




SIMS

Joining forces for better outcomes

A multi-academy trust's
guide to assessment



A successful multi-academy trust (MAT) with strong leaders at the helm can boost the performance of its schools and transform the fortunes of its pupils. A sound approach to assessment is crucial to the strong leadership and management of a MAT. This guide explains how trusts can address their key assessment challenges and highlights some questions that MAT leaders need to ask to ensure they drive standards.

Know your MAT

MATs come in all shapes and sizes. Some trusts have just two schools, others have 52. The schools in a trust might be primary, secondary or a mix; urban or rural; geographically spread or locally concentrated.

To manage assessment successfully across your unique group of schools, you need to consider how each school approaches assessment and if the practice is autonomous or consistent. This will have an influence on your ability to gather and compare accurate information on the performance of your schools over time and help you ensure they are making a difference.

Autonomy or standardisation?

In the early days of the academy programme, the focus was on school autonomy. But with increased accountability measures, and the hint of a new Ofsted inspection framework for both trusts and their schools coming into effect from as early as September 2018, the drive for a more consistent and centralised approach to assessment is high on the agenda for many MAT leaders.

With the removal of levels and the ability for schools to assess however they choose, finding the right approach can be challenging. However, MATs often find that consistency really is key to accurately comparing pupil attainment outcomes and understanding performance across the group.

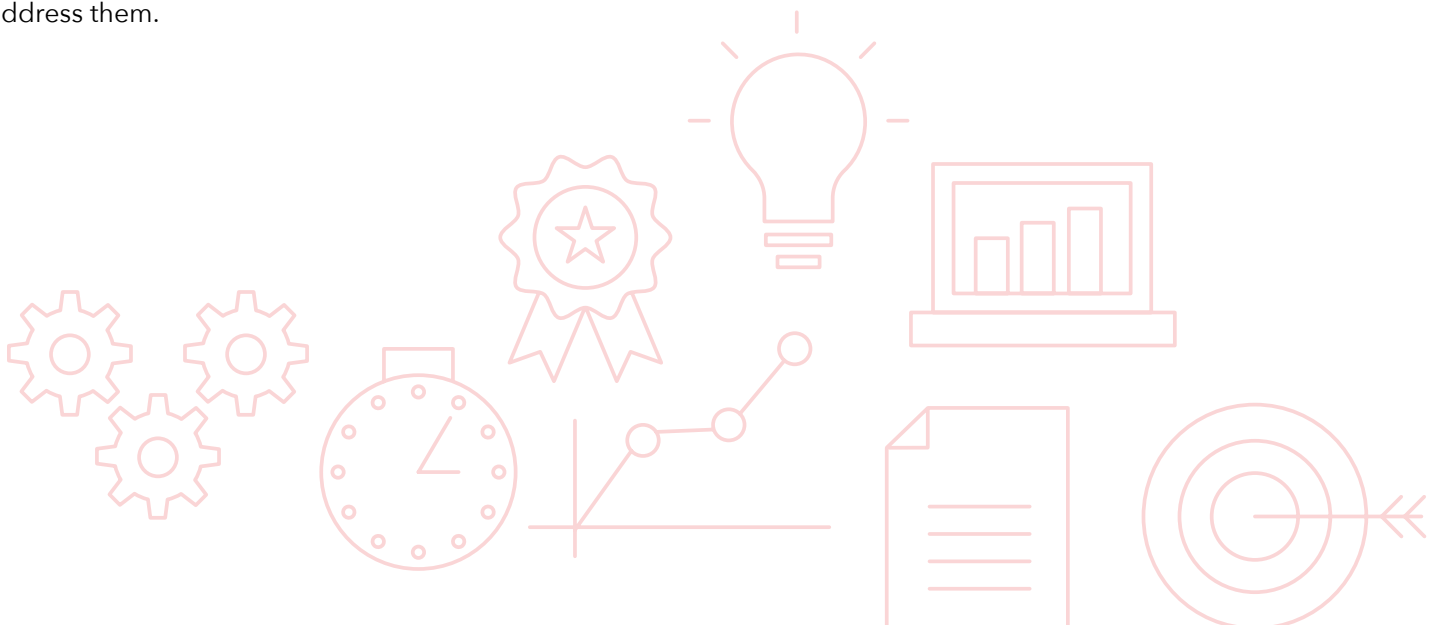
When there is consistency in the way school data such as details of pupils' attendance and achievement is recorded, with the right tools, it can be pulled together and analysed quickly and easily in one place, enabling trust leaders to evaluate the performance of schools with confidence. The information can also be used to identify any potential issues so that steps can quickly be taken to address them.

MAT assessment check list

- What size is the trust?
- Is it growing?
- Is there a standardised assessment strategy across the group?
- What data do trust leaders need at school and MAT level to drive pupil achievement?
- Can data be easily analysed and reported on centrally to inform decision making?

How SIMS can help...

Tools such as SIMS SchoolView bring SIMS data to the centre of your academy group with ready-to-use dashboards which combine SIMS key performance measures and useful pupil demographic filters, providing a consolidated view of performance. Bespoke options are also available, in the form of the **SIP MAT Dashboard** from the SIMS School Improvement Programme, offering even more flexibility for data collection, analysis and reporting at MAT level. Ensuring you have the right system for your MAT will save staff hours of time and offer the insight you need to deliver improved outcomes for learners.



Decide which data you need

Trust and school leaders should challenge themselves to focus on exactly what data will be useful within their schools and for what purpose, **and then collect the minimum amount of data required to help them evaluate how they are doing.**

To achieve this, there are a number of key questions trusts should be asking and among the most important is 'What information do we need to be able to spot any issues, put successful interventions in place and measure performance across the trust?'

As a trust leader, you want to know that you have the data you need to flag if, for example, 3 out of 5 schools are falling behind in maths, so that action can be taken promptly to address this. You should also be able to identify what it is that school A is doing more effectively than school B to improve reading, for example, so that best practice can be replicated.

Do you want to collect regular, formative assessments or focus more on summative judgements across the trust and formative assessment in the classrooms? How frequently do you need to be able to review the information, every week, month, half term or termly?

Answering these questions will give you a focussed assessment process and help to ensure timely insights without building up mountains of data and putting an additional burden on teachers' workloads.

How SIMS can help...

With a solution such as **SIMS Assessment**, schools have the flexibility to allow teachers to record both formative and summative assessment judgements quickly and easily in the classroom, while also helping to ensure the quality and accuracy of data is maintained across the group. When the latest information is gathered efficiently and effectively in this way, it can then be scrutinised centrally by authorised staff within the academy group. This makes keeping track of pupil performance a much simpler task for trusts to undertake, without asking too much of their schools.

SIMS Discover empowers schools to present their assessment data visually with Venn diagrams, charts and graphs, whilst also being able to drill down into the data, supporting clear and insightful reporting.



Demonstrate your impact

With increasing focus on governance at MAT level and new approaches being developed to better scrutinise MATs, academy groups need to make sure that their systems allow them to analyse both their individual schools' data and trust level information for key pupil groups and demographics.

There is a growing need for trust leaders to have a clear understanding of the strengths of schools within the group and to spot areas that would benefit from the introduction of timely interventions. Being able to evaluate the success of these interventions is essential too. Does your system enable you to see whether the new lunchtime reading clubs introduced have had a positive impact on the achievement of EAL students in your primary schools, for example? Have the revision support sessions put in place helped Year 11 maths classes improve their grades?

It is vital for trusts to be able to show as quickly as possible that interventions are having a demonstrable impact, particularly for MATs taking on struggling schools, and so trusts need the pupil assessment information and tools that enable them to do this.



How SIMS can help...

With SIMS, schools can manage their assessments and interventions simply. Tools such as SIMS Interventions enable schools to ensure that any action being taken to raise pupil attainment is achieving the desired results – and if not, changes can be made. For trusts, bespoke data dashboards enable staff to view key information on the performance of the group as a whole, or drill down deeper to answer school specific questions – is improving attendance having an impact on achievement, for example? Has the attainment of EAL students risen as a result of a new teaching resource? Knowing this is key to driving standards across the group.

Did you know...

The SIP MAT Dashboard allows you to share relevant data with key members of staff across your MAT.



Using the SIP MAT Dashboard has proved to be an efficient way of sharing data quickly, and it saves me an immense amount of time too. All the way through creating the system, our school improvement consultant was fantastic in adding in the different functionality that we wanted to include, such as helping us to analyse data in a certain way or making particular information available at the touch of a button.



Annie Wiles, Chief Operations Officer,
Aquila, the Diocese of Canterbury
Academies Trust

Meet schools' individual needs

Each MAT faces its own set of challenges and has its own strengths and needs. It is therefore important to ensure that assessment practices meet the requirements of the trust and match the dynamics of the schools, encouraging collaboration and the sharing of best practice.

When reviewing assessment practice across your MAT, you need to know that your current system is customisable enough to allow each of your schools to assess as they need to and that achievement data is used to drive progress. The software your trust uses should also enable you to access a central dashboard of information that can give you a clear picture of each school, while enabling you to support all of your schools in raising achievement.

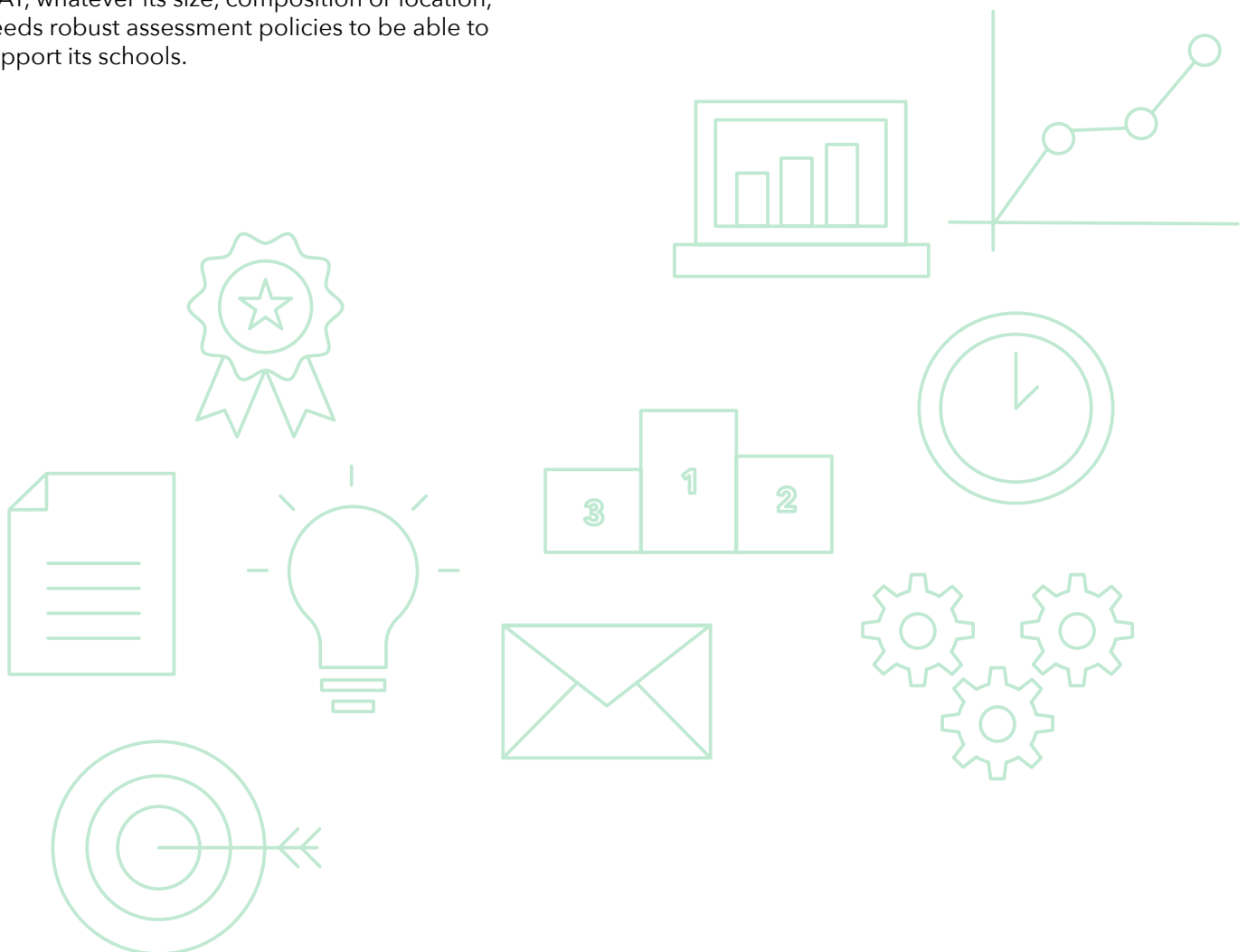
Consistency and standardisation of systems and processes across your group of schools will result in time and cost savings, enabling you to work more efficiently.

It's clear that no two MATs are the same, but every MAT, whatever its size, composition or location, needs robust assessment policies to be able to support its schools.

Whether your academy group has a standardised model of teaching and management for its schools, when it comes to assessment data at MAT level, quality not quantity is the watchword.

Key to success is deciding what data you need to gain insight into the performance of pupils across your MAT. You can then ensure that this knowledge is used to make informed decisions on which interventions will have the greatest impact on raising achievement - and demonstrate success.

Managing assessment across a MAT needn't be complex. With a system that's flexible enough to accommodate the assessment needs of your schools, and the ability to get answers to the questions you want to ask of the data, your trust will put strong foundations in place for improving outcomes for all pupils across the group.



SIMS provides 21,000 schools with the tools senior leaders, teachers and support staff need to drive improvement and manage daily school life efficiently.

SIMS Assessment gives schools the flexibility to record details of pupils' formative or summative achievement quickly and easily and monitor progress in accordance with their own assessment practice.

SIMS Interventions allows school to plan, manage and track interventions to identify which are successfully boosting students' achievement and ensure initiatives are cost effective.

SIMS Discover enables key information from SIMS to be displayed visually at the click of a button to help school staff unlock students' potential simply - whether they want to track the achievement of children with SEND, measure the impact of attendance on the attainment of Key Stage 3 or provide evidence of the value added to students' learning during an inspection.

SIMS SchoolView enables trust leaders to view and analyse assessment data - including statutory assessments for KS1 and KS2 - alongside information such as attendance, details on the number of pupils with EAL or SEND and data on pupil conduct from individual schools and the trust as a whole.

SIP MAT Dashboard enables trusts to analyse a range of bespoke school and pupil information to help them monitor pupil attainment accurately and effectively - from comparing the achievement of girls with boys, tracking the progress of students on FSM or uncovering the reasons why achievement soars between Year 7 and 8 in one school so that good practice can be shared. A tailored consultancy package will help ensure MATs get the insight they need to drive pupil progress across the trust. A customised reporting service can ensure staff across your trust have the data needed for their roles delivered straight to their inbox.



To find out more about our solutions for MATs, visit ess-sims.co.uk/MATs