

# Church of England MAT Peer Review

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Overview for Cohorts 1 and 2 - 2023



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
EDUCATION OFFICE

FOUNDATION FOR  
EDUCATIONAL  
LEADERSHIP



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## Rationale and Overview

Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership (CEFEL) successfully piloted an approach to Multi Academy Trust (MAT) Peer Review with a small group of MATs in 2021-22. This was driven by the need expressed by its member MATs. Those involved in the pilot varied in size, context and make up, and were spread across the country.

Having evaluated and learned from the pilot stage, The Foundation is now in the position to offer this peer review opportunity to its first two cohorts of MATs:

- **Cohort 1 (spaces for 10 MATs in 5 pairs)**  
Training commences Summer Term 2023, Review Process begins Autumn Term 2023
- **Cohort 2 (spaces for 20 MATs in 10 pairs)**  
Training commences Autumn Term 2023, Review Process begins Spring Term 2023

The process which has been developed is distinct to Church of England MATs and is delivered through a bespoke framework based on work of Robert Hill, together with input from a wide variety of senior stakeholders in MATs and the DfE. The framework has been aligned to the Church of England Vision for Education, and seeks to provide opportunities for MAT leaders to evaluate the extent to which that vision is being lived out in core leadership decisions and outcomes.

At the heart of the process two MATs are brought together, with reciprocal reviews being carried out by a team of credible reviewers from of the each of the MATs. Reviewers are individuals with experience of establishing and developing thriving Trusts in their own right. Lead reviewers will always have CEO level experience

Those participating gain an invaluable external perspective on a chosen focused area of their MAT Improvement Plan. Those MATs involved are carefully paired following discussions around their context and current priorities. Lead reviewers are selected for their personal experience of MAT leadership, current political and best practice knowledge and ability to skilfully offer both insight and challenge. Many reviewers may be selected for their specific expertise within a certain size or type of Trust from outside our network. Additional reviewers will support the lead reviewer. These individuals may also be CEOs or may be chosen for their relevant deep expertise within selected areas of focus.

The relationships and commitments already felt by members of the MAT Leaders network within the Foundation makes it both possible and attractive for the Church of England Foundation to offer its own tailored approach. In doing so, the Foundation has built a process which is centred on 'walking together' and enabling long term support at an affordable cost.

In short, the process has proved **distinct** for Church of England Trusts (including those with both Church and community schools), **developmental** by making a difference to a Trust's effectiveness and **doable** in terms of cost effectiveness.

## Pilot Impact

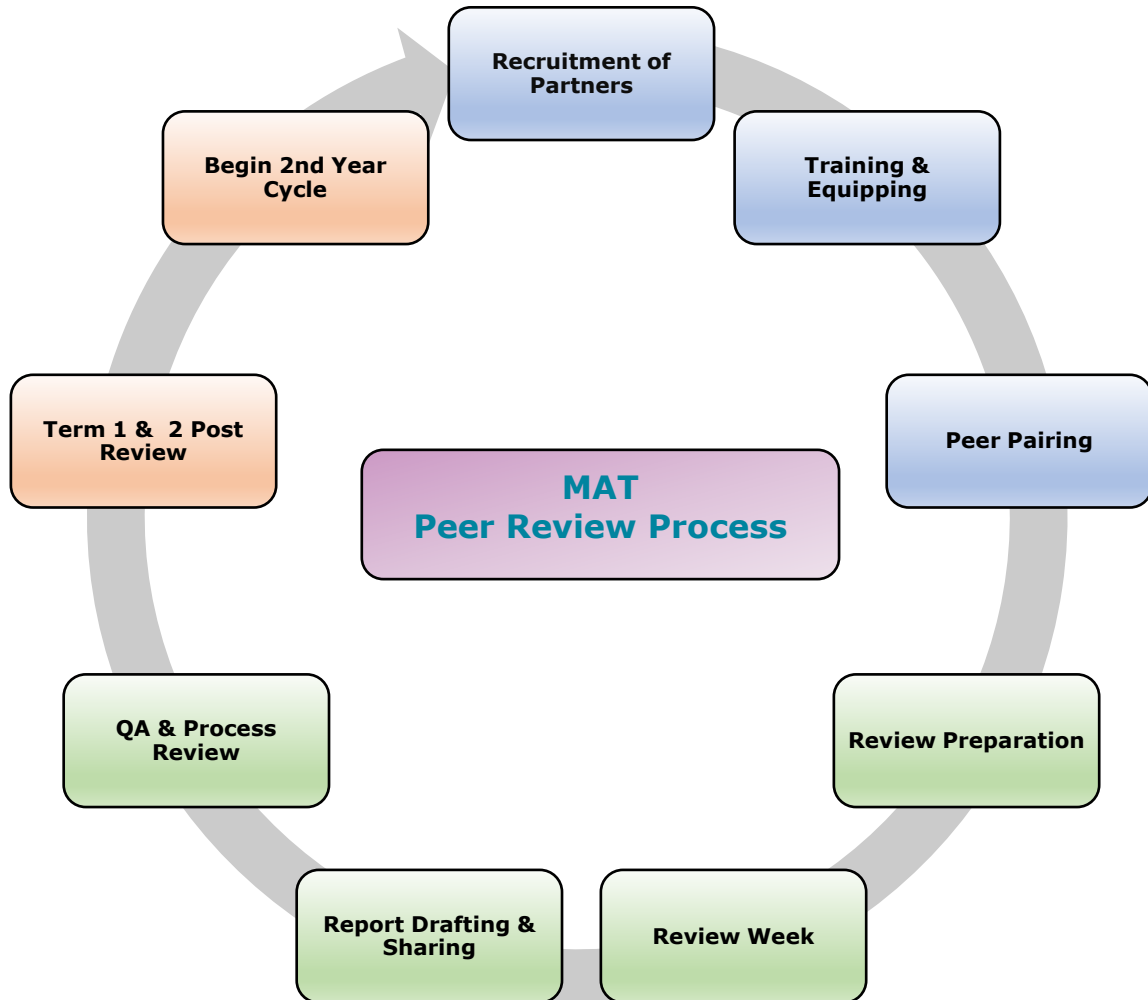
As part of the pilot the impact was carefully monitored and feedback from the MATs and CEOs involved has been positive with reporting indicating that the process was beneficial to both the host and the reviewing parties. Remarks made included:

- 'Insightful manner and respectful yet probing analysis'
- 'A truly beneficial review'
- 'The report will give us the external quality assurance to build on our successes as we evolve'
- 'The links made with the other Trust will enable meaningful, ongoing, work on areas that each team wish to develop further'
- 'This has been an amazing opportunity for both Trusts'
- 'Our Trust has already benefited from the things we have learnt, all of which bodes very well for the intended outcome of the pilot as being more than a few days of review!'
- 'The links made with the other Trust will enable meaningful, ongoing, work on areas that each team wish to develop further.'

An evaluation of the pilot phase has led to the adaptation to some of the chosen approaches and also to a strengthened Memorandum of Understanding for Trust Boards to consider.



## Review Process





| <b>TIMETABLE</b>                       | <b>Cohort 1</b>                | <b>Cohort 2</b>                |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Recruitment</b>                     | Spring (1) 2023                | Summer (1) 2023                |
| <b>Training &amp; Equipping</b>        | Summer (1) 2023                | Autumn (1) 2023                |
| <b>Peer Pairing</b>                    | Summer (1) 2023                | Autumn (1) 2023                |
| <b>Review Preparation</b>              | Autumn (1) 2023<br>Week 1 & 2  | Spring (1) 2024<br>Week 1 & 2  |
| <b>Review week</b>                     | Autumn (1) 2023<br>Week 3      | Spring (1) 2024<br>Week 3      |
| <b>Report Drafting &amp; Sharing</b>   | Autumn (1) 2023<br>Week 4 to 6 | Spring (1) 2024<br>Week 4 to 6 |
| <b>QA &amp; Process Review</b>         | Autumn (2) 2023                | Spring (2) 2024                |
| <b>Term 1 Post Review</b>              | Spring (1) 2024                | Summer (1) 2024                |
| <b>Term 2 Post Review</b>              | Summer (1) 2024                | Autumn (1) 2024                |
| <b>Begin 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Cycle</b> | Autumn 2024                    | Spring 2025                    |



After committing to the Peer Review the Trust Boards to be reviewed will identify a focus area for the review. The review could cover all aspects of the MAT, i.e. business functions as well as educational.

An exploration of any of these areas will be founded upon the assumptions that there is not just one way to drive MAT improvement and that the Church of England Vision for Education offers a distinctive lens through which all of these areas can be explored.

The possible Focus Area(s) that could be considered include:

1. Vision, Ethos & Culture
2. People & Partners
3. Teaching & Learning
4. Curriculum & Assessment
5. Quality Assurance & Accountability
6. Governance Capability

with each having sub-sections, for example:

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>1. VISION, ETHOS AND CULTURE</b><br><b>Focus Area</b> | <b>1A Clarity of Purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision for the MAT</li> <li>• Link to strategy</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities</li> </ul> | <b>1B Understanding of Needs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil/School Needs</li> <li>• Link to MAT priorities</li> <li>• Approach to school improvement for different schools</li> </ul> | <b>1C. Leading a culture of improvement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspirations for pupils</li> <li>• Non-negotiables vs autonomy for schools</li> <li>• Staff engagement</li> <li>• Innovation</li> </ul> |
|--|---|---|---|

These themes, if selected would be probed though '*questions to consider*' drawn from

- MAT Competency Framework
- Vision into Practice (drawing on Ethos Enhancing Outcomes and Called, Connected, Committed documentation)
- National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership - knowledge, skills and behaviours.

One such example can be seen here:

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>1. VISION, ETHOS AND CULTURE</b><br><b>Focus Area</b>  | <b>1A Clarity of Purpose</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision for the MAT</li> <li>• Link to strategy</li> <li>• Roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>  |  |
| <b>MAT Competency Framework Questions to consider</b>   | <b>Vision into Practice - Questions to consider</b><br><b>EEO (17 and 18), CCC,</b>  | <b>National Professional Qualification for Executive Leaders (NPQEL) knowledge, skills and behaviours.</b>   |
| <i>j.</i> Does the MAT have a clear vision of what excellent education looks like in practice?                                  | To what extent does your vision and ethos actually 'foster confidence' in driving school improvement and results?' (EEO 18 1)<br>If you could accurately gauge these 4 concepts: 'vision, value, trust and joy' for your team – where would the gauges be reading at the moment? What could you do to 'refill' the team if it were near the red? (CCC4.2)            |  |
| <i>ii.</i> Does the MAT know how it will improve the schools in its trust to deliver its shared vision for excellent education? | As an 'horizon of hope and aspiration' how does the MAT know how it will improve the schools in its trust at different points in their individual improvement journeys? (EEO 18 15)<br>Where is there scope for 'generosity, truth-telling and forgiveness' in the drive for educational improvement, for the pupil, the teacher and the leadership team? (EEO 17 6) | Develop a clear, logical and well specified implementation plan, and using this plan, build collective understanding and ownership of the approach (NPQEL 8) |

The Trust Boards will then be matched with a review team including individuals with complementary background and perspectives.

In advance of the review, the lead reviewer and MAT Board Chair/ appropriate Trustee will meet for a preliminary meeting to discuss MAT context, key questions, and agree upon a timetable for the full review.

A MAT Peer Review is an opportunity for a Trust Board to gain an external perspective on a chosen focused area of their MAT improvement plan.

In the MAT Peer Review, a team of at least two external reviewers will spend a usually at least a full day or the equivalent in virtual meetings with the CEO, Chair, and others most relevant to the chosen review focus.

At the end of the face-to-face review, reviewers will prepare a detailed report describing strengths, areas for consideration and potential limiting beliefs which may be addressed in order to develop and grow the reviewed Trust.

Reports will be quality assured by our national team drawing on extensive knowledge of organisational development and the current political landscape.

A term later, the reviewers will meet again with the Trust Board to review the actions taken and further needs for coaching and signposting to other sources of support.



## Commitment

In order to obtain the most from this process the paired Trusts need to be prepared to :

**Be fully engaged** in the process as a whole, having a shared responsibility to establish improvement across both Trusts and not just one's own.

**Be committed to action** with the intention of acting as a result of the review, whether to get even better ,address a deficit or mature practice. Trusts need to recognise that the Peer Review is not a standalone activity but part of wider processes that provide sustained support for evidence-based improvement.

**Be rigorous and objective in approach**, the teams nominated should always consist of peer leaders with expertise and professional integrity to give a truly honest appraisal of where the Trust is in its development and the knowledge to perceptively present evidence informed opinions.

**Apply the agreed structure with honesty and humility**, in order for the intelligence gathered to be objective, justifiable and is action-focused, with all actions owned by the reviewed Trust.

**Provide the very best people resources** in order for the process to succeed. The reviewers should be released in order to receive the training and support to be(come) experts in peer review; anchoring their findings of Trust performance in evidence and not opinion.

**Ensure that the process is done with, not to, the reviewed Trust.** Inspiring transparent collaboration that brings about meaningful and lasting change.

**Be open and trusted**, with the reviewed Trust being confident and willing to share its vulnerabilities, in order to explore new assessments on the challenges faced.

**Build deeper relationships**, from the initial peer review creating lasting collaborative partnership, which can grow over time to facilitate stronger and closer working.

**Dedicated to continuous improvement**, regularly revisiting the findings of the report. Embedding the Peer Review process into the Trust's monitoring and moderation structures and processes to ongoing evaluate the effectiveness of the process and commit to continuous improvement.

### Committed to the Memorandum of Understanding

- Participation in the Peer Review Programme is discussed, agreed and minuted by the Board of Trustees
- The Chair of the Board and the CEO sign an agreement to be part of the Review and to subscribe to its Ways of Working
- Trusts agree lines of communication with the expectation that emails will be answered promptly (to a maximum of three days)
- Trusts agree to adhere to the agreed Timetable for the review.
- Trusts will pay for the costs of the Review at the beginning of the process.

## Reviewer Training and Quality Assurance

All reviewers will be fully trained in how to gather evidence against the review framework, ask insightful questions, and objectively offer feedback for consideration by the Trust Board. All reviewers will also be trained and fully aware of the latest Church of England resources for MATs and be aware that a MAT Peer Review is not akin to an Ofsted or SIAMS inspection.

The Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership employs a MAT Peer Review Lead, Mary-Jane Edwards, who is responsible for quality assuring every review process and feedback report written.

## Cost

The cost to take part in Cohorts 1 or 2 is **£3500 per MAT**, which includes:

- Individual support in on-boarding into the process
- Tailored allocation of partners
- On-going remote advice and administrative support throughout pre, review & post stages
- Bespoke training for those MATs taking part in the Review Process delivered by expert practitioners – 2 x 0.5 day remote sessions
- Face to Face specialist reviewer training delivered by expert practitioners – 1 day
- Access to the framework and other supporting materials
- External Quality Assurance of the process and the final written report

## Next Steps

For more details, and to commit your MAT to being part of these cohorts, please contact

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