



Formal Collaborations Partnerships, Federations and MATs

Advice for Governing boards

The context: school sustainability challenges

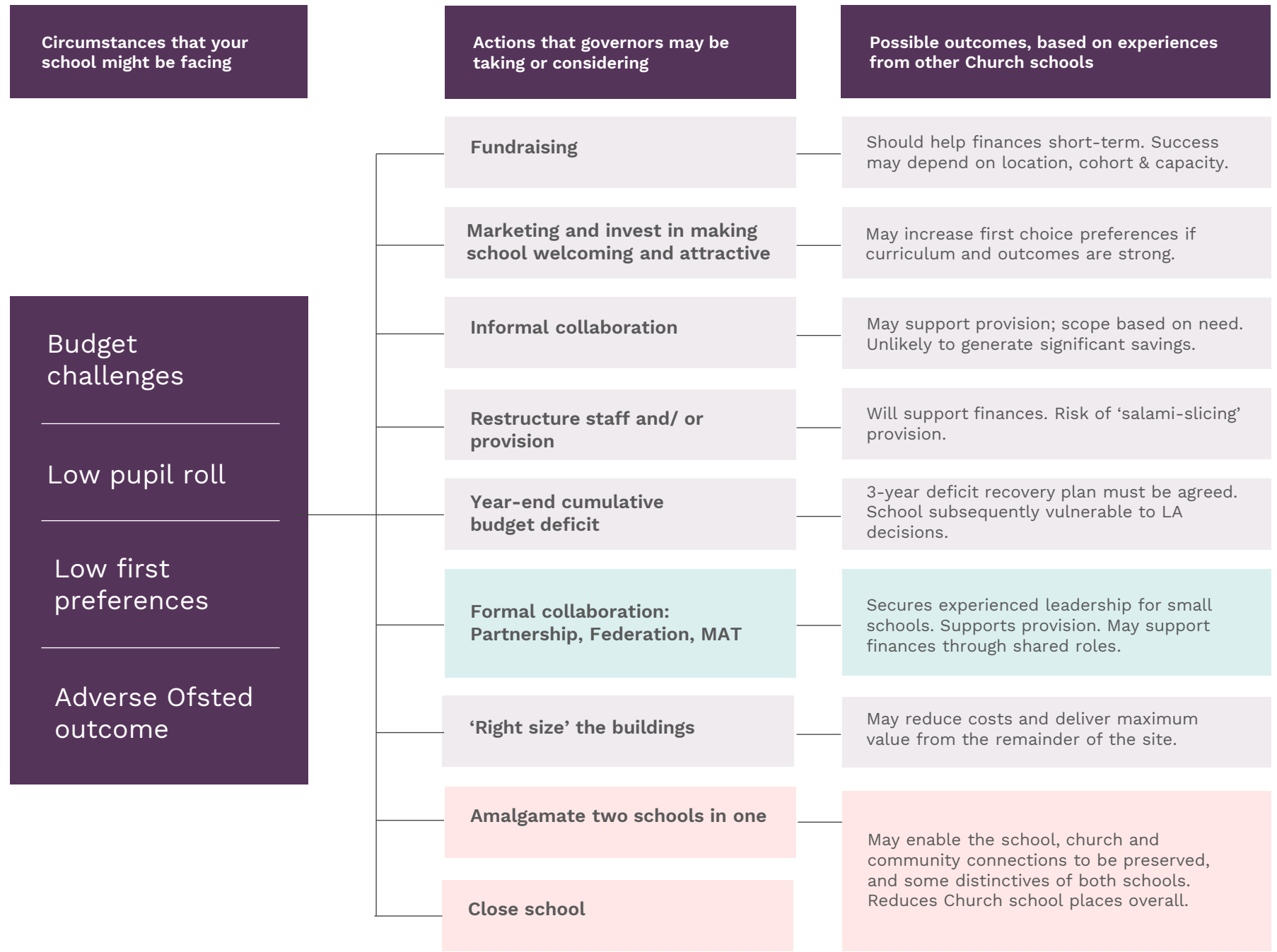
Governors of one-form entry schools are finding it increasingly difficult to ensure that the school thrives as a stand-alone school, for a range of reasons.

- Governors find it difficult to set a balanced budget. Falling pupil rolls make it difficult to balance the school budget. Schools are funded on a per-pupil basis, so even a small fall in pupil numbers can create budget challenges.
- Governors of schools that are 2fe or larger can make a request to the Local Authority to reduce their PAN if pupil numbers fall but this is not an option for 1fe schools.
- Falling pupil rolls mean that many Local Authorities in London have thousands more primary school places than are needed. Any school in a financial deficit position relies on the Local Authority approving a deficit budget and deficit recovery plan which means the school is vulnerable to closure.
- Strong leadership across the curriculum can be difficult to provide in a stand-alone small school where every teacher is leading one or two curriculum subjects.
- Specialist SENDCO positions can be difficult to sustain in small schools, however rising numbers of pupils with special educational needs makes this a vital appointment for most schools.
- Small schools attract lower headteacher salaries than large schools, which can make it difficult for governors of small schools to recruit experienced headteachers.

A London Councils [report](#) published in January 2023 stated:

- The birth rate in London has been falling since 2012.
- Demand for Reception places in London has been falling since 2017.
- On average, London boroughs are likely to see a further 7% decrease in Reception pupil numbers in the next five years.
- *“Primary schools with small rolls... will find that the only option for the school is to merge the school with another school or close it altogether... (p6)”*

The context: school sustainability challenges



The context: when to consider a formal collaboration

There are a range of circumstances that may prompt a Governing Board to consider a formal collaboration.

- The school is thriving and the Headteacher is experienced, successful and may soon be looking for a new challenge. The opportunity to become an Executive Headteacher (EHT) can support staff retention and provide career progression. It can also secure sustainability through shared curriculum development and cost savings.
- Governors are succession planning because the Headteacher (HT) is making plans to leave the school. LDBS expects governors at every 1fe school to consider all options, including potential formal collaborations, before advertising a headship.
- Governors are concerned that they may not be able to set a balanced budget in the future and wish to consider all options before the school reaches a crisis point.
- Governors are aware of other risk factors and wish to consider all options before the school reaches a crisis point. For example:
 - fewer than 80% Reception places are filled with first place preferences
 - more than 20% of places in the school are vacant
 - the school has an adverse Ofsted outcome, or governors consider this is a future risk
 - governors are concerned about the quality of education on offer

Some of the most successful schools in the London Diocese are among the smallest.

LDBS always prefers to work with governors to sustain small schools, including considering formal collaboration options, rather than to see them amalgamate or close.

Half of Church primary schools in London were part of a formal collaboration in September 2023.

It may not be possible to sustain every school. However, Church schools have been serving London's children for 500 years and we want to make sure that there are excellent Church schools to serve Londoners for many generations to come.

Formal collaboration: three types

There are three types of formal collaboration:

- Partnership
- Federation
- Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

A partnership is an agreement between schools to work together to share knowledge, experience and resources for mutual benefit. It is formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-school-partnerships/guide-to-setting-up-partnerships>

A federation is two or more maintained schools that are governed collectively under a single governing body.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1035/made#:~:text=24.,the%20modifications%20in%20Schedule%206> (section 24)

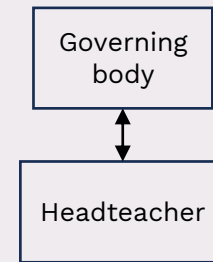
A Multi-Academy Trust is a not-for-profit company that runs two or more academies.

<https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>

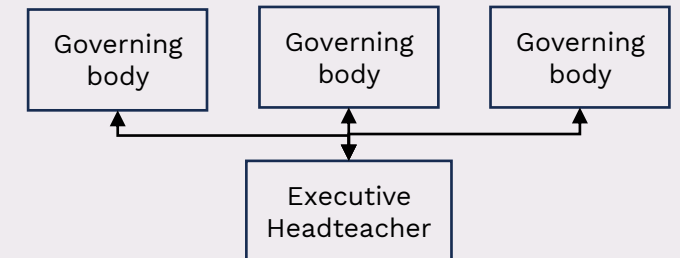
The government's preference is for every school to join a MAT. Partnerships and Federations also remain as options for VA and VC maintained schools. LDBS will support the governors of Church schools to consider all three types of formal collaboration to find the right approach for the school and the local context.

Some bodies use different terminology (e.g., a 'soft' or 'hard' partnership or federation). LDBS simply uses 'Partnership' and 'Federation'. There is a table which summarises the key features of each on the next page.

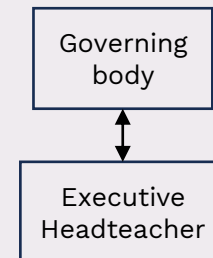
Stand-alone school



3-school partnership



3-school federation



Formal collaboration: key features

Partnership	Federation	Multi-Academy Trust
Each school has a Governing Board (GB) and retains its URN	One GB for the Federation; each school can have a Local Governing Body (LGB) and retains its URN	One Trust Board for the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT); each school has an LGB and its own URN
One Executive Head (EHT) leading two or more schools	One EHT leading two or more schools	CEO provides overall leadership; each school has either an EHT or HT
EHT employed by the GB of the 'home' school and seconded to the other school(s) in the Partnership for part of the week	EHT likely to be employed by the GB of the Federation	CEO employed by the Trust; EHT likely to be employed by the Trust
Time-limited; for up to two years initially	Long-term; often follows an initial partnership	Permanent
If the EHT leaves, the Partnership comes to an end and each GB considers its next steps	If the EHT leaves, the GB appoints a new EHT	If the CEO or an EHT leaves, the Trust appoints a new CEO or EHT
When the Partnership ends, the EHT returns to the substantive HT position and salary	It is possible to dissolve the Federation; each school needs to re-establish its own GB	It is not possible to become a maintained school again after joining a MAT
Individual school budget allocations; pooling funds is not an option	Individual school budget allocations; received by individual schools or by the Federation, pooling is an option	Individual school budget allocations received by the Trust; pooling funds is an option
A Partnership can include maintained and academy schools	All the schools in a Federation are and remain as maintained schools	All the schools in a MAT are academies
Possible to make strategic plans and share staff and curriculum leadership across the Partnership by negotiation with each GB	EHT accountable to the GB for strategic leadership across the Federation	CEO accountable to the Trust for strategic leadership across the MAT
Locally negotiated between LDBS and governors	Locally negotiated between LDBS and governors; formal process - Secretary of State informed	May be locally negotiated between LDBS and school/ trust or may be directed by Regional Director following 2xRI or Inadequate Ofsted

Employment Arrangements: MOU and contract

Executive Headteacher in a Partnership

Where one GB agrees to the HT becoming an EHT with another school, it prepares a Memorandum of Understanding for both boards to sign, setting out how the partnership will work for mutual benefit.

The GB also prepares a secondment agreement which acts as a contract of employment for the EHT for the duration of the Partnership. The agreement includes the EHT salary, performance management arrangements, and any bespoke arrangements e.g., expenses for additional travel costs.

The employer school invoices the partner school each month for the relevant proportion of time spent at the partner school with on-costs.

When the partnership ends, the EHT returns on a full-time basis to their employing school. They revert to their HT role and their substantive salary.

Head of School in a Partnership

Sometimes a Head of School is recruited. More often, the Deputy Headteacher (DH) acts as Head of School (HOS) for the duration of the Partnership. The DH receives the appropriate salary while undertaking HOS duties.

Executive Headteacher in a Federation

The EHT is employed by the GB of the Federation to lead all the schools within the Federation. Therefore, the GB is the sole employer, and a permanent contract can be issued.

If two or more schools wish to advertise jointly for an EHT, one school will act as the employer for pay and pension purposes. If the role is for a permanent EHT, the GBs should ensure that they federate within two years.

Head of School in a Federation

In a Federation, the EHT sets the staff structure for each of the schools in the Federation, which will often include a permanent HOS.

Employment Arrangements: pay

Setting Executive Headteacher Pay

The salary for an EHT or HT must be in line with the arrangements set out in the [Schoolteachers Pay and Conditions Document](#) (STPC). The document provides statutory guidance for maintained schools, including all VA and VC schools.

LDBS encourages academies to follow the same guidance.

Governors and Trustees must also refer to their own pay policy.

Calculating the Group Size

The number of pupils on roll is used to calculate a 'unit score' to determine the group size. For an EHT, the unit scores are added together for all the schools to determine overall group size for the EHT.

For example, a HT of a 1fe primary school with 210 pupils should have a Group 2 salary. An EHT of two 1fe primary schools with a combined roll of 420 pupils should have a Group 3 salary.

The GB determines a seven-point range within the group, taking account of differentials with other school staff, the complexity of the role and the experience of the person they may wish to appoint.

If the school pay policy allows, a GB may pay in excess of the group size. A clear rationale is required e.g., recruitment and retention. The rationale must consider sustainability issues.

Group Size	Combined pupil numbers (primary-age)	Individual Salary Range
Group 1	0-143	L6 – 18
Group 2	144-314	L8 – 21
Group 3	315-500	L11 – 24
Group 4	501-714	L14 – 27
Group 5	715-1071	L18 – 31
Group 6	1072-1571	L21 – 35
Group 7	1572-2429	L24 – 39
Group 8	2430+	L28 – 43

Adjusting to a change of PAN

If there is a change to the number of registered pupils, or such a change is anticipated, the group size and salary range should be reviewed by the GB.

Please refer to the [Schoolteachers Pay and Conditions Document](#) for more details; this page provides only a brief summary.

Employment Arrangements: job description

The Executive Headteacher role

The EHT role isn't defined in law. The role will vary depending on the needs and context of each school and the number of schools that the EHT is responsible for.

The most important difference from that of a Headteacher is that the role is more strategic and less operational.

The EHT is responsible for the long-term, strategic direction of all the schools in the Partnership or Federation.

The EHT is responsible for treating all schools with equity. This is particularly important if the EHT had previously been Headteacher of one of the schools. They will want to take time to understand the distinctives, context, strengths and weaknesses of the new school that has joined the partnership.

More detailed information is available from the LDBS People and Culture team, including template job descriptions.

EHT and HT appointments are ultimately a decision for governors who must have due regard to LDBS advice.

Key tasks for an EHT

Whatever the context and however many schools are involved, the key tasks for an EHT will include:

- Securing the sustainability of all the schools
- Providing strategic leadership to all the schools, and co-ordinating school strategies
- Promoting and developing the Christian character of each school
- Coaching and supporting the development of leaders
- Developing and monitoring systems across all the schools
- Considering areas where best practice, curricula and expertise could be shared between schools for mutual benefit
- Acting rapidly and decisively to address weaknesses
- Ensuring value-for-money, effective financial planning and balanced budgets, including shared procurement
- Working with parents, governors and Churches to maintain and build trust in the model of leadership, especially if this is new for the community
- Reporting to governors

Economies of scale

These budgets compare staffing models for a school with 165 pupils as a stand-alone school and in a five-school partnership.

Income is assumed at the average for an LDBS school. Salaries are assumed at the highest point of the appropriate STPC salary range.

The models are indicative. Actual staff structures will vary according to context.

The models highlight that a formal collaboration can help a small school to secure specialist roles, staff progression and experienced leadership.



1fe primary - stand alone 165 pupils on roll

Income	£1,370,000	Based on LDBS school average
Staffing budget	£1,096,000	Assuming 80% of total income

Role	Scale/ point	No. posts	Salary	Oncost	£/ post	£ Total	Responsibility
Headteacher	L21	1	£80,862	£28,302	£109,164	£109,164	Responsible for one NC subject DHT is SENDCO, leads three NC subjects and some PPA
Deputy Headteacher	L14	1	£69,420	£24,297	£93,717	£93,717	cover
7 x Teachers	M6	7	£44,756	£15,665	£60,421	£422,944	Each teacher leads one or two subjects
8.5 x Teaching assistant	Pt 8/ Sc4	8.5	£22,369	£7,829	£30,198	£256,684	
Finance professional						£17,600	1 day/ week @ £400/ day, 44 weeks
Office manager	Pt 24/ SO1	1	£31,099	£10,885	£41,984	£41,984	
Office assistant	Pt 8/ Sc4	0.6	£22,369	£7,829	£30,198	£18,119	TA covers office when needed
Premises officer	Pt 12/ Sc 5	1	£24,496	£8,574	£33,070	£33,070	
MMSA	Pt 3/ Sc 2	1.25	£20,812	£7,284	£28,096	£35,120	5 x MMSA each working 0.25fte
Other staff costs						£65,000	LDBS average
Total		21.35				£1,093,402	

Five 1fe primaries - partnership 165 pupils on roll at each

Income	£1,370,000	Based on LDBS school average
Staffing budget	£1,096,000	Assuming 80% of total income

Role	Scale/ point	No. posts	Salary	Oncost	£/ post	£ Total	Responsibility
Executive Headteacher	L31	0.2	£100,977	£35,342	£136,319	£27,264	Works across the partnership
Head of School	L18	1	£75,732	£26,506	£102,238	£102,238	Responsible for one subject across the partnership, assumed working half the week at another partnership school
Assistant Head	L4	0.5	£56,085	£19,630	£75,715	£37,857	Responsible for inclusion across the partnership
SENDCO	L4	0.2	£56,085	£19,630	£75,715	£15,143	
2 x Teachers	M6+TLR2	2	£49,756	£17,415	£67,171	£134,341	Responsible for one subject across the partnership
5 x Teachers	M6	5	£44,756	£15,665	£60,421	£302,103	Some are responsible one subject within the school
PE specialist (PPA)	M6	0.7	£44,756	£15,665	£60,421	£42,294	PPA cover
7.5 x Teaching assistant	Pt 8/ Sc4	7.5	£22,369	£7,829	£30,198	£226,486	
Business Manager	Pt 32/ PO3	0.2	£39,493	£13,823	£53,316	£10,663	Works across the partnership
Senior Administrator	Pt 20/ Sc6	1	£28,371	£9,930	£38,301	£38,301	
Office assistant	Pt 8/ Sc4	0.8	£22,369	£7,829	£30,198	£24,159	
Premises officer	Pt 12/ Sc 5	1	£24,496	£8,574	£33,070	£33,070	
MMSA	Pt 3/ Sc 2	1.25	£20,812	£7,284	£28,096	£35,120	5 x MMSA each working 0.25fte
Other staff costs						£65,000	LDBS average
Total		21.35				£1,094,039	

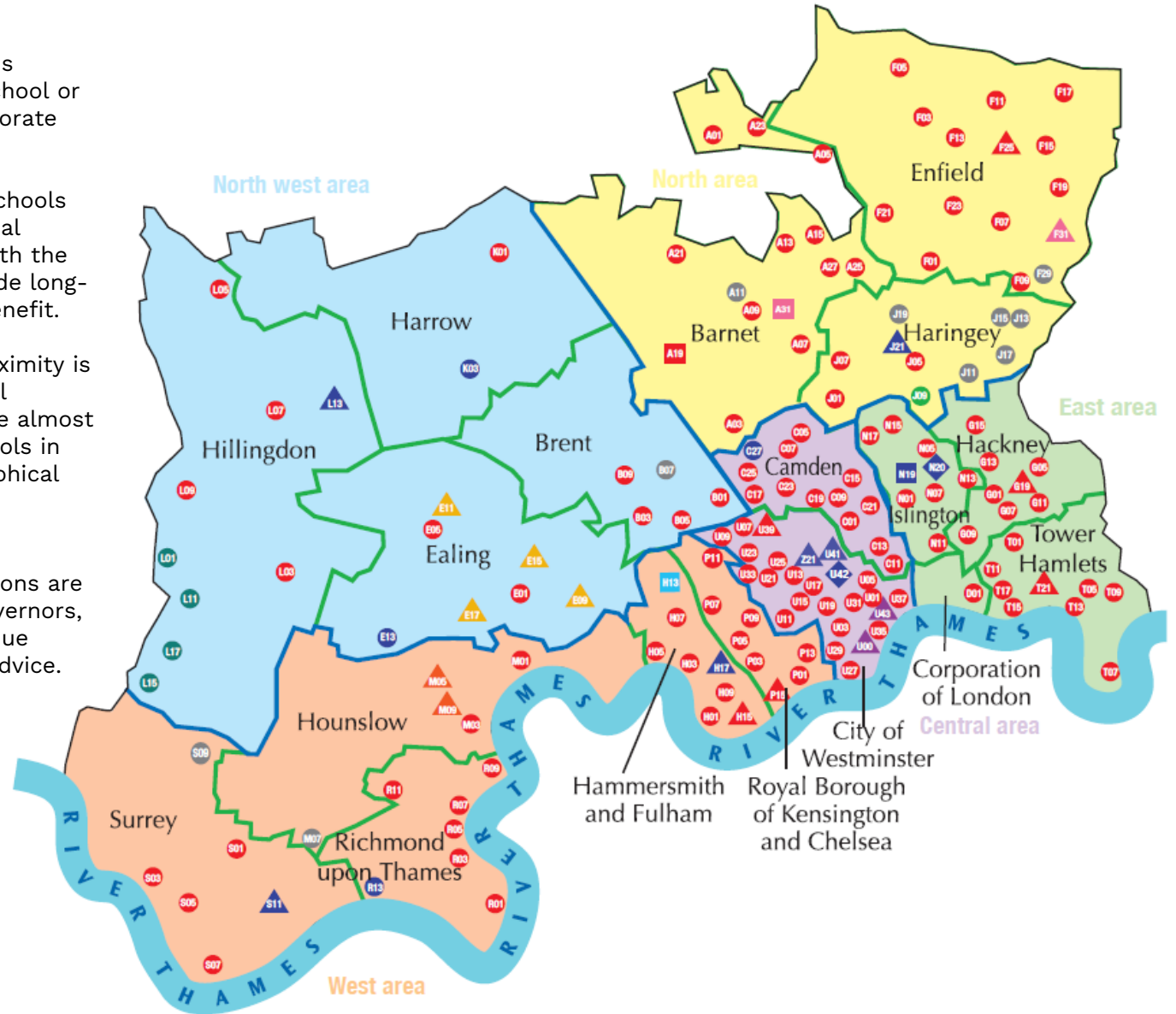
Identifying collaboration partners

One of the most important steps is identifying the school or schools to collaborate with.

LDBS supports schools to establish formal collaborations with the capacity to provide long-term strategic benefit.

Geographical proximity is important; formal collaborations are almost always with schools in the same geographical area.

Partnership and Federation decisions are ultimately for governors, who must have due regard to LDBS advice.



Testimonial

Co-Chair of Governors
LB Barnet

“The advice provided by our LDBS link adviser and HR adviser was insightful and allowed us to make an informed decision. They attended meetings and supported us throughout.”

“We went through some leadership changes and needed to recruit an experienced headteacher. Our budgetary constraints would have restricted our options.

Our history and ethos was enshrined as a 1fe school with a Head, Deputy Head and local Church. We did not wish to be consumed by a larger organisation that would impact our decision making, independence and Christian values. We entered the partnership maintaining our individual ethos and identity. We immediately benefited from the experienced headteacher, who shared time equally between both schools.

The partnership model maintains individual boards to oversee their individual schools thus maintaining their full powers as an autonomous body. There is a clause within the partnership agreement to dissolve it, with a notice period of one term to protect both schools, which gave governors some comfort.

The new structure also gives us a cost saving.

Shared staff development for all staff and governors has been achieved through joint training, collaboration, sharing good practice and mentoring. This structure prepares the HOS and AHT for future leadership, with a breadth of experience and mentoring from an experienced EHT. Administrative tasks and contracts are being considered as the partnership develops. Both schools now use the same financial systems for a consistent financial overview of both schools.

The EHT has a unique overview of the strategic development of both schools. Their experience shines through in governors’ meetings. Complex issues are explained, discussed and resolved with due consideration. As governors we are empowered to discharge our strategic role.”

“If you are a one form entry school, and your budget precludes you from employing an experienced headteacher, I recommend, that you consider a partnership model.

An experienced executive headteacher will resolve HR issues, complaints, curriculum shortfalls, staff development/ deployment, finance etc.

The benefits will allow your school to make solid, proportionate and sound decisions.

An experienced executive headteacher saves the SLT, the staff and the governing board, time.

I’m not advocating that an inexperienced headteacher cannot be successful, as there are many examples of success. However, if you have a challenging budget, curriculum or staffing structure, the head needs to ‘hit the ground running’ in the best interests of the children.

In my opinion, a partnership is the way forward.”



Formal Collaborations Partnerships, Federations and MATs

Establishing a Partnership

Forming a partnership

Recruiting an EHT

When forming a new Partnership, the Executive Headteacher vacancy is rarely advertised. This is because an EHT post can only be advertised when two or more schools have simultaneous leadership vacancies, and the governors resolve to collaborate in a formal way.

Partnerships more often form when one school has a leadership vacancy and a local Headteacher takes this on in addition to their current school. Both governing boards must give consent.

LDBS supports transparent and robust recruitment, so we work within these constraints to make sure potential candidates and partner schools are considered.

LDBS holds a list of prospective EHT candidates. When a school is interested in forming a Partnership, all those on the list from the relevant area are invited to consider it. GBs are supported with recruitment; the process varies depending on the context and the number of potential partners.

LDBS Prospective Candidate List

If you are a HT who may be interested in becoming an EHT in the future, or if you are an EHT who may have the interest and capacity to take on an additional school, we invite you to join the Prospective Candidate List.

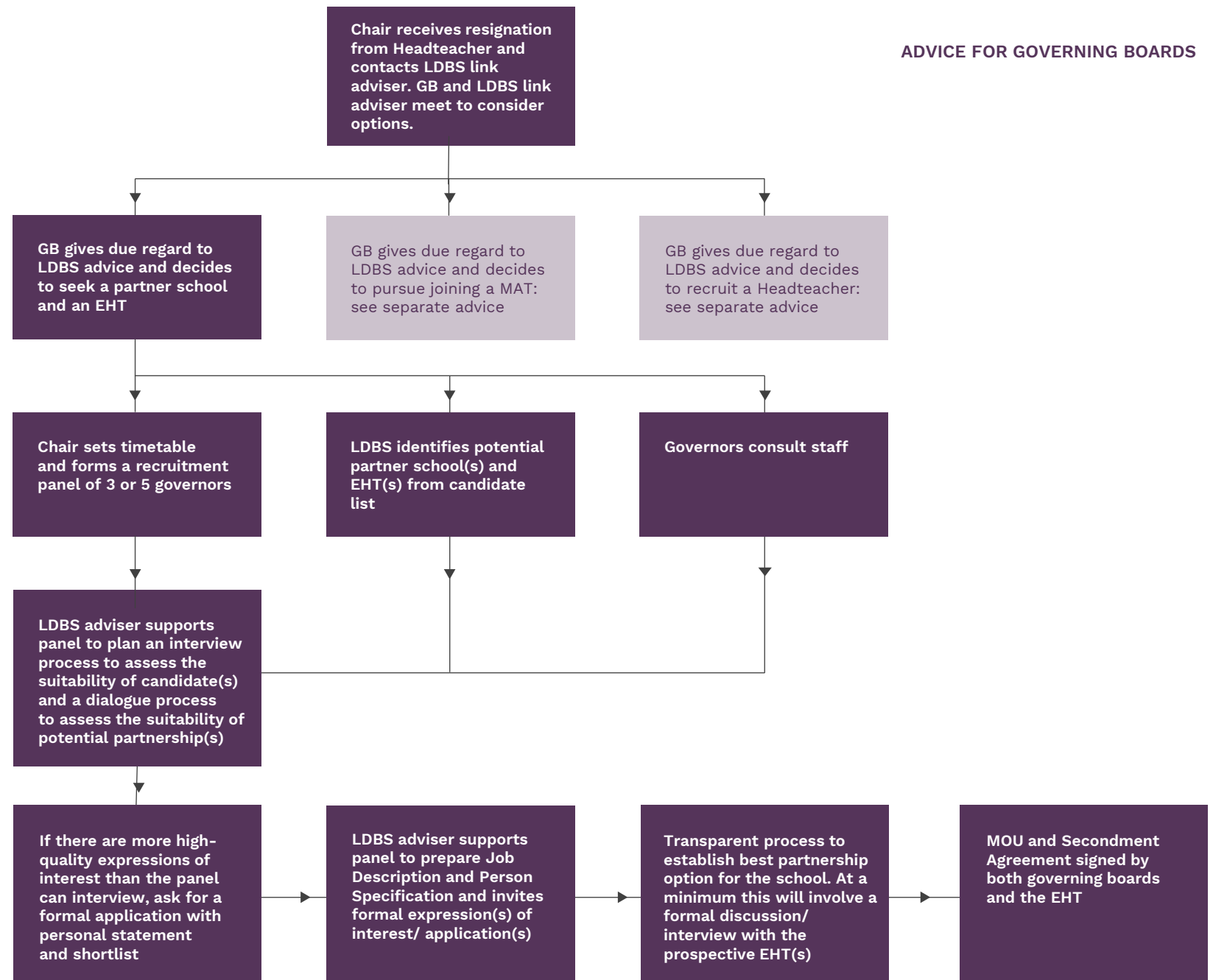
You will have a successful track record of sustained school improvement and staff development in your current Church school, and the support of your governing body to take on another school if the opportunity arises.

Contact Terri Patterson, People and Culture Director, terri.patterson@london.anglican.org, for details.

While preparing for a potential EHT role, consider your own professional development and that of your Assistant and/ or Deputy Head. LDBS will offer you a developmental psychometric assessment and invite you to relevant events.



Forming a partnership: when the Headteacher resigns



Forming a partnership: LDBS role

Note: The actual process, and the LDBS role in the process, will vary according to need and context – this is indicative.

Stage	LDBS role
Head or Chair of Governors alerts LDBS adviser that governors are considering future options, or that the Head is planning to resign.	LDBS identify which colleagues should be involved, depending on the context.
Identification of potential partner schools.	LDBS identifies potential schools and People and Culture Director checks the prospective candidate list. If appropriate, all eligible schools/ heads may be contacted to invite fresh applications to the prospective candidate list.
Governors carry out due diligence in relation to all possible partners.	LDBS advises governors to ensure due diligence covers all relevant areas.
Governors meet to review due diligence and, if proceeding, to agree recruitment process and communications with stakeholders.	LDBS advises governors re: process and due diligence information. GB determine process, with due regard to LDBS advice, and draws up timeline. Communications advice provided if sensitive.
Governors agree whether school or LDBS will alert the Local Authority.	LDBS may meet with LA representative, depending on context.
Governors recruit Executive Head.	LDBS adviser supports the GB to organise the consultation/ recruitment/ interview/ dialogue process.
Governors make appointment.	LDBS provides advice. Upon successful recruitment, LDBS provides template Memorandum of Understanding and Secondment agreement for governors to review.
Communication of the appointment to staff and parents.	Adviser supports both/ all schools to co-ordinate communications.
Termly review meetings established.	Adviser arranges termly review meetings to enable LDBS and governors to assess the impact of the partnership and ensure any issues are addressed early.

Partnership Review Meetings

What are Partnership Review Meetings for?

The primary purpose is to provide space for governors from each school to reflect on the effectiveness of the arrangement. They have one executive head who reports to both boards, and this is their opportunity to come together for a shared review and planning.

Bringing the Chairs together provides an opportunity to air and resolve any issues that have emerged.

Meeting regularly with the Chairs also enables LDBS to assess the impact of the partnership on each school and to ensure decisions around the future of the partnership are held well in advance of the end of the two-year period.

The Executive Head attends the meeting, but it is for governors to make strategic decisions about the future of the partnership. The meeting belongs to the governors.

Who attends?

- The LDBS adviser convenes and chairs the meeting.
- The Chairs of Governor for each school attends. The Vice Chairs of Governors may be invited as well.
- The Executive Headteacher
- Minutes of the meeting should be shared with each governing body. Minutes can be taken by any of the participants, there is not usually a clerk.

How often do meetings take place?

Usually termly in the first year and biannually after that.

What is the format?

Usually a one-hour virtual meeting.

Template Agenda

1. Review
 - Review MOU
 - What is going well?
 - What are the challenges/ barriers?
2. Risks
 - Budget
 - NOR
 - Other?
3. Leadership changes and/ or training
 - Senior leadership team
 - Governors
4. Ofsted and SIAMS preparation
 - Training needs
5. Future considerations
 - Include this item from the start of the second year
 - Federation?
 - Dissolution?
6. Date of next meeting



Formal Collaborations Partnerships, Federations and MATs

Establishing a Federation

Forming a Federation

Circumstances

A Federation is usually formed when partner schools have established the benefits of working together and wish to extend the arrangement beyond two years.

Moving from a Partnership to a Federation:

- Enables the school leaders to maximise opportunities for strategic planning and leadership;
- Gives long-term security to staff members who work across more than one school as they are employed by the Federation rather than being employed by one school and temporarily seconded to another for part of the week;
- Prevents one school from taking on long-term salary liabilities on account of the partner school. If a partnership extends beyond two years, staff accrue benefits (e.g., the EHT may have a salary that is higher than they were paid as the HT of one school). If the partnership comes to an end after that, the original school is left with a salary liability.

When schools federate, the governing bodies are dissolved and a new single governing body is incorporated with a new Instrument of Governance to oversee the strategic direction of both schools.

LDBS approach

Each Partnership will be encouraged to consider Federation at a Partnership Review Meeting.

If Federation is being considered, a joint committee will be convened, with support from the LDBS adviser, to plan and manage the formal process.

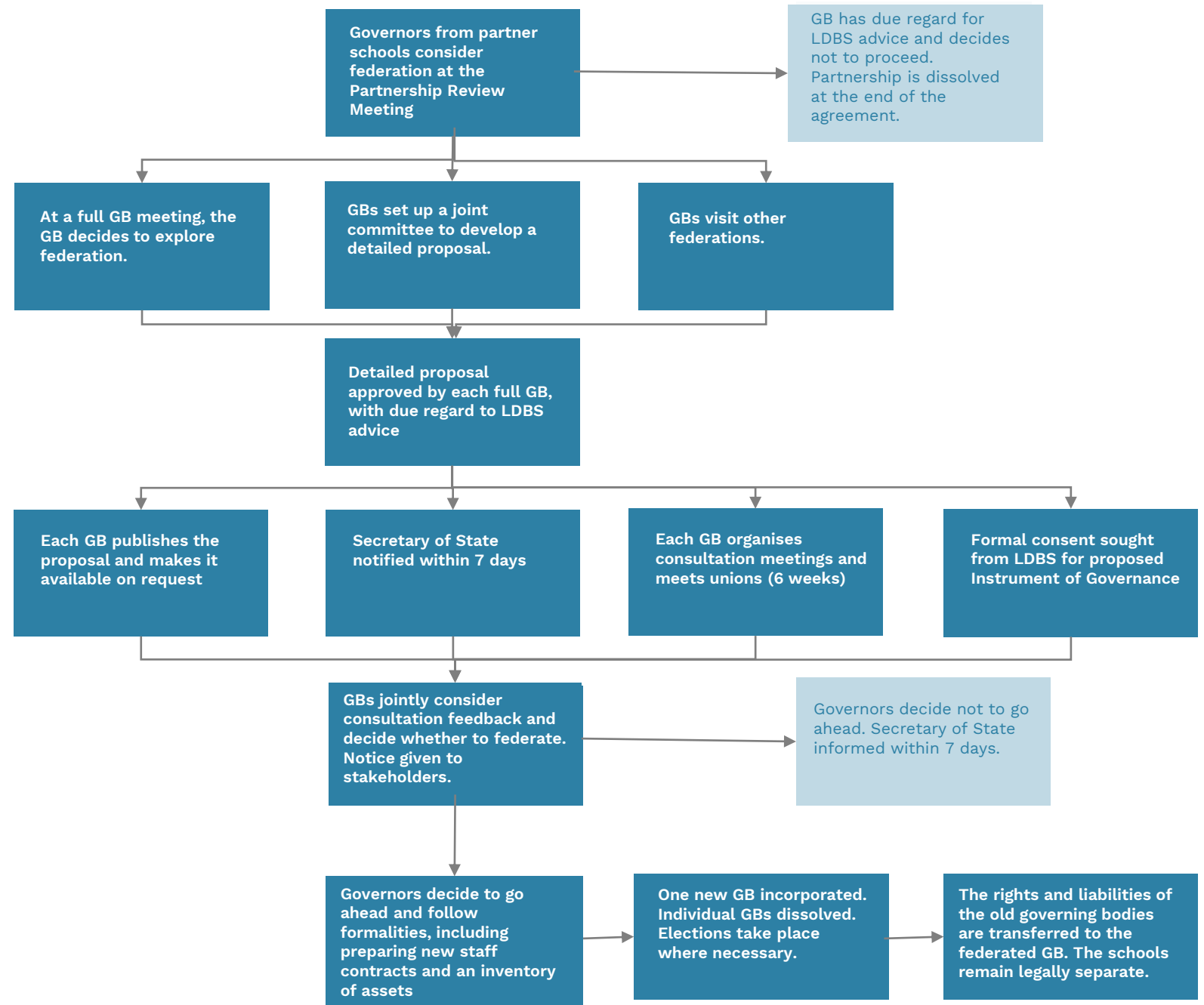
If Federation is being considered, LDBS will consider the most appropriate support for the context. It is likely to involve support from the People & Culture team, your Adviser and the Head of Governance.

Legislative process

There is a prescribed legislative process to follow when forming a Federation. Governors must:

- Formally consider the proposal,
- Inform staff the proposal is being considered,
- Design a new governance and leadership structure,
- Agree the name and vision for the Federation,
- Identify HR issues and agree how they will be addressed, including TUPE,
- Consider financial implications,
- Undertake a formal consultation,
- Constitute the new federated Governing Body.

Forming a Federation



Forming a federation: LDBS role

Note: The actual process, and the LDBS role in the process, will vary according to need and context – this is indicative.

Stage	LDBS role
Partnership Review Meeting concludes that governors wish to explore federation.	Adviser chairs partnership review meeting.
Governors seek advice.	LDBS provides advice; which colleagues are involved will depend on the context.
Each governing board formally agrees to explore federation.	LDBS Head of Governance available to advise each board and ensure an appropriate resolution at each meeting.
Joint committee established.	Representatives from each governing board form a joint committee to research and develop a detailed proposal. LDBS provides advice. Committee alerts Local Authority.
Detailed proposal published.	Committee sends a copy to Secretary of State and Local Authority. LDBS Director of Education meets with Regional Director; LDBS lead for the borough meets with LA adviser.
Draft Instrument of Governance prepared.	LDBS Head of Governance provides advice and support.
Consultation meetings.	LDBS People & Culture team provide advice and support.
Consideration of responses to formal proposal.	LDBS ensures appropriate due diligence undertaken by all governing boards.
Each governing board consults.	LDBS provides advice and ensures consultation feedback is considered.
Legal formalities.	LDBS Head of Governance provides advice and support.
TUPE process for staff.	LDBS People & Culture team provides advice and support.
Communicating the appointment to staff and parents.	LDBS adviser supports both schools to co-ordinate communications.



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