



# Where next for the self-improving school system?

## GETTING SYSTEM GOVERNANCE RIGHT

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TEACHING SCHOOLS COUNCIL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CONFEDERATION OF SCHOOL TRUSTS,  
SUPPORTED BY

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## STEERING THE SCHOOL-LED SYSTEM

*Every child in a great school.*

### FOREWORD

Teaching schools have come a long way since the very first pioneers were designated back in 2010. This exciting journey has taken us to a place where there are now over 800 teaching schools distributed across the 8 regions of the country, typically working in groups or alliances of schools, some of which can be quite large. The remit is clear and remains similar to its initial iteration, namely to deliver on the “Big 3” of initial teacher training, CPLD and school-to-school support.

In saying their remit remains the same, this is true, but the landscape has changed significantly and so has the scale of the work, the challenges and the opportunities. Over the past two years teaching schools have been at the heart of driving the school-led system, working collaboratively with the DfE, RSCs, MATs, Local Authorities, Dioceses as well as with smaller partnerships and federations of schools.

Leading and steering the work of teaching schools is the responsibility of the Teaching Schools Council (TSC), an elected and seconded council of head teachers from teaching schools, Multi Academy Trust CEOs and Teaching School Directors that represents all the teaching schools and their alliances throughout England. Our overarching aim is clear, and is the focus of all we do: to ensure that every child and young person, in every part of the country, has access to a place in a great school. This is our prize, this is our goal, and we are determined to play our part in making this vision a reality.

But the very nature of our vision causes us to stop, take stock and look ahead. As we play a leading role in the school-led system, not least in the opportunities afforded us by the Strategic School Improvement Fund, it is natural for us to reflect on the journey that the school-led system has already travelled and to consider what role teaching schools could and should play in the future. In short, we want to move thinking on from “*What now?*” to “*What next?*”, and even to “*What could be?*”

So, we have started asking ourselves, our partners, our stakeholders a series of questions, and through our discussions to come to a clearer understanding. This document aims to give an interpretation of where are now, using this as a spring-board to look ahead with optimism and some clarity to where we could be. We offer it as an honest contribution to the direction of travel for the school-led system, a system and idea to which we are passionately committed.

I would like to thank Leora Cruddas for her perception and wisdom in not only understanding what we were trying to express, but also in constructing this think-piece and making sense of what is a very complex educational landscape. Thank you, Leora! I'd also like to thank Nick MacKenzie and Browne Jacobson for their generous support of the roundtable. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my Teaching School Council colleagues, and particularly Stephen Munday, who have all played their part in helping us to reach this point in our journey.

Andrew Warren  
Chair of the Teaching Schools Council

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**It is eight years since David Hargreaves published the first of his think pieces on the self-improving school system. And it is three years since ASCL published ‘Leading the Way: A Blueprint for a Self-Improving System.’**

**The early signs of a self-improving school system can be found prior to 2010, for example with the introduction of national leaders of education. However, it was the 2010 White Paper ‘The Importance of Teaching’ which set out a plan to establish a national network of teaching schools as part of the policy aim of developing a self-improving school system. In the same year, the Academies Act established the legislative context for the extraordinary rise of autonomous schools and groups of schools that has characterised the last eight years of the English education system.**

**Over the last eight years, the organisation and structures of the system have changed irreversibly but the extent to which standards have risen in all areas of the country is less clear cut, and indeed some areas are still left behind. It is now timely to consider where next for the self-improving school system in England.**

## **So why a self-improving school system?**

In his original think piece, Hargreaves argued that “in an era of diminishing centralisation, accelerating the rate and depth of school improvement and reducing the number of underperforming schools requires a new vision.”<sup>1</sup> Increased decentralisation, he argues, offers an opportunity for us to do something different – and potentially visionary.

Hargreaves goes on to propose that the quality of school leadership since the 1980s has increased substantially. Additionally, most schools are now used to managing in fairly autonomous ways and working as part of a network or networks. Leaders are now much more aware of schools as a system.

ASCL’s blueprint for a self-improving system starts with a bold statement about imagination, courage and collective action.<sup>2</sup> The blueprint sets out a vision for the English education system. At its heart, ASCL argues, is capacity building – leadership capacity, pedagogical capacity and the capacity for creativity and action.

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<sup>1</sup> Hargreaves, D. (2010) *Creating a self-improving school system*. NCSL. Page 3.

<sup>2</sup> Cruddas, L. (2015) *Leading the Way: Blueprint for a self-improving system*. ASCL.

This is heady stuff. England has one of the most autonomous education systems in the world. We are collectively involved in a Grand Design of our education system – one that puts the professionalism of school leaders at the very heart of the system.

The challenge for us now is to ensure that the self-improving school system is a *national* system, one that includes all geographical areas – and that what might be dismissed as simply rhetoric becomes reality.

Here is a new opportunity to lead. Let's make sure we grasp it.

## Overview of our current system

The system has changed in very significant ways since 2010 when the large majority of schools were maintained by local authorities. There are now more than 800 teaching school alliances in England. More than two thirds of secondary schools and slightly more than a quarter of primary schools are now academies. The growth of groups of schools in multi-academy trusts has been exponential.

Alongside these changes, we have seen the retraction of local authority school improvement services as settlements have reduced year-on-year, the abolition of the Education Services Grant, and a rise of education partnerships and traded school improvement services.

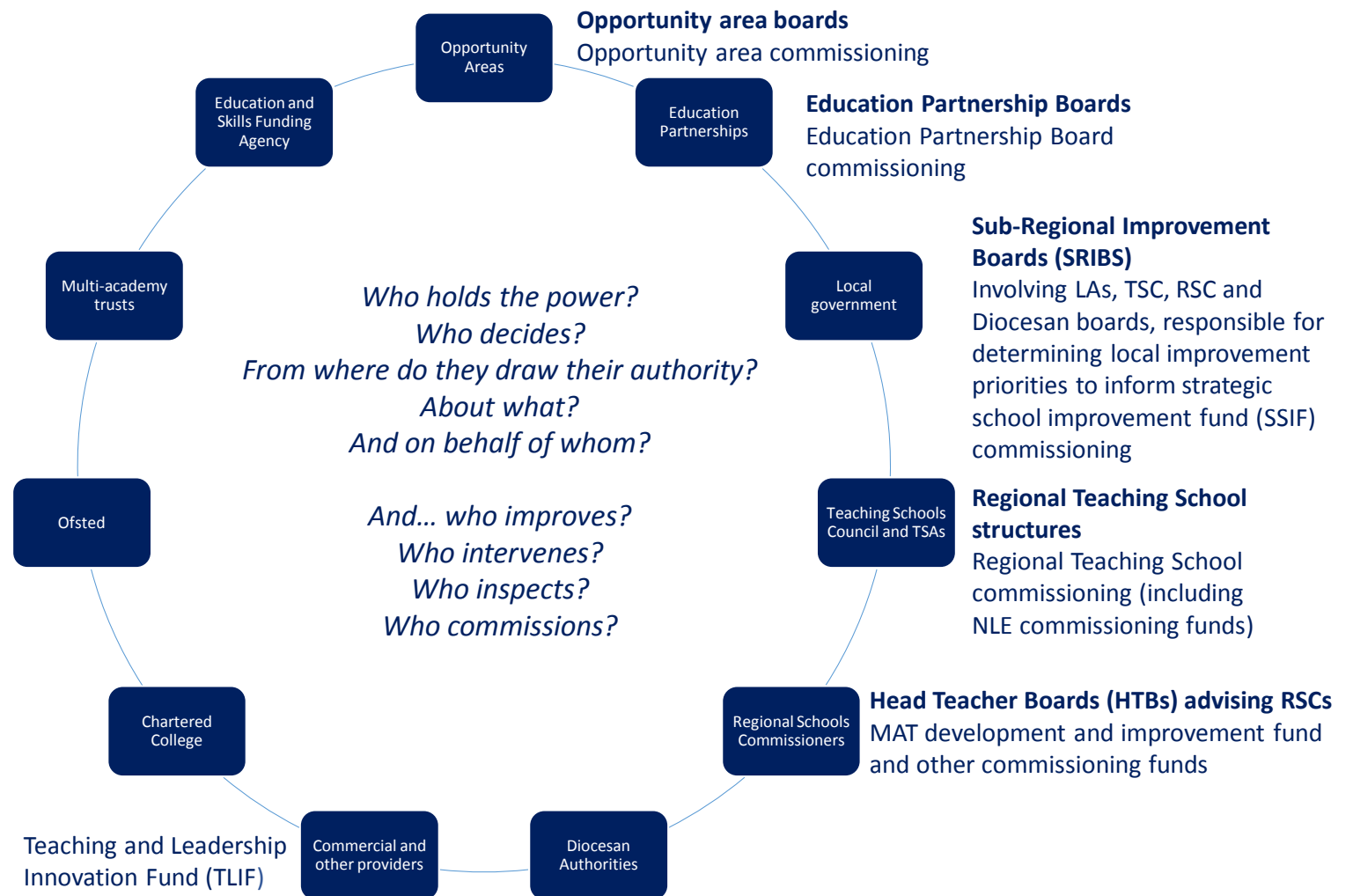
The collective mind set about school improvement has shifted from that of 'experts' outside of schools largely in school improvement services, to a strong belief that school improvement expertise lies within schools. Commissioning of school improvement is increasingly following this trend with large budgets available through for example the Strategic School Improvement Fund and the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund.

More recently, there has been a policy focus on place-based improvement and the commissioning of 'opportunity areas' with their own discrete governance structures and funding streams.

Oversight of the school system has also changed. Previously, local authorities had oversight of the local school system and, since 2006, powers to intervene in underperforming schools. 2014 saw the introduction of regional schools commissioners (RSCs) to exercise oversight over the rapidly growing academies sector. Their role was expanded in 2015 to include responsibility for approving the conversion of underperforming maintained schools into academies and deciding on their sponsors. The RSCs - and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) - now form part of an increasingly complicated system of oversight, accountability and inspection – in other words, of system governance.

Figure one below, provides a map of what we might call 'system actors' – organisations which, in the broadest terms, have a role in school improvement and/or oversight of the system.

**Figure one: where are we now?**



In the context of answering the question: ‘where next for the self-improving school system?’ it is perhaps timely to consider how we might align the respective system actors to optimise improvement while exercising good system governance.

In a recent speech, the Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State for Education, said: “I also know that schools can at times feel accountable to multiple masters, and even subject to multiple ‘inspections’. That is why I will be making a statement ... to clarify the roles of the different actors in the system.”<sup>3</sup>

On 4<sup>th</sup> May, the Secretary of State published a statement outlining principles for a clear and simple accountability system.

We are pleased to see in the Secretary of State’s statement so many of the principles and policy positions outlined in this think piece. We see the statement as a first step towards putting school leaders back in the driving seat of a self-improving school system.

But our think piece goes beyond accountability and makes the case for good system governance. It is only if we understand system governance, that we will be able to clarify properly the roles of different actors in the system.

It is our view that a self-improving school system is *not* characterised by complete autonomy – or put another way, the self-improving school system is not one in which there is no element of top-down control. Good system governance is key to ensuring the system is serving the needs of all children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

This think piece argues for a genuine orchestration and public declaration that we *are* a self-improving school system.

We want a system in which all children and young people achieve, regardless of their needs, background or perceived intelligence.

We want a system in which every child is entitled to be in a great school.

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<sup>3</sup> Damian Hinds’ speech to the ASCL conference, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2018.



## What do we mean by system governance?

We use the [Institute on Governance](#) definition: “The need for governance exists anytime a group of people come together to accomplish an end.” While the ultimate end may be contested, perhaps we can accept for the purposes of our argument here that the end or desirable outcome of our school system is that all children and young people achieve - and every child is educated in a great school.

Our working definition of governance rests on four dimensions:

- **Authority** – who holds the power?
- **Decision-making** – who decides?
- **Legitimacy** - from where do they draw their authority?
- **Accountability** – for what and on behalf of whom?

The Institute’s working definition of governance reflects these dimensions: “Governance determines who has power, who makes decisions, how other players make their voice heard and how account is rendered.”

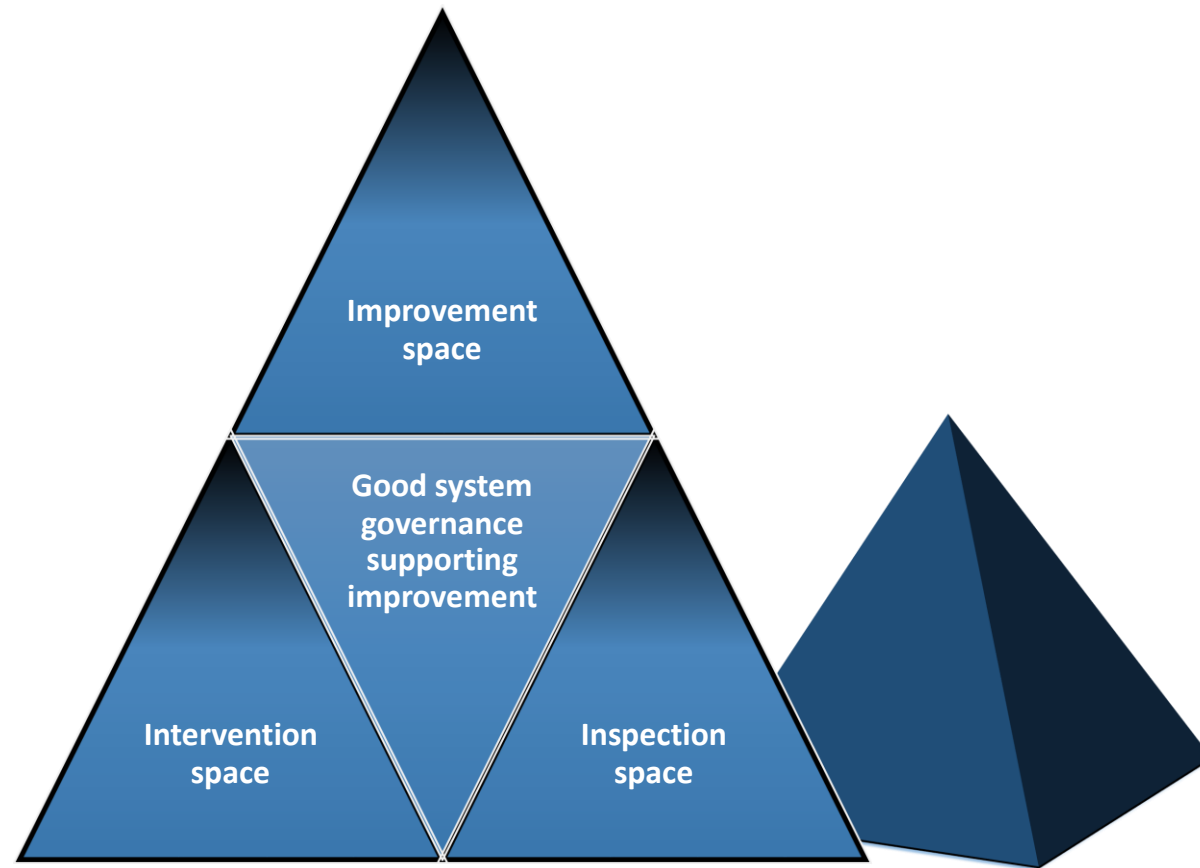
We think that ‘governance’ is preferable to talking about ‘accountability’ as accountability is only one part of good governance. The relentless policy focus on accountability at school level (through Ofsted and performance measures) in the recent past has given perhaps undue emphasis to this feature of system governance.

We are therefore interested in how the improvement imperative in a self-improving school system is supported by good governance – as opposed to high stakes, often adverse accountability. The ‘improvement imperative’ is not to just provide remedial support, as too often characterised, but also to drive even more effective practice and then share it.

In this think piece, we propose that those with authority and power to make the decisions – to exercise good governance of the system – are all focused on being a force for improvement. For this to happen, the roles and responsibilities of those with authority and power have to be aligned. And the roles of those actually responsible for improvement also need to be clear – ultimately, it is the leader of the institution that needs to drive its own improvement.

A triangle is the strongest geometric shape because any added force is evenly spread through all three sides. Therefore, we think the concept of good governance supporting system improvement can be represented as a triangle, or perhaps to create more three-dimensionality, a pyramid. We will explore each of the ‘spaces’ in the triangle or pyramid in turn and discuss how they need to align in order to drive improvement.

**Figure two: the triangle of good system governance**



# The inspection space

## Ofsted

### Authority

Ofsted was set up by an Act of Parliament – the Education (Schools) Act 1992, initially to inspect schools, although its inspection and regulatory remit is now much wider. It holds the power to inspect schools.

### Decision making

Inspectors make decisions at a particular point in time on the basis of data and the quality of education. They reach decisions based on a published inspection framework.

### Legitimacy

Ofsted draws its authority from Parliament.

### Accountability

Ofsted is ultimately accountable. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is appointed by an Order-in-Council and thus is an office holder under the Crown. Inspection reports giving judgements about the quality of education at a specific point in time are for the benefit of parents, tax payers, schools and the government.

Inspection is an essential part of good governance in a self-improving school system. It is the independent verification of the quality of provision. Valid and reliable inspection should enable schools and trusts to take action that leads to improvement, and develop the capacity for improvement. The inspectorate however has no executive powers in relation to schools and trusts. This means that it has no powers to intervene and require changes when a school is judged not to meet expected standards.

The inspectorate is not an improvement agency. This is a crucial distinction and one in which the current HMCI, Amanda Spielman, is very clear about. She wants Ofsted to be a force for improvement, not an improvement agency. Inspection is also not the same as peer review and peer review can never replace an independent inspectorate. Peer review is one of a range of quality assurance mechanisms that can be used by school leaders. Peer review is essential in a self-improving school system – it is one of the mechanism by which the system improves itself. It is an improvement tool. Peer review does not belong in the inspection space – it belongs in the improvement space.

**RECOMMENDATION: The inspectorate should have a role in the aggregation of insights as it acknowledges in its recent strategy. It should comment on practice in the system and the outcomes that that practice is leading to. This is one of the ways in which it acts as a force for improvement, without becoming an improvement agency.**

# The intervention space

## Regional Schools Commissions (RSCs)

### Authority

RSCs are civil servants who hold their power on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. Acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, they draw their authority from an Act of Parliament – the 2006 Education and Inspections Act which provides a power to intervene in schools in very specific circumstances, defined by legislation. This includes unacceptably low standard of performance, a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed; and/or or when the safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened. The Education and Adoption Act 2016 amended the 2006 Act to provide powers when a school is judged inadequate by Ofsted or falls within the coasting definition defined by regulations.

### Decision making

They make decisions about approving new academies and intervening in underperforming academies in their area. They are also responsible for intervening in and approving the conversion of underperforming maintained schools into academies and making the decision on sponsors. They make decisions about the support a school that meets the coasting definition may need, following an initial discussion and based on the available evidence. They make recommendations to ministers on free school applications and make decisions about significant changes to an existing academy or multi-academy trust. They are advised by elected Head Teacher Boards (HTBs).

### Legitimacy

RSCs draw their authority from the Secretary of State.

### Accountability

RSCs are accountable to the Secretary of State through the Office of the National Schools Commissioner. Unlike Ofsted, they exercise 'executive' power in that they can use powers of intervention to bring about structural change in a school where standards are not good enough. They do not inspect. They exercise their power for the benefit of children and young people, parents, tax payers and Parliament.

## **Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)**

### **Authority**

The ESFA is the financial regulator of academies. It also has a remit in relation to further education, sixth-form colleges and training providers. The ESFA does not regulate local authority maintained schools.

### **Decision making**

The ESFA intervenes where there is risk of failure or where there is evidence of mismanagement of public funds through issuing a Financial Notice to Improve or other sanctions set out in the Academies Financial Handbook.

### **Legitimacy**

The ESFA is an executive agency of the DfE and draws its authority from the Secretary of State for Education.

### **Accountability**

The ESFA is accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. It provides assurance that public funds are properly spent, achieves value for money for the tax payer and delivers the policies and priorities set by the Secretary of State and in line with HM Treasury and Parliamentary rules on public funding and value for money.

## **Local authorities**

### **Authority**

Community schools are maintained or controlled by their local authority. Local authorities also have a role in maintaining foundation schools and voluntary controlled and aided schools, which have more freedom to change the way they do things than community schools.

### **Decision making**

Local authorities have a very wide range of statutory responsibilities and decision making powers, for example, SEND and admissions. In relation to school improvement, they have powers of intervention in schools they maintain. Like RSCs, they have powers to intervene in maintained schools where standards are unacceptably low, there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed or when the safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened. There is no requirement on local authorities to have school improvement services, but they do still have the duty to promote high standards.

### **Legitimacy**

Local authorities draw their authority from directly elected councillors.

### **Accountability**

Local authorities are accountable ultimately to the local electorate.

Intervention, like inspection, is an essential part of good governance in a self-improving school system. They are the ways in which the state exercises stewardship of the system and accountability towards children, parents and tax payers. Both should be forces for improvement, but not improvement agencies.

The intervention space is clearly crowded. There is significant duplication of authority and decision making in relation to maintained schools where local authorities and the RSCs both have powers of intervention – but the Education and Adoption Act 2016 makes clear the RSCs’ powers trump those of the local authority.

In relation to academies, there is a lack of alignment between the powers of intervention exercised by RSCs and those exercised by the ESFA. For example, non-compliance with the requirement to set a balanced budget is often indicative not just of serious financial issues but also governance issues. This impacts on a trust’s capacity to sustain its improvement and secure good standards of performance. Solutions to financial issues are also likely to be about the strategic future of the organisation and curriculum-led.

There is also some duplication between RSCs and Ofsted. Only Ofsted has the statutory power to inspect schools. RSCs should not undertake activity that may be perceived as ‘inspection.’

Although there is a legislative basis and statutory guidance to the authority and decision-making powers of Intervention Authorities, there are no published framework or procedures, or rather no co-ordinated framework that brings it all together.

**RECOMMENDATION: We believe there should be a consolidation of authority and decision making in the intervention space in order to bring about clearer alignment and transparency in the form of published frameworks for decision-making. It may not be helpful that funding is merged with regulation in relation to the ESFA. The DfE should consider the creation of a single Intervention Actor.**

# The improvement space

## School leaders

### Authority

School leaders (defined here as the head teacher or executive leader) hold the authority and professional responsibility for improving their school or group of schools. School leadership is of course distributed in a school or Trust, but ultimate authority sits with the head or executive leader.

### Decision making

School leaders are the decision makers in relation to school improvement.

### Legitimacy

School leaders draw their authority from the governing board or trust board who appoint them.

### Accountability

Governing boards (trust boards for academies and multi-academy trusts) hold the head teacher or executive leader to account for both educational and financial performance. This accountability is clearer for academy and multi-academy trusts, which are their own legal entities. Ultimately, the buck stops with the Trust Board.

## Drivers, enablers and inhibitors of improvement

School leaders are the **drivers** of improvement – the people who hold the responsibility and accountability for improvement in their school or group of schools.

But school leaders can draw on bodies and organisations that we will call the **enablers** of school improvement – other schools including teaching schools, local authority school improvement services, education partnerships, commercial providers.

The enablers help a school or trust by bringing additional capacity to support the school leader to execute their improvement strategy more effectively. Importantly, the enablers hold no authority and are not decision makers. The enablers are accountable first and foremost to the school or Trust to whom they are providing support. This should be the case even if they are accountable under conditions of grant elsewhere – for example through the DfE's Strategic School Improvement Fund. They might be accountable to the DfE for targets as a condition of grant but they cannot and should not assume that they have authority in relation to the school or trust they are supporting.

The *only* situation where this is not the case, and the enabler holds both the authority and accountability is where it has been appointed by an Intervention Body (RSC or Local Authority) to provide support to the school or trust as part of statutory intervention, for example an interim executive board.

Finally, **inhibitors** are those agents, bodies or organisations who seek to assume an authority they do not in fact have. Inhibitors might also overwhelm a school or trust by attempting to secure an improvement journey by providing too much support on too many fronts by too many agents. 'Improvement' done this way is neither secure nor sustainable.

## **Place-based improvement and local governance**

We are increasingly seeing a move towards place-based improvement initiatives in the improvement space. We want to focus on three here:

- The opportunity areas and opportunity area boards
- Sub-regional improvement boards
- Education partnerships and their boards

### **Opportunity areas**

Opportunity areas are part of the government's national plan for dealing with social mobility through education. Opportunity areas have significant sums of money (a share of £72 million plus £22 million through a new Essential Life Skills programme). Each opportunity area has a local board and is required to publish a plan.

### **Sub-regional improvement boards**

Each sub-region of England is now part of a sub-regional improvement board. The purpose of the boards is to stimulate and identify recommendations for prioritising the Strategic School Improvement Fund (£140 million a year over two years), support the monitoring of the impact of funded proposals within the area and use the combined expertise of the different parts of the education system in the sub-region to enable a strategic partnership forum for mapping, facilitating and communicating support available for access by all schools. The boards are not decision-making but rather advisory. The Teaching School Council, Local Authority, Diocesan Board of Education and Regional Schools Commissioner all have a role on the sub-regional improvement board.

### **Education Partnerships and their boards**

Some local areas have set up (or are setting up) local education partnerships. These take different forms. Some are vehicles for traded school improvement services, others are more school-led and subscription-based. Typically, they have local boards providing strategic direction and leadership.



## Local boards as drivers, enablers or inhibitors?

Place-based improvement is crowded with a variety of local governing boards. While each of these partnerships arguably performs a different and discrete role, the risk that this poses is a duplication of effort and commissioning intentions that are not necessarily aligned. In the worst case scenario, these entirely laudable partnerships may actually act as **inhibitors** – the very opposite of what they set out to be.

We have said above that we need to hold the line that school leaders are the drivers of school improvement in their school or trust. Good locality-informed commissioning can certainly be an **enabler** of improvement.

However, we would like to put forward the idea that place-based improvement might also be a significant **driver** of improvement at the meso-level<sup>4</sup>. Done well, place-based approaches offer a meso-level of analysis and can be designed to connect micro- and macro-level policy.

**RECOMMENDATION:** In order for place-based approaches to be a real strategic driver at the meso-level, we believe there needs to be at least better alignment – and probably consolidation. At the moment, it is not easy to answer our four questions: Who holds the power? Who decides? From where do they draw their authority? For what and on behalf of whom? We recommend that a single board is established at the sub-regional level to drive place-based improvement.

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<sup>4</sup> Meso-level is defined as a population size that falls between the micro-level of the school or local trust and macro-level of government. It is in our view a more desirable term than ‘middle tier’ which we feel is now very ideologically loaded.

## Multi-Academy Trusts in the Improvement Space

Back to our principle that school leaders are the drivers of improvement – the people who hold the responsibility and accountability for improvement in their school or group of schools.

When we claim that school leaders are the drivers of improvement, we do not mean that this is the wholly the responsibility of the person at the top – the head, executive head or chief executive. The person at the top is ultimately accountable and has the final authority, but the leadership of improvement will be distributed across the organisation.

Increasingly, schools are grouping together and although there are other legal vehicles, the most common legal structure for the group is the multi-academy trust.

The multi-academy trust is not a panacea for all things good or bad. It is simply a legal vehicle. It provides the legal basis for schools to group together in strong and sustainable structures. A system in which groups of schools work collectively in deep collaborations to improve outcomes for pupils.

The position outlined in *Multi-academy trusts: Good practice guidance and expectations for growth* is:

“There are, of course, many different and vital forms of partnerships that support school improvement, including teaching school alliances [discussed below]. These can complement and enhance the benefits of multi-academy trusts, but they are not a substitute for them. When weak schools join MATs it is not just a matter of drawing on the expert support to help them improve, but rather the trust’s leaders are responsible and accountable for whether they do, in fact, improve.”<sup>5</sup>

The multi-academy trust is ‘hard’ governance in the sense that schools join the legal entity that is the Trust. The Trust itself holds the authority, makes the decisions and is ultimately accountable for the improvement.

The multi-academy trust is therefore the **driver** of improvement for the schools in its group.

The challenge for MAT leaders now is to deliver on a larger, systemic scale and for the system to begin to hold itself to account. The perspective of MAT leaders needs to be outward-looking and purposeful, for example a MAT should take decisions that are right for all children and young people in the area or region, not just those that are right for organisation.

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<sup>5</sup> DfE (2016) *Multi-academy trusts: Good practice guidance and expectations for growth*. Page 8.

The single charitable object of all MATs is the advancement of education in the public interest. MAT leaders need to balance their duties to the trust as a charity while also pursuing and the wider public benefit of education.

## Teaching Schools in the Improvement Space

Teaching schools and teaching school alliances are key **enablers** of improvement. They can bring additional capacity to support the school leader to execute their improvement strategy more effectively in their school or trust. But they do more than this.

Currently, the remit of teaching schools is three-fold:

- School-led Initial Teacher Training;
- Professional and leadership development; and
- School-to-school support.

But there is a lot of variation in the system.

We need to be very clear about what we want teaching schools to do – the legacy of the ‘Big 6’ is still quite strong and we do not want teaching schools to become simply the trading bodies of academy or multi-academy trusts.

Drawing on teaching hospitals, we might say that teaching schools could pilot specialist areas where we need to innovate. For example, Nottingham Hospital became the beacon of innovation in emergency care. Other Hospital Trusts looked to Nottingham in this regard.

If we construct the improvement space more widely to capture the role of schools and trusts to provide education and training to future and current teachers, then we may wish to strengthen this role of teaching schools and alliances. We may wish to move away from teaching schools as ‘remediation.’

In this way, teaching schools and alliances become the strategic drivers of teacher education and innovation at the meso-level

However this begs a question about whether teaching schools are at the right unit size. Do we need one thousand teaching schools or a smaller number with greater expertise and strategic intent?

**RECOMMENDATION: We need a clearer articulation of the role of teaching schools and alliances in the emerging system. How many do we need? What roles do we want teaching schools and alliances to perform? How do we ensure geographical spread?**

## How could this all fit together?

The three parts of the triangle or pyramid need to be held in careful alignment in order that the system is strong and resilient. Both inspection and the intervention authorities need to be **forces for improvement**, without seeing themselves as improvement agencies.

School leaders are the **drivers of improvement** in their school or group of schools.

The **enablers of improvement** provide much-needed capacity and when they align with the school or trust's own improvement strategy and trajectory, can provide enormous forward momentum. They need to align laterally to ensure that they become enablers of improvement at the meso-level.

Place-based improvement can also be a strategic driver if it offers robust evidence-informed analyses to reach aggregate solutions that will have a sustainable effect on improvement locally. There should be a single place-based improvement body or board which works locally to bring the various enablers of improvement together.

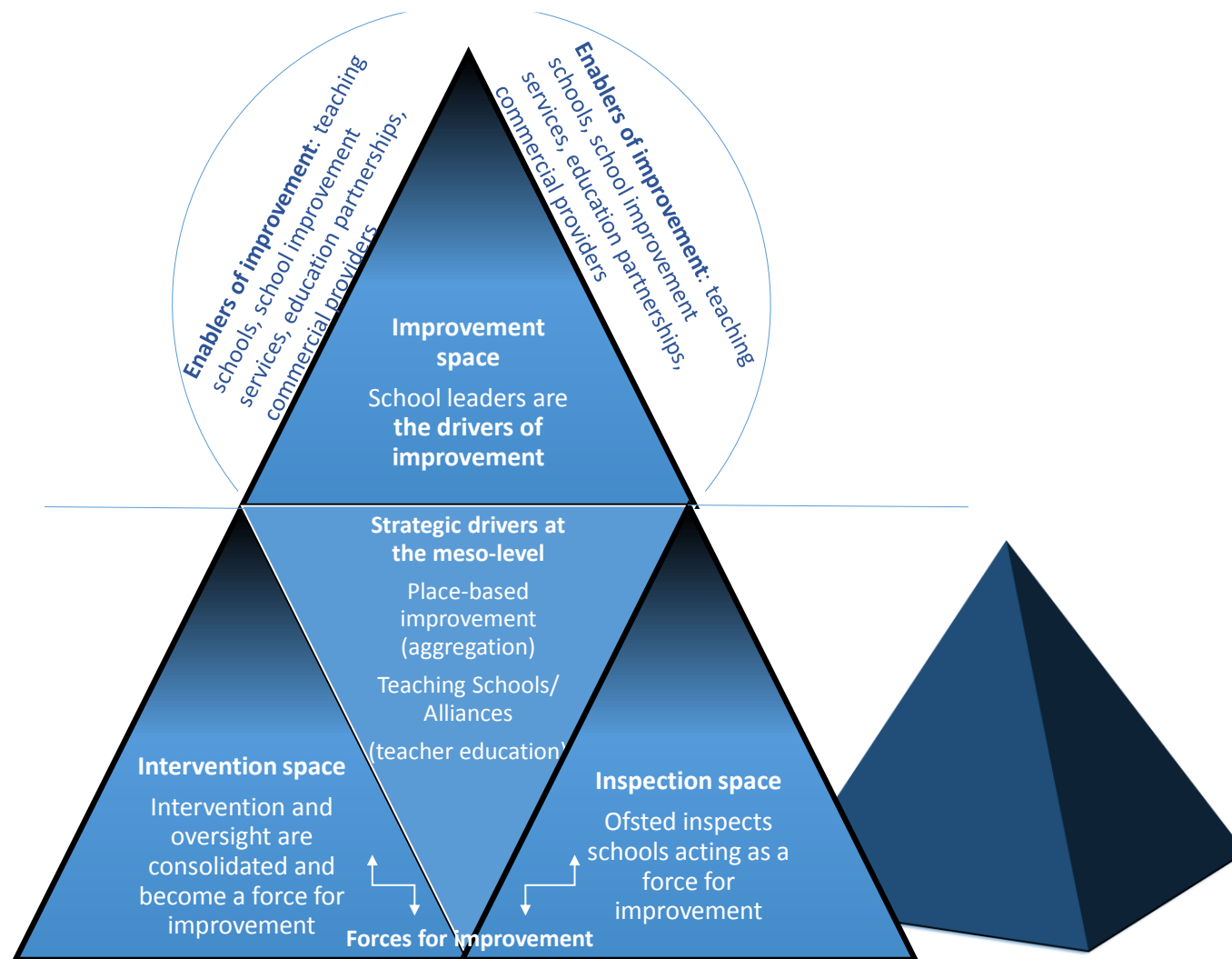
Teaching schools and alliances can be strategic drivers at the meso-level of teacher education, ensuring local sufficiency and mobilising evidence for improving teacher knowledge and practice.

The strength of the triangle or pyramid is in large part determined by the system actors respecting the boundaries of their authority and working together.

Good governance of the system depends on the inspection and intervention authorities making valid and reliable decisions in the public interest, supported by sound frameworks. Both inspection and intervention authorities are crucial in a self-improving school system as a guard against self-interest and a response to failure.

**Each part of the triangle or pyramid should be independent of the other in terms of their role and focus in order to have integrity against challenges and work effectively together as a whole.**

**Figure three – an aggregate meso-level model of system governance**



## The Role of the Teaching Schools Council

If we accept that the role of teaching schools and alliances become primarily the meso-level **strategic driver** of teacher education (through school-led initial teacher training, professional and leadership development) and also an **enabler** of, and catalyst for improvement through school-to-school support, then what is the role of the Teaching Schools Council?

We envisage three roles:

- **A regulatory role:** making recommendations for the designation of teaching schools and alliances and national leaders of education and alliances to the Secretary of State, including take a system view of teaching schools and alliances, geographical saturation and paucity.
- **A facilitating role:** connecting teaching schools and alliances to each other, co-ordinating at regional level and supporting the implementation of appropriate government initiatives.
- **An advisory role:** Advising the Secretary of State on a range of policy areas.

This is a refinement and clarification of current roles rather than a new role. To return to our four aspects of good governance:

### Teaching Schools Council

#### Authority

The Teaching Schools Council would draw its authority primarily from the school sector which elects council members, and could potentially also draw its authority from a formal designation by the Secretary of State which recognises it as the school-led body supporting improvement and leading on the strategy for teacher supply, recruitment and retention.

#### Decision making

The Teaching Schools Council already recommends the designation of teaching schools, alliances, and national leaders of education to the Secretary of State.

#### Legitimacy

The Teaching Schools Council will draw its legitimacy from the sector.

#### Accountability

The Teaching Schools Council would be accountable to both the school sector which elects council members, and directly to the Secretary of State.

## The Teaching Schools Council and the Chartered College of Teaching

Before we leave this section on the role of the Teaching Schools Council, it may be useful to explore the relationship between the Teaching Schools Council and the Chartered College of Teaching. Both are involved in teacher education, but in different and complementary ways.

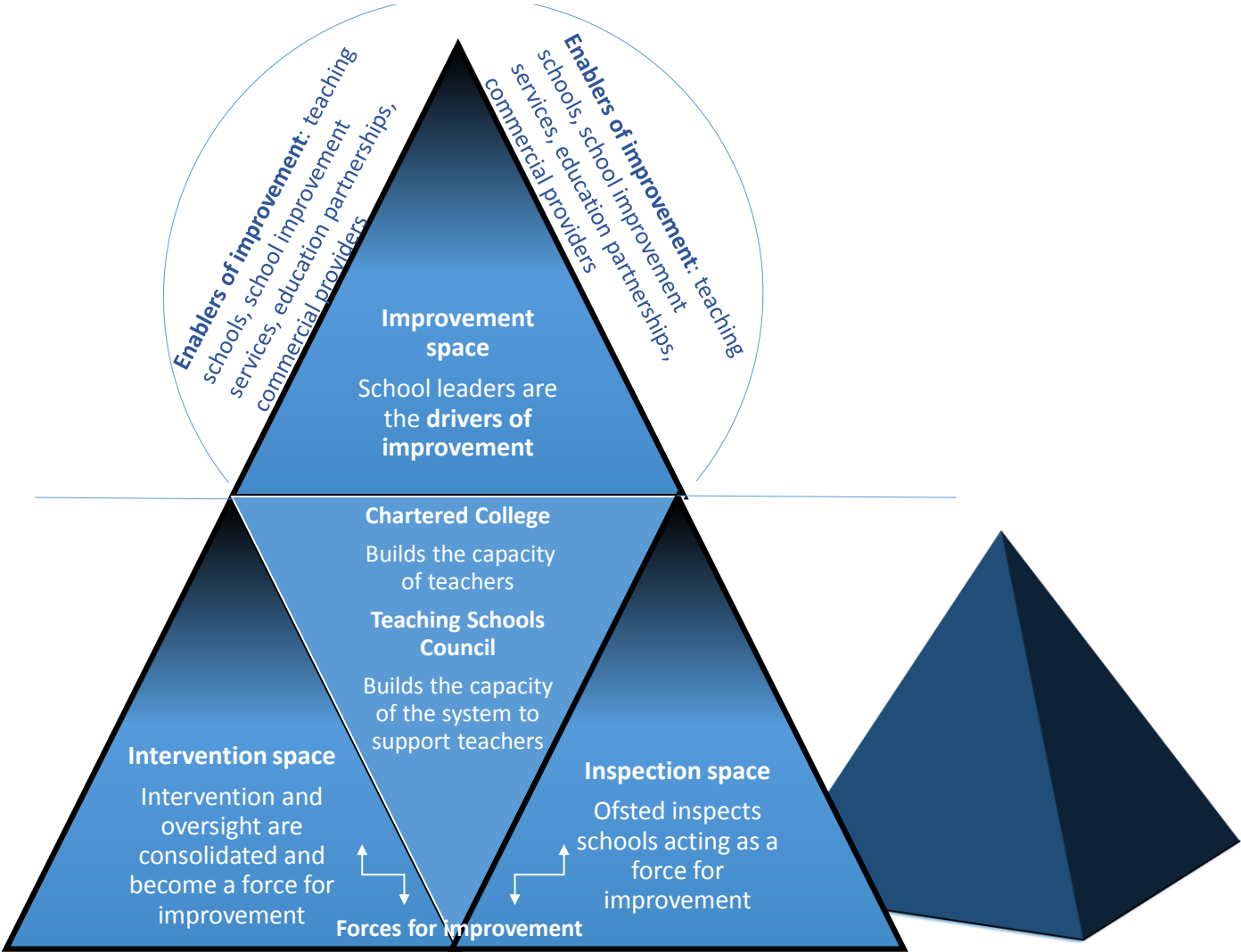
The Chartered College is the new **professional body** for the teaching profession. Membership is voluntary and provides access to research, events, a wide community of educators, and high-quality professional learning. The Chartered College is about giving individual teachers a sense of agency and individual effectiveness.

Both the Teaching Schools Council and the Chartered College want teachers who are working in the most effective, informed way to provide the best possible education for children and young people now, and in the future. Both want to improve the quality of education for children and young people.

- **The Chartered College** does this through supporting teachers – connecting them to the wider profession, informing them through being the conduit to a more evidence-informed profession and providing access to professional knowledge and intellectual challenge, and inspiring them, offering accreditation pathways. The Chartered College builds the professional capacity of the teacher.
- **The Teaching Schools Council** does this through supporting teaching schools and alliances to deliver high quality teacher education, primarily through school-centred initial teacher training and professional development. The Teaching Schools Council builds the professional capacity of the system to support teachers.

**RECOMMENDATION: It is essential that the Chartered College and Teaching Schools Council work together to mobilise evidence for improving teacher knowledge and practice that leads to school improvement.**

Figure four – an aggregate macro-level model of system governance





## Afterword

Let's take a step back and revisit for a moment our opening question: where next for the self-improving school system? And an important corollary question: why is good system governance important?

### **Where next for the self-improving school system?**

The central premise of a self-improving system is that deep and sustained reform of our education system will not come from outside the profession. We can of course learn from other professions, but meaningful reform that truly drives system improvement cannot be 'done to' us. It *depends* on us – the many, not just the few.

Leading the change will involve a new mind set – the political administration of the day has a democratic right to govern appropriately, but we (school leaders) should not conflate this with a set of givens by which we are constrained. Rather our leadership must be active, passionate and ethical. We are the public intellectuals of our system. Together we can be the architects of our system.

### **And why is good system governance important?**

There *is* a role for government in a highly autonomous system – an essential role in fact. The government must exercise good governance of the system on behalf of children, young people and the wider communities served by schools and groups of schools. In any highly autonomous system, there is a risk of self-interest – that autonomy will be seen as the right of adults or institutions rather than exercised on behalf of children. That parts of the system will fail children.

Good governance is essential as a legitimate response to self-interest and failure. We must however get it right. It must be proportionate – a force for good. Good system governance, like good school governance, must be driven by purpose, and the purpose of governing a school system is very similar to that of governing a school or group of schools.

The purpose of governance is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance, first and foremost on behalf of children and young people.



Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive, Confederation of School Trusts (CST)