

## **Requirements for Multi-Academy Trusts**

In addition to the statutory duties carried out by individual school leaders within their respective schools, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) assume a broader role on behalf of The Crown in safeguarding the integrity of the public estate, ensuring sound financial management, and upholding educational standards. As outlined in the *Academy Trust Handbook (2024)* and *Charities Act*, MATs must adhere to stringent oversight requirements beyond individual school-level responsibilities. The MAT central team and Executive Officer, upon the acquisition of the 125-year lease, assumes duties traditionally held by Local Authorities under the *Education Act*, adding a layer of governance to support compliance, transparency, and efficiency on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) and Parliament. Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) are not required to have a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) but must appoint a Senior Executive Leader to oversee Trust operations and drive educational standards. This requirement, introduced in September 2020 under the *Academy Trust Handbook*, specifies that the role of the Senior Executive Leader is not to act as a headteacher but to hold schools accountable on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) in the absence of Local Authority oversight, ensuring compliance, consistency, and alignment with Trust and national educational priorities. In the list below, the term "CEO" is used as a shorthand reference for the role of Senior Executive Leader.

### 1. Financial Oversight and Compliance

- MATs must establish robust financial governance frameworks, including accurate financial records, internal audits, and annual financial reporting to the ESFA as mandated by the *Academy Trust Handbook* and *Companies Act 2006*. The CEO and Accounting Officer are legally required to ensure that financial decisions are regular (in accordance with relevant laws and funding agreements) and proper (aligned with the intended purpose of funds). Failure to comply may lead to ESFA sanctions, disqualification, or Section 128 Prohibition List placement.

### 2. Risk Management and Accountability

- Under the *Academy Trust Handbook* and *Charities Act 2011*, MATs must maintain an updated risk register to manage risks, including safeguarding, financial, and operational risks, protect the public purse from liabilities, and ensure organisational stability.

### 3. Capacity to Intervene in Schools and Drive Up Standards

- The DfE's *School Improvement Support* framework requires MATs to independently maintain sufficient capacity to monitor and intervene in schools to uphold and improve educational standards. The *Education and Skills Act 2008* and *Education Act 2011* require MATs to provide intervention when schools fail to meet expected standards.

### 4. Estate Management and Health and Safety Compliance

- MATs are responsible for safe school estate management, as mandated by the *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974* and *Public Property Regulations 2012*. The DfE's *Good Estate Management for Schools* framework requires MATs to perform site assessments, manage risks, provide land returns to the DfE and uphold statutory safety standards.

### 5. Resolving Audit Actions and Avoiding Repeated Issues

- The *Academy Trust Handbook* requires MATs to address audit findings promptly. Unresolved issues can lead to ESFA intervention. Centralised audit tracking is essential to maintain transparency and accountability.

### 6. Ensuring Fair and Transparent Admissions

- MATs must ensure individual schools adhere to the *School Admissions Code*, which mandates fair, consistent, and transparent admissions processes and promotes equitable access across all schools.

### 7. Safeguarding Compliance

- Under *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* and the *Children Act*, MATs must establish and enforce safeguarding policies, including regular monitoring, protocols, and staff training. The TDSL (usually the CEO) is personally responsible for ensuring all schools comply with KCSIE's standards, with non-compliance potentially leading to regulatory intervention and Section 128 disqualification.

### 8. Safe Recruitment Practices

- MATs must adhere to *Safer Recruitment* standards as specified in KCSIE, *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*, and *Protection of Freedoms Act 2012*, including thorough background checks on all staff.

### 9. Support for Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health

- The DfE's *Education Staff Wellbeing Charter* encourages MATs to support staff mental and emotional health, enhancing retention and morale.

## 10. Accurate and Compliant Payroll Processing

- Payroll accuracy is legally required under HMRC and DfE guidelines. MATs must ensure timely and accurate payroll processing, meet obligations under the *Employment Rights Act 1996*, and ensure tax is not avoided.

## 11. Curriculum Oversight and Compliance with Statutory Minimums

- MATs must ensure schools deliver a broad and balanced curriculum, meeting the statutory minimums outlined in the *Education Act 2002*, the *National Curriculum*, and the *School Inspection Handbook*.

## 12. Ensuring Inclusivity and Compliance with Equality Duties

- The *Equality Act 2010* mandates that MATs provide inclusive environments free from discrimination. Central oversight is essential to ensure objective compliance.

## 13. Public Benefit Duty

- As charitable entities, MATs must comply with the *Charities Act 2011* to operate for public benefit. The CEO must ensure resources are managed ethically and effectively.

## 14. Compliance with GDPR and Data Protection Laws

- Under *GDPR* and the *Data Protection Act 2018*, MATs must safeguard data, ensuring lawful processing and secure storage. Centralised data management upholds compliance.

## 15. Governance and Financial Oversight

- The *Academy Trust Handbook* requires MATs to implement a governance structure with clear roles. As Accounting Officer, the CEO must ensure financial sustainability and regular reporting to trustees and the ESFA. The AO must report directly to Parliament for all spending across the MAT.

## 16. Preparation of Annual Report and Accounts

- MATs are required by the *Companies Act 2006*, *Academy Trust Handbook* and charity law to prepare and publish an annual report and financial statements, ensuring accountability and transparency.

## 17. Internal Scrutiny and Accountability

- The *Academy Trust Handbook* mandates independent internal audits and an audit committee to review and strengthen financial controls regularly, safeguarding public funds.

## 18. Compliance with Contracting and Procurement Standards

- Under the *Public Contracts Regulations 2015* and DfE's *Procurement Policy Notes*, MATs must ensure competitive procurement practices to secure value for money.

## 19. Environmental and Sustainability Obligations

- Following the DfE's *Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy*, MATs are encouraged to adopt sustainable practices that align with public sector goals.

## 20. Promoting a Culture of Accountability and Ethical Standards

- The DfE's *Governance Handbook* requires MATs to uphold accountability and transparency, guided by the *Nolan Principles* (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership).

## 21. Governance Training and Development

- The DfE's *Governance Handbook* recommends MATs provide ongoing training for trustees and governance leads, ensuring they remain informed about governance practices and obligations.

## 22. Clarity of Vision, Culture, and Ethos

- MATs must establish a clear vision of educational excellence, supported by a consistent culture and ethos that permeates all schools within the Trust. This responsibility includes clearly communicating the vision and ensuring it guides

decision-making at every level. MATs are required to define and align their improvement strategy with the Trust's educational goals, ensuring that all schools operate under unified objectives. This alignment serves as a critical check and balance, supporting headteachers by providing consistency in expectations and reinforcing the Trust's collective commitment to excellence, as monitored by the DfE.

### 23. Comprehensive Understanding of Pupil and School Needs

- MATs must develop a deep understanding of the diverse needs of pupils across all academies within the Trust, including those with SEND, pupil premium, EAL, and varying levels of prior attainment. This understanding is essential for driving the MAT's improvement priorities and implementing evidence-based strategies tailored to each school's unique context. This central oversight role supports headteachers in delivering targeted interventions, monitored by the MAT on behalf of the DfE to ensure consistency, inclusivity, and adherence to statutory obligations across the Trust.

### 24. Leadership in Cultivating a Culture of Improvement

- MATs are required to foster high aspirations for all pupils and set clear, non-negotiable standards for school improvement. This includes creating a leadership structure with specific responsibilities for driving educational progress and holding leaders accountable for measurable impacts. Regular reviews and adjustments ensure that the Trust maintains a balance between Trust-wide standards and individual school autonomy, providing an additional layer of oversight beyond headteacher duties to assure continuous improvement and alignment with DfE priorities.

### 25. Building and Managing Improvement Capacity

- MATs must strategically build and allocate capacity for school improvement, leveraging the expertise of their best leaders and teachers across the Trust. This responsibility includes identifying weaknesses and deploying resources to address these areas effectively. MATs must also engage with external networks, such as Teaching School Hubs, to enhance school improvement. This centralised capacity ensures support beyond the school level, acting as a check on behalf of the DfE to ensure high-quality educational provision across all Trust schools.

### 26. Staff Recruitment, Development, and Retention

- MATs are required to implement comprehensive strategies for recruiting, developing, and retaining staff at all levels, from teaching assistants to senior leaders. This includes creating career pathways, standardised appraisal models, and structured progression opportunities across the Trust. The MAT must also promote staff wellbeing and manage workload, aligning with DfE's sustainable staffing standards. This centralised function provides additional support to headteachers, offering consistent HR practices and acting as a regulatory check to ensure compliance and sustainable workforce management.

### 27. Ensuring High Standards in Teaching and Learning

- MATs are responsible for defining core pedagogical principles and embedding them across all schools within the Trust. This includes providing opportunities for staff development, standardised systems for behaviour management, and support for addressing behavioural challenges. Regular evaluation of teaching practices is essential to ensure continuous improvement. This oversight provides an additional layer of quality control, ensuring that high standards in teaching and learning are maintained across all schools on behalf of the DfE.

### 28. Evidence-Based Professional Learning

- MATs must promote a culture of continuous professional learning, with a structured approach to development that includes peer coaching, research engagement, and classroom-based practice. MATs are expected to implement evidence-based models that can be scaled across the Trust to enhance teaching and learning quality. This function provides an additional support layer for headteachers, ensuring all staff access high-quality professional development that is systematically monitored by the MAT.

### 29. Curriculum and Assessment Alignment

- MATs must establish clear curriculum principles and align curriculum content with the Trust's educational vision. This responsibility includes setting age-related expectations and supporting teachers with shared resources. Additionally, the MAT must implement a consistent assessment framework with shared moderation practices, standardising curriculum delivery across all schools. This alignment supports headteachers by providing consistent curriculum standards and serves as a monitoring mechanism on behalf of the DfE to ensure all students have access to a high-quality education.

### 30. Data-Driven Quality Assurance

- MATs are required to use both quantitative and qualitative data to inform performance assessments and decision-making. This data system must enable performance tracking across all schools and student groups. Regular benchmarking and

transparent performance discussions are essential to maintain accountability. This centralised quality assurance function supports headteachers in maintaining high standards and acts as a check on behalf of the DfE to ensure Trust-wide performance transparency.

### 31. Incorporating Stakeholder Feedback

- MATs must systematically gather and incorporate feedback from parents, pupils, and staff to assess school performance. This includes regular surveys and feedback mechanisms, with a structured process for reporting to the Trust board. The MAT's role in gathering stakeholder feedback supports headteachers by providing additional insights and acts as a quality assurance measure for the DfE to ensure responsiveness and inclusivity across all schools.

### 32. Governance Capability and Succession Planning

- MATs are required to establish governance structures focused on school improvement, including regular reviews and board-level succession planning to ensure continuity and capability. Regular governance training is required to maintain skills aligned with educational standards. This governance structure supports headteachers by providing consistent leadership expectations and serves as an additional layer of accountability on behalf of the DfE.

### 33. Strategic Growth and Sustainability

- MATs must have a clearly defined growth strategy that aligns with their capacity for school improvement, including plans for building leadership capacity as the Trust expands. This requirement ensures that growth is sustainable and does not compromise the quality of education in existing schools. This strategic oversight supports headteachers by ensuring all Trust schools have access to sufficient resources and is monitored on behalf of the DfE to maintain high standards during periods of expansion.

### 34. Alignment with National Expectations

To meet the Department for Education (DfE) standards and ensure accountability for academic outcomes, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) must establish robust, evidence-based frameworks for monitoring and improving educational performance across all schools. This requires aligning Trust-wide improvement strategies with national benchmarks, including Key Stage performance data, EBacc (English Baccalaureate) uptake, Progress 8 measures, and overall attainment standards.

The *Academies Financial Handbook* (now known as the *Academy Trust Handbook*) explicitly requires Trusts to monitor performance against national expectations and demonstrate improvement in pupil outcomes. The DfE's *Governance Handbook* (2023) underscores that MATs must ensure educational standards are consistently reviewed and improved, with measurable impacts across all pupil groups. This includes using performance data to track attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils and ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 by promoting equity in educational provision. Furthermore, the *Schools Causing Concern Guidance* (2022) highlights that MATs must intervene swiftly in underperforming schools to secure compliance with national expectations.