

Maximising the MAT factor

Harnessing the power of MAT-to-MAT collaboration and challenge for mutual improvement

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Challenge Partners MAT Peer Review: Aims

1. Enable development and improvement in host MATs through challenge and collaboration
2. Provide reviewers with CPD and unique insights that benefit their own MATs
3. Capture and share knowledge about what works so all can benefit



One simple question (no checklist)

What is the MAT doing to ensure the children it serves achieve better than they might otherwise, and is it working?

(Because if it isn't, what's the point?)



MAT peer review participation

- Benefits of mutual learning and challenge
- MAT has participated in two of the CP pilot reviews- one smaller MAT and one of significant size
- Understanding very different contexts and challenging preconceived ideas
- Specific focus on school improvement strategies and outcomes- both considering sponsored academies and challenge to established, successful academies
- Creating new links between similar roles with subsequent visits e.g. MFL planned visit, Inclusion shared expertise



MAT to MAT networks- formal and informal

- Challenge Partners MAT network
- RSC sub regional networks, round tables and focus meetings
- Regionally set up governance and Data Protection networks– DPOs and Head of Governance
- Leicestershire MAT CEO network
- Operations networks for CFOs and COOs
- Local support in MAT set up, accepting and offering help, such as policy development
- Mutual MAT visits e.g. SAF in Bedfordshire, Pioneer in Kent, Inspiration Trust in Norfolk



Future Challenges and Developments

- Reporting to the Board
- Business Planning and KPIs that are most effective
- Sustainable growth
- Marketing and PR
- Partnership with other trusts
- Politics and Brexit



Bringing things back to actual children

- Keeping things real in the complex MAT world
- Kevin and the football boots- a humbling moment
- Celebrating and acknowledging variety



What have we learned from reviews so far?

1. There is no one “right” answer

- Saw elements of all three points of the standardisation to autonomy spectrum:
 - **Standardisation** – defined and mandated practices
 - **Alignment** – agreed approaches that are widely adopted, but voluntary
 - **Autonomy** – each school decides preferred approach
- And also all three approaches to developing shared practice:
 - **Roll-out**: Develop an approach in (lead) school. Codify and package into defined model. Implement through handbooks, resources and training.
 - **Co-design**: Facilitate development of an agreed approach via subject networks and collaborative development projects. Formalise into agreed policies, resources and training.
 - **Organic**: Encourage common approaches to emerge via subject networks, joint projects etc. Agree shared principles or values, but allow flexibility over how they are applied. Ongoing sharing of different approaches.

Source: Greany, T. (2018), *Sustainable improvement in multi-school groups*



What have we learned from reviews so far?

2. But there are some common challenges

- At MAT level:
 - Articulating and aligning around the approach to school improvement – does everyone know what it is and understand it? Does practice match the intent?
 - Systems and succession planning – to underpin the school improvement approach and avoid the CEO becoming the single point of failure
- At system level:
 - Ensuring expertise and good practice isn't locked in individual trusts
 - Reinventing the wheel



What have we learned from reviews so far?

3. Effective collaboration and challenge requires...

- Distance and independence
- Doing with, not doing to
- Sensitivity to context (including evolutionary stage)
- Openness to challenge
- Humility – no one has all the answers
- Generosity





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