




**Lancashire Association of
Governing Bodies**

Academisation




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Context and experience




- Deputy Headteacher in converter academy in 2011, then took over as headteacher in 2012.
- Established a multi-academy trust in 2016 – joint CEO
- Engaged in school support work with LCC 2018-2020
- CEO of the Pennine Trust since April 2021




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‘Strong Multi-Academy Trusts’



The School White Paper sets out, for the first time, the principles of strong trusts:

- high quality and inclusive education;
- transformative school improvement to quickly improve standards;
- effective and robust strategic governance;
- strong financial management; and
- trains, recruits, develops and deploys their workforce effectively.




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DfE Area-based approach 

Focus on strategic, not incremental, growth of strong trusts – well planned;


- Identify trusts which can grow and support them to grow at scale;
- Be clear where new trusts are needed and where there are sufficient strong trusts locally;
- Be clear where trusts do not have the capacity or space for further growth;
- Recognise there are challenges in many areas - especially with small, rural schools;
- Build vibrant communities of trusts serving local communities and avoid local monopolies.

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Will schools *really* have to join trust by 2030? 

- Currently 80% of secondary schools and 40% of primaries are academies.
- Lancashire picture is lower for both phases.
- Is the current patchwork landscape sustainable?
- Would a Labour government unpick things?
- There is a lot of activity at present.... be proactive
- Capacity of the DfE to achieve this rate of change? (In Lancashire alone this would involve 6/7 conversions per month)

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Are academies more effective than maintained schools? 


- Face-value data suggests not:
92% of council-maintained schools were ranked outstanding or good by Ofsted in January 2022, compared with 85% of academies that have been graded since they converted. (Local Government Association)
- Effective Leadership turns schools around – more chance of this in a strong trust with a clear vision, plan and track record?
- Is it right for small village primaries which have a consistent track record of being good or outstanding?

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The Case for joining a trust.... 


- Direction of travel and where resources are being directed:
 - Capital projects
 - School-led system – e.g. NLEs
 - Training and development, Golden thread CPD, etc.
- Vision, support, collaboration – only as strong as the weakest school
- Leaders can focus more on curriculum and teaching
- Some trusts are genuinely transformational

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The arguments against.... 

- Autonomy
- Top slice
- It is a distraction – we don't have capacity for this


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Questions for Trust Leaders from Regional Directors 


- How could you scale your model of school improvement consistently and at a high quality to welcome another group of schools?
- How can you continue to develop leadership capacity across the trust necessary to support well planned growth and, if so, over what period of time and at what scale?
- Can you support a group of schools beyond the area which you currently serve?
- Can your existing schools support, as well as benefit from, other local schools joining the trust in the same phase or another phase?
- Can you articulate why schools in the area should join your trust?
- Can you articulate how you plan to respond to parents' expectations that their child's school should 'feel local'?

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Questions to ask



- Do our vision and values align?
- How could our pupils and staff gain from this? Will it improve provision?
- What could we bring to a trust and are they receptive?
- Do we have capacity and a clear vision with like-minded partners to form a trust?



- Will we be left alone to....?
- Will our reserves be protected?
- Will our governors get representation on the Board and/or be retained?

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What should we be doing now?



- Attend events like this
- Discuss as a governing body and in meetings with headteachers
- Investigate trusts – Head and Chair contact trusts and ask to visit for discussion and tour of a school
- Don't put your own political views above the interest of the school/community
- **Be PROACTIVE – you set the strategic direction of the school. Decisions now will have lasting impact.**



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