

GOVERNORS'
GUIDE TO
**TRUST
SCHOOLS**



department for
children, schools and families

Governors' guide to TRUST schools

More and more schools are working with external partners as a way of making school a more rewarding place for both pupils and staff. To help schools build on this and create long-term, sustainable relationships with partners, a new type of school has emerged – Trust schools.

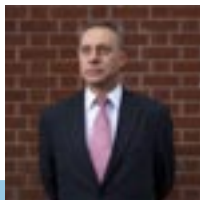
Trust schools are local authority maintained and are supported by a charitable foundation. Schools can work with a wide range of partners including other schools, businesses, charities, universities, FE colleges, community groups, or even individuals.

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Windsor High School,
West Midlands



It's up to each school to decide who they want to work with so that they get the right partners for their particular school.

In Trust schools, the governing body is the admissions authority – acting in accordance with the School Admissions Code – and the employer of staff. The Trust holds the land and assets. Like other maintained schools, they teach the National Curriculum, are inspected by Ofsted, and are funded on the same basis as other maintained schools in the authority.

DIFFERENT MODELS

The Trust school model is a flexible one, giving schools the opportunity to create the right learning and working environment for them. Three models are now emerging:

*** Group of local schools working with a Trust**

A group of local schools can choose to work together to share best practice. This could be with the aim of developing a particular subject, or as a way of addressing a specific issue, such as creating greater 14-19 opportunities. As a group, these Trust schools are in a position to offer pupils experiences and resources that they might be unable to offer on their own.

This type of collaboration already exists in some places, but working within a Trust can clarify schools' aims, expectations and standards and ensure the collaboration or partnership has a sustainable foundation and future.

For example, Sharnbrook Upper School in Bedfordshire is working with its feeder schools, Unilever Research and Cranfield University to smooth pupil transition, provide work experience opportunities for its pupils and strengthen its curriculum.

*** Group of schools spread throughout the country working with a single Trust**

This arrangement could incorporate a business or charitable foundation supporting a network of schools with the aim of developing a specialist subject or particular approach to school improvement.

*** Individual school working with a Trust**

Working with partners such as universities, businesses and community groups can bring new energy, expertise and enthusiasm to help drive up standards. For example, The Ferrers Specialist Arts College is working with its Trust partners the RSPB, The Duchy of Lancaster, and the University of Leicester to increase pupils' knowledge of conservation and sustainability and to find ways of encouraging more pupils to stay on in further education. ■

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South Dartmoor
Community
College, Devon



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Andrew Marvell
Business and Enterprise
College, Hull

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Margaret Kubicek, Sam Upton*

Collective responsibility for improving support to all families in the Garforth area of Leeds is the overarching aim of the School Partnership Trust, which brings together secondary Garforth Community College and four feeder primaries as well as the local PCT and Trinity and All Saints HE college.

For Jane Addy, Chair of Governors at Green Lane Primary, the end result is simple: "if we can access the wider family, we're more likely to have the children in school performing at their best. All the research says it's the family environment that makes the big difference." Accessing the family means everything from linking them more efficiently with local services offered by the PCT to improving children's chances of economic

wellbeing by widening their parents' and carers' access to education. "For children to see older people learning – not because they have to, but because they want to and because it's fun – sends a powerful message."

Establishing a charity has enabled them to successfully bid for additional charity grants such as funds for ICT upgrades. (Big Lottery funding for the Trust's holiday programme has also been forthcoming.) It also means Green Lane is better placed to respond to behavioural and other issues "which aren't that common for us," says Jane, since the appropriate services and resources are now "on tap". She believes the Trust process has strengthened the strategic input of governors at Green Lane. "It made us take a wider view and look formally at where we were going. Rather than talking about Every Child Matters generically, it made us focus practically on what we could do." ■

CASE STUDY 1

SCHOOL Green Lane

Primary, Garforth, Leeds

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Jane Addy



» IF WE CAN ACCESS THE WIDER FAMILY, WE'RE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE THE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL PERFORMING AT THEIR BEST «

THE TRUST MODEL
will promote the forging of
stronger community links
as local businesses offer
their support

What can a TRUST offer?

RAISING STANDARDS

By forming a Trust, governors can bring together the expertise they need to help raise standards. For example, Windsor High School in the West Midlands is using the expertise of its Trust partners, the Black Country Consortium, the University of Wolverhampton and Dudley Local Authority, to improve learning outcomes, and raise students' aspirations.

SUSTAINABILITY

Many schools already work with a wide range of partners but these relationships can weaken over the longer term, particularly as members of staff leave or retire. Through a Trust, governors can ensure that their partners are committed to their school for the long term.

ECM

Trust status can also help schools deliver the five Every Child Matters outcomes. For example, Garforth Community College in Leeds is working with four of its feeder primaries, Leeds PCT and Trinity and All Saints College of FE to improve the life chances of its pupils by using the expertise of its partners to create multi-agency partnerships to support families and young people.

And Kingsley College in Worcestershire is working with one of its Trust partners, children's charity Barnardo's, to improve provision for vulnerable young people.

PRIMARY

Trust schools can also help with the challenges facing primary schools today. For example, Strawberry Fields Primary School is working with its other primary school Trust partners and Garforth Community College to help ease the problems faced by pupils when they move from primary school to secondary school. Trust status, particularly when Trust partners include other schools and HE/FE institutions, can also help primary schools offer a wider choice of professional development for staff. And external Trust partners can provide support on curriculum development, and in some instances help to free up capacity to allow headteachers to focus on teaching and learning in their schools. Forming a Trust can also provide a forum and a mechanism for collective bargaining and collaborative

working. For example, using their flexibilities around land and buildings, a Trust school could share a site with its partners to provide an early years facility or antenatal unit.

14-19

Broadening 14-19 provision can be achieved through a Trust. For example, The Hermitage School in County Durham is teaching pupils about the construction industry through its Trust partner, construction company Laing O'Rourke.

COMMUNITY COHESION

Schools can invite community groups to take part in their Trust to improve community cohesion. For example, Ashington Community High School Sports College in Northumberland, four other schools, the University of Northumbria, Ashington Children's Centre, Wansbeck Business Forum, Northumberland College, and the local authority are working together to provide lifelong learning opportunities and extended support for local families. ■


CASE STUDY 2

SCHOOL Windsor High School,
Halesowen, West Midlands

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Colin White

» IT'S ABOUT
GIVING CHILDREN
OPPORTUNITIES TO
SHARE FACILITIES
AND BENEFIT FROM
THE BEST METHODS
OF TEACHING «



enterprise specialist). The three schools have formed a Trust with external partners, including Halesowen College and the University of Wolverhampton, to formalise collaborative working. The aim of the Trust is to extend opportunities in 14-19 provision in each of the schools – including introduction of the International Baccalaureate – and improve rates of progression into further and higher education.

“It’s about giving children opportunities to share facilities and benefit from best methods of teaching, and to give staff the opportunity to collaborate,” says Colin. “We should be looking at each of the departments or faculties and what they are doing that’s adding so much value to each child, and then looking to share that experience across the piece. This has been done informally through personal contacts in the past. What the Trust does is put it on a formal basis and encourage more of it.”

Colin believes Trust status has boosted strategic management of the school, enabling governors to be innovative in driving forward school improvement. “If being a governor is about moving your school and the local community on, which it should be, this has got to be a phenomenal opportunity to do it,” he says. ■

Even schools with a winning formula for success reach a point when further improvement requires a new way of working. Windsor High School in the West Midlands is a case in point, according to Chair of Governors Colin White: “Over the years, standards in school increased to the point that we felt that’s probably as far as the model we have at the moment could go. There’s only so much added value you can bring.”

A specialist sports, science, vocational and training secondary, Windsor is in close proximity to two other specialist secondaries, Earls High (arts, leading edge and language specialist) and Leasowes Community College (business and

TRUST SCHOOLS
will not be 'owned' by
businesses. They may be
a Trust partner, but
do not run the school

How is a TRUST school set up?

Becoming a Trust school requires a formal process that is undertaken by the school and its governing body. This process is likely to take around a year and has five stages, outlined here.

STAGE 1

Decide who to work with – and how. Schools should hold a governing body meeting to explore questions such as: what benefits will this bring the school? Who would the Trust partners be? Many schools already have relationships with partners that could form a Trust. See back page for details.

STAGE 2

Consultation. Regulations require schools to consult with certain groups and individuals, including those the governing body believes will be affected by the changes. This is an opportunity for families, staff and other stakeholders as

trade unions, to learn about, express a view and shape plans for the Trust. The school must decide how this consultation is carried out; the DCSF recommends a four- to six-week period in term time.

STAGE 3

Publish statutory proposals and invite representations.

The school publishes statutory proposals, which include specific details on the Trust in accordance with regulations. It must post notices in public places, so all the school's stakeholders are able to express their views. If the Trust plans to appoint the majority of governors, proposals will also include information on how a Parent Council would be set up. There must be a period of four weeks (during term time) for representations. LAs may require the proposals to be sent to the Schools Adjudicator for a

decision if they consider that the consultation has been inadequate or that the proposals will have a negative impact on standards at the school.

STAGE 4

Consider representations and decide whether to acquire the Trust.

The school's governing body makes the decision whether to approve the proposals, taking on board the views and opinions of all the stakeholders and having regard to statutory guidance. The decision must be made within six months of publishing proposals (Stage 3).

STAGE 5

Implementation. When a school acquires a Trust, ie becomes a Trust school, the school's land and buildings are transferred to the Trust for it to hold on the school's behalf, and the governing body is reconstituted. The implementation date will have been outlined in the published proposals. ■

Further information can be found in the draft Trust Schools Toolkit at:
www.tinyurl.com/2qmx4v (PDF)
www.tinyurl.com/yw5ok3 (Word)

CASE STUDY 3

SCHOOL South Dartmoor
Community College, Devon

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

Mike Billington



» THE FIRST
THING YOU
HAVE TO GET
STRAIGHT IS
WHY YOU'RE
DOING IT «

Since becoming a Trust school, South Dartmoor Community College has been on a steeper learning curve than most. As a Pathfinder Trust school, they strode into an area where few maintained schools had been before, finding out everything about self-governance – from getting the right insurance policies to the provision of childcare vouchers for staff.

Their journey began more than 12 months ago, when they agreed to join the scheme with a view to formalising and developing a series of partnerships that were already in place. “The first thing you have to get straight is why you’re doing it,” explains Mike Billington, Chair of Governors at the college. “Because that’s the first thing everyone else – teachers, parents, the local authority – is going to ask you.”

From an impressive list of existing business and educational partners, the governing body

of the Devon college decided upon four – Capita Children’s Services, Exeter University’s School of Education & Lifelong Learning, education publisher TLO and local construction company E&JW Glendinning. Each had a unique offer and were chosen to benefit the students and the staff, who were kept informed of the school’s progress throughout every stage.

“Communication is paramount,” says Mike. “We had to ensure everybody, including staff, students, parents, partners and the local authority, was kept informed so there was no resentment about not feeling included.”

Having moved from community to foundation status, and undergoing a rigorous consultation phase, the college became a Trust school in September 2007. It has meant more responsibility and accountability, but everyone at the school is relishing the challenge.

“As governors, we have huge responsibilities,” says Mike, “and I think governors underestimate their own capability. If you wrote down what governors are actually responsible for, you’d discover the huge range of responsibilities they already have, and realise that taking on a bit extra isn’t such a frightening prospect.” ■

TRUST SCHOOLS
aim to build long-term
relationships with
partners in order to
raise standards

What could this mean? for YOU?

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

Forming a Trust offers governors the opportunity to bring in external expertise to strengthen the governing body. For example, many businesses can offer the governing body personnel and finance expertise, while HE and FE colleges can help develop curriculum and staff training policies. It's up to the governing body to decide what kind of skills they need and to identify the right partners.

LONG-TERM VISION

Along with the headteacher, governing bodies will still be responsible for managing the school and developing its strategic vision. However, the Trust will be able to help schools take a longer view. The Trust can help governing bodies look further, taking into account the needs of other local schools, the local community and employers.

SUSTAINABILITY

Every governor knows the disruption that the departure of a key member of staff can cause, particularly with long-term relationships built up with external partners. By forming a Trust, these partners are committed to the school, not the individual, which means that the benefits of these partnerships can continue well into the future.

STRUCTURE

Governing bodies will continue to include elected parent and staff governors, as well as local authority and community governors. Trusts will choose

who they appoint to the governing body. Trusts will also be able to appoint individuals who are not directly associated with the Trust, if the Trust thinks they will uphold and support its aims.

Parents must be at least one third of the governing body. Where the Trust appoints a minority of governors, the parent governors will be elected. Where the Trust appoints a majority, in addition to the elected governors the Trust must appoint additional parents as governors in order to ensure that parents make up at least one third of the governing body. ■

www.governornet.co.uk/parentcouncils

CASE STUDY 4

SCHOOL Andrew Marvell
Business and Enterprise
College, Hull

CHAIR OF GOVERNORS
Barry Jacobs



» THE SCHOOL IS NOT JUST A BUILDING THAT SITS BEHIND FENCES, IT'S A BUILDING THAT'S EMBEDDED IN THE COMMUNITY «

A strong community and co-operative ethos has played a key role in driving up standards of achievement at Andrew Marvell Business and Enterprise College, located in an area of significant deprivation and historically low educational aspiration in east Hull.

At the heart of Andrew Marvell's ethos are the values of self-help and personal responsibility, and the school sees Trust status as a means of actively engaging the wider community, says Chair of Governors Barry Jacobs. "We're looking at learning opportunities that are not restricted to 11-16. The key to Trust status for us is the community design. The school is not just a building that sits behind fences, it's a building that's

embedded in the community." The main Trust partner will be the Co-operative Group (and its educational arm, the Co-operative College), which already sponsors the school's business and enterprise specialism, and other partners will include Hull University and Hull College. The proposed Trust will establish a council to give the wider community a direct voice in the running of the Trust.

"It will be a body based on membership – an idea aligned with the Co-operative Group itself – to include parents, carers, staff and the wider community," says Barry. "Council members will appoint two trustees to the board of the Trust."

On a practical level, Barry says, Trust status solidifies the school's relationship with the Co-operative Group, whose business experience and insight can be a real benefit to pupils when it comes to developing vocational learning. ■

Who is making TRUSTS happen?



The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, Youth Sport Trust,

Foundation and Aided Schools National Association and the Office of the Schools Commissioner are all supporting schools to become Trust schools.

Sir Bruce Liddington, Schools Commissioner,

explains his role in advising governors and promoting Trust status among the country's schools.

What's the role of your office with regard to Trust schools?

"My office has a responsibility to keep a record of potential partners for Trust schools. Often schools will have local partners already in place, or have a good idea of the type of partner they want. But we can draw on our pool of people who are interested in working with schools."

What are the advantages of a school acquiring a Trust?

"The advantages depend on the type of school. For a high-performing school, adding a Trust could help improve their gifted and talented provision, or help build on their specialist subjects. Elsewhere, local clusters of schools have

formed a Trust to preserve the good practice that exists and look at their schools' long-term future. But it's the partnerships with local businesses or HE colleges that can bring the most rewards, and a lot of schools are looking to strengthen existing relationships or develop new ones."

How would becoming a Trust school affect governors?

"In a Trust school, the governing body remains the accountable body. The governing body will be reconstituted and include governors who will be appointed by the Trust to strengthen the expertise on the governing body. The main difference is that, as governors of a Trust school, they would be the employers of the staff and their own admissions authority. That doesn't mean they can select academically. They are bound by law to the School Admissions Code."

Will it affect a school's funding?

"Trust schools are funded on the same basis as other maintained schools in the area. Funding goes directly to the governing body, not the Trust.

Like other maintained schools, the local authority will remain responsible for funding the maintenance of a Trust school's buildings, and Trust schools will continue to receive direct capital funding that they can invest according to their individual needs. There is no funding reserved centrally for Trust schools. However, a Trust could use the pooled devolved formula capital of all its schools for particular projects or can bid for additional capital funds to support specific initiatives."

Will becoming a Trust school mean more work for the governing body?

"Setting up the Trust will mean more work initially. However, once the Trust is in place, governing bodies will be able to draw on the expertise and skills of the Trust so the task of running schools should become easier."

Will governors lose control of their schools?

"The governing body of a Trust school, not the Trust, will remain responsible for all aspects of the conduct of the school. The Trust and the governing body remain separate entities." ■

Find out more

Advice and resources are readily available to anyone wishing to set up a Trust or become a Trust school from the following organisations

Specialist Schools and Academies Trust at:

www.ssatrust.org.uk/trustschools

Youth Sport Trust at:

www.youthsporttrust.org/schoolsportxchange

Foundation & Aided Schools

National Association at:

www.fasna.org.uk/index.htm

Download Trust Schools Toolkit at:

www.tinyurl.com/2qmx4v (PDF)

or: www.tinyurl.com/yw5ok3 (Word)

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FRONT COVER PICTURE SHOWS BARRY JACOBS, ANDREW MARVELL BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE COLLEGE, HULL