

What is a Strong Trust?

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.

If we are going to build a school system in which schools are part of a group in a single governance accountability structure, we need to be explicit and eloquent about what constitutes a Strong Trust. CST has explored research and evidence to identify what the foundations of the most effective School Trusts might be. Our discussion paper 'What is a Strong Trust?' aims to generate engagement and we welcome views from across the sector. We suggest five domains constitute a Strong Trust:

Quality of Education

The best Trusts are focused on the quality of education - they have strongly theorised, coherent models of improvement and they can scale improvement by knowledge-building through evidence-informed professional development and creating communities of improvement.

Expert governance

Strong governance of the legal entity of the Trust hardwires collaboration and shared accountability in a way that no other school structure does. Trust boards carry both the accountability, along with the powers of intervention where necessary at a governance level of its schools.

Workforce resilience and wellbeing

The strongest Trusts are good employers. They recruit, develop, deploy and retain great teachers, support staff and leaders, supporting their development using evidence-informed professional development and ensuring a manageable work-life balance, paying close attention to wellbeing.

Efficiency and effectiveness

Schools Trusts are public organisations and it is essential that the efficient use of public money is part of Strong Trusts. Efficiency, while fundamentally important to deliver value for the public, is necessary but not sufficient. Effectiveness is made possible through efficiency.

Public benefit and civic duty

Trusts are a new form of civic structure. The strongest Trusts are explicit in their commitment to creating the conditions for human flourishing - social and cultural development, contribution to society, formation of character. They support the weakest schools, mentor and support other Trusts, and fulfil their civic duty.

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