For Schools & Trusts

# Inclusion strategy: questions to ask

## For trustees in multi academy trusts

November 2026

From December 2026, mainstream schools must develop and publish an inclusion strategy. The strategy will outline a school's plans to deliver inclusive whole-school approaches and evidence-based support to meet the needs of all of their pupils.

The government has committed £1.6 billion to the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF). Grants from the IMF will be distributed to schools over a three-year period. As part of those funding conditions, schools must publish an inclusion strategy to outline how they will use their IMF grant.

The DfE has published guidance for school leaders. This includes an optional template for schools to use to develop their strategy.

Each school in a multi academy trust (MAT) should have its own inclusion strategy, reflecting the needs of its pupils and local context. A trust's central team may establish a trust framework to support a consistent approach while allowing schools to respond to local needs.

The trust board should ensure the trust's scheme of delegation is updated to outline responsibilities for overseeing inclusion strategies. Trustees are not expected to review every school's strategy. Their role is to seek assurance from trust leaders that:

- effective strategies are in place to meet pupils' diverse needs across the trust;
- strategies are informed by local context and evidence; and
- the impact on pupils' experiences and outcomes is routinely monitored and evaluated.

The following questions support trustees in discharging their trust-wide role in a MAT. To monitor an individual school's strategy, please read our questions for those governing in single schools.

9000 Lives

NGA would like to thank Aaron King, Inclusion Advisor at 9000 Lives for his expertise that informed this guidance.

Aaron works with schools, colleges and charities to improve inclusion for all.

**9000lives.org**

# Questions to ask

| Trust-wide approach and accountability | Assurance of implementation | Evaluating impact and setting strategic direction |
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| • Is each school's strategy a reflection of both its local context and our trust's wider approach to inclusion?<br>• How confident are trust leaders that pupil and parent views have informed each school's strategy?<br>• How are responsibilities for overseeing inclusion strategies defined across the trust?<br>• What information have trust leaders received to assure themselves that each school has effective scrutiny of its strategy? | • How are inclusion strategies monitored in our schools?<br>• Is the inclusion strategy discussed in meetings between headteachers and central trust staff? And how is this evidenced?<br>• What guidance have academy committee members received to enable them to effectively monitor their school's strategy?<br>• If funding is pooled, what financial governance arrangements are in place?<br>• How will the SEND link trustee liaise with others responsible for SEND in the MAT (trust-wide SENCO and local SEND link governors)? | • What evidence is there of impact on pupils across the trust? Are there differences between schools or groups of pupils that require further action?<br>• How do schools share effective practice across the trust?<br>• What have we learned about inclusion that will help us to achieve trust-wide 'inclusion by design'?<br>• How have school-level inclusion strategies informed the wider MAT strategy? |

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