

SSMAT Collaboration, Support and Challenge Model

Collaboration, Support and Challenge for the Trust-Wide Development of Effective Teaching and Strong Learning Outcomes¹

1. Conditions for effective collaboration

School improvement research studies identify the following features of effective inter-school collaboration:

- Strong leadership and governance
- Well-defined structures and processes
- A history of collaboration
- Clear communication
- Sensitivity to context

The Stephen Sutton Multi-Academy Trust features good clarity and objectivity of key roles with **well-defined accountability**. Schools partner up on the basis of their common principles and values and their productive working relationships. The Trust starts from the premise that there are many models of effective practice. The cross-phase model of collaboration provides **rich opportunities for colleagues to learn from each other for the benefit of the students**. **School improvement strategies** need to be appropriate for the setting and **are often best developed within the setting itself**.

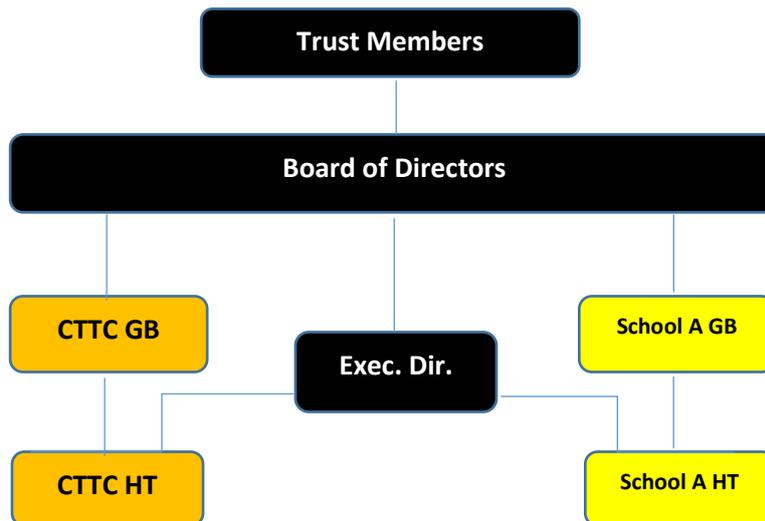
2. Leadership and governance

2.1 The governance arrangements for the MAT must be aligned with education, charity and company law. In order to be effective, they also need to be flexible to the needs of the schools and the community it serves. Most importantly, strategic governance from the Trust Board must have student welfare and strong learning outcomes for all students in the partner schools as its foremost concerns. Furthermore, the way that the MAT operates and develops must support, rather than compromise, learning outcomes for students in other schools in the community. These are central principles for SSMAT.

2.2 SSMAT is a model with **no lead school** and with an Executive Director, who is directly accountable to the Trust Board and acts as line manager to the individual headteachers of the schools in the Trust. SSMAT is conceived as a highly community-focused cross-phase MAT. The focus of the Executive Director role is on system leadership, through which change and improvement is brought about at a systemic level.

¹ Informed by: 'Effective School Partnerships and Collaboration for School Improvement: a Review of the Evidence' (DfE), Oct. 15

2.3 The overall framework for the governance and strategic leadership model is shown in the diagram below. Just CTTC and one further school (School A) are shown, but further schools (B, C, etc.) can be added, with corresponding links to the Board and to the Executive Director.



2.4 The Board of Directors and Executive Director (who sits on the Board) are responsible (in short) for:

- developing (continuously) a compelling vision for the MAT
- ensuring regulatory compliance
- developing, reviewing and adjusting a set of ambitious but realistic key performance indicators (KPIs) against which progress can be tracked
- evaluating the extent to which the KPIs are being met and ensuring that effective action is taken to address any underperformance
- promoting the MAT's value and successes in the local community and beyond
- ensuring that capacity is always being built, through networks and through training and development

2.4 The KPIs are largely concerned with:

- safety, welfare and well-being
- standards of teaching and learning and educational outcomes
- financial health and the effective use of resources

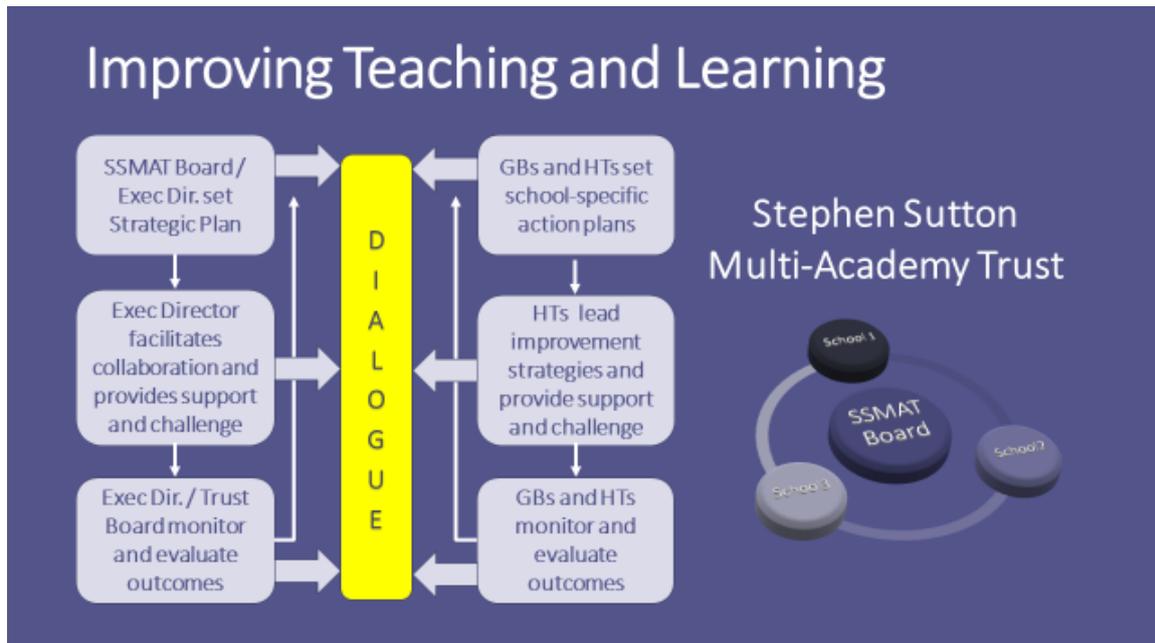
2.5 Supporting the Trust Executive Director, there are further central Trust leadership roles: Trust Business Manager and Trust Teaching and Learning Consultant. The three roles comprise (collectively) the extra centralised leadership capacity that, through effective collaboration, brokering of extra support and direct support and intervention, support the

improvement of outcomes throughout the Trust. As the Trust grows, further roles (full and part time) will be created to give extra consultant support (and/or business-related capacity).

- 2.6 Further leadership and school improvement capacity is provided, as appropriate, by staff in the partner schools. Furthermore, schools joining the Trust will bring their own distinctive strengths and key staff who can contribute to school improvement capacity across the Trust.
- 2.7 Additional school improvement is commissioned from other agencies, including 'Challenging Education', a local educational consultancy firm with strong credentials in supporting school leaders and evaluating the effectiveness of provision in both the primary and secondary sectors.
- 2.8 At Board level, the Trust has involvement from the University of Derby, which has very strong credentials in Initial Teacher Training. This partnership is viewed as an important aspect of the Trust's capacity for developing a highly effective, ambitious staff training programme and a programme of inspiring, curricular opportunities for students of all ages.
- 2.9 Evaluation, by the Trust Board, of the effectiveness of the Trust itself (including, specifically, the performance of the Executive Director) is informed by the involvement of an external Trust Improvement Partner (TIP), recruited by the Board.

3. Improving teaching and learning – the SSMAT approach

- 3.1 The diagram below illustrates the way that the Trust Board creates the broad strategic context in which the individual schools operate. However, the **MAT vision is also informed by the aspirations and successes of the individual schools, creating the conditions for authentic, sustainable, emergent strategy.**



- 3.2 As outlined in the previous section, the Executive Director is supported in facilitating the development of strong learning outcomes across the MAT, by the Trust Teaching and Learning Consultant, by other consultants/leaders appointed/commissioned to work across the Trust and by suitable staff from the schools in the Trust.
- 3.3 The Executive Director meets individually on a regular basis with the Headteachers of the individual schools, with a regularity that depends on the circumstances of the schools concerned. As appropriate, these meetings may involve the Trust Teaching and Learning Consultant, the Trust Business Manager and/or other leaders/consultants.
- 3.1 Each half-term, there is a **Trust Executive Panel Meeting**, chaired by the Executive Director and attended by the Headteachers of the individual schools, the Trust Teaching and Learning Consultant, the Trust Business Manager and, by invitation, other senior colleagues (as appropriate). Reports from the Panel are received and considered by the Trust Board.
- 3.2 The Trust Teaching and Learning Consultant and Trust Business Manager operate 'from the centre' and are directly accountable to the Executive Head.
- 3.3 Further specialist support is commissioned, as required, for the purposes of review / evaluation and developing strong and sustainable strategies for improvement, in the context of national changes.
- 3.4 **Trust Focus Groups** are set up to ensure that there is a proper degree of involvement in evaluation and planning for improvement in relation to the key performance indicators. These include:

- **English / literacy**
- **Mathematics**
- **Vulnerable students**

The groups meet on a termly basis and are attended by the Executive Director, Teaching and Learning Trust Consultant, Headteachers of the schools (or their delegates) and the Subject / Key Issue Leaders from each school. Reports from these groups are received and considered by the Trust Executive Panel.

4. Scheme of Delegation

- 4.1 Headteachers and Local Governing Bodies are formally responsible for the standards and outcomes in their individual schools. The Executive Director and the Trust Board are responsible for standards and outcomes across the MAT.
- 4.2 On an operational level, more detailed roles and responsibilities are outlined in each school's Scheme of Delegation. The strength of each school's performance profile, its Ofsted categorisation and its financial health influence the degree of autonomy that an individual school (i.e. the Local Governing Body and Headteacher) is able to exercise within the MAT structure.
- 4.3 In relation to the development of teaching and learning, the design principles and arrangements outlined in the previous sections apply for all partner schools. However, the KPIs and associated action plans will necessitate differing degrees of involvement from the Core Team, depending on the performance profile of the individual school in question.

Stuart Jones; Feb. '17