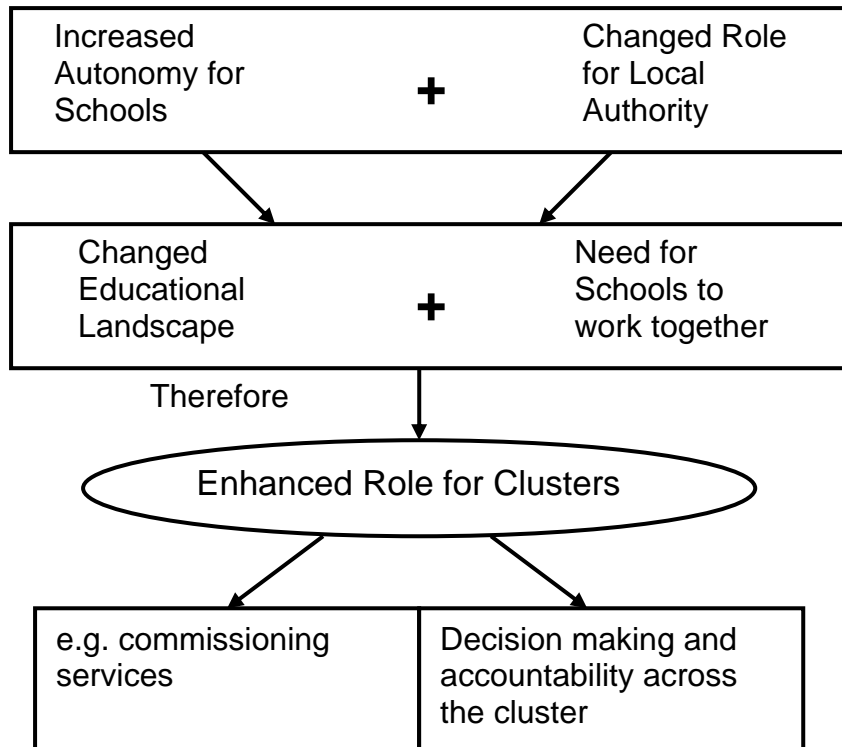


Cluster Development – a Rationale for Cluster Governance

1) *Why is cluster governance important?*



REQUIRES:

- ⇒ **Clear lines of communication between headteachers/governors**
- ⇒ **Clear cluster governance arrangements which protect all the schools and all the children in a given area (usually geographical)**

2) *What does effective cluster governance look like?*

Governors in a cluster which is functioning effectively will:

- be aware of the funds that have been provided to the cluster each financial year; the purposes for which they are intended and the intended outcomes
- collectively approve the arrangements for using and accounting for such funds within the cluster. It is particularly important that governors satisfy themselves that proper arrangements are in place for the employment of staff financed by cluster monies
- receive reports which satisfy them that the funds have been used and accounted for in the way agreed and that the outcomes have been achieved
- in addition, where collaborative provision is planned, governing bodies also need to ensure that they have the **ability to hold school leaders to account, both individually and, where relevant agreements in place, collectively**

3) Where is your cluster on the spectrum of collaboration?

We are aware that different clusters are at different points on the spectrum of collaboration. Looking at the criteria above for effective governance, would you describe your cluster as:

- a) **beginning** to work in this way
- b) **developing** this way of working
- c) **embedding** this way of working
- d) **going beyond** this way of working

To make this assessment, you may like to use the Cluster Self Evaluation Document.

If the cluster is just beginning to work in this way, it may be that you need further advice. If this is the case, please contact Governor Services for further support.

4) What do we need to do?

In order to underpin these cluster-wide responsibilities, governors will need to adopt an appropriate framework. The diversity of schools in your cluster, and the level of collaboration which currently exists will influence your choice of structure.

The Service Improvement Board recommends that each cluster adopts either the **Cluster Governance Agreement** (clusters with maintained schools only) or the **Cluster Steering Group Agreement** (clusters with range of schools including academies or free schools) by end of Summer Term 2012. Each agreement includes a set of appendices to provide detailed arrangements for finance and staffing. It is also possible to adopt more formal arrangements, such as a trust. The document entitled 'Models of Collaboration' sets out a range of these options.

<p>With one of these models in place, governors will be in a secure position to monitor any commissioned service, including the allocation of SEND funding through clusters</p>
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How does your cluster currently work?

Sense of shared identity between schools?

(which could be through physical proximity or a sense of belonging to an inclusive community)

	Strong			Non-existent
School Leaders	1	2	3	4
Governors	1	2	3	4

A sense of common purpose and a joint vision?

Perhaps with reference to:

- A collaborative focus on **raising standards**
- The development of a **wider entitlement of experiences** for all our pupils
- A local **Every Child Matters agenda**, i.e. local solutions to local issues
- The opportunity to develop more **cross-phase projects / programmes** to work innovatively with any specialist provision (SEN) or Academy Trust or Children's Centre in the locality / cluster
- The opportunity to create more **efficient and effective support services**
- The opportunity to develop a new inclusive curriculum with effective transition from pre-school to post 16
- The ability to **attract staff** to more innovative approaches
- Provide **school improvement** support
- Ambition to shape the provision landscape through commissioning new schools

	Strong			Non-existent
School Leaders	1	2	3	4
Governors	1	2	3	4

Strong cohesive leadership which looks to develop and sustaining leadership at all levels in all the partnership schools

	Strong			Non-existent
School Leaders	1	2	3	4
Governors	1	2	3	4

A Management structure

	Strong			Non-existent
School Leaders	1	2	3	4

Level of Trust

(schools need to share a sense of openness and a willingness to operate in a joined-up way)

	Strong			Non-existent
School Leaders	1	2	3	4
Governors	1	2	3	4

A system of review to monitor the effectiveness of the partnership

	Strong			Non-existent
School	1	2	3	4

Leaders				
Governors	1	2	3	4

Commitment to the partnership

(which may at times be in conflict with loyalty to individual school)

	Strong			Non-existent
School Leaders	1	2	3	4
Governors	1	2	3	4

Add up scores for each group and then choose your starting point from the foci overleaf.
You may need to cover all those points over time.

		RESOURCE/HELP
START HERE⇒	Do you have a clearly expressed joint vision & purpose for your Cluster?	Broker support from external consultant, perhaps through NIEAS, Governor Services etc.
If you have a high score this is likely to be your starting point	Concentrate on building & strengthening your cluster structures, therefore take a pragmatic approach to SEN for the Autumn Term 2012.	Broker support from external consultant, perhaps through NIEAS, Governor Services etc. Seek advice from Senior Adviser for SEND regarding pragmatic approach and engage with SEND toolkit and the support offered.
Discrepancy between Governance and School Leadership Scores.	Confirm Cluster agreements and chose an appropriate model of governance that matches the level of collaboration and schools status. Then go to next focus.	Example Cluster Governance Agreement or Cluster Steering Group Agreement, possibly Models of Collaboration document
If you have a low score , this is likely to be your starting point.	Concentrate on implementing the Cluster SEND toolkit by adapting it fully to your own circumstances. Consider innovative approaches to the development of SEND	Cluster SEND Toolkit

KEY QUESTIONS:

Do Governing Bodies of schools in the cluster have sufficiently strong mechanisms to:

1. Monitor financial spending at cluster level?	Describe these in your cluster agreement!	
2. Hold school leaders to account both individually and collectively for any collaborative activity?	Describe these in your cluster agreement!	

School Organisation Models of collaboration

“Autonomy, choice and diversity” are the buzz words of the Coalition government and central to their educational policy. Schools convert to academy status in order to benefit from the greater freedoms which, it is claimed, enable innovation and higher standards.

These include:

- freedom from local authority control
- the ability to set their own pay and conditions for staff
- freedoms around the delivery of the curriculum
- the ability to change the lengths of terms and school days.

However, unlike the Grant Maintained School policy, which promoted competition between schools, there is general recognition that governors and leaders cannot work in isolation, but need to take responsibility for improving the educational system as a whole. As schools are held more accountable to their communities, there is an awareness that schools need to work more collaboratively in order to bring about improvement for all children. The Local Authority has a role in challenging schools which are causing concern, and this may involve brokering partnerships around issues which cut across more than one school.

The idea of schools working together through clusters and networks is not new, but a range of more formal partnerships is beginning to emerge. The most important factor in the success of any partnership appears to be how well the structure of the partnership has been tailored to meet the needs of the individual schools involved.

There is no one-size fits all, but there are some factors which contribute to the success of any collaborative partnership:

- A sense of shared identity between schools, which could be through physical proximity or a sense of belonging to an inclusive community
- A sense of common purpose and a joint vision for improving the attainment, achievement and progression of ALL the young people served by the partnership
- Strong cohesive leadership which looks to develop and sustaining leadership at all levels in all the partnership schools
- A strong management structure
- Trust – schools need to share a sense of openness and a willingness to operate in a joined-up way
- A system of review to monitor the effectiveness of the partnership
- Commitment to the partnership, which may at times be in conflict with loyalty to individual school

Below is a guide to the characteristics of each of the differing levels of partnership:

Collaborations



A collaboration is a governance partnership model that may use collaborative regulations to establish a partnership. In Norfolk, Management Partnerships are collaborations that permit a headteacher to lead more than one school.

- Good practice to consult with parents before agreeing to a management partnership but not statutory
- Each school retains its separate governing body, although a joint committee may be established
- Each school retains its separate budget and admissions arrangements
- Relatively easy to establish and therefore a handy “emergency” measure to provide a school with leadership
- Appointments need to be underpinned by an SLA
- Partnerships can include academies and free schools but a formal collaboration which makes use of the Collaboration Arrangements regulations, only applies to maintained schools and FE colleges
- Each school in the collaboration/partnership retains a separate DfE number and is subject to separate Ofsted inspections

Federations



Two or more schools agree to operate **under a single governing body**

- Governors must follow a statutory consultation process before federating, but the decision is made by individual governors, not the LA
- Each school retains its separate budget and admissions arrangements
- Single governing body has a strategic view across the schools in the federation
- The federation can be under the leadership of a single headteacher, but it is also possible for each school to retain its headteacher
- Can help bring about consistency and cohesion across the federation
- Opportunities for common management positions across the federation and shared staff (often SENCO or School Business Manager)
- Greater buying power of pooled budgets brings about better value for money, and greater opportunities for buying in professional support and development
- The degree of integration in staffing and finance is a matter for the federation leadership to decide

- Academies cannot be part of federations, but it **is** possible for a church school and a non-church school to federate
- Each school in the federation retains a separate DfE number and is subject to separate Ofsted inspections

Trusts



A trust school remains a local authority maintained school, supported by a charitable trust made up of the school and partners (such as businesses, universities or community groups) working together to raise standards for the whole community. Schools can set up a trust in a collaborative group whereby the schools acquire foundation status and adopt the same trust.

- Governors must follow a statutory consultation process before becoming a Trust school, but the decision is made by individual governors, not the LA
- Each school within the Trust retains its individual governing body but contributes to the strategic direction of the Trust
- A Trust enjoys more flexibility – it can set its own admissions criteria (in accordance with the admissions code), employ its own staff and have responsibility for school land and buildings
- Involvement of non-school partners helps develop new and more effective approaches to learning
- Co-operative Trust Schools have a membership structure that enables parents, learners, staff and community to be directly involved in the Trust in the belief that it is only through the active engagement of communities that aspirations and expectations of educational achievement can be transformed
- Time consuming to set up because of the statutory process which must be followed. A maintained school must apply to become a Foundation School before it can become a Trust school, although the consultations can run concurrently
- Each school in the trust retains a separate DfE number and is subject to separate Ofsted inspections

School Companies



Joint working may be secured by creating a limited company or other partnership agreement and a memorandum of understanding to deliver services across a range of schools. A local limited company is an emerging model which enables schools to create formal structures on a business model to appoint staff, share resources and work together to achieve economies of scale.

- The school company model is very adaptable
- In addition to maintained schools, VC, VA, Foundation schools and Academies can participate in a school company
- Each school retains its individual governing body and ethos
- Maintained schools need the consent of the LA to set up a school company
- Each governing body empowers a governor to sign up to the company
- All school companies need to have a supervising authority, which in most instances is the local authority
- Non-educational partners can be included in the company
- Enables groups of schools to adopt local solutions to common problems with a focussed approach
- Generally quicker and easier to establish than a trust

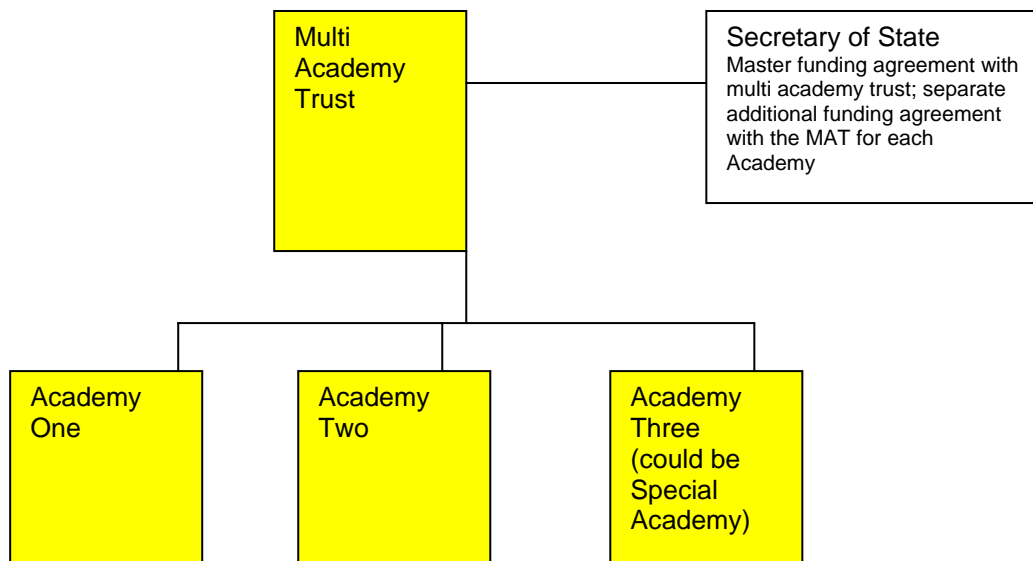
Academies



Academies are independent of local authority control. The previous government promoted **Sponsored academies** as a way to tackle underachievement. The coalition government has introduced **Converter academies** (initially an option for Outstanding and Good schools only). Schools rated Satisfactory cannot convert on their own, but the DfE will allow them to convert as part of a federation, or if sponsored by an agreed provider.

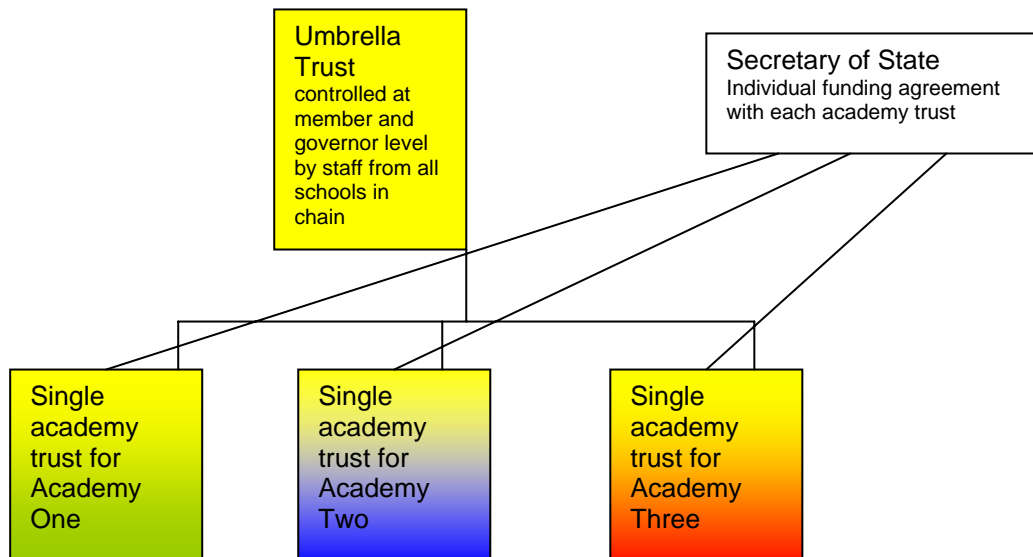
Both types of academy may be part of multi-agency trusts or chains.

Option 1: Multi-Academy Trust



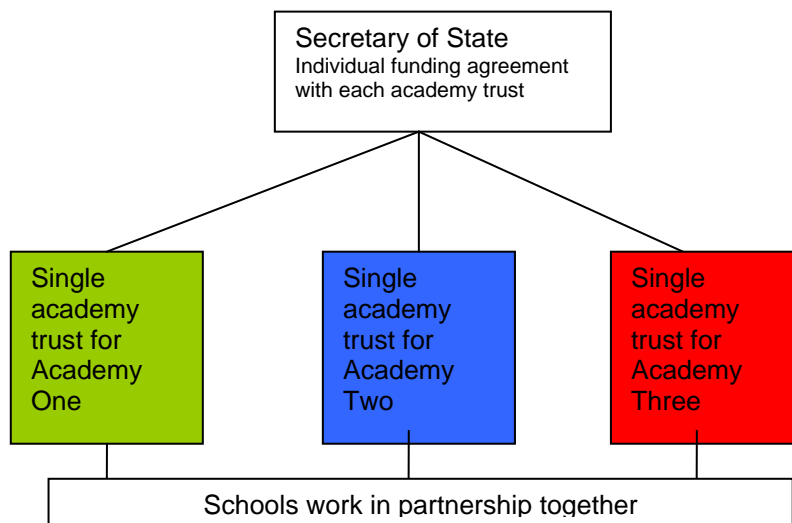
- Academy Trust may decide to govern each Academy direct, or it can set up a local governing body for each Academy, to which it can delegate some matters
- Alternatively the Trust can set up an advisory body for each Academy with no delegated powers

Option 2: Umbrella Trust Model



- Members and governors of each single trust are appointed by the umbrella trust
- Umbrella trust can have majority or minority control of individual academies (Outstanding/Good schools can choose but majority control for Satisfactory/Inadequate schools)

Option 3: Collaborative Partnership Model



- Could be a mix of Academies, maintained schools and fee-paying independent schools
- No shared governance arrangements required between schools although they are free to have a written agreement to collaborate on particular matters should they wish