

Insights into the successful growth and development of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

By Gareth Davies, Managing Director, Frog Education

Making a success of your Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

Establishing a MAT is challenging - navigating the complexities of bringing schools together, whilst delivering a high standard of education in a financially viable way, can be tricky. This eBook provides essential guidance for senior leaders seeking to make a success of their MAT.

All MATs have an aspirational eye towards their intended future, but many are still in the process of finding their way, building meaningful processes and communication systems, whilst establishing responsibilities within their Scheme of Delegation. Indeed, many MATs are run by first-time CEOs.

For such challenges, there appears to be a lack of comprehensive guidance that takes senior leaders through the many different aspects of MAT management. The MAT Improvement Framework has been created to address four key areas that feed into the development of a successful MAT.

Four Key Areas of the MAT Improvement Framework

Leadership & Planning
Core Services
School Improvement
Marketing & Recruiting

The Improvement Framework provides guidance to overcome common challenges that have been identified by established MATs.

I hope you find the following insights useful.



"As a trust, we share HR, admin, finance and governance across our five schools. With FrogConnect, we no longer have to struggle to share resources across departments in the trust."

Sarah Balmer | Education Village



The Education Village
Where learning has no limits

MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK



LEADERSHIP & PLANNING



CORE SERVICES



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



MARKETING & RECRUITING



Vision & Ethos



IT Infrastructure & Support



Curriculum Development



Centralised Marketing & Branding



Growth & Sustainability



Finance & HR



Standards & Moderation



Reducing Costs



Management & Governance



Communication & Collaboration



Sharing Best Practice



Parental Engagement



Data & Analytics



Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare



Teaching, Learning & Intervention



Reducing Teacher Workload

LEADERSHIP & PLANNING

A successful MAT benefits from a strong leadership team with a shared vision and a clear strategy. Good communication between members, trustees and/or directors is vital, as is the ability for MAT leaders to access key data and management information from their schools in real time.

Vision & Ethos

Joining a new MAT creates a lot of uncertainty for school leadership, staff and parents. Their own lives and the lives of their children will be affected by this change; you need to be able to demonstrate how the new setup will be a positive change for all stakeholders.

Early communication of your vision and ethos is essential to ensure everyone is on board from the start.

Growth & Sustainability

Every MAT is unique and with differing objectives, but each one shares a common need to build a central infrastructure of systems, processes, technology and expert resources.

Implementing a strategy for growth and sustainability will require funding, which also means there needs to be sufficient schools and pupils within the MAT to fund the objectives.

Management & Governance

Communication across a MAT is a much bigger challenge than in a school. There are now many more stakeholders to engage, such as members, trustees and directors – many of whom are still trying to understand and define their role. At school level, there are also governors who will be unsure of their place in this new structure.

Clear communication of roles, accountability, meeting materials and agreed outcomes will help to deal with the complexities of governance and build confidence amongst the teams involved. It is about being in control whilst also being seen to be in control.

Data & Analytics

When a school joins a MAT, the responsibility of the performance of that school transfers to the MAT. This means financial, educational and accountability measures are all in the hands of the new trust.

It is therefore important that the leaders of the MAT can access meaningful management information from all the schools on a regular basis, including pupil performance. Real-time access to key data, as a result, is invaluable.

CORE SERVICES

Shared policies and procedures, along with a centralised IT infrastructure enables staff to work collaboratively across schools in the MAT, freeing up time to focus on teaching and learning.

IT Infrastructure & Support

It is commonplace for MATs to provide centralised IT services and expertise. This can help to reduce prices through bulk purchasing power. It also simplifies processes and support, linking all schools into the same procedures for their IT requirements.

Finance & HR

Finance software and HR systems are often the first technology systems to be implemented within a MAT. This includes the sharing of policies, procedures, staff handbooks etc. removing the burden of this from each individual school and providing more time for teaching and school leadership.

Communication & Collaboration

The sharing of skills and expertise across a MAT can prove invaluable. Improved communication tools not only connect people as one cohesive team, but also enable schools to share their expertise and experience. This will have a positive impact on the whole group, going forward.

Personal Development, Behaviour & Welfare

Training is often the first casualty in times of economic hardship, but it's important to get maximum value from the provision chosen.

Sharing learning with others, such as feedback from attended courses, is a simple way to spread knowledge and expertise without enlisting large numbers on training sessions.

Accurate data from each school is the best way for MAT leaders to identify groups that may be struggling, as well finding the strongest resources.

Curriculum Development

Many MATs use a principle of "earned autonomy" for their stronger schools, while providing additional curriculum and learning support for other schools in their group. Some choose to provide a centralised curriculum, whilst others co-construct a curriculum collaboratively.

The ability to maintain a central curriculum, while capturing strong resources from all schools, is an effective way of reducing teacher workload and improving outcomes.

Standards & Moderation

Key to the development of a shared curriculum is the principle of clear benchmark standards ("What does good look like?") for each aspect, ensuring that everyone has the same expectations. This gives confidence to teachers because they know exactly what they need to achieve.

Once these standards are in place, it is then possible to moderate the teachers' assessment of children's work against these agreed standards. It is clear that this process has a dramatic effect on the quality of teaching.

Sharing Best Practice

Whether it's processes, systems, teaching resources or just advice, all MATs can benefit from the sharing of best practice between schools.

Whilst most teachers will agree that this is important, the reality is that it is rarely done effectively. Knowledge sharing needs to become commonplace and supported by processes and technology that embed it into everyday life.

Teaching, Learning & Intervention

Most MATs will build a team of subject experts, either positioned centrally or based within the schools themselves.

Equipped with information regarding children's progress, clear guidance can be provided. In some cases, a SWAT team can be parachuted in to help a school to address problem areas.

MARKETING & RECRUITING

MATs need to be able to market themselves to attract new schools, talented staff and prospective parents. Branding should be strong and consistent across all schools.

Centralised Marketing & Branding

A challenge many MATs face is to attract high-performing schools. A clear and positive vision, ethos and public image is vital to be able to seize such opportunities.

People should want to be a part of your brand and their experience should be consistent, regardless of the role they play within the MAT. It is important to have a plan for rolling out the brand and communicating with schools.

Reducing Costs

Schools are currently facing a few overwhelming challenges; they have a lot less money compared to previous years, and many are facing the difficult prospect of losing staff. Experienced teachers are leaving the profession which results in schools asking a lot more from those that remain.

In short, schools are being asked to tighten their belts and often lay off staff as a solution to waning budgets. Yet at the same time, significant structural changes are being implemented and improvements demanded. Schools are having to **think differently** about the way they do things and adapt quickly.

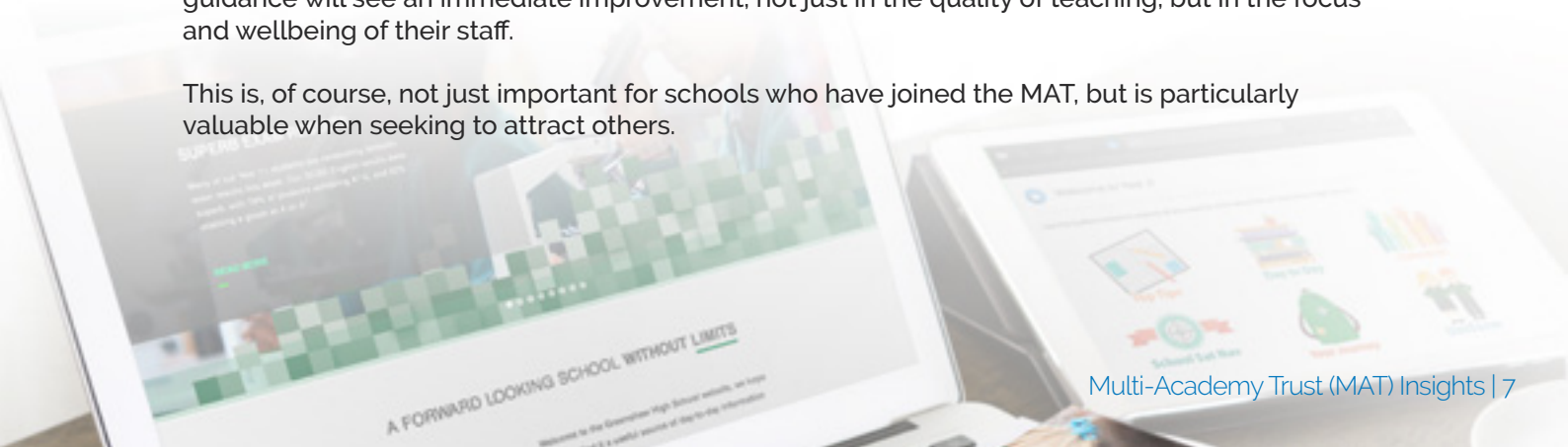
Parental Engagement

Improved parental engagement and home learning is becoming a necessity. The challenges of change, a new curriculum, accountability and higher expectations are all coming at once and schools need all the help they can get.

Reduced Teacher Workload

A MAT focused on reducing the administrative burden on teachers, changing the cultural pressures of marking, providing technologies that directly reduce workload and offer clear guidance will see an immediate improvement, not just in the quality of teaching, but in the focus and wellbeing of their staff.

This is, of course, not just important for schools who have joined the MAT, but is particularly valuable when seeking to attract others.



Biography

As Managing Director of Frog Education, Gareth works proactively with hundreds of schools and MATs. His previous experience as a member of a Multi-Academy Trust and school governor has provided him with great insight into the world of education and he's still a trustee of a couple of MATs. This personal involvement in school-life inspires Frog's development of sector-specific technology solutions that address teacher workload and student engagement along with insights and measurable results for senior leaders.

Talk to **Frog** about your MAT

To find out more about how Frog can help you, please contact us.

[Book an online meeting with a member of our team](#)

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