Academy trust survey 2017

Research report

July 2017

Rob Cirin

Department for Education

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1. Headline Findings

A representative sample of 326 multi-academy trusts (MATs) and 542 Single Academy Trusts (SATs) completed a survey that examined the reasons for conversion amongst their schools, use of their autonomy, collaboration, trust management and achieving financial efficiencies. The **headline** findings were:

Schools convert academy status to collaborate and use their autonomy to innovate

- 82 per cent of MATs felt the creation of new opportunities to collaborate contributed to the decision of their schools to become academies.

- All or most of the schools in 82 per cent of MATs and 89 per cent of SATs have procured services previously provided by the LA form another provider.

- The changes perceived to be most important for MATs and SATs relate to improved procurement, which respondents feel lead to efficiencies.

Academies understand the benefits of collaboration

- Virtually all MATs (96 per cent) with two or more academies believe their structure has facilitated collaboration, and most have formal relationships with schools outside their trust.

- The vast majority (87 per cent) of SATs support other schools.

- Most MATs, especially those that are larger, can provide examples of financial efficiencies achieved.

Trust boards focus on strategy with operational matters delegated down the accountability structure

- The Trust Board predominantly handles financial compliance, senior appointments, legal compliance, risk management and holding headteachers to account.

- The vast majority of trusts (and all larger trusts) have a qualified finance director. The average top-slice to provide central services is 4.6%.

- Most MATs have some prescription, but allow a degree of flexibility in how individual academies teach and deliver the curriculum.

- The vast majority of trusts feel that the controls placed on them by DfE/EFA are about right.

2. Summary of main findings

Academy conversion and the decision whether to join a MAT

MATs
- 82 per cent of MATs felt the creation of new opportunities to collaborate contributed to the decision of their schools to become academies, with 4 in 10 MATs believing this was the main reason for their schools converting.

- Half of the MATs in the survey reported that a shared vision and ethos was the main reason academies joined their trust.

SATs
- Schools converting to become SATs tended to do so for funding reasons – 79 per cent converted to use funding how they see fit and 71 per cent to obtain more funding for front line education (this was the main reason for 37 per cent).

- School phase is an important factor. Secondary SATs, which on average converted earlier, did so for funding-related reasons whereas primary SATs were more concerned with creating opportunities to collaborate and seek efficiencies.

- There are numerous reasons why SATs are not currently part of a MAT. These include concerns about autonomy/individual identity and not being convinced of the benefits. This is despite MAT responses, which show that schools can keep their identity.

Changes planned or made since conversion

Changes made
- Some changes are more widely made by MATs than others. The vast majority have changed their procurement and introduced savings in back-office functions but few academies in MATs have made changes to the school day or term times, let alone MATs making these types of changes trust-wide.

- The differing priorities of trust types are emphasised by the fact that SATs were more likely to have made changes at the school level such as changing the curriculum, adding non-teaching positions and introducing revenue-generating activities. Academies in MATs are more likely to make organisational-level changes such as reconstituting governing bodies.

Most important changes
- There was some commonality between MATs and SATs in terms of the five most important changes with both endorsing making back office savings and procuring services previously provided by the LA. However, some differences exist, with MATs more likely than SATs to identify changing school leadership and

reconstituting the governing body, whereas SATs are more likely than MATs to identify curriculum changes.

- There are also differences between MATs (back-office savings and changing leadership) and SATs (changing procurement and curriculum) in what they perceive to be the MOST important freedom.

Collaboration

MATs
- The vast majority (96 per cent) of MATs with two or more academies believe that their structure has facilitated collaboration and that academies within their MAT regularly collaborate in a number of areas that lead to financial savings.

- When asked to explain the benefits of collaboration, MATs focussed on the benefits of school improvement, helping teachers, and school-to-school support

- Typically, MATs are not inward looking, with the vast majority having formal relationships with other organisations at both trust and individual academy level.

- MATs are more likely to have senior-executive level formal relationships with those outside their trust than are SATs, possibly due to having more capacity at senior executive level to develop these relationships.

SATs
- As would be expected of good and outstanding schools, the vast majority (87 per cent) of SATs support other schools (identical to the figure in our report in 2014). This support comes in varying forms, from commonly cited support such as joint practice development to less common reviews of governance.

MAT Management and compliance

MAT management
- The average MAT board consists of around 8 trustees.

- The vast majority of trusts (and all larger trusts) have a qualified finance director.

- Regional management structures become common as trusts grow.

- The mean average top-slice is 4.61% of funding with over half of MATs taking between 4 and 5 per cent (interquartile range of 1, with a lower quartile of 4.0 and upper quartile of 5.0). A third vary the level of top-slice between academies. This variation is often defined by performance, size and phase.

- Most MATs have some consistency, but encourage academies to innovate in how they teach and deliver the curriculum. Best practice is shared across the MAT, which demonstrates the benefits of joining a trust.

- Financial compliance, senior appointments, legal compliance and risk management are predominantly handled by the Trust Board.

Burdens of compliance
- The vast majority of trusts feel that the controls placed on them by DfE/EFA are about right, although MATs are more likely than SATs to think that the level of burden is "about right" for governance/financial oversight and financial planning.

- Although a minority, some trusts felt that burdens should be reduced.

Financial efficiencies

Achieving efficiencies
- Use of procurement frameworks by MATs is not yet widespread (used by 55 per cent of MATs).

- Legal, payroll and HR are often outsourced by trusts, but this is particularly the case for MATs.

- The majority of MATs, especially those that are larger, can provide examples of efficiencies achieved, with trusts able to articulate areas where they have made significant savings including payroll, catering, and grounds maintenance. Almost half (47 per cent) of SATs outlined efficiencies achieved.

Generating income
- Academies generate income by allowing adult/community groups to use their facilities but only a few generate income from use of their facilities by external groups for religious instruction.

- The majority of trusts have not changed their offer of facilities to external organisations over the last year (only 20 per cent of MATs and 33 per cent of SATs), but many of those who have done so have increased prices.

3. Introduction

Academies are independent state schools that are directly funded by the government. They provide greater freedom and flexibility to heads and teachers, and promote innovation and diversity in the school system under strong accountability with the aim of raising educational standards. Every academy is operated by an academy trust, which is an exempt charity and company limited by guarantee. Every academy trust enters into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education that sets out the requirements that apply to individual academies and the trust, and the conditions to which the payment of grant is subject.

There are a number of different types of academies. Some academies have sponsors (sponsored academies) while other schools convert to become academies without a sponsor (converter academies). Many academies operate in multi-academy trust (MAT) arrangements while others operate as a standalone organisation or Single Academy Trust (SAT). The first academies were mainly underperforming secondary schools but in 2010 the programme was opened to all high performing secondary, primary and SEN schools, as well as pupil referral units and post-16 institutions. Free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools are new academies which open in direct response to parental and employer demand or local need for new school places.

Academies have more autonomy than local authority maintained schools in a number of areas, including how they use the national curriculum and their ability to hire teachers who do not hold qualified teacher status. In July 2014, the Department for Education published its first research report that examined how academies used their autonomy[1]; this report updates the department's knowledge about academies and MATs. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of academies in MATs since 2014, so the decision was made to collect responses at trust level for academies in MATs rather than contacting the individual academies within them. Data for SATs were collected in the same way as in 2014.

The majority of the analysis compares responses between MATs and SATs and the reader needs to keep in mind that MATs were responding on behalf of their academies whereas SATs were responding on their own behalf. Size of MAT is also an important variable for analysis. Around a quarter of MATs are 'empty', which means that they currently only contain a single school, but this structure was created for those who expert to grow and support others. In some cases, these schools were removed from the analysis because the questions were not intended to apply to single schools. It is important to note that the analysis reports perceptions and shows where there are correlations between becoming an academy and subsequent outcomes, but it cannot prove causal links.

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[1] Cirin (2014), Do academies make use of their autonomy? Department for Education

4. Methodology and sample

An online survey was scripted by BMG Research and sent to 1045 Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) and 1637 Single Academy Trusts (SATs) which have been academies since at least January 2016. The response period was between 21 November and 16 December 2016.

A total of 326 MATs and 542 SATs completed the survey, which means the response rates were 31 per cent for MATs and 33 per cent for SATs. The survey included 59 responses from schools classified as MATs that currently only consist of one school.

The tables below demonstrates that the survey is reasonably representative of the MAT and SAT populations.

Table 1 Survey respondents compared to the actual population by RSC region

	RSC Region							
	EENEL	EMH	LWY	North	NWLSC	SESL	SW	WM
Proportion of MAT population	12%	12%	11%	8%	14%	17%	12%	14%
Proportion of MAT responses	11%	12%	12%	10%	11%	19%	11%	15%
Proportion of SAT population	11%	15%	10%	5%	18%	13%	15%	13%
Proportion of SAT responses	12%	15%	11%	6%	18%	14%	10%	15%

Table 2 Survey respondents compared to actual population by size of MAT

	Number of academies in MAT						
	1	2	3	4	5	6 to 10	11 plus
Proportion of population	24%	26%	16%	11%	6%	12%	5%
Proportion of responses	18%	23%	18%	14%	7%	15%	5%

Table 3 Survey respondents compared to the actual population by phase of SAT

	Primary	Secondary	Other*
Proportion of population	39%	56%	6%
Proportion of responses	36%	56%	8%

*'Other' includes all-through schools, alternative provision and special schools

MAT responses were completed at trust level rather than academy level, whereas SAT responses were completed by the academy. Therefore, the surveys issued to MATs and SATs contained common themes, but the wording of questions was often slightly different and some questions were not posed to both groups to ensure that all questions

were appropriate. For example, only MATs received the following question: "*To the best of your knowledge which of the following reasons (if any) contributed to the converter academies in your trust applying for academy status?*"

The report includes coded data from open questions but verbatim comments are included throughout to illustrate points and add depth. Analysis of coded data is clearly highlighted throughout the report.

5. Academy conversion and the decision on whether to join a MAT

Key findings
   MATs
- 82 per cent of MATs felt the creation of new opportunities to collaborate contributed to the decision of their schools to become academies, with 4 in 10 MATs believing this was the main reason for their schools converting.

- Half of the MATs in the survey reported that a shared vision and ethos was the main reason why academies joined their trust.

   SATs
- Schools converting to become SATs tended to do so for funding reasons – 79 per cent converted to use funding how they see fit and 71 per cent to obtain more funding for front line education (this was the main reason for 37 per cent).

- School phase is an important factor. Secondary SATs, which on average converted earlier, did so for funding-related reasons whereas primary SATs were more concerned with creating opportunities to collaborate and seek efficiencies.

- There are numerous reasons why SATs are not currently part of a MAT. These include concerns about autonomy/individual identity and not being convinced of the benefits. This is despite MAT responses that show that schools can keep their identity.

Reasons for becoming an academy

We asked MATs what they thought were the reasons that contributed to the converter academies in their trust applying for academy status. Standalone converter academies were also asked their reasons and main reason for becoming an academy. A wide range of different motivations were cited (as shown in Figure 1) with some clear differences between the answers provided by MATs and SATs. Creating opportunities for collaboration was the most commonly cited answer for academies which converted and joined MATs (82 per cent) with this being the main reason for 4 in 10, whereas SATs

focused on funding-related reasons. It is possible that this is linked to the fact that many SATs converted during the early stages of the coalition government when greater funding incentives were available, whereas MATs have expanded more recently, when more focus has been on improving collaboration.

This year's responses were similar to those provided when the question was asked in 2014 (as would be expected, given that many respondents will be the same). For example: "to gain greater freedom to use funding as you see fit" (83 per cent in 2014 and 79 per cent in 2016); "to obtain more funding for frontline education" (71 per cent in 2014 and 71 per cent in 2016); and "to realise savings through improved efficiency" (63 per cent in 2014 and 54 per cent in 2016).

Figure 1: Reasons for converting and the main reason
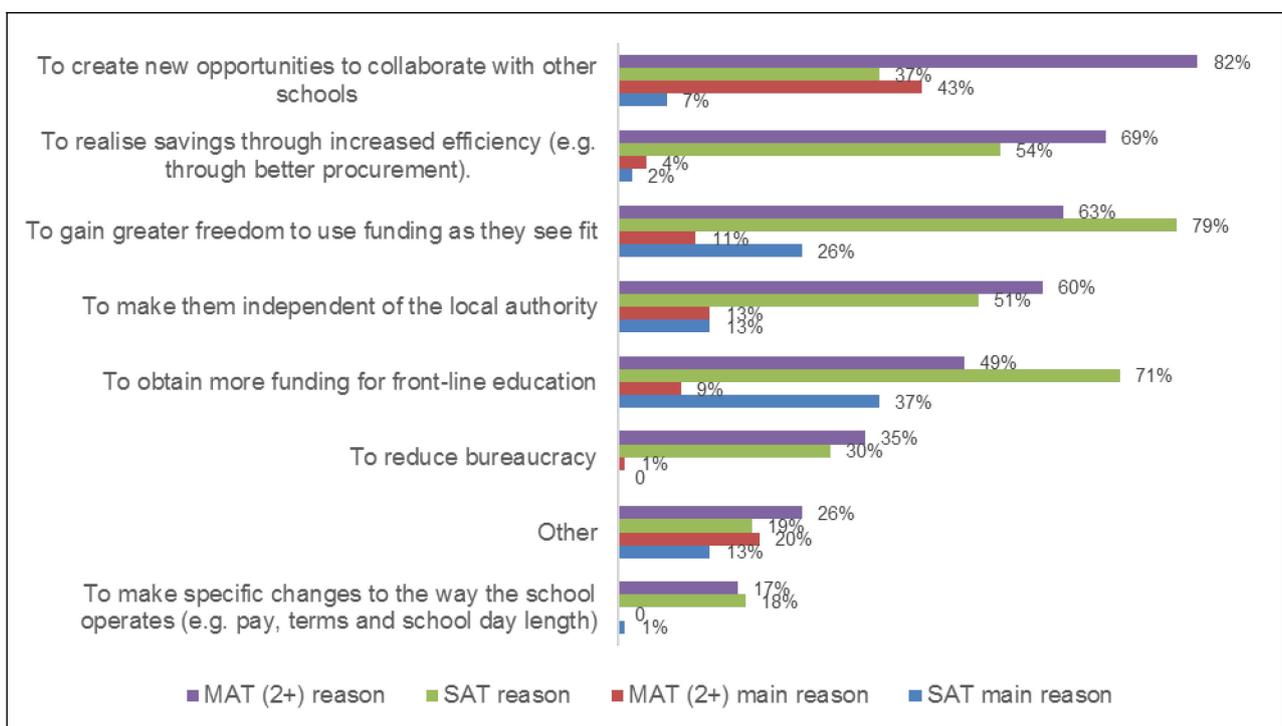
Base: MATs 2+ academies who answered the question (267), ALL SATs (422)

As shown in Figure 2 there are differences between primary and secondary SATs in terms of their reasons for conversion. Secondary academies, who on average converted earlier, did so in order to obtain more funding for front-line education (79 per cent secondary vs. 64 per cent primary). Creating opportunities to collaborate (60 per cent primary vs. 51 per cent secondary) and seeking efficiencies through improved procurement (46 per cent primary vs. 31 per cent secondary) were more likely to be reasons for primary schools.

Figure 2: Reasons for converting for primary and secondary SATs
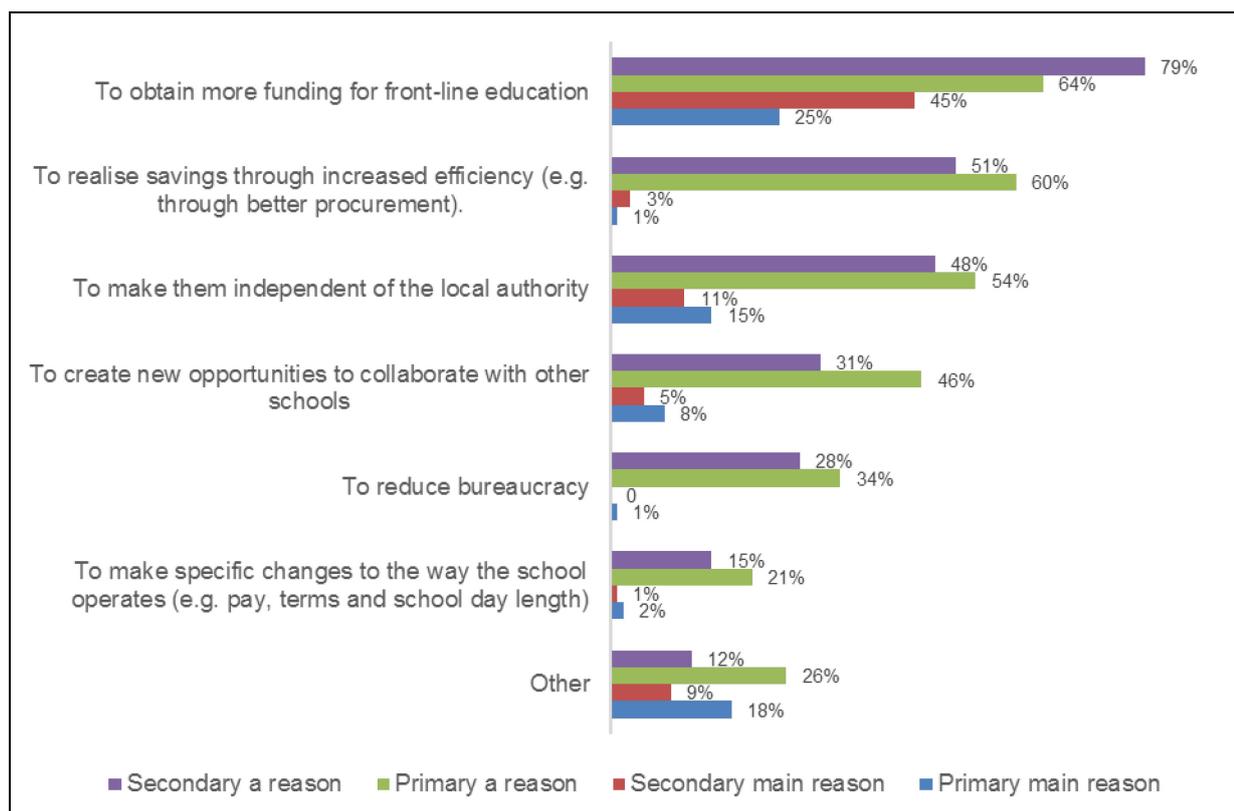
Base: Primary SATs (156), Secondary SATs (236)

Reasons for joining a specific MAT

MATs explained the different reasons why academies made the decision to join their trust (see Figure 3). A number of different factors were highlighted and for a large number of trusts more than one reason was stated for academies joining. These included: a shared vision and ethos (82 per cent); to benefit from the support of other schools (73 per cent); geographical proximity (65 per cent); to realise procurement savings (64 per cent); and to support other schools (61 per cent).

However, a shared vision and ethos (selected by half of the trusts who responded to the survey) was selected significantly more often than any other as the **main** reason for joining the trust. If this is an accurate perception, it indicates that schools appear to understand the importance of, and place value on, working with others who hold similar values. The next two most common responses were linked to collaboration, with 16 per cent stating their main reason for joining was so that their school could benefit from receiving support from others, and 10 per cent stating it was to help support other schools.

Figure 3: The reasons for academies selecting their MAT

Reason	A reason	Main reason
A shared vision and ethos	82%	50%
To benefit from support from other schools	73%	16%
Close geographical proximity to other academies in the trust	65%	7%
To realise savings through increased efficiency (e.g. through better procurement).	64%	3%
To help support other schools	61%	10%
To make them independent of the local authority	38%	3%
None of the these	11%	12%

■ A reason   ■ Main reason

Base: All MATs 2+ academies 267

SATs explained why they had not joined a MAT and instead remained as a standalone school, it is worth noting that 44 per cent of SATs are either seeking to or would like to become part of a MAT. Table 4 shows a number of points were made without one specific reason being the most important. Around a third identified at least one of the following reasons: they already collaborate so did not feel the need to formalise the arrangement; risk of losing autonomy; risk of losing individual identity; and that they are sustainable in their own right. There were no significant differences between primary and secondary schools.

Table 4: Reasons for not joining a MAT

	Proportion of SATs
We collaborate already and do not need to formalise this arrangement	37%
We would like our school to maintain its autonomy	35%
We feel we'd lose our individual identity	29%
We feel we are sustainable on our own	28%
We are currently seeking to become part of a MAT	25%
We would like to become part of a MAT but haven't yet	19%
Other	34%

Base: SATs 542

A third of SATs provided a different reason to the choices provided in the survey, and these can be grouped under a variety of headings.

A number of faith schools presented reasons that are **linked to their diocese**:

> *"Our plans to become a MAT have been stopped by our Diocese's insistence that any MAT with a VA church school in must be made up of more than 50% foundation (Church) members."*
>
> *"We are also awaiting diocesan wide plans for MATs"*
>
> *"We have joint leadership with a church school and have moved them from RI to Outstanding. We wish to form a MAT however the Diocese could restrict this option."*

Some explained that they were **unable to find a suitable partner** school with whom to form a MAT. The example below is from a special school:

> *"We are the only special academy in the county and currently we collaborate with local schools. We would look at becoming part of a MAT if they shared our vision and ethos for the complex pupils in our locality."*

A number explained that they are **already exploring setting up a MAT** but are not quite ready:

> *"Once we are recognised as a Good (and then Outstanding) School, we wish to be the lead school in a MAT."*
>
> *"We are considering developing a MAT."*

Some SATs are **yet to be convinced about the benefits** of joining a MAT and worry about losing their autonomy (many of these points are addressed in later sections):

> *"We converted to become an Academy to have greater autonomy. Being part of a MAT is the complete opposite of this."*
>
> *"There is no evidence that MAT structures are more efficient or effective. MATs can, and often do, divorce leadership of the school from leadership within the school community. This is philosophically unwelcome."*
>
> *"MATs are often run or dominated by High Schools with different values and often less effective than primary schools."*

6. Changes planned or made since becoming an academy

Key findings

Changes made
- Some changes are more widely made by MATs than others. The vast majority have changed their procurement and introduced savings in back-office functions but few academies in MATs have made changes to the school day or term times, let alone MATs making these type of changes trust-wide.

- The differing priorities of trust types are emphasised by the fact that SATs were more likely to have made changes at the school level such as changing the curriculum, adding non-teaching positions and introducing revenue-generating activities. MATs are more likely to make organisational-level changes such as reconstituting governing bodies.

Most important changes
- There was some commonality between MATS and SATs in terms of the five most important changes with both endorsing making back office savings and procuring services previously provided by the LA. However, some differences exist, with MATs more likely than SATs to identify changing school leadership and reconstituting the governing body, whereas SATs are more likely than MATs to identify curriculum changes.

- There are also differences between MATs (back-office savings and changing leadership) and SATs (changing procurement and curriculum) in what they perceive to be the MOST important freedom

Use of autonomy

We asked MATs what proportion of their academies had made specific changes since becoming an academy. Many of the changes would have been possible before conversion, so we asked MATs specifically for changes made **since** the schools

converted. MATs were asked whether specific changes had been made by most (or all), some, or none of their schools.

As shown in Figure 4 the changes most commonly made by most or all academies in MATs were procuring services that were previously provided by the LA (82 per cent), introducing savings in back-office functions (77 per cent) and reconstituting governing bodies (72 per cent).

The changes least likely to have been made by academies in MATs were related to the specific operations of the school (such as changing terms and length of the school day), changing the planned admission number and changing catchment areas.

Figure 4: Proportion of academies within MATs making changes
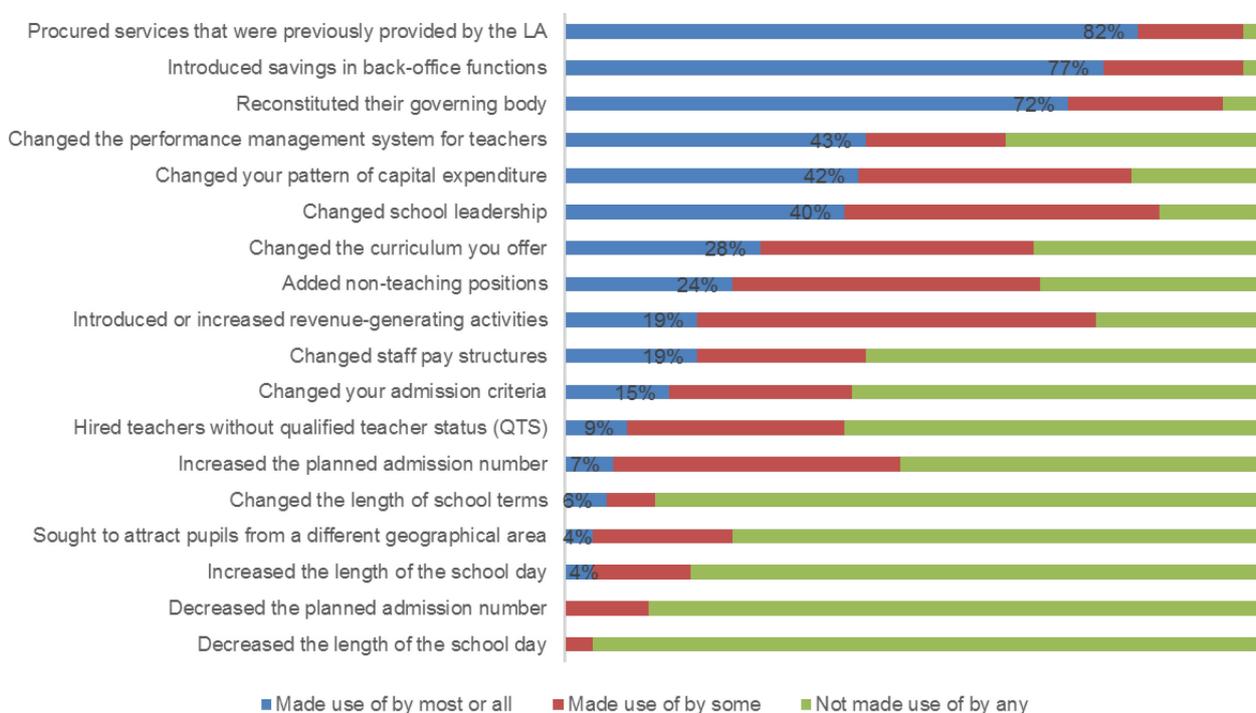
Base: All MATs 2+ academies 267

Despite the slightly different context between MATs and SATs - SATs are single schools responding about themselves rather than MATs who are responding on behalf of an organisation - it is useful to understand the apparent differences between types of trust about the changes made. Figure 5 (below) examines the differences between the proportion of SATs who have made particular changes and the proportion of MATs with two or more academies who say that most or all of their academies have made the same change(s).

Unsurprisingly, SATs report that they are more likely to have made those changes, which operate at school level. For example, changes in their curriculum (58 per cent SATs vs. 28 per cent MATs[2]), in introducing revenue generating activities (47 per cent SATs vs. 19 per cent MATs) and adding non-teaching positions (54 per cent SATs vs. 24 per cent MATs). In contrast, MATs have made more organisation-level changes – e.g. reconstituting the governing body (72 per cent vs. 57 per cent).

Figure 5: The proportion of SATs making specific changes compared to most or all within a MAT[3]
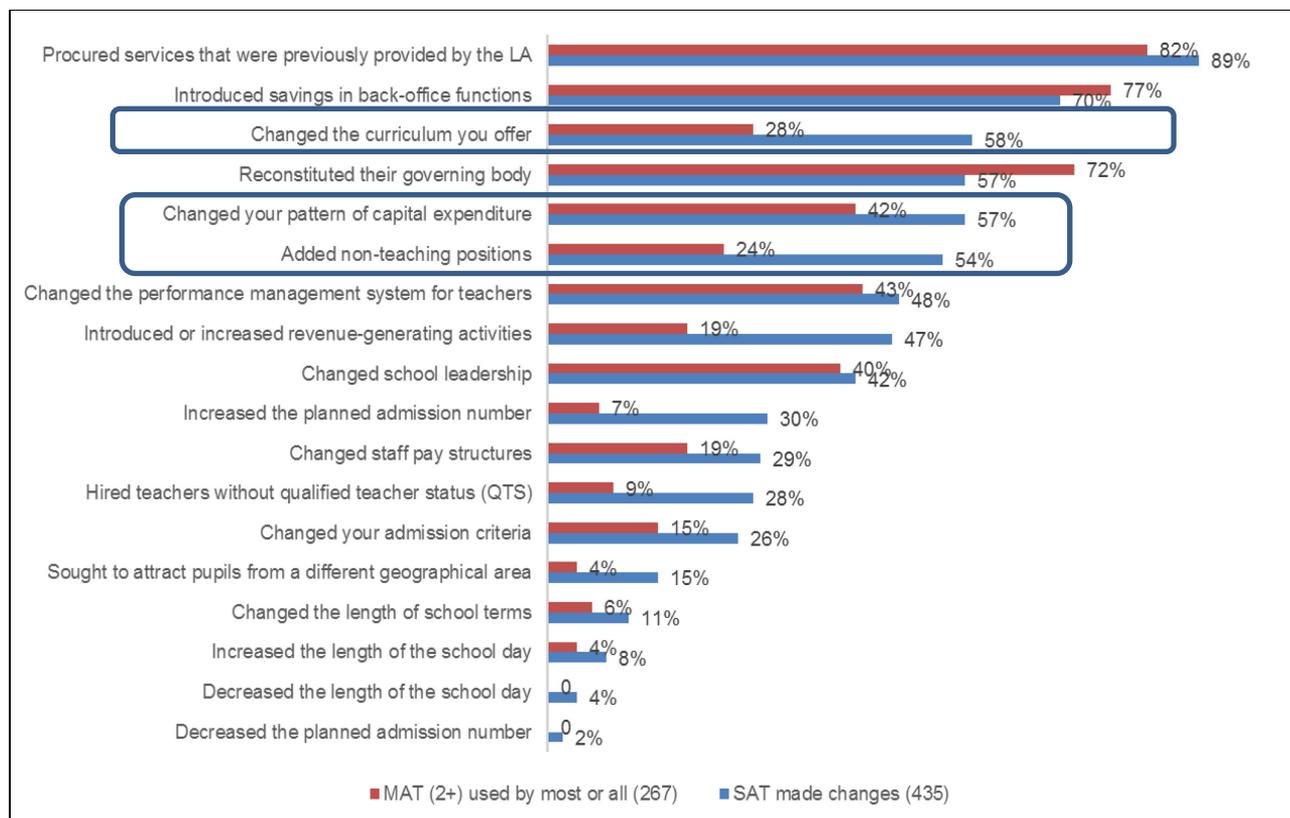
Most SAT responses are almost identical to the 2014 survey but two areas that have seen an interesting change are the introduction of revenue generating activities (cited by 35 per cent in 2014, which has increased to 47 per cent in 2016) and the proportion who have hired unqualified teachers (16 per cent in 2014 has increased to 28 per cent in 2016).

Importance of different changes

Both MATs and SATs were asked to identify what they saw as the five most important changes available to be made. Figure 6 shows that, again, there are significant

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[2] This is the proportion of MATs who say the change has been made by most or all of their schools

[3] This question was not asked to all appropriate SATs due to a scripting error by the contractor that was corrected after one day's fieldwork

differences between the views of SATs and MATs. Three areas stand out as areas felt to be more important for MATs: introducing back-office savings (79 per cent of MATs vs. 57 per cent of SATs); changing school leadership (60 per cent MATs vs. 22 per cent SATs); and reconstituting the governing body (60 per cent MATs vs. 31 per cent SATs). These differences are expected as MATs have more ability to achieve economies of scale with back-office functions and SATs are typically high performing schools that chose to convert to academies and so would be less likely to want to change their leadership or governing body.

There are three changes that SATs are considerably more likely than MATs to view as being amongst the five most important changes they could make. These are changing the curriculum (59 per cent SATs vs. 37 per cent MATs), introducing revenue-generating activities (42 per cent SATs vs. 28 per cent MATs) and increasing the number of pupils on the roll (30 per cent SATs vs. 18 per cent MATs).

It is interesting to note that some measures are endorsed by MATs as being one of the five most important changes available, despite them also stating that it is has not been a change made by most or all of their academies. For example, 28 per cent replied that most or all had changed their curriculum, yet 37 per cent felt it was one of the top five changes they could make. This may suggest that schools within MATs have not yet made all of the changes that the trusts would like to see or that they know it will be useful tool going forward if they develop a new approach that they can spread.

Figure 6: The proportion of MATs and SATs who endorse a change as being one of the five most important available to them
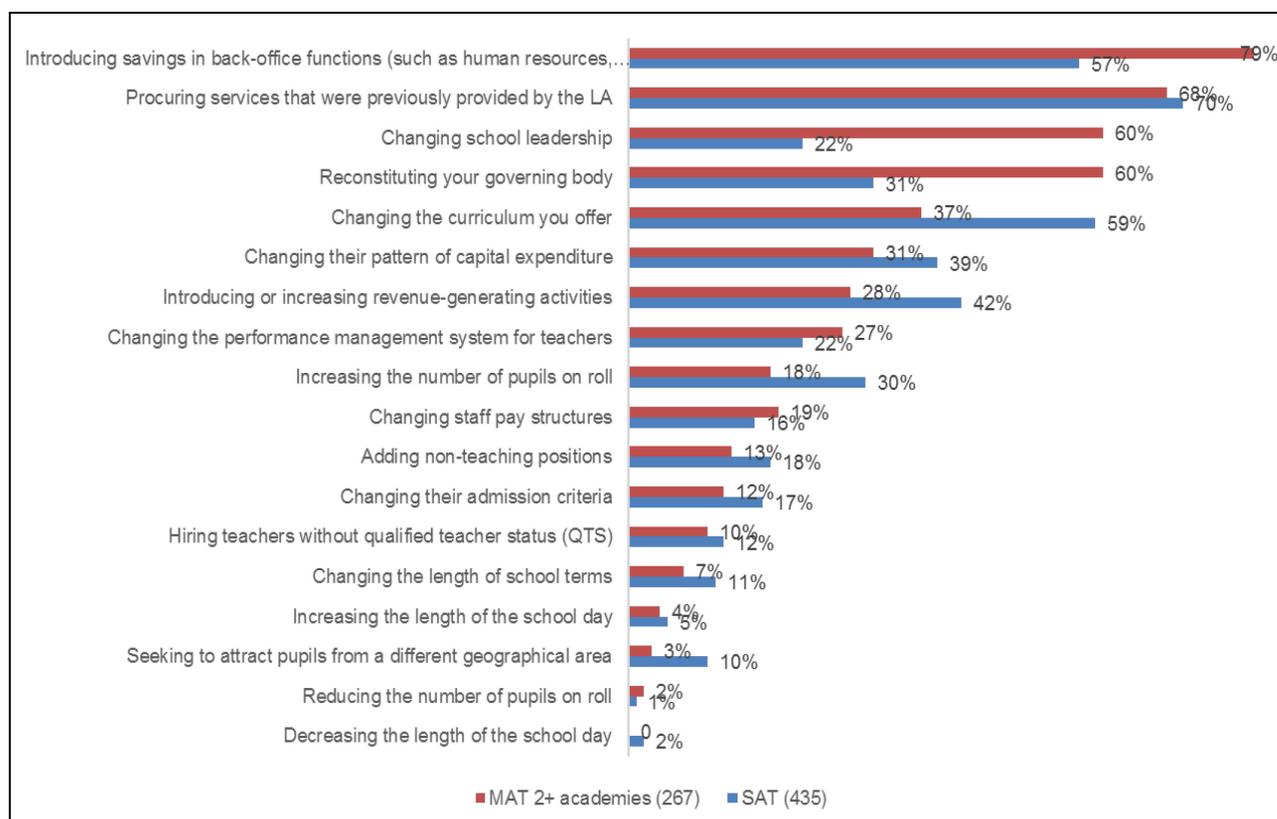
All respondents were asked to pick **the most important** change available to them. MATs focused on efficiency and leadership, whereas SATs emphasised making specific school-level changes and increased freedom over procurement, which can be explained by the different priorities of MATs compared to SATs (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: The most important change available to MATs and SATs
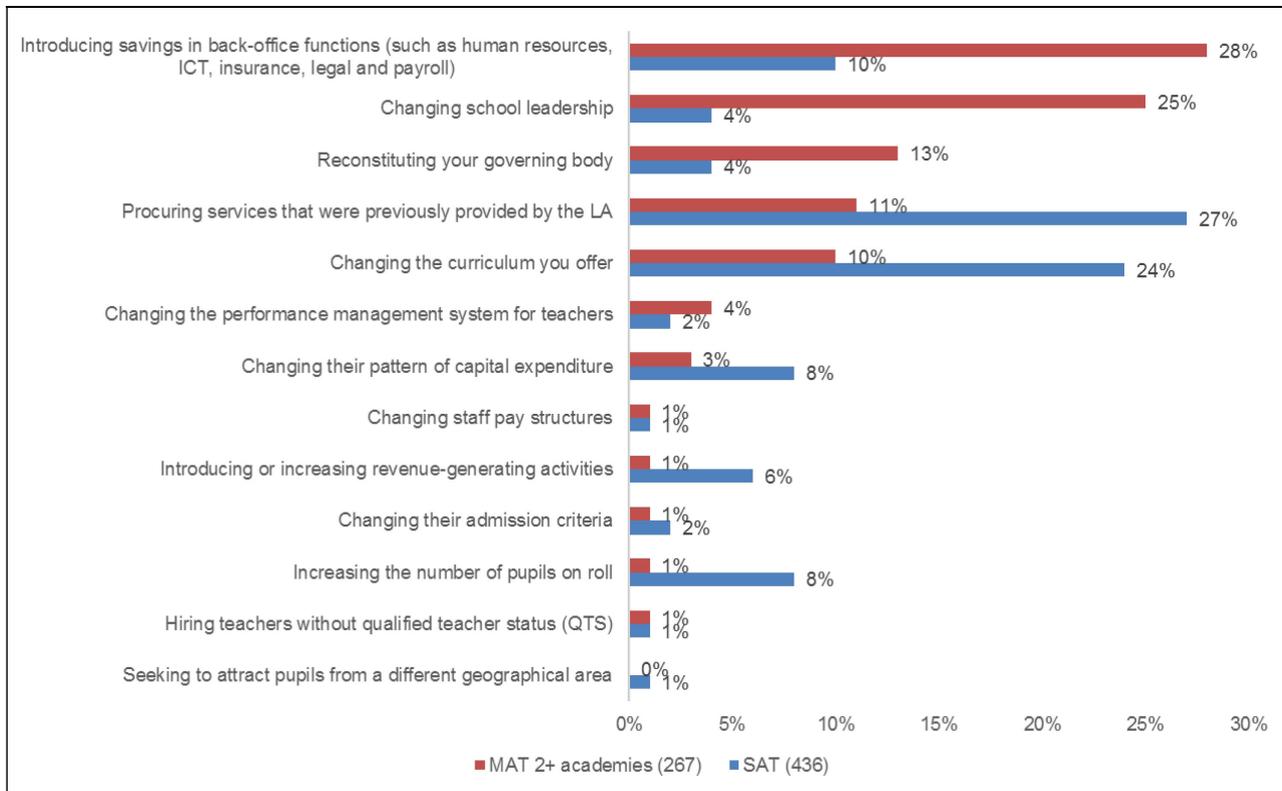
7. Collaboration

Key findings

MATs
- The vast majority (96 per cent) of MATs with two or more academies believe that their structure has facilitated collaboration and that academies within their MAT regularly collaborate in a number of areas that lead to financial savings.

- When asked to explain the benefits of collaboration, MATs focussed on the benefits of school improvement, helping teachers, and school-to-school support

- Typically, MATs are not inward looking, with the vast majority having formal relationships with other organisations at both trust and individual academy level.

- MATs are more likely to have senior executive-level formal relationships with those outside their trust than are SATs, possibly due to having more capacity at senior executive level to develop these relationships.

SATs
- As would be expected of good and outstanding schools, the vast majority (87 per cent) of SATs support other schools (identical to the figure in our report in 2014). This support comes in varying forms, from commonly cited support such as joint practice development to less common reviews of governance.

MATs facilitate collaboration

Of the MATs with two or more academies who completed the survey, 96 per cent felt that being part of a MAT had facilitated collaboration. Respondents who agreed with this statement were asked to explain in their own words how being a member of a MAT had facilitated collaboration. Table 5 presents the coded survey responses.

Table 5: Coded responses of MATs' explanations of collaboration

	Total
Partnership/collaboration/efficiencies incl. internal and external collaboration	44%
Support/improvement	35%
Assessment/moderation incl. cross phase moderation	25%
CPD	18%
Leadership and management development	14%
Staffing/recruitment incl. staff circulation, sharing	14%
Training/development opportunities incl. meeting, events	12%
Good/best practice	9%
Curriculum development	9%
Planning/strategies incl. joint planning	7%
Policies/protocols	3%

Base: All MATs 2+ who said MAT facilitated collaboration (256)

Explanations about how collaboration had been improved and specific examples of schools benefiting from this were provided by a number of MATs. Some outlined how **formalising collaboration** is important:

> *"In less formal collaborative arrangements when schools are in difficulty (for however short a time) they can choose to disengage. Once in a MAT schools know that they have to engage. In a MAT schools get the sense that they are only as good as the weakest school and therefore are much more inclined to support other schools during tougher times. Relationships build that are trusting and supportive and professionals become more inclined to discuss practice and reflect and share in an honest and open way."*
>
> *"The two schools were federated prior to conversion, but the MAT structure has allowed governance, back office and leadership collaboration to develop further and in a more coherent way"*
>
> *"Without a doubt it has increased co-operation and an all for one and one for all mentality across the trust. As a result professional development and a willingness to share is higher than I have ever seen it between schools. Areas such as curriculum and assessment as well as behaviour management and safeguarding systems and approaches are willingly shared throughout."*

A number of trusts outlined numerous areas where schools benefitted from membership of their MAT including **sharing resources, support staff and achieving efficiencies**:

> *"We collaborate as a group of schools by sharing support staff functions. We completed a support staff organisation review in 2015 and now have centralised finance, ICT, HR and facilities management provision. This is more professional and cheaper than 8 schools with different solutions and contracts. Moreover, we work as a leading member of the [a regional group of trusts] and we have run successful collaborative procurement exercises for payroll, energy, finance & budgeting software and HR consultancy."*
>
> *"Collaboration between MAT schools is a key feature of the success of the Trust. Examples: joint work scrutiny; moderation; regular meetings of different leaders across the MAT; peer review; joint leadership development programme; specific support to ensure that rapid improvement is made in sponsor academies from across the Trust; and joint training / CPD"*

The increase in the amount of **school-to-school** support, which in turn enabled school improvement, was outlined by a number of MATs:

> *"MAT School to school improvement framework/ quality framework, accountability and structure has enabled to (sic) incorporation of standalone academies to participate within the programme with the option to move into the MAT"*
>
> *"School to school support throughout the MAT with the converter school directly improving outcomes for children in the sponsored schools"*
>
> *"Working in regional groupings has enabled good school to school support and peer to peer support between headteachers"*
>
> *"A number of examples of impactful school to school support: specific subjects and phases, Pupil Premium reviews, peer reviews, moderation, leadership changes and support benchmarking, joint governor training etc."*

MATs highlighted how members of **senior leadership teams** benefitted from shared expertise:

> *"Our Headteachers meet each fortnight; we have 6 days training for all senior teams each year; we have moved staff and resources between schools in the Trust; we have worked collaboratively with other MATs in the region and beyond"*
>
> *"Joint middle leadership development, joint senior team planning, moderation across the trust, support for other schools' staff"*
>
> *"One of the main reasons our MAT works is through collaboration within our schools and with other MATs. This is one of the greatest benefits to our schools. All our senior leaders work together and engage in activities (involving their own strengths) to support each other."*

Trusts presented examples of how **staff development/retention and shared expertise** had been improved.

> *"We have been able to offer greater capacity in staff working and supporting other schools, Intra MAT support has increased significantly with year group teams, subject teams, curriculum teams, teaching and learning teams and leadership teams."*
>
> *"MAT facilitated moderation across primary schools, development of assessment system across primary schools, one SENCO working across two primary schools, appointment of central staff to support schools in a coordinated fashion"*
>
> *"Shared CPD/ INSET Modelling/ shadowing of Local Governing Boards to observe best practice in scrutiny/ monitoring The recruitment and retention of staff by finding opportunities across the whole MAT. Shared use of subject specialist teacher i.e. for computing/ music/ sport Collaborative meetings at senior level to decide/ change policy and find solutions. Shared use of Admin/Site staff for cover purposes"*

Many trusts explained how collaboration had enabled them to develop a **shared curriculum**:

> *"Curriculum planning, sharing teachers, sharing good practice, shared learning resources and schemes of work"*
>
> *"Joint curriculum planning and delivery, development of new assessment systems, moderating standards."*

MATs were asked the extent to which academies within their trust collaborated with each other on a number of issues. As shown in Figure 8, close to 9 in 10 MATs claim that their schools collaborate with each other regularly through professional development and sharing best practice; all MATs do this at least occasionally. Academies in the vast majority of MATs collaborate regularly (81 per cent) or occasionally (15 per cent) to secure financial efficiencies, which suggests that trusts understand the savings that can be made through collective purchasing. Around three quarters of MATs second or move teachers or senior leaders between schools, with a third doing so regularly. This emphasises the point made by trusts earlier about sharing expertise and offering opportunities for promotion to improve staff retention.

Figure 8: The regularity of collaboration between academies within trusts

|	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Professional development/sharing best practice	88%	12%	0%	
Securing financial efficiencies	81%	15%	3%	1%
Developing lesson plans or curriculum materials	51%	35%	13%	2%
Local governance decisions	42%	34%	17%	7%
Seconding/moving senior school leaders between schools	36%	45%	12%	7%
Seconding/moving teachers between schools	31%	44%	18%	7%
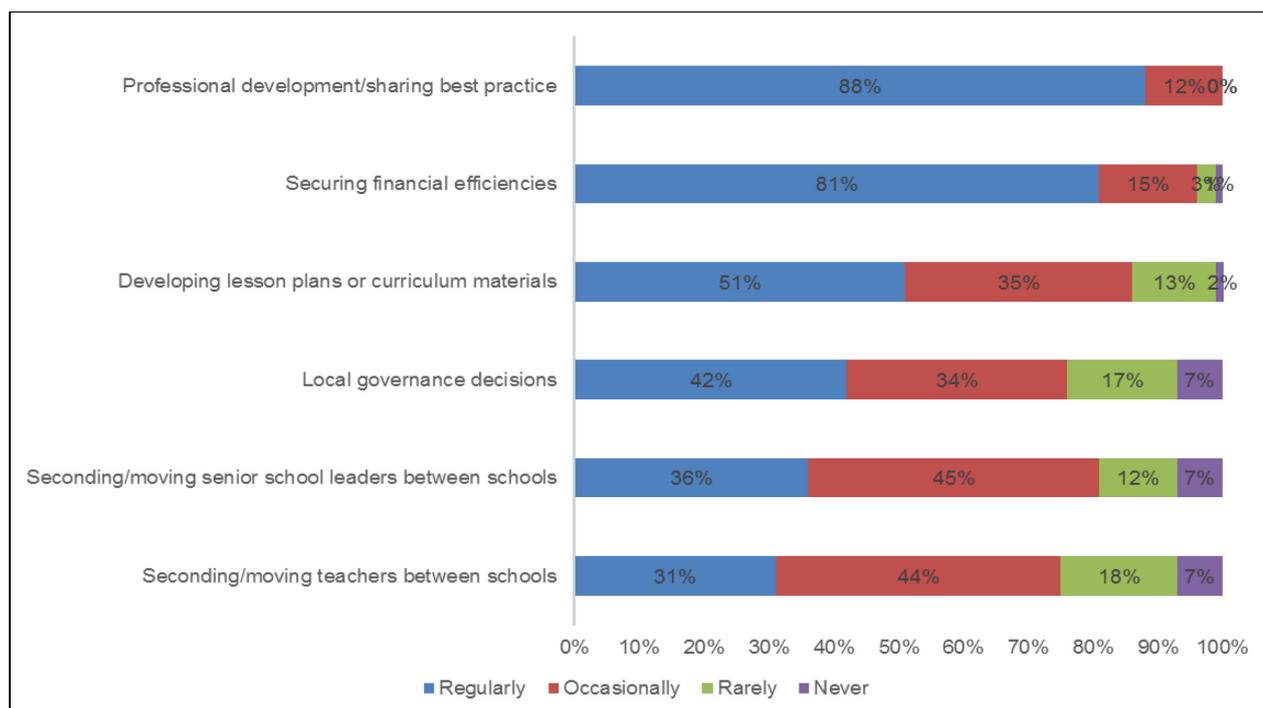
Base: All MATs with 2+ academies (267)

Efficiencies achieved through collaboration

When asked to explain the benefits of collaboration, MATs focussed on the benefits of school improvement, helping teachers, and school-to-school support (see Table 5 on page 23 and the quotes above). A minority explained how they had achieved efficiencies, but when asked specifically about whether they had made financial efficiencies the majority felt that they had done so. Figure 9 below shows the proportion of MATs with two or more academies who claimed to have collaborated on a number of staff and non-staff related factors and, whether through this, they had achieved financial efficiencies. It is interesting to note that schools within MATs have collaborated across a wide range of areas and, for almost all of these factors; collaboration has helped to achieve financial efficiencies. This point suggests that MAT membership can lead to significant efficiencies in the education sector. Curriculum planning is one area where financial efficiencies are not readily achieved; it is likely that these benefits will be linked to the time that teachers spend on curriculum development.

Figure 9: The proportion of MATs whose academies say they have collaborated and secured financial efficiencies
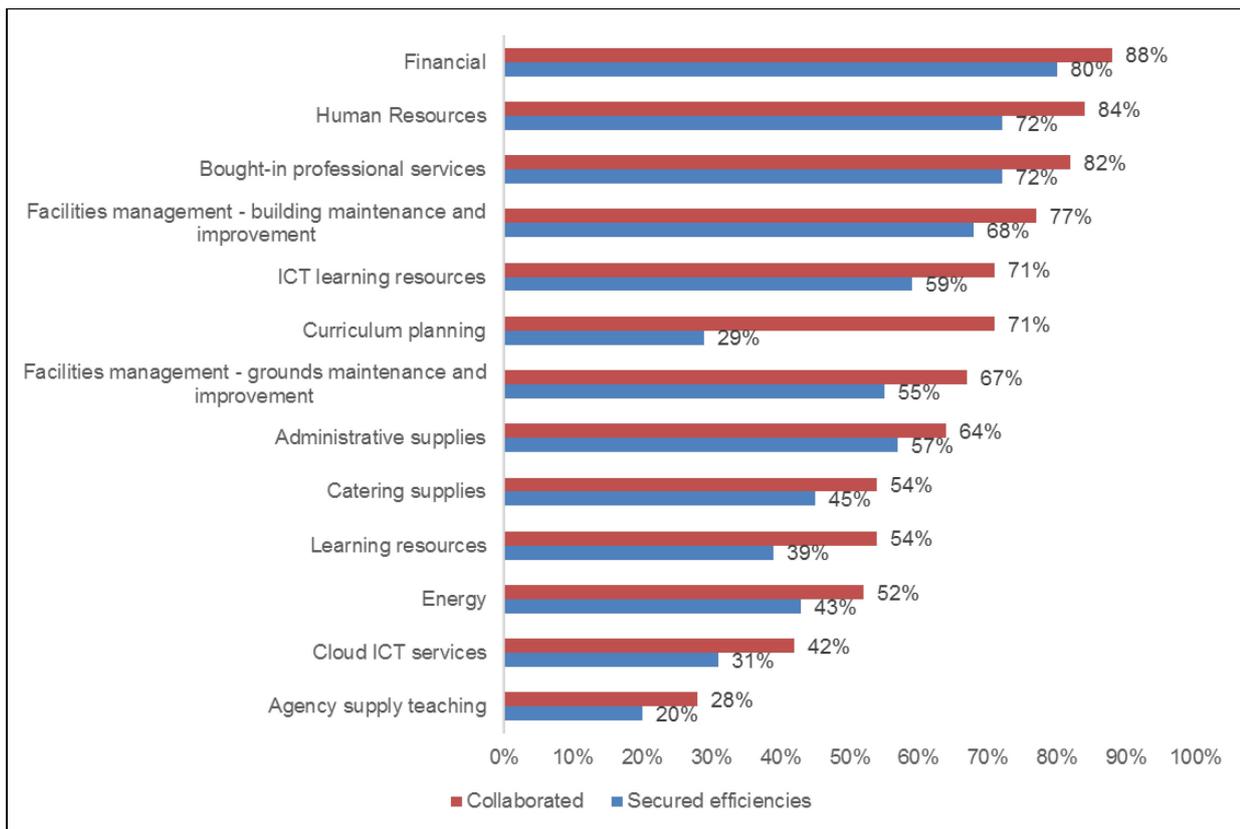
Base: All MATs with 2+ academies (267)

Wider engagement outside the MAT

Senior executive level

At a senior executive/trust level, the vast majority of MATs have regular formal relationships with external bodies. Around 8 in 10 have links with Teaching School Alliances, which demonstrates the importance of MATs in the wider school improvement agenda. Links with local authorities (70 per cent) and other trusts (70 per cent) are also common, and show that MATs are not insular but rather engage with the wider school system.

Table 6: The proportion of MATs who at senior executive/trust level have any regular formal relationships

	Total
Teaching School Alliances	79%
Local authorities	70%
Other Trusts	70%
Other (please explain)	42%

Base: All MATs with 2+ academies (267)

42 per cent of MATs spontaneously mentioned other organisations with whom they had formal relationships. The majority of these mentioned other local leaders. Below are some examples:

> *"With have a formal partnership with the Flying High Trust sharing roles in leadership delivery and teacher training, CEO network. 4 MATs collaborate within Affinity TSA coordinated focus and areas for development Informal support to 2 new MATs"*
>
> *"Other local schools - through offering school to school support beyond the Trust"*
>
> *"ASCL, NASBM, Oxfordshire Academies Business Managers Group, PS Financials MAT forum and regional conferences"*
>
> *"Work on research projects with universities to deliver school improvement Work with other settings to provide support"*
>
> *"Work closely with the Wakefield System Leaders Network and collaborating at regional level with the West Yorkshire strategic group"*
>
> *"Our trust has established educational partners in each of our three hubs. These range from the main teacher training institute in the city MMU etc. and the main FE College i.e. Stoke 6th Form etc."*
>
> *"London Leadership Strategy (SEN team) Challenge Partners. HTB"*

Individual school level

This research demonstrates that collaboration between individual schools in MATs with schools outside their trust is common. We asked MATs what proportion of their academies have regular relationships with local schools outside their trust. Two thirds of MATs stated that all of the individual academies have such relationships, and a further 16 per cent stated that most of them do (which equates to 83 per cent of all MATs in total). Only a very small minority of MATs (4 per cent) stated than none of their academies work with schools outside their trust.

Figure 10: The level of collaboration of individual academies within MATs with schools outside the MAT

All of them do	67%
Most of them do	16%
Half of them do	6%
Most of them don't	6%
None of them do	4%
Don't know	1%
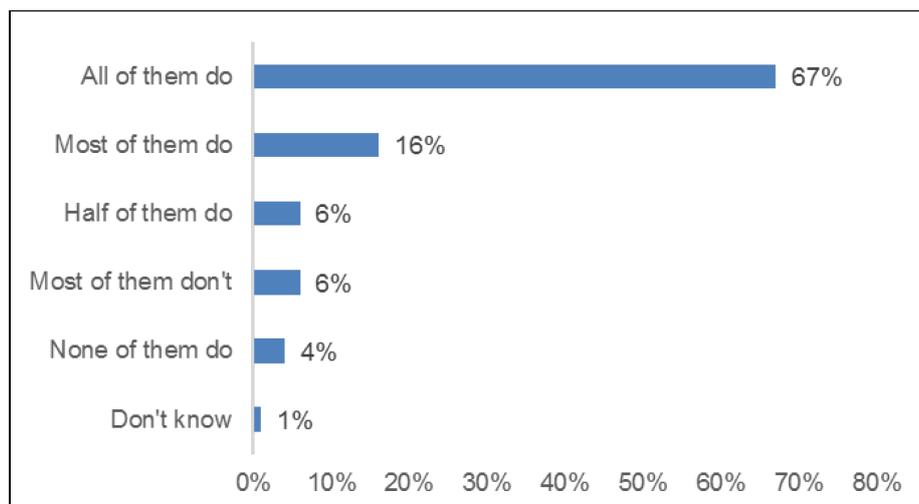
Base: All MATs with 2+ academies (267)

Collaboration with other schools - SATs

This survey repeated two questions about collaboration from the 2014 study. These questions identify the proportion of SATs who support other schools and those providing support that they did not before conversion.

Table 7 shows that 87 per cent of academies support other schools, a figure identical to the one obtained in 2014.

Table 7: The proportion of SATs who support other schools

	2016	2014
Yes	87%	87%
No	13%	13%
Base size (all SATs)	542	431

School to school support has been one of the main tenets behind the growth in the number of academies since 2010. As shown in Table 8, 80 per cent of those supporting other schools are providing support that they did not provide prior to conversion, which again is identical to the figure obtained in 2014.

Table 8: The proportion of SATs supporting other schools who are providing support that they did not before conversion

|	2016	2014
Yes	80%	80%
No	20%	20%
Base size (all SATs)	291[4]	376

The most common type of support offered (that did not exist before conversion) varied, with joint practice development (e.g. lesson study) being provided by almost three quarters (73 per cent). Other support offered includes running CPD courses (67 per cent), developing middle leadership (60 per cent), deploying a Specialist Leader of Education, Local Leader of Education or National Leader of Education (39 per cent) and boosting senior leadership capacity (37 per cent).

Interesting differences exist between the support offered by primary schools and secondary schools. Primary schools appear more likely to offer support in joint practice development (81 per cent of primary academies vs. 71 per cent of secondary academies), whereas secondary schools are more likely to offer support in developing future leaders (33 per cent secondary vs. 19 per cent primary), take part in action research activities (42 per cent secondary vs. 27 per cent primary), and second staff between schools (34 per cent secondary vs. 23 per cent primary).

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[4] This question was affected by a routing error during the first day of fieldwork so the base size appears artificially low.

Figure 11: Types of support offered to other school by primary and secondary SATs
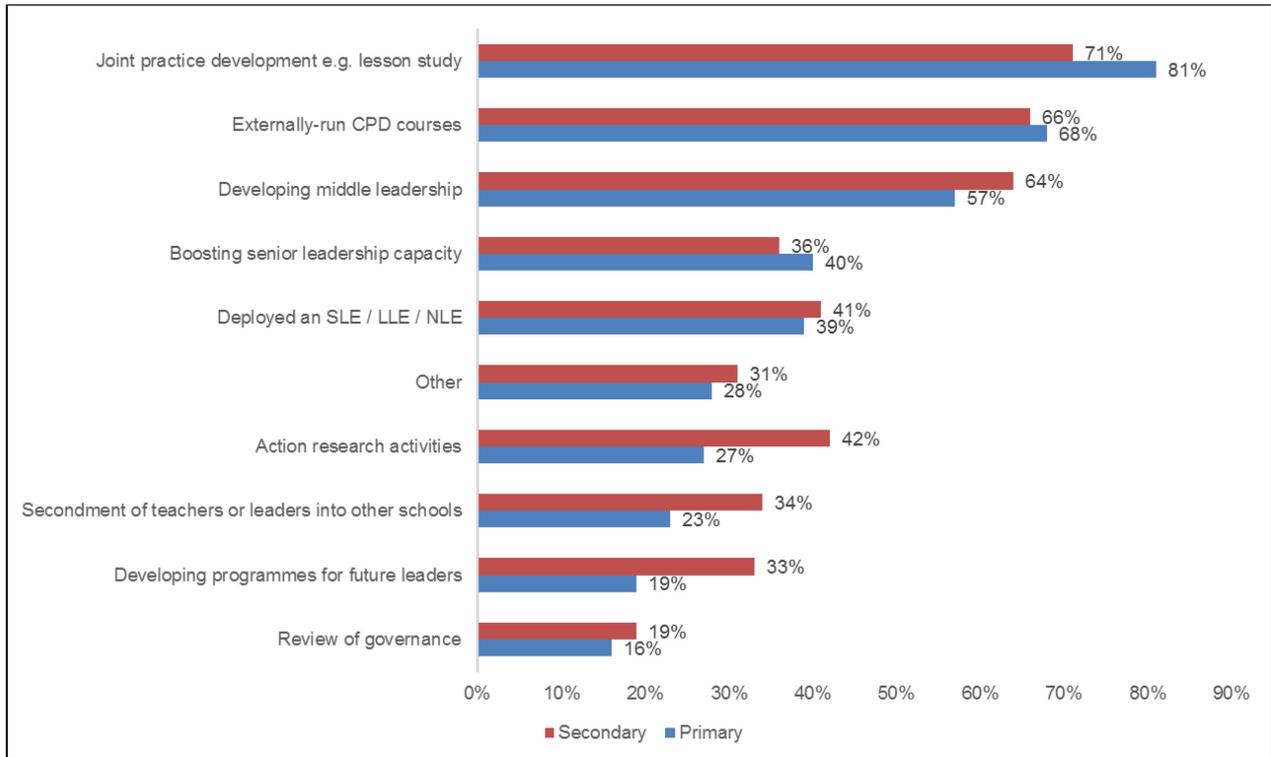

Base: Primary (93) and secondary (196) SATs who support others they did not before conversion (249) [5]

Differences in executive/trust level links with others

MATs are more likely to have senior-executive level formal relationships with those outside their trust than SATs. This is not surprising given MATs are likely to have more senior executives and so a greater capacity to engage with people outside their trust. Figure 12 shows the differences between MATs (with two or more academies) and SATs.

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[5] This question was affected by a routing error during the first day of fieldwork so the base size appears artificially low.

Figure 12: Formal relationships at an executive/trust level with those outside their trusts SATs and MAT
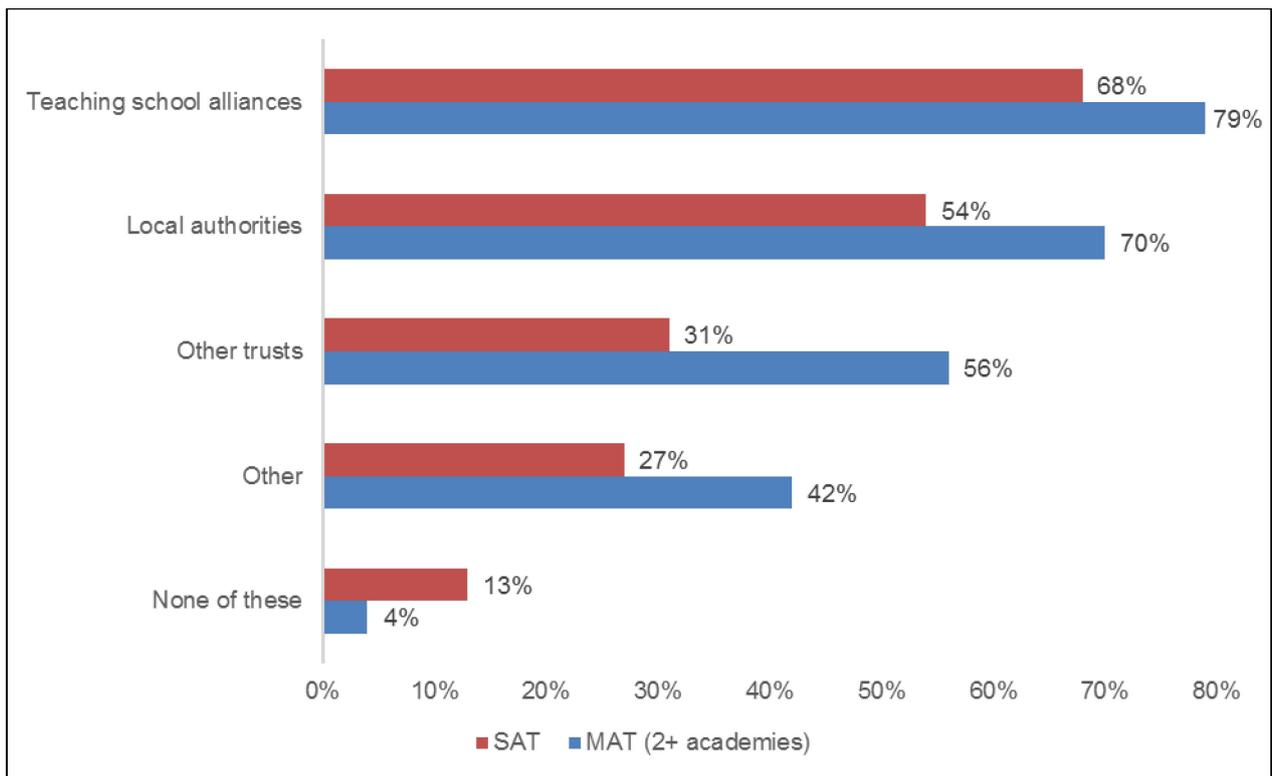
Base: MATs 2+ academies (267) and SATs (542)

8. MAT management and compliance

Key findings

MAT management
- The average MAT board consists of around 8 Trustees.

- The vast majority of trusts (and all larger trusts) have a qualified finance director.

- Regional structures become common as trusts grow.

- The mean average top-slice is 4.61% of funding with over half of MATs taking between 4 and 5 per cent (interquartile range of 1, with a lower quartile of 4.0 and upper quartile of 5.0). A third vary the level of top-slice between academies. This variation is often defined by performance, size and phase.

- Most MATs have some consistency, but encourage academies to innovate in how they teach and deliver the curriculum. Best practice is shared across the MAT, which demonstrates the benefits of joining a trust.

- Financial compliance, senior appointments, legal compliance and risk management are predominantly handled by the Trust Board.

Burdens of compliance
- The vast majority of trusts feel that the controls placed on them by DfE/EFA are about right, although MATs are more likely than SATs to think that the level of burden is "about right" for governance/financial oversight and financial planning.

- Although a minority, some trusts felt that burdens should be reduced.

Over the last few years, there has been an expansion in the number of academies in MATs, which has led to a rapid evolution in governance of the sector. This chapter examines the characteristics of Trust boards, the level and uses of school top-slice, the level of autonomy within MATs and financial compliance.

Many schools, not just academies, have seen a shift towards a smaller skills-based model of governance, rather than a more traditional stakeholder model. While there is no agreed upon ideal size for a governing body or trust board, evidence suggests it is likely to be in the range of 8-10. One proponent of this view includes The Institute of Directors,[6] who state:

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[6] Corporate Governance Guidance and Principles for Unlisted Companies in the UK - IoD

The board should not be so large as to be unwieldy. [….] regardless of nationally defined structures, the ability of any form of committee to make decisions and exercise proper scrutiny becomes increasingly difficult at sizes in excess of 10-12 members. A smaller board size will improve the quality of communication and is likely to result in more focused discussions.

Trust boards, finance and accountability structure

The average size of MAT boards was eight, with over half having between 7 and 10 trustees. A very small minority (6 per cent) have more than 12 trustees. Figure 13 shows the distribution of MATs based on the number of people on their most senior boards. The distribution shows that, as per the recommended approach[7], more boards consist of an odd number of individuals (to prevent split votes) rather than even.

Figure 13: The number of people on the main MAT board
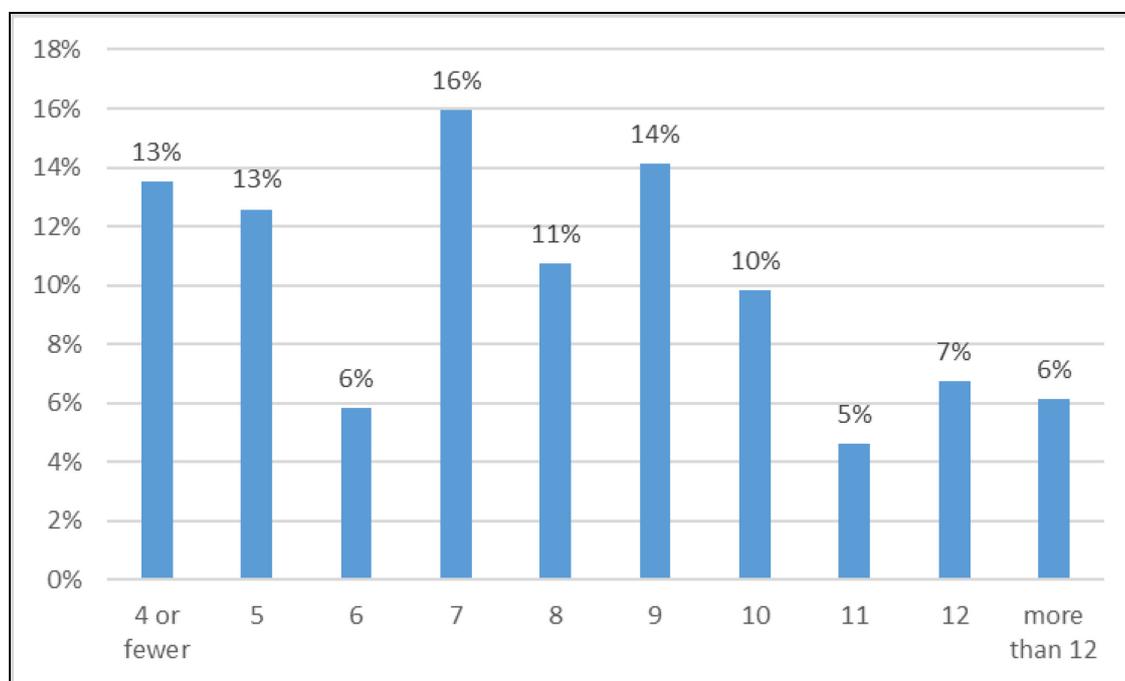
Base: All MATs (326)

Table 9 shows that the vast majority of MATs have a qualified finance director who works across the whole trust. Half of the "empty" MATs have a full-time finance director and a quarter have one part-time. As the number of schools in a trust increases so too does the likelihood of a full-time finance director being appointed increase, with almost all Trust boards made up of six or more schools having a full-time finance director.

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[7] http://www.newschoolsnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Academy_Ambassadors_Guide_to_Recruiting_v3.pdf

Table 9: Whether the MAT has a qualified finance director who works across the trust

	All MAT	1	2 to 5	6 to 10	11+
Yes - Full-time	71%	53%	69%	96%	93%
Yes - Part-time	16%	24%	18%	2%	7%
Summary: Yes	87%	76%	87%	98%	100%
No	13%	24%	13%	2%	0%
Base	326	59	204	48	15

As would be expected, regional or hub management structures become more common as trusts grow. Table 10 shows that all but two of the trusts with 11 or more academies who completed the survey have a regional or hub management structure.

Table 10: Whether there is a regional or hub management structure to support accountability for MATs of difference sizes

	2 to 5	6 to 10	11+
Yes	36%	63%	87%
No	64%	38%	13%
Base	204	48	15

Financial management

The majority of MATs (75 per cent) take a top-slice of each academy's budget which is used to provide essential services. Thanks to increased buying power, they are often able to achieve efficiencies (further explanation in Chapter 9). Figure 14 shows the distribution of the level of top slice of MATs with two or more academies. The mean average top-slice is 4.61 per cent of funding with over half of MATs taking between 4 and 5 per cent (interquartile range of 1, with a lower quartile of 4.0 and upper quartile of 5.0). The average size of the top-slice is not related to the size of the trust.

**Figure 14: The level of top slice among MATs with 2 or more academies**
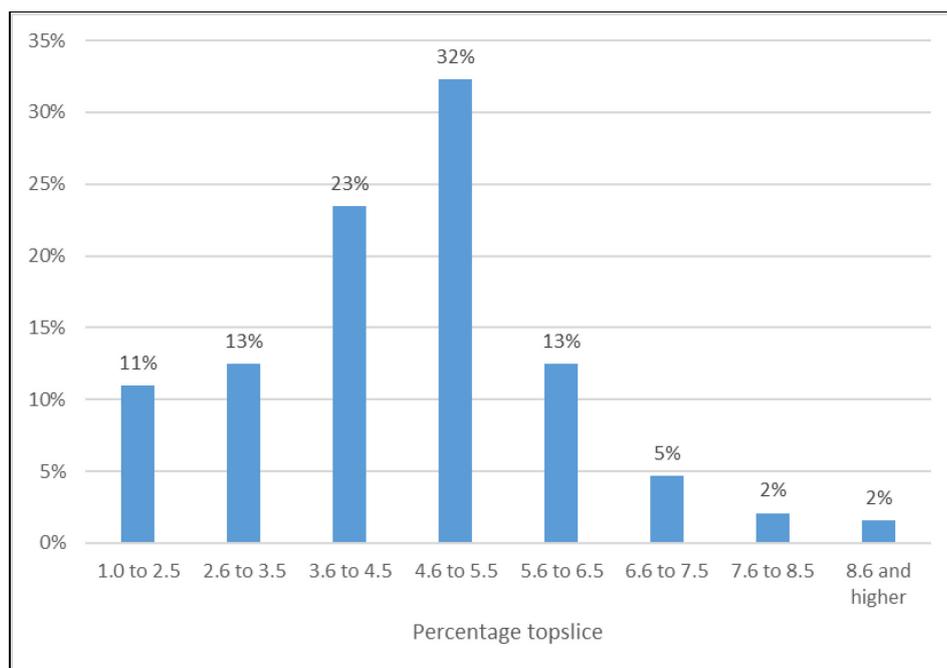
MATs are able to vary the level of top-slice they take from academies within their trusts; overall 29 per cent of MATs choose to do this. As demonstrated in Table 11, it is interesting to note that varying the level of top-slice appears to be more common in trusts with between 6 and 10 academies than it is in smaller trusts with between 2 and 5 academies. (The base size for MATs with 11+ schools is low so figures need to be treated with caution.)

Table 11: The proportion of MATs who vary the level of top-slice between academies

	2 to 5	6 to 10	11+
Yes	26%	47%	7%
No	74%	53%	93%
Base	144	43	14

The most common reason for varying the level of top-slice is the performance of the academies - although no detail was provided about the difference between stronger or weaker schools - with size and phase also common reasons for varying the top-slice.

Figure 15: Reasons for varying the top-slice between academies within a MAT

Performance 52%
Size 38%
Phase 34%
Other 26%
Condition 10%
Amount of pupil premium 7%
Utilities cost 2%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%
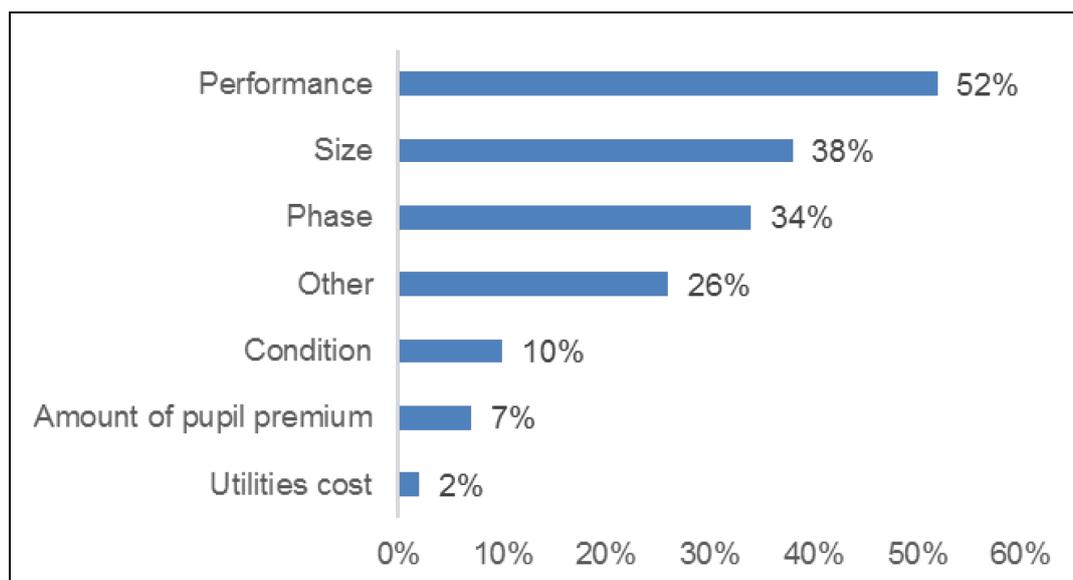
Base: MATs with 2 or more academies who vary their top-slice (58)

In addition to varying their top-slice, MATs are also able to redistribute funds between schools in their trust. Table 12 demonstrates that this rarely happens, with only 18 per cent currently doing so. However, a further 31 per cent plan to redistribute funds between academies in the future.

Table 12: Whether MATs redistribute funds between academies in their trust

|	Total
No and we don't intend to in the future	50%
No - but we intend to in the future	31%
Yes	18%
Base: All MATs 2+ academies	267

The level of freedom and flexibility within MATs

Chapter 7 demonstrated a wide range of collaboration strategies between academies within MATs. One area highlighted as being particularly important was sharing good practice to help school improvement. Of particular interest when looking at collaboration, and specifically when looking at how strong schools are able to support weaker ones, are the approaches to teaching and curriculum development. We asked MATs how closely teaching/learning and curriculum align within the schools in their trust. The results are shown in Figures 16 and 17.

Flexibility in teaching and learning

Figure 16 shows some differences between MATs of different sizes when asked which statement best describes their approach to teaching and learning in their academies. Smaller MATs appear slightly more likely to allow full discretion over the approaches to teaching and learning in their academies (20 per cent vs. 9 per cent for bigger trusts). This is likely to be caused in part by smaller MATs being, on average, newer than their larger counterparts, which might explain why there is not more consistency between their schools. The majority of trusts have some consistency in their approach to teaching and learning, but individual academies are encouraged to innovate and tailor to develop best practice, often working with others in the trust to do so. Successful innovations can then be shared across the trust. This demonstrates that by joining a trust, academies do not lose all of their autonomy, rather they benefit from working together and shared expertise.

Figure 16: Approach to teaching and learning in MATs
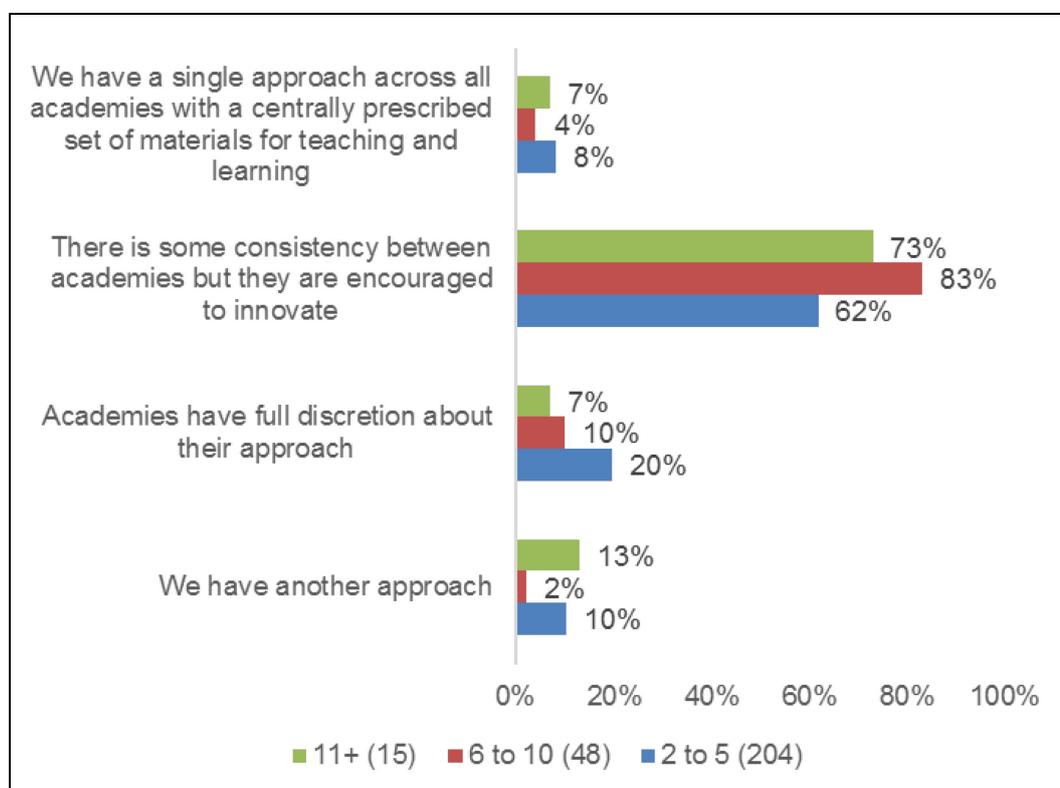
A number of MATs explained that they had an alternative approach including the concept of "earned autonomy" and challenge while also offering support:

"Earned autonomy model distinguishes between the amount of control the trust prescribes"

"Strongly shared ethos and leadership styles which are pace-setting and focused -give high challenge and high support. Teaching and learning styles delegated to academy, depending on Ofsted grading.."

> *"We encourage diversity and innovation matched to the schools needs but share and learn from the best practice. We also challenge and change practice that isn't working"*
>
> *"We are very early in our development but are looking at consistency across hubs that Is innovated from within the hubs and best practice shared across the Trust"*

Flexibility in curriculum

As shown in Figure 17, some consistency exists between the curricula across trusts but, unlike teaching and learning, this does not appear to be related to trust size. Over half of MATs have a core curriculum that all schools follow but they allow freedom to innovate and tailor. This reflects some of the comments in the earlier chapter about collaboration where schools within MATs developed a shared curriculum. Around a third of MATs claim not to have a uniform curriculum across their schools and only a very small minority expect all schools in the same phase to follow an identical curriculum.

Figure 17: Approach to deciding the curriculum across MATs
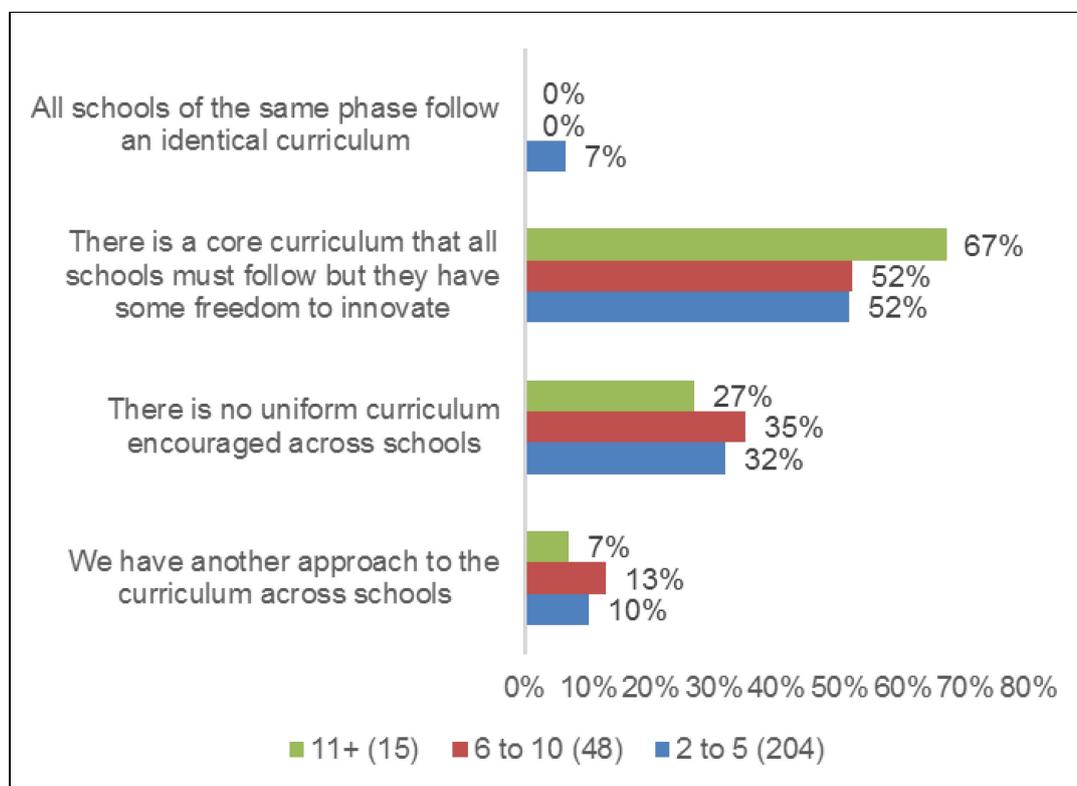
MATs outlined some other approaches but commonly referred to collaboration:

> *"A mixture of 1 and 2. All MATS have the English and Maths Curriculum prescribed as well the principles underpinning PHSCE but Schools are expected to innovate and respond to their demographic needs."*
>
> *"Primaries allowed to follow own curriculum with structured Literacy and Maths, Secondary schools have same KS3 curriculum and aligned KS4"*

> *"Our schools cater for different SEN groups and therefore although there are similarities they are significantly different"*
>
> *"All schools have freedom but consistency is achieved through collaboration and sharing best practice"*

Delegation of responsibility within MATs

Ultimately, the accountability for the education and financial performance of every MAT lies with the Trust board, but boards are able to delegate responsibilities to other levels in their structure. Figure 18 shows where responsibility **predominantly** lies and shows that the Trust Board predominantly handles financial compliance, senior appointments, legal compliance and risk management, whereas MATs delegate many operational factors to schools. It is interesting to note that despite around 4 out of 10 trusts having a regional/local hub structure, a more limited number of trusts devolve responsibilities at this level. The one exception appears to be directing school improvement, responsibility for which lies at the regional/cluster level in 17 per cent of MATs. The operational responsibilities (which predominantly lie with schools) include developing school action plans, setting individual school strategy/objectives and designing staffing structures.

Figure 18: Location of responsibility in MATs for different factors
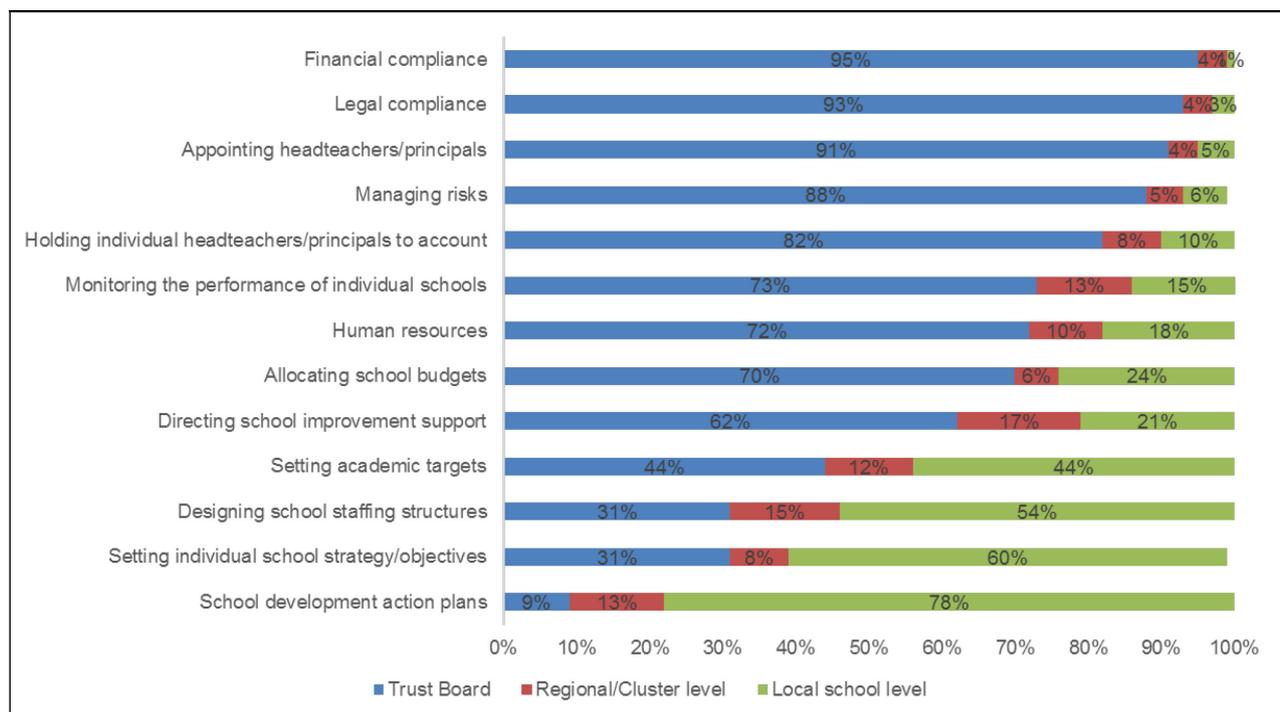

Base: All MATs 2+ academies (267)

Controls and compliance

As part of the accountability system, all academy trusts have a range of statutory duties and must ensure compliance with their funding agreement and articles of association. This section explores how trusts (both SATs and MATs) feel about the expectations and

burdens placed upon them to comply with the terms of their funding agreement. All trusts were asked about the different requirements and controls placed on them and asked for their views of each. The majority felt that the burdens place upon them to comply with various elements were about right; this was particularly the case for monitoring and reporting and internal control and scrutiny. That said, around a quarter felt that checks about financial planning, governance and financial oversight, as well as proper and regular use of funds, were either burdensome or overly burdensome.

Figure 19: Trust views on the level of burden they face to remain compliant
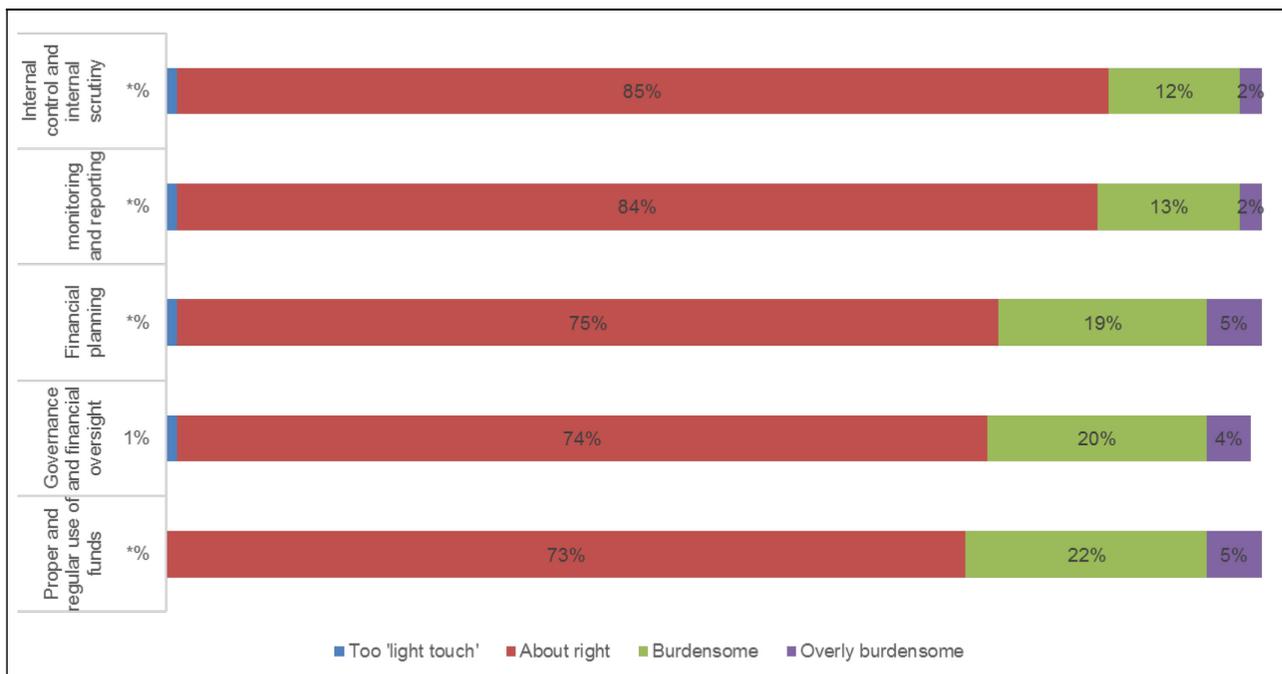
Base: All respondents (868)

The views presented to the questions above by SATs and MATs were the same for three of the five measures of perceived burden, but SATs were less likely than MATs to think that burdens associated with governance/financial oversight (70 per cent of SATs vs. 81 per cent of MATs) and financial planning (72 per cent vs. 80 per cent) were about right. It is possible that this is because SATs don't have the same administrative resources as MATs, and so may be more likely to feel overburdened. They might also feel that SATs need less regulation as they are just one school and they might compare the burdens to those experienced by non-academy schools.

A number of requirements are placed on academies, which are applied primarily through the Funding Agreement and Academies Financial Handbook (AFH); we asked all trusts if there were any they felt were overly burdensome. Only 16 per cent of trusts felt that legal compliance was overly burdensome, and there were no differences between MATs and SATs (see Table 13)

Table 13: Trust views on whether legal requirements are overly burdensome by SATs and MATs

	Total	MAT	SAT
Yes	16%	16%	15%
No	84%	84%	85%
Base	868	326	542

We asked those who felt the burdens were too great to explain any specific elements with which they were particularly unhappy. The open responses were a mix of requirements and processes. They were coded and are presented below in Table 14. Common responses included the time, financial requirements and general comments about the level of burden.

Table 14: Coded responses explaining what trusts feel are burdensome

	Total
Cost/time consuming	19%
Financial requirements (incl. level, too many, too high)	15%
Auditing process	14%
Too difficult/burdensome	13%
Paperwork/formal bureaucracy	10%
Financial funding incl. grants, budget funding	10%
Regulation/legislation	8%
Reporting system issues	7%
Financial returns	5%
Using accounting systems	4%
Website related feedback	4%
Base (all trusts who felt legal requirements were overly burdensome)	135

Some trusts explained their views in some detail and reflect the comments made above:

"I accept fully the importance of auditing accounts and spending public monies with careful due diligence. My concern is the amount of time these processes take for the finance team and governing body. As a future MAT we will need to extend the finance teams capacity in order to deal with increased accountability and I am concerned on how onerous this might be."

"The form completion for financial reports can be frustrating; in as much as it alters every year and the guidance notes are very lengthy. Whilst we fully accept the responsibilities

here, any help to streamline this reporting would be very much appreciated by business managers."

"It is not so much that they are burdensome in themselves, it is just that we have had to develop the capacity for this work from within, with no real support from the LA, RSC or EFA. There are also financial implications in that we are a standalone academy."

"The processes are most bureaucratic, we are governed by company law, charity law and the rules surrounding schools. We are far more heavily regulated that most other public institutions. Without expensive additions to the infrastructure within school this could be a significant distraction from core business."

"We are required to log accounts and relevant details (such as governors) at Companies House, with the DfE, with the EFA ... on our own website. There is tedious and unnecessary replication."

"What we report and how we report it seems to change every year. I have no objection to reporting, but many, many objections to tinkering with templates (and indeed not letting us know of the requirements with enough notice)."

9. Financial efficiencies within MATs

Key Findings

Achieving efficiencies
- Use of procurement frameworks by MATs is not yet widespread (used by 55 per cent of MATs).

- Legal, payroll and HR are often outsourced by trusts, but this is particularly the case for MATs.

- The majority of MATs, especially those that are larger, can provide examples of efficiencies achieved, with trusts able to articulate areas where they have made significant savings including payroll, catering, and grounds maintenance.

Generating income
- Academies generate income by allowing adult/community groups to use their facilities but only a few generate income from use of their facilities by external groups for religious instruction.

- The majority of trusts have not changed their offer of facilities to external organisations over the last year (only 20 per cent of MATs and 33 per cent of SATs), but many of those who have done so have increased prices.

As highlighted in Figure 1, a relatively large proportion of academies expect to increase efficiencies through improved procurement following conversion. This chapter examines whether academies are able to achieve efficiencies, and if so, how.

Use of procurement frameworks

Schools can make use of a variety of procurement frameworks that are designed to help achieve efficiencies through economies of scale. For the first time the department asked all MATs whether they had used existing procurement frameworks and found that 55 per cent have used at least one. Figure 20 shows the variety of procurement frameworks used by MATs: YPO has been used by almost a quarter (24 per cent), while a smaller proportion had used others. This suggests that MATs are either not understanding the benefits of procurement frameworks or do not believe they provide good value for money; this is an area which needs further research.

**Figure 20: Use of procurement frameworks by MATs**
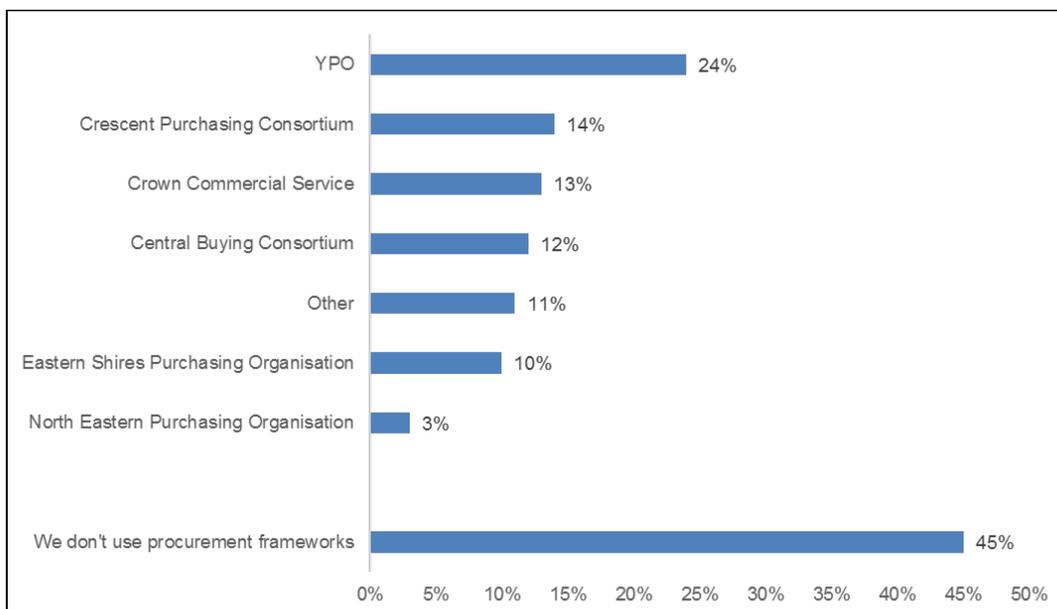
Base: All MATs (326)

Outsourcing

All respondents were asked about whether they currently outsource, are considering outsourcing or have no plans to outsource a number of important services. Figure 21 shows that the most commonly outsourced services for both MATs and SATs were legal, payroll and HR. It is interesting to note that for HR, catering, ICT and facilities management, few differences exist between the level of outsourcing between MATs and SATs. However, significant differences exist in the level of outsourcing for legal and payroll, with MATs more likely to outsource these. The survey data cannot explain why this difference exists, so this area would benefit from further research.

Figure 21: Level of outsourcing of services from MATs and SATs

MATs with 2+ academies

Service	Currently outsource	Considering outsource	No plans to outsource
Legal	90%	3%	5%
Payroll	83%	3%	13%
Human resources	56%	6%	38%
Catering	56%	16%	28%
ICT (including cloud services)	37%	19%	44%
Facilities management	19%	13%	67%

SATS

Service	Currently outsource	Considering outsource	No plans to outsource
Legal	73%	6%	21%
Payroll	63%	11%	25%
Human resources	57%	11%	31%
Catering	49%	14%	37%
ICT (including cloud services)	44%	12%	44%
Facilities management	22%	10%	68%

Base: All MATs with 2+ academies (267) and All SATs (542)

Financial efficiencies achieved

The majority of MATs were able to highlight examples of where they had achieved significant efficiencies by improving their procurement. Around half of SATs (47 per cent) were able to do so. Analysis shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the likelihood of MATs with two or more academies claiming that they have achieved efficiencies compared to SATs (59 per cent compared to 47 per cent). Table 15 shows that larger MATs (with six or more academies) are more likely to claim that they have achieved efficiencies than smaller trusts (those with 2 to 5 academies).

Table 15: The proportion of SATs and MATs (by size) who have made financial efficiencies

	SAT	MAT 2 to 5	MAT 6 to 10	MAT 11+
Yes - Please provide details	47%	55%	69%	86%
No	39%	30%	27%	7%
Don't know	13%	15%	4%	7%
Sample Bases	542	204	48	15

The examples provided show that academies have achieved efficiencies in a number of areas. However, the distribution suggests that more efficiencies could be achieved if more academies pursue them in areas where they have not yet been achieved.

The areas where trusts felt efficiencies have been achieved are outlined in Figure 22. The most common responses were ICT, energy/utilities, catering and HR. It is unlikely

that this list is exhaustive as trusts were only asked to provide a few examples. Again, this area would benefit from further research.

Figure 22: Areas where financial efficiencies have been achieved (MATs 2+ and SATs)
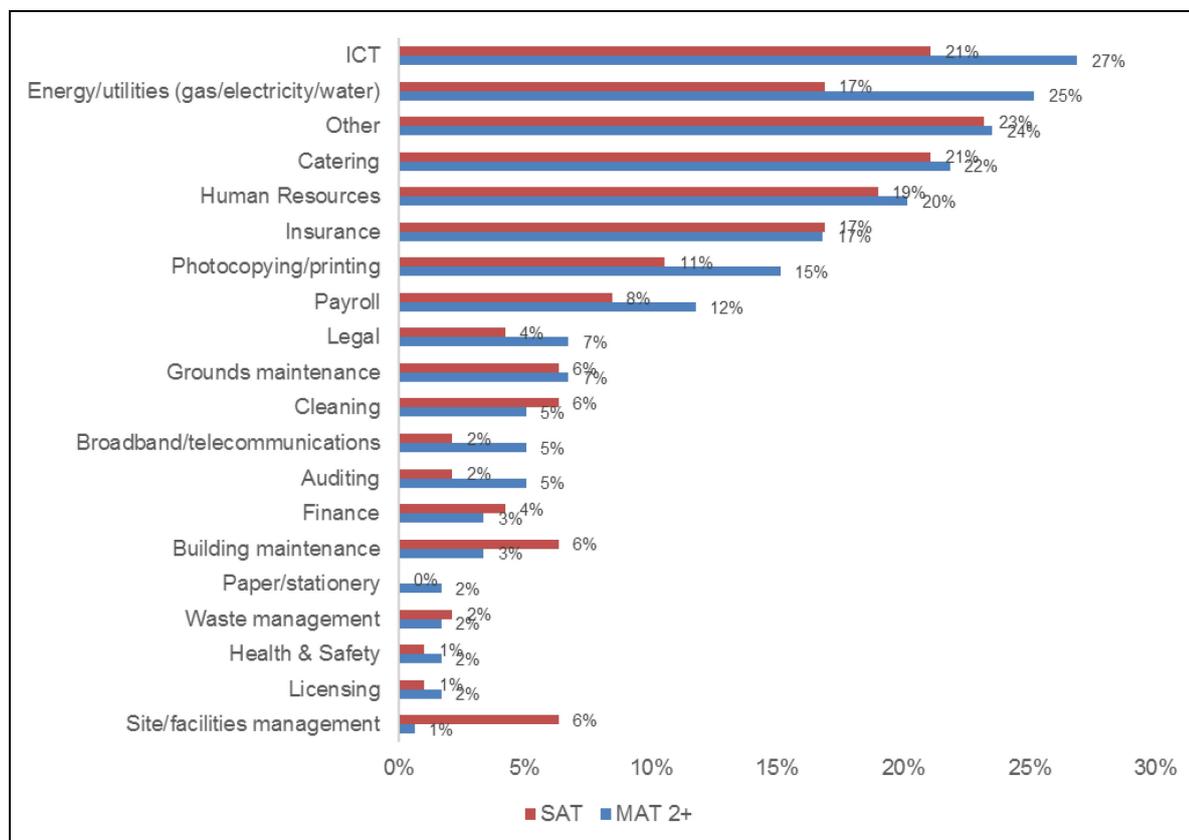
Base: Made financial efficiencies – MATs 2+ academies (159) and SATs (257)

Below are some examples provided by trusts of the savings they have made:

"Through collaborative procurement we have saved approximately: 20k on our energy costs 20k on our insurance costs - this may now get overtaken by the RPA scheme when we next review, but when we last procured, by taking a group approach, we reduced our insurance costs by a significant margin. 20K on payroll costs. Also savings via: group approach to accounting software and budgeting software."

"Payroll : outsource cost is currently £325 per month; LA cost was £765 per month HR : outsource cost is currently £9,000; LA cost was £21,635"

"Catering supplies - buying for a number of schools have achieved a 14% saving (approx £35,000) Legal Services - 25% saving (£8,000 per school instead of £11,000)"

"100k saved across 7 schools through single non-LA catering contract 23k saved across 7 schools through negotiation of single waste contract"

"Over the past 3 years we have brokered a partnership saving over £60,000 with our HR provider. We have also procured a partnership with a Grounds Maintenance company

which we now broker on behalf of other school not in our MAT for over £30,000. A recent smaller saving is for over £15,000 on bin collections across our MAT of 3."

"Ed Psych and SEN services - huge amount of LA 'waiting time' saved by procuring services from elsewhere. As a result, the children are assessed far more quickly, diagnosed and effective support put into place faster. This has impacted on the school's pupil outcomes. HR - we have a part time Bursar who does all of this for us. Huge saving compared to the LA service cost. Legal - local legal company used instead of the LA service. Pay As You Go arrangement in place, which is much cheaper."

"The significant efficiencies have been made on services that we have in house and sell to others (….we actually sell IT services, Speech & Language Therapy and Facilities Management to others)- through selling the services to others, the students attending our Academy get much better services in these areas for a fraction of the previous cost."

Use of academy facilities

Schools have facilities that can be used by the wider population in evenings, weekends and school holidays. Many schools charge for their use of facilities to help generate extra funds. The most common use of facilities is for adult and community groups, with three quarters of trusts allowing others to rent their facilities, half charging external groups to teach children sports (17 per cent allow use without charge), and almost half (46 per cent) renting hall space for social events such as parties. A quarter charge other schools to use their facilities, but a fifth (21 per cent) allow use without charge and a further 15 per cent allow access as part of a reciprocal arrangement between schools. 90 per cent of schools are not being used by external groups for children being taught religious instruction; 6 per cent charge for this use, 3 per cent allow use for free and 1 per cent allow use as part of a reciprocal arrangement with other schools.

Figure 23: Use of academy facilities
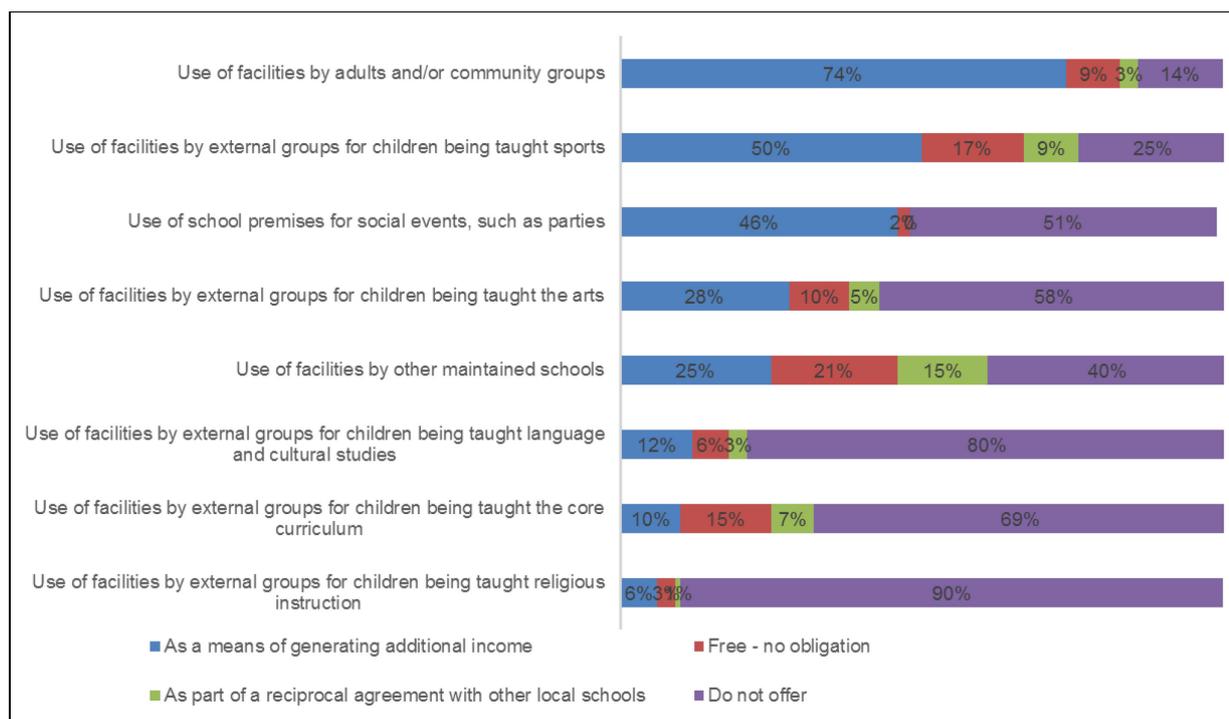
Changes in the use of facilities

The majority of trusts have not changed their offer of facilities to external organisations over the last year (only 20 per cent of MATs and 33 per cent of SATs have changed the use of their facilities).

Table 16: Whether trusts have changed the use of their facilities

	MAT	SAT	Total
Yes	20%	33%	28%
No	80%	67%	72%
Sample Bases	326	542	868

Those who have made changes tended to focus on generating extra income for their trust:

"Prices have been raised for lettings. We work with more local schools, we let more areas of the site, we are applying for community grants to set up a community HUB on school grounds"

"We now offer weekend lettings to a local church group and a sports club. We have increased our income over the past year.We have a reciprocal agreement with [professional football club], who use our field for an after school club and in return offer us free weekly reading support for target children"

> *"We outsource use of our facilities to community groups via a company called SLS which generates income for the Academy"*
>
> *"More academies within the MAT now let their facilities out of hours in order to generate additional sources of income"*
>
> *"We now offer more facilities than ever before including a dance school and Arabic school. We have restructured our pricing to reflect demand."*

Some focussed on the trust's role in the community:

> *"Encouraging much greater use of the school by the local community than previously. In part to generate income but mainly to build links with community groups and organisations"*
>
> *"Community orientated - facilities are available to our communities 24/7 - change in culture to serving the local communities."*

10. Conclusion

This research develops the Department for Education's understanding of academies. The report builds on the findings from our 2014 research[8] and for the first time includes analysis of the similarities and differences between SATs and MATs. The survey results demonstrate the rapid evolution of the academy sector that has occurred since the previous survey completed in spring 2014, the most notable factor being the increase in numbers of MATs and academies joining them.

The majority of school conversions now involve a school joining a MAT, rather than becoming a standalone academy. This report demonstrates that the motivations for joining a MAT are usually based on an understanding of the potential benefits afforded by MAT structures, in particular collaboration. Collaboration within MATs takes many different forms, including improved school-to-school support, financial efficiencies and improving staff retention. Our 2014 report stated that academies wanted "to raise educational standards through collaboration with other like-minded schools", a point emphasised by the fact that half of the trusts surveyed for this report claimed that the main reason for academies joining their trust was a shared vision and ethos.

The reasons for conversion among SATs were often linked to obtaining more funding for front line education - as was the case for early converters in 2010-12 - but many also sought to create new opportunities for collaboration, especially for primary schools. SATs explained the reasons why they were not part of a MAT and the reasons varied from

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[8] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/401455/RR366_-_research_report_academy_autonomy.pdf

failing to see the need to formalise the arrangement, to wishing to maintain autonomy, while others remained unconvinced about the benefits.

The department will use this research to develop examples of how schools have benefited from converting to become an academy, the challenges they face, the benefits associated with membership of a MAT, and we will consider any wider implications for policy or support to MATs and SATS. For example, the responses from MATs show that financial benefits can be achieved and many MATs balance the application of consistent practice in things like curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning with room for innovation to develop best practice among schools in the trust. The department should conduct further research to get a better understanding of the level of efficiencies that can be achieved, as well as better understand what distinguishes the strongest MATs from those which perform less well.

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