Ten Characteristics of Successful MACs
Maturity evaluation

The Ten Characteristics of Successful Multi Academy Companies

The creation of new multi-academy MACs (MACs) has been a highly visible element of the regional landscape since the Regional School Commissioners came into their posts in September 2014. In recent years, more and more work has been undertaken to help academies[1] that are creating MACs to understand better the expectations we have of them. It is also helpful to be able to create a definition of success for those MACs who have been in operation for some time, as we support them to become strong, improvement-focused, sustainable organisations. The system is maturing and we need to recognise that maturity is not just about doing more of the same better. It is about recognising that maturity means that the smallest MACs as well as the largest can self-evaluate in the same way and that an expectation of a maturing MAC is that they begin to play a role in the system beyond their own MAC. The characteristics seek to establish a working definition that categorises the development of each characteristic against four possible stages of maturity.

- **Beginning** – this early stage is an indicator that the MAC is new and that whilst the characteristic has been identified as being important, the progress within the characteristic is embryonic and developmental. MAC activity is focused on oversight and structures as the culture and ethos is established in the schools
- **Developing** – this moves beyond the embryonic and it is clear that the Board has started to drive improvement and strategy to embed stronger and better practice in the schools to sustain their improvement over time. Key improvements are being shared across the MAC
- **Embedding** – this moves to a more concise model of MAC influence where some of the systems and structures that the MAC wants to embed are now in place and making a difference. Staff work together through MAC co-ordinated work and independent collaborative groups that staff set up themselves.
- **Leading** – A MAC that is leading will be influencing practice beyond its own organisation. Momentum towards collaboration is now significantly beyond the act of working together to the common understanding and ability to articulate exactly how collaboration works and enables change to be sustained.

Note: This document is a working document designed to support the development and growth of MACs in the region.
It is not intended to supersede or replace the specific requirements for financial management, reporting and control outlined in the Academies Trust Handbook.

Our Vision

"A Beacon of Excellence for Catholic Education"

Our Mission:

"We are a Christ-centred Community dedicated to faith formation, academic excellence and individual growth for all of our young people, all rooted in the Gospel message of Jesus Christ."

Our Values:

These are fundamental to our long-term success and represent the set of standards under which all of us in Romero MAC will work, and against which performance will be assessed and rewarded.

- **Respect** We respect and value those we work with and the contribution that they make.
- **Integrity** We act fairly, ethically and openly in all we do.
- **Service** We put our children at the centre of all that we do
- **Excellence** We use our energy, skills and resources to deliver the best, sustainable results.

Our Aims

As Catholic Schools in the Romero MAC we are committed to:

- **Spiritual Growth** An ethos in which the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ experienced, service to each other and the wider world community is recognised, and thanksgiving and worship of our God is cultivated.
- **Formation of the Whole Person** Providing well rounded high quality education that empowers and enables pupils to recognise their full potential and respond to what God calls them to be.
- **Inspire, innovate and excel** Building on the collaborative success of the Romero Partnership our schools will be inspirational, academically rigorous and innovative, achieving standards of excellence in all settings, supported by exceptionally caring staff who reflect the light of Christ.
- **Family Partnership** Partnering with, upholding, supporting and understanding parents and guardians in their role as primary educators of their children.
- **Vibrant Communities** Ensure diverse, dynamic, welcoming, compassionate communities available to all.
- **Global awareness** Nurture the personal integrity and faith development of pupils that also challenges them to know and understand communities around the world.
- **Stewardship** Ensuring a vibrant sustainable future for our schools through unified support and prudent management of resources.

Overview

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	Overall Performance	Strategic vision and plan	Clear accountability framework	Clear Quality Assessment	Delegated framework of governance	Financial and resource management accountability	MAC wide school improvement	Systematic School to school support S2SS	MAC Risk indicators	Clear succession plan	MAC wide commitment contribution local, regional and national
Notes	Seven out of eight schools in line or above national for key metric	Romero Strategic and Operational plan is in place	Board accountable for standards Perf m'ment is strengthening	Peer reviews Shared CPD CW StAug/JW on assessment	RACI matrix T of R Sch Imp Strategy	Centralisation of Finance and HR is complete	Romero strategic and operation plan in place	MAC ensures that teachers and leaders support beyond own school	Risk Register in place Flash reports for Core Committees Academy RR	Lots of secondments taken place	Links with other MACs – Our Lady of Lourdes/ Holy Spirit MAC/ TSA links Diocesan links
2017/18	Developing (CW is beginning)	Developing	Developing (CW is beginning)	Developing	Developing	NA	Developing	Developing (CW is beginning)	Developing	Developing	Embedding moving to leading
2018/19	Embedding	Embedding	Embedding (just)	Embedding	Embedding (just)	Embedding	Embedding	Embedding	Developing	Embedding	Leading
2019/20	Embedding	Embedding (Leading)	Embedding	Embedding (Leading)	Embedding	Embedding	Embedding	Embedding	Embedding	Embedding	Leading
2020/ 21	Embedding	Embedding (Leading)	Embedding (Leading↑)	Embedding (Leading)	Embedding (Leading ↑)	Leading ↑	Leading ↑	Embedding (Leading ↑)	Embedding (Leading ↑)	Embedding	Leading
2021/ 22	Embedding	Leading ↑	Leading ↑	Leading ↑	Leading ↑	Leading	Leading	Leading ↑	Leading ↑	Embedding (Leading ↑)	Leading

Embedding (Leading) This is denoted with highlighting in yellow showing we are moving to Leading

↑ This is to show an improvement from previous year

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Board	**OVERALL PERFORMANCE SELF ASSESSMENT** There is clear evidence that the outcomes for young people who are educated within the MAC are exceeding previous performance and national expectations and the MAC is a 'beacon of excellence for Catholic Education'	*The outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4* ***are not yet at national averages*** *in more than half of the academies in the MAC.*	*The outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4* ***are in line with national averages*** *in more than half of the academies in the MAC.*	*The outcomes for young people in terms of attainment and the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4* ***are above national averages*** *in more than half of the academies in the MAC.*	*The outcomes for young people in terms of the progress they are making from KS1 to 2 or KS2 to 4* ***are significantly above national averages*** *in all of the academies in the MAC.*
Evidence				***Attainment*** *2019* ***GLD*** *5/7 above NA (GS SP)* ***Phonics*** *6/7 above NA (SJF)* ***KS1 com*** *5/7 in line or above NA (CC SP)* ***KS2 com*** *7/7 all above NA* ***CW P8 -0.24 (below NA)***	***Progress*** *2019* • ***Reading CC GS SSPP SG*** *in top 40%* • ***Writing CC GS SH SSPP SG*** *in top 25% SJF middle 20% SP top 40%* • ***Maths CC SSPP*** *top 25%* ***SG SJF*** *top 40%*
Next steps				• *Greater depth in all Key stages* • *Securing KS1 across the board in reading writing and maths consistently* • *Higher progress measures which would result in increased greater depth*	

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Board **CC1**	**Step 1 - there is a well communicated strategic vision & plan that moves seamlessly from implementation into impact.** **The school improvement plan can only be delivered through support from the Board and the Board priorities can only be delivered through the academies**	*The Board has identified their key priorities & there is a strategic plan but it is too soon to see evidence of impact. The academies are not yet using the plan to inform their own improvement planning*	*Each Academy has links in their improvement plan to the Romero strategic plan showing the contribution they make to the MAC and the academy priorities*	*The academy can provide some evidence that through their delivery of their academy-based plan at least 2-3 of the MAC priorities are also being delivered*	*The Board has a strategic plan that seamlessly sits within the academy plans. There is clear evidence that all of the MAC priorities are being delivered by the academy. It is impossible to tell who takes the credit as the delivery and quality assurance (QA) is united and done by both*
Evidence				*Romero Strategic 3 year plan Romero Operation 1 year plan* *All seven Primary academies are aligned to the Strategy and Operational plan for current year*	
Next steps				*Cardinal Wiseman don't align currently it has a 'Move to Good' Strategy although it maps similarly to the Ofsted areas*	

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
CC2	**Step 2 – There is a clear accountability framework for the performance of the MAC that all staff understand, including what happens when key staff under-perform**	*Accountability is linked to line management at academy level and does not rise through the MAC effectively. Local governing bodies may hold the Principal(s) to account but the Board are not directly involved. Performance Management is embryonic at MAC level (LAC hold Principals to account, CSEL not fully held to account)*	*The CSEL holds the Principals to account and is held to account by the Board for the performance of the MAC. The CSEL is accountable for standards in the academies. Performance Management of the CSEL is emerging as a strength*	*The Chair of Board and the CSEL hold the Principals and the chairs of academy boards to account. There is a collective responsibility for standards across the MAC. Performance across the academies is not as strong as it is at senior level where it is excellent*	*There is a clear path of accountability that enables discussions to take place from the* • *Board Chair to the CSEL,* • *The Board Chair to the Academy Board Chair* • *The CSEL to Principals* • *Principals to their team members* *that improves standards.* *Performance Management is excellent MAC wide*
Evidence				• *Continuous Improvement Review meetings take place January and July/Sep to hold Principals to account* • *Principal committees held half termly*	• *RACI Scheme of Delegation is now in place* • *Performance Management has been overhauled in 2021 2022*
Next steps				• *Review school improvement strategy and engagement model (including SIB) to refine model*	

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
CC2 and 3	Step 3 – There are clear quality assurance systems in place to improve consistency and performance	*The MAC has started to explore the elements of common practice that it believes will lead to greater consistency across the MAC. Examples include shared CPD and agreed data collection points and common educational policies across the MAC*	*The MAC has moved towards a stronger commitment to shared approaches that are improving practice. Shared CPD & data collection points are extended by peer reviews with frequent inclusion of external challenge*	*The MAC has ensured that there is a pattern of consistent practice that is now recognised as more efficient than each Academy working independently. Academies are suggesting new areas of common working practice of their own for the MAC*	*The MAC has a common understanding of what outstanding performance is.* *All of the chief operating systems are consistently applied by the academies who welcome this level of effective practice development*
Evidence				• *We have PP reviews in place for all schools (three completed)* • *Each school/ Principal contribute to collective responsibility.* • *We have Peer reviews and external partners for validation* • *QA in place for deployments and CPD*	• *Xero; Every; Arbor PiXL in place* • *Assessment is more robust*
Next steps				• *Continue to identify best practice in all schools;* • *Tighten Secondary in light of exit of MOU*	

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Board	Step 4 – There is a clear delegated framework for governance at Board and local governing body level that makes the responsibilities of both the Board and any Academy Committee explicit	*The Governance at all levels fully understand their responsibilities and are they clear about the legal framework in which the MAC operates but the overall governance structure lacks clarity, and information flow from academy level to Board may be restricted as a result. The MAC may be considering an engagement structure but this is not yet in place. All decisions for all schools are taken at Board level*	*There is a MAC board where the distinction between the role of members and directors is clear and understood by all staff. A skills audit enables the board to recruit skilled professionals capable of fulfilling their roles. There is clarity in terms of the roles of both boards but the structure is at an early stage of development. The values of the organisation are driven by the uniqueness of the schools not the MAC*	*The MAC board is a strength of the organisation and has been developed over time following review into a stronger unit that reflects the scale and development of the MAC. The delegated authority is clear and both boards understand their responsibilities. The MAC board support protects and improves the Catholic values of the organisation*	*The board has a clear plan for delegated authority and regularly checks that it is fit for purpose. Local Academy Committees are effective at quality assuring standards at their school and the CSEL and central team are subject to the same scrutiny. The MAC is successful as a result of the school's performance and the schools are good because of the MAC. There is top-down and bottom-up accountability*
Evidence				• *Engagement & structure well established and currently being reviewed*	• *RACI Scheme of Delegation is in place*
Next steps				• *Academy Committees in place at all eight schools* • *LAC Chairs have support ahead of meetings* • *Link representatives have templates to use*	• *Skills audit needs updating*

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
Board	**Step 5- There are clear and transparent models of financial and resource management accountability across the MAC** ***New***	*The internal systems of financial control give too much authority to the schools in the MAC. The senior financial employee is not a qualified accountant. The consequence is that the board cannot hold the schools fully to account as the systems are not set up to enable this. HR policies are inconsistent across the MAC and staff could be treated differently as a result. External audit has identified a number of areas for improvement*	*The internal systems of financial control are in place and there is a clear management responsibility being enacted by the board. The schools are clear about the processes they must comply with. A Qualified accountant oversees the MAC financial strategy. HR policies are common to all schools but are not being consistently implemented yet. External audit is positive but has identified a small number of areas for improvement*	*There are strong internal systems of audit that have improved over time and are now highly effective. A well-qualified central team ensures that the MAC operates well as a single business. External audit has identified no significant areas of improvement*	*There are strong internal systems of audit that are exemplary in the eyes of external auditors and the ESFA. The non-educational oversight of the MAC is robust and underpins excellent educational delivery. The MAC is the local employer of choice*
Evidence			• *Finance and HR now centralised* • *ICFP completed at CW (2021) and next step for all Primary schools*	• *Management letter for December 2021 is clean* • *SMRA is completed for the MAC and a visit from DfE Finance Advisor*	• *Every to be embedded and assessment model to secure as green*
Next steps				• *Complete all MAC HR and Finance policies*	

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
CC3	Step 6 – There is a MAC wide school improvement strategy that recognises the different interventions needed at different stages of the improvement journey that a school undertakes.	*There is an embryonic MAC wide school improvement strategy that is focused on performance improvement in schools in significant difficulties. The MAC may have embedded effective attendance, behaviour and performance tracking systems for example to rapidly improve the schools in the early years of membership*	*The MAC has a school improvement strategy that is becoming embedded and has progressed beyond the day to day core improvement needs. Systems to track data, the collection of regular KPI and a stronger performance management system are sustaining improvement in the schools.*	*The school improvement strategy is sustaining improved performance and standards are rising and improvement is rapid. The self-evaluation of the academies is maturing so that they have greater ownership of their own requirements and make more bespoke support demands of the MAC*	*The MAC has improved the majority of its schools to the point at which those that were once weak now have capacity and strength to support new schools joining the MAC or schools beyond the MAC. They can also peer review with confidence other schools in the MAC. MAC leaders can articulate their school improvement repertoire*
Evidence				• *RSL and School Improvement team in place at Primary* • *External support through commissioning of TQ KM and CO at CW*	
Next steps				• *Review school improvement strategy in light of CIR meetings; heavier focus in 2022*	

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
CC3	**Step 7 –** **There is a systematic programme of school to school support that is focused on the need of individual academies**	*The MAC is starting to develop a school to school support strategy. Support is delivered by talented teachers and leaders in their own schools and is framed around core improvement themes and the skills of the staff*	*The MAC ensures that more teachers and leaders are making a contribution to school to school support beyond their own schools. The practice is good but needs to be more impact driven classroom support*	*The MAC school improvement strategy balances the generic needs of the schools with the facilitation of smaller learning communities of teaching leaders who develop coaching groups with colleagues needing help*	*The MAC's school improvement strategy is built around an emerging pool of talented teachers and leaders who know the impact of their work and can name it and describe it*
Evidence				• *SJF are leading Teacher Research Groups on Maths with a few Primary schools*	• *Matrix of teaching staff and leaders across all Primary schools in place Networks in place led by key staff from across MAC*
Next steps					• *Review School Improvement strategy Hardwire/ formally link a Secondary element with Holy Spirit MAC, Trinity or if willing Holy Cross MAC.*

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
CC4/5	**Step 8 –** **There is evidence of skilled management of MAC Risk indicators**	*There is little or no evidence that risk management is structured in the MAC. Risks are managed on an individual basis and whilst successfully mitigated, do not enable the Board to prevent them re-occuring*	*The MAC has a risk register in place and it is used to monitor risks that the MAC has identified as possible threats to the organisation. There is some but as yet unstructured relationships between the MAC Risk plan and those in the academies*	*The Board risk register is used to drive all improvement priorities and is the framework for agenda setting across the MAC. Each academy has its own Register which indicates the risks that are linked to their academy as well as the ways in which board risks are mitigated*	*The Board risk is managed well and there is a clear relationship between risk and mitigation.* *The board has a structure in place that ensures that not only current risks are managed well but that there is a 3-5 year risk anticipation plan in place that is under regular review*
Evidence			• *Centralised Finance and HR is now in place* • *Risk Register is in place and is reviewed annually* • *Flash Reports Objectives are linked to the Risk Register* • *BCP has been created* • *Financial Policies in place*	• *Flash Reports at each Core Committee are used* • *The individual risks for schools are built into the Full Risk Register*	• *A lot of work has been completed in this area in 2021*
Next steps					

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	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
CC2	**Step 9 – There is a clear succession plan for the key posts within the MAC (Director of Finance, HR, Academy Business Director Chair of Board, members and directors, Principals and Vice Principals)**	*The MAC knows there are posts in the organisation that require a succession plan. It has not yet grown enough capacity from within the organisation to address this. The MAC would rely on external recruitment or some internal secondments to resolve succession issues*	*The MAC has a talent management programme that supports and develops talented teachers and leaders and equips them to work effectively across the MAC in different academies and roles. These blend CPD opportunities with wider leadership experience*	*The MAC has a talent management plan for emerging and senior leaders in the organisation that means the MAC can deploy its most talented staff to work in more than one school on secondments or permanent transfers, creating career development and succession solutions*	*The MAC has a talent management plan that has matured and now includes staff at all levels across the MAC. Senior leaders have worked in more than one academy and middle leaders and the best teachers are deployed across the MAC to sustain and deepen impact*
Evidence				• *A number of secondments have taken place* • *SLE recruitment – Michael Kirby and Elise Liggins (Aut 2020)*	
Next steps	**Iread**			• *Organisation development strategy is further embedded– needs strengthening through CC2 Principal Cttee* • *Pupil Premium Strategy funding- demonstrating the impact*	

	MAC Characteristic	Beginning	Developing	Embedding	Leading
CC3	Step 10 – There is a MAC wide commitment to making a contribution to local, regional and national educational networks beyond the MAC	*The academies in the MAC continue to participate in local and national networks but these are the continuation of previous practice and there is little evidence that these relationships contribute to MAC improvement or support for other academies*	*The MAC has developed partnerships with external groups beyond those that the academies have sustained. These partnerships enable the MAC to be better connected to regional and national networks that benefit children and staff*	*The MAC and the academies play a key role in wider system leadership through membership of Teaching School Alliances, supporting other schools, leading and participating in local partnerships and sharing expertise widely. The MAC learns from and contributes to the practice of other MACs in their region*	*The MAC has a Teaching School Alliance, NLE, NLG and SLE who provide support across the MAC but also to schools beyond the MAC. The MAC is a key part of the regional system leadership capacity to improve standards for all and works to support and challenges new and experienced MACs*
Evidence				• *Diocese MACs – forging links more closely* • *Extend links with Origin Maths Hub (HQ and LS) and Lawrence Sherriff TSF (Blue Sky)*	• *NLE NLG and SLEs in MAC* • *Strong links with other TSH (new for 2021) and Catholic to deliver leadership and CPD across the city and Diocese* • *Lots of local initiatives e.g. fundraising and SST did community day; PP camp*
Next steps					• *Impact seen in results across all schools as a result of the increased and intense S2SS from this academic year*