



# CJK

## Supporting education leaders from strategy to delivery

CJK specialises in providing bespoke consultancy services to multi-academy trusts and school groups. We use benchmarking data to underpin strategic decisions with real-world insights.

Our mission in working with trusts and school groups is to help them on the next step of their development journey; always reflecting their individual culture and values.

# CJK, an introduction



CJK was founded when Chris Kirk recognised the need for a consultancy for the education sector which could combine 'blue chip' strategy and operational consulting with detailed management expertise, to deliver powerful insight and practical change. Chris is a former civil service fast streamer who built his skills through 14 years at PwC, where he was a Partner in the Strategy Consulting business. Chris then spent 4 years as CEO in an international school group (50+ schools), putting consulting theory into practice. The learnings from this experience form the basis for a set of solutions which have been honed through 8 years of working with school groups, suppliers and investors in the UK and internationally.

**Chris Kirk**  
Director



**Lou Reader**  
Senior Consultant



**Chris Sheasby**  
Financial management



**Sophie Hill**  
Senior Consultant



**Mandy Coalter**  
People transformation



**Cate Noble**  
Business transformation



## Trust clients:

- Oasis
- Orchard Learning Alliance
- Schelwood
- Greenwood
- E-ACT
- Astrea
- HISP
- Initio Learning Trust
- Woodard
- Dartmoor
- Summit
- North Star
- Arbib Education Trust
- Langley Park
- Futura
- Ormiston
- David Ross Education Trust
- United Learning Trust
- Solent
- Spencer
- Vanguard Learning

## Thought leadership activity:

- NPOEL faculty for Teach First and Ambition Institute
- Master Class in Shared Services for Confederation of School Trusts
- 'Building Trusts' research for Ambition Institute
- Ofsted national working group, MAT Review Framework
- Blogs and presentations <https://www.cjkassociates.co/blog>

## System, service and investor clients:

### Groups:

- Juniper Education
- The Key
- TES
- Herts for Learning
- Supporting Education Group

### Systems:

- Pupil Asset
- Scholarpack
- Target Tracker
- SIMS
- Arbor Education
- Bromcom

### Investors:

- Horizon Capital
- Montagu Private Equity
- CBPE



# Our services

CJK is dedicated to empowering education through strategic collaboration. Our team consists of experts from the worlds of education, business, and strategy. We bring deep experience from within the education sector, alongside a wide range of approaches from outside it.

We love to help you overcome challenges and achieve success in the ever-evolving educational landscape.

## CJK Aurora

Our operating model assessment will review your operations (Finance, HR, IT and estates) culture, organisation, governance, systems, people, processes and performance to produce a 'current state assessment' which is benchmarked against other Trusts.

## Operating model redesign

We will work with you to design and analyse costed and evaluated options for the future organisation, governance, systems, processes and skills, and the steps to implement them. We will benchmark costs of proposed designs against other trusts.

## Mergers, expansion and growth

We offer a structured consultancy process designed to support your decision-making regarding options for merger or growth. Our services include pre- and post-merger support, structured help when forming a new trust, and identifying the right partner for merger.

## Trust strategy development and delivery

We work with your trust to clarify and document its strategic intent, leading to a clear strategy which is understood by stakeholders. We then provide a facilitated process for developing an actionable delivery plan to achieve your strategy.

## Operating model current state assessment and benchmarking

Our **operating model assessment** will consider the combination of:

- Organisation, Capabilities (People, Systems, Processes), Performance and Governance
- 'Back-office' functions (finance, procurement, estates/facilities, health and safety, safeguarding, HR services - payroll, policies), recruitment, retention and staff development, IT, and education data.

Our **operating model review process** provides a simple way to gather a holistic picture of these three aspects. Our review covers the following steps:

- Collecting a high-level view of the main IT systems used for Finance, MIS, Assessment, HR, Health and Safety, Asset management
- Collecting and benchmarking data on the people (FTEs) and other costs involved in delivering each of the back-office functions, at central and school level. This will go well beyond data currently held by finance teams and auditors, and is an essential step before designing the future
- Assessing the organisational arrangements (organogram) of each function (central and school level)
- Understanding the schemes of delegation and how these link to responsibilities
- Surveying education and operational staff, as well as Trustees and governors, to gather their perspectives on strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

Our **findings workshop**

We will analyse the findings from the data and surveys, benchmark against other trusts, and identify options for the future based on your criteria.

We will run a workshop with a project group to discuss findings, options and recommendations. We will gather structured feedback and give advice on these findings.



# Case study

## Current state assessment and benchmarking

### Case study

**Who:** a large rural trust grown through mergers of federations. Previous attempt to introduce shared services had resulted in dissatisfaction.

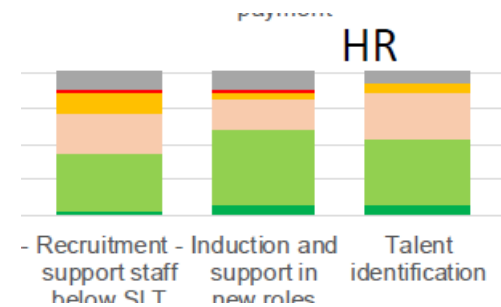
#### Our work

- Our clear end to end benchmarking revealed true cost of arrangements leading to insights around actual role of central teams vs intended role
- We worked with trust leadership to design revised services, new leadership structures and innovative approaches to distance learning

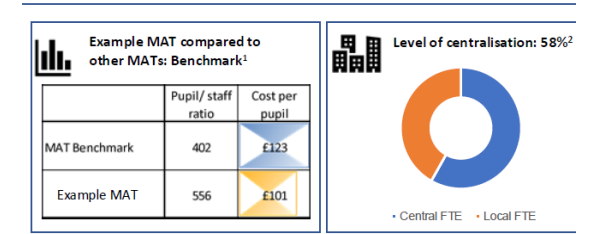
**What happened next:** the trust appointed a new CEO who used our report as an implementation plan, and continues to evaluate progress against it.

### Example CJK reporting

**Current state summary:** objectives, organisation, capability, governance



**Process assessment:** end to end costs, strengths and weaknesses per sub-process



**3. Operating model assessment**  
Stakeholder perceptions: average score of 3.6/5 across all...

**Surveys:** strategic intent, service quality

	Strengths:	Develop
Finance strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overarching financial strategy in place which identifies challenges/risks and required steps to ensure financial stability and effective use of resources.</li> <li>• Pooled reserves enable targeting of resources where most needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Now tr of the clearly project</li> <li>• Once c will be and pla</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual budget process is led by the central team</li> </ul>	

# Operating model redesign

## Future options for delivery of services

### Our **operating model redesign**:

- We will work with you to design and analyse costed and evaluated options for the future organisation, governance, systems, processes and skills, and the steps to implement them. We will benchmark costs of proposed designs against other Trusts.

### Our **operating model redesign process** provides the following:

- Evaluation of current state analysis and options for improvement
- Development of 'design principles' to guide any changes
- Design of costed future services, benchmarked against other trusts and compared with current arrangements
- Design organisational blueprints for future structure
- Benefits and risks of new structure
- Recommendations regarding systems, skills and changes to accountabilities
- Support to assess requirements for residual school-level roles (e.g. Office Manager)

### Options and tactical improvements:

- Where a full redesign is not appropriate we may instead provide advice on options for development
- For all functions we will also make tactical recommendations for improvement.

### Roadmap and implementation

- For all services we will provide a high-level roadmap for delivery and implementation

### Our **final written report and presentation**

We will present the final redesign to stakeholders, including trustees and the executive board if required, tailoring our presentation to the audience and time available.



# Case study

## Operating model redesign: designing central teams

### Case study

**Who:** one of the largest mixed phase trusts. The trust has been struggling with HR, especially in terms of payroll and transactions.

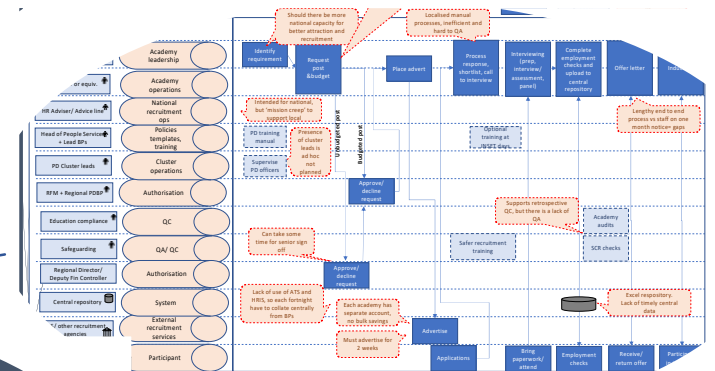
#### Our work

- CJK worked with the trust to diagnose and benchmark the issue, and to design the future
- Our design template generated detailed organisation, role and level 1 process tables for the HR Transactions and Payroll function

**What happened next:** the trust is currently implementing our recommendations, with the project due to finish in mid-2025.

### Example CJK reporting

**Current state: 'as is' process and issues**



	ACADEMY	REGIONAL	NATIONAL
<b>RECRUITMENT</b>	<p><b>Principal/SLT/line manager</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify/ approve need for new/ replacement role and agree JD (sourced from a OCL JD library)</li> <li>Review applications on ATS, shortlist and interview</li> </ul> <p><b>Admin</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Input advert detail onto ATS</li> <li>Organise interview process (rooms, panels, applicant packs)</li> <li>Generate offer letter from ATS</li> <li>New joiner checks – upload scanned documents and complete DBS, SCR</li> <li>Once job offer accepted, key in any 'required' data fields on HRIS not carried over from ATS</li> <li>Generate and issue contract from ATS</li> </ul>	<p><b>RD, FFM and HRBP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve new roles</li> <li>Approve all recruitment for academies in deficit</li> </ul> <p><b>HRBP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide or be the conduit to accessing support for hard to fill roles (from Resourcing and Talent team)</li> </ul>	<p><b>People Services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up vacancy on ATS</li> <li>Quality control of new joiner checks through training/ support for academies</li> <li>Quality assurance through SCR audit and spot checks</li> <li>Support for difficult cases e.g. immigration</li> </ul> <p><b>People Strategy &amp; Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops and maintains model JDs and any JE processes</li> </ul>

**Future state: 'to be' processes and roles**

#### IGN | HR Transactions – Recruitment and other HR Admin

Role	Actual FTE	Salary an
Head of People Systems & Process Improvement	1	£114
People Systems Manager	1	£54
Process Design, Training & Monitoring Lead	1	£51
PD Operations Manager	1	£55
PD Officer (national)	1	£44
Recruitment Officer	1	£42
PD Team Assistant	1	£39
PD Cluster staff**	-	£21
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>£423</b>

Role	Actual FTE	Indicative salary an
Head of People Services	1	£91,000
People Services National Manager	1	£55,000
People Services Officer (National)	1	£42,000
People Services Operations Manager	1	£55,000
PD Helpdesk Advisor	1	£32,000
People System Officer	1	£32,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>£307,000</b>

\*\*Assumption that transactional activity on Recruitment and 'Other HR Admin' currently carried out by cluster staff is no longer required in new operating model.

**Costings: 'to be' FTE, locations and costs**



# Case study

## Operating model redesign: road maps and change plans

### Case study

**Who:** a group of 10 schools in a learning alliance which were considering whether and how to form a trust

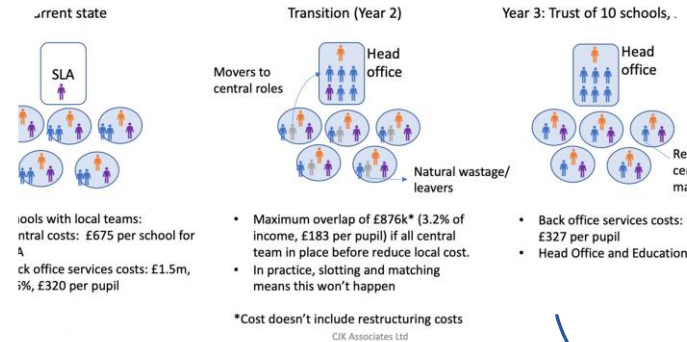
#### Our work

- We helped them through the process including creation of future blueprint for working together
- We assessed their current state and how this mapped to the future model
- We identified the optimal sequence for changes, peak transition risks and the change management implications

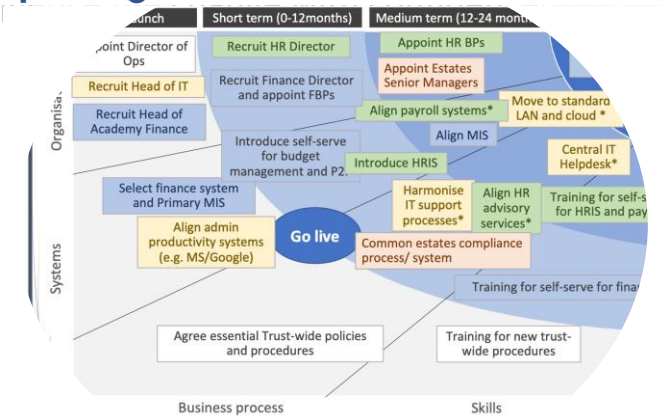
**What happened next:** The schools gained approval to form a trust and the trust formally started in September 2024.

### Example CJK reporting

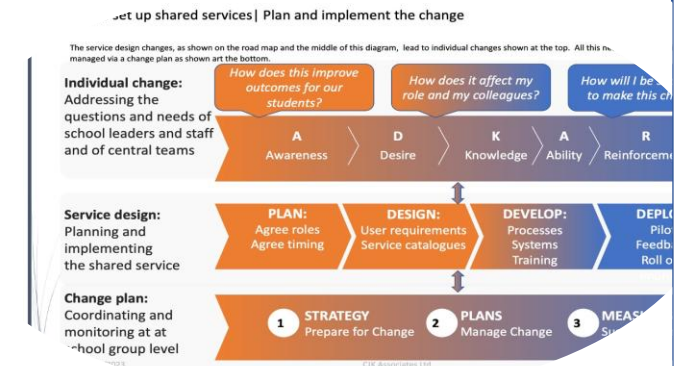
#### T-map: board-level view of change sequence



#### Change plan: implementation and delivery



#### Staff risks: identify risks during transition



## Operating model redesign: designing local academy roles

### Case study

**Who:** a large regional trust which had preserved local operations as it grew, but was now recognising a significant cost to efficiency and effectiveness

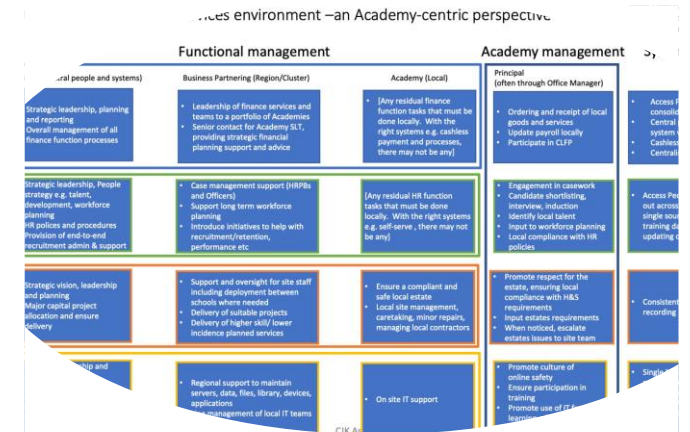
#### Our work

- Following detailed benchmarking, we worked with leadership to develop a future shared services model
- We set out how this would be implemented in schools of different phases and sizes so that all would have appropriate local capacity

**What happened next:** the trust is midway through a 3 year transition programme, having achieved a number of quick wins already.

### Example CJK reporting

**Responsibilities:** Simple shared services responsibility matrix - Academy centric view



Duties	Activities
Local admin	Non-teaching/ support / administrative activities outside of school hours
	Organise / deliver midday supervision and organise hospitality v
	Oversee breakfast club arrangements (if required)
Contracts and services	Over time, there should be few or no service contracts or software operations or procurement.
	Local equipment ordering
	Organise and book supply staff through central systems (or use ce
Communication internal and external	Liaise with other staff, pupils, parents, external agencies e.g. insur
	Completion and submission of forms, including for external agenci schools may wish to use trust admin for this)
	Produce and respond to correspondence including local elem
	Collation and distribution of reports to SLT, LGBs, usin
	Oversee school trips management includi

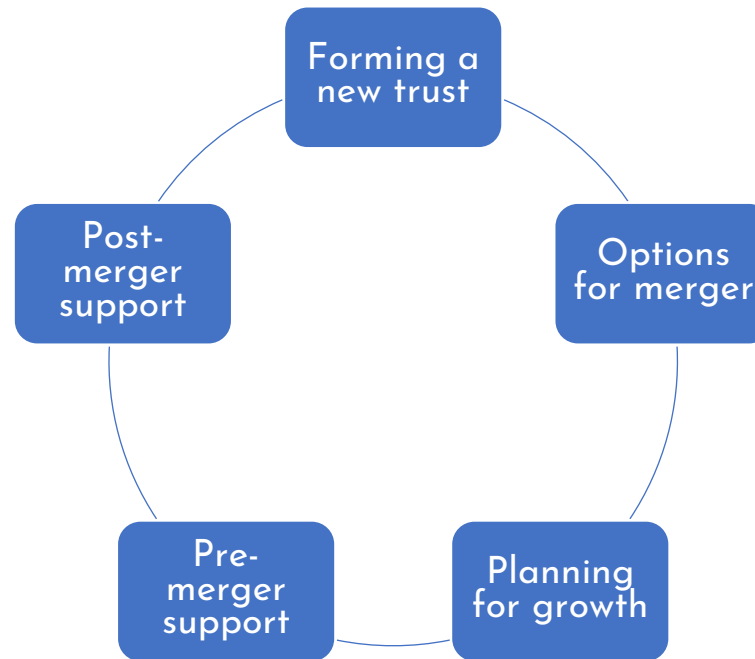
**Job descriptions:** Standard Office Manager template, standard adaptation by school type



# Mergers, expansion and growth

Guiding your path to strategic growth and successful partnerships

CJK offers comprehensive services to support trusts at all stages of their growth journey



# Forming a new trust

## Our **structured** support

- Our process will support you to plan the operational services you need for your new trust and how much they will cost. This will inform the central service costs for the new MAT including top slice (if applicable) and provide a blueprint which can be shared with the DfE regional advisory board and any potential new joiners.

## Our **consultancy process** for forming a new MAT provides the following:

- Recommendations on a new MAT operating model including executive board structure.
- Advice on central services and back-office capacity including analysis of existing capacity and how this could be built into future service provision.
- Workshop to review benefits of fully centralised shared services vs. provision of services in schools with locally maintained operational teams.
- Design and cost of future service model for operational functions.
- Identification of top slice or retained GAG pooling to support the new operating model.
- Advice on pros and cons of GAG pooling.
- Identification of systems required to support the new MAT e.g. finance, MIS, HRIS, payroll
- Review of your services prospectus for potential partners and new joiners

## Our **final report**:

We will present a written report with the defined shared services operating model and proposed future structure.

This will include estimated top slice of GAG funding required for the chosen operating model, number of FTE, roles and organisational structure.



# Case study

## Forming a new multi-academy trust

### Case study

**Who:** a secondary school and a college wanted to join together to create a new multi-academy trust for their local area. Other local schools have been involved and may join in the future.

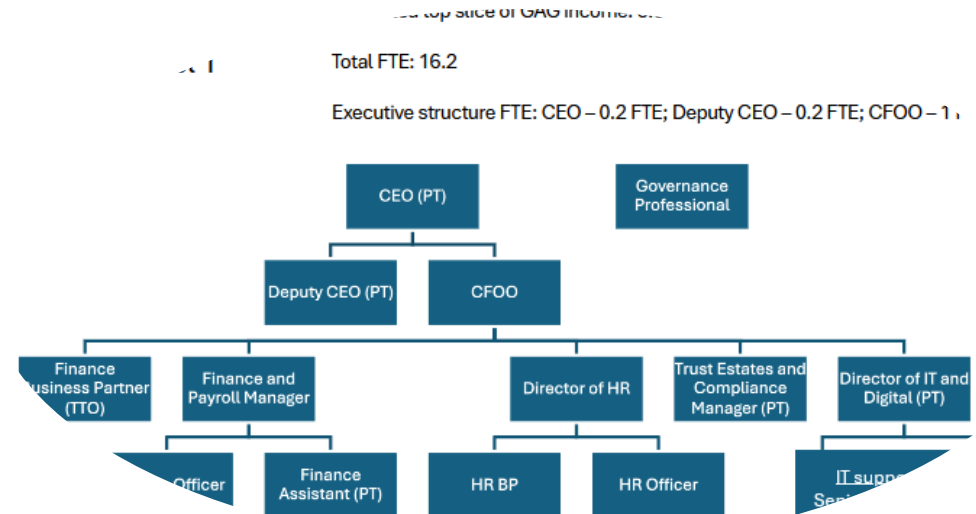
### Our work

- CJK ran a workshop with senior leadership from schools to explore and decide on the benefits of a shared services model vs. local provision.
- Following the discussion, CJK modelled the future design and provided two costed options.

**What happened next:** the creation of the new trust was approved by the regional advisory board and will officially form on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025.

### Example CJK reporting

**Operating model:** fully costed future structure options, supported by role descriptions, salaries, benchmarks



# Options for merger

Our **structured merger** consultancy:

- Our consultancy is designed to support your decision-making regarding options for merger. We will work with you to establish your criteria for trust selection and provide an in-depth assessment of potential partners.
- We bring significant experience about how trusts operate, and from advising on previous merger discussions.

Our **merger consultancy process** provides the following:

## Criteria

- We will help you to develop and refine your criteria for merger or growth. In our experience it is one task to describe the facts about a trust or school - its size, plans, educational approach - but another to turn these into drivers for decision making.
- We will support you to make sure all the right questions are being asked throughout the process.

## Identify longlist

- We will work with you to generate a list of potential trusts operating in the area and identify with you suitable trusts for the pre-screening longlist.
- Pre-screen: review of longlist based on public information sources, using the defined criteria, after which we will run an internal workshop with you to shortlist trusts for screening.

## Screening

- We will request additional data from each shortlisted trust, collate and analyse their responses, providing a text narrative and a summative assessment against each criteria.
- CEO/Chair interviews: we will work with you to carry out short interviews with the CEO and/or Chair of each trust (or suitable nominee). This will flesh out our understanding of anything not covered by the written returns.

Our **final merger report**:

- We will provide a written report with scoring of the shortlisted trusts, and a recommended trust.
- We will present and facilitate at a meeting with your trustees, leading to a go / no-go decision.
- We will also advise on pros and cons of alternative ways forward e.g. organic growth.



# Case study

## Options for merger: identify a partner trust

### Case study

**Who:** a two school trust with one secondary and one primary. They have been considering their growth strategy and, having collaborated well with other trusts, now wish to assess the potential to turn these partnerships into a formal merger.

#### Our work

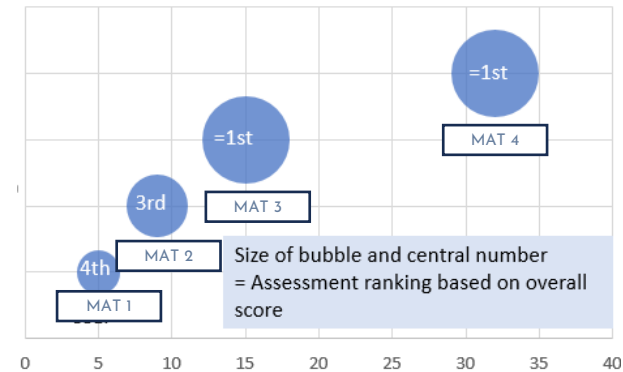
- CJK worked with trust leaders to develop and refine the criteria for potential partners.
- We appraised five trusts against the defined criteria, providing an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each.
- We ran a workshop with trust leaders to facilitate a recommendation to the board.

**What happened next:** the trust selected one of the shortlisted trusts to merge with. The merger is due to complete in early 2025.

### Example CJK reporting

#### Trust comparison: analysis and scoring of strengths and weaknesses

Behaviour, attendance and inclusion	5	Strong approach to inclusion and interventions. Strong support for behaviour. Challenges in some schools, but the trust is responding well	3	Trust intervenes where t Approach reflects 'earne limit collaboration to m Permanent exclusions re reduce these in future n
Curriculum and learning	5	The structures for collaborative alignment are in place and these are enabling rather than restrictive. Work in progress; further development needed.	5	Collaborative alignment subject choice left to ac Curriculum alignment is be a big change for som
People	5	Strong People Strategy. Clear commitment to entire workforce, including non-teaching staff. Good approach to staff engagement.	3	Good progress has been Staff Charter. The wider People Strat development and clear



#### Trust maturity: assessment of size vs. maturity

Financial decision making	Partial	LGB receives draft budget and contribute final budget and 3 year forecast. Also re management accounts and is expected to school where there are variances to budg
Premises and Health & Safety	Partial	LGB 'monitors, supports and challenges' i performance. For premises LGB works w determine priorities for capital expenditu parameters of the wider Estates strategy,
Safeguarding	Full	LGB required to have named link Governc out termly checks on SCR. LGB monitors, challenges welfare and child protection it
Headteacher & SLT appointments	None	CEO responsible for Headteacher appoint consultation' with the LGB. Headteacher SLT appointments (LGB has a supporting, appointment panels).

#### Governance: detailed analysis of LGB delegated responsibilities

# Planning for growth

## Our **growth planning** consultancy:

- Our consultancy process will be tailored to your needs, growth stage and desired outcomes. We will agree a set of deliverables based on your individual requirements.

## Here are some examples taken from our recent work to **support trusts looking to grow**:

- Current state assessment of existing operating model, its costs and benefits.
- Facilitated discussion about how this should be scaled in the future and design principles including the trust's culture and values.
- Decision making on future high-level options for delivery of operational services and systems. This along with the design principles will inform our design brief for future services.
- Developing costed blueprint designs for future services, taking into consideration of staged growth if required.
- Produce a preferred structure including roles, costs and reporting lines, notes on enabling systems and workflows.
- Provision of draft and final reports.
- Appraisal of options for future top slice and central service charging arrangements.
- Producing a high-level roadmap for implementation, linked to the trust growth strategy.
- Identification of top slice or retained GAG pooling to support the new operating model.
- Advice on pros and cons of moving to GAG pooling.

## Our **final written report**:

- We will present a written report with the future costed services and structure, along with a high-level roadmap for implementation and recommendations for potential improvements.





# Case study

## Planning for growth

### Case study

**Who:** a trust of five schools had identified a trust to merge with and required a design for this merger, as well as a long-term plan blueprint for growth to 20 schools.

### Our work

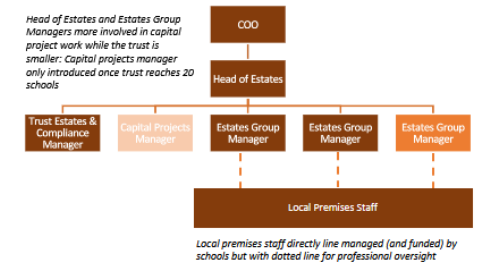
- CJK was commissioned to provide support and guidance on how to scale the established model at 3 different points of growth
- CJK facilitated sessions with the Executive team to consider the trust's culture, current capabilities and preferred future options.
- The final report included costed blueprint designs for central services for stage 1 (11 schools), stage 2 (15 schools), and stage 3 (20 schools)

**What happened next:** the trust incorporated the costed plans into their merger discussions with another trust.

### Example CJK reporting

**Future models:** functional structures and how they will evolve as the trust grows

ESTATES TARGET MODEL - build up over time



**Funding model:** options for central services funding

1. Top Slice and Service charge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost covered by top slice.</li> <li>• Shared services charged in addition (e.g. IT support, HR Support)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potentially allows more transparency around the shared service element – a price for a service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut off between central team and shared service is somewhat arbitrary e.g. for an HR Service</li> </ul>
2. Top slice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All central and shared services funds recouped through top slice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively simple to calculate and explain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will lead to a higher top slice which can be used in a negative or simplistic way</li> </ul>
3. GAG Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All funds are pooled to centre, and then redistributed to departments/schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders consider the needs of every student, rather than fighting individual school's cause</li> <li>• Look after financially</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived impact on school autonomy</li> <li>• Colleagues may feel funds are allocated specifically to students in that school.</li> </ul>

**Staged growth:** future central services costings at each growth stage

	5 schools Current	11 schools 2025/26	15 schools 2027/28	20 schools 2029/2030
<b>COST</b>				
Top tier (CEO, CFO, COO)	£418K	£536K	£692K	£719K
Education (Directors of Education)		£135K	£141K	£293K
Finance	£287K	£573K	£830K	£1.1M
HR	£112K	£498K	£700K	£868K
Estates	£98K	£314K	£394K	£480K
IT	£108K	£564K	£766K	£1.05M
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>£1.02M</b>	<b>£2.62M</b>	<b>£3.52M</b>	<b>£4.51M</b>
<b>INCOME</b>				
Estimated GAG	£15.54M	£35.45M	£51.93M	£72.02M
Central costs as % GAG	6.59%	7.40%	6.78%	6.26%

# Pre- and post-merger support

## Our pre- and post-merger operating model redesign:

- We will work with you to design and analyse costed and evaluated options for your combined operating model, either pre- or post-merger, and benchmark the costs of proposed designs against other trusts.

## Our pre- and post-merger redesign process provides the following:

- Evaluation of current state analysis of each of the merging trusts, or the new combined trust post-merger, and identification of options for improvement.
- Development of 'design principles' to guide any changes such as the cultures of the trusts that are joining together, or the new trust's vision and values.
- Design of costed future services, benchmarked against other trusts and compared with current arrangements.
- Design of organisational blueprints for future structure
- Assessment of benefits and risks of new structure
- Recommendations regarding systems, skills and changes to accountabilities
- Support to assess requirements for residual school-level roles (e.g. Office Manager)

## Roadmap and implementation

- For all services we will provide a high-level roadmap for delivery and implementation

## Our final written report and presentation

We will present the final design to stakeholders, including trustees and the executive board if required, tailoring our presentation to the audience and the time available.



# Case study

## Post-merger operating model redesign

### Case study

**Who:** a large regional trust which had grown organically for 8 years and then merged with another trust.

#### Our work

- Progress had been made in centralising finance and there was a growing need to further develop the operating model for all back-office functions to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- CJK provided a current state analysis of the combined trust, highlighting differences in performance and costs between the legacy trusts. This supported discussions about where good practice could be scaled up.
- We provided a fully-costed redesign of all central operational functions, along with tactical and operational recommendations.

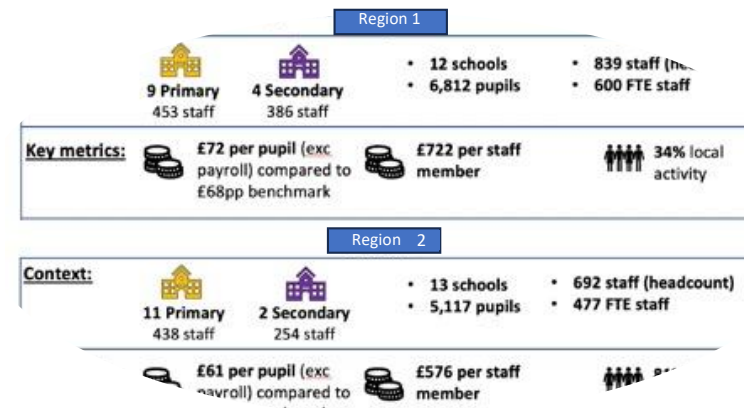
**What happened next:** the trust is currently in the process of implementing the recommendations and recruiting for key positions.

### Example CJK reporting

**Service satisfaction benchmarking:** comparing satisfaction with services between the two legacy trust regions, to inform post-merger decisions

Question:	Region 1	Region 2
The service is reliable?	4.4	3.4
Service is efficient?	4.5	3.1
There is good two way communication and responsiveness?	4.2	3.3
Good data and insight are delivered by this service?	3.2	3.1
Are there any robust ways to measure the performance of this service?	3.7	

**Cost and efficiency benchmarking:** comparing cost of service between the two legacy trust regions



# Strategy and delivery planning

## Strategy development and delivery planning:

- Strategy: establishing and documenting the strategic intent, focus and role of the centre leading to a clear strategy which is understood by stakeholders.
- Delivery planning: Creating a clear plan with owners, actions, milestones, performance measures and resources assigned.

## Our **Strategy development** service typically includes the following steps:

- Review of current documentation, and meetings with key stakeholders.
- A series of workshops with Board, Executive including Headteachers to discuss and agree the components of the strategy in a logical and stimulating way. This is highly interactive and we work with you based on your capacity and desire for external input - for example, you may want key Exec members tasked with development of content, or you may wish us to provide initial input. It's your choice.
- Production of a 'Strategy on a page' backed up by a Strategic Plan which sets out the vision, mission, strategic objectives and the main initiatives that will deliver the strategy.

## Our **Delivery planning** service provides:

- A facilitated process for developing a clear delivery plan to achieve your strategy.
- We provide a template, alongside support for your leadership and teams to complete it through a series of workshops and 121 meetings.
- As with Strategy development, you can choose how much content you want from us: We can play the role of facilitators, providing challenge as well as support; and where needed, we can generate content for you to review and adopt.

Strategic intent	Trust vision, mission, values, culture, objectives: 'Truly Civic'
Focus	Phases, locations, types of schools or contexts of students where we can make a difference.
Role of the Centre	What we do as a Trust of schools that individual schools cannot do by themselves
Operating model	Performance objectives, organisation, capabilities, governance

# Case study

## Strategy development

### Case study

**Who:** A small London trust with a strong focus on social justice and inclusion.

#### Our work

- We conducted a 'Strategy Survey' to understand where views were aligned or at odds
- We facilitated discussions to resolve key debates
- We helped the Executive to document the strategy, and then supported the Board to review and challenge it.

**What happened next:** the strategy provided clarity, and has been used for the Trust's development and delivery planning for 3 years.

### Example 'Strategy on a page'

"Stronger together"					
<b>MAT Vision, mission and values</b>	To provide every child and young person with an enriching and inspiring educational experience, where they can thrive academically and socially, both now and in future				
<b>Trust-wide themes</b>	1. Preparing students for the future	2. Schools at the heart of their communities	3. An employer of choice for our staff	4. High quality leadership	5. A sustainable Trust
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ensuring students are ready to learn</li> <li>b) Enriching and inspiring teaching, learning and curriculum</li> <li>c) Future-focused learning experiences</li> <li>d) An education in the roundest sense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) High quality support for parents and parenting</li> <li>b) Effective working with community partners</li> <li>c) Working with system partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Providing an environment for meaningful work</li> <li>b) Career pathways and professional development</li> <li>c) Professional communities and shared resources</li> <li>d) Promote flexible approaches to working wherever possible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Recruiting and retaining excellent leaders</li> <li>b) Developing our leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Committed governance</li> <li>b) Maintaining financial viability</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed Trust-wide curriculum principles and collaboration</li> <li>• Develop and embed high quality STEAM curriculum</li> <li>• Develop and role out the MAT promise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further develop Community Outreach Services</li> <li>• Create a bank of 'MAT volunteers'</li> <li>• Enhance strategic partnerships at community and system level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all staff have a personalised career development pathway, supported by their line manager</li> <li>• Build a culture of support and collaboration, shared resources, all staff benefit from some form of flexible working if they wish;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put in place high quality professional development pathways into and through leadership roles</li> <li>• Identifying opportunities for cross-school improvement leadership, with appropriate support for those who take on these roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External reviews of governance</li> <li>• High quality induction for new trustees, and ongoing development</li> <li>• Further develop central services, including service catalogues</li> <li>• Gather regular feedback on services from school staff to inform ongoing development</li> </ul>



# Working with CJK

## Interview with Tom Campbell, CEO, E-ACT

### **How did the 'current state' assessment help you?**

"The initial assessment was incredibly valuable in collating a range of information on process, costs and service quality. Going through the exercise promoted us to process map, brought to light variation in regional delivery practice and provided insight into the aggregate impact of services in schools as well as evaluation of an individual service. The partnership with the CJK team made the process of discovery useful to the executive team and the board as we charted what a change programme might look like. The careful attention to Headteacher feedback also reflected our organisational culture with the opportunity to co-construct future models with input from across E-ACT".

### **What other aspects of the process were helpful in bringing staff on the journey?**

"The evidence base prompted useful debate. The tools used to simplify complex data were extremely helpful and allowed us to focus on key findings quickly".

### **How has the work been progressing?**

"We have since transitioned from regional to national model of service delivery taking all staff with us and achieving the new model through collaboration with key staff. It is still early days in our transition to the new model but we have made timely considerable cost savings, remapped many of our processes including more investment in digital and revised our scheme of delegation to reflect more efficient agency in our processing. As a result of the national delivery, the quality of data we are providing to our trust board is improving all of the time and we have already used this data to commission a number of national delivery projects e.g. on reducing energy consumption, investment PV panels across the estate etc".

### **Is there anything you wish you had done differently and why?**

"Not differently per se, but knowing now what we got out of the support, we might have invested more in drilling further into process mapping within our services. This was particularly interesting in understanding bottlenecks from a school's perspective or how we work more efficiently".

### **Any overall feedback on CJK?**

"CJK really understand the sector and have a great deal of insight and experience to share. Highly professional, excellent communicators and absolutely committed to getting it right for your own unique context".

## Interview with Graham Feek, Deputy CEO, Greenwood Academies Trust

### **How did the 'current state' assessment help you?**

"It provided an objective way of collating headteacher feedback, in addition to the normal solicitation of informal feedback, against a clearly considered set of measures. The survey helped emphasise that the Trust sees Principals as our key customers and we want to understand their pain points and do something about them. The additional feedback from CJK Consultancy alongside the Principals' feedback about services provided really helpful context and balance and reflected more generally what was happening in the market in terms of service and delivery expectations".

### **What other aspects of the process were helpful in bringing staff on the journey?**

"Involving Directors in the design of the questions helped achieve the buy in of all Directors in relation to the outcome of the feedback, which they then had commitment to act on, rather than seek to be defensive, even when some of the understanding of principals was not exactly right. CJK objective recommendations about service improvements based on the market and their experience I believe galvanised Directors' determination to respond to issues raised, and in a number of cases confirmed their planned direction of travel was the right one, giving renewed confidence in their direction of travel".

### **How has the work been progressing?**

"We've acted on all recommendations made and in one case sought further support to develop different delivery options. Initial outcome and progress made in implementing recommendations have been presented to Board and Academy Principals. It has really helped us to demonstrate to our academy principals that we want to improve the quality and cost of the services we provide to them".

### **Is there anything you wish you had done differently and why?**

"I wish we had commissioned the work earlier and some aspects of our implementation of recommendations could have been quicker and potentially more decisive in some areas, however, this doesn't significantly detract from the value of the work and the impact of the improvements made in response to it".

### **Any overall feedback on CJK?**

"The tried and tested methodology applied, as well as the extensive access to reliable relevant benchmarking and other sector information provided real clarity about our strengths and weaknesses, and the engaging way in which the work was planned and delivered gave leaders real ownership of the findings. This has allowed GAT to deliver many improvements to its central services to date, with further improvements in train. The consultancy outcomes have made a real difference to our academies and the work they do with our pupils because of the improvement to services we are making as a result of the work. What could have been a divisive piece of work has actually help galvanise a more coherent approach to supporting our academies".

# Testimonials

A selection of testimonials we have received from our trust clients

## CEO Summit Learning Trust

"Centralising our operational functions has worked really well, and we have no desire to return to the old systems. Chris and his team engaged all our Principals during the process to ensure their views were heard - getting their buy-in was the key to making the changes work. Principals see the value in the specialist expertise we now have in place and there are more opportunities for career development for operational staff, positioning our family well for long-term success".

## Executive Principal, The Arbib Education Trust

"Chris's external review was key to making change happen for TAET and helped us to move forward faster than we would have done on our own. The expert, evidence-based perspective helped us gain trustee buy-in, and exploring different models gave everyone more to consider, making the whole process more impactful".

## CEO Vanguard Learning Trust

"CJK's work delivered exactly as intended; it has transformed our organisation, helping us realise our vision of a single organisation with shared understanding of our collective endeavour. The report CJK provided was clear, insightful and helpful, particularly the benchmarks; since it was shared with trustees, it has helped us make significant progress in establishing our shared operational services. Chris is outstanding at what he does; he connects with any audience, using the right terms and metaphors to simplify complex ideas. Every Trust would benefit from having someone with Chris's knowledge and expertise working alongside them. Simply put - brilliant value for money!"

## CEO North Star Community Trust

"Working with Chris has been fantastic. One of Chris's standout qualities is the ability to truly listen and absorb our needs, treating us as an individual client rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Chris consistently goes the extra mile to support us, and that dedication has made a real difference to our trust."



# Testimonials

A selection of testimonials we have received from our trust clients

CEO Dartmoor  
Academy Trust

"The work of CJK Associates gave a laser sharp appraisal of our current position in terms of both strategic mapping and operational efficiencies; the proposals emanating have helped us to streamline where needed and to grow functions where this was necessary. An invaluable partnership that has brought better strategic fit and resultingly operational excellence".

CEO TKAT

"CJK Associates helped us get a really clear view of our current services. CJK's benchmarking was really helpful, as was the independent gathering of views from our trustees, headteachers, and operational teams. CJK then supported us to develop a strong framework for moving forwards. They were knowledgeable about the barriers that needed to be overcome, clear about the solutions, and provided us with great direction".

CEO David Ross  
Education Trust

"What I really liked about CJK Associates was the mix of rigour, candor and energy. They helped us clarify our aims and how to get there. Some of the priorities we identified as a result of their independent input were quite different from the ones we had in mind before we started the work".

CEO Orchard  
Learning Trust

"CJK's collaborative approach, which invested considerable time and resources into listening to and getting to know and understand our schools - the people who lead them and the values that we share - meant that the target model which emerged was designed to fit us. It is a bespoke model and service".



# Contact CJK

Contact us for a no-obligation informal meeting:

Email: [info@cjassociates.co](mailto:info@cjassociates.co)

Web: [www.cjassociates.co](http://www.cjassociates.co)

Chris Kirk: +44 07740 923089

Sophie Hill: +44 07918 636661