

Myth busting

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.

Trusts are not businesses - nor are they run by 'private' people

Trusts are education charities that are set up purely for the purpose of running and improving schools. Trustees have strict duties under charity law and company law. Trustees hold public office - they do not run the trust for 'private' interest but are required to advance education for public benefit. They are required to uphold the Principles of Public Life.

Sponsors, Trustees and/or Members cannot make profits

As education charities, trusts are not allowed to make profits or distribute profits to trustees or members. All surpluses are invested into the front-line to improve the quality of education.

Trusts are highly accountable

Trusts are held to account to a higher standard than maintained schools. The obligation of transparency and accountability is much greater than maintained schools. They are held to account by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Ofsted and Regional Schools Commissioners.

They are required to have an independent audit annually and to publish their accounts. They are also required to disclose pay in thresholds. If the ESFA investigates a trust, the investigation report is published on the government's website. There is no similar requirement on local authorities to publish investigation reports or disclose head teacher pay.

Trusts are part of state-funded education

Like any other state school, academies are free to attend, inspected in the same way, and children take the same tests and exam. Academy trusts are state-funded - parents do not pay fees. They operate in accordance with their funding agreement with the Secretary of State.

More than half of pupils in England - 3.8 million pupils - are educated in academy schools. This is seven in 10 secondary pupils and three in 10 primary pupils.

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

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Land is not passed into 'private' ownership and trusts need permission to sell land - just like maintained schools

Trusts can have various tenure types, but most hold their sites on long leases from the local authority, for a nominal charge. There are controls on the disposal of academy and maintained school publicly funded land. The Secretary of State's permission is required for the disposal of publicly funded school land or school land which has been enhanced at public expense.

Trusts have the same legal responsibilities as maintained schools towards children with special educational needs and disabilities

Trusts are subject to most of the same direct statutory duties as maintained mainstream schools in respect of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). As such, mainstream academies must:

- Have regard to the statutory SEND Code of Practice;
- Use their best endeavours to make sure a child with SEND gets the support they need;
- Designate a qualified teacher to be the SENCO;
- Co-operate with the local authority in respect of the child;
- Admit a child where the school is named on that child's Education, Health and Care plan;
- Ensure that children, young people and their families are involved in decision-making and planning.

Trusts must comply with the same law on admissions as maintained schools

The Department for Education's (DfE) model funding agreement for mainstream academies requires them to comply in full with the DfE School Admissions Code and the law relating to admissions.

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