

Review launches to future proof role of academy trusts

The Department for Education has today, Wednesday 29 June, launched a [review](#) of how it works with academy trusts, helping make sure the children in schools within trusts get the right support to fulfil their potential.

The review will look at the standards trusts are held to, and the thresholds at which the government uses its powers to intervene in rare cases of underperformance, helping minimise trust failure and retain parents' confidence.

It will also look at how the government supports the growth of existing strong trusts and the creation of new strong trusts, helping trusts improve schools. The government intends for all schools to be in or joining strong academy trusts by 2030.

The review will conclude by the end of 2022, and is intended to give clarity on how the powers in the Schools Bill, currently going through parliament, will be applied.

Schools Minister Baroness Barran said:

As we work towards all schools in strong academy trusts, we have a once in a generation opportunity to drive up standards for pupils that sadly remain too low in too many areas of the country.

The very many strong academy trusts across the country do a great job of improving their schools, working to the highest national and international educational standards while keeping their schools rooted in their local communities. Our proposals to allow local authorities to establish trusts will help draw the best of the maintained school sector into the new trust-led system.

But not every school is currently in a strong trust or has the option of joining one. Our three-pronged approach between the Schools White Paper, Schools Bill, and our new regulatory review, will change that. It will create a new, higher performing school system that parents love and gives every child every chance of success.

The review will:

- Look at how to retain and maximise academy trusts' innovation, and

reduce regulatory burdens, by producing clear standards that are transparently enforced

- Look at improving how intervention works against the new standards, by producing proportionate thresholds for the use of new powers in the Schools Bill for intervention in academy trusts themselves, and focusing government action on preventing failure before it occurs
- Consider how to commission new academy trusts and the expansion of existing trusts, helping make sure there are no 'cold spots' of the country where a school does not have an option to join a strong trust that is a good fit for its needs

The review will also build on the definition of a strong trust set out in the Schools White Paper – providing a high quality and inclusive education across their schools, improving their schools' standards, maintaining their schools' strong local identities, developing their workforce, and displaying strong financial management.

It will be chaired by the Schools Minister Baroness Barran, and be directly informed by an Expert Advisory Group including the Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman, Confederation of School Trusts Chief Executive Leora Cruddas and LSE Professor of Political Science and Public Policy Martin Lodge, alongside further representatives from the academy trust sector to be confirmed shortly.

Confederation of School Trusts Chief Executive Leora Cruddas said:

I look forward to working with Ministers and the Department for Education through the period of the Commissioning and Regulatory Review.

It is essential that the approach to strategic commissioning and risk-based regulation protects the independence of School Trusts and promotes high quality education as a public good, as we move forward to build a strong and sustainable education system in England.

LSE Professor of Political Science and Public Policy Martin Lodge said:

I am honoured to be joining the external advisory group. It is an exciting challenge to contribute to the critically important development of the regulatory framework for academy trusts.

The review will engage throughout with parliamentarians, representatives from unions including ASCL and NAHT, and other interested parties via working

groups, visits and workshops to test and iterate proposals.

It will consider what change might be needed immediately, in the medium-term and long-term, reflecting the Department's commitment that in the first instance, the Schools Bill will not seek to materially change existing academy trust standards, and future changes will be informed by the findings of the review or further engagement with the sector.