

Supporting school improvement

Each school is different and operates in different circumstances. Academy trusts that are taking on underperforming schools for the first time should consider what information they need in order to identify what needs to improve, and then how they deploy the capacity within their trust to work with the schools teachers and leaders to improve practice. These trusts will also want to learn from the common features and approaches that more established MATs adopt.

Some trusts have found it helpful to use the four stage model of school improvement (set out below) when they have identified particular areas of weakness. This model can be applied to teams, year groups, subjects and improvement areas, such as special educational needs and disabilities, just as well as they can be applied to whole schools. It can also be used by schools that are generally performing well but have identified areas of practice they want to improve. There are, however, other approaches and models, and trusts should make sure they use strategies and systems that are right for their schools.

Four-stage improvement model

Stage of school improvement journey	Key leadership qualities
Phase 1: Stabilise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School requires significant improvement No clear underpinning for the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calm and reassuring leadership Focusing on urgent priorities Ensuring team members have the right jobs High visibility
Phase 2: Repair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing more control Reactive decision-making Make the school feel more like a regular school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedding early improvements Building a medium term plan Retaining visibility, but increasing focus on quality assurance
Phase 3: Improve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More proactive leadership Embedding strategies Improving outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and tracking performance is key Shifting from management to leadership Increasing benefits from collaboration
Phase 4: Sustain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidence in performance Increase innovation in delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing excellence Looking to lead collaboration Increasing focus on 3-5 year planning