

Release date: 6 February 2023

New MAT leader insight report, *The 2030 MAT Growth Challenge: Effective Strategies and Systems*, published

A new report commissioned by IMP Software has highlighted “very opposing views” among MAT leaders around centralising functions, GAG pooling and top slice mechanisms as Trusts are directed to step up their efforts to expand.

The 2030 MAT Growth Challenge: Effective Strategies and Systems offers expert insight on how Trusts can grow effectively to at least 10 schools or 7,500 pupils. It includes the perspectives of those who have already hit that target set out in the Schools White Paper and smaller MATs who are starting their growth journey. It demonstrates practical strategies for growth, lessons learned on the way, and key advice to schools on assessing their options on which MAT they should join in the coming years.

As well as reflecting on the findings of the MAT Growth Survey 2022, through in-depth interviews Trust leaders were asked about the impact of the White Paper on their Trust’s vision/strategy for growth, the key success factors around organisational strategy which lead to a “strong Trust” as defined by the government, and their views and personal experiences around centralising functions, pooling and top slice mechanisms to ensure effective and efficient operations across their group of schools.

The report itself comprises five compelling chapters: Schools White Paper: A ‘New’ Trajectory; A “Strong Trust”: Centralising Functions; Operating Models: GAG Pooling and Top Slice; Future Growth: Attracting More Schools; and Which MAT to Join? Advice from Trust leaders. It features the latest thinking from Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, Consilium Academies, Dartmoor MAT, Meridian Trust, Prince Regent Street Trust, The Constellation Trust, The Diocese of Coventry MAT, and The Skylark Partnership.

IMP Software Co-Founder Will Jordan said: “There is a real challenge facing Trusts, big and small, in developing a smarter approach to MAT finance. Whilst the desired outcome of the White Paper is shrouded in uncertainty in terms of the sector’s ability to meet the 2030 timeframe, this is still the political direction of travel despite a difficult operating environment. Both in the short, medium and long-term, Trusts are under more pressure than ever before to adopt smarter MAT finance, and consider the impact of their chosen operating model on their attractiveness to other schools as they seek to grow.

“IMP Software’s position is not to argue for or against centralising functions or GAG pooling in terms of ‘this is the thing everybody should do’. We are not here to point out the right way of doing things. In fact, there is no right answer, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Our objective with this report is to convene a range of perspectives from MAT leaders on the challenges facing Trusts, and document how their approaches are working in practice. What we present is a combination of insight and experiences.

“What is not in doubt is that centralising and GAG pooling is a trend. Our MAT Growth Survey found that 94% of MATs feel that centralising more of their operations and/or funding could make them more effective. And among those Trusts that already GAG pool, 71% say their approach to pooling or centralisation has been either a positive or neutral factor for schools looking to join them. However, as highlighted by the follow-on interviews, there are some very opposing views on these and other issues. The common factor is degrees of ambition to centralise always lie with a Trust’s organisational strategy.”

Pam Tuckett, Audit Partner and Head of Education at Bishop Fleming, added: “All our MAT clients are talking about the future following publication of the Schools White Paper. Before there was a sense of contentment, now most are seriously considering the way forward, whether that is smaller MATs becoming larger or alternatively joining other MATs as they are unable to grow themselves. However, there are still some who do not see the benefits of academisation, and the sector needs to put some energy into changing hearts and minds on this issue. Political turbulence often drains resources away from day-to-day transactions which may ultimately slow the growth anticipated when the Schools White Paper was published.”

“The White Paper is a menu, and it is down to us how we serve it up,” concluded Dartmoor MAT CEO Dan Morrow. “It is an invitation for us as educators to step into the space and stage it in how we believe it should be. It is an opportunity for us to bring about change. We can shape lived experience in the communities we serve.”

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS:

The following MAT leaders contributed to this report:

Arthur Terry Learning Partnership

Simon Smith, Chief Finance and Operations Officer

Consilium Academies

David Clayton, Chief Executive Officer

Dartmoor MAT

Dan Morrow, Chief Executive Officer

Meridian Trust

Lesley Birch, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Prince Regent Street Trust

Julia Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer

The Constellation Trust

Robert Kennington, Director of Finance and Business

The Diocese of Coventry MAT

Michael Cowland, Chief Executive Officer

The Skylark Partnership

Jim Bowyer, Chief Executive Officer

MEDIA CONTACT:

Phil Smith

IMP Software PR consultant

Office: 01778 218180

Mobile: 07866 436159

Email: phil@philsmithcommunications.co.uk