

# Teaching School Hubs - Test and learn phase

# Questions and Answers

**These questions and answers were discussed on 11 June at the clarification skype call. However, new questions and answers will be added to the list.**

**Question:**

Please can you clarify the application process and key dates?

**Answer:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Deadline/Date** |
| Application submitted with three-year commitment | 26 July 2019 |
| Outcome of sift and invitation to interview | WC 9 September 2019 |
| Interviews for applicants successful in sift | WC 23 September 2019 |
| Notification of outcome | WC 4 November 2019 |
| Start-up meeting and development of annual delivery agreement | WC 18 November 2019 |
| Annual Delivery Agreement sign off | By end of the autumn term 2019 |
| Teaching School Hubs operational | From January 2020 |

**Question:**

Where there is an eligible area covering many schools, would the pilot centre be expected to cover the entire geographical area?

How big an area do we need to cover? Is it based on school numbers or geographical size?  
How many schools in our hub would we need as part of our offer? Mix of primary and secondary

Our questions are surrounding legislation, numbers of schools supported and geographical remit - would it be confined to our LAD or do we have potential to work with other Hubs cross-boundaries?

**Answer:**

The areas for the test and learn phase were chosen to test a variety of areas – rural, coastal, urban, areas of high deprivation; areas where there are high numbers of system leaders to test how the Teaching School Hub model will work in each context.

We expect that in most cases, the area defined will cover whole Local Authority District (LAD), aggregating to cover 200 to 300 schools. If you want to apply to cover part of an LAD, we would want you to define specifically where you would cover and a strong rationale for separating an LAD. We would allow very slightly below 200 (i.e.197), but 300 is the maximum.

We want to understand whether DfE should define the areas of coverage or whether it works better to allow schools the flexibility to choose the area the new hub covers, for any national rollout. Where there are more LADs in the area which have over 300 schools, we expect that the applicant will define the area. This may potentially reflect existing relationships and networks..

Within each area, we would expect a Teaching School Hub to be able to support all phases, through a variety of delivery relationships, to allow a hub to support any school who needs help.

**Question:**

Does a lead school need to be located in a test and learn area? We are just outside of the area but already provide support in the area.

**Answer:**

Lead schools must be located within a test and learn area, otherwise the school is not eligible to apply. Schools can provide delivery support through a lead school that is located in a test and learn area. See the application pack for further details. You can also speak to your local TSC representative to discuss how to engage in the Teaching School Hubs test and learn phase.

**Question:**

Do legacy GCSEs count towards English Baccalaureate (EBacc) entry scores? Will you be reconsidering the eligibility criteria in light of 'early entry' policy for EBacc?

**Answer:**

Generally, once a GCSE qualification has been reformed, its legacy qualification does not count towards the English Baccalaureate measure. We are however, willing to consider accepting applications on a case by case basis, where a school has a trend of demonstrating a high level of EBacc entries over the previous years (2016, 2017) and projected for the future year (2019). Please contact [systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk](mailto:systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk) if you want to check eligibility.

**Question:**

My school’s progress score is above 0, does that mean it meets the eligibility criteria?

**Answer:**

No. The school’s progress has to show that it is ‘Above average’ or ‘Well above average’ as defined in the [DFE published data](https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/) (rather than above 0). This is because these ratings take account of the context and cohort of the school. These two categories in the DFE performance tables are highlighted in green (eligible), whereas ‘Average’ is highlighted yellow (not eligible).

**Question:**

How many schools are in my LAD?

**Answer:**

The number of schools is published in the application pack - Section 3, Area of coverage. Page 13.

**Question:**

My school is the joint lead school for a Teaching School Alliance, will my evidence be able to cite work we have done as a Teaching School (In partnership with other schools) as well as an individual school?

**Answer:**

Yes, the evidence can come from existing collaborations. However, 1 lead school must be eligible and accountable for the Teaching School Hub.

**Question:**

A partnership school currently manages all the finances for the Teaching School Alliance. Can this continue or must the Teaching School Hub take on this role?

Is there an expectation about the proportion of the total funds for the Teaching School Hub that should be maintained by the Hub school itself and the proportion that should be used to broker support from other organisations?

**Answer:**

Yes to the managing finances but the lead school is accountable.

The lead school can choose to give the funding to another school in the partnership to manage if it wishes to and this would be managed within their own local governance arrangements. However, accountability for the funding remains with the lead school as this is who we are contracting with so they would need to be responsible for all financial returns and assurance to the DfE

On distribution of funding, it must be equitable and the budget by agreement, shared with others who are delivering activity.

**Question:**

Is it possible to find out the names/numbers of NLEs in the selected area to get a sense of the scale of local NLE capacity?

**Answer:**

NLE contact details can be found on Gov.uk, in the school to school support directory: <https://apps.nationalcollege.org.uk/s2ssd_new/index.cfm>

**Question:**

What do you see as the relationship between a school currently designated as a Teaching School and the same school being designated as the Hub? Does the Hub and Teaching School operate as separate entities going forward or do their functions become one and the same? Can partners e.g. other MATs be from outside the pilot area?

**Answer:**

Teaching School Hubs will have a wider role than teaching schools and will need to support more schools. For this reason, we only want the highest performing schools to apply to lead a hub and this is why we have raised the performance bar for those wishing to apply.

TSA Core Grant will be paid to all designated TSAs in 2019/20, irrespective of involvement in TS hub activity. However, double funding will cease within designated Teaching School Hub test and learn areas, after the test and learn phase and we intend to consolidate future funding to a single TS Hub grant. The Teaching School Hub will absorb the responsibilities of the Teaching School

Yes, partners can be from outside area, as long as it is within practical distance for the support they will offer.

**Question:**

What is the advantage of having the MAT formally recognised alongside the lead school?

**Answer:**

It is a formal recognition that the school’s school improvement activities will be whole or in part, delivered through the MAT.

**Question:**

Do we currently need to have a relationship with schools within the proposed hub schools? Or, do we inform them that we are including them in our proposed Teaching School hub?

**Answer:**

An existing formal relationship is not required but their agreement to supporting an application is.

**Question:**

What would the relationship be between designated teaching schools, MATS and NLES with the new proposed teaching hub, linked to the remit of the hub?

**Answer:**

Hubs will manage the NLEs operating in their area with respect to the work carried out on behalf of the Hub. Schools and MATs which form part of the Hub’s delivery apparatus will be led by the Hub with appropriate governance in place. Those Teaching School Hubs which are parts of MATs may choose to have their MAT designated alongside themselves.

We strongly encourage existing collaborations to keep on doing what they are good at. The Teaching School Hub model strengthens the concept of networks and collaborations working together, to bring the strongest TSAs, other outstanding schools, MATs and leaders to every part of the country so that schools can source the best evidence based support available.

It is hoped that, where there are existing collaborations within the test and learn areas, that have the capacity and expertise, they would form part of the Teaching School Hub application. In areas where there is less collaboration, we expect this to stimulate these discussions to happen.

**Question:**

How will the new Teaching School Hubs be allocated/assigned work when a need at a school is identified?

**Answer:**

We will use Ofsted Requires Improvement judgements as the sole trigger to identify schools for a proactive, optional offer of support.

We will publish details of the 19/20 offer soon.

**Question:**

What will happen to TSAs in the localities of the new Teaching School Hub pilots should they decide to not be part of the pilot?

The school currently works closely with our own TSA schools and other TSAs in the area. Will these links continue to operate independently from the Teaching School Hub should some of these other schools decide to take part in the pilot?

**Answer:**

* 1. During the test and learn phase, existing teaching schools, including in and outside of the test and learn areas, will continue to operate and be funded direct from DfE during the 2019/20 academic year (as usual, funding beyond March 2020 will be confirmed following the forthcoming spending review).

**Question:**

How much grant money would we receive, if successful? Can you clarify how the level of school improvement funding will be calculated? Expected source and level of funding outside of the infrastructure grant?

**Answer:**

Average annual grant payments will be £200k subject to outcome of the Spending Review. The finance section in the [application pack](https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/98dde964-ac94-410c-8254-1cd573c2dc45) details maximum funding levels per LAD.

The Department will confirm to applicants exact funding during discussions on the delivery agreement.

2019/20 School improvement Support Offer. Teaching School Hubs will receive a variable funding amount depending on the number of schools in their area eligible for DfE-funded school improvement support, in line with the 2019/20 School Improvement Support Offer. We intend to announce the arrangements for 2019/20 in due course.

Existing teaching schools, including in the test and learn areas, will continue to be funded direct from DfE during the 2019/20 academic year (as usual, funding beyond March 2020 will be confirmed following the forthcoming spending review).

**Question:**

What would happen if the school loses its eligibility during the three years of the pilot?

**Answer:**

To ensure schools have access to high quality support for school improvement, Teaching School Hubs must operate within, and co-operate with, the quality assurance requirements set by the DfE. These requirements aim to provide all Teaching School Hubs with a shared understanding of the DfE’s expectations and the processes by which the DfE seeks to maintain high quality delivery of Teaching School Hubs.

The DfE will monitor performance and delivery of each Teaching School Hub and conduct 6 monthly reviews to ensure they are meeting the quality requirements and effectively delivering against their individual delivery plan.

Where it is identified that Teaching School Hubs are not meeting eligibility requirements or delivering effectively against its delivery plan, or in the event of serious underperformance, remedial action will be taken and it will be managed on a case-by-case basis.

**Question:**

How many schools have been invited to apply?

**Answer:**

We are unable to provide numbers of schools eligible for the test and learn as the eligibility criteria contains measures that are not published (phonics) and not in the public domain. We have emailed eligible schools to inform them about the procurement.

**Question:**

How do you see the relationship with the Local Authorities and Dioceses? Can LAs be partners in a Teaching School Hub? Can the named providers in bids include strong LAs?

**Answer:**

The Teaching School Hub initiative is designed to ensure strong schools can lead improvement and spread best practice in their areas. For that reason, we would not expect local authorities or dioceses to be lead Teaching School hub or a joint partner, but applicant schools may choose to include local authorities or dioceses with a strong track record of school improvement in their partnerships.

**Question:**

Would applications covering LA areas that combined have more than 300 schools be encouraged or discouraged?

**Answer:**

For the test and learn phase, 300 is the maximum number of schools that should be involved in the Teaching School Hub. However, some variations will be accepted if required to align with LAD boundaries.

**Question:**

Would all provision need to be in the county of the bidding or eligible school, as our TSA is part of a wider network which stretches across 3 counties?

In large counties is it anticipated that the Hub reaches all areas or those within reasonable travelling distance from the lead school?

**Answer:**

First, our criteria focusses on local authority districts rather than local authorities or counties.

We don’t want to undermine any collaborations that you already have in place. We want to build on these networks and collaborations - not disrupt things. We want to make it easier to access quality school-to-school support, especially for those schools who are most in need of the support.

We want to see hubs operating within the 200-300 range so lead schools need to consider this when they decide what their area of coverage will be.

If funding for travel is a barrier in LADs that are geographically sparse – it can be addressed in the funding proposals (up to 5% of the grant can be spent on travel and subsistence (with the exception of [rural areas](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-urban-classification) where this might be slightly higher).

You can check your rural/urban description on the [Get Information about Schools website](https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/Establishments/Establishment/Details/136401) on the location tab.

**Question:**

Please provide further information about the finance section, especially with regard to the scale of largely unknown school improvement funding. Where this is within an Opportunity Area, where three year ongoing financial support is awaiting DfE spending review, how do we calculate expected revenue?

**Answer:**

Schools can generate income in addition to the Teaching School Hub grant funding. Funding arrangements are defined in section 6 and in the supplementary note on Page 24-26 of the application pack. You can also refer to the finance section in the prospectus, for further information - Section 6, Funding Model. Page 8, and Section 7, Funding calculation. Page 9.

DfE will clarify the position after the spending review but you should use your current levels of funding as a guide, including where appropriate opportunity area funding.

**Question:**

How much funding is provided to the Hub for brokering the School Improvement Fund? The £16,000 quoted for the supporting school to provide support, not to fund the Hub QA, etc. Is there brokerage income for the Hub?

**Answer:**

The grant cannot be used to pay brokering fees. The cost of brokering the school improvement fund/ school-to-school support should be covered by the infrastructure grant funding.

**Question:**

What if the current headteacher of the lead school is an LLE rather than a NLE?

**Answer:**

The criteria to become a Teaching School Hub lead school does not require a headteacher designation (NLE, LLE or other) to apply.

**Question:**

Are Teaching School Council organising/facilitating collaborative bids?

**Answer:**

The TSC would like to be involved to help people who are interested in putting forward applications from each pilot area; [teaching school council representatives](https://tscouncil.org.uk/about-2/whoswho/) would be happy to hear from you.

**Question:**

Do applications from early year’s providers (or SEND / alternative provision) need to submit the form which demonstrates that they meet eligibility criteria?

**Answer:**

Yes, providers from early years and special provision settings need to fill out a form – located on [contracts finder](https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/98dde964-ac94-410c-8254-1cd573c2dc45) – before they start their application, to help us assess if they meet the eligibility criteria

**Question:**

The 2019/20 School Improvement offer guidance does not refer to the income needed to broker and deliver school to school support, only to the amount distributed for schools eligible for support. Can you clarify as soon as possible what amount might be released so that we can indicate proposed spend?

**Answer:**

Successful Teaching Schools Hubs will be awarded variable funding, in line with the number of eligible schools (RI or double RI) in their pilot area. And - as with non-pilot areas – they will be expected to signpost schools to appropriate, evidence-based support from a range of providers, based on an assessment of the school’s needs.

Funding arrangements are defined in section 6 and in the supplementary note on Page 24-26 of the application pack. You can also refer to the finance section in the prospectus, for further information - Section 6, Funding Model. Page 8, and Section 7, Funding calculation. Page 9.

**Question:**

How strict is the application criteria in terms of standards? 89% phonics rather than 90% but exceeding in all other areas

**Answer:**

The application criteria is strict in terms of standards, however if for example a school scores 89.7% and was exceeding in other areas, we would consider this on a case by case basis, and any school in that situation should contact [systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk](mailto:systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk) to confirm eligibility before completing an application.

**Question:**

Whilst there is a maximum number of schools, is there a minimum number?

**Answer:**

200, and only less marginally and by exception

**Question:**

The application pack refers to ‘three-year commitment’ and then ‘track record’ in the scoring table, can you clarify?

**Answer:**

The application pack and scoring table should both refer to ‘three-year commitment’ and this has since been corrected on the document on contracts finder.

**Question:**

My school has just received an outstanding Ofsted inspection, does this mean I am now eligible to apply to become a Teaching School hub?

**Answer:**

Your school must meet all of the eligibility criteria, detailed in the [prospectus](https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/98dde964-ac94-410c-8254-1cd573c2dc45) at the point of application and beyond. If you have further questions, you can discuss eligibility with your local [teaching school council representative](https://tscouncil.org.uk/about-2/whoswho/), or use the online eligibility tracker – which is available on [Contracts Finder](https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/98dde964-ac94-410c-8254-1cd573c2dc45).

**Question:**

Does the £200,000 TS Hubs funding align to academic year, calendar year, or neither?

**Answer:**

This figure relates to academic years. However, as outlined in the Application Pack, funding figures reflect maximum available funding. The level of funding sought in each academic year should correspond to the costs of delivery, including – where appropriate – consideration of the period of delivery.

**Question:**

Is there anything preventing our school from being named in more than 1 application for this as we currently work with more than one eligible teaching school alliance and I believe that both may be considering making an application?

**Answer:**

A school can be named on more than one application – with its agreement - as we understand that a school can be working with a range of teaching school alliances and we want the best capacity to be utilised.

**Question:**

Can an application include any appendices or hyperlinks to additional information e.g. organisation chart, which can’t be easily incorporated into the application form?

**Answer:**

Information included in the Teaching School Hubs application must be no more than the stipulated word count for each question. Hyperlinks and web page addresses will not be accepted.

**Question:**

Will the TS hub lead school be responsible for outcomes for all schools within their hub bid, including schools that are being supported?

**Answer:**

The lead school is not directly responsible for outcomes for all schools within their hub area, though support given to schools that need it will need to be evidenced for resources given by DfE – as is the case with the school improvement offer now – and where this forms part of the delivery agreement.

Whilst each TS Hub will be the single point of accountability for the annual delivery agreement, it will be expected to form strong relationships with other local schools (including Teaching Schools and MATs), individuals, and providers. The TS Hub will need to draw on their expertise and capacity in order to ensure coverage of all phases and settings[[1]](#footnote-1)[1]. The TS Hub will also be expected to demonstrate how these other schools, individuals and providers meet the requirements set out in its delivery agreement and hold them to account for the elements which they deliver.

**Question:**

I’m finding it difficult to populate the funding section of the application pack in relation to the 3 year delivery plan due to uncertainties around future funding and the number of schools the Hub will support during roll out

**Answer:**

We recognise uncertainties in relation to confirmation of the spending review, the 19/20 school improvement offer and any decision on the future of TS hubs policy. We therefore expect applicants to predict what funding the hub will generate or be in receipt of (external and from the DfE) and how much infrastructure funding is required over the three years (based on the guidance in the application pack and prospectus) to deliver your proposals, clearly demonstrating value for money.

The Department will confirm to applicants exact funding during discussions on the delivery agreement.

1. [1] ‘Phases’ includes Primary (including Early Years), Secondary and 16-18. ‘Settings’ includes Alternative Provision (AP) and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) provision. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)