

**Teaching School Hubs**

**Prospectus for Test-and-Learn Phase**

**May 2019**

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# Background and Vision

## Introduction

* 1. Great schools and leaders sharing their knowledge and expertise with others is at the heart of an effective school system. In “Educational Excellence Everywhere”[[1]](#footnote-2), we set out our view that a school-led system has a key role in improving outcomes for children and we committed ourselves to expanding the coverage of Teaching Schools Alliances (TSAs) and system leaders, with a particular focus on schools at risk of falling behind. Since 2016, we have expanded the number of TSAs and National Leaders of Education (NLEs)[[2]](#footnote-3), with a particuar focus on areas of the country with previously limited access to system leadership. We have introduced performance-related data, alongside Ofsted ratings, into the designation criteria for system leaders to ensure that judgements are current. We have also focused the work of NLEs on schools which were identified as 'coasting' or 'below the floor standards' as part of the School Improvement Support Offer for 2018/19[[3]](#footnote-4). From September this year we will use a single, transparent trigger for an offer of support - ‘Ofsted requires improvement’ - to make sure it is totally clear when leaders will be offered support[[4]](#footnote-5).
  2. Alongside this expansion, there has been strong growth in the number of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). More than 50% of children in state-funded schools in England are now taught in an academy or free school[[5]](#footnote-6). The most recent data also shows converter academies performing well above the national average and disadvantaged pupils in MATs making more progress than the equivalent national average[[6]](#footnote-7). The best MATs are driving improvement through releasing leadership capacity, using the freedom and autonomy allowed by the structure to direct resources to where they are needed most[[7]](#footnote-8).
  3. Together, the growth of TSAs and MATs reflects a school system in which there is greater collaboration than ever before; a system in which co-operation and the sharing of best practice has become the norm rather than the exception.
  4. In addition, new school-based centres of excellence have developed: some funded by the Department for Education (DfE), such as English and maths hubs, others supported by charitable bodies. There has been a renewed focus on evidence, with a growing network of Research Schools[[8]](#footnote-9) to help other schools adopt the best evidence-based approaches to their teaching, leadership and school management. There is also a network of providers of gold-standard National Professional Qualifications[[9]](#footnote-10) to support the professional development of thousands of teachers across the country.
  5. We want to build on the maturity and reach of system leadership, bringing the support of the strongest TSAs, other outstanding schools, MATs and leaders to every part of the country. We want to strengthen the accountability for quality and consistency of system leadership activity, reinforcing schools’ use of the best evidence-based approaches so that schools have access to the best sources of support. In addition, we wish to further integrate MATs and Teaching Schools (TSs) in support of a single, easily-understood school improvement system.
  6. This prospectus introduces a ‘test-and-learn’ phase we plan to run in AY19/20 in up to 9 areas of the country. We are looking for up to 9 high-achieving lead schools, with their MAT where this is appropriate, to bring the best school improvement expertise in their area, and to take ownership of outcomes. MATs will be eligible to be identified alongside the lead school where school improvement activity and governance makes it more appropriate than designation of a single school.
  7. These will be called “Teaching School Hubs” (TS Hubs). Their coverage will be larger than the current average size of TSAs or of most MATs[[10]](#footnote-11). This is to ensure that schools can develop strong relationships and source the best support available from within a reasonable travelling distance, especially when that expertise is not available within the immediate locality.
  8. The prospectus also sets out the test-and-learn phase in more detail, and invites applications from eligible schools – along with their MATs where appropriate – which are able to show that they have the track record set out in the prospectus, including a commitment to, and experience of, strong collaborative relationships with other schools within the test and learn areas.

## Role

* 1. While TS Hubs will have considerable freedom in shaping delivery of their school improvement offer, we expect that every TS Hub will provide support to local schools in three core areas: school-to-school support, continuing professional development (CPD) – including workforce development at all career stages – and teacher recruitment and retention. These reflect the existing priorities of TSAs but also the critical importance of teacher recruitment and retention[[11]](#footnote-12).
  2. In particular, TS Hub activity will include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| School-to-School Support | Overseeing the deployment and development of NLEs in their area[[12]](#footnote-13), to work with schools that can benefit from their input. Specifically, delivering the Department’s School Improvement Support Offer for all eligible schools[[13]](#footnote-14). We anticipate that TS Hubs will have flexibility to tailor the delivery of the offer in line with schools’ needs.  Providing stabilisation packages where commissioned by Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) for schools awaiting academisation.  Providing first-line advice and support on whole-school issues including behaviour management, school resource management, Pupil Premium and governance to any school in the area that chooses to engage with it. |
| CPD | Providing a comprehensive, evidence-based and high-quality CPD offer to schools in the area, including DfE-endorsed[[14]](#footnote-15) offers and NPQs.  To reinforce the expectation that the work of TS Hubs should be evidence-informed, each Hub should be, or have a strong relationship with, an EEF-sponsored Research School. Relationships might take a variety of forms, including that a Research School might become a TS Hub, play a role in designing, developing and quality assuring TS Hubs’ CPD offers, or provide training to NLEs providing school-to-school support.  TS Hubs should offer each school in its local area the opportunity to discuss how the TS Hub can support its own CPD plans, including growing the school’s own capacity to sustain the impact of CPD. |
| Teacher Recruitment and Retention | Leading and embedding successful strategies to improve teacher recruitment and retention within the area of the hub.  Leading collaborative approaches to the marketing of ITT, the recruitment of trainees and the delivery of high-quality ITT.  Showcasing best practice in recruitment and retention, including teacher workload reduction in their own school. |

* 1. During the ‘test and learn’ phase, it is expected that TS hubs will also be able to respond to new policies[[15]](#footnote-16) that fall under these categories, such as those that relate to the recruitment and retention strategy[[16]](#footnote-17) including the Early Career Framework.

## Three-year Commitment and Annual Delivery Agreement

* 1. Building on the maturity of the system and on the expertise of system leaders, TS Hubs will take a long-term view of school improvement. They will set out how sustainable improvement can be delivered across their local area through a three-year commitment. As funding over this period will coincide with a new spending review, future funding by DfE is subject to confirmation.
  2. Within the framework of the three-year commitment, TS Hubs will draw up annual delivery agreements, which will set out the full details of their operating model, activities and measurable school improvement targets for that year. These agreements, once approved by DfE, will form the basis for TS Hub funding and accountability.
  3. 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[[17]](#footnote-18). The TS Hub will be also 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.

## Eligibility for a School to be a TS Hub

* 1. TS Hubs will be selected ultimately on the basis of their capacity and capability, as set out in their three-year commitment. However, in order to be considered as a TS Hub for this test-and-learn phase the applicant school should generally meet the following criteria[[18]](#footnote-19):

**Performance**

*KS2 Schools*

* Progress for Reading, Writing and Maths is above average (as defined in the DfE performance tables) for 2 of the past 3 years for either All Pupils OR Disadvantaged pupils
* Phonics results (if applicable) for 2017/18 are at or above 90%
* Percentage pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths is above the national average for 2 of the past 3 years.

*KS4 Schools*

* Progress 8 score is above average (as defined in the DfE performance tables) for 2 of the last 3 years for either All Pupils OR Disadvantaged pupils
* EBacc entries (if applicable) for 2017/18 are at or above 45%
* Attainment 8 score is above the national average for 2 of the past 3 years.

**Ofsted**

The applicant school is rated Outstanding at its latest Ofsted inspection.

* 1. The strength of school performance data may also be considered as part of the assessment of the three-year commitment in case of tied scoring.
  2. Each prospective TS Hub must also demonstrate that it has the capacity to lead and manage school improvement activity. This includes having a secure financial position, a strong track record of governance, and suitable personnel and infrastructure to support the role.
  3. We expect prospective TS Hubs to have existing strong relationships with other school improvement providers in the area, including other schools and MATs covering all phases and contexts, as well as key DfE-recognised providers such as research schools, curriculum hubs, NPQ providers and SCITTs. TS Hubs can continue to draw upon expertise, through these established relationships, to build on existing activity.

## Eligibility for a MAT to be a TS Hub

* 1. Where the prospective TS Hub is an academy, and it meets the criteria set out in Section 4, it may seek to have its MAT formally recognised alongside the designated school. This might be appropriate where capacity relevant to the role of TS Hub is mainly managed at the MAT level, or where the governance of the MAT means that accountability to DfE should be held by the MAT. In such circumstances, the National Schools Commissioner (NSC) will advise on suitability based on the MAT’s capacity to support schools outside its MAT without detriment to its own academies. In any case, the academy will of course require the agreement of its MAT to apply.

## Funding Model

* 1. In FY 2018-19, TSAs received a core grant of around £40,000 per year[[19]](#footnote-20) and National Support Schools (NSS) received bursaries of £6,000 per year for NLE activity[[20]](#footnote-21). In addition, in FY2018-19, the DfE made available up to £16,000 for system leaders to spend on each local school which were identified as 'coasting' or 'below the floor standards', and had two consecutive ‘Requires Improvement’ judgements, through the School Improvement Support Offer.
  2. In future, we want to simplify the system so that each TS Hub receives a single grant which incorporates School Improvement Support Offer funding. This single grant will be set flexibly – with a premium for coverage of Category 5 or 6 areas[[21]](#footnote-22) – and according to the number of schools supported under the School Improvement Support Offer.

Test-and-Learn FY18-19

TSA Core Grant\*

TS Hub Grant inc. AY19/20 School Improvement Support Offer

TSA Core Grant

NLE

Bursary

School Improvement Support

Future TS Hubs (inc. current TS)

Income from traded services to schools

\*To be paid to all designated TSAs in 2019/20, irrespective of involvement in TS hub activity. However, double funding will cease within designated TS Hub test and learn areas, after the test and learn phase and we intend to consolidate future funding to a single TS Hub grant.

*Figure 6.2.1 – Current and test-and-learn phase funding streams (in TS Hub areas only)*

* 1. In return for an agreed three-year commitment, we want to give TS Hubs the stability and certainty to commit fully to their task. We will, therefore, make a three-year funding commitment to the Hubs, subject to the successful delivery of annual delivery agreements and grant conditions[[22]](#footnote-23), as well as future decisions on budgets following the forthcoming spending review.

## Funding Calculation

* 1. Whilst some costs and funding will be fixed, others will vary according to the number of schools requiring support (in line with the School Improvement Support Offer). All funding will be agreed during the application process, and monitored throughout the lifetime of the grant[[23]](#footnote-24).
  2. Funding will be awarded in two blocks:
* **Infrastructure.** This includes funding for staffing and running the central TS Hub infrastructure, as well as for overseeing the deployment and development of NLEs. DfE will make available an average of £200,000[[24]](#footnote-25). Details are set out in the application pack.
* **2019/20 School improvement Support Offer.** TS 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 the summer term.
  1. TS Hubs should detail in their application the breakdown of how they will allocate infrastructure funding within the Hub and any additional schools or individuals which will provide expertise or capacity in support of TS Hub delivery. We expect that TS hubs will use more funding in the start-up phase to operationalise their model and that this will be reflected in their funding profile for the first year.

## Test-and-Learn Phase Locations

* 1. We plan to test the new TS Hubs in a range of areas with contrasting characteristics. We are offering some flexibility for applicants to select their chosen TS Hub areas from within the eligible areas set out below. However, there are two key requirements:
* Firstly, proposed areas should cover 200-300 schools. This reflects the scale of some existing collaborative arrangements and is designed to ensure schools can access the best support available in reasonable travelling distance.
* Secondly, other than by exceptional justification, TS Hub areas should align with local authority district boundaries. This is to ensure that the model (when replicated nationally) gives *every* school an opportunity to engage with system leadership through a recognised local provider, with no school left behind. This does not, however, hinder schools in choosing which TS Hub they choose to work with (or none at all).
  1. During the test-and-learn phase, each TS Hub must be located within the proposed area of its Hub. Where it needs to draw on additional expertise or capacity to support its school improvement offer, it should source the best support from schools and individuals which are located either within the area or within reasonable travelling distance.

## Eligible Areas for Test-and-Learn Phase TS Hubs

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Area Number** | **Local Authority District(s)** | **Local Authority Name** | **Regional Schools Commissioner Region** |
| 1 | Basildon | Essex | East of England & North East London |
| Braintree |
| Brentwood |
| Castle Point |
| Chelmsford |
| Colchester |
| Epping Forest |
| Harlow |
| Maldon |
| Rochford |
| Tendring |
| Uttlesford |
| Southend-on-Sea | Southend-on-Sea |
| Thurrock | Thurrock |
| 2 | Barnsley | Barnsley | East Midlands & Humber |
| Rotherham | Rotherham |
| Sheffield | Sheffield |
| Doncaster | Doncaster |
| 3 | Craven | North Yorkshire | North |
| Hambleton |
| Harrogate |
| Richmondshire |
| Ryedale |
| 4 | Milton Keynes | Milton Keynes | South Central & North West London |
| Corby | Northamptonshire |
| Daventry |
| East Northamptonshire |
| Kettering |
| Northampton |
| South Northamptonshire |
| Wellingborough |
| 5 | East Devon | Devon | South West |
| Exeter |
| Mid Devon |
| North Devon |
| South Hams |
| Teignbridge |
| Torridge |
| West Devon |
| Plymouth | Plymouth |
| Torbay | Torbay |
| 6 | Sandwell | Sandwell | West Midlands |
| Walsall | Walsall |
| 7 | Wirral | Wirral | Lancashire & West Yorkshire |
| Knowsley | Knowsley |
| Liverpool | Liverpool |
| St. Helens | St. Helens |
| Sefton | Sefton |
| Warrington | Warrington |
| Halton | Halton |
| 8 | Greenwich | Greenwich | South East & South London |
| Lambeth | Lambeth |
| Southwark | Southwark |
| Bexley | Bexley |
| Bromley | Bromley |
| Lewisham | Lewisham |
| 9 | Bradford | Bradford | Lancashire & West Yorkshire |

## Next Steps

* 1. Applications for the test-and-learn phase will be assessed through a competitive grant process administered by DfE. Applications should be submitted by a single lead entity – the proposed TS Hub. However, in order to complete the application form, you will need to approach any additional schools or individuals whose capacity or expertise you require to deliver school improvement outcomes and obtain their agreement to support the work of the Hub should your application be successful. The track record, including financial, of the proposed schools, individuals or providers will be assessed as part of the assessment stage.
  2. If you intend to apply, please first ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria (outlined in Sections 4 and 5). You can check your eligibility by using the eligibility tool (accessible via [Contracts Finder](https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/4e3d7129-d72d-4a94-817e-5e7cf18cb3a2?p=@FQxUlRRPT0=NjJNT08=U)). You may also contact us at [systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk](mailto:systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk) if you have any queries about your eligibility.
  3. You should then complete the application form provided in the Application Pack and submit it by no later than midday on **26th July 2019**.
  4. The application form comprises basic details about proposed Hub operation and composition, as well as a template for the three-year commitment, including:
  + The area which the applicant intends to serve;
  + Evidence of their school improvement experience and capacity;
  + The school improvement requirements in the area;
  + How the TS Hub intends to address these requirements, including planned collaboration with other schools; and
  + The funding and governance required, including a high-level breakdown of proposed costs
  1. Once submitted, the application – including the three-year commitment – will be assessed and sifted against the published scoring criteria (we may also need to contact applicants to confirm or obtain additional detail as part of this sifting process).
  2. If successful in the sift, applicants will receive an invitation to interview. These interviews will take place during week commencing **23rd September**,to discuss their application further, including the track record of any named individuals. DfE may also conduct further visits or enquiries to support decision-making. We intend to notify applicants of the outcome of their application from week commencing **4th November 2019**.
  3. Successful applicants will be required to generate a detailed one-year delivery agreement for academic year 2019/20 – covering the full performance management, funding and governance arrangements for activity.
  4. Once finalised, the delivery agreement will be approved by DfE officials including the NSC and DfE-funded educational experts, subject to discussions during November and December. This will result in the formal designation of the applicant school or MAT as a TS Hub. Please note that we do not envisage input from teachers and leaders over the school summer holidays.
  5. Test-and-learn phase TS Hubs are expected to be operational from **January 2020.**  Set out below is the indicative timetable:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Stage** | * 1. **Deadline/Date** |
| Application submitted with three-year commitment[[25]](#footnote-26) | * 1. 26th July 2019 |
| Outcome of sift and invitation to interview | * 1. w/c 9th September 2019 |
| Interviews for applicants successful in sift[[26]](#footnote-27) | w/c 23rd September 2019 |
| Notification of outcome | * 1. w/c 4th November 2019 |
| Start-up meeting and development of annual delivery agreement | * 1. w/c 18th November 2019 |
| Annual Delivery Agreement sign off | * 1. By end of the autumn term 2019 |
| TS Hubs operational | * 1. From January 2020 |

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1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/educational-excellence-everywhere> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teaching-schools-and-system-leadership-how-you-can-get-involved> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/school-improvement-support-for-the-2018-to-2019-academic-year> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/damian-hinds-speech-at-the-2019-naht-conference> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-calls-on-more-schools-to-become-an-academy> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/standards-continue-to-rise-in-englands-schools> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://nfer.ac.uk/publications/NUFS02/NUFS02.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://researchschool.org.uk/> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-professional-qualifications-frameworks> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. TS Hubs will provide school improvement capacity to 200-300 schools. However, as TS Hub support is offered to schools on a voluntary basis, the number of active relationships with schools is likely to be lower. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-strategy> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. In order to establish and further strengthen standards in this aspect of system leadership, and in parallel with the test-and-learn phase, we intend to undertake a review of NLEs focusing on eligibility, role expectations and quality. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Subject to decisions on the 2019/20 School Improvement Support Offer <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/identifying-schools-for-support> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-improvement-support> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Additional funding to deliver new policy activity that falls under the TS Hub remit, maybe available if applicable, subject to funding availability and ministerial approval. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-recruitment-and-retention-strategy> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. ‘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-18)
18. Schools with other key stage performance data are able to apply providing they can demonstrate comparable high performance. Schools without performance data (e.g. special schools, Early Years, Alternative Provision settings) are able to apply if they can demonstrate that they are a high performing school, who are regarded as the best leaders in their sector.

    Those wishing to apply under these circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis and should contact the team by emailing [systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk](mailto:systemleader.applications@education.gov.uk) including their school name and unique reference number (URN). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/teaching-schools-a-guide-for-potential-applicants#funding> [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-leaders-of-education-a-guide-for-potential-applicants> [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defining-achieving-excellence-areas-methodology> [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Funding for TS Hubs, as with other system leader and government funding, is confirmed until the end of the current spending review period. The Department will confirm future funding for financial year 2020-21 in due course.  [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. As referenced in paragraph 2.3, additional funding to deliver new policy activity that falls under the TS Hub remit, may be available if applicable, subject to funding availability and ministerial approval. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Up to £170,000 is available per annum for an area which contains no Category 5 or 6 local authority districts. Areas which do contain Category 5 or 6 districts will attract additional funding. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. We recognise that some schools break-up for the summer holidays, before the application closing date; however this date allows the maximum time before the summer holidays for schools to submit applications. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Interviews must take place during the allocated window, as outlined in the table. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)