

Joining a School Trust: Getting started

School Trusts are groups of schools that come together to form a single organisation. They are sometimes called Multi-Academy Trusts or MATs, but we prefer School Trusts because the word 'school' is universally understood and best describes what academies are.

When joining a School Trust, knowing where to begin can seem daunting. This short read suggests some of the practical steps you might want to take to get started.

Strategic options

Think strategically about the medium- and long-term plan for your context, and draw up some options to take to your governing body. Do some research and find out if there are strong Trusts in your local area that might be looking to grow. If not, find out where the strong Trusts are that you think could be a good fit for your school. You may have a clear preference if, for example, you are already collaborating with a Trust, but do keep an open mind and consider alternatives.

Reach out

Speak to your Regional Director (formerly Regional Schools Commissioner) and the Local Authority. They will be able to provide additional context about existing Trusts and should know if they have capacity for growth.

Think about speaking to the Trust to get a sense of how they operate and their own growth plans. Any conversation at this stage would be informal and free of commitment, but may provide clarity and an opportunity to learn more. You might also benefit from speaking to the leaders of a school within the Trust, who can share their experiences of joining.

Due diligence

Later in the process, you will undertake due diligence (as will the Trust you are joining) and carry out a consultation. At this stage, look at publicly available documents such as audited accounts, performance tables and Ofsted reports to get a sense of the Trust, and explore culture by looking online by looking at, for example, values and mission statements.

Present your options

Take your research and a shortlist to your governing board for a decision which will allow you to begin the process. If you are a faith school, make sure you are aware of which body needs to make the decision and their policy on joining a Trust.

CST is the national organisation and sector body for School Trusts - advocating for, connecting and supporting Trusts.

Find out how CST can support you by visiting our website cstuk.org.uk