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Department
for Education

Guidance

Partnership models guide

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Partnerships can take various forms, from simple collaborations between 2 or 3 schools, to complex structures with multiple partners.

Some of the most successful partnerships tend to:

- be mutually beneficial for all schools involved
- be sustainable – only ask schools to do things they have the time and resources to do
- have a measurable effect on pupils

The most common model types are:

- hub and spoke partnerships
- broad area partnerships
- partnerships as part of other formal structures

[You can use our template school model partnership diagrams to help you.](#)

Hub and spoke partnerships

A hub and spoke partnership is where schools work together in a small group, of

generally no more than 4 or 5 schools, where one school is the lead school.

The lead school takes on some responsibilities for all the partner schools, which can include:

- co-ordinating partnership activities
- organising or hosting events
- bearing most of the costs, such as the cost of transporting pupils
- contributing resources, such as a specialist teachers
- evaluating the effect of activities

However, all schools share responsibility for strategic elements, such as developing new activities that improve the partnership by working more closely or bringing in new partners.

Often partnerships that begin as hub and spoke partnerships can turn into broad area partnerships.

Example

An independent school employs a co-ordinator to run partnership activities across a maintained school and an academy. The 3 schools are all nearby, which has helped to establish good relationships among staff and pupils. The independent school invites pupils from the other schools to hold mixed science classes at their school. They transport pupils to and from the school at their expense. They also contribute the time of a specialist foreign language teacher to go to the other schools to teach.

Broad area partnerships

A broad area partnership is a group of schools that work together as equal partners.

Often, these partnerships cover a whole city or borough, and involve multiple schools and institutions across that area.

Although some schools can sometimes contribute more than others – for example money or teaching resources – all schools share the benefits equally.

A good use of this model is where schools create a network of school improvement, where staff time and resources in one school are targeted towards a shortage area in another.

Often broad area partnerships start small and then grow to include more schools as time goes on.

Structure and contributions

These partnerships are usually led by a board that includes a representative from each school. They meet at least once a term to decide partnership activities and make sure their objectives are met.

The costs can be covered by a yearly membership contribution, which all schools pay in a way that is fair to all. This generally pays for the cost of partnership activities. Sometimes it's also used to employ a co-ordinator who reports to the partnership board and works for the benefit of all the schools.

Benefits

The benefits can include:

- a positive effect across a whole city or area
- a wider range of partnership activities through sharing resources
- savings through buying things together
- giving development opportunities to staff, who can work across schools
- sharing ideas and best practice between partners

You can find an example of a broad area partnership in [case study 7](#).

Partnerships as part of other formal structures

As part of a formal structure, a lead sponsor may want to work with a group of partner schools to support a new or existing academy.

Types of meaningful support can include:

- financial contributions
- seconded teaching time
- contributing staff to develop one of the school's academic departments
- curriculum design and delivery

This can include opening a free school or formal sponsorship of an academy.

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