



# Multiple School Partnerships

## Partnerships with other schools

### Background

The common goal of all schools is to promote the educational experiences of children and young people to ensure that they all achieve their potential. Partnerships between all schools, be they Government or non-Government, can be used to help achieve this goal as often neighbouring schools find they are experiencing similar challenges.

By partnering together schools can:

- create opportunities to share school resources, including facilities
- enhance student transition between schools
- encourage cross sector professional learning for staff
- advance flexible and innovative approaches to school improvement that allow students greater opportunity to learn, thrive and grow
- broader curriculum and provision options
- improve student engagement and retention.

### The benefits of partnerships

The benefits of partnerships between schools can include:

- exploring innovative school leadership and/or governance arrangements
- sharing resources and staffing or teaching arrangements
- improving pedagogical approaches
- increasing curriculum delivery options
- allowing mentoring, coaching and targeted professional development for teachers
- school reorganisation, such as school mergers or education regeneration projects
- improving transition pathways between schools
- removing competition between government schools and non-government schools.

## Practical steps to establishing partnerships

### Create

Identify an issue or goal to be addressed between the schools. Consider whether you have the resources or expertise to address that issue. If your school is approached by another school to work together, consider if it aligns with your school's annual implementation plan, school performance data and will address a need. Visit the '*Identify goals*' webpage of the [Create](#) section of the website for more information.

Review a partnership proposal with your school council (as approver of all partnership activity), students and families to ensure that the partnership is relevant. Be clear about the partnership and what benefits will be derived for the school.

Discuss the partnership proposal with existing networks or Regional Office in the first instance to identify other schools in the region that are working on similar initiatives. This provides an opportunity to investigate similar initiatives in the region, other schools that may also want to get involved and to brainstorm opportunities and concerns.

After making contact with the school about partnership possibilities, partnerships plans, expectations and possible roles should put in writing. This will clarify ideas and assist in making decisions in a busy school environment.



## Implement

Following initial discussions, plan a strategy to achieve your goals which includes:

- agreement on clear and realistic objectives
- agreement about how resources will be provided
- inviting organisations and people to contribute to the partnership
- equitably assigned responsibilities between the partners
- a dispute resolution mechanism, just in case things go wrong
- an evaluation process.

The purpose of a partnership with a school should always relate to removing barriers to learning. To ensure that partners both have a clear and uniform understanding of the partnership's objectives, it is important to have identified the need for the partnership using rigorously analysed data or evidence. Documenting agreed partnership goals and well defined shared objectives in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Terms of Reference (TOR) will ensure the partnership is purposeful and driven.

It is also important to take time to plan the partnership to be sure of the resources to be committed, the roles of each partner, and to allow time for partnership members to voice their concerns or uncertainty regarding their responsibilities.

Working collaboratively encourages schools to share data and become more informed about the issues within their school community. Strong leadership is required to encourage a whole school approach and commitment to sharing data and implementing strategies across a community. A strategic approach will contribute to flexible learning across a network, a reduction in duplication of activities and an opportunity to build capacity across the network.

## Grow

Even well planned partnerships can encounter barriers that may impede the ability to achieve the partnership's objectives. Tackling problems early and embedding ongoing communication, trust and respect can help resolve any issue as it emerges.

Visit the '[Addressing problems](#)' section of the Education Partnership Resource website and the '*Troubleshooting*' fact sheet which details some common barriers and tips to overcome them.