



**NEW SCHOOL OR FREE SCHOOL INDUCTION POLICY**

**APPROVED**

<b>APPROVED</b>	
Signature of CEO	
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Signature of Chair of Board:	
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## 1 RATIONALE

As the Believe Engage Succeed Trust (BEST) evolves and grows, it is essential that it does so in such a way that does not jeopardise its future success and sustainability and always considers the risks and benefits in doing so. New schools joining may be:

- existing schools converting to be academies,
- existing academies moving to BEST, or
- new Free Schools applied for successfully by BEST

This policy sets out the agreed considerations, processes and decision making of the BEST Board, which will ensure that any school joining BEST understands their role and position in doing so, how processes of due diligence and information sharing will be carried out and how the Board will support and develop new governors when a school joins the multi academy trust (MAT).

## 2 INDUCTION OF A NEW SCHOOL

When a recommendation or application is made for a new school to join BEST, the Board, subject to permission granted from the DFE, will always take seriously the impact of a new school joining. The decision whether or not a new school joins BEST rests solely with the Trust Board.

The Trust Board's decision will be a two-step process:

1. In principle approval: The Board will meet and take the decision whether or not to approve a new school joining in principle. This decision will initiate the Trust's due diligence processes. This in principle decision will also be communicated to the LGB of all the school(s) concerned.
2. Final approval: Once the due diligence processes have been completed and the outcomes reported to the Board, the Trust Board will assess the benefits, risks and any mitigating actions required to manage these risks, to the Trust of the new school joining the Trust. The Board will then take their final decision on whether or not the new school will join BEST.

## 3 DUE DILIGENCE

Before a new school is considered for converting and / or joining BEST, professional scrutiny will be undertaken in the following areas:

- Financial Position
- Historic attainment and trends
- Views of parents and the local community
- Current assessment performance
- Leadership and Governance Capacity
- Asset Condition
- Capacity and other risks, with mitigating factors

A similar due diligence process will be completed for a completely new Free School applied for and joining BEST.

A formal report, sharing the outcomes of the Due Diligence, will be provided to the Board and the governing body of the school wishing to join the MAT. (See Appendix 1 for example)

#### **4 PROCEEDING TO CONVERSION**

For converting schools, upon a successful recommendation for progression to conversion and the awarding of an Academy Order from the DfE, the relevant processes to support the conversion will ensue. For an existing academy to move to BEST, again the relevant DfE process will be engaged with. In the case of a successful new Free School bid, the processes to be followed are laid down by the DfE in the bid process.

It is the expectation that any school joining BEST will utilise the existing expertise and consultancy provided by the Board's solicitors, accountants etc. BEST's Chief Finance Officer and Trust Financial Lead will provide support to the school in this period to facilitate the process of conversion and communicating progress back to the Trust Board.

Relevant Headteachers and Chair of LGB will meet as per an agreed timetable to support this process, at a local level.

#### **5 INDUCTION OF NEW GOVERNORS TO THE LGB**

The DfE states that effective governance at is based on six key features:

- **Strategic leadership** that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy;
- **Accountability** that drives up educational standards and financial performance;
- **People** with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity;
- **Structures** that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
- **Compliance** with statutory and contractual requirements; and
- **Evaluation** to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

All new governors will be given a full and comprehensive induction to their role within the Trust. Within this, they must read and understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to the very important public duty they hold. A list of these can be found below:

- Code of Conduct For Staff and Volunteers
- ESFA's Academy's Financial Handbook
- DfE's Governance Handbook
- DfE's Governance Competency Framework
- BEST's Articles of Association
- Companies Act 2006
- Skills audit for LGBs

➤ 7 (Nolan) Principles of Public Life

In addition prospective governors and schools must demonstrate that they have the required personal qualities and pre-requisite skills for joining the LGB and Trust. This may be ascertained through the use of a skills audit. All members of the LGB are accountable and responsible for all the decisions made by the LGB. All schools joining BEST must operate within the powers and authority delegated to them.

BEST LGBs also recognise that principles and personal attributes that individuals bring to the LGBs are just as important. All those involved in governance should exhibit the 7 C's:

**Committed** – devoting the required time to the role

**Confident** – of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations

**Curious** – an enquiring mind and analytical approach

**Challenging** – providing appropriate challenge to the status quo, not taking information at face value

**Collaborative** – prepared to listen and work in partnership with others

**Critical** – critical friendship which enables both challenge and support

**Creative** – able to challenge convention wisdom and be open-minded

## 6 THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSION PROCESS AND BEYOND

As part of the induction process and ongoing schedule of evaluation and improvement, the LGB governors will be involved in the following activities which form part of the MAT's cycle for continual improvement:

- Agreeing and formulating the plans for medium and long-term development of their school and how they build capacity within the LGB's schools.
- Continually evaluating the needs and development challenges are for all the schools involved within their LGB, irrespective of current performance levels.
- Determining how the school will contribute to wider MAT system improvement and develop and retain good links with other schools across BEST.
- Ensuring there is sufficient financial expertise to oversee the school's financial operations.
- Carrying out financial planning which is integrated into the Trust's overall strategy for its school(s).
- Ensuring the school's vision remains deliverable and resilient to operational changes in income, such as changes in pupil numbers or characteristics or the implications of national and local funding formulas and is consistent with the Trust's vision
- Making sure that there are robust contingency plans in place, with clear triggers for enacting these plans.

## **7 RISK MANAGEMENT**

BEST operated comprehensive Risk Management where the key is its Risk register. The BEST Board will ensure that BEST and any new schools have effective procedures in place to identify, monitor and mitigate risk at both school and trust level. BEST's Risk management is definitely not a box-ticking exercise. Effective Risk Management will be achieved in the following ways:

- its Risk Register makes clear what risks are managed at what level, so no issues 'fall between the gaps';
- the Trust has a clear idea of how the way it manages risk may need to change as the Trust grows, and has made a balanced assessment of the risks, expansion and opportunities might pose, to its existing schools;
- the Trust has access to appropriate due diligence expertise so that they can be confident the Trust knows what it is taking on (both in terms of benefits and risks) when an additional school joins it; and
- the Trust has capacity to manage the estate for which it is responsible.

## **8 APPOINTMENTS TO BEST'S LGBS**

The BEST Board is structured as per its Articles of Association. BEST has defined governance structures and their membership in place, which work in conjunction with the Trust Board. All new schools joining the MAT will understand their representation at LGB level available to them. Any new governors must possess the requisite skills and demonstrate the ability to meet the expectations of the Code of Conduct of Staff and Volunteers and other above mentioned documents.

## **9 TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

All governors will access training which will support them in fulfilling their public duties, as determined by the needs of the LGB and individuals themselves.

## **10 POST CONVERSION**

### **Policies**

Post conversion, the joining school will be required to adhere to key BEST Policies such as Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Performance Management, Whistleblowing, Financial based policies, in the first instance. These can be given as part of the Induction package.

### **Systems**

Schools joining BEST will be offered the support of schools already within the MAT for the implementation and management of processes new to them, such as finance packages, purchasing and other systems and processes that may be pertinent. This will be organised by the Chief Finance Officer and Trust Financial Lead in conjunction with the individual Headteachers.

### **Support for Staff**

Times of change can be challenging for staff, especially if it feels there is more work to be done as an academy. Established BEST schools will support joining schools by “buddying up” key staff, as a first point of support. Learning from colleagues is also the benefit of joining one of the existing LGBs made up of BEST schools.

In addition to this, support will be increased in the first year post conversion for new tasks such as the first few month-end returns the school has to do. It is anticipated by putting in an adequate level of support at the start that this will future proof against subsequently.

Peer to peer support for office staff and individual school Head Teachers is essential in the early stages post conversion. BEST is committed to putting this level of support for all schools that join.



*'Engaging learners to enhance their life opportunities and outcomes'*



**11 APPENDIX 1 MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST: JOINING SCHOOL APPLICATION**

**Due Diligence Report**

Taken from BEST' Risk Register proforma – full Risk Register format to be used for Due Diligence

**Appraiser:**

**Date:**

Id.	Area / Activity	Risks / Hazards	Risk owner / Person(s) responsible for action	Likelihood of occurring (5=high, 1=low)	Impact if occurs (5=high, 1=low)	Risk Value (Likelihood x Impact)	Response (transfer, tolerate, treat, or terminate)	Evidence / Notes
<b>Strategic and Reputational Risk</b>								
	Views of parents & local community							
	Etc...							
<b>Operational Risk</b>								
	Attainment related issues							
	Current performance assessment							
	Leadership and Governance							
	Capacity and other risks, with							

	mitigating factors							
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<b>Compliance Risk</b>								
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	Ect.							
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<b>Financial Risk</b>								
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	Asset condition							
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	Etc.							
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**Recommendation – considering the following criteria:**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we have an existing school in the locality (organic growth)?</li> <li>• Can the new school be part of a MAT?</li> <li>• Are parents / staff in support?</li> <li>• Attainment levels – now and projected</li> <li>• Outcome of due diligence report (analysis)</li> <li>•</li> </ul> |
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