

Oswald Road Strategic Development Report

CHAPTER 1: Context

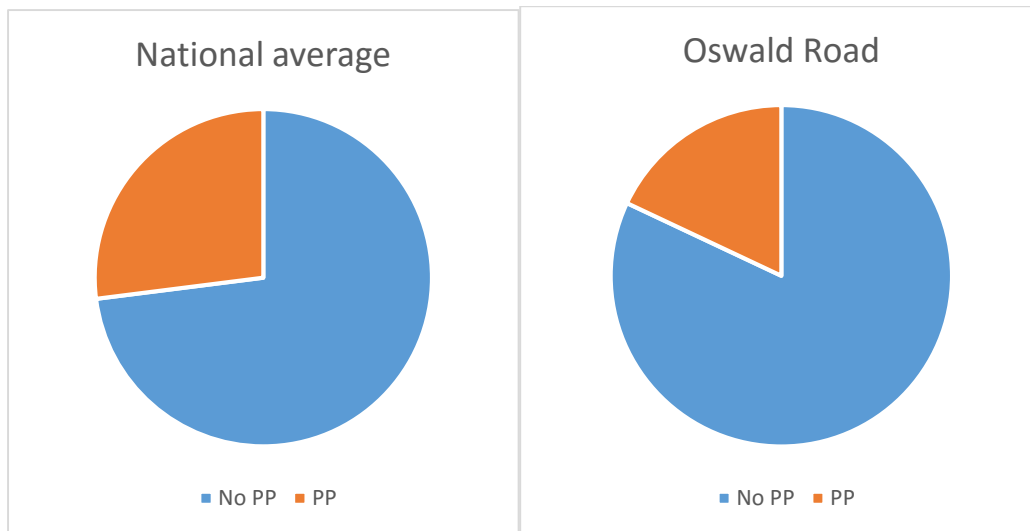
Oswald Road is a large, local authority maintained primary school with over 600 pupils on roll and situated within Chorlton, a relatively affluent area of Manchester. However, the school has a very mixed intake of pupils from a range of different backgrounds. The school also has a nursery, which currently caters for three- and four-year-olds. From September 2016, the school will be three-form entry in all year groups and the nursery will continue to cater for 54 children. (4 of these places are part time).

Local and school population

Whilst the population of Manchester as a whole is around 59% White British¹, this rises to around 74% in Chorlton. The next largest proportion of the Chorlton population are individuals with a Pakistani heritage, at around 6%. The remainder of the population is very mixed, with pupils from a range of backgrounds, including Bangladeshi, Arab, Black/African/Caribbean, and Indian. The majority of the pupils at Oswald Road are of White British heritage but the school also has a relatively high proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and pupils who speak English as an additional language (32% - higher than the national average). This means that the school caters for the majority of other ethnic groups within Chorlton.

80% of the working age population in Chorlton are economically active, compared to 64% of the working age population in Manchester. This is demonstrated in the fact that the proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium at Oswald Road is lower than the national average, at 18% (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Pupil premium eligibility



60% of residents aged 16 or over in Chorlton have at least a level 4 qualification, compared to only 29% of the residents aged 16 or over in Manchester as a whole. 49% of the working population in Chorlton are managers, directors or senior officials, or professional occupations, compared to 27% of the working population in Manchester. 1.5% of homes in

¹ ONS Neighbourhood Statistics, 2011 census data

Chorlton have no adults in employment and dependent children, compared to 7.7% in Manchester. In addition, only 3.5% are single parent households in Chorlton, compared to 9.9% in Manchester as a whole.

School Background

Following a 'satisfactory' Ofsted inspection in October 2011, the current headteacher, Mrs Deborah Howard, was appointed as deputy head (on secondment from her previous school, in order to provide support for Oswald Road's improvement). Ofsted reported that although some of the teaching was good or better, the quality of experiences received by pupils overall was inconsistent. In addition, Ofsted stated that the middle leadership of the school was not fully effective in supporting and driving the school's improvement.

Mrs Howard became acting headteacher in September 2012 and permanent headteacher in May 2013. Mrs Howard was clear that there was an urgent need to raise academic standards across the board, particularly in the basics of literacy and mathematics, which at the time were around the national average.

Mrs Howard and the wider staff have also worked hard to improve pupil absence figures. Overall pupil absence in 2013/14 was slightly lower than the national average (3.7% compared to 3.9%), although persistent absence was slightly higher (2.4% compared to 1.9% nationally).

The change of leadership and improvements in teaching and learning led to the school achieving its first ever 'good' Ofsted rating in October 2013. Ofsted reported that "*staff morale is high*" and that "*teaching is good and some is outstanding*". Since this time, the leadership team have implemented further significant changes to the school's curriculum and the school improvement plan, with associated collective ownership of the actions required².

The school's Key Stage 1 and 2 results have been on an upward trajectory since the 2012/13 academic year. The KS2 results have risen from 75% in 2012, to 95% of pupils achieving a level 4+ in reading, writing and maths (15% above the national average) in 2015. In addition, 90% of pupils achieved level 4+ in the spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPAG) test. 100% of the school's disadvantaged pupils achieved level 4+ in reading, writing and maths, as well as making at least two levels of progress in each of these.

In 2011, Ofsted reported that the school's early years foundation stage (EYFS) was one of the strongest areas of the school; however, from observations from September 2012 this wasn't still the case. The provision, however, significantly improved following the recruitment of an assistant head for EYFS in September 2013. The results went from 27% of children with a good level of development (GLD) to a GLD above the national average in 2015. Capacity has been built in the EYFS team and there is now the capacity for leadership through others in this area of the school.

The staff team at the school are very supportive of each other and the leadership team is now stronger as a result of the promotion of existing staff and the appointment of a new deputy headteacher. A recent report by Ofsted³ states "*teachers speak positively of the support they receive from senior leaders*".

School's Ongoing Development & Improvement

² Oswald Road School Improvement Plan

³ Ofsted section 8 report, January 2016

School improvement priorities

The school staff are responsible, as a whole, for writing the school improvement plan (SIP), which is then considered and approved by the leadership team. This means that the SIP is fully owned by the staff, who have their own areas of accountability within it. The SIP contains five priorities for the next phase of the school's development over the next year and therefore makes a large contribution to the school's wider improvement strategy. Parents are also involved with the writing of the plan, so that they have a strong sense of ownership of the improvements made in the school. They are invited to a Parent Forum where they meet with SIP leads and share ideas. The recent Ofsted inspection noted that the school had taken many actions to further engage with parents and carers, and noted that this was also an area for further improvement, which is being addressed by the leadership team and wider staff. The school's priorities thread through the school improvement plan and are also core to staff appraisals. The school business manager works with the school improvement leads to develop different areas of the school budget.

The current school improvement plan has a number of strands. One of these is concerned with the school's work to become a UNICEF rights respecting school. The others are concerned with parental links, being fit for learning, staying safe and achieving success. Some of the actions to be taken in respect of these strands during the current academic year have been:

- For the school's rights respecting ambassadors to research and allocated UNICEF events to different phase groups
- To include charity events in their topic planning, so as to support UNICEF
- To produce videos in different languages to support learning and parental engagement
- To organise, deliver and evaluate workshops for parents
- To hold a parent forum event to share and discuss the school improvement plan
- To produce a home/school agreement in partnership with parents
- To arrange home visits for children due to start in the nursery
- To hold induction welcome meetings for all families new to the school
- To ensure that circle time and assemblies are covering current issues in relation to emotional wellbeing
- To establish a staff wellbeing committee and run termly events
- To continue to provide healthy snacks for pupils
- To embed good practice of physical activity taking place in school
- To make behavioural expectations clear and explicit to children
- To introduce life skills lessons for Y5 and Y6 in preparation for transition to secondary school
- To promote independence and resilience at key stage 2
- To set up workshops and drop in sessions for parents/carers and children who need support with attendance and punctuality
- To produce information leaflets and hold workshops on key themes to address issues as they arise
- To undertake first aid training for children in key stage 2
- To embed mathematics in other subjects across the curriculum
- To set up opportunities for using and applying maths skills in the outdoor areas
- To challenge children's learning through the new curriculum
- To ensure that all learners are challenged in all aspects of lessons
- To ensure that children have opportunities to share skills, including through peer tutoring

The progress of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities was inconsistent four years ago, when it was rated 'satisfactory' by Ofsted. However, the school appointed an

assistant head for early years who then became school SENCo; with the outcome that the school's SEND provision is now strong, as demonstrated by the recent Ofsted monitoring inspection, "*because the special educational needs coordinator has a secure understanding of current requirements and is working effectively to enhance the provision for pupils*".

Recruitment and retention

The school has a number of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and teachers who are at a relatively early stage in their career. In contrast to the national trend, the school does not have any problems at present recruiting good staff. Whilst the school clearly wishes to retain high quality staff, it also recognises its moral purpose to the wider system in having a strong focus on the development of staff who might subsequently move on to other schools.

School partnerships

The school has 'gold' partner membership of the local teaching school alliance (Manchester TSA, led by Chorlton Park Primary School); and this allows the school to access support from the TSA, although it is not formally part of the TSA. This gold membership provides Oswald Road with the following entitlements:

1. Access to CPD and Leadership Programmes from a suite of high quality Manchester TSA (MTSA) programmes
2. Access to tailored School to School support through high quality system leaders
3. Initial consultation to support identification of school improvement priorities and Leadership support needs
4. School Direct, primary Manchester PE Teacher Training, ITT Trainee placements
5. 3 days Specialist Leader of Education support per year
6. Succession planning and leadership development support. Support to develop, accredit and deploy system leaders – NPQML, NPQSL
7. 3 MTSA Partners Meetings per year. Provides communication on local, regional and national priorities through termly Headteacher Briefings including feedback from recent Ofsted inspections. Opportunity to influence and shape the work of MTSA by collaboration, participation, contribution and feedback
8. Buddy system for new Headteachers
9. Membership of networks in: Assessment, Yr6, Yr2, SENCO, School Business Management, Literacy, Singapore Maths, EYFS
10. Membership of Professional Learning Communities, which will have a specific learning focus based in subject leadership and knowledge. Schools will work with an expert facilitator to enhance learning and ensure sustainability
11. Additional services from One Education:
 - a) ICT Hardware Audit & Recommendations report
 - b) School Workforce Census (SIMS) – November - On site completion including training
 - c) Free place on any of One Education's 2016-2017 training courses

The school is also working hard to build better relationships with parents and the wider community. The school holds a wide range of events which aim to get parents involved in the life of the school, and parental engagement with these events is a target area for the school. Parents are currently involved in literacy events, parent focus groups, parent forums and surveys and much more.

Leadership and governance

A recent (January 2016) section 8 monitoring visit by Ofsted was triggered by a parental/community concern regarding safeguarding arrangements and some aspects of the

leadership and management of the school. However, Ofsted concluded that safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet requirements; and that the headteacher and governors hold a “*shared vision to provide the best education for pupils*”. In addition, a national leader of governance (NLG) undertook a review of governance during last summer (2015), as a result of which governor training is being enhanced and a new complaints policy is being implemented.

Mrs Howard has high expectations and is not afraid to take robust action to ensure that pupils receive the quality of teaching they deserve⁴. It is clear that staff feel the head is a good leader and enjoy working with her – “*your staff feel that you lead the staff well and they enjoy working at Oswald Road because they feel part of the staff team*”. The recent Ofsted inspection report also noted that the pupils “*are proud of their school*” and “*demonstrate this pride in the high-quality work they produce...*”

The headteacher, governors and staff work hard to ensure the school is inclusive; and it is clear that the pupils are proud of their school. Oswald Road is a happy school, which does not seem as big as it is, because of the family atmosphere that exists in the school, and its pupils are clearly thriving.

The headteacher and leadership team have also recognised that staff continue to be put under a great deal of pressure, both from the ongoing changes to national policy around assessment and outcomes; and from expectations of some parents within the community. The school, like many schools, is also now preparing for a significant period of change for the school system as a whole. A staff welfare meeting has recently been held, the outcome of which has been the development of an action plan which aims to address areas of staff concern around the level of scrutiny they are being placed under.

National and local challenges

In response to national policy changes, including the scaling back of local authority support, and increasing pressures on school budgets, the school is moving towards a model of buying in more services. However, at the same time, it has been necessary to appoint some in-house specialists, in particular with regard to the school’s SEND provision. Even if the local authority says that children need to be in a special school, these spaces are limited so Oswald Road is increasingly finding that it needs to offer provision for pupils with some very complex needs, who often have a number of different conditions which need to be catered for. The school currently buys in its occupational therapy provision and its speech and language therapy provision. The school improvement plan demonstrates a firm commitment to ensuring that all learners are supported to do their best as they move through the school.

The school has designed its own assessment scheme, following an extensive research project carried out by Laura Flynn (Assistant Head) to seek out and find what other schools were using in order to tailor a new assessment system that would support judgements in response to the removal of the national curriculum levels. The assessment scheme is designed to provide an informative structured model which helps to identify learning which is secure and embedded as well as providing focused next steps for learning. This assessment tool fits with the school’s curriculum which was written two years ago specifically for the school, whilst adhering to the requirements of the national curriculum. Through effective leadership, regular monitoring and review cycles and prioritised staff CPD, the school feels that it has embedded this new assessment system and staff feel more confident in making informed assessment judgements which impact on future learning opportunities for pupils.

⁴ Ofsted inspection section 8 report, January 2016

Teachers in the school undertake cross moderation exercises in other local schools, from which Oswald Road's teachers and senior leaders take the impression that the learning and attainment of their pupils compares very favourably.

The leadership team feel that the new national funding formula may have a detrimental impact on the school, so the school business manager is considering how best to achieve economies of scale in terms of purchasing and procurement. The local school cluster which Oswald Road is part of do not currently procure as a cluster, but they are looking into doing so.

The school has recently appointed a new member of staff who will be responsible for communications and public relations exercises; and it is felt that this will also help to continue to improve the school's relationship with parents and the wider community.

In response to the publication of the recent education white paper 'Educational excellence everywhere' and keen to keep up the school's improvement momentum, senior staff and governors at Oswald Road have begun to think about what the next steps might be for the school, in order to secure continuing improvement. This has included holding a strategic development session just before the Easter holidays with senior staff, in house NUT representative and members of the school's governing body, where colleagues were able to discuss the implications of the white paper for the school. The focus of the recent education white paper 'Education excellence everywhere' on schools forming collaborative partnerships means that Oswald Road is well placed to work more closely with other local schools and to benefit from the economies of scale that can be achieved through such partnerships.

CHAPTER 2 Preparing for a changing landscape: locally & nationally

The national policy landscape & emerging issues

A new educational landscape is emerging, with another period of key policy developments at a time when there are also a number of other contextual elements at play.

The new education white paper 'Educational excellence everywhere' sets out the government's clear focus on a self-improving education system, where school-based professionals take the lead on school improvement and with the role of local authorities scaled back. The Department for Education (DfE) has also recently launched consultation exercises on two new national funding formulae, one on school funding and one on high needs funding. The new 'fair' national funding formula for schools will be phased in over time so that there is a smooth transition period, which is manageable for schools and local authorities. This will include retaining the local authority role in school funding until 2019 to 2020, even though the national funding formula will begin in 2017 to 2018.

In his budget speech on 16 March, the Chancellor, George Osborne, announced that extra funding would be provided so that, by the end of 2020, every school in England will be an academy or free school – or be in the process of becoming one. This was then closely followed the next day by the publication of the education white paper. Whilst there were a range of new policy developments announced through the white paper, the most significant structural issue for all schools, and of particular interest to Oswald Road's strategic discussions, was the government's plan to make all schools academies by 2020.

In addition, the Education and Adoption Act 2016 sets out some particular legislation regarding how the government plans to deal with underperforming and 'coasting' schools. Whilst Oswald Road is currently a good school and on an improvement trajectory, it is

important to be aware of these developments, in particular once the definition of 'coasting' is confirmed.

Other factors which are currently impacting on the system include the ongoing teacher recruitment crisis. This is not currently affecting Oswald Road as significantly as some schools, but is definitely a national problem which needs to be addressed, in particular as the quality of the teachers and teaching is the single most important factor in securing good outcomes for children. There are also currently not enough school leaders of the quality that is going to be needed across the system in order to ensure every school is good or outstanding and can deliver the education our children deserve. In addition, the new curriculum is putting pressure on schools, in particular primary schools; and it is not yet clear how primary schools are going to be held to account for their key stage 2 results this summer, as the government will not decide on the threshold scores until the national data are available.

As discussed above, the main headlines from the recent schools white paper were that all schools would need to become academies, or be in the process of doing so, by 2020 (so that all schools will be academies by 2022). In addition, local authorities will have no further role in the management or improvement of schools from 2020. There is a strong focus on encouraging a culture of sustainable self-improvement amongst schools, which the government feels is most likely to be forged within multi-academy trusts (MATs) and this is their preferred structural model for the system going forward. The white paper stated: *"we start from the basis that the country's best school leaders know what works, and that good, enthusiastic leaders should be able to use their creativity, innovation, professional expertise and up-to-date evidence to drive up standards."*

The rationale for the government's expectation that most schools will form or will join existing MATs is that they see this as the best way to spread proven educational models and to enable the best school leaders in the system to spread their influence. It is anticipated that children will benefit from their schools being part of a larger whole, as being part of a MAT provides improved opportunities for development and support for teachers and leaders. The government also anticipates that the MAT model will enable better teaching and a broader curriculum, thus providing more opportunities for children. They also expect that the model will provide more robust governance for schools and that back-office arrangements will be more efficient, so that more funding will be able to be spent on teaching and learning.

The rationale for removing the role of local authorities in managing and improving schools is to provide a clear break from the past model, when local authorities were directly responsible for all state-funded provision in their area, and to support the self-improving system through local authorities retaining only three distinct roles: the allocation of school places; providing support for children and young people with high needs; and championing parents and the local community. Local authorities will therefore step back from maintaining schools and providing school improvement.

The pace of change for the system continues to present challenges, in particular with regard to the provisions made in the Education and Adoption Act 2016 regarding schools which 'require improvement' or which are inadequate, which will be brought under the wing of MATs or other strong school sponsors as soon as possible, unless they can demonstrate they have a robust plan to secure rapid improvement. In addition, schools which are deemed to be 'coasting' will also be a priority with regard to securing school improvement and the Act introduces new powers *"to force coasting schools to accept new leadership"*. Finally, smaller schools will have to become part of a MAT, in order to make the most of the economies of scale which this presents.

The government has a clear policy of rewarding successful schools and leaders with more freedom and wider professional responsibility, including through expanding the academies programme. Successful schools will therefore continue to maintain significant freedom around the types of partnerships they enter into as well as their strategies for continuous improvement. However, the strategic leadership of these schools, from headteachers, leaders, governors and school business managers, will be at a premium in order to maintain and build upon their success. However, there remains continued challenge and scrutiny for underperforming or 'coasting' schools and their leaders.

There is a danger that, in the high profile policy discussions about the structure of schools and the wider system, the main focus of education gets lost, that is the goal of ensuring that every child is supported and encouraged to reach their full potential. Teachers and leaders frequently cite the following factors as having the greatest impact on achieving the best outcomes for children:

- *recruitment and retention of high quality teachers* – this is the single most important factor in securing better educational outcomes and is something that all schools will need to be good at over the coming years, in particular as the role of local authorities in recruitment begins to diminish
- *a need to evolve the curriculum* to prepare children for a rapidly changing world – whilst the national curriculum has been pared down, this has placed an even greater task on schools to design and develop curricula that fully engage pupils, whilst meeting the requirements of the new national curriculum
- *more efficient use of funding* (getting more for less) – with the reduction in school budgets in real terms and a focus on ongoing austerity measures for at least the next four years, schools are increasingly going to have to find ways of making their non-classroom based functions more efficient and are likely to have to find ways of partnering with other schools to purchase and share some key resources and personnel
- *greater autonomy for schools* – as discussed in the white paper, the move to a fully autonomous school system will require leadership capacity at all levels, with a consequent need for high quality leadership development and teacher development opportunities, which will lead to even better teaching and outcomes for children
- *overcoming disadvantage and raising aspirations* – these are likely to remain key issues for all schools, whatever their intake, and are crucial to supporting pupils to develop self-confidence and resilience that will enable them to succeed throughout life and to key on trying even when they face significant challenges
- *fostering a culture of continuous improvement* – no matter what the government-set 'benchmarks' are in terms of pupil attainment, the best schools are always striving to do even better for their pupils, even if they already have high levels of attainment. Fostering this culture of continuous improvement will be even more vital given the government focus on 'coasting' schools

Considerations and potential responses

During the strategic development session with members of Oswald Road's senior leadership team and the school's governors on 30 March 2016; colleagues discussed what they felt were their core priorities for the school over the next few years and beyond:

- The recruitment and retention of high quality teachers, including making sure that the terms and conditions for staff are protected, no matter what the future holds for the school in terms of forming or joining a MAT
- Growing leaders at all levels within the school, but also encouraging good staff to develop and move on if they wish, so that the school is not 'holding on' to all its best staff but is also serving the wider system

- Getting more for less from its budget and other resources – Oswald Road is already having these sorts of discussions regarding securing economies of scale, for example through the procurement of educational psychologists and speech and language therapists
- Determining what services are provided by MATs in return for what they top-slice from the budgets of their constituent academies – are these services what Oswald Road needs?
- Retaining control over Oswald Road’s high quality, creative curriculum – this has been crucial to engaging the children and therefore to raising standards
- Providing high quality professional development opportunities for all staff, so that they feel valued and want to stay at Oswald Road, but are also equipped to move on if they wish to do so
- Retaining Oswald Road’s strong community feel

Colleagues discussed the role of the school vision and values, which is particularly vital during challenging times and times of great change for the system. The ‘why’ of an organisation is about the values and vision which underpin everything they do; for Oswald Road the ‘why’ is what gets the staff and pupils out of bed in the morning and comprises the values which underpin the essence of the school and which the staff, pupils, parents and governors are not prepared to give up, no matter what the future holds.

The school already has 10 values which have been agreed by staff, the pupils and governors; but colleagues took the discussion of the ‘why’ further and came up with the following descriptors which should run through the Oswald Road ‘stick of rock’:

- Children only get one go at education – we need to make it great!
- Nurturing the ‘whole child’ to be the best they can be
- Leadership
- Self-belief
- Resilience
- Determination
- Motivation
- Independence
- Confidence
- A thirst for knowledge – developing the building blocks for further study
- Supportive - no-one is a ‘failure’
- Developing and improving self-esteem
- Creativity
- Inspiring pupils and raising their aspirations
- Resourcefulness
- Equal and equitable access for all
- Better outcomes for all children
- Problem-solving
- Providing a moral compass
- Relating their classroom experiences to the real world
- Encouraging children to be proud of their achievements
- A school not a business

Staff and governors at Oswald Road are, first and foremost, passionate about doing their best for the children in their school. The school is rightly proud of its rapid improvement over recent years and wishes to keep up the momentum. The school is very much at the heart of its community and wishes to keep this community feel no matter what developments are

ahead. Whilst the white paper pushes all schools to become academies, or be in the process of becoming academies by 2020, how the school gets to that point will be crucial.

Senior leaders at Oswald Road are keen to forge more and deeper partnerships with other local schools. Leaders and governors are clear that, whilst some of the professional networks/partnerships they are involved with are of good quality and are helpful, Oswald Road as a school is not yet in all the right partnerships and it needs to be developing these improvement partnerships as it moves towards academy status over the coming years. The SENCo network provides excellent support and provides a forum for colleagues to share ideas and responsibility and the school feels that this support impacts positively on the children. The School Business Manager network is also strong and provides good support; and colleagues from a number of schools in the network, including Oswald Road, are discussing options to engage in the joint procurement of services. The leadership networks have tended, on the whole, to feel less helpful, and this is an area which senior colleagues at Oswald Road feel needs more attention.

CHAPTER 3 Potential next steps: moving towards the right partnerships

Current school partnerships

Whilst there are many different professional networks available locally, the SENCo network in the local cluster of schools seems to be the most effective – Helen (Oswald Road's SENCo) said being part of the network had been one of the best experiences she has had as a SENCo. Oswald Road's dedicated staff team have a lot to offer but not having the Ofsted 'outstanding' badge means that, at present, the majority of support they give is within the school.

In discussing the future of Oswald Road, the headteacher cited a number of 'non-negotiables' that would need to feature strongly in any future partnership or structural change:

- The school to retain power over its own curriculum
- To keep the school running as "our school", but partner with others to gain access to high quality CPD and to learn from other schools' approaches to teaching and learning
- To enable the teachers to continue to be strong classroom practitioners
- To become 'outstanding'

Identifying partners & working in effective partnerships

The white paper, in its push for more multi-academy trusts, is placing a premium on formal school-to-school partnership. The international evidence shows that the most successful school systems have moved away from central control and accountability to professional forms of accountability.

"High performers have also moved on from administrative control and accountability to professional forms of accountability and work organisation. They support their teachers in developing innovations in pedagogy, in improving their own performance and that of their colleagues, and in pursuing professional development that leads to stronger education practice. The goal of the past was standardisation and compliance; now, top performers enable teachers to be inventive."

Andreas Schleicher, OECD, December 2013

These successful school systems share some common core principles:

- A strong sense of collective mission
- Professional engagement in and ownership of collective improvement
- A focus on teacher and leader quality, CPD and research
- A strong culture of collaboration at all levels

Professor David Hargreaves' research shows us some of the characteristics of different types of partnerships:

- *Project-based* – these tend to be short-term, sporadic and often based around specific funding, and tend to be low on both challenge and support and true partnership
- *Delivery-based* – these tend to be tight and controlled, high on challenge and support but can lack true partnership, e.g. some MATs provide a standardised 'top-down' offer across all their schools (which can provide a basis for effective support for underperforming schools but is quite disempowering for other schools).
- *Relationship-based* – these tend to be high in terms of true partnership values but are often not rigorous enough and so lack the capacity for appropriate challenge and support that leads to meaningful improvement.
- *Improvement-based* – these partnerships are longer-term, with shared accountability and leadership and strong governance, offering both high levels of partnership with high levels of challenge and support, and are much more sustainable over time

It will be important for Oswald Road to continue to build on its existing partnerships and develop new, improvement-based partnerships over the coming years, so that it can be clear about what it is looking for in terms of longer-term partnerships. This will help colleagues at the school to decide which existing MATs might provide a 'best fit' for Oswald Road's core values and principles, or alternatively colleagues may decide they wish to work with other local schools to form their own new MAT should this be the avenue they wish to pursue.

Oswald Road could undertake some of the following in order to work towards closer partnership working with other schools in the local area:

- Establishing trusting relationships with other local schools – perhaps through peer review – because trust is crucial to developing good professional relationships
- Looking at our accountability frameworks – who are we accountable to and why?
- Working with other local schools to both receive and provide support for improvement – recognising that we have a lot to offer as well as things to learn
- Ensuring our staff have access to and participate in high quality professional development – so that all teaching and learning can be 'outstanding'

Peer review partnerships

Peer review is beginning to emerge as a core accountability and school improvement tool in the school-led system. How the process is conducted can vary considerably but it is always focussed on the needs of the schools involved. For example, a small number of schools may form a peer review partnership to look at a particular issue or topic, such as improving boys' reading, or embedding maths skills across the curriculum. In any event, the review process should be an integrated part of the school's development activities; and it should be clear to all how the review will aim to address current needs. The peer review process will also provide development opportunities for the staff that are involved in reviewing other schools.

There are many different models of peer review being used within the system, with the following summarising a few examples:

- a. **Challenge Partners** – the review provides an external audit on where the school is at a specific point in time. It uses the school's current Ofsted grade to act as a benchmark to assess the progress the school has made since it was awarded. Review judgements are then based on Ofsted's framework for school inspection using the rigour and challenge of professional scrutiny. *"92% of QA Review judgements deliver a consistent or lower (i.e. tougher) overall grade than an Ofsted inspection judgement."* Schools welcome the opportunity for professional dialogue with colleagues from other schools and the professional development that the review process provides.
- b. **Medway Teaching Schools Alliance** - the peer review involves 3 schools working as a trio. Each school identifies a theme or area of their development that it wishes to review through the process. The group spend a day in each of the schools conducting the review, during which they may tour the school, visit classes, meet with staff, and review documentation as appropriate to the theme. At the end of the day, peers provide feedback to the host headteacher. Schools may then decide to meet again to review the impact of any changes made by the school.
- c. **Whole Education** – the peer review process is designed to support, challenge and celebrate the progress schools are making in providing a whole education and to provide schools with clear next steps for their improvement journey. Schools complete a self-review and identify areas of focus. The reviewer (an experienced, practicing school leader who has received training in the process) spends the day in the school and then feeds back to the headteacher. Schools are able to comment on a draft report which is then finalised and returned to school, along with a certificate from Whole Education.
- d. **CfBT (now Education Development Trust)** – runs a peer review process as part of its schools partnership programme. Schools get access to a two-day training event, plus access to the organisation's peer review framework and tools
- e. **Lincolnshire Learning Partnership** – peer review is established as the foundation of the Lincolnshire Learning Partnership. Schools can access free of charge training on peer review and each school will receive one peer review annually. The process aims to identify excellent practice in schools so that this can be fed into the network of system leaders, as well as helping headteachers to focus their school improvement activity.

Entering into peer review partnerships could be a useful next step for Oswald Road on the way to deeper collaboration as other forms of support from the local authority start to diminish over the coming years.

In a self-improving, fully-autonomous system, leaders need to be as willing to be open about identifying their school's areas for development as they are about their strengths, and the success of the system will depend on all leaders modelling this approach.

Peer review partnerships offer leaders and teachers the opportunity to be open about their successes and areas for development in a trusting, supportive but challenging environment. The process is led by schools for schools and includes monitoring of practice and outcomes for pupils, feeding into school improvement plans, and sharing best practice. Developing and adopting a process of peer review can therefore help to forge trusting professional relationships, as the process requires a high level of mutual professional trust and reciprocity. This type of collaboration, done properly, provides a high level of challenge for schools, whilst also showcasing areas of strength that could be shared or developed with others.

"there has been significant challenge and searching questions prior to and during the reviews: 'comfortably uncomfortable' was how one Headteacher described it. We agreed

a completely open approach to seeing each other's schools 'warts and all', and this has been a tremendous learning experience for the Reviewers too. Excellent practice has been identified in all of the Reviewed schools, and has already begun to be shared across the wider collaboration. "

Headteacher, Lincolnshire

"It is much more than simply a 'one off' challenging conversation. Every school taking part has signed a memorandum of understanding that agrees protocols around the sharing of data and key information, the process of review – from an initial meeting with the lead reviewer (a senior colleague from another school within the partnership) to how the full review itself is conducted... I can honestly say that it is best professional development I have had. The questions I was asked were hard and sufficiently probing, yet I knew that the purpose of the exercise was to support my improvement and that of my team. "

Head of an outstanding school in Lincolnshire

Teaching School Alliances

Teaching schools are outstanding schools that work with others to provide high-quality training and development to new and experienced school staff. The government aims to have a network of 600 teaching schools by October this year (2016). Teaching school alliances are led by a teaching school and include schools that are benefiting from support, as well as strategic partners who lead some aspects of the TSA's training and development. Strategic partners can include local authorities, academy chains, universities, and other schools from any phase or sector. TSAs are loose collaborations with no shared accountability. Teaching schools currently have responsibility for the following six core areas:

1. School-led initial teacher training
2. Continuing professional development
3. Supporting other schools
4. Identifying and developing leadership potential
5. Recruiting and deploying specialist leaders of education (SLEs)
6. Research and development

Recent research commissioned by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL)⁵ has looked in depth at the work of teaching schools and their alliances. The research report concluded the following:

- There is a sustained appetite from eligible schools to apply to become a teaching school and be part of the national initiative. However, there remain variations in teaching school representation across geographical regions and school sectors, with fewer primary and special teaching schools
- Leadership credibility, trustworthiness and resilience are paramount in building and leading a teaching school alliance
- Specific governance and accountability arrangements vary across alliances and most have experienced considerable changes over time
- The nature, forms, operating structures and priorities of teaching school partnerships vary considerably, and are influenced by leaders' values and visions, as well as prior histories of partnership and collaboration

⁵ NCTL, Teaching Schools Evaluation: Final Report, December 2015

- The alliance partnerships benefit from the development of other school-to-school partnerships and institutional networks
- Teaching school alliances and multi-academy trusts (MATs) serve different purposes and their organisational structures and accountability arrangements differ
- Teaching schools have become increasingly confident in their strengths with regard to their six core responsibilities
- The sustainability of the teaching school initiative is seen as a continuing challenge by almost all teaching school alliances which participated in the NCTL evaluation
- The levels of impact of teaching schools and their alliances vary

Federation

Federations are groups of maintained schools, with the term 'hard federation' applying where the schools within the federation operate with a single governing body. 'Soft federation' has been used to refer to schools which have formed a partnership but have retained their own individual governing bodies. The 'hard federation' model is the legal definition of a formal federation of schools.

Whilst formal partnerships, such as with hard federation of schools, are more likely to lead to long-term school improvement, looser collaborations also have an important role to play in a self-improving school system, and may often be a useful first step in moving towards more formal partnerships.

Federations are accountable to their local authority, and schools within the federation are accountable to an over-arching governing board. Depending on the size of the federation, they may choose to establish committees or local governing bodies that sit under the main board and are often concerned with specific areas of work, such as teaching and learning, HR and finance.

In this way, structurally the hard federation model is very similar to the multi-academy trust (MAT) model as it is a formal partnership of the schools within the federation. However, the white paper is clear that all current local authority maintained schools will be in the process of becoming academies by 2020. Therefore devising and/ or entering into a 'hard' structural arrangement that is accountable to the local authority is unlikely to be an option between now and 2020, particularly as the local authorities role in school improvement and management is set to end.

However, there remains the option for schools to federate in an informal way, such that each retains its own governing body, but all schools involved can begin to work in a more structured partnership. Entering into this type of approach – on a time-limited basis - might provide a helpful next step for Oswald Road as it begins to explore which schools it might like to form a more formal partnership with in future. However, as more schools become academies and enter into multi-academy trust arrangements, it may be that fewer neighbouring schools will see soft-federation as either a practical or desirable option.

The 2011 Ofsted report '*Leadership of more than one school: an evaluation of the impact of federated schools*' identified some common features in federations with strong leadership:

- a clear vision and good communication of the benefits that federation brought to pupils, driven by the headteacher but shared by others
- well-developed strategic plans with success criteria shared with all staff
- rigorous procedures for monitoring and evaluating the federation and holding staff to account

- well-established procedures for, and belief in the importance of, developing and coaching leaders at all levels
- continued professional development of staff

Towards becoming or joining a MAT?

Within multi-academy trusts, the following are key elements of effective partnership, which Oswald Road needs to be looking for when it considers joining or forming a MAT:

- Establish a shared set of values and principles
- High quality leadership at all levels – including trustees, CEO, central leadership, corporate functions and school improvement
- Work to clear and consistent protocols – including clear lines of authority, schemes of delegation and internal accountability measures
- A strong sense of partnership and collective improvement - partnering academies in order to share good practice and strengthen academy leadership
- A process of ‘academy reviews’ (peer review) so as to understand the strengths and areas for development of each academy
- Maintain a team of ‘system leaders’ to support newly appointed principals and challenge weaknesses
- Establish online communities where staff can seek advice and share best practice

Working together as a multi-academy trust can allow academies to push and pull each other to achieve even better outcomes for their pupils – a kind of collective moral purpose.

Joining a multi-academy trust

Vision and values

Therefore the first issue to consider is whether the MAT has a strong vision and whether it resonates with Oswald Road’s values and vision for its children.

Some MATs have really got this aspect sorted and it is a real strength:

“WCAT has articulated its vision across its family of academies very successfully. Trust and academy leaders speak enthusiastically about a shared sense of purpose and culture of improvement. ‘Setting children on the right way’, ‘raising staff morale’, and ‘challenge and change with dignity’, are common explanations of the trust’s approach to raising aspirations, achievement and driving improvement.” (Ofsted focused inspection of Wakefield City Academies Trust, May 2015)

Leadership

The next issue to consider is whether the MAT has appropriate and high quality leadership at all levels, in particular with regard to its trustees, governing board, and financial leadership.

“Trustees and managers must have the skills, knowledge and experience to run the academy trust.....”

Each year, academy trusts must provide “a review of the composition of the board in terms of skills, effectiveness, leadership and impact.”

“The academy trust must have a chief financial officer (CFO), appointed by the trust’s board, who is the trust’s finance director, business manager or equivalent, to lead on financial matters. The CFO should play both a technical and leadership role, including ensuring sound and appropriate financial governance and risk management arrangements are in place, preparing and monitoring of budgets, and ensuring the delivery of annual accounts.”

Academies Financial Handbook, 2015

Governance and accountability

Another issue to consider is how the MAT delegates responsibilities at local school level and what these responsibilities are. MATs should communicate the scheme of delegation with both current schools and new schools joining the trust, to ensure clear understanding of roles and responsibilities that exist at all levels of governance. It is important to consider whether the delegation of powers to local governing bodies reflects the spirit of the characteristics of effective governing bodies. If Oswald Road is considering joining a MAT, the senior leadership team and governing body should ask to see the MAT’s scheme of delegation as part of their decision-making process.

“In all types of schools, governing bodies should have a strong focus on three core strategic functions:

- *Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;*
- *Holding the headteacher to account or the educational performance of the school and its pupils; and*
- *Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.*

Governors’ Handbook, DfE, 2014

Partnership

It is clear that leaders, governors and staff at Oswald Road want to be able to make a full contribution to the partnership, so that it can contribute to the wider success of the MAT/partnership, as well as learning from the strengths of others. This element of partnership is essential to the school’s long-term success. Some of the larger MATs have struggled to ensure proper improvement partnerships are in place and have failed many of their pupils as a result.

Capacity for improvement

Consideration also needs to be given as to whether there is sufficient capacity within the MAT to enable support and secure improvement across all of its schools. Again, some established MATs have grown too quickly and spread their improvement resources too thinly. Others, however, have done a great job of utilising the skills of leaders, teachers and other key staff to support schools right across the MAT:

“The cultivation of the skills, competencies and confidence of staff lies at the heart of the trust’s improvement strategy. The trust utilises the skills of its own NLEs, directors (senior staff from the trust who work within and across academies) and subject specialists to provide a range of training and development opportunities to teachers, leaders and staff across the trust. Trust leaders have developed strong links with a range of partners including regional and national universities to raise aspirations of pupils, expectations of teachers, enhance professional development opportunities...” Ofsted co-ordinated Inspection

Given the above evidence, some questions for Oswald Road to ask before joining a MAT might be as follows:

- What gets them out of bed in the morning?
- How do they handle conflict?
- What value does the group bring to the individual schools?
- Who will they not work with and why?
- How big do they plan to get?
- What happens when the leader leaves?
- What is shared and what is delegated?
- How can they support you in the process of joining their MAT and do you need independent legal advice?
- How do the pupils, parents, staff and wider community feel about your school joining this MAT?

When considering joining an established MAT, schools need to be clear about what it is important for the school to retain control of, i.e. what are your non-negotiables? Also, what will be the effect of MAT membership on the pupils, families and staff? This is often the area which puts schools off thinking about joining existing MATs, but there is the option to join with a small number of other partner schools and approach an existing MAT as a hub or cluster. This would potentially enable the cluster of like-minded schools to retain some of their independence whilst also benefitting from the economies of scale and professional development opportunities that come from being part of the MAT. In particular, if the cluster was comprised of already strong schools, the MAT might grant them 'earned autonomy', e.g. more freedoms over curriculum and assessment that might not be offered to weaker schools.

A helpful strategy when considering joining an existing MAT might be to list all the essential features of your own school (the non-negotiables) and then consider these against each MAT option.

Forming a multi-academy trust

A 2014 Department for Education (DfE) commissioned report '*What does a high performing academy sponsor look like*' offered some of the following advice to organisations setting up multi academy trusts – based on the performance of existing MATs:

- Grow carefully, understanding your own capacity and the challenges and risks you take on
- It's advisable to have a mixed portfolio of schools – chains with exclusively primary schools appear to find things tougher
- When planning growth, think consistently in terms of geography and plan your development in terms of clusters
- Focus on delivering great outcomes for the schools you have first before you consider expanding
- Make sure your vision and purpose is well understood throughout your organisation – it is collective ethos that counts
- Nurture leadership internally and make the most of cross-chain CPD and progression opportunities
- As you grow beyond five schools, a full time financial director will be essential
- Clear accountability and governance are vital
- Formulate your business model carefully and look at what others have done
- Strong financial planning is vital

- It is your choice on how prescriptive to be with schools in your chain that are performing well – but take swift and assertive action with failing schools

The experiences of primary school leaders who have established their own smaller MATs (less than five schools) suggests that doing so has had a range of benefits. Establishing a MAT has enabled leaders to bring their vision for the school and for learning to a wider number of schools and to therefore have a positive impact on a wider number of pupils. It has enabled the schools to hold on to good quality staff, as they have the opportunity to develop as teachers and leaders through undertaking different roles across all the schools. The ability to move teachers and leaders between academies within the MAT both provides the opportunity to balance skills and experience but can also lead to more rapid improvement for all the schools. There are also more and more varied opportunities for staff to develop and improve their practice, as they can discuss their practice with a larger number of teaching staff across the schools. Multi-academy trusts also provide headteachers with a career pathway beyond headship to system leadership. There are economies of scale to be gained, even when there are only two or three schools in the partnership, relating to buying power and the ability to share staff posts. There are also savings to be made on staff training, as the MAT can send one person on a training course who can then train other staff across the MAT, rather than having to send a representative from each individual school. Forming a MAT can also lead to a more strategic level of governance, as the governing board responds to its new responsibilities.

Forming a multi-academy trust can be quite a daunting process, in particular if strong schools are partnering with weaker schools as a MAT, in order to better support school improvement. There is therefore a certain amount of reputational risk. The process of forming a MAT is quite complex, so appointing a strong legal team is vital. The most important thing is to be clear about why you are taking this course of action and to ensure that all your stakeholders, including staff, are engaged at the earliest opportunity and are able to contribute in an appropriate way to your plans.

Given the above, some questions for Oswald Road to ask of other schools if it is thinking of forming its own MAT might be:

- Is the chemistry right?
- Is what you offer what they need?
- Be honest from the outset – be clear on what your non-negotiable asks are
- Be clear about governance arrangements – local governing bodies have reduced autonomy
- Staffing structures – be honest if you think a staff restructure is required
- Physical structures – be wary of any issues with school buildings
- Don't be the used car salesman – be clear on the benefits for schools joining you but don't over-promise
- Get early engagement right and take time to build the relationship
- Get independent legal advice to help guide you through the process
- How do the pupils, parents, staff and wider community feel about the school forming its own MAT with other schools?

Finally, Oswald Road colleagues at the strategic development discussion cited the following that they felt would be 'non-negotiables' for the school when considering forming any kind of formal partnership with other schools or with an existing MAT:

- A need to keep the school's own identity – *"we are not a franchise, we are here for the children"*

- Ensuring that all staff and children are respected and treated with dignity
- Ensuring that the school has a role in shaping the trust and that there is a 'spirit of partnership' within the trust

Oswald Road is currently in a relatively secure position, as it is not a 'priority school' for the Department for Education, i.e. it is not a small school, and it does not anticipate being categorised as a 'coasting' school or a school which 'requires improvement'. This means that there is time to think wisely and carefully consider what actions need to be taken to secure the best possible outcomes for the school and its pupils

Recommendations for partnership working

- Keep the focus at all times on the pupils and what the partnership should be doing for them
- Determine your objectives for the partnership up-front, so that you can keep coming back to these to see if your expectations are being met
- Assign a lead individual within school for each major partnership the school is engaged with, to ensure that communication is consistent and that the school's values and vision are always reflected in new partnerships
- Be confident about what your school can offer the partnership, as well as being humble about what the school needs from the partnership
- Be honest and open about your school improvement priorities, to encourage others to be honest and open in return
- Document your partnership working, so that not only does the school have a record of what has been achieved but that this is also available to other agencies to view

Chapter 4: Next steps

- The school should look to capture its 'why', ensuring key values are embedded within governing body meetings and discussions, with agenda items set within 'values' headings to ensure that the focus remains on the school's strategy and vision at all times.
- The school should consider what specific benefits a formal partnership would bring to the school and its staff and pupils.
- The school should consider whether there are existing school-led improvement partnerships it might consider joining and becoming active members of.
- The school should consider entering into a peer review partnership (or equivalent) looking at how it can establish 'hard edged' partnerships that are focused on mutual evaluation and improvement. This will enable the school to enter into deeper partnerships with other schools (perhaps through 'soft' federation?) and provide a potential basis for converting to or establishing a multi-academy trust.
- The school should consider whether its existing partnerships amount to 'deep partnership' and whether these partnerships are actively contributing to the school's wider strategy, values and improvement plan.
- The school should seek to meet with representatives from a range of multi-academy trusts - including both small trusts and larger trusts and including representatives from governing boards and local governing bodies. These meetings should provide an opportunity for governors and senior staff to ask questions of senior representatives of

MATs and their colleagues in governance positions, with reference to the characteristics of successful MATs and also to Oswald Road's long term improvement plans.

- Senior staff at the school should access independent coaching and support from individuals with experience of school improvement and significant organisational change.

A suggested timetable for actions which the school could take on the next stage of its improvement journey are set out in Appendix E.

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APPENDIX A – Summary of education white paper ‘Educational excellence everywhere’

Educational Excellence Everywhere

Summary

The Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, has presented a new white paper to parliament, which sets out the government’s plans for education over the next five years and covers the following areas:

- great teachers – everywhere they’re needed
- great leaders running our schools and at the heart of our system
- a school-led system with every school an academy, empowered pupils, parents and communities and a clearly defined role for local government
- preventing underperformance and helping schools go from good to great: school-led improvement, with scaffolding and support where it’s needed
- high expectations and a world-leading curriculum for all
- fair, stretching accountability, ambitious for every child
- the right resources in the right hands: investing every penny where it can do the most good

The white paper states that, whilst significant progress has been made in improving the English education system, this progress isn’t being felt everywhere. The government is taking the approach of what it terms ‘supported autonomy’, with the aim of driving up standards for all, by ensuring that extra support is available for schools and leaders to draw on where it is needed, while it is needed. The white paper seeks to take the reforms (which aim for a school-led system) to the next level – supporting improvement by building capacity and creating the conditions that will allow schools in all areas to use their freedom effectively.

The following sections summarise the key points from each of the seven areas set out above (*source: DfE*).

Great teachers

Schools will continue to play the central role in the management, training, retention, development, pay and performance-management of existing teachers, particularly as more schools become academies. In turn, work to strengthen school leadership will support more, better leaders to help improve retention.

The government will:

- **Reform the National College for Teaching and Leadership** (NCTL), ensuring that the government is better able to design and deliver well-targeted incentives, teacher recruitment campaigns and opportunities that attract sufficient high quality new entrants to the profession
- Help schools to ensure that enough talented teachers are recruited wherever needed, and help schools to build a diverse workforce, with more opportunities for teachers to work flexibly including through part-time work and job-sharing

- Strengthen university and school-led training, increasing the rigour of ITT content with a greater focus on subject knowledge and evidence-based practice
- Continue to move to an increasingly school-led ITT system which recruits enough great teachers in every part of the country, so that the **best schools and leaders control which teachers are recruited** and how they are trained
- Introduce new quality criteria for ITT providers and allocate training places accordingly, providing greater certainty to the best providers – both school and university-led – by **giving allocations over several years**
- **Replace qualified teacher status (QTS)** with a stronger, more challenging accreditation based on a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom, as judged by great schools. This will raise the quality and status of the teaching profession and will better recognise advanced subject knowledge and pedagogy that is rooted in up-to-date evidence
- Help schools by ensuring that great teachers are encouraged to work where they are most needed, including through the National Teaching Service
- Support teachers to develop their skills through evidence-based continuing professional development and **introduce a new Standard for Teachers’ Professional Development** to help schools improve the quality of CPD
- Support the development of a high status, world-leading teaching profession by supporting the establishment of an independent **College of Teaching**; continuing to reduce unnecessary workload; and increasing teachers’ access to and use of high quality evidence – including supporting the establishment of a **new peer-reviewed British education journal**; and continuing to work in partnership with the **Education Endowment Foundation** to expand its role in improving and spreading the evidence on what works in education

Great leaders

The government’s changes are designed to empower and extend the reach of the best leaders; and to support the school-led system to better develop and train the next generation of strong school and system leaders.

The government will:

- Encourage more leadership development training to be delivered by successful schools – including teaching school alliances and multi-academy trusts (MATs), both of which will grow in areas where they are most needed
- Convene experts to **redesign** voluntary, world-class **National Professional Qualifications** to prepare leaders more effectively for the full range of leadership roles in the new schools system
- Rebalance incentives so that great leaders are not discouraged from working in challenging schools, through a greater emphasis on progress in the accountability system and by **introducing ‘improvement periods’**, during which schools will not be inspected by Ofsted and thereby ensuring time for sustained improvement
- Introduce the new National Teaching Service to support elite teachers and strong middle leaders to move to work in some of the nation’s most challenging areas’ aligning this with existing targeted leadership programmes for maximum impact
- Launch an **Excellence in Leadership Fund** for the best MATs and other providers to develop innovative ideas to tackle significant leadership challenges in areas where great leaders are most needed
- Support schools to develop a strong and diverse pipeline of great school and system leaders, **funding activity aimed at groups who are under-represented in leadership**

positions like women and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender candidates or those from a black and minority ethnic background

- Create stronger expectations on governing boards to fill skills gaps, including through training, with help to recruit skilled people; develop a new competency framework for governance in different contexts; and establish a database of everyone involved in governance. The government intends to legislate so that it can bar unsuitable individuals from being governors or maintained schools

Every school an academy; a clearly defined role for local government

By the end of 2020, all schools will be academies or in the process of becoming academies; and by the end of 2022, local authorities will no longer maintain schools.

The government will:

- Continue to encourage high performing maintained schools to put forward applications to become academies by 2020
- Implement measures in the Education and Adoption Act so that all inadequate schools become sponsored academies and coasting schools are tackled for the first time
- Take powers to direct schools to become academies in underperforming local authority areas of where the local authority no longer has capacity to maintain its schools; or where schools have not yet started the process of becoming an academy by 2020
- Build sponsor capacity; speed up the process of conversion to academy status, and work with the Church of England; Catholic Church and other faith groups to support Church and faith schools to become academies
- **Promote greater collaboration between schools**, particularly through multi-academy trusts, which the government expects most schools will join
- Ensure that the future school system is dynamic, responding to success and failure, and that **RSCs intervene promptly where academies or MATs are underperforming**
- Build on the success of the free school programme to **open 500 new schools by 2020**
- Engage MATs, sponsors, academies, dioceses and the wider schools sector to **create a legal framework for academies that is fit for purpose for the long term**
- Help parents to support their child's education and navigate the schools system, through a **new Parent Portal**
- Ensure school complaints and admissions are clear and fair for all parents and children
- **Define the role of local authorities in education**: ensuring every child has a school place, that the needs of all pupils are met, and championing parents and the local community. **Local authorities will step back from maintaining schools and school improvement**
- **Review the responsibilities of local authorities in relation to children**, including the implications for the roles of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children, in light of the policy changes set out in this white paper

Preventing underperformance; and school-led improvement

Extra support will be provided to stimulate activity in areas of the country where schools are falling behind, building capacity to deliver long term, sustainable self-improvement where it is most needed.

The government will:

- Enable the best leaders to play a wider role by **transferring responsibility for school improvement from local authorities to school and system leaders** to spread expertise and best practice
- Ensure all schools in all areas can choose to access support, collaboration and best practice through full coverage of system leaders across the country
- **Improve how the government designates system leaders** (teaching schools and NLEs) by introducing a more sophisticated approach based on timely and accurate data rather than relying heavily on Ofsted judgements
- Ensure that the work of system leaders is focused, purposeful and evidence-based, and the right incentives and brokerage are in place to encourage them to work with vulnerable schools
- **Provide targeted funding for system leaders** to build capacity through school-to-school support and for RSCs to intervene in failing and coasting schools
- Ensure that there are enough strong academy sponsors available where they are needed, and build sponsor capacity for the long term
- Place a sharp new focus on '**Achieving Excellence Areas**' – where too few children have access to a good school and there are insufficient high quality teachers, leaders, system leaders and sponsors – to enable the school-led system to deliver rapid and sustainable improvement

High expectations and a world-leading curriculum for all

Every child should receive a 21st century education that equips them with the knowledge and character necessary for success in modern Britain.

The government will:

- Continue to equip schools to embed a knowledge-based curriculum as the cornerstone of an excellent, academically rigorous education to age 16; establishing the national curriculum as an ambitious benchmark that autonomous academies can use and improve on
- Increase support for teachers to deliver this stretching curriculum effectively, including by encouraging greater use of **evidence-based teaching materials** to raise standards and cut unnecessary workload
- Reform primary assessment to help ensure every child leaves primary schools with the essential building blocks to succeed at secondary
- Continue to embed reforms to assessment and qualifications, including more robust and rigorous GCSEs and A levels; and the expectation that the vast majority of pupils will study the **English Baccalaureate**
- Ensure a knowledge-based curriculum is complemented by the development of the character traits and fundamental British values that help children succeed, and make available funding so that it is easier for **25% of secondary schools to extend their school day** to include a wider range of activities, such as sport, arts and debating
- **Publish a strategy for improved careers provision** for young people and further support The Careers & Enterprise Company
- Help schools provide the right support for children of all abilities; stretching their lowest-attaining and most academically able pupils and focusing on the outcomes and experiences of all children and young people with special educational needs and disability
- Reform the alternative provision system so that **mainstream schools remain accountable for the education of pupils in AP** and are responsible for commissioning high quality provision

Fair, stretching accountability

Fair, robust, ambitious accountability is vital to monitor standards in schools, identify schools and areas that need extra support, and ensure children receive the education they deserve.

The government will:

- Embed reforms to primary, secondary and 16-19 accountability that focus on the progress of all pupils, and their destinations; and highlighting where a school is doing better for a child than the same child would have done elsewhere
- Work with Ofsted to ensure **inspection is fair and increasingly focused on underperformance**, where it can add most value. Ofsted will consult on removing the separate graded judgements on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to help clarify that the focus of inspection is on outcomes and to reduce burdens on schools and teachers
- **Launch new accountability measures for MATs, publishing MAT performance tables** in addition to the continued publication of, and focus on, inspection and performance data at individual school level
- Publish improved and more accessible school performance data to inform school choice and help parents and governing boards to hold schools to account
- Ensure RSCs are able to commission support and intervention for schools identified as underperforming. Headteacher Boards will provide an important check and balance for academy leader to scrutinise and challenge the decisions of RSCs

The right resources in the right hands

Fairer and clearer funding of schools based on the needs and characteristics of pupils, and the best use of these funds.

The government will:

- Introduce new, **fair national funding formulae** for schools, and for allocating high needs funding to local authorities for special educational needs and alternative provision
- **Improve the effectiveness of pupil premium spending** by encouraging schools to adopt evidence-based strategies, drawing on evidence from the EEF
- **Support schools to improve their financial health and efficiency** through tools, guidance and direct support such as training and better national frameworks for procurement
- **Improve and maintain the school estate** to ensure that those responsible for school buildings get a fair share of funding and have the right incentives to make effective use of the school estate. Continue to rebuild and refurbish schools in the worst condition across the country

Further details can be found in the white paper:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/educational-excellence-everywhere>; and in the associated press release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nicky-morgan-unveils-new-vision-for-the-education-system>; and Nicky Morgan's speech: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nicky-morgan-educational-excellence-everywhere>

APPENDIX B – Current TSAs operating within five miles of Oswald Road Primary School;

There are a number of teaching school alliances (TSAs) within five miles of Oswald Road, which might potentially provide opportunities for further partnership working; although the school is already a member (but not full partner) of the Manchester Teaching School Alliance.

- Trafford TSA – 0.68 miles
- Manchester TSA – 0.92 miles
- Everyonelearning@ TSA – 2.19 miles
- Ashton on Mersey TSA – 3.06 miles
- The Manchester Schools' Alliance Teaching School ('Teach Manchester') – 4.18 miles
- Gatley TSA – 4.19 miles
- St Patrick's Salford TSA – 4.44 miles
- Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College TSA – 4.86 miles

APPENDIX C: Academies within five miles of Oswald Road

Within 5 miles of the school, there are also 33 primary mainstream academies, 39 secondary academies and 1 all-through academy.

Within one mile of the school there are 12 other primary schools, and 1 secondary school (Chorlton High School).

APPENDIX D: Academy Trusts operating within the local area

There are a number of existing multi-academy trusts (MATs) which are based in or serve the local area, some of which are briefly described below:

The Dean Trust

Led by Ashton on Mersey Teaching School, The Dean Trust operates in three local authorities (Manchester, Trafford and Knowsley) and there are now six primary and secondary schools and academies in the trust.

"All of our schools and academies are part of their local community and have a real sense of identity. Notwithstanding this we expect the highest possible standards and we always look to 'level-up' to our best school." Mr Tarun Kapur CBE, Chief Executive and Academy Principal

CHS Learning Trust

CHS Learning Trust is a partnership between Newell Green High School and Chorlton High School.

“Our aim is to develop Outstanding schools for the local community, providing the very best educational opportunities for our students irrespective of their ability or background.”

Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust

Wythenshawe Catholic Academy Trust is a MAT of three Catholic primary schools and one Catholic secondary school.

“The collective strength and support of the MAT should provide strength and support to its member academies for any future challenges in the years ahead.”

Bright Tribe Academy Trust

Bright Tribe is a MAT of three secondary schools and four primary schools, operating across the country but with one of the primary schools in Oldham, Greater Manchester.

“Our aim is to break down the barriers that limit educational progress. We do this through adopting a personal learning pathway for every child – one that takes account of individual needs, aspirations and talents.”

Dunham Trust

The Dunham Trust is a partnership between Elmridge Primary School and Acre Hall Primary School in Trafford.

“We aim to ensure that, for everyone involved, excellence and equity become and remain a reality”

Beaver Road Academy Trust

Beaver Road Academy Trust is a MAT but with currently only one school – Beaver Road Primary School in Didsbury, Manchester.

“I believe excellent teaching gives children the life chances they deserve. Our school does not fail any child.” David How, Headteacher

Tauheedul Education Trust

Tauheedul Education Trust was originally established in the North West but now runs primary and secondary schools across the country. TET's network includes both faith and non-faith schools. The schools are located in five cluster areas – Lancashire, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, the West Midlands and London.

“We aspire to create outstanding organisations that promote educational excellence, character development and service to communities.”

Prestolee Trust

Prestolee Trust is a MAT with currently one school – Prestolee Primary School in Radcliffe, Manchester, but with another school – Bowness Community Primary School in Bolton - soon to join the trust.

“At Prestolee we feel that the school should provide the foundation and opportunities for the children in our care to become well rounded and capable individual members of a society which continually evolves and develops”.

Oasis Community Learning

Oasis Community Learning is a MAT with a large number of academies across the country, but with five academies in Manchester and the surrounding area.

“We want all our students to achieve their very best, have access to high quality cultural experiences and develop the social skills that allow them to flourish in any context and lead fulfilled lives.”

Appendix E: Timetable for action

Action	Timescale
Raise the idea of partnering with one or more other schools with members of the school’s governing body and hold a strategic discussion	Completed – 30 March 2016
Form a small working part of governors and senior staff to begin to identify and research schools which Oswald Road might be particularly interested in partnering with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Ofsted reports • Analyse their data • Consider the local reputation of the school • For academies or MATs – look at their annual report and financial statements 	Ongoing until January 2017
Talk to your key contact within the LA to discuss your options	Ongoing until December 2016
Meet potential partner schools (heads and governors) and also potential existing partner TSAs and MATs for informal discussions regarding partnership	Ongoing until March 2017
Hold informal discussions with key stakeholders – staff, parents, community, pupils – about potential partnerships	Ongoing until June 2017

<p>Hold a full governing body meeting for the working party to report back its findings and to agree a preferred course of subsequent action</p>	<p>June 2017</p>
<p>Hold open meetings with key stakeholders to discuss your preferred option and invite their views:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meeting • Q&A session for parents • Special assembly for pupils 	<p>July 2017</p>
<p>Before joining a MAT, ask to see their Scheme of Delegation (SoD)</p> <p>If forming your own MAT with other schools, develop your SoD as a collective</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>