

GUIDANCE:

# Academisation and Educational Excellence Everywhere FAQ – version 1

13 May 2016

School structures



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## Introduction

The white paper *Education Excellence Everywhere* published on 17 March 2016 set out the government's intention that schools in England would be required to convert to academy status by the end of 2022, either having converted or in the process of converting by the end of 2020. The Department for Education (DfE) said it would take steps to direct schools not already in the process of becoming an academy in 2020 so that by 2022, there will be a "definitive end to the role" of local authorities in maintaining schools. The white paper reinforced the DfE expectation that most schools will be part of a multi academy trust (MAT).

Along with many others in the education sector, NGA lobbied against the move and on 22 April 2016 [wrote a letter to Nicky Morgan outlining the concerns of our members](#). The following week on 6 May 2016, after much public resistance to the plans, including from within the conservative party itself, Nicky Morgan announced that compulsory academisation, as proposed in the white paper, would not go ahead. The Education Secretary said this was about listening, and added ministers understood that good and outstanding schools should retain the choice as to whether to convert. The government has however reaffirmed its "continued determination to see all schools become academies in the next 6 years".

### 1) Will all schools be required to become academies?

No, not all. Despite the Government indicating there would be no "reverse gear" on universal academisation and prime minister David Cameron stating on 27 April 2016 "we are going to have academies for all, and it will be in the Queen's Speech", Nicky Morgan, the Secretary of State for Education announced on 6 May 2016 that it is now "not necessary to bring legislation to bring about blanket conversion of all schools to achieve this goal".

The DfE will continue to encourage good schools to convert and to take the lead in supporting other schools as part of [multi-academy trusts](#). All underperforming schools will continue to be required to become academies but in most good and outstanding schools, the strategic decision to convert will remain with the governing body. However the announcement on 6 May also brought with it a government pledge to bring forward legislation which will lead to the conversion of all schools within a local authority in two specific circumstances:

- where it is clear that the local authority can no longer viably support its remaining schools because a critical mass of schools in that area has converted. Under this mechanism a local authority will also be able to request the Department for Education converts all of its remaining schools



- where the local authority consistently fails to meet a minimum performance threshold across its schools, demonstrating an inability to bring about meaningful school improvement

The criteria for defining an LA as ‘failing’ is as yet unknown, and whatever method is used will be put out to consultation before an MP vote and will be subject to affirmative resolution in the House of Commons. It is likely that the majority of those LA’s targeted will be Labour run and likely to include the 16 LA’s Ofsted criticised in its annual report in December 2015.

So it seem that while the initial policy of legislating for universal academisation has, for now at least, been dropped, the government intends to use other measures to reach their goal of all schools becoming academies within the next six years. We will update as more information becomes available.

NGA’s reading of the white paper is that when it refers to all schools it is including special schools and Pupils Referral Units (PRUs) because they can currently convert to be academies and it doesn’t specify otherwise. LA maintained nurseries aren’t currently able to convert to be academies and the white paper doesn’t make any mention of legislating to allow them to do so

## 2) What is the next step for our governing board?

Do not rush into any decisions. This is a hugely significant step. While the government says it is determined to achieve universal academisation within six years, the fact there will no longer be legislation for “blanket conversion” and considering that six years is quite a long time, there is really no need to make a hurried decision. Governing bodies need to carefully consider their next steps – this is a strategic decision and for Good and Outstanding schools one that is still very much in the hands of the governing body, with the exception of those schools that fall within the remit of the LA’s discussed

Governing bodies need to take the time to think about the best approach for their pupils. Even though there is no need for haste (although this perhaps arguable for those schools falling within the remit of ‘failing’ LA’s), establish a working group to scope your options and begin discussions now. In September 2015 NGA in conjunction with the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and Browne Jacobson produced the document [Governing Groups of Schools: staying in control of your school’s destiny](#), which provides guidance for schools forming or joining a group of schools, whether an LA maintained federation or a MAT. Every governing board of a standalone school, whether of an LA maintained or an academy should begin considering which other schools or groups might make good partners and how these discussions should be approached. We will be producing more guidance with ASCL in due course.

## 3) Can we convert as a single school or are we required to form a MAT or join an existing one?



The DfE expectation, as outlined in the white paper, is that most schools converting to academy status will be expected to do so by either forming or joining a MAT; and the U-turn does not appear to have altered this view. The DfE has said it does not intend to force schools to be part of a MAT if “successful and sustainable alone” – it has not as yet defined in writing what ‘sustainable’ means. Nicky Morgan stated in her subsequent announcement on 6 May 2016 that “no small successful schools will be forced to join a national academy chain - most small schools will choose to join multi-academy trusts made up of other local schools, though small sustainable schools will be able to convert alone if they wish”. Equally, the white paper says small schools (size not defined in the document, but potentially all but the largest primary schools) will be part of a MAT “other than in exceptional circumstances”. A £10 million fund for small schools to secure expert support and advice has also been announced.

The number of pupils in the school will be a key deciding factor as to whether it is sustainable to be a standalone school. NGA is led to believe from recent department speeches that probably only those which are over 1000/1200 pupils will be allowed to remain stand alone; it is likely that the Regional School Commissioner (RSC) will decide if the school is sustainable on its own

The performance of the school, including exam results and Ofsted judgement may also determine the options available – only those considered ‘performing well’ are likely to be allowed to convert as a standalone academies, but that doesn’t mean it is the right option. Schools in special measure are already subject to forced academisation. Although no specific announcement has been made about requires improvement schools, it is highly unlikely that they will be allowed to be standalone academies or be the lead school in a MAT even if they are of a sustainable size.

As at 31 March 2016:

- 66% of secondary schools and 20% of primary schools are already academies;
- 65% (3611 out of 5449) of academies (including free schools) were in MATs, up from 53% at the end of the 2013/14 academic year;
- 973 MATs in total
- 10 MATs have 31+ schools
- 135 MATs have between 6-30 schools
- 85% (828) of MATs have between 1-5 schools (250 existing MATs of one school)

Schools converting to academy status have been allowed to do so in the past as a MAT of one school (empty MATs), allowing for future expansion. NGA is now hearing reports of DfE officials saying they will no longer allow ‘empty’ MATs, although this is not set out in any



published guidance. In addition, we are also aware of schools recently being told by DfE officials that to be accepted as a MAT they need to have a strategic plans showing how they will grow to 10 academies within a 3-5 year strategic plan (see following questions). This appears to be at odds with the Secretary of State who said in giving evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee on 27 April 2016 that “I’m not going to say that small clusters of schools can’t work together and be extremely successful”.

#### 4) Is there an optimum size for a MAT?

There is currently no compelling evidence about the optimum size for a MAT. Much of the evidence of the benefits of groups of schools (as contained [Governing Groups of Schools: staying in control of your school’s destiny](#)) comes from federations which have been in existence for longer than most MATs, particularly in the primary sector. Federations tend to be fewer than seven schools and all in the same locality (see question 5). Some, but by no means all, the larger MATs have had schools removed from them by the Secretary of State.

The white paper introduces the idea of MATs needing to be on average 10-15 schools to deliver the benefits of centralised systems, but although this is stated as fact, no evidence has been published to this effect. It seems to be primarily based on the premise of economies of scale, not the educational performance of the schools within the MATs. Some recent financial modelling by the National Schools Commissioner does not seem to back up this premise that growth is required to bring financial efficiency.

NGA does however agree with the DfE that it is the number of pupils the MAT is educating which is more relevant than the number of schools within it. Each MAT board of trustees must judge what is right in terms of its growth for its pupils – present and future; and carry out due diligence and a risk assessment when strategic planning, considering not just finances but also the staff capacity and the strength of leadership within the trust.

Before a MAT board agrees to expand, it needs to identify a clear ethos, vision, and rationale for its growth strategy, including an assessment of its continuing capacity to support both existing and additional schools, and the benefit of further growth to pupils. Some MATs grow too quickly and without due consideration about the capacity and infrastructure within the trust to support this growth, resulting in an inability to support all the schools. When MATs grow rapidly, they often have done so in an unstructured way, without considering their strengths, which schools might be a good fit for the MAT and whether the MAT is in a position to provide for further pupils. Although the MAT’s aim of wanting to provide a good education for more pupils is well intentioned, it will not be realised if their needs cannot be provided for.

In the absence of any definitive evidence, NGA suggests that is much more important for a group to evolve in a sustainable fashion than to make a dash for growth. Some of our



members who are trustees are already saying that their MAT of between seven and nine schools is working well and might not if it grew further: this is a perfectly reasonable decision for a board of trustees to take. NGA will be working further with MATs over the coming year to share experiences of what is working well.

### **5) How important is locality?**

NGA's view is that the benefits for pupils are more likely to be achieved when schools are in reasonable geographical proximity to each other. While there is no legal requirement for schools in a group to be in close geographical proximity, experience suggests that the benefits of collaboration are much easier to realise when schools are physically close. Lord Nash, the under-secretary of state for schools, has suggested that groups should ideally consist of schools between which staff could travel in 'half a lunch break' and he has spoken of the need for 'territorial efficiency' i.e. not having schools within trusts which are outliers. Despite this we continue to hear of cross regional MATs, sometimes spread over vast areas, being approved by RSCs. NGA would like to see further clarity on government policy on geographical placing of schools within MATs. While there may be a few examples of MATs with successful schools many miles apart, these tend to be organised around local clusters, sometimes called hubs; a better model might be for a smaller MAT for each cluster and those clusters to come within an umbrella trust.

NGA is concerned that a number of MATs are spread across too wide an area to be truly effective as staff are unable to move easily between schools, which means that most of the advantages of being in a group of schools cannot be easily achieved. Research needs to be conducted and released into the advantages and disadvantages of large and geographically dispersed groups. Until this is available growth to additional areas needs to be treated with caution.

### **6) If there's only one MAT in a locality, what does that mean for choice for parents?**

This will largely depend on the ethos and approach of the MAT itself. A MAT is a single organisation; as part of a MAT its individual schools no longer have their own legal existence. However, schools within a MAT may be given the freedom to reflect not just the vision of the MAT, but the surrounding community of the school. Many MATs do operate under the principle that its schools will maintain their own character and therefore becoming part of a MAT needn't alter the character of the school. This is one of the issues a school considering joining a MAT will want to discuss.

For many parents, choice is already limited, depending on locality, which remains the number one factor effecting parental choice. Just because all the schools in area are part of the same MAT won't therefore necessarily mean the amount of choice for parents is reduced. However this is a risk and the white paper states that RSCs will aim to avoid 'geographical



monopolies'. This might be a consideration for schools considering forming its own local group.

### **7) What are the best models for different phases?**

Again the evidence is inconclusive on this one. MATs can be based on a primary-only/secondary-only model or a cross-phase model and can also include special schools. NGA would like to see more research conducted into this area to feed through to our members who are now looking at the options available to them. In the meantime there is no one particular model which is always most successful; governing boards can choose what is best for their context and the pupils in the community.

NGA is also aware of concerns that having only one of any particular type of school within a MATs means that school does not benefit from most of the advantages, such as benchmarking, shared staff and their expertise, CPD and staff retention. The secondary feeder model of MAT with only one secondary school for instance could provide valuable benchmarking data for those primary schools but not for the secondary school. It has been reported to us that RSCs now prefer to see MATs contain at least two secondary schools.

### **8) Does there need to be a lead school in a MAT?**

There is no statutory requirement for MATs to have a lead school but this may be inevitable where an existing single academy [applies to become a MAT](#) or where a maintained school converts to an academy in an 'empty' or 'shadow' MAT – i.e. where a school converts alone but makes an application to become a MAT in anticipation of more schools joining the trust later on.

In both of these circumstances, whilst there would still only be one overarching trust, the identification of a lead school wrongly suggests that is just one school which will be responsible for growing and developing the trust. NGA has asked Lord Nash and officials to reconsider this process as it misunderstands the nature of the trust and also because governing boards of good schools are reporting to us that they want to enter more collaborative arrangements without the notion of one school in the lead.

### **9) We are an existing MAT – are we required to take on additional schools?**

No: currently there is no compulsion in the system, albeit that there can be a lot of pressure exerted by the DfE and its RSCs. DfE messages both before and since the White Paper was published have envisaged that MATs should seek to grow. In the past some existing and new MATs have overstretched themselves under pressure from the DfE to take on more schools. NGA's view is that all MATs need a clear strategic plan and should only expand in accordance with its plan when it has the capacity to do so.



## **10) We are a school with a religious character – what are our options for conversion?**

The options available for conversion – i.e. as a single school or group of schools – also apply to schools with a religious character. However, the relevant religious authority will be the ultimate decision-maker for the structure of your academy trust. You should have early discussions with the relevant body to find out if it has any set views.

For Catholic and Church of England schools, the DfE has published [memoranda of understanding](#) with the National Society and Catholic Church and if your school is covered by one of these then you should read the relevant document. Different dioceses are taking different approaches to the formation of MATs; it would be useful if these were made available to governing boards who are considering the options. Some diocese are promoting very large MATs; but NGA suggests that governing bodies who wish to be part of smaller groups should make this case to the diocese.

## **11) We are currently a voluntary controlled school: could we form a MAT with a voluntary aided school or community school?**

It depends where you are. NGA is aware of some dioceses being more flexible than others, specifically with respect to forming or joining ‘mixed’ MATS involving voluntary aided (VA), voluntary controlled (VC) and even community schools. With respect to VC and community schools, the DfE has developed clauses in the model funding agreement which provides for local governing committees (LGCs) to be established in order to preserve the character of such schools, particularly to ensure the non-religious character of community schools.

In VA schools the existing governance structure provides for the relevant foundation body (usually but not exclusively a religious body) to appoint a majority of the governors. In most situations, the foundation body will seek to retain this position when the school converts to academy status. We have been told anecdotally of some Church of England dioceses who have allowed VA schools to join a MAT where the foundation body does not have the majority. This will be very much a decision for the individual diocese.

The MOU between the DfE and the Catholic Education Service explicitly states that control of the school particularly in relation to the governance arrangements will remain with the Catholic Church. In essence this means that catholic schools will be unable to join any MAT in which the Catholic Church does not appoint the majority of the trustee board.

Further information can be found [here](#) but we cannot stress enough, the importance of speaking to the diocese before taking action.



## 12) Is there any help with the cost of converting to an academy/forming MAT?

The DfE will provide a £25,000 grant for maintained schools converting to academy status. There are further grants available where new MATs are created with a minimum number of three schools and where the majority are primary schools. Groups of two or more primary schools joining an existing MAT, can apply for a one-off grant. Further, there is a small school supplement for schools with less than 210 pupils joining an existing MAT. Such funding is explained in more detail in [DfE guidance](#).

The DfE has also expressed its intention to establish a 'MAT Growth Fund', although it does not appear that this will go straight to the trust and will instead be used to invest in people and systems to aid with expansion.

## 13) How will the governance structure of our school change?

There will be fundamental changes to the governance structure of your school –particularly if the school is forming or joining an existing MAT. All academy trusts, whether single trusts or MATS, will have members and a board of trustees. The board of trustees will have the same role as governing bodies in a maintained school, but with additional legal duties in accordance with company and charity law. MATs often have an additional layer of governance at school level – either local governing committees (LGCs) or academy councils. These are committees of the trust and those who sit on them may not be trustees. Where there is a level of geographical dispersion, cluster boards and regional management may well be needed. The constitution, proceedings, delegated powers and functions of LGCs is a matter for the board of trustees to decide. Further information about MAT structures can be found in NGA's [guidance paper](#) and [model schemes of delegation](#).

As MATs grow the boards of trustees have responsibility for the education of more and more pupils; it is important that all the risks of this model are mitigated by having a robust model of membership: NGA is producing further information on this, but in the meantime GOLD members can seek advice from our GOLDline advice service.

## 14) Will parent governors cease to exist?

No, they needn't. Boards of academy trustees can still decide to reserve places for elected parents and it is important that they do. But the term 'governor' is not usually used within MATs as the role is different from in a maintained school,

The white paper proposes that the requirement for elected parent places on academy governing boards, will indeed be phased out. The DfE has said that it *"...will no longer require academy trusts to reserve places for **elected parents** on governing boards"*. NGA has



[expressed its concerns](#) regarding the removal of the requirement for elected parent governors, warning of the danger of governing boards being comprised of like-minded individuals with a much less diverse range of skills and experience. We are urging governors and parents who agree with us to [contact their MP](#). The removal of the requirement for places for elected parents on academy governing boards will only also be dropped if there is pressure on the government to do so, and in the meantime we are encouraging parents and governors to make their voices known by publishing a template letter and tweets to support our [Keep Parents Governing campaign](#).

### **15) We are forming a MAT/we are an existing MAT – do we have to have an executive headteacher/chief executive officer?**

While there is no statutory requirement for a lead executive, there is an expectation from the DfE that there will be a single person with overall responsibility for the day to day running of the trust. Such a post may be termed an executive principal/head or a chief executive. Although some existing MATs were established without such a 'lead' executive, NGA is aware that such arrangements are now frowned on by the DfE, and Regional Schools Commissioners have in some cases refused to approve such arrangements for new MATs.

A MAT is a single organisation and NGA agrees that it needs a single lead executive in overall charge whom the board of trustees holds to account. That lead executive in turn line manages the headteachers of the schools; this is therefore no longer the role of the academy committee.

### **16) Can a MAT close a school or have it removed from the trust?**

The expectation placed on MATs by the DfE is that they do not make changes that will have "a negative impact on the basic need or other good provision in the area". There have been some publicised cases where MATs have closed schools, either because they have been deemed to be financially unsustainable due to low pupil numbers, or for ongoing and severe performance issues. But a MAT board can't simply decide to shut a school on its own accord and it is a complex process subject to consultation and investigation by the DfE. As the academy trust have entered into a funding agreement with the Secretary of State, any decision to close a school or transfer a school to another MAT will ultimately rest with the DfE and the MAT will first have to conduct a fair and open consultation and submit a full business case to the DfE.

While the model funding agreement does stipulate that either party may give notice to terminate the funding agreement, this has to be at least seven academy financial years notice, effectively removing this approach as a tenable option and resulting in any decision being firmly placed in the DfE's hands. The circumstances, under which the Secretary of State may terminate a funding agreement of an academy within a MAT are outlined in the



[model funding agreement for MATs](#). The RSC will have the authority to exercise the powers and functions of the Secretary of State on her behalf, including the termination of funding agreements. For academies within an existing MAT, the RSC can 'rebroker' them – i.e. require them to join another MAT which is a sponsor. While the academy will be able to discuss their preferences with the RSC, ultimately the decision will be made for them. Further information can be found in the [Schools Causing Concern](#) statutory guidance.

Where a MAT proposes to amalgamate schools, again a business case will be required. The academy trust must propose to close one (or more) school (terminating the funding agreement(s) in the process) and propose to enlarge/change the age range/transfer site of an existing academy to accommodate the displaced pupils. The remaining academy will retain its school number, as it is not a new school, even if its age-range/phase has changed.

Earlier this year it was announced that two MATs within Lincolnshire were merging, after approval to do so was given by the DfE. This potentially sets a precedent for similar mergers of MATs in the future although NGA would stress that this raises even more questions about ethos and culture and ensuring compatibility to become one organisation.

### **17) How do we get out if we don't like our MAT?**

There are no provisions for schools which convert to academies to revert back to their maintained status. Currently, it is only possible for an individual academy to request that the MAT releases them; however this is complicated by the fact that there is no independent academy structure left to make that request. It could be done by an academy governing committee (although in one case we know of the committee members were then removed by the board of trustees after making that request), parents or the headteacher, or a combination of those parties. If the MAT board agrees, it would still need to go for approval to the DfE (see above); if the MAT board refuses as may well be likely for good schools, those individuals can still petition the RSC. We know of one case where an RSC's office had said they are minded to allow such requests within six months, but we have not heard of any successfully achieved and are waiting for confirmation of the process from the DfE. If the Secretary of State allows it to leave, the school is likely to be expected to join another MAT.

### **18) How much say do the RSCs get in our proposals?**

Quite a lot. Their remit is now rather wide and essentially, much of the powers and functions of the Secretary of State, are carried out by RSCs on her behalf. One such power is to approve the conversion of maintained schools to academies and also, to approve sponsors for schools and academies that are underperforming. As such, it is sensible to have early conversations with your RSC regarding academy conversion and in particular, where you are considering or forming a group of schools.

In the case of a failing, underperforming or coasting school, the RSC will have the ultimate say in what action must be taken in order to improve the school. Further information about what



such action might involve, is outlined in the [Schools Causing Concern](#) statutory guidance. Further information about the role and responsibilities of RSCs can be read in more detail on the School Commissioner's Group webpage, [here](#).

### 19) Where is the evidence academies are better?

NGA view is that the jury is still out on conclusive evidence that academies perform better than other schools due to their legal structure. There is no evidence that any one school structure is better than another in bringing about school improvement. Where schools are underperforming governing boards need to be honest and realistic about their own performance and ensure that an appropriate plan to improve the school is put in place. This will almost certainly involve assistance from outside agencies, including in many cases a successful local school.

While the government has decided not to legislate for universal academisation it has said it is still determined to achieve this goal and the white paper cites the 2015 academic results, showing that primary sponsored academies open for two years have improved their results, on average, by 10 percentage points since opening, more than double the rate of improvement in local authority maintained schools over the same period. 2015 GCSE results show that secondary converter academies are performing 7.2 percentage points above the national average, with 64.3% of pupils achieving five or more good GCSEs, including English and maths. However converter academies were all schools performing well on conversion.

The LGA, who opposes forcing schools into academies against the governing body's will, have said there is "mixed evidence to suggest that academies are facilitating educational improvement, and councils have clearly demonstrated that they are effective education improvement partners". LGA have reported 86 per cent of maintained schools have been rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding, compared to 82 per cent of academies with 15 per cent of the largest academy chains perform above the national average in terms of pupils' progress, compared with 44 per cent of councils. Both sets of evidence are questionable – the latter has been criticised for not comparing schools which are in similar contexts; sponsored academies were by and large failing maintained schools while converter academies were high performing maintained schools.

While the evidence both for and against remains inconclusive, the NGA remains committed to its view that sponsored academy conversion is not the only route to school improvement, there is not one solution to school improvement. There are successful academies and there are successful maintained schools.

Education data company SchoolDash has recently published a report on whether academies perform better which can be found here <https://www.schooldash.com/blog.html>. This wide ranging and detailed report looks at number of factors, but essentially does not back claims that "forced academy conversion will lead to across-the-board improvements" but instead could help to "close the gap between the best and the worst-performing schools".



NGA will be publishing an article summarising our findings on the available evidence on structure and outcomes in our July/August edition of *Governing Matters*. We will update this FAQ as and when further details are available.

## **20) How does conversion affect sixth form provision?**

Secondary schools with existing sixth form provision should not, in theory, be adversely affected by academy conversion. Changes cannot be made to a school upon conversion to an academy and must retain its existing provision throughout the process. There is, of course, the possibility for the oversupply of sixth form provision where you create a new MAT or join an existing one where there are other academies with the same provision. However, in such cases, the opportunities for greater collaboration and better offer of courses, resources, quality of teaching and learning should be recognised. Above all else, the key consideration is the best interests of the pupils and this may or may not involve the closing of a sixth form within the same trust.

It is also important to bear in mind that the updated guidance on [Making significant changes to an open academy](#) provides an outline of the criteria that will be considered in opening new provision; including the expectation of 200 students or more. You can also read more information about collaboration and funding for sixth forms in NGA's [Governors' Guide to Sixth Form](#).

## **21) Now the Government has decided not to legislate, will schools choose to do this anyway? Isn't it inevitable?**

Possibly, given the other changes that the Government is likely to introduce; particularly the diminished role of the local authority. This will especially be the case where an LA is deemed to be failing to meet the minimum performance threshold and all its schools converting as a result. However, a definition for underperforming LA's is yet to be agreed and will be subject to consultation and then put to a vote to MPs requiring majority support and this is likely to take some time.

School funding constraints might also have an effect. However, it is difficult at this stage, to make predictions about whether or not academisation of schools is inevitable; all predictions are speculative given the large numbers of governing bodies who will have to make decision. NGA suggests that all maintained schools governing bodies consider both the option of academisation and forming a federation in the meantime.

## **22) Is there still a point in Federation First?**



In NGA's view, yes – at least for those maintained schools which currently have more of a choice over their school's structure. The Government's plans for all schools to become academies will for now at least not be legislated against and is yet been finalised; for schools that are performing well and not located in one of the LA's discussed above, decisions regarding school structures continues to rest with individual governing bodies. In many ways, the premise of forming a federation will mirror that of forming a MAT but without having to undergo the legal and business processes in converting to an academy. As such, it may be easier for schools to join together under a federation within the first instance.

A federation can then convert their schools to academies further down the line and establish a new MAT with minimal further disruption to the school's structure; rather than having to deal with lots of different changes all at once. NGA's guidance paper – [Forming or joining a group of schools: staying in control of your destiny](#) - outlines the key benefits of collaboration which can be achieved through either a federation or MAT. We have also launched our [Federation First](#) campaign and would recommend any schools considering forming a federation to speak to one of [Federation Champions](#).