible for the same three core governance functions performed by the governing body in a maintained school: setting the direction, holding the headteacher to account and ensuring financial probity. As charity trustees, they must also ensure that they are complying with charity law requirements. Academy trusts are charitable companies and the trustees are company directors and must comply with company law requirements. This may sound daunting, but, in reality, the duties are largely the same as those of a governor of a maintained school, such as regularly attending meetings, managing conflicts of interest, seeking advice from the academy's leadership team and ensuring the academy has appropriate procedures in place for reporting financial information.

The model articles state that the chair of the board of trustees will also be a member, thereby ensuring a link between the two layers. However, while trustees can also serve as members, the most effective governance models recognise that the members are responsible for holding the trustees to account. Some separation between those serving as trustees and those serving as members is, therefore, desirable for achieving robust accountability.

Local governors

Individuals who sit on local governing bodies (LGBs) are referred to as 'local governors'. This is because trustees can delegate governance functions to the local level. Trustees have complete discretion over what is delegated to each LGB. They may, for example, decide to delegate all functions to academies in the chain that are performing well and only a few to those academies that need greater support. Alternatively, where a MAT wishes to retain all governance functions centrally, it may establish an advisory body at the school level, which has no formal governance function but which advises the board of trustees on its decisions.

² Information correct as of April 2014. Refer to model articles and Governor's Handbook for current information.

The details of what has been delegated from the trustees to local governors should be detailed in a scheme of delegation for each LGB. This should make it clear what functions the trustees have delegated to the LGB and for which academies. It is important to note that local governors are not trustees of the academy trust, unless they also sit on the academy trust board.

Everyone involved in the MAT governance arrangements should ensure that they understand what their role is. This should be clear from the scheme of delegation. It should be noted, however, that even where trustees have delegated functions to local governors, the trustees remain accountable and responsible for these functions. Trustees should, therefore, be satisfied about the LGB's ability to adequately perform any functions delegated to them.

It is understood that the Department for Education is considering using the next version of the funding agreement and model articles to give MATs even greater flexibility in their governance arrangements. This would allow a MAT to establish an LGB that is responsible for more than one academy. The DfE also intends to remove the current requirement that, where an academy does not have a LGB, it must have an advisory body. This would be replaced with a more general requirement that the governance of each academy must be informed by local intelligence. This will shift the focus away from prescribing structures to focusing on outcomes, leaving the MAT free to decide what mechanism would work best for each academy in the chain.

The role of trustees and local governors in MATs

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In his speech to the 2013 National Governors' Association Summer conference, Schools Minister Lord Nash recommended that more should be done to attract highly talented and committed people to volunteer as school governors and academy trustees. He called for all schools to have a dynamic board akin to the board of company or charity, focused on its core strategic functions. He described governors and trustees as engaged and energetic non-executive leaders who:

- are driven by their core strategic functions of setting the vision, holding the headteacher to account for results and making sure money is well spent
- sit on boards that are no bigger than they have to be
- are curious about what's going on in the classroom and aren't afraid to innovate
- focus ruthlessly on what really matters: raising standards

The chairs of governors and headteachers interviewed for the case studies and accounts of practice in this publication confirmed the importance of recruiting and selecting high-calibre governors who are able to adopt a strategic view of the trust as a whole, as well as the individual schools within it. Business, legal and financial skills and understanding were almost unanimously regarded as a necessity for the role of chair of governors.

In their role as trustees, the chairs of governors felt they had increased responsibility and accountability and needed more time and stamina to fulfil their roles. The roles and responsibilities of chairs of local governing bodies varied across the case studies, with some chairs of governors maintaining a more traditional role, with high levels of autonomy and responsibility for budgets, staffing and health and safety.

For others, the role had changed considerably and was focused specifically on monitoring data and the quality of teaching and learning. Where this occurred, the chairs of governors and headteachers did not see this as a loss of autonomy or power but, instead, as a positive change that enabled them to focus on improving standards rather than worrying about budgets and HR.

There was a strong feeling amongst the chairs of governors that working collaboratively was a major benefit of being part of a multi-academy trust. In the initial stages of the process of converting to a MAT, anxieties had arisen about where the power within the MAT would lie and what would happen to them as governors and to their roles and responsibilities; but it was clear, from speaking to the chairs of governors and headteachers, that these fears had been assuaged and that the many benefits of being part of a MAT were quickly becoming apparent and having a positive impact on their schools.

It is worth noting that governors should be very clear about what they can expect from their MAT. It may involve a potential loss of power, but, equally, it may also mean that schools within the MAT have their financial systems, corporate governance and legal issues managed for them. This, in turn, may mean they are free to focus on the core business of their pupils' attainment and progress.

Key governor skills and attributes

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This section of the publication provides an overview of the skills and attributes that interviewees felt were key for effective governance. Many agreed that the changes to school organisation and the increasing levels of accountability and responsibility required high-calibre trustees (and local governors) with specific skills and attributes, who were able to lead school improvement and develop dynamic boards of trustees.

Trustees are not expected to possess all of these skills and the list is not intended to be used as a definitive list but, rather, as a starting point for consideration and further exploration. Trustees are invited to use the list of skills and attributes outlined below in a variety of ways, for example:

- for personal reading and reference
- as a starting point for the development of a skills-based set of criteria for governor selection and recruitment
- to contribute to self-assessment and self-evaluation
- as a resource for governor training

Trustees should have the skills and attributes to:

- constantly focus on what's best for the school and pupils by challenging in a constructive manner, asking probing questions and visualising the strategic picture, in terms of both the MAT and the academies within it
- understand and effectively carry out their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, with the ability to take risks and consider dynamic and innovative options
- measure and lead school improvement and drive the necessary changes
- understand the financial and the business elements of leading a MAT, as well as the legal aspects of the role and how the trust and the business work
- work as part of a team and accept shared responsibility and accountability, as well as undertaking frequent self-evaluation in order to remain effective
- act with a strong moral purpose, integrity and honesty, and as an advocate for the MAT's values, ethos and philosophy
- express disagreement in a rational and professional manner
- adopt an entrepreneurial mind-set in order to see and make the most of opportunities that are outside the day-to-day practices of the MAT or academy
- be innovative, creative and open-minded by engaging in futures thinking and 'horizon scanning'
- ensure that they have the commitment and stamina to drive forward the MAT, as well as the will to abandon the 'good' in order to find the 'outstanding'

Key questions that governors in maintained schools should ask

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The following questions have been collated from the case studies and accounts of practice, and offer a starting point for governors in maintained schools who might be considering establishing a multi-academy trust or joining one. We hope you find them helpful and a starting point for creating your own list of key questions. It is possible to use the same questions at different stages in the development of a MAT. For example, at the start of the process, governors might ask the question, “How will it influence local links and our community work?” Once the MAT has been established, trustees can then revisit the question and ask, “How is it influencing our local links and our community work?” The same applies for schools that are considering becoming part of a MAT.

Other ways in which the questions could be used include:

- for personal reading and reflection
 - to support research and investigation at the start of the process
 - as a resource for themed working party groups
 - as a checklist
 - to inform the development of success criteria
1. What do we wish to achieve by this process? What will be the benefits for our pupils and the school, and what will be the implications for staff arising from the changes?
 2. How will these changes influence, impact and improve our levels of achievement and the quality of teaching and learning?
 3. What will the financial implications be?
 4. What powers, responsibilities and accountabilities will we have after the changes?
 5. Which organisations can we talk to, visit or ask to visit us in order to discuss their experiences, the support they provided or received, and the resources available to them?
 6. Do we have confidence in the educational experience and track record of the sponsor or school, and does it have the core competence to deliver successful school improvement and make a difference?
 7. What is it that drives the MAT or school? What is the ‘stamp in their stick of rock’ and does it match our values, vision, ethos and philosophy?
 8. Does our governing body have the necessary culture of challenge and eye for detail needed to take on these changes? If not, what options are available to us?
 9. Has the MAT or the DfE broker explained, in detail, exactly what it will mean for us, and have they explained all the terminology?
 10. What benefits will there be in terms of our reputation and the community?

Seven signposts to success

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These signposts provide seven key criteria that governors in maintained schools need to think about if their school is considering becoming a MAT or joining a MAT.

1. Understand how joining a MAT will impact governance at the school level.
Will your governing body become an advisory body or an LGB and, if the latter, what range of governance functions will be delegated to it?
2. Ensure that you are clear about the ethos and philosophy of the MAT and what the process entails, and constantly focus on how it is going to be better for the children and improve teaching and learning.
3. Gather as much information as you can from the sources available to you, including other MATs, the DfE website and broker, the National Governors' Association (NGA), Freedom and Autonomy for Schools – National Association (FASNA), the Independent Academies Association (IAA), NCTL and the web.
4. Ensure that the trustees possess the necessary skills and attributes to carry out their roles effectively, and that they are clear about their accountabilities, responsibilities and the amount of time, commitment and determination needed to carry out the changes required to become a MAT.
5. Consider appointing someone to manage the project, to ensure that it remains on track and adheres to your original aims and objectives.
6. Make your vision clear and understood to as many people as possible and encourage them to discuss, question and engage with you throughout the transitional period.
7. During the conversion phase, as chair of governors, ensure that you lead the process and are prepared to challenge in a constructive way, and that you clarify the governance, structure, roles and responsibilities.

Case studies

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This section of the publication sets out three case studies illustrating the process that schools have gone through as they establish or join a MAT.

The case studies explore the challenges that governors have faced and the benefits that are beginning to be seen. In particular, they examine the skills and attributes that governors and chairs of governors need in order to effectively lead a MAT, and the questions that governors need to consider. Each case study also offers a number of top tips. We hope you find them helpful.

They all cover the following topics:

1. Context
2. Why a MAT?
3. Governance structure
4. The role of governors
5. Challenges and barriers
6. Support structures
7. Governor skills and attributes
8. Questions that governors should ask
9. Impact and benefits
10. Top tips

The case studies can be used by governors and school leaders in a variety of ways, for example:

- for personal reading and reflection
- as a resource for governor training
- for discussions around specific sections or case studies with working parties, small governor groups or full governing bodies
- by using the 'Governor skills and attributes' sections as a starting point for the development of a skills-based set of criteria for governor selection and recruitment
- by using the 'Questions that governors should ask' sections to support research and the development of themed working parties, or as a checklist
- by offering solutions and suggestions that can be explored in relation to your own context

Case study 1: The Collaborative Academies Trust

1. Context

The Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT) is a growing multi-academy trust for primary, secondary and special schools. The trust itself is sponsored by EdisonLearning UK. Schools joining the trust connect to a wide family of other schools and partners from the UK, USA, the Middle East and China, all sharing similar core values and a collaborative approach to learning.

The Collaborative Academies Trust website

In late 2011, two Northampton primary schools and a secondary school approached EdisonLearning UK, (which was already working with 30 schools in Northampton), and asked them if they would consider establishing a MAT. The schools felt the ethos and values of the organisation were closely aligned with their own, and that EdisonLearning UK's strong track record of school improvement would make it an ideal sponsor. As a private company, EdisonLearning UK was not permitted to set up a MAT but, instead, became chief sponsor of The Collaborative Academies Trust.

The trust was incorporated in August 2012 and the three Northampton schools joined the trust in November 2012, with three Somerset primaries converting in April 2013 and a fourth due to convert in January 2014. The trust also includes a new-build primary, which is due to open in Somerset in September 2014. The schools have continued to work with their own local networks and other schools in the trust, as well as with a wider international network of EdisonLearning schools.

Kevin Crossley is the chief education and operations officer of The Collaborative Academies Trust, and Tim Nash, managing director of EdisonLearning UK, is a member director of the trust.

2. Why a MAT?

Margaret Riley, the chair of governors at Spring Lane Primary School in Northampton and an academy director, and Claire Hepher, headteacher at Priorswood Primary School in Taunton, Somerset, explained how and why their schools became part of The Collaborative Academies Trust.

Spring Lane Primary School, Northampton

The process began in 2011 when the school, a one-form entry in a deprived area of central Northampton, and with results fluctuating from year to year, was invited to take academy status by the DfE. The local authority put the school in touch with a DfE broker, who visited the school to offer support. He told them that, because the school had had good results in 2010, they would be offered a choice of sponsor.

Margaret explained that the announcement prompted a range of responses, including shock and disbelief. The school was fortunate, however, in that it had a long-standing headteacher who had maintained his passion and enthusiasm for education. It was ultimately agreed that there was little point in fighting the decision, but rather, that they should focus their energies on seeking out the most appropriate sponsor for their school and children.

The governors developed a grid of criteria based on the school's context and values, as well as the benefits and impact that different sponsors would bring. A key criterion for them was the ability to maintain some ownership of the process.

A number of organisations presented to them, including The Collaborative Academies Trust, which was in the early stages of its development. The CAT presentation was closely aligned with the school's philosophy, values and vision. Importantly, CAT reassured them that the process would be collaborative and based on a close working partnership.

A series of informal meetings and question-and-answer sessions were held at the school, which were fully supported by CAT. Parents were invited to early morning tea and toast sessions, which were used as a vehicle to share information and updates. Regular letters were also sent to parents, while evening drop-in sessions were offered for working parents.

The headteacher and Margaret assured the unions, staff, parents and governors that "every step of the way, you will know what is happening". It was a priority for both of them to make sure they were honest and open throughout the process.

The fact that the school had previously worked with EdisonLearning UK meant there were few issues from staff; the school, nevertheless, created an email procedure allowing staff to raise any questions or concerns anonymously, and held regular meetings to alleviate any potential fears or concerns. Union representatives were also able to meet with staff privately, if requested.

Interestingly, the unions commented that this conversion had been one of the "least bumpy rides", and that staff were already on-side and positive about the changes when the process began.

The school converted quickly and joined CAT in November 2012. From the outset, EdisonLearning UK and CAT have given the school a great deal of time and attention, and have been keen to ensure continued governor involvement and communication. They appointed an adviser to the school, Chris Hilliard, who makes regular visits, attends governor meetings and talks through any school-based issues. He is seen as "someone who is there for us".

It has been about changing and learning to work for new masters at the end of the day, but it feels like we are part of a family of schools: the CAT family of schools. It is very much a two-way process.

Margaret Riley

Priorswood Primary School, Taunton

On 1 September 2011, Claire Hepher was appointed headteacher at Priorswood Primary School in Taunton, Somerset. On 23 September 2011, the school went into special measures and an interim executive board (IEB) was set up to replace the existing governing body. Once a decision had been made to take academy status, a number of organisations presented to the school, including The Collaborative Academies Trust. Kevin Crossley came to speak to the school and shared The CAT model. Claire had previously attended an EdisonLearning UK workshop entitled 'A quality framework for learning and teaching', which had resonated strongly with her personal and professional beliefs. The CAT values and ethos were closely aligned with the school's own values and ethos. CAT therefore recognised and understood the journey the school had been on and was able to demonstrate to Claire how it would build on and contribute to the work the school was already doing. For Claire, it was also a chance to work collaboratively.

Simon Peck, who at the time was chair of the IEB, explained:

At Priorswood, they were looking for an overarching body with consistency across more than one school. Equally, the ethos and values that an organisation could offer them was important. They were also keen to be able to retain the best elements of local authority practice. Similarly, they were seeking to avoid some of the more fragmented aspects of the local authority system.

Kevin Crossley believes that:

A multi-academy trust offers a natural group of partners with shared accountability and shared vision and values, and it provides a clear structure and purpose for the schools within it. It also offers opportunities for collaboration – the thing which holds everything together.

As an external sponsor, EdisonLearning UK aims to be open and honest about the advantages of being chief sponsor of CAT. Essentially, the MAT enables it to demonstrate that it is possible for a business to have an altruistic approach to education, which is reflected in the fact that EdisonLearning UK has donated all its intellectual property rights to CAT and – through a tripartite agreement between CAT, the DfE and EdisonLearning UK – the company cannot profit in any way from its involvement in the Collaborative Academies Trust.

At the same time, the MAT gives EdisonLearning UK the opportunity to develop and access a huge evidence and research base which, in turn, enables it to develop and trial educational resources and materials. The MAT also offers EdisonLearning UK greater opportunities to contribute to government policy than if it were operating on its own.

3. Governance structure

Appendix 1: CAT governance structure

- Local governing body
- Board of directors
- Members/trustees

4. The role of governors

The high degree of earned autonomy and collaboration within The Collaborative Academies Trust allows schools to determine their own governance structure (albeit within a guidance framework and subject to approval by the CAT board of directors). The Northampton schools, for example, wanted to adopt a more traditional governance structure, while Claire Hepher, from Priorswood Primary in Somerset, adopted the interim executive board model, which is much smaller and operates without subcommittees. The CAT is now working with schools to decide an overall model for the trust.

Once Priorswood Primary had become an academy, the interim executive board selected and trained the new local governing body and shadowed it until it was confident that the LGB could govern effectively on its own. As part of the recruitment process, the IEB considered the specific skills that would be required by the LGB, and used local links and connections to hand pick governors.

The new local governing body of Priorswood has no subcommittees but focuses developmentally on the five strands of the EdisonLearning UK Design for School Improvement, whilst also ensuring that the more usual governance matters are covered through regular meetings of the smaller governing body. Members of the senior leadership team have the role of key lead for each of the five strands, and two or three governors are matched to each of the key leads or strands. Regular meetings are held between key leads and governors, who monitor and check progress and developments. Written reports and feedback are also submitted at governors' meetings.

Initially, the IEB held fortnightly meetings at 10am rather than in the evening. These worked well and ensured that the meetings were streamlined, focused and effective. The meetings then became monthly, and were then finally held about once or twice a half-term. This approach has been adopted by the Priorswood local governing body, which holds 10 meetings a year, between 4pm and 6pm.

When Spring Lane Primary became a CAT academy, it also offered the school the opportunity to restructure its governing body, to review its way of working, and consider the skills and attributes that governors would need. The review and restructure led to a small number of governors leaving amicably. Margaret Riley believes there is a need to deselect and reselect governors when schools become academies as it enables the school to:

- review, explore and agree the new governance rationale
- agree the code of conduct and terms of reference
- make decisions about key roles and responsibilities
- develop a charter based on ways of working

Like most effective governing bodies, a CAT local governing body is expected to set the strategic direction of the academy, be successfully focused on raising standards and have an accurate overview of how well pupils are achieving in relation to their potential and other schools. Governors are also expected to be confident in providing high levels of professional challenge and playing a significant role in the school's leadership.

For Margaret Riley, her role in school is very much the traditional role of leading the governing body, maintaining an overview of the school (including a strong focus on teaching and learning), data analysis and having an oversight of the school's finances and HR. She is also accountable to the directors of the trust. In her role as a director, Margaret is far more strategic, with a focus on the trust as a whole and with lines of accountability to its members.

Kevin Crossley points out that the directors' roles and experience vary across the board and include finance, legal issues and the overall vision for the trust.

The MAT operates the following graduated delegation structure for governing bodies, depending on their Ofsted category:

- A supported school is a sponsored academy in Ofsted category 4.
- A transitional school requires improvement but is beginning to develop Ofsted category 3.
- A good or outstanding school requires only a light touch. These are the only schools whose headteachers can be members of the board of directors.

High levels of autonomy within and across CAT are matched by high levels of accountability. Strong support and strong accountability go hand in hand. If an issue occurs or an area of weakness is identified, CAT is quick to provide support and challenge, and will work with schools and governors to find a solution that is right for them.

I know that The Collaborative Academies Trust will hold me accountable if they need to do [so]. But, equally, I feel empowered.

Claire Hepher

The multi-academy trust offers considerable support to local governing bodies and provides training to assist governors in meeting expectations. The training includes:

- an audit of the governing body
- analysis
- action planning
- identification of governors' training needs

The trust also employs Chris Hilliard and Simon Peck as CAT associates, who support governing bodies in their regions. Chris and Simon support the development of good governance across the trust by identifying and developing training and materials. They also support the development and delegation to committees, and attending governor meetings, as well as liaising with The Collaborative Academies Trust to advise on any actions required.

Every CAT school also has a school improvement partner, employed through the CAT, who offers a further degree of support and accountability.

The CAT website (<http://collaborativeacademiestrust.org/about-cat/governance/>) offers a number of useful papers relating to the role of governors, including 'The role of the local governing body', 'Supporting governance' and 'Twenty key questions for a school governing body to ask itself'. The trust is also developing a Quality Framework for Effective Governance.

5. Challenges and barriers

Margaret Riley and Claire Hepher both felt that CAT offered them excellent support throughout the process. At Spring Lane, there were a number of problematic legal and financial issues but, according to Margaret, "CAT handled these for the school and worked with them to solve the issues."

Initial discussions at Priorswood brought to light ideological differences between governors, and a further challenge for Priorswood was the length of time it took from the school going into special measures to the school becoming an academy.

6. Support structures

For Margaret and Claire, the main forms of support involved talking to other colleagues who had been through the same process and visiting other academies and trusts.

Considering local and national options was also important, as was finding out as much as they could through web research – looking at the DfE website and governor websites (such as the NGA), along with National College-commissioned research (for example, the PricewaterhouseCoopers report 'Academies: research into the leadership of sponsored and converting academies').

Governors must go out and look and find out from others what the options are and what is going to work best for you.

Margaret Riley

7. Governor skills and attributes

Claire Hepher suggests a higher calibre of governor is called for to deal with the need for increasing accountability and for governors to be strategic in terms of both the academy and the MAT. She also feels that governors need to be able to dig deep, ask probing questions and have the confidence to challenge. Essential skills include an ability to analyse data and measure school improvement, and to be able to work as part of a team and accept shared responsibility and accountability. Claire also feels it is important for governors to be advocates of the academy model and to buy into the values, ethos and philosophy of both the school and the trust.

Governors often talk about what they will do and how they will do it, but not enough about why, which links into the values and vision of the school. Governors should be able to understand the values of the school and be committed to living those values.

Kevin Crossley

For Claire, governors from different backgrounds will bring different perspectives, which, in turn, will help to bring focus and strength to the governing body.

Kevin Crossley believes that governors' skills should, increasingly, include financial acumen and an ability to interrogate data. He describes governors as the most willing of people, who act as custodians and, as such, should be paid and be part of the leadership of the school.

8. Questions that governors should ask

- Is finance or education driving this decision? (Always ensure it is education.)
- How will standards and education improve as a result of these changes?
- Do you have the necessary time and capacity for these changes to happen and be successful?
- Do you have confidence in the educational experience and track record of the organisation or MAT you are considering becoming part of? Does it have the core competence to deliver successful school improvement and make a difference?
- What is it that drives the MAT? What is the 'stamp in their stick of rock' and does it match your values, vision, ethos and philosophy?

9. Impact and benefits

As a sponsor, CAT aims to provide a wealth of experience and expertise in school improvement. It offers trust schools a range of benefits, including support with financial issues, benefits linked to economies of scale – for example, the option to buy into shared services – and the expertise of legal advisers. EdisonLearning UK also makes sure that both local and central people are available to offer support and advice to schools within the MAT.

It is clear from speaking to people within the MAT that this support structure and the levels of expertise available make a significant difference to headteachers and chairs of governors, in that it enables them to focus on teaching and learning rather than having to worry about financial and legal matters.

As Margaret Riley puts it:

It has enabled the headteacher to maintain a strong focus on teaching and learning. The CAT is hands-off in the sense of not dictating everything to the school and headteacher; but they are hands-on in a supportive way.

For Claire Hepher, the strong focus on collaboration within the MAT has given her and her staff and governors the opportunity to learn and share good practice in a number of ways as follows:

- Shared key lead days are organised, where governors and key leaders come together to explore aspects of best practice.
- Achievement teams collaborate on specific learning issues and agree solutions and future action, which is then trialled and tested back in school. The results are then shared at the next meeting, with any unresolved issues noted and referred appropriately.

- The Quality Framework for Learning and Teaching provides a common language for teachers to talk about their practice.
- Headteacher support is available, including collaboration with like-minded individuals and networking, and the chance to develop distributed leadership throughout the school by empowering middle and senior leaders.

Children within the MAT are also encouraged to work collaboratively. For example, school councils have come together to work on the development of student pledges, such as improved parent and child voice. Students also undertake joint learning walks in school.

As well as the high levels of collaboration and support offered by CAT, schools are given the opportunity to earn a high degree of autonomy to do things their own way. EdisonLearning UK has a vast range of evidence-based educational learning resources that schools can use; and CAT schools are able to use these free of charge, but the schools are not automatically expected to use them. Similarly, schools are not expected to use EdisonLearning UK consultants. When one of the schools within the MAT had specific problems with the teaching of Maths, it was agreed that an external consultant would better meet their needs. Schools are also allowed to choose their own staffing structures, roles and titles in consultation with the trust.

The Collaborative Academies Trust certainly has no desire to take over the strategic function and direction of the schools. Instead, it offers schools effective support and high levels of school improvement expertise within a nurturing and truly collaborative, yet autonomous, environment. It offers consistency of approach, strong vision and values, and a robust framework of accountability, as well as an aspiration for all of its schools to be outstanding and not accept the status quo.

As the CAT website says:

We believe in a concept of ‘collaborative autonomy’ – schools working together with common aims under a common banner they all believe in but retaining a sense of autonomy and uniqueness.

10. Top tips

1. Think about 'why' first and then about the 'how' and the 'what'.
2. You may not always be able to rely on your local authority in the future, as they may not have the capacity to support you, so you must find good partners that can work with you.
3. Remember that small changes can enthuse people, so plan for some small, easy-to-establish and positive changes. You can then work on the bigger things together.
4. Gain as much information as possible from different sources, so you can make informed choices and decisions.
5. As a governor, make sure you take a full part in the leadership of the school and that you are not just rubber-stamping decisions made by others.
6. Be rigorous about monitoring and challenging, and don't be afraid to take risks.
7. Be clear about the governing body's remit and your role.
8. Make sure you stay focused on achievement and what is best for the children.
9. Engage positively and don't fight against it. Take ownership and make it yours – otherwise it will happen to you.
10. Revisit why you are a governor: is it about children being at the heart of everything? Consider this carefully when looking at options.

Interviews for this case study were conducted with the following:

- Kevin Crossley, chief education and operations officer, The Collaborative Academies Trust
- Claire Hepher, headteacher, Priorswood Primary School
- Chris Hilliard and Simon Peck, consultants, The Collaborative Academies Trust
- Tim Nash, director, EdisonLearning UK
- Margaret Riley, chair of governors, Spring Lane Primary School, and governor representative on the MAT board of directors

Case study 2: Fylde Coast Academy Trust

1. Context

When the concept of national teaching schools was first announced in the 2010 schools white paper, 'The Importance of Teaching', Blackpool Sixth Form College (BSFC), a National Challenge partner and rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted in 2009, was immediately interested. It offered schools a leading role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and headteachers, as well as contributing to the raising of standards through school-to-school support. Recruiting good teachers to the Fylde coast was difficult, and the ability to grow and retain its own teachers was an attractive proposition. At the same time, the educational standards of many of the schools that fed into Blackpool Sixth Form College were poor and, as a result, large numbers of students were not eligible to attend the college. National teaching school status would enable the college to address these issues and open up access for many more students.

The initial selection and designation of national teaching schools did not include sixth form colleges. Therefore, in order for BSFC to achieve teaching school status, it needed to form a partnership with an outstanding secondary school. Hodgson High School, a local outstanding secondary school in the process of converting to an academy, was already involved in the Raising Attainment Partnership Programme (RAPP) and designated an advanced consultant school by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT). It invited Blackpool Sixth Form College to bid jointly to become a national teaching school.

The teaching school needed to be a distinct legal entity. To this end, a company limited by guarantee was formed, called Fylde Coast Teaching School (FCTS) Limited. It had two members: BSFC and Hodgson Academy. The members appointed directors, who were the principal and chair of governors of each member. The chairs of governors were both experienced businessmen – who between them were professionally qualified in banking, accounting and financial services – which provided a good balance for the academic and educational skills of the two principals.

Shortly afterwards, the Department for Education approached Fylde Coast Teaching School to ask whether it would consider sponsoring schools that had been asked to take academy status and, in doing so, continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and educational standards across the Fylde coast area. The Fylde Coast Teaching School was neither a school nor a trust, and did not have the appropriate legal status to take on such a role. Following discussions with the DfE and agreement by the governors of both schools, a new multi-academy trust, the Fylde Coast Academy Trust (FCAT), was formed. FCAT is a company limited by guarantee and its chief sponsor and primary member is FCTS. The other initial members are the principal and chairs of governors of Blackpool Sixth Form College and Hodgson Academy. The members appointed a board of directors comprising the principals and chairs of BSFC and Hodgson Academy, the director of children's services of Blackpool Council, the executive principal of Unity Academy and the chair of Unity Academy Council.

Unity Academy, a 3–16 year school, became FCAT's first sponsored academy on 1 September 2013. FCAT has delegated some of its responsibilities for Unity Academy to a local governing body – the academy council – via a formal scheme of delegation. FCAT appoints the members of the academy council, who are called governors.

Two high schools in Blackpool, Collegiate and Bispham High, have merged to form a single school on the Collegiate site. The new school will become an academy, sponsored by FCAT, on 1 September 2014.

For Iris Nugent, the chair of governors at Unity Academy, the process from being told that the school would need to take academy status until Unity joined FCAT took two years. The overriding concern amongst school governors, staff and parents was that an external sponsor from outside the area would be drafted in to take over. The response from governors was mixed, and many of the long-standing governors were reluctant to accept that things had to change. After many meetings and some resignations, a majority of the governors voted to proceed.

FCAT was suggested to the Unity governors as a potential sponsor, and Felicity Greeves, the principal of Blackpool Sixth Form College and a member and director of FCAT, and Tony Nicholson, the executive principal of Hodgson Academy and a member and director of FCAT, presented at a governors' meeting. They explained they were planning to establish a multi-academy trust, how it would develop and the process that they needed to go through. Their honesty and openness impressed Iris and the governors and, according to Iris, it was clear from their presentation that they were very education-minded, not driven by profit and that they put the interests of the students first. FCAT also had a strong track record of school improvement and school-to-school support. Importantly, they were local and already knew many of the children from the Fylde coast and the crucial issues in the area. As a result, Unity decided that its choice of sponsor would be FCAT.

Appendix 2: FCAT teaching school business and governance arrangements

2. Why a MAT?

A strong moral purpose and an aspiration to improve the quality of teaching and learning within the Fylde coast area drive the work of the trust. These were significant factors for both BSFC and Hodgson Academy in deciding to become a MAT.

The educational standards of many of the schools that fed into Blackpool Sixth Form College were poor. As a result, large numbers of students were not eligible to attend the college. A key driver for Felicity Greeves was to change this situation and open up access for students to achieve. The desire to maintain the sixth form college's Ofsted rating by learning from and working with other schools – in particular, Hodgson Academy – was equally important to Felicity.

A MAT offered greater autonomy for both the sponsor schools and the schools they would be sponsoring.

For John Boyle, the chair of governors at BSFC and a member and director of the MAT, the opportunity to retain good staff who might otherwise move on, and to grow their own leaders and establish a succession planning programme, was a strong incentive to seek MAT status.

Felicity Greeves, principal of Blackpool Sixth Form College, has very much been the driving force behind these developments and establishing a MAT was a way of keeping her.

John Boyle

Tim Freeman, co-director of the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance, viewed the development of a MAT as a way of influencing a much wider network of schools and allowing the teaching school alliance to reach more people and use its resources to support more schools. However, Tim had some reservations about the relationship between the MAT and the teaching school alliance.

As a teaching school alliance, each school within it has equality. If they choose to join a MAT, then they might be viewed as subordinate.

On the other hand, Tim felt that the MAT would probably be the vehicle to bring everything together and build on the existing strong partnerships and networks.

For Iris Nugent, the key reason for joining FCAT was “to keep it local and make sure that things were done with us rather than to us”.

3. Governance structure

Appendix 3: FCAT governance structure

3.1 Academy council (local governing body)

- executive principal of Unity
- principal of Unity
- up to 8 sponsor governors
- 2 staff governors
- 2 parent governors

3.2 Board of directors

- up to 12 sponsor directors
- up to 3 chairs of academy councils
- director of children's services, Blackpool Council

3.3 Members/trustees

- sponsor of FCAT – Fylde Coast Teaching School Limited
- principals and chairs of governors of Blackpool Sixth Form College and Hodgson Academy

4. The role of governors

Governance is a major issue for the multi-academy trust. Getting the right people to become governors is key.

You need high-calibre governors who can take a strategic view of the MAT and the schools within it. Too often, governors are focused on management issues and what they know and are comfortable with, and they don't focus enough on the strategic issues. Governors will have to come out of their comfort zones for these new roles with a MAT.

Felicity Greeves

A significant advantage when setting up the MAT was the fact that the governors of both Blackpool Sixth Form College and Hodgson Academy had already been through the process of establishing a teaching school alliance. This had resulted in a number of substantial changes and raised and addressed many of the questions that would have been posed in relation to becoming a MAT. The fact that the governors and, in particular, the chairs of governors have a very good understanding of the education sector and the business world was also an advantage.

When Unity became a sponsored academy, the governing body was deselected and the governors were required to reapply for their posts. The application process was rigorous, with governors completing a six-page application form and being interviewed by five different people. According to Iris Nugent, this was exactly what was needed. The process ensured that the MAT and Unity had the right people in place, with the stamina, skills and dedication to drive the expectations, and achieve the changes and results required.

John Boyle says governors should be clear about their roles. He suggests that current training needs to be reviewed in the light of these changes, and governors' roles reconceptualised. According to John, good corporate governance is required and this, in itself, is a goal for governors to strive for.

We measure our profit by educational outcomes. As a limited company, a corporate structure needs to be applied to the running of a MAT.

John Boyle

Tim Freeman also believes that effective training is key to supporting governors and ensuring consistency of approach and role. Tim suggests a standardised best practice model of training, where everyone who becomes a governor undertakes the same basic training that is relevant and specific to their role and organisation. For Tim, it isn't just about the calibre of the governors recruited; it is about how they are trained to carry out their roles in an ever-expanding corporate, accountable and strategic environment.

A governing body should be a formidable group of people who are experts in their own right, who can ask questions about education in a non-educational way.

Tim Freeman

The specific responsibilities and authorities of members, directors and academy councils within FCAT can be found in *Appendix 4*.

5. Challenges and barriers

The main concerns raised by Hodgson Academy governors focused on the school's capacity and ability to maintain its 'outstanding' Ofsted rating and its high levels of performance. The chair of governors and the headteacher were able to use the school-to-school work that Hodgson Academy had already undertaken to alleviate these concerns and to point out the potential benefits of becoming a MAT; for example, the opportunity to learn from Blackpool Sixth Form College, as well as from the schools they were supporting.

For Iris Nugent, the greatest challenge at Unity was the initial reaction of some of the governors and the continued refusal by a small minority to sign the relevant papers. With hindsight, Iris believes a number of things would have helped, including:

- talking to other governors who had been through a similar process
- making better use of the national network of governors
- having a fuller idea of what the other options were

We didn't even know what a sponsor was. Some governors thought about it like a football sponsor who comes in and then withdraws and leaves the club in debt.

Iris Nugent

For Amanda Pickup, the director of finance and personnel at Blackpool Sixth Form College, establishing a multi-academy trust with two schools is more complicated; it is vital that the two principals work well together and achieve a balance between them in terms of power and accountability. Managing relationships is unique to every MAT, but must always be a priority.

In the early stages of the conversion to MAT status, Amanda was brought in to establish the limited company and deal with solicitors and the setting up of accountancy systems. The job eventually became too much to carry out alongside the normal day-to-day work at the college, and a financial administrator was, therefore, appointed to work solely for the MAT.

6. Support structures

A strong and confident chair of governors with a corporate background helped both schools lead their governing bodies through the process of becoming a MAT. A financial administrator who worked solely for the MAT and the schools that it sponsors ensured the level of detail and support required throughout the conversion process and beyond.

7. Governor skills and attributes

Blackpool Sixth Form College has created a skills matrix for its governing body that sets out the skills required to be an effective governor. Governors are not expected to demonstrate competence in all of the areas. The purpose of the matrix is to identify which areas of expertise a governor may bring to the academy council. These areas of expertise include leadership and management, safeguarding, accountancy and audit, and curriculum design and assessment. A copy of the skills matrix can be found in *Appendix 5*.

The college also used an external agency to undertake an assessment of its governors' appetite for taking risk. This was considered an important attribute, essential for a governing body that was forward-thinking and constantly seeking to improve and develop.

Although not part of the MAT, the college also has a 'search committee', which is separate from the governing body and has the job of searching for future governors, reviewing training on an annual or termly basis, and having an overview of which governors sit on which committees and the length of time they have served on those committees.

For Felicity Greeves, a good governor needs to understand exactly what their roles and responsibilities are, as well as the roles and responsibilities of others. Similarly, they need to be able to distinguish between a business and an organisation, and have both the time and the commitment required to fulfil that role.

Iris Nugent suggests that governors need to be able to voice concerns, to challenge and ask 'why' at both board level and academy council level.

If you disagree – and you should at times – then you need to know how to put forward your point of view; but you also need to be able to listen to other points of view as well.

Iris Nugent

Iris also believes you need a degree of simple common sense and the ability to work well in a team, as well as good business sense and financial skills. Good local knowledge is also important, but this needs to go hand in hand with the wider strategic view of the MAT and the schools that it sponsors.

8. Questions that governors should ask

- Has the MAT and/or the DfE broker explained, in detail, exactly what it will mean for us, and have they explained all the terminology?
- What will the financial implications be?
- How will these changes influence and impact on our standards and levels of achievement, and the quality of teaching and learning?
- What advantages and disadvantages will there be in terms of our reputation?
- Does our governing body have the necessary culture of challenge and eye for detail needed to take on these changes?

9. Impact and benefits

An extract from the Unity Academy website outlines some of the early benefits of being part of FCAT:

We are sponsored by the Fylde Coast Academies Trust and working together significant improvements are being achieved. High quality staff development, enrichment opportunities for our students and further investment into our school facilities has already been a result. The support of a local sponsor is something that we are confident will bring our young people greater chance of success and new opportunities and experiences.

The schools within FCAT will benefit from cost-effective services, the services of a school business manager and wide-ranging expertise, experience and resources. Ultimately, economies of scale from centralised services will enable the schools to channel the savings made back into school improvement.

The MAT has boosted opportunities for staff development and enabled the creation of new roles and responsibilities; and, in doing so, it has helped to retain good staff.

Iris Nugent feels the MAT has also provided stability and has taken the spotlight off the school so that it can concentrate on improving standards and teaching and learning. The school now has high-calibre governors. FCAT directors and members guide the trust and ensure that school improvement continues. The school feels that FCAT is “totally on our side” and “we can draw on FCAT resources and expertise. The ethos at Unity is already starting to change and we are seeing the benefits of being part of the FCAT.”

10. Top tips

1. During the conversion phase to become a MAT, make sure the chair of governors leads with the principal of the MAT and establishes the governance structure and roles and responsibilities.
2. If possible, be strong enough to create a skills-based board of directors and academy councils.
3. Engage in the full legal consultation process and be open and honest. Point out and make clear the benefits to be gained.
4. Most importantly, reassure people that the school is safe and that standards won't suffer or be allowed to slip.
5. Make sure you interrogate the lawyers working for you, ask probing questions and challenge them if necessary.
6. Consider appointing project managers to see you through the conversion process.
7. Appoint a business director or someone who focuses solely on the business side of the MAT.
8. Don't underestimate the scale of the task and make sure you are doing it for the right reasons.
9. Try to eliminate any misunderstandings by keeping the language simple and using jargon-free and plain English.
10. Ensure that everyone in the MAT and in the sponsored schools understands what being a MAT means. Don't assume they already know.

Interviews for this case study were conducted with the following:

- John Boyle, member and director of Fylde Coast Academy Trust and chair of governors at Blackpool Sixth Form College
- Tim Freeman, co-director of the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance
- Felicity Greeves, principal of Blackpool Sixth Form College and a member and director of Fylde Coast Academy Trust
- Tony Nicholson, executive principal of Hodgson Academy and a member and director of Fylde Coast Academy Trust
- Iris Nugent, chair of governors at Unity Academy and a director of Fylde Coast Academy Trust
- Amanda Pickup, director of finance and personnel at Blackpool Sixth Form College
- Emily Trotter, financial administrator of Fylde Coast Academy Trust

Case study 3: Steel City Schools Partnership

30/65

1. Context

The Multi-Academy Trust has been established to ensure a local, primary led partnership of schools with an ambition to work closely with other Academies and schools in both formal and informal arrangements. The Trust aims to provide a high quality learning and cultural environment that inspires and motivates children, staff and the wider community to engage in education and learning. The “To provide a first class, innovative education for all” philosophy drives policy, practice and governance in order to achieve this. Leadership development, succession planning and capacity building are also priorities for the Trust.

All 3 schools serve the Parson Cross/Fox Hill estates in the North of Sheffield and predominantly feed into Yewlands Technology College, also an Academy. The Family of Schools has extensive history of working collaboratively, in a number of areas including Leadership and Governance, SEN, Teaching and Learning and Science and has won national awards for its work.

Steel City Schools Partnership website

The Steel City Schools Partnership multi-academy trust was formed following a long-established partnership between local schools. It is led by Montenev Primary School. In 2006, Nicola Shipman, headteacher of Montenev Primary, which was also a national support school, worked two days a week as lead headteacher for Sheffield local authority. In May 2007, Nicola was asked to support and work with Fox Hill Primary School. In July of that year, Montenev Primary was rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted. In September 2007, Montenev and Fox Hill formed a learning partnership. In December 2007, Fox Hill had an Ofsted inspection and was given notice to improve.

In December 2009, the partnership between Fox Hill and Montenev was formalised by the establishment of a federation, with Nicola as executive headteacher. In 2011–12, the Department for Education invited Fox Hill and another local school, Mansel Primary, to take academy status or risk being taken over by an external sponsor. Nicola was approached by the local authority and asked to work with them to find a permanent and local solution. After considering various options, the decision was made to become a multi-academy trust, with Mansel and Fox Hill taking academy status and Montenev becoming the sponsor school. Consultations took place across all three schools between 2012 and 2013. In April 2013, MAT status was granted by the DfE. Nicola is now executive principal of the MAT, with a principal in each of the three schools.

Another school from Rotherham is also planning to join the MAT as a sponsored academy.

2. Why a MAT?

The fact that a federation already existed between Montenev Primary and Fox Hill Primary meant the schools were already used to working collaboratively and capitalising on the advantages of this approach, including opportunities to share best practice, financial benefits and increased staffing resources. A MAT model enabled them to build on these existing partnerships and continue their school-to-school support work, as well as increasing the economic benefits by introducing common payroll, HR, insurance and finance packages.

Montenev already had a history of highly effective leadership development and a proven track record of success that had resulted in positive outcomes and high standards. This could be shared and adopted across the MAT. The MAT model was seen as a way of continuing and extending this work, and also helped to retain key staff and nurture future leaders for both the system and individual schools.

The MAT model also offered the potential for the trust to remain local but to grow and expand. It enabled each of the schools within the MAT to keep its unique and individual character and maintain its own local governing body; and it allowed each of the principals a high degree of autonomy (in terms of leading their schools), whilst still abiding by the Steel City Schools Partnership ethos and philosophy.

The reason for becoming a multi-academy trust was because we wanted to keep the schools together and didn't want outsiders taking over and rebranding the schools. Parents of Mansel and Fox Hill are passionate about the schools and their community, and it had to be a local solution that kept them together.

Mark Priest, chair of governors at Montenev Primary
and a director and member of the trust

It was also very clear that all three schools have a strong moral purpose and believed that the MAT would:

...ensure that each and every pupil across the three schools receives high-quality teaching and learning experiences, and change the negative labels that have been associated with at least one of the two sponsored schools.

Mark Priest

3. Governance structure

3.1 Local governing body (LGB)

The smaller the better because it allows the governing body to be more focused on teaching and learning.

Nicola Shipman, executive principal

Each of the schools within the MAT has a maximum of nine governing body members, comprising:

- principal
- 2 staff governors (one of whom may be co-opted)
- 3 co-opted/community governors
- 3 parent governors

Parent governors can only apply to the school that their children attend and not to others within the MAT. Other governors can, however, move from school to school.

3.2 Board of directors

- executive principal
- business director
- chair of governors at Montenev (also a member/trustee)
- chair of governors at Fox Hill
- chair of governors at Mansel
- member/trustee

3.3 Members/trustees

- chair of governors at Montenev Primary school
- business executive from HSBC
- previous chair of governors

4. The role of governors

The trust is still working through the roles and terms of reference for the local governing body, but the model adopted is one where the LGB and the role of the chair of governors is focused specifically on the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring high standards. Therefore, responsibility for big-ticket items such as health and safety, HR, the budget and staffing sits with the directors at trust level. This leaves the principal free to maintain a rigorous focus on the quality of teaching and learning, without having to worry about the more traditional areas that headteachers are usually responsible for. When recruiting a principal, the brief was for a leader of learning and not a traditional headteacher. For Sarah Wallis, chair of governors at Fox Hill, this was one of the key reasons she took up the role of chair:

Because the pressure had gone and I was able to concentrate on teaching and learning rather than budgets and buildings and, at director level, I can enjoy the strategic role because the directors lead collectively and it's not just me.

From the principal's perspective, however, it means they have to be prepared to lose a little autonomy. The model also has implications for the role of chair of governors, as they represent the principal at director level and need to be able to act on their behalf and make strategic decisions about key factors and developments, such as finance and long-term strategy.

As a director, they (along with the other directors) have the collective power and responsibility to run the trust and effect change at all levels, including the business, systems, structures and processes. Directors are answerable to the members or trustees, who are seen as shareholders of the company. The members own the company, but they have delegated responsibility to the directors and to the LGB.

The governors of the schools within the MAT were required to reapply to become members of the LGB, and chairs of governors had to apply to become directors. As the trust expands, there will be a limit of five chairs of governors allowed to sit as directors.

Sarah Wallis, chair of governors at Fox Hill and a director of the trust, explained that her role has changed significantly:

My role has very much changed now that I am both a chair of governors and a director. As a director, it is much more about strategy and the bigger picture. My old role involved taking assemblies in the school and looking at specific subjects but now, the only thing I focus on as the chair of governors at Fox Hill is the quality of teaching and learning and analysing data. I am in school much more now, and I speak to the principal more now, and challenge and ask "why?" much more. There is also a strong leadership element in my new role and to think of myself as a leader is a challenge... but I'm getting there.

5. Challenges and barriers

Overall, the governors were very positive about becoming a multi-academy trust and, ultimately, it was their decision. In the early stages of the process, there was an understandable degree of anxiety amongst the governors due, in part, to the fact that there was limited information available and a lack of understanding about what the changes would mean.

As Morag, the business director, explained:

A MAT is not a business model, it's not an education model and it's not a charity model; but you use and reflect elements of all these models. It's like being the director of a medium-sized company.

One of the key challenges for governors was to understand the role of a MAT and what that role meant for governors, parents, children and families in the local community and at system level. There was also a need to understand the specific roles that would exist within the MAT, including the new LGB and chair of governors' roles, director and member/ trustee roles, as well as the roles of principal and executive principal. Governors needed to understand what it would mean to no longer be officially part of the local authority group of schools. Mark Priest, chair of governors at Montenev and a director and member of the trust, quickly realised.

The governors would need to come out from under their comfort blankets and do things for themselves once the local authority control and support disappeared.

Similarly, as well as understanding the implications for their own roles as governors, they needed to appreciate and understand any concerns that staff might have about the changes that were taking place. Although the staff were in favour of the changes, there were still concerns from staff at Montenev Primary about their ability to support other schools whilst still maintaining their own high standards. Fortunately, the successful school-to-school support work at Fox Hill demonstrated that it could be done.

6. Support structures

Support came from various sources, including:

- talking to other MAT principals and governors
- the National College for Teaching and Leadership
- web research

- the DfE website and broker
- links to local teaching schools and the teaching school network of schools
- formal and informal partnerships
- governor training opportunities, for example, 'Taking the chair' training
- data training provided in-house

7. Governor skills and attributes

Mark Priest believes that talent identification is key for governor recruitment and specific skills and attributes are required when searching for and selecting governors and chairs of governors.

First and foremost, governors need to be prepared to lead the process of becoming a MAT and have the ability to challenge, motivate, inspire, empower and support others. A combination of strong moral purpose, integrity, honesty and openness is essential.

The continuous focus on teaching and learning and high standards also requires governors (particularly chairs of governors) to be able to interpret data and monitor performance expertly.

Governors and directors need to be able to work collectively for the good of the MAT, and to have both the time and the stamina to successfully perform their roles.

Above all else, governors need the ability to stay focused and never lose track of why they are doing it.

Mark Priest

The MAT business director, Morag Somerville, believes that governors need to be incisive and prompt when making decisions, and have a much stronger focus on the strategic elements of their role and on performance levels within the MAT.

Executive principal Nicola Shipman agrees that governors need a mixed skill set, including good business acumen, excellent communication skills and an understanding of the legal aspects of the role so they can see how the trust and the business work. In addition, governors need to realise they can no longer rely on the headteacher or principal and, as directors, that they are equals. They also need to be able to keep their role as a parent separate from their role as a governor/chair of governors and director, and distinguish between director, parent, governor and chair of governor conversations.

8. Questions that governors should ask

- Why are we doing this and what do we want to achieve?
- What will be the benefits for the pupils and our school?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current leadership and can that success be replicated across all schools?
- What implications will this have on staff and what are their biggest concerns likely to be, for example, job security, pensions and benefits?
- Have you considered and fully explored the responsibility and accountability issues? Are you clear about what will sit with you and what you will be asked to do?

9. Impact and benefits

Sarah Wallis has already seen positive improvements at Fox Hill Primary school, including greater community involvement, with parents actively supporting the changes and the emergence of a clearer identity and focus for the schools involved that didn't exist previously. The school has also benefited from the "Achievement for All" programme, which was introduced for parents whose children are underachieving. The school visits the children at home and encourages parents and children to lead the intervention programme by highlighting the issues and barriers they face.

For Mark Priest, one of the key benefits of the MAT model is that it leaves principals free to focus on teaching and learning. This has led to all teachers now knowing exactly where they are in terms of the quality and impact of the teaching and learning going on in their schools, and the provision of support and monitoring to improve any areas of weakness. There is also a leadership and learning hub, which is run in-house and which focuses on improving teachers' practice and moving everyone to 'outstanding'.

Other benefits that Mark is seeing include improved collaboration, with shared inset days and development meetings. The MAT also offers excellent continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and options to create new roles. These, in turn, offer staff the opportunity to undertake secondments and experience new roles and responsibilities across the trust. This helps the MAT to retain good teachers and staff. These opportunities also contribute to the leadership development programme and succession planning work carried out by the trust.

The MAT has developed creative learning teams – involving governors, teachers and learning support assistants from across the trust – who work collectively to develop specific areas of learning.

The MAT also draws on the collective knowledge of the community, sharing resources, knowledge and expertise. Transitions for children who move between the schools are now seamless.

Significant financial benefits are achieved by centralising services and focusing funds where they are most needed. As the sponsor school signs the funding agreement for all the schools, and the trust is legally responsible for the collective budgets, this offers greater flexibility to move money across the schools and different subject areas. In addition, the MAT can reinvest money to enhance the curriculum, offer staff training and create new posts, for example, a new catering manager who will offer hospitality to other schools and, in doing so, generate funds for the MAT.

The MAT is also considering appointing its own educational welfare officer and a new HR manager for the trust. Money saved has allowed the trust to offer scholarships to staff across the trust to enable them to take part in professional development opportunities.

10. Top tips

1. Know what you want and what you believe in, and always focus on what will be best for the children.
2. Make sure you have a business director or the equivalent to handle the business side of things.
3. Don't underestimate the amount of work that is involved and be realistic about the individual capacity you will need to set up the MAT and once it has been established.
4. Try to contribute to the process by pushing people to see things in a different way, from a different perspective; and don't be afraid to challenge.
5. Be certain that you are clear about exactly what you will be responsible and accountable for.
6. Create a space where you can work for the trust; all three schools have a 'trust room'.
7. Make sure you have joined-up thinking but maintain your uniqueness as well.
8. Try and speak to other MATs at the start of the process in order to get an idea of the kind of governance structures and roles that are possible.
9. Define the roles early on, especially the leadership roles, and learn from others.
10. Be absolutely clear about the ethos and philosophy of the MAT.

Interviews for this case study were conducted with the following people:

- Mark Priest, chair of governors at Montenev Primary School and a member/trustee and director of the MAT
- Nicola Shipman, executive principal of the Steel City Schools Partnership MAT
- Morag Somerville, business director of the Steel City Schools Partnership and associate director
- Sarah Wallis, chair of governors at Fox Hill Primary and director

Accounts of practice

39/65

This section of the publication sets out four accounts of practice that illustrate a range of different ways in which schools become part of a multi-academy trust. They also show how these schools have overcome different MAT-related issues. They are designed to provide snapshots of practice.

Governors and school leaders can use the accounts of practice in a variety of ways, for example:

- for personal reading and reflection
- as a resource for governor training
- for discussions around specific sections with working parties, small governor groups or full governing bodies
- to offer solutions and suggestions that can be explored in relation to their own context

Account of practice 1: Flying High Trust

40/65

The philosophy of the Flying High multi-academy trust is based on school-to-school support and collective responsibility. It sees its role predominantly as supporting school improvement – from underperforming schools to those growing from ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’. The headteacher, Chris Wheatley, had already seen the impact of school-to-school support through the work of the teaching school alliance he set up in 2011. At the same time, the demise of the local authority’s capacity to support schools created a potential vacuum and the possibility of primary schools being subsumed by local secondary schools. Chris realised there was a need for a strong primary organisation that had a clear moral purpose and a genuine appetite for collaboration, and applied to establish a MAT.

The Flying High MAT is a primary-only MAT and, from January 2014, includes an ‘outstanding’ school, two ‘good to outstanding’ schools, and one school in special measures, which will be the sponsored school. The ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’ schools are joining Flying High Trust because they want to become outstanding. Both of the schools know Chris and have worked with him in the past. They see the advantage of being part of a collaboration that is focused on the primary phase, and have also seen the benefits of the teaching school alliance.

When Chris was thinking about applying for MAT status, he consulted a range of sources, including the NCTL’s online academy resources, other heads who had successfully established MATs, as well as FASNA and the Department for Education broker. He also used accountants and took specific legal advice when it came to setting up the MAT. Lawyers are still being used to provide up-to-date legal advice and to support the conversion process for each academy that joins the MAT.

The MAT has appointed a director of business and finance, and a director for school improvement. The latter will spend three days a week as executive headteacher supporting the head of school in the school that is in special measures, and will also support the ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’ schools.

There is constant pressure on Chris to keep the schools on track and, at the same time, to make sure his own school, Cotgrave Candleby Lane Primary, remains outstanding. He is conscious of the capacity required to support multiple schools in special measures and currently is of the view that the MAT can only support one such school at a time, until there are sufficient schools within the MAT with ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’ capacity to support other schools in special measures.

The MAT has set out specific criteria for determining which schools – both ‘good’ to ‘outstanding’ and schools in special measures – may join the trust. A school completes an initial expression of interest, which is then evaluated against the criteria. The Flying High Trust will then carry out a due diligence review – including buildings, finance and performance – which identifies both the priorities for support for improvement, and the capacity that the school has to support others. This review informs the final decision as to whether or not the school may join the trust.

Cotgrave Candleby Lane already had a good chair of governors – a national leader of governance (NLG) who had seen what a difference good governance and leadership could make to a school – and wanted to extend this. The governing body saw the development of a MAT as a natural extension of what it was already doing. So far, the governors of the MAT haven't had to deal with opposition from staff or unions, but they are aware that support may be needed for governing bodies of schools that wish to become part of the MAT.

One of the lessons they have learnt is the importance of modelling the differences in governance roles and responsibilities between directors and local governing bodies and making explicit what these differences are. They also felt there is a need for governor training, exploring the different roles and the specific skills required at different levels.

Some of the questions that governors need to think about include:

- Do we have absolute clarity about why we are doing it, the principles underpinning it and the capacity we need to do it?
- Why do we want to become an academy? What are we looking for? How much autonomy are we prepared to give away? Where will we fit within the governance structure?
- How is it going to be better for the children and how will it improve learning and teaching?
- Are we committed to being part of a collective responsibility for a group of schools as well as our own school?
- Are we happy to have our budget top-sliced by the MAT?

An interview for this account of practice was conducted with Paul Bennett, project manager.

Account of practice 2: Howard of Effingham School

42/65

Howard of Effingham School had its MAT status confirmed on 1 November 2013, with the formation of The Howard Partnership Trust (THPT). This account of practice explores its conversion journey.

In September 2007, The Howard Partnership was formed as a collaboration of Howard of Effingham School and Thomas Knyvett College – both secondary comprehensives in Surrey. Howard of Effingham was rated 'outstanding' in 2006 and 2009, and was one of the first schools to be invited to convert to an academy. As a result of their outstanding partnership work, both schools were invited to form an academy chain of linked academies. In 2011, The Howard Partnership Education Trust was formed as an overarching umbrella trust.

The vision of the trust was to support the sustainable improvement of its schools and partners through collaborative working, in order to enhance the life chances of students and members of the local community.

Surrey County Council and the DfE asked Howard of Effingham, as a sponsor academy, to support a local primary and nursery school that had been placed in special measures by Ofsted. The support the school has provided since 2013 has already resulted in marked improvement at these schools.

The Howard Partnership Trust achieved MAT status, which enables it to support more schools in Surrey, including those in challenging circumstances and good schools that want to become outstanding schools. The number of schools in Surrey needing support is increasing, and the Howard Partnership is well positioned to help. The local authority has recently re-launched its school support service and is promoting school-to-school support. More schools, school leaders and THPT will be contributing to this work. In addition, a number of primary schools are being asked to convert to academy status and THPT has had a direct request to help with this. MAT status will also help the partnership achieve greater control and autonomy, and will enable it to form a governance structure that better meets its requirements.

Conversations about converting to a MAT started in January 2013. In March and June, governing body workshops were held to explore the concept further and to develop draft terms of reference for the local governing bodies. Consultations took place throughout the summer in each of the partnership schools. Working parties were set up in each school to address and answer any questions or concerns from parents and governors. There were few challenges or barriers, as many of the critical discussions had already taken place and key questions had already been answered when the partnership was formed. Their history of successful partnership working and respect for the key players also helped to make the process easier.

Some of the questions that arose focused on land issues, admissions and the powers that the LGB would retain as well as structures, roles and responsibilities. The governing body took time to research and explore different DfE models. It also sought specific legal advice and appointed a project manager to focus solely on the MAT.

Although it is still in its very early stages, the plan is to delegate a high degree of autonomy back to the LGB, depending on its Ofsted category, with higher degrees of autonomy for schools that are achieving high standards and good Ofsted ratings. The proposal is to allow LGBs to focus on achievement and progress, rather than some of the more traditional governance issues.

The trust will not necessarily be looking for governors with specific skills. According to Chris Williamson, chair of governors at Howard of Effingham:

You don't always need people with specific skills. People can learn skills but you can't learn attitudes as easily.

For Chris, the most important thing is that governors must always have a focus on the best for the school and the pupils, they should engage in frequent self-evaluation for effectiveness, have a willingness to adapt, trust in colleagues and be “prepared to abandon the good to find the better”.

An interview for this account of practice was conducted with Chris Williamson, chair of governors at Howard of Effingham School.

Account of practice 3: Belleville Primary School

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Belleville Primary School is a four-form entry school of 850 pupils, based on two sites in south-west London. Numbers attending the school are increasing. The chair of governors, Kate Amis, has been at Belleville for the last 15 years. In 2007, the school was rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

In November 2011, the school became an academy, having spent the previous year researching and considering conversion, holding governor workshops and consulting with parents. The governing body was split about the decision and three of the governors resigned. In July 2013, the school was granted MAT status and has now moved to a more streamlined governing body, with a maximum of 12 governors plus the headteacher.

A key incentive to become a MAT was to enable Belleville to open a new school. This option was only available once it had become a MAT. Other reasons for becoming a MAT included a desire not to be constrained by curriculum changes, to gain increased autonomy – for example, in terms of admissions policy – and to better support and reward staff. Although it would consider supporting other schools, Belleville feels the timescales are very tight and leave little time for preparation.

The existing governance structure comprises:

- members – the chair of governors plus 2 chairs of committees
- directors – 2 staff, 2 pedagogy, 1 finance, 1 curriculum, 1 executive head, 1 communications and 1 legal
- governing body – 6 parent governors, 3 staff governors (2 teaching and 1 non-teaching)
- 3 co-opted governors

It is likely that when Belleville adopts the MAT model of governance it will increase the number of members to five and have academy councils and a board of directors. Academy councils will have their powers delegated to them by the board of directors.

Top tips for governors considering becoming a MAT include:

- Use a range of sources to help you make your decision, for example, National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), the National Governors' Association (NGA), the Department for Education, web research, and other schools and governors.
- Make sure your governors' skills are fit for purpose in terms of what you expect and what needs to be done.
- Stay true to your core vision and make sure your strategy follows and supports that vision.
- Develop systems and processes that allow you to keep abreast of developments.
- Be clear about roles and responsibilities.
- Set up a subcommittee to examine research proposals and options, and make sure the right people are on it.

An interview for this account of practice was conducted with Kate Amis, chair of governors.

Account of practice 4: The Kingfisher School

45/65

The Kingfisher School has 55 pupils. It was set up in 2006 and developed out of a previously failing school. In 2013, the school was rated 'good' by Ofsted.

Following its Ofsted inspection in 2012, the school considered that academy status would offer more freedom to be innovative and creative in its approach to special needs education. Kingfisher was already in contact with other schools in Redditch and Worcester about working collaboratively, as well as a sister school in Evesham. From these discussions, and with input from the DfE, the decision was made for the Vale of Evesham School – an outstanding special school that had already been granted academy status, with approval to operate as a MAT from April 2013 – to become a sponsor school and incorporate three schools for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), of which Kingfisher was one.

The process of joining the MAT began in September 2013 and, along with the two other schools, Kingfisher School was granted academy status from 1 January 2014.

The multi-academy trust, known as Advance Trust, now comprises four schools:

- Vale of Evesham School, Evesham (sponsor school)
- Kingfisher School, Redditch (BESD)
- Riversides School, Worcester (BESD)
- Newbridge School, Worcester (short-stay school)

The sole purpose of the MAT is to build a large trust that caters only for special needs schools, although, over time, the MAT may also consider creating a mainstream section.

The governors played a significant part in the process of achieving academy status, in particular, the chair of governors and the headteacher, who collaborated closely on the planning.

Many of the questions raised by governors focused on the benefits and pitfalls of such a change and the implications it would have on the school and the children. Questions about cost and capacity were also raised, as were questions about support and where it might come from.

The support structures referred to included publications by the NGA and FASNA, meetings with local authority advisers and visits to schools that had been through a similar process.

The school is currently in the process of reducing the size of the governing body (to 10 people) and to reduce the workload on the committees (which currently number three or four). The governing body meets twice every term: once to look at educational issues and once to look at management.

Kingfisher is already enjoying some of the benefits of being part of a multi-academy trust. It will be able to expand facilities and share resources. For example, the MAT can employ its own educational psychologist – a service that had been reduced within the local authority. Most importantly, it has created a wider set of opportunities to collaborate with other schools and achieve the changes necessary to improve education for its students, to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and, of course, to achieve better results.

Succession planning is also much easier now across the MAT. Good special needs teachers are hard to replace, so having a succession planning programme alongside strong training support enables better staff retention. The MAT is also gradually building a structure for progression: deputy heads moving to heads of school, and then executive head positions where appropriate.

An interview for this account of practice was conducted with Chris Hindle, chair of governors.

Church school MATs

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This publication aims to provide support and guidance for governors of all schools in England, including church schools. However, it is important to note that, although much of the content will be helpful to governors of church schools, their situation is unique and schools considering academy status should engage as soon as possible in discussions with their diocese.

In the Catholic Church, there are effectively 19 English dioceses which could potentially have academies. The bishop of each of the dioceses is responsible for taking forward education policy in his diocese in his own way. As such, there could be 19 different ways in which dioceses may progress the academy agenda. The way in which the education framework is structured will also be different across dioceses. Some dioceses only have multi-academy trusts, some have single academies, while others have a mixture, including umbrella academy trusts. It is important to bear in mind that the consent of the diocesan bishop is required for the conversion of any Catholic school; it will be the diocese that makes decisions about what conversion will look like, in the event that consent is given.

Where a school is causing concern, it is with the diocese that the DfE will engage to agree how the school will be supported. A key principles document has been agreed with the DfE, which sets out the basis of that agreement. Governing bodies are also accountable to the diocese.

Similarly, the Church of England has a memorandum of understanding with the DfE. This stipulates that the diocese owns Church of England schools and that it is the diocese that has the first opportunity to show it is capable of providing a solution if a school is struggling. It is, therefore, to the diocese that schools should turn first. Together with the DfE, they agree on a solution.

The following extract from 'The church school of the future: review' explains some of the implications for Church of England schools.

As quasi-independent schools, academies are outside most of the core education legislation and, therefore, are accountable only to themselves for their curriculum, organisation, admissions policies and teachers' pay and conditions.

For a Church of England school to convert to academy status, a number of conditions have to be satisfied: the land and title issues have to be dealt with appropriately; the relation to the wider diocesan family of schools must be maintained; and a continuing commitment must be made to preserve the distinctive character of the foundation. Together with Roman Catholic and Methodist colleagues, the National Society and the Department for Education have drafted appropriate documentation and issued advice to DBEs [Diocesan Boards of Education] and schools.

The church school of the future: review, 2012, p.12

How the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) can help you

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As outlined in *The Role of School Governing Bodies: Government response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2013–14*, the government had doubled its investment in governance support and training offered by NCTL. Believing that high-quality clerking is key to governing body effectiveness, NCTL is designing a new training programme for clerks. This work will be carried out by NCTL, so that by March 2015:

- The Chairs of Governors' Leadership Development Programme will expand to reach over 6,500 chairs, vice-chairs and aspiring chairs.
- Designate up to a total of 535 high-quality chairs as national leaders of governance (NLG).
- Develop and roll out a programme of training for 2,000 clerks to governing bodies.
- Develop and publish training resources on governance in MATs, and in federations.
- Deliver high-quality training for governors on specific key policy priorities, including understanding performance data, driving financial efficiency in schools, and developing new performance-related pay arrangements for teachers.
- Provide resources and processes on reviews of governance.
- Leading governors' resource to be publically available.

If you are interested in getting involved in any of these areas, please email governors@education.gsi.gov.uk or visit our website: www.education.gov.uk/nationalcollege/index/roles/governors-role

More help and resources

Membership of NCTL is free and gives you access to a range of services, benefits and networking opportunities, including:

- a monthly e-newsletter
- a comprehensive library of leadership resources and research
- training events
- online seminars, discussions and networking opportunities exploring current issues, good practice, school improvement and leadership development

For more information and to register, go to www.nationalcollege.org.uk.

Primary Academy Chain Development Grant

Building on the success of the Primary Chains Grant, the DfE extended the grant in February 2014, renaming it the Primary Academy Chain Development Grant. This will fund a two-year chain development programme for multi-academy trust partnerships. A grant of up to £150,000 (depending on the size of the MAT) will provide financial support to enable new clusters of primary schools to build strong MAT partnerships, helping them to achieve their shared vision of improved results, better outcomes and significantly improved standards more quickly.

Key contacts

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Department for Education

The Department for Education (DfE) offers a range of information and advice for governors of all types of school, from guidance on the law and constitution of the governing body to committees, training and year planning.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

National Governors' Association

The National Governors' Association (NGA) is an independent membership organisation that represents school governors of maintained schools and academies in England. Its aim is to improve the wellbeing of children and young people by promoting high standards in all our schools, and improving the effectiveness of their governing bodies.

NGA materials mentioned in this document are available on the NGA website at www.nga.org.uk.

Tel: 0121 237 3780

Email: governorhq@nga.org.uk

www.nga.org.uk

GovernorLine

GovernorLine offers free, confidential advice, information and support to school governors, clerks and individuals involved directly in the governance of maintained schools in England.

The service is free, seven days a week, from 9am to 10pm on weekdays, and from 11am to 4pm at weekends.

Tel: 08000 722 181

www.education.gov.uk/a0064505/governorline-helping-you-helping-your-school

National Co-ordinators of Governor Services

National Co-ordinators of Governor Services (NCOGS) represents local authority providers of services to school governors. It is a source of good practice in training, materials and support services regionally, and also lobbies national bodies on governance issues.

www.ncogs.org.uk

SGOSS

SGOSS (formally School Governors' One Stop Shop) is an independent charity dedicated to recruiting volunteers with added-value skills and helping place them on school governing bodies across England. Its services are free to volunteers, employers, schools and local authorities.

Tel: 020 7354 9805

Email: info@sgoss.org.uk

www.sgoss.org.uk

Freedom and Autonomy for Schools – National Association (FASNA)

Freedom and Autonomy for Schools – National Association (FASNA) is a national forum for self-governing primary, secondary and special schools and academies. FASNA has an Executive Board with elections structured to ensure equal representation of primary and secondary representatives, including heads and governors as well as clerks to governing bodies.

Tel: 0115 917 0142

Email: admin@fasna.org.uk

www.fasna.org.uk

Independent Academies Association

The Independent Academies Association (IAA) is a national body representing state-funded independent schools. A membership association, it brings academy leaders together, runs events and represents members' views on education policy to ministers.

Tel: 0115 942 1238

Email: iaainfo@iaa.uk.net

www.iaa.uk.net

The Schools Network

The Schools Network provides a range of training programmes for academy and school governors, including an academy governor programme.

Specific programmes are available for governors of recently converted academies to ensure that all governors are fully up to date with their new roles and responsibilities, and chairs of academy governing bodies can join a free network to receive academy-specific updates. For further details, see www.ssatuk.co.uk/governors.

Tel: 020 7802 2300

Email: info@ssatuk.co.uk

www.ssatuk.co.uk

Schools featured in the case studies and accounts of practice

- The Collaborative Academies Trust
<http://collaborativeacademiestrust.org>
- Fylde Coast Academy Trust
www.fyldecoastteachingschool.blackpool.sch.uk/academytrust
- Steel City Schools Partnership
<http://steelcityschoolspartnership.info/SCSP/>
- Flying High Trust
<http://flyinghightrust.co.uk/>
- Howard of Effingham School
<http://thehoward.org/>
- Belleville Primary School
www.belleville-school.org.uk/home/
- The Kingfisher School
www.edulink.networcs.net/schools/Kingfisher/Pages/Default.aspx

References and resources

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All-Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership, 9 July 2012, *Effective governance for good schools: Twenty key questions for a school governing body to ask itself*. Available at www.nga.org.uk/getattachment/Resources/Useful-Documents/Twenty-Key-Questions/20-questions-for-the-GB-v2-July-2012.pdf.aspx

Church of England Archbishops' Council Education Division, 2012, *The church school of the future: review*

Department for Education, 2014, *Governors' handbook: For governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools*

Education Funding Agency, 2013, *Academies Financial Handbook 2013*

PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011, *Academies: research into the leadership of sponsored and converting academies*, Nottingham, National College

The Role of School Governing Bodies: Government response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2013–14

Unleashing greatness: Getting the best from an academised system – The Report of the Academies Commission, January 2013

Appendices

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Appendix 1: Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT) governance structure

Appendix 2: FCAT teaching school business and governance arrangements

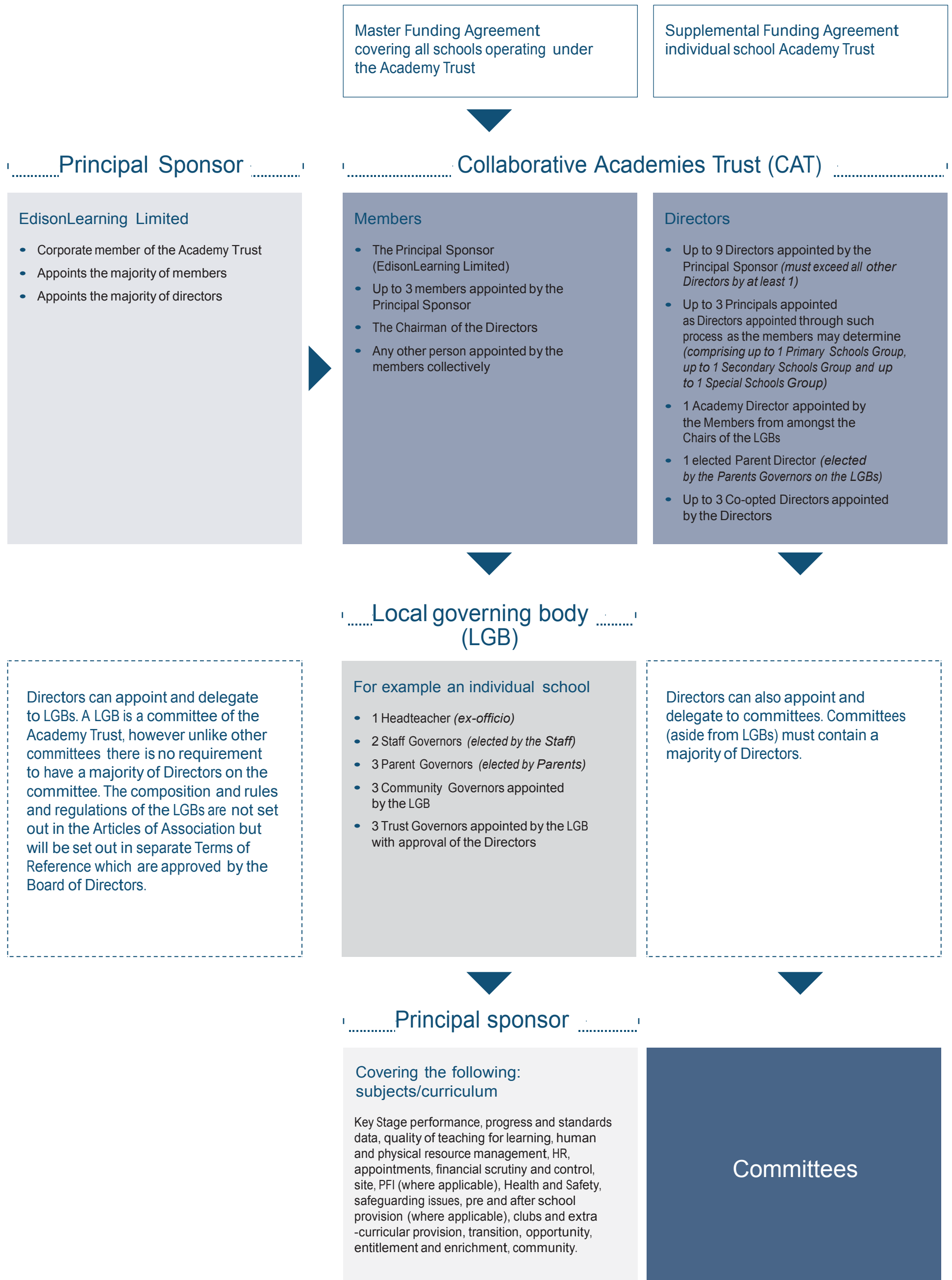
Appendix 3: FCAT governance structure

Appendix 4: FCAT responsibilities and authorities of members, directors
and academy councils

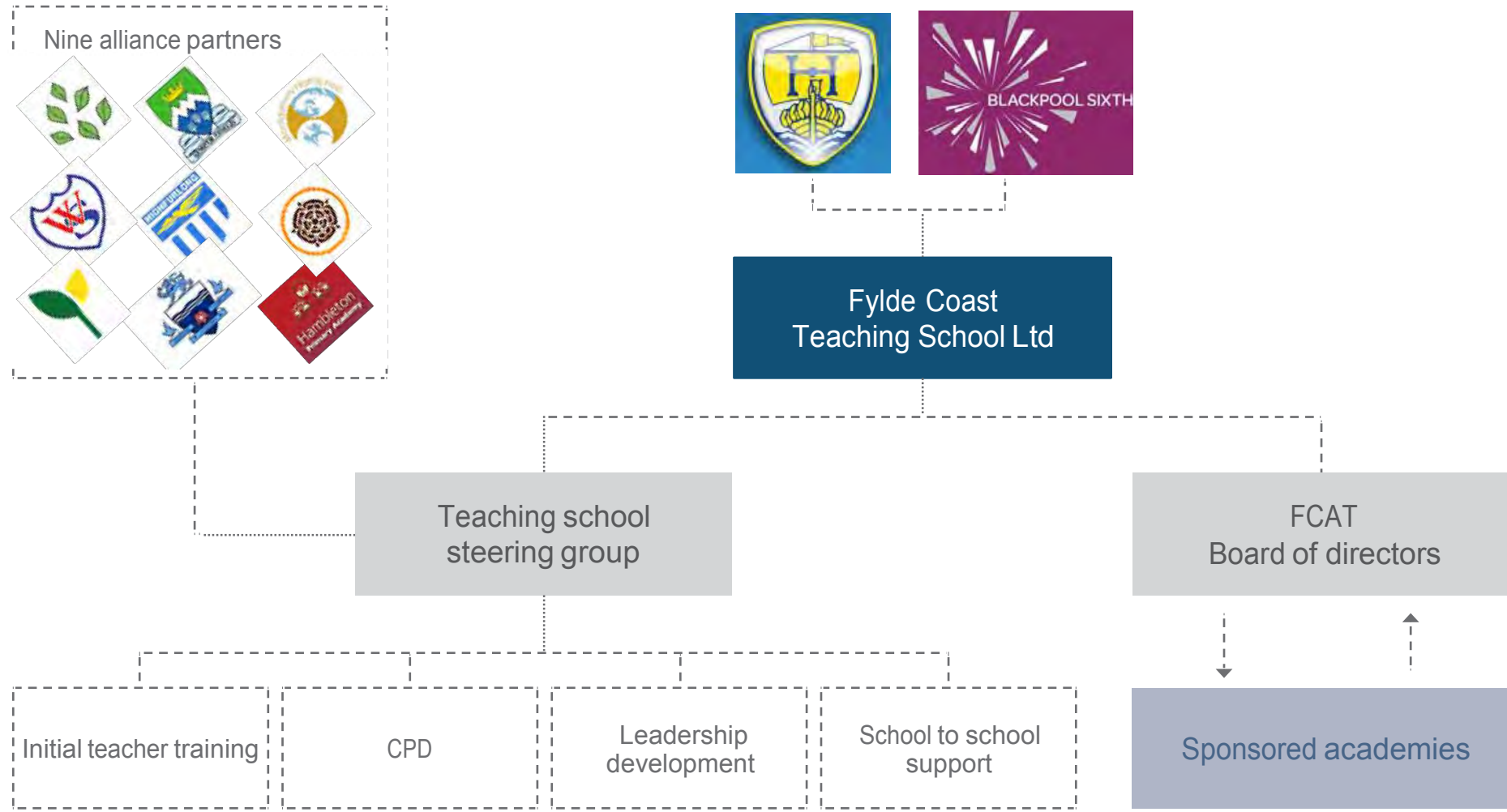
Appendix 5: FCAT governor skills matrix

Appendix 1: Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT) governance structure

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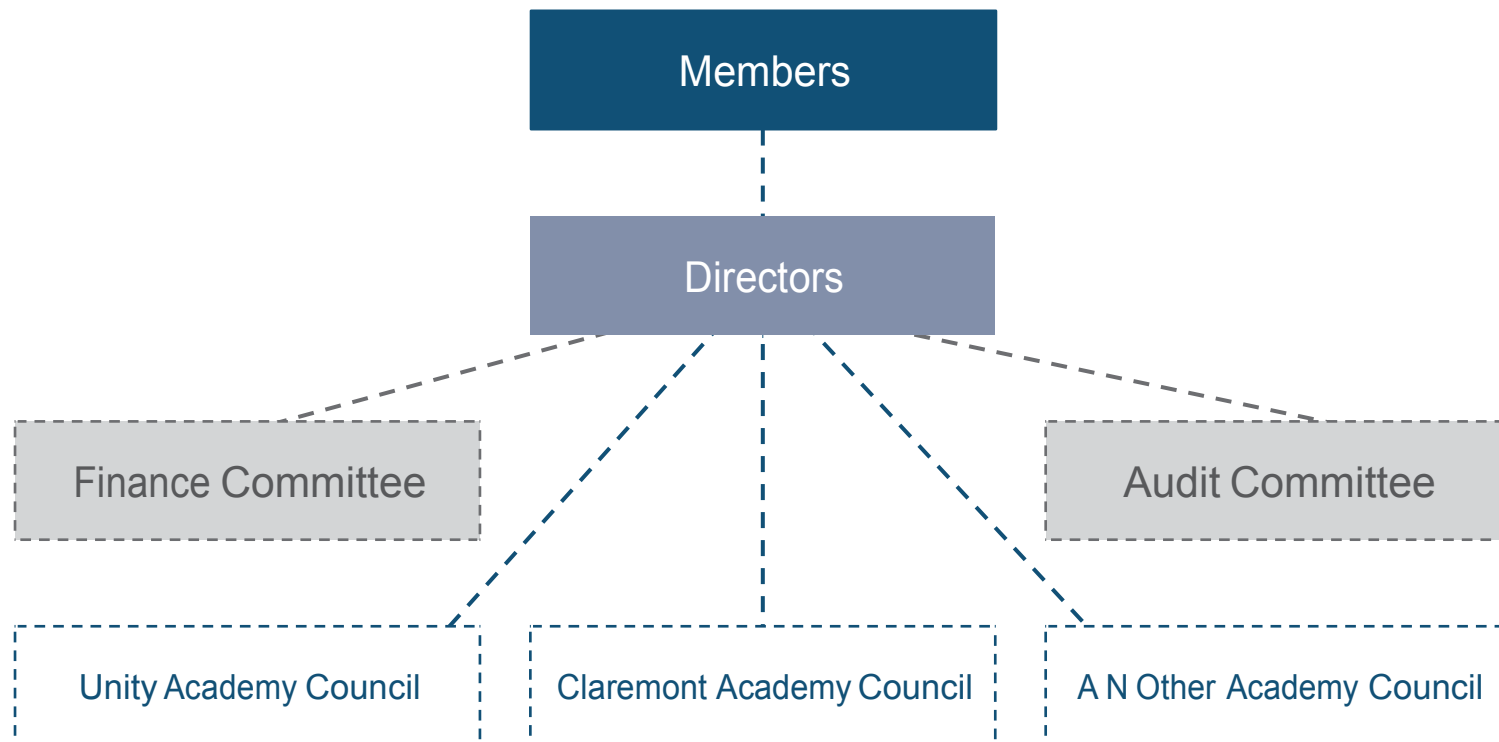


Appendix 2: FCAT teaching school business and governance arrangements



Appendix 3: FCAT governance structure

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Appendix 4: FCAT responsibilities and authorities of members/ directors and academy councils

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Board and committees

Governance level	Membership	Meetings	Responsibilities/Authorities	Reporting	References
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor of FCAT – Fylde Coast Teaching School Principals and Chairs of Governors of Blackpool 6th Form and Hodgson Academy 	AGM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To appoint/remove Sponsor Directors To sign off the financial statements and annual report To change the Articles 	N/A	N/A
Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 12 Sponsor Directors Up to 3 Chairs of Academy Councils Director of Children's Services at Blackpool Council 	6 half-termly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure quality of educational provision To challenge and monitor performance To manage finances and property To manage the Principals To exercise reasonable skill and care in carrying out their duties To ensure compliance with charity and company law To ensure operation in accordance with Funding Agreement 	Reports to Members at AGM on progress for the year and to present financial statements and annual report	Standing Orders
Finance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 4 Directors 	6 half-termly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide financial oversight 	Reports to Board of Directors through approved Minutes	Terms of Reference

Appendix 4: FCAT Responsibilities and Authorities of Members/ Directors and Academy Councils (continued)

Governance level	Membership	Meetings	Responsibilities/Authorities	Reporting	References
Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 4 Directors (not members of the Finance Committee) Attendees: Academy Principals, Academy Business Managers 	AGM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide oversight on internal controls 	Reports to Board of Directors through approved Minutes	Terms of Reference
Academy Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Principal Principal Up to 8 Sponsor Governors 2 Staff Governors 2 Parent Governors 	6 half-termly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support the vision of FCAT To provide a monitoring role in connection with the Academy To monitor and be accountable for budget setting and review To govern admissions and exclusions To monitor and be accountable for standards To act as a critical friend to the Principal To represent the views of the community 	Reports to Board of Directors through approved Minutes	Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference

Appendix 4: FCAT Responsibilities and Authorities of Members/ Directors and Academy Councils (continued)

Communication

Meeting	Communication	Provided by	Provided to
Board of Directors	Summary of meeting	Academy Principal	Academy Council
Finance Committee	Minutes of meeting	Finance Committee Chair	Board of Directors
Audit Committee	Minutes of meeting	Audit Committee Chair	Board of Directors
Academy Council	Minutes of meeting	Academy Council Chair	Board of Directors

Appendix 4: FCAT Responsibilities and Authorities of Members/ Directors and Academy Councils (continued)

Specific roles

Role	Responsibilities	Reporting	Requirements
Accounting Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate oversight of financial transactions • Regularity and propriety • Prudent and economical administration • Value for money through efficient, effective and economic use of available resources • Preparation of the statement on governance in the annual report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personally responsible to the Board of Directors and through it to the Secretary of State and Parliament • Reports to Members through annual report 	
Principal Finance Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare the annual accounts • To prepare and monitor the budget • To provide technical advice • To liaise with auditors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to the Board of Directors through written reports and meeting attendance 	Finance Director/Business Manager or equivalent
Responsible Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake a programme of work to address the risks, inform the statement of internal control and provide assurance to the external auditors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to the Audit Committee through written reports and meeting attendance 	Unpaid Non-employee Director with appropriate qualifications and/or experience OR internal auditors OR external auditors OR peer review

Appendix 5: FCAT governor skills matrix

When appointing new governors to an Academy Council, FCAT is trying to taking account of:

- the need to ensure key stakeholders are represented
- there is a balance of gender, age and ethnicity
- governors come from geographical areas and communities from which the Academy draws its students
- the Academy Council has a range of career and job backgrounds
- there is the right blend of expertise and experience for the Academy Council and its committees to work effectively

The following questions are designed to inform FCAT and will be treated as confidential.

How to fill in the questionnaire?

- What? Give an indication of your experience and/or knowledge
- How? Give details of any evidence such as posts held or qualifications achieved
- When? State the length of recent or current experience in the area
- Overall Score Give yourself an overall score on the following scale:
5 = very experienced **4** = experienced **3** = reasonable **2** = limited **1** = very limited **0** = none at all

Please be aware that you do not need to demonstrate competence in each area.

The purpose is to identify which area of expertise you may bring to the Academy Council.

Appendix 5: FCAT governor skills matrix (continued)

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Skill Area	What?	How?	When?	Overall Score
Accounting and audit				
Business efficiency				
Care and caring professions				
Communities in the local area				
Corporate governance				
Curriculum design and assessment				
Education in schools – secondary, primary or early years				
Employment law and human resource practice including CPD				

Appendix 5: FCAT governor skills matrix (continued)

63/65

Skill Area	What?	How?	When?	Overall Score
Equality and diversity				
Financial management				
Health and safety				
Management and leadership skills, in particular quality improvement processes				
Operational management				
Performance management				
Risk management				

Appendix 5: FCAT governor skills matrix (continued)

64/65

Skill Area	What?	How?	When?	Overall Score
Safeguarding				
Social issues in the area				
Sport and leisure				
Strategic planning				
Sustainability				
Young people's welfare and health				

Appendix 5: FCAT governor skills matrix (continued)

Additional Information

- Are you a parent of a child currently attending a school/academy in Blackpool?
If so, please give full details.
- Are you a member of staff currently employed at a school/academy in Blackpool?
If so, please give full details.
- Have you been a member of staff, an elected member or otherwise connected with the Local Authority or associated bodies? If so, please give full details.
- Are any of your immediate family or partner employed at or associated with a school/academy in Blackpool? If so, please give full details.

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