Department for Education

Trust and school improvement support for the 2021 to 2022 academic year

Guidance for system leaders

Updated January 2022
Version 2.2

Contents

1. Foreword

Dominic Herrington, National Schools Commissioner

September 2021

During the last year, our schools and trusts have been tackling unprecedented challenges caused by the pandemic. We have seen how schools have kept children safe and kept them learning, either in person or remotely. We have also seen the commitment of leaders to support one another and the positive impact of support from strong school and trust leaders to those that were most vulnerable during this time.

As we begin to return to a form of normality, the Secretary of State has set out his vision for every school to be part of a family of schools within a strong multi-academy trust (MAT), because they represent the best structure for school improvement and levelling up of education standards.

MATs create the conditions for deep collaboration and a shared strategic vision across multiple schools, enabling clear accountability for pupil outcomes. By working in partnership, schools within a trust can share curriculum expertise and effective teaching practices, and can develop the best teachers and leaders, to deliver the strongest outcomes based on the needs of each individual school.

The Trust and School Improvement (TSI) offer is a critical tool for ensuring that vulnerable schools and trusts receive the very best support both now and in the future. In the short term, through helping the leaders of vulnerable schools and trusts ensure they have in place high-quality evidence-based improvement strategies that address and prioritise the right needs. In the longer-term, through consideration of what further support may be needed. For standalone schools, the option of becoming part of a MAT, and through supporting the development of links between vulnerable schools and trusts and our strongest MATs.

That is why the role of system leaders in delivering the TSI offer is so important – your leadership and expertise will provide the foundations for sustained and strengthened school improvement in our most vulnerable schools and trusts, including recovery from the impact of the pandemic, and the longer-term capacity to deliver continuing improvement.

The TSI offer is a core aspect of a sector-led school improvement strategy and the Department for Education's (DfE) work with schools and trusts through our regional teams. I want to thank you personally for giving your time and expertise to make a fundamental difference for schools and trusts, and ultimately for children and their educational experience and attainment.

From January 2022, we are increasing the focus of the TSI offer to provide urgent support to schools and trusts significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. COVID-19 support through TSI Offer from January 2022

We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic is presenting an increasing challenge to schools and trusts. We are keen to ensure the TSI Offer provides support to schools and trusts being impacted and would benefit from system leader support. From January 2022 we will do this in 2 ways –

- Firstly, we recognise many of the schools and trusts currently being supported in the TSI offer may be facing immediate issues due to the pandemic. If this is the case, please adapt and prioritise your support to accommodate the relevant issues.

- Secondly, by utilising the existing exceptions route to provide rapid support to schools faced with challenges due to the pandemic. Your Regional Delivery Partner (RDP) will be in contact with you if your support is required for schools/trusts in these circumstances.

  Support could include the below although this list is not exhaustive:

  - Difficulties delivering remote education for those pupils who are out of school.
  - Managing low pupil attendance rates.
  - Managing significant staff shortages including leadership.
  - Any other factors which would put schools/trusts at risk of disruption caused by COVID-19.

The latest COVID-19 operational guidance for information can be found here: Schools COVID-19 operational guidance January 2022 (publishing.service.gov.uk).

System leader deployments to provide specific support to schools/trusts to overcome the impact of COVID-19

The guidance below provides details on your role as a system leader providing support to schools and trusts through the TSI Offer. To reflect the fact that you have been deployed to support a school/trust through the exceptions route to overcome immediate challenges they face because of COVID-19, you should adapt the support you provide to the needs of the school.

These deployments should focus on quick support to face current challenges, rather than being focused on longer term improvement. Whilst the offer is the same (3 days for schools/5 days for trust), we envisage that due to the nature of this support in some instances it could be 1 to 2 phone calls or a day of support. You should work flexibly in this way and claim the appropriate payment. These deployments will follow the same reporting and payment claim process as outlined in section 7.

3. What is the 2021/22 Offer?

Key Principles

The DfE believes that **strong trusts are the best structure for supporting long-term school improvement.** Therefore, support for vulnerable schools should either anchor them to a strong trust where they are not already part of one or support them *through* their existing trust by strengthening their own trust's school improvement model.

Announced as part of the Secretary of State's [speech](#) to the Confederation of School Trusts in April 2021, the TSI offer for academic year 2021/22, has been developed with these principles at its core.

Eligibility:

We will offer support to local authority-maintained schools (LAMs), single-academy trusts (SATs) and MATs if the LAM/SAT or any school within the MAT meets any of the following criteria:

- enters the 2021 to 2022 academic year with a current 'requires improvement' (RI) judgement for overall effectiveness where their previous judgement was also 'requires improvement' or worse.

- receives an Ofsted RI judgement during the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Please also note the following:

- additional schools can be added by exception where they either self-identify as needing help or RSCs judge that to be the case. If you identify a school that would benefit from the offer, please alert your RSC.

Content of the offer:

The following support is on offer to eligible schools/trusts:

For LAMs, SATs and empty MATs:

- Up to 3 days' support and advice from a **national leader of education (NLE)** or equivalent to help the leadership team identify and implement improvements within the school and support the building of relationships with a MAT, where appropriate.

- Signposting to **additional support available**, including for recovery and catch-up (curriculum and behaviour hubs etc), help to identify activities likely to support their needs and guidance on how to access.

- A conversation about **long term sustainable improvement** including about joining a strong MAT.

- Discussion regarding suitability for a funded **trust partnership, subject to DfE agreement.** £10,000 may be approved and paid to a MAT to cover the costs of the services received in a time-limited "try before you buy" arrangement.

For MATs with eligible schools within them:

- To improve the strength of trusts, up to 5 days' support and advice from an NLE or equivalent will be provided to the MAT (rather than the eligible school/s) to help the MAT's leadership team identify and implement improvements across the trust and ensure school-level actions align with the trust's improvement approach.

- Signposting to **additional support available**, including for recovery and catch-up (curriculum and behaviour hubs etc), help to identify activities likely to support their needs and guidance on how to access these including a **National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership (NPQEL)** which is being made available to trusts free of charge via the education recovery package. The NPQEL forms part of a new, robust, and high-quality suite of NPQs that is being introduced to improve professional development for school and trust leaders. An NPQEL will help build long-term capacity for improvement at trust level, by strengthening the leadership of trusts.

- Discussion regarding the benefits of accessing a funded **National Leader of Governance (NLG) deployment.** A new cadre of reformed NLGs will be in place from October 2021 and through our offer, where appropriate and funding allows, we will offer 5 days of funded NLG support. NLGs will advise the trust on ways in which MAT-level governance and accountability could be strengthened, though a governance review.

Approval for a trust partnership and NLG deployment will be subject to DfE agreement and funding availability.

If a MAT is already receiving support through the TSI offer and another school within the trust receives a requires improvement judgement, **the trust will not become eligible for additional system leader time.**

4. How will the offer be delivered?

Matching to a system leader

Schools and trusts eligible for the offer will be matched to a system leader who will provide them with the system leader element of the support offer and discuss with them whether they wish to access the relevant additional funded element/s on offer. It is important that matching considers the capacity, experience and expertise of system leaders to make an appropriate match.

During the summer term of 2021, all schools and trusts with existing eligibility and wishing to take up the offer have been matched to a system leader for support to commence in the autumn term 2021. This matching process was undertaken by DfE regional teams and the Teaching Schools Council (TSC).

From September 2021, when a school or trust becomes eligible for support and agrees to taking up the offer, DfE regional teams and our new Regional Delivery Partner's (RDPs) (who replace the TSC) will be responsible for identifying a suitable system leader to provide the required support. They have received a handover from the TSC and will be your main point of contact during the delivery of support.

The TSI offer Regional Delivery Partner (RDP) lead contact for each region are–

RSC region	Lead name	Contact email address
Lancashire & West Yorkshire (LWY)	Amanda Bennett	a.bennett@greatheightstrust.org.uk
East Midlands and the Humber (EMH)	Becky Smith	rebecca.smith@emsyh.org.uk
North-West London and South-Central England (NWLSC)	Kerry Batten	kbatten@iftl.co.uk
South-West (SW)	Andrew Earnshaw	andrew.earnshaw@iaspire.net
East of England and North-East London (EENEL)	Mark Lambell	mlambell@cpetrust.co.uk
The North	John Hardy Jonathan Johnson	headteacher@sjvschool.co.uk JOHNSONJ@westlakesmat.org.uk
West Midlands (WM)	Carly Kelly	c.kelly@jths.co.uk
South-East England and South London (SESL)	George Masters	g.masters@hispmat.org

If you are identified as a potential match, your RDP will be in touch regarding your availability and to ensure the match is suitable. If you agree to supporting the school/trust, they will contact them to confirm the match.

If, for any reason, the school does not agree with the choice of system leader offered, the matching team will discuss the implications of this with you.

Your RDP will email you with the final details of the match including contact details for the relevant person at the school/trust and any contextual information that could inform the support you provide. System leaders are likely to be called upon at different points during the 2021/22 academic year and asked to support schools as they become eligible for the TSI offer.

Contacting supported schools / trusts

If matched to a trust, you will be providing trust level support and should contact the trust CEO. If matched to a school, you should initially be in contact with the headteacher.

Where matched to an existing eligible school/trust (stock school/trust) in the summer term 2021, you should contact them once the 2021/22 academic year has begun to agree a deployment start date.

If matched to a school/trust that becomes eligible during the academic year, once a match has been confirmed, you should contact the school/trust within 2 weeks (not including school holidays). Within 4 weeks, you must have an agreed deployment start date.

System leader professional development

We have provided continuing professional development materials for system leaders made up of think pieces and additional reading; you should read these alongside the TSI Offer guidance for 2021/22 academic year.

The reading materials are based on key evidence and research on five topics;

- implementation
- curriculum and assessment
- behaviour
- teaching
- school/trust culture.

We want all system leaders delivering support to spend time reading the material to build on your existing knowledge and experience. We do not expect you to read all the material listed in the reading list, but you should identify reading that you would benefit from according to your interests and professional development needs along with the needs of the school/trust you are supporting.

System leader support

The focus of the support should be to help schools/trusts have the right short-term priorities and actions in place to secure improvement including recovery from the impact of the pandemic, and the longer-term capacity to deliver continuing improvement through a strong trust family.

Support may be delivered remotely, but ideally will be delivered face to face.

You should assess the strength of their current improvement approach and determine whether to spend your time to support them to develop new strategies or reflect on and update their existing strategies. These improvement strategies should address leadership, governance and financial management alongside the curriculum, behaviour, pedagogy, workload and wellbeing through the signposting of DfE approved programmes. Unlike in previous offers, in this offer, the system leader is **not** required to deliver/oversee any further support/delivery of the improvement strategy developed. **In all cases, the school/trust is the owner of their improvement strategy and is accountable for delivery against this.**

You should also discuss with the school/trust whether they wish to access any of the additional support on offer.

You will be asked to provide a summary report and payment claim to the DfE via your RDP following the deployment, to include any recommendation on whether the school/trust would benefit from additional funded elements of support (funded trust partnership for LAM/SAT/empty MATs; NLG deployment and/or NPQEL for MATs) (see reporting and funding section).

You will of course adapt your support to the circumstances of the school/trust but we have provided the following two models as a **suggested** structure for the 3/5 days support you provide and the guidance and documentation you **could** consider.

System Leader 3-day support offer for supporting standalone schools – due diligence stepped guidance on framing the offer within an effective implementation model			
This is a **suggested** stepped process for the 3-day system leader support offer for standalone schools. You should frame the most appropriate number of half or full days to cover the process to attain an agreed next steps plan to identify and shape improvement strategies. The support offer **could** cover the steps suggested and result in a strategy for future implementation agreed by all stakeholders and consideration given to long-term improvement through joining a strong MAT.			
1.1 'Set the scene' *Scope*	1.2 'Lift the lid' *Explore*	2. 'Audit/diagnosis – planning implementation' *Diagnose*	3. 'Framing sustained improvement' *Prepare*
Actions:	Actions:	Actions:	Actions:
Post matching confirmation set up call to set the scene to enable the school to drive forward change including exploring a trust partnership.	Enable reflective discussions to take place by providing safe-coaching spaces	Allocate the day to probe/triangulate evidence to date on suitability of current improvement pathways.	Model consideration of the necessary prep needed to ensure good implementation: Implementation/change teams? Evidenced informed approaches ... Reframing of policies & practices ... Who will affect these changes? What resources will be required?
Research information already accessible: Ofsted, school website, databases etc. Be mindful of the limitations on current information and the pitfalls of cause or coincidence when analysing current positioning.	Allow the school the opportunity to 'share' - establish a climate for change.		Reflect on the necessary capacity to deliver.
Be aware of those with responsibility for school improvement for the school: LA, Diocese, Opportunity Area lead members etc. Position the potential of a trust partnership.		Sense check existing control measures (audits & reports) - align with on the ground evidence.	Support connectivity to partners who will support continuous improvement journey.
Confirm leadership involvement from the school (Principal/ Head/Head of School/ CEO etc).	Explore the current school improvement evidence to share	Sense check current performance position. Clarify use of nationally recognised standards, toolkits & audits - including EEF support for SI; Headteacher standards; Teacher Standards; ECF; Governance competency framework; Behaviour audits; Workload; Financial Health and Efficiency self-assessment tools and checklists/benchmarking. Utilise existing audit reports as part of the due diligence approach.	Connect to improvement structures for the school including working more closely with a strong trust.
Connect to structures within the school.	Use the EEF guide to support school planning – use implementation questions to assess positioning for the tiered model: High Quality teaching & learning; Targeted support; Wider Strategies.		Support the identification of the behaviours that need to be in place to address the issues - these are the 'active ingredients. Ensure that cross-checks are in place ... audit reframing ... appropriate analysis ... upfront professional coaching or mentoring … professional development ... availability of capacity and resources. A climate of behaviours for change.
Set 'safe ways of working ' - Nolan principles.	Scope improvement capacity internally and from existing external partners.		Agree engagement with stakeholders to agree next steps - adopt the 5W approach – why, what, who, when and where.
Explain the 'offer', expected outcomes and timescales - the remit of identification of an appropriate roadmap for the school's continuous improvement journey.	Explore and triangulate.	Enlighten, if necessary, the importance of 'Quality Assurance' measures above to frame continuous quality improvement strategies - use in roadmap planning.	Agree: Non-negotiables ... monitoring ... offers of coaching/professional development. Ensure the school can own the improvement suggestions.
ASK ... if the setting has additional information, they think would be helpful pre-reading to support the process.	What has already been used/ initiated - Does this need unpicking on 'fidelity?' Will this need reframing? Has appropriate analysis of need taken place? Are the causes tightly identified with precision?	Agree on the challenges/support required for leaders, teachers & pupils to gauge capacity to improve.	Ensure clarity on delivery ... fidelity, reach, acceptability, and engagement.
Avoid the potential of starting with a solution before scoping or identifying potential causes.	Scope the school's capacity for change and realistic timescales - unpick the severity of vulnerability.	Seek any additional audits needed.	Test understanding of how the roadmap will work in calendar of the school and especially its day-to-day workings. What will it look like?
		Model seeking nationally approved programmes and links to appropriate hubs or networks/research to inform proven school	
	Outcome: Initial expectations of a 'tiered approach' to build a 'Roadmap' for continuous and sustained improvement. Initial lines of enquiry identified to be followed up with the SLT.	**Outcome:** Set a task to identify the expected short, medium and long-term outcomes - for professional dialogue in day 3. Agree a manageable number of tightly identified issues that need to be addressed and the criteria for success.	**Outcome:** Agree a bespoke 'Tiered Model' & linking 'Roadmap' with clearly embedded monitoring, reframing and quality control measures. Sign off? Decision on whether to pursue a trust partnership and identification of suitable MAT. Submit delivery report to DfE with request for trust partnership including name of identified trust (if applicable).
Key documents: Match confirmation & TSI Offer. System leader guidance. Nolan Principles. EEF Implementation guidance & Supporting SI Planning.	**Key documents:** School improvement plans. Education recovery plans and pupil premium strategy statement and underpinning plans EEF: Tiered Model 'Implementation questions'. EEF Gathering and interpreting data to identify priorities Scope the school's capacity for change and realistic timescales - unpick the severity of vulnerability.	**Key documents:** Headteacher standards, Teachers' standards, ECF & NPQs if needed via TSHs Audits ... Govs, Behaviour, Workload etc. Benchmarking including financial positioning. EEF support for school improvement planning.	**Key documents:** System leader catalogue of nationally approved programmes (eligibility/reach audit tools). Network connectivity via local TSHs. EEF guidance reports – linking research. Roadmap & Implementation considerations.

System leader 5-day support offer for supporting multi-academy trusts – due diligence stepped guidance on framing the offer within an effective implementation model

This is a **suggested** stepped process for the 5-day system leader support offer for MATs. System leaders should frame the most appropriate number of half or full days to cover the process to attain an **agreed next steps plan to help identify and shape implementation improvements**. All offers **could** cover the steps suggested and a strategy for future implementation agreed by all stakeholders.

1. 'Set the scene' *Scope*	2. 'Lift the lid' *Explore*	3 & 4. 'Audit/diagnosis – planning implementation' *Diagnose*	5. 'Framing sustained improvement' *Prepare*
Actions:	**Actions:**	**Actions:**	**Actions:**
Post matching confirmation set up call to set the scene.	Enable reflective discussions to take place ensuring safe-coaching spaces to allow this to take place – use the MAT Assurance Framework tool to shape the lens for discussions.	Allocate the days to probe/triangulate evidence to date on suitability of current improvement pathways.	Model consideration of the necessary prep needed to ensure good implementation: Implementation/change teams? Evidenced informed approaches ... Reframing of policies & practices ... Who will affect these changes? What resources will be required?
Confirm leadership involvement from trust including Chair/trustees.		Connect to NLG (where available) and align developments.	
Research information already accessible: Ofsted, school/trust website, databases etc. Be mindful of the limitations on current information and the pitfalls of cause or coincidence when analysing current positioning.	Allow the trust the opportunity to 'share' positioning and future plans - establish a climate for change. Position within the element areas of 'Vision, Culture and Ethos' and 'People and Partners.'	Sense check existing control measures (audits & reports) - align with on the ground evidence within the element areas: vision, culture and ethos; people and partners; teaching and learning; curriculum and assessment; quality assurance and accountability and governance capacity.	Reflect on the necessary capacity to deliver.
			Agree a manageable number of tightly identified issues that need to be addressed and the criteria for success. Agree engagement with stakeholders to agree next steps - adopt the 5W approach.
Be aware of those with responsibility for school improvement for the trust and links to the Diocese, Opportunity Area lead members etc.	Explore the current evidence together.	Sense check current performance position for recovery and catch-up. Clarify use of nationally recognised standards, toolkits & audits.	Support connectivity to partners who will support continuous improvement journey.
Connect to trust structures, decide if an NLG would be appropriate for the trust and email a request to your DfE regional team to seek approval.	Use the EEF guide to support school planning – use implementation questions to assess positioning for the tiered model. Position the elements of 'Teaching and Learning' and 'Curriculum and Assessment.'	Enlighten, if necessary, the importance of 'Quality Assurance' measures above to frame continuous quality improvement strategies - use in roadmap planning.	Connect to trust structures
			Support the identification of the behaviours that need to be in place to address the improvements needed - these are the 'active ingredients. Ensure that cross-checks are in place ... audit reframing ... appropriate analysis ... upfront professional coaching or mentoring … professional development ... availability of capacity and resources. A climate of behaviours for change.
Set 'safe ways of working ' - Nolan principles.	Scope improvement capacity internally and from existing external partners.	Agree on the strengths and challenges for leaders, teachers & pupils to gauge capacity to improve.	
Explain the 'offer', expected outcomes and timescales - the remit of identification of an appropriate roadmap for the continuous improvement journey for the trust.	What has already been used/ initiated - Does this need unpicking on 'fidelity?' Will this need reframing? Has appropriate analysis of need taken place? Are the causes tightly identified with precision?	Positioning within the language of the MAT Assurance Framework.	
Agree use of the MAT Assurance Framework, DfE Trust good practice guidance and 'Building strong academy trusts'.	Explore and triangulate.	Model seeking nationally approved programmes and links to appropriate hubs or networks/research to inform proven school improvement needs.	Agree: Non-negotiables ... monitoring ... offers of coaching/professional development ... connectivity to partners and ongoing evaluation & reframing.
	Scope the capacity for change		Ensure clarity on delivery ... fidelity, reach, acceptability and engagement.
	If NLG deployment approved, connect to NLG to align developments and position, including the elements of 'Quality Assurance and Accountability' and Governance Capacity.'	**Outcome:** Agreement on the MAT Assurance Framework assessment outcomes and set a task to identify the expected short, medium and long-term outcomes from this for professional dialogue in day 5.	Test understanding of how the roadmap will work in calendar of the trust. What will it look like?
Avoid the potential of starting with a solution before scoping or identifying potential causes. Use the self-assessment tool within the MAT Assurance framework			**Outcome:** Agree a bespoke 'Roadmap' and linking 'Tiered Model' for educational recovery with clearly embedded monitoring, reframing and quality control measures by the trust. Sign off? Suitability to access NPQEL?
	Outcome: MAT Assurance Framework self-assessment audit completed ready for days 3 & 4.		
Key documents: Match confirmation & TSI Offer. System leader guidance. Nolan Principles. EEF Implementation guidance & Supporting SI Planning. MAT Assurance Framework.	**Key documents:** MAT Assurance Framework. Tiered Model 'Implementation questions' re catch-up positioning.	**Key documents:** MAT Assurance Framework & DfE MAT good practice guidance.	**Key documents:** System leader catalogue of nationally approved programmes (eligibility/reach audit tools). Network connectivity via local TSHs. EEF guidance reports – linking research. Roadmap & Implementation considerations.
		Headteacher standards, Teachers' standards, ECF & NPQs via local TSH Audits, Govs, Behaviour, Workload etc Benchmarking including financial positioning. Consider need for SRMA support. EEF support for school improvement planning.	

Reducing absence and tackling persistent absence

Reducing absence and tackling persistent absence in all schools is a priority for the Secretary of State and the department; ensuring that pupils regularly attend is a pre-requisite for all other efforts to support pupils making up lost learning. We will notify you where absence is identified as a particular concern in a school/trust you are supporting. We expect you to explore what plans they have in place to maximise attendance and tackle persistent absence. You may wish to refer to the department's best practice advice for improving school attendance to structure these conversations.

You may also wish to explore whether the school or trust has:
- a clear attendance policy that all parents and pupils are aware of and is applied consistently
- a school or trust wide culture of high expectation around attendance
- a strategy for rigorously using absence data and benchmarking against comparator schools/trusts and LA/national averages to focus efforts where there are patterns and trends (eg low attendance amongst pupil premium pupils)
- dedicated attendance/pastoral staff who can build strong relationships with persistent absentees and those at risk of habitual poor attendance to overcome barriers and join up with services.
- strong relationships with their LA attendance service and a clear escalation process for using legal intervention where necessary

Where you are considering whether an NLG deployment is necessary, you should also consider whether and how governance structures support strong attendance.

Teaching School Hubs

Where appropriate system leaders should also be able to support schools to engage with their local Teaching School Hub (TSH). TSHs provide high-quality professional development to teachers at all stages of their careers, including delivery of the Early Career Framework and the reformed suite of National Professional Qualifications. Whilst schools should engage directly with their local TSH, system leaders can help schools identify, initiate and prioritise their engagement with the TSH to support the school's improvement plan. This may be particularly helpful to schools with limited capacity due to their size and / or rurality.

Timeframes for completing a deployment

The deployment (either 3- or 5-days support) should be completed by the end of the term following the term you are **matched** to the school/trust as follows –

Term in which matched	Term deployment completed by end of
Summer 2021 (for Autumn 2021 start)	18 February 2022
Autumn 2021	1 April 2022
Spring 2022	28 July 2022
Summer 2022	21 December 2022

Role of RDPs in support and monitoring during delivery

The responsibility for delivering the TSI programme sits with the DfE regional delivery teams, and system leaders are accountable to the DfE for delivering the support. However, day to day, our RDP

will be your main point of contact for any questions or issues that arise during the delivery of the support. They will remain in contact with you to ensure that the support is being delivered and will monitor your delivery of support within the timescales indicated above. Please ensure that you respond to any contact made with you.

5. Additional funded support elements

Unlike previous school improvement support offers, there is no requirement for you to help put into action any of the activities outlined in the strategy produced/updated as part of the support offer. Improvement should be enacted by the school's own implementation and the choice of additional support detailed below, where appropriate.

Throughout the 3 or 5 days you should have discussions with leaders of the school or trust about the relevant additional support and whether they wish to be considered for this. Details of the support on offer and the process you will need to follow to request this are provided below.

Trust partnerships

For standalone schools – LAM/SATs and empty MATs

What are they?

A trust partnership is a sector-led arrangement where a school partners with an academy trust for a time-limited period to access the academy trust's networks and services at an agreed cost through a service charge. It can be a powerful school improvement tool providing quick and accessible support from a strong trust. They are not a replacement for converting to academy status or a routine preliminary step before academy conversion takes place. They do not deliver the full benefits of joining an academy trust. They are a time-limited way for a school to benefit from trialling membership in an academy trust and explore how a permanent arrangement might work.

For standalone schools – LAM, SATs and single-school MATs that are eligible for the TSIO, we are offering credit to be paid to a MAT of up to £10,000 towards the costs of a trust partnership where a suitable partner MAT is identified, and subject to the availability of funds.

What are the key components?

There is no single model of trust partnership, but it should have the following key components:

i) It should be **time-limited,** typically 12-18 months**.** It is imperative that none of the parties involved considers trust partnerships as a long-term solution, or a replacement for conversion.

ii) During the partnership, the governing body of the school **should give due consideration to academisation/merging** through formal consultation where required.

iii) Activity undertaken as part of the partnership should **focus on teaching and leadership.** Trust partnerships are usually focused on activities such as academy trust-wide training opportunities, headteacher mentoring and support, and cross-trust data benchmarking of data.

iv) All arrangements should be **recorded** through formal documentation. Whilst documents may vary, academy trusts have expressed the importance of each party being clear from the outset about the terms, any costs, expectations, and objectives of the arrangement.

What should a trust forming a partnership with a standalone school consider?

- They are clear on the objectives of the relationship - what the offer will be, including the expectations of what each party will bring to/expect from the arrangement.

- The "hidden costs" of any arrangement – particularly the amount of time and resource needed from academy trust leaders.

- Due diligence is essential if the relationship is to provide effective school improvement, as is flexibility to deal with unexpected issues.

- What additional evidenced based professional development and support may be available, that meets the needs of the school.

What should a school forming a partnership with a trust consider?

- Make sure you are clear from the outset on the objectives of the relationship. Ensure you know what the offer will be, including the expectations of what each party will bring to/expect from the arrangement.

- Take time to consider and engage the right academy trust.

- The "hidden costs" of any arrangement– particularly in the amount of time and resource required from the leadership team.

- Be aware that these relationships are time limited. They allow you to experience the benefits of being in a particular trust.

- Church schools should consult their diocese prior to seeking a Trust Partnership and receive consent to do so.

What is the system leader role?

During the 3-day deployment to a standalone school, unless the school leadership has indicated that they are ready and willing to join a trust, you should discuss with them whether a trust partnership would be beneficial to their future improvement strategy and if they would like to receive a funded partnership.

As part of the contextual information provided to you by your RDP, a potential partner trust/s may be indicated either due to known existing links to the school and/or recent engagement with the RSC's office. This may of course be your own trust and was the reason for your match to the school. In these cases, it would be appropriate to have a conversation with the school about partnering with this/your trust. Where there is no pre-existing relationship with a trust/potential trust indicated, we ask you to gather contextual information during your deployment from the school which may help the DfE to identify a suitable partnership trust for the school, for example existing relationships we may not be aware of or a preferred trust.

If you receive confirmation from the school to enter a partnership, please indicate this on the reporting form you will be asked to return to your RDP (see [reporting and funding](#)). If you feel it is appropriate and would be beneficial to the supported school early in the deployment, you are able to make an early recommendation of a funded trust partnership to the RSC's office rather than as part of the end of the deployment report. You should propose this via your RDP.

It is not the responsibility of the supporting system leader to initiate this partnership, this will be confirmed with the school and the trust by DfE regional teams. However, any information you can provide to regional teams to support this decision will be taken into consideration. The department

will also be responsible for arranging for payment to be made to the MAT. Once payment has been made, the department will have no other formal role in any trust partnership that is established.

Where funding is agreed, regional teams will work with the school to identify and confirm which trust may be the most appropriate for them to partner with and then liaise directly with the MAT to initiate this arrangement.

National Leaders of Governance

Available for MATs only, those with at least 1 2RI school will be prioritised

During your 5-day deployment with a MAT and review of its structure (using the MAT Assurance Framework) , you should consider whether specific governance support is required from a National Leader of Governance (NLG). The department may fund up to 5 days support from an NLG. In those 5 days, the NLG will undertake a review of the governance of the trust in line with expectations laid out in the NLG Standards. The purpose of the review is to identify and analyse causes of weak governance and provide targeted and prioritised plans for improvement. All reviews will include a Board observation, in addition to evidence gathered from interactions with Board members and relevant documentation. 2-3 months following completion of the initial review, the NLG will undertake a progress review to evaluate progress and provide any further guidance as necessary. This is included within their 5-day deployment.

If through early conversations with the leaders of the trust including the Chair or Trustees, you determine that they would benefit from additional governance support, please email your regional representative (detailed above) with a request for NLG support, including the rationale for your recommendation. Alternatively, a recommendation may be included in your summary report at the conclusion of your deployment. However, we believe that it would be most beneficial for the NLG to be deployed at the same time as a system leader so early notification of the request is the strong preference.

Your request will be considered and if deemed appropriate, the National Governance Association (NGA) who are responsible for the accreditation and management of NLGs, will be notified of the requirement and will deploy a suitable NLG to provide support to the trust. Please be aware that there are a limited number of NLG deployments available through the offer and whilst the department will consider all requests, there is no guarantee that this support will be provided to the trust. You should therefore only request such support for trusts that are most in need of governance support.

If an early recommendation for NLG support is made and approved, suggested liaison points between the NLG and system leader are detailed in the 5-day support model, however, we expect this to be flexible and managed according to need. You will be required to indicate whether you are happy for your contact details to be shared with the NLG so that they are able to contact you.

If you make a recommendation at the end of your deployment and this is approved, please ensure that you allow time within your 5-day support allocation to have a conversation with the NLG to brief them on the leadership and management of the trust, prior to them commencing their support.

National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership

For discussion with MATs.

The provision of funded middle and late career National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) is available as part of the education recovery package. This includes the NPQEL.

Through this recovery package full scholarship funding for the NPQEL, with no cost to the participant, is available to leaders who:

- are, or are aspiring to be, an executive headteacher or have a school trust CEO role with responsibility for leading several schools
- in a trust that has 1 or more state-funded schools in England within the top 30th percentile in relation to pupils on pupil premium as of the end of the previous academic year.

We would encourage you to have a conversation with any trusts you are supporting that fall in this eligibility criteria to make them aware of this training and consider if it would be appropriate for them to access this qualification to improve leadership within the trust. Those trusts that do not have a school that falls into the eligibility criteria for a funded NPQEL through the recovery package, will be eligible for a funded place through the TSI Offer. This funding is available for cohorts commencing in the 2022/23 academic year.

Should they be interested in accessing a place please advise them to go to National professional qualifications (NPQs) reforms - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Please indicate on your reporting form if the trust has indicated their interest – this will not request a place for the trust but will allow us to monitor interest. The trust will be required to access this qualification themselves.

Other NPQ options for schools and trusts to access are detailed in the approved programmes section of this guidance.

National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership

6. Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

Support for schools eligible for the TSI offer

Many schools and trusts will still be recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and tackling issues such as persistent absenteeism and poor behaviour. Your support to schools and trusts on their improvement strategies should seek to address any such issues as a priority. The department is working proactively with the sector to understand the drivers behind workload and wellbeing issues and improve our policies and interventions.

You should ensure that all schools are made aware of the funded programmes available through the education recovery package. This guidance document provides information about the programmes and activities the DfE is funding to support education recovery and children and young people's wellbeing. There are programmes and activities for pupils and students of all ages, including with consideration to disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Some of the programmes are also detailed below but this guidance document provides a useful summary for schools.

Non-statutory guidance is also available offering suggestions to help all maintained schools, academies, and free schools decide how to prioritise elements within their curriculum for education recovery. These suggestions are based on the good practice evident in many schools, as exemplified in the case studies. While the guidance states that schools should follow these suggestions, this language is used for clarity and the guidance remains optional.

Please ensure that all schools/trusts are aware of these offers and guidance when providing support and encourage them to access any support that would be beneficial to them in their continued recovery.

Ofsted have provided their reflections on the impact of the pandemic on inspections and key issues that have arisen across the sector which you will find as useful context to inform your support.

7. Reporting and funding guidance

Reimbursement and deployment reporting

In comparison to previous school improvement offers, the reporting requirements for this programme have been streamlined to reduce burden on system leaders and to maximise the time spent with schools/trusts providing support, reflecting their specific context.

You will be paid £600 per day inclusive of VAT and any expenses incurred. Once you have agreed to take on a deployment, you will be sent a grant offer letter with details of the agreed funding. Upon completion of the deployment, you should complete all sections of the form contained within the grant offer letter and return it to your RDP.

The form will ask for –

- signatures to accept the grant offer
- payment school/trust and bank details
- amount being claimed
- an overview of the support provided
- for standalone schools whether they wish to accept a funded trust partnership and accompanying contextual information
- for trusts whether they require NLG support (if not requested early in the deployment)
- for trusts whether they intend to enrol staff on an NPQEL
- signature from lead at the supported school/trust to confirm completion of the support (for grant assurance purposes).

You should return your completed form by email to your RDP by the end of the term you are required to complete the deployment (see section 3). If your form has necessary information missing, or has been filled out incorrectly, it may be returned to you with instructions on how to rectify the issue.

Once received and approved, the details on your form will be logged onto our system and payment will be triggered. You will receive a remittance notice by email when payment has been made.

8. Frequently asked questions

Q. Can I deploy someone else to either support me to deliver the offer or to deliver the offer on my behalf?

As with previous school improvement offers, NLEs will provide a significant proportion of the system leader support element. In addition, where appropriate we will also utilise CEOs of approved sponsor trusts who are not NLEs.

We would expect the system leader matched to the school/trust to provide most of the support under the TSI offer, however where appropriate the system leader can utilise other members of their leadership team to support them. The matched system leader remains accountable for the delivery of the deployment and the quality of the support provided. System leaders are however not able to contract the support to another individual outside of their own school/trust. The exception is for substantial governance support which should be requested through the option of funded NLGs.

Q. How will the impact of the offer be monitored? Is there a role for the system leader in ongoing monitoring?

The system leader will be asked to provide a short report to the department at the end of the deployment to outline the support that has been provided and the additional support elements that they recommend for the school/trust as per the programme offer. The support provided should focus on ensuring that a high-quality improvement strategy is in place at either school or trust level. The system leader will **not** be required to monitor the implementation of this strategy and/or provide evidence of its impact.

Q. Is a funded NLG deployment guaranteed for a trust?

Funding for an NLG deployment is not guaranteed. Each region has an allocation of NLG deployments based on the number of eligible schools/trusts within the region and will be required to manage this allocation. This may mean that some deployments are not approved.

Q. How will I receive payment for the support I provide?

Please see the reporting and funding section for guidance.

Q. Will I receive expenses on top of the day rate?

No, the day rate of £600 includes VAT and expenses.

Q. A trust has asked me to provide school level support to their eligible schools rather than trust level support. Is this appropriate?

Unlike previous school improvement offers, support for those schools in academy trusts should focus on improving the leadership of the trust. If following discussion with the trust leadership about the outcomes of their MAT assurance framework self-assessment you conclude that the trust has in place a sound trust-wide improvement strategy, it may be more beneficial to use your time to provide support at a school level, supporting the school/s eligible for the TSIO within the trust. This decision should be made in conjunction with the trust leadership and once you have assessed the trust level improvement strategies.

Q. The trust I am supporting has recently received a new RI judgement, are they eligible for additional system leader support?

No, the offer for schools in a MAT is focussed on improving the capacity of the trust leadership to improve their schools. No further support is provided for newly eligible schools. Should the school become RI during the support period, and you are content that the trust has a sound trust-wide improvement strategy, you may use your remaining time to provide support at a school level but this decision should be made in conjunction with the trust leadership and once you have assessed the trust level improvement strategy.

Q. Can schools be offered support by exception where they do not meet the eligibility criteria?

There is an option for additional schools to be added by exception where they either self-identify as needing help or RSCs judge that to be the case. Please contact your RSC office.

Annex A – approved DfE programmes

Alongside the additional support available for referral, you should consider whether any of the following approved DfE programmes may be beneficial/relevant to the school/trust, their improvement needs and recovery from the pandemic. If so, the school/trust should be made aware of their options, how they can access this additional support and be encouraged to take advantage of these offers. These details are provided for you below.

1. Financial support

School Resource Management Advisor

Schools Resource Management Advisors (SMRAs) are sector experts who provide hands-on advice and support to all schools on how to optimise the use of resources to provide the best possible educations for children.

SRMAs provide support to all schools and trusts and are free of charge. You can request support by contacting ESFA.

If the school/trust has already received support from an SRMA you should review this with the school/trust as part of the support you provide.

School Resource Management Collection

The department is committed to working alongside schools and trusts to help them improve outcomes for pupils by getting the best value from all their resources. We have published a variety of resources for school leaders, school business professionals, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies, and free schools, as well as local authorities. The resources cover

- school resource management
- data
- workforce management including workload reduction
- non-staff costs
- school business professional
- guidance for governors

2. Teacher Development

National Professional Qualifications

National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) are trusted, transferable qualifications targeted at different groups of teachers to provide a coherent framework for development at every stage of their career.

There are three new specialist NPQs (replacing the existing middle leadership NPQ) to address the broad range of responsibilities of current and aspiring middle leaders, which will:
- support the training and development of others, including early career teachers;
- develop teachers who are subject leads or responsible for improving teaching practice in a subject or phase; and
- develop teachers who have responsibilities for leading behaviour and culture.

The three existing NPQs have been refreshed to ensure that they are underpinned by the latest evidence of what works:
- National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL)
- National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)
- National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership (NPQEL)

Any teacher who is currently or aspiring to be a senior leader (with cross-school responsibilities), a headteacher or head of school (with responsibility for leading a school), or an executive headteacher/school trust CEO (with responsibility for leading several schools) will be eligible for the relevant qualifications. Additionally, the qualifications will be available to any teacher who may have or aspires to have responsibilities for leading teaching in a subject, year group, key stage, or phase; leading behaviour and/or supporting pupil wellbeing in their school; or leading the development of other teachers in their school and/or the development of teachers who are early in their career.

There are two cohorts a year starting November 2021 followed by February 2022.

Schools will be able to contract directly with the NPQ lead providers in accordance with Schedule 4 of the framework which will shortly be added to find a framework.

For more information please visit national professional qualifications frameworks: from September 2021.

Early Career Framework

The early career framework (ECF) sets out what early career teachers are entitled to learn about and learn how to do when they start their career. From September 2021, early career teachers will be entitled to a two-year ECF based induction, including:

- 5% off timetable in the second year of induction for all early career teachers to undertake induction activities including training and mentoring (in addition to the existing 10% off timetable they get in their first year of induction)
- high quality, freely available materials to complement the framework
- a dedicated mentor and support for these mentors
- funding for mentors to spend with early career teachers in the second year of induction - this is based on 20 hours of mentoring across the academic year.

There will be 3 approaches available to enable the delivery of an ECF-based induction. These are:

- **provider-led programme (Full Induction Programme)** - This approach has been designed to be the simplest option and the one we expect most schools to use. High-quality training alongside the professional development materials have been developed for early career teachers and their mentors. Schools will receive additional funding for the time mentors of early career teachers will spend on the provider-led mentor training. This will consist of 36 hours of backfill time over two years per mentor.
- **core induction programme** – [professional development materials](#) only, provided online by DfE for early career teachers and mentors to deliver their own support, with appropriate bodies (local authorities, teaching school hubs, the National Teacher Accreditation and the Independent Schools Teacher Induction Panel) ensuring there is fidelity with the ECF
- **school-led programme -** schools independently designing and delivering their own induction programme, with appropriate bodies ensuring there is fidelity with the [ECF](#).

Schools can find information and guidance and sign up for the programme via [the online service](#). All schools should have received a registration prompt for this service.

For further information about the ECF please visit the [website](#).

High Potential Initial Teacher Training

The High Potential Initial Teacher Training and Leadership Development programme is a route into teaching that attracts highflyers who are unlikely to have otherwise joined the profession. The programme is run by Teach First.

It is an employment-based route with trainees currently completing a two-year Leadership Development Programme, with the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) at the end of year one and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at the end of year two.

Schools can apply to partner with Teach First at any time of the year, but new trainees will only be placed in a school for a September start.

Schools interested in the programme can apply by filling in an online form on the Teach First [website](#).

3. Recovery, Behaviour and Curriculum Hubs

National Tutoring Programme

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) is a catch-up programme to provide tuition support for disadvantaged pupils who need support to catch up on learning lost during the pandemic. The NTP is currently in its first year and will continue for another academic year from September 2021.

ACADEMIC YEAR 21/22:

On 2 June 2021, the DfE announced the next step in the government's plans to support children and young people make up lost learning as a result of the pandemic.

Building on the success of the National Tutoring Programme 2020/21, we have listened to your feedback and further developed the programme for 2021/22. We have developed options that make it easier for schools to access tutoring whilst ensuring that you can still exercise a high degree of discretion to support the pupils you believe are most in need. Find out more here: About the National Tutoring Programme | NTP

As of the 2nd of September 2021:

- Schools can sign up with this year's external tuition providers, covering the whole country and expected to reach over 500,000 students this year

- New guidance has been published to support schools to offer their own teacher-led tuition, expected to reach over one million students this academic year

- Academic mentors are being placed in selected schools across the country to work in small groups with over 250,000 students most in need of support this year

There are three subsidised tutoring options for AY 2021/22:

School-led Tutoring: Based on your feedback, we are introducing a grant payment to all schools, based on the number of pupil premium students. This payment is ring-fenced to fund tutoring provision that can be locally sourced by schools. This could include using your teaching assistants, existing teaching staff or even local tutoring resource that is familiar with your schools and pupil needs. You have complete flexibility to use this payment in the best way to suit your school tutoring needs. This funding is expected to cover around 75% of the costs of local tutoring provision in AY 2021/22 with the school contributing the remaining costs.

- **Funding:** For the next academic year, the school-led allocation has been calculated based on **75%** of the average cost to a school accessing a 15-hour block of locally sourced tuition.

To complement School-led Tutoring, we are continuing to offer Tuition Partners and Academic Mentors as part of the National Tutoring Programme to ensure schools have the greatest choice in accessing high-quality tutors.

Tuition Partners: State-funded schools can access subsidised, high-quality tuition from an approved list of Tuition Partners spanning a wide-range of topics. This option can take the pressure away from schools having to organise local resource as our network of highly skilled Tuition Partners have already passed a set of quality, safeguarding and evaluation standards. Some schools might not have subject specific teaching resource on site for example SEND, but with Tuition Partners, can still access quality tutors.

Funding: 70% of the cost will be subsidised in 2021/22. Schools will need to fund the remaining 30% through other budgets, for example Recovery Premium or Pupil Premium. The subsidy rate for 2022/23 will be 50% and for 2023/24 will be 25%.

Academic Mentors: Some schools prefer to use tutors as an 'in class' resource to work alongside the pupil's teacher to address a range of interventions, focusing on 1-1 and small group sessions with pupils. In the areas that are most in need of support, you can employ trained graduates to provide intensive support. These Academic Mentors will provide support tailored to schools, including subject-specific work, revision lessons and additional support available outside the school setting.

Funding: 95% of the Academic Mentors salary will be subsidised in AY 2021/22. Schools will need to fund the remaining 5% through other budgets, for example Recovery Premium or Pupil Premium. The subsidy rate for 2022/23 will be 50% and for 2023/24 will be 25%.

When will this be available and what are the next steps?

These tutoring options are available from the 2nd of September, you can find out more information on the National Tutoring Programme website.

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact info@nationaltutoring.org.uk

16-19 Tuition fund for those secondary schools with 6th forms

This provides additional funding for the academic years 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022 for schools, colleges and other 16 to 19 institutions to mitigate the disruption to learning arising from coronavirus (COVID-19).

The fund is being provided to support small group tuition for 16 to 19 students in English, maths and other subjects that have been disrupted, including vocational and/or academic learning.

Further information can be found here 16 to 19 funding: 16 to 19 tuition fund - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Behaviour Hubs Programme

The Behaviour Hubs programme is a 3-year programme to improve pupil behaviour, pairing schools and multi-academy trusts with exemplary behaviour practices, with partner schools or MATs who want/need to improve behaviour in their setting. All partner schools can expect to get support with:

- diagnosing specific areas of improvement
- designing and developing new approaches to addressing poor behaviour
- developing clear, sustainable behaviour cultures for all pupils

This is a flexible, tailored offer of support. There are 3 possible pathways of support:
1. **Core support:** For schools who want to work independently (12-20 days)
2. **Extended support:** For schools who need one-to-one support (30-40 days)
3. **Multi-school support:** for MATs that would like to implement change across several schools within the trust (22-30 days)

Partner schools and MATs can apply at any time. New cohorts will join the programme at the beginning of each term and therefore do not have to wait for the start of the next academic year. Schools can find more information via the [brochure](#) and complete an application form via the [gov.uk page](#).

Maths Hubs Programme

Each Maths Hub is made up of a partnership of schools, colleges and other organisations working together to provide support for maths teaching in a particular region of England. A Hub's work takes many forms and includes face-to-face CPD and online support.

The programme offers:

- support from the school's local Maths Hub
- free or subsidised professional development programmes (including Teaching for Mastery)
- new COVID learning recovery support
- up-to-date information about all local maths education activities
- a network of local leaders of maths education (LLMEs)
- nationally coordinated professional development and research projects
- the opportunity to share work or ideas through the school's local maths hub

Maths Hubs are accessible to all state-funded schools subject to capacity. Activities take place throughout the year at 40 hubs, which together serve the whole of England. Professional development programmes typically begin in the autumn term and schools may need to reserve their places on support programmes, typically in the preceding summer term.

Schools can access support, including applying for the Teaching for Mastery programme, directly with their local Maths Hub or through the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM). To [find out more please visit the website](#).

Advanced Maths Support Programme

The Advanced Maths Support Programme (AMSP) aims to increase participation in Core Maths, AS/A level Mathematics and Further Mathematics, and improve the teaching of these Level 3 Maths qualifications.

The programme provides national support (with more than 40 area coordinators deployed) - all teachers and students in state-funded schools and colleges are eligible to apply. Support is tailored to the needs of the school or college, with additional support offered in areas of low social mobility.

Area coordinators work with schools and colleges in their area to:

- support and promote the study of Core Maths, AS/A level Mathematics and Further Mathematics.
- arrange AS/A level Further Mathematics tuition for students when their schools and colleges cannot provide it themselves.
- organise enrichment events for Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 students, often involving links with local universities and employers.
- provide a wide range of flexible professional development opportunities for teachers
- assist in the planning of advanced maths provision.
- facilitate [teacher network meetings.](#)

Support is available now and throughout the next academic year.

Schools can request to be kept informed at: amsp.org.uk/subscribe and register at: amsp.org.uk/register.

See the Advanced Maths Support Programme website for more information. Home | AMSP

English Hubs Programme

The English Hubs Programme is a school-to-school improvement programme dedicated to improving the teaching of reading, particularly for disadvantaged children, focusing on Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP), early language, and reading for pleasure. Since its launch the programme has provided appropriate and targeted support to several thousands of schools across England. There are 34 English Hubs across the country. All primary schools that would benefit from support in the teaching of early reading are eligible for support via the programme.

Different types of support are available including:

- **Intensive support:** literacy specialists within each Hub will provide tailored support to local schools to develop their practices. Schools are selected based on their phonics screening check data (PSC) and following an audit from the Hub school.
- **Medium level support**: general support for various aspects of teaching early reading and language. This can be accessed online or in person, depending on public health restrictions.
- **Showcase events**: demonstrating why the Hubs are a good source of support.

With partner school places for 2021-22 filled, schools will next be eligible for intensive support from September 2022, subject to selection. Medium level support and the showcase events are available from September 2021 and run throughout the year. (NB. some schools may have received this support or be in the pipeline to do so based on the outreach work of their local English Hub).

Find your local hub and contact them directly to apply. For more information, please visit the guidance.

Systematic Synthetic Phonics

Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) is the government's preferred approach to the teaching of early reading.

Different SSP programmes provide different approaches to implementation and varying levels of ongoing support. Schools should explore the different SSP options before deciding which suits them best. It may be that schools are already using a programme but would benefit from the opportunity to re-evaluate whether it remains the most effective one for them.

DfE is in the process of undertaking a new process of validating SSP programmes. These validated programmes are those who have demonstrated that they meet the standard expected to provide effective teaching. Further information, including the list of programmes validated under the previous iteration of this process, can be found online at Choosing a phonics teaching programme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Schools pay the full cost for an SSP programme, but prices vary for different programmes.

Science Learning Partnerships Programme

The national network of school-led Science Learning Partnerships (SLPs) improve the standard of science teaching in primary and secondary schools and FE colleges through delivering high-quality CPD and bespoke school-to-school support at a departmental and whole-school level.

The SLPs draw on local expert science teachers and partners to support schools and colleges deliver a knowledge-rich curriculum through excellent teaching. The SLPs are led by schools and colleges with cutting-edge expertise in science themselves.

Each SLP provides a programme of subject-specific support that covers all Key Stages and is tailored to national priorities and local need. The support provided by SLPs integrates appropriate STEM Learning offers including:
- Teaching and learning resources
- STEM Clubs
- STEM Ambassadors
- STEM Community

Schools can access support directly by contacting their nearest Science Learning Partnership via the website.

ENTHUSE bursaries

Generous bursaries are available for eligible schools in England and are funded by the Department for Education and Project ENTHUSE. They contribute towards the cost of attending high-impact science CPD at the National STEM Learning Centre in York.

Your bursary will cover the entire cost of your CPD (including associated resources) **and** provide an additional cash bursary of £150 per course day, which can be used towards travel, teacher release, science equipment or further local CPD. In addition, as part of our all-inclusive experience, your accommodation, meals and refreshments are also included.

To find if your school is eligible for an enhanced science bursary, simply select a course and the date that you are interested in attending and then type in your school name. If you are logged in to your account, all you need to do is select the course and the date.

Computing Hubs Programme

Computing Hubs provide local level engagement and support schools, to improve the quality of the teaching of computer science by increasing subject knowledge of computing teachers across all key stages. Support includes high-quality CPD with generous bursaries, teaching and learning resources and school-to-school support. National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE) is developing a Computing Quality Framework (CQF) to help school leaders benchmark their computing provision and increase capacity and sustainability of teaching computing. Participating schools will be able to receive support from their local hubs and move through the maturity model to reach a Computing Quality Mark.

Computing Hubs are available to all schools and can provide support now with the new CQF ready from September 2021.

Schools can access the support directly by contacting their nearest Computing Hub via the website. See the Teach Computing Hubs page for more information.

SEND Hub

SEND Hub provides advice and guidance on ways to ensure the curriculum is accessible and inclusive for all.

Training on ways assistive technology could be used by teachers, leaders and SENCos to support all pupils via a library of training webinars focusing on the best ways to integrate accessible technology into classrooms – supporting teachers to improve the outcomes for all their pupils.

Training materials can be accessed by all through National Star College's SEND Hub [website](#).

4. Governance support

Academy Ambassadors

The Academy Ambassadors programme is a recruitment service to source and match leaders of business and industry to serve on academy trust boards as trustees.

The department recognises that high quality and effective and ethical governance is key to success in our school system. The programme sources suitable volunteers from organisations, both large and small, and matches them to boards seeking support, through a rigorous matching process. The programme also offers onboarding support, making the new trustees aware of their responsibilities, and providing an alumni network with opportunities for continuing development.

Both multi academy trusts and single academy trusts, who need to strengthen their boards, are eligible. The programme is targeted to those boards most in need, defined as high needs trusts by RSCs and ESFA, including the four areas. The programme is also required to improve the diversity of boards, targeting BAME volunteers, women and those from younger age groups, all traditionally under-represented on trust boards, therefore making boards more representative of the communities they serve.

The programme is currently live and is free to trusts. Further information can be found on the [website](#).

5. Digital Support Programmes

EdTech Demonstrator Schools and Colleges

The Demonstrators are a network of schools and colleges who were initially funded for a year from April 2020 to provide free peer-to-peer support on making the best use of technology to support remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next stage for the Demonstrator network will be to bridge the gap between crisis response and long-term implementation of technology.

A key area of focus for the network this year will be how technology can support wider school improvement. The Demonstrators will work directly with schools and colleges to identify areas where they may be struggling and where technology can really make a difference to streamline processes and reduce unnecessary workload burden. This may be areas such as attendance management and wider communication with both staff and parents. They will also be able to offer

peer support with activities such as effective procurement of technology or developing digital strategies which make effective use of technology to enhance teaching and learning.

 The support model will run across three tiers:

- **Light touch support** (c.6 hours of training delivered over a term): Likely to be targeted towards schools or colleges requiring rapid support on remote education, catch-up and recovery provision.
- **Medium touch term support** (c.15 hours of training delivered over the academic year): Our network would likely work with schools/colleges to identify one or two areas where technology can be adopted and have maximum impact for teachers and pupils.
- **Long-term support** (c.30 hours of training delivered over the academic year): The network would likely work with schools/colleges to develop a sustainable digital strategy, embedding technology (particularly digital platforms and devices) as part of a wider change programme, and recognising where technology will and will not make an impact.

For schools to find tailored support relevant to their needs, visit the website or email edtechdemoprogramme@ucst.uk.

Digital Education Platforms

A free digital education platform provided to schools through Government funding. This allows schools to apply and get set up, access to and handover training on either Google Workspace for Education or Office 365 Education. The funding allows accredited Google and Microsoft suppliers to provide the technical service to:

- set up all staff and student user accounts for the platform
- provide handover training and technical advice

The funded support is for schools that:

- do not have a digital education platform
- have access to Office 365 Education or G Suite for Education, but are not yet set up to assign work and communicate with pupils

This programme is available all year to any publicly funded school or college in England.

Schools can find out more and submit an application by visiting the Get Help with Technology programme. The Key for School Leaders website also provides feature comparison and case studies on how schools are making the most of these platforms, to help schools make the most appropriate choice.

Sustaining Digital and Remote Education Toolkit

The Digital and Remote Education Toolkit is a training course designed to support school leaders who are responsible for the quality and delivery of remote education provision.

By sharing best practice principles derived from evidence-based research, complemented by the developer's (Sandringham School) experiences using digital technologies, the Toolkit supports school leaders in developing and implementing effective remote education strategies. Schools will also be helped to consider how best to target resources, including digital resources, towards education recovery.

The course explores what constitutes effective curriculum implementation, barriers to learning faced by students, and the type of resources, both digital and paper-based, that are available to schools. The Toolkit encourages school leaders to consider impacts on teacher workload, flexible working, and safe and effective working practices. The Toolkit supplements existing departmental resources that schools already rely upon when developing their remote education provision.

The course launched in May 2021 and is freely available to all publicly funded schools and colleges in England for an initial period of one year via the website.

6. Workload Reduction

We continue to support schools to act and remove unhelpful practice that creates unnecessary workload for schools. The DfE school workload reduction toolkit, developed alongside school leaders, is a helpful resource that is being used by schools to review and reduce workload. The report by the Education Development Trust shows the positive outcomes from schools using the toolkit. We have commissioned further school-based projects to explore workload issues experienced during the pandemic. We will be publishing an update in the autumn term 2021.

7. Mental Health

The DfE will offer schools and colleges a grant to pay for senior mental health lead training from autumn 2021. More information about this training along with further useful information to support schools to reflect on their existing approach to mental health and wellbeing are available here. This includes information about the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter.

Annex B - Ofsted update

An update from Ofsted on their learnings from the pandemic

Routine inspections of school were suspended from March 2020, although our regulatory work continued. As COVID-19 restrictions began to relax and more children and students returned to education, we began a programme of visits to schools in September 2020 designed to support providers through collaborative conversations and constructive challenge, and to gather insights about the picture of education and care across England. We worked closely with sector unions to design the visits and with public health officials to make sure that they were carried out as safely as possible. These visits did not result in a graded judgement, but we published the outcomes of our discussions in short letters so that parents and others could understand the steps that were being taken to support children. When the second national lockdown was imposed, we continued to visit schools on site where we had concerns but carried out most of our visits remotely. We published national findings from all our interim visits in a series of monthly COVID-19 briefings throughout the autumn term, accompanied by commentaries from HMCI. In the spring term, we carried out monitoring inspections of maintained nurseries, state-funded schools and FE and skills providers judged inadequate or requires improvement. These inspections focused on important issues like curriculum, remote education and pupils' attendance, particularly of vulnerable children. On 4 January 2021, a third national lockdown was imposed, forcing us to adapt our approach to do as much as possible remotely. This meant that, while the level of assurance that we were able to provide was higher than in the autumn term, it was considerably lower than we had originally envisaged. Our view throughout has been that inspecting remotely provides less assurance, and that we cannot provide adequate assurance remotely about safeguarding.

Our key findings from this time were that children's experiences fell into 3 broad groups. There are those who coped well in the face of restrictions; those hardest hit, largely because of the interplay between their circumstances and the impact of the pandemic; and the majority who have slipped back in their learning to varying degrees since schools were closed to most children and movement restricted. The children in their earliest years of education whose parents were unable to work more flexibly and who experienced the double whammy of less time with parents and less time with other children. Leaders reported regression back into nappies among potty-trained children and others who had forgotten some basic skills they had mastered, such as eating with a knife and fork – not to mention the loss of early progress in words and numbers. We were told of older children losing stamina when it came to reading and writing; some who had lost physical fitness; and others showing signs of mental distress, including an increase in eating disorders and self-harm. Many school children are thought to be at least 6 months behind where they should be. This loss of learning shows itself differently in different age groups. Across all age groups, children with SEND were seriously affected in both their care and education, as the services that families relied on, particularly speech and language services, were unavailable. We also raised concerns about the children who were out of sight while schools were closed to most pupils. Referrals to social care fell and have still not fully returned to more usual levels as schools have returned, raising concerns that neglect, exploitation, or abuse is going undetected.

From Easter 2021 we resumed some normal inspection, including monitoring inspections of schools less than good, and graded inspections where we had concerns, or where schools showed improvement. Across the term we completed around 500 on-site inspections and visits of state-funded since the start of April. We saw several schools that showed improved performance since the start of the pandemic, including schools that came out of a category of concern. In fact, we

generally saw quite a positive response to COVID, with schools having taken seriously the need to get a strong curriculum in place and, in general, taking good steps to do so. Where schools were not responding so well, we often found that that came down often to poor leadership. We continue to be concerned over what we've seen in terms of lost learning in very young children - especially in terms of language skills. The loss of language development in very young children is a significant concern as this is the basis of future access to the whole curriculum. We've seen some schools taking this very seriously. Again, where they haven't, it is down to poor leadership that doesn't understand the importance of early education. Obviously, we've been concerned about some of the sexual abuse and harassment we're finding but have been pleased with how seriously governors are taking the sexual abuse review and the determination they have shown to tackle the issue.

Feedback from providers throughout the pandemic has been positive. Providers received a survey following their interim or assurance visit in the autumn term. Most respondents to this said that the visit had helped them to reflect on current plans and to improve. One school said that 'inspectors challenged and were thorough, but the whole process felt supportive and informed plans for the school moving forward'. Another commented that 'the rigour in questioning provided the opportunity for school leaders to reflect on next steps of development, and feedback was appropriate and useful'.

Change log

Version	Published date	Changes made
1.0	September 2021	
2.0	November 2021	Page 7 Update on system leader professional development Page 11 Additional section on reducing absence and tackling persistent absence Page 11 Additional section on Teaching School Hubs Page 28 Information on Science Learning Partnerships Programme and ENTHUSE Bursaries