Trust Improvement Strategy

Approved by: Trust Board

Last reviewed: July 2023

Next review due: July 2024

TRUST IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

Accountability is a key component of our trust. It is vital that we hold schools, settings, and services (hereafter, the organisations) in our trust to account to ensure all pupils receive the education they deserve. Crucial to this is ensuring that leaders and others understand how the accountability system for educational performance operates, and what methods we use to determine which organisations are eligible for support.

In a trust where most organisations are performing well, we have a responsibility to ensure that leaders know that they can continue to do the best for their pupils without interference.

In the small number of cases where an organisation is not delivering the high standards we expect, we are clear that local leaders should drive the response to their improvement needs.

What is our model of sustainable school improvement?

Our model draws on research, in particular Sustainable improvement in multi-school groups (Greany, December 2018).

This research identifies two sets of high-level practices which are necessary for sustainable improvement at scale:

- the five-school improvement 'fundamentals'
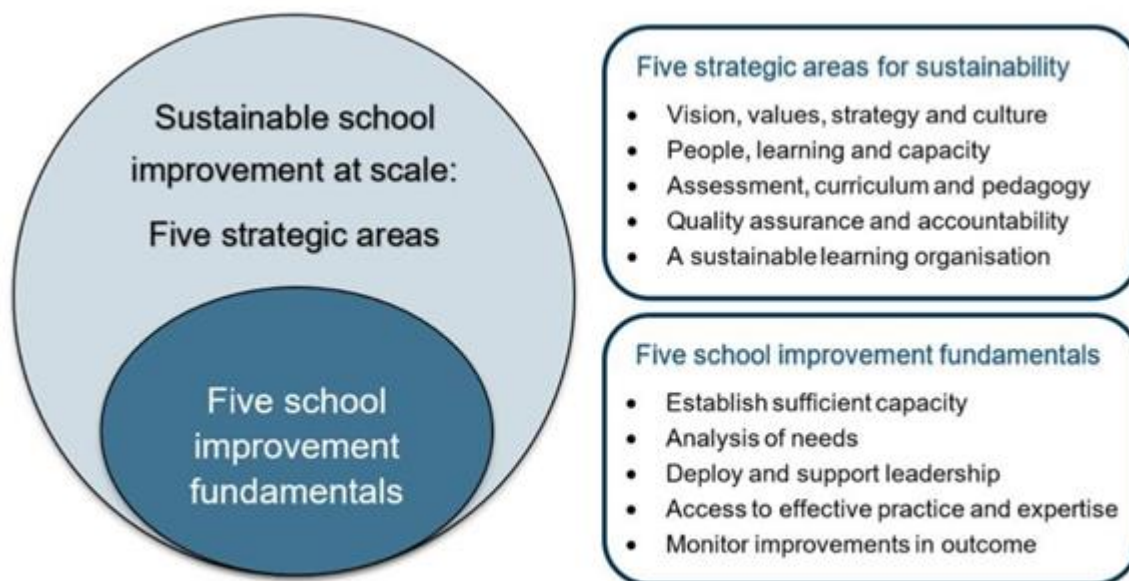- the five strategic areas for sustainability

Figure 1.1: The five 'fundamentals' and five strategic areas in MATs and federations

We use these as a framework to shape our improvement strategy and our scheme of delegation, which identifies where governance responsibilities lie within our trust.

What is governance?

[The Governance Handbook](#) (DfE October 2020) defines governance as:

- ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.
- ensuring that the organisation fulfils its statutory duties

Who is responsible for governance in our trust?

Within our trust, governance responsibilities are either held at board level with the trustees, or formally delegated to the local governing bodies of individual schools, setting or services. This is set out in our scheme of delegation, which we organise in the five strategic areas:

- vision, values, strategy and culture
- people, learning and capacity
- assessment, curriculum and pedagogy
- quality assurance and accountability
- sustainable learning organisations

Does the delegation of these responsibilities ever change?

Where serious concerns are identified within an individual school, setting or service, the board will temporarily remove delegated responsibility for specific, or all, functions from the local governing body.

Examples would be:

- *where a school is identified by Ofsted as requiring improvement, or is judged as requiring special measures or having serious weakness*
- *where the termly financial review identifies serious concerns around financial management which are unlikely to improve without significant support*

Our trust uses the following key tools when reviewing whether to remove or return delegated responsibilities to local governing bodies within the trust:

AREA OF GOVERNANCE	KEY TOOLS
- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction	- Review of development plans - Review of self-evaluation forms - Review of Parent View and parental complaints
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff	- Termly improvement partner reports - Review against KPIs - Reports to board on outcomes of performance management - RSC annual reviews - Ofsted outcomes
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.	- Termly financial standards review - Termly audit committee scrutiny - Internal and external financial audit outcomes - Review of websites
- Ensuring that the organisation fulfils its statutory duties	- Termly safeguarding, health and safety reviews

How do we identify the improvement needs of schools?

Most organisations in our trust have the capacity to self-improve. However, where there are signs of educational underperformance, some may benefit from a more bespoke offer of external support. In the first instance, our preference will always be to seek external support for our organisations from within the trust.

Our improvement strategy is based on the principle that in a self-improving system, organisations are responsible for their own educational improvement. We aim to build a system where school leaders take the lead in identifying their own improvement needs and securing the most suitable support and believe that support should be allocated on transparent criteria.

To this end, we want a transparent, straightforward method so organisations are in no doubt about when they will be offered support. We want a method that feels proportionate for leaders and does not unintentionally create additional burdens. We also want a way to identify organisations for this support offer based on their overall educational performance.

We have considered using headline performance data to determine which schools should receive an offer of support however, we believe that data alone does not provide a complete picture of school effectiveness and does not offer any diagnostic information about improvement needs.

The board of trustees will therefore allocate support using a best fit of the following criteria:

LOW SUPPORT	MEDIUM SUPPORT	HIGH SUPPORT
The local governing body has earned autonomy. **The school, setting or service aligns with the main scheme of delegation.**	**Action group formed, action plan drawn up and reviewed half termly.** **Adjustments will be made to relevant delegated responsibilities in line with identified concerns**	**Action group formed.** **Delegated responsibilities are removed from the local governing body and assumed by the board**
The annual RSC review identifies strengths and areas for development and there is internal capacity to drive further improvement	RSC has identified serious concerns in the annual review and advises securing external support	The school has been issued with a Warning Notice or Significant Concerns letter
The school is judged good or outstanding	The school is / is at risk of being judged as requiring improvement	The school has been judged as requiring improvement on two consecutive occasions. The school is / is at risk of being judged as requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses
The quality of education is judged or likely to be judged as good or outstanding	The quality of education is judged or is at risk of being judged as requiring improvement	The quality of education is judged or is at risk of being judged as being inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes are judged or likely to be judged as good or outstanding	Behaviour and attitudes are judged or is at risk of being judged as requiring improvement	Behaviour and attitudes are judged or is at risk of being judged as being inadequate
Personal development is judged or likely to be judged as good or outstanding	Personal development is judged or is at risk of being judged as requiring improvement	Personal development is judged or is at risk of being judged as being inadequate
Leadership and management are judged or likely to be judged as good or outstanding	Leadership and management are judged or is at risk of being judged as requiring improvement	Leadership and management are judged or is at risk of being judged as being inadequate
The quality of early years education is judged or likely to	The quality of early years education is judged or is at risk	The quality of early years education is judged or is at risk

be judged as good or outstanding	of being judged as requiring improvement	of being judged as being inadequate
Termly HIP visits identify strengths and areas for development and there is internal capacity to drive further improvement	Termly HIP visits identify serious concerns which require external support	Termly HIP visits identify that the school, setting, or service is at risk of being judged as needing Special Measures/Serious Weaknesses
The termly financial standards review, internal audit or external audit identify few concerns and there is internal capacity to drive further improvement forward	The termly financial standards review, internal audit or external audit identify significant concerns which require external support	The termly financial standards review, internal audit or external audit identify serious/complex concerns which require immediate external intervention
Safeguarding, health & safety review identifies few concerns and there is internal capacity to drive further improvement forward within the organisation Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.	Safeguarding, health & safety review identifies significant concerns which require external support. Safeguarding will meet statutory requirements after swift intervention.	Safeguarding, health & safety review identifies serious/complex concerns which require immediate external intervention Safeguarding does not meet statutory requirements.
There are no significant or very few parental complaints.	Several complaints are raised by a significant number of parents, which are being resolved through appropriate procedures.	There is a high number of unresolved parental complaints.
The school website meets all statutory requirements	The school website will meet statutory requirements after swift intervention.	The school website fails to meet all statutory requirements

How do we identify the appropriate solutions and measure and monitor improvement??

Action plans will use the five strategic areas as framework for identifying key actions and measurable success criteria:
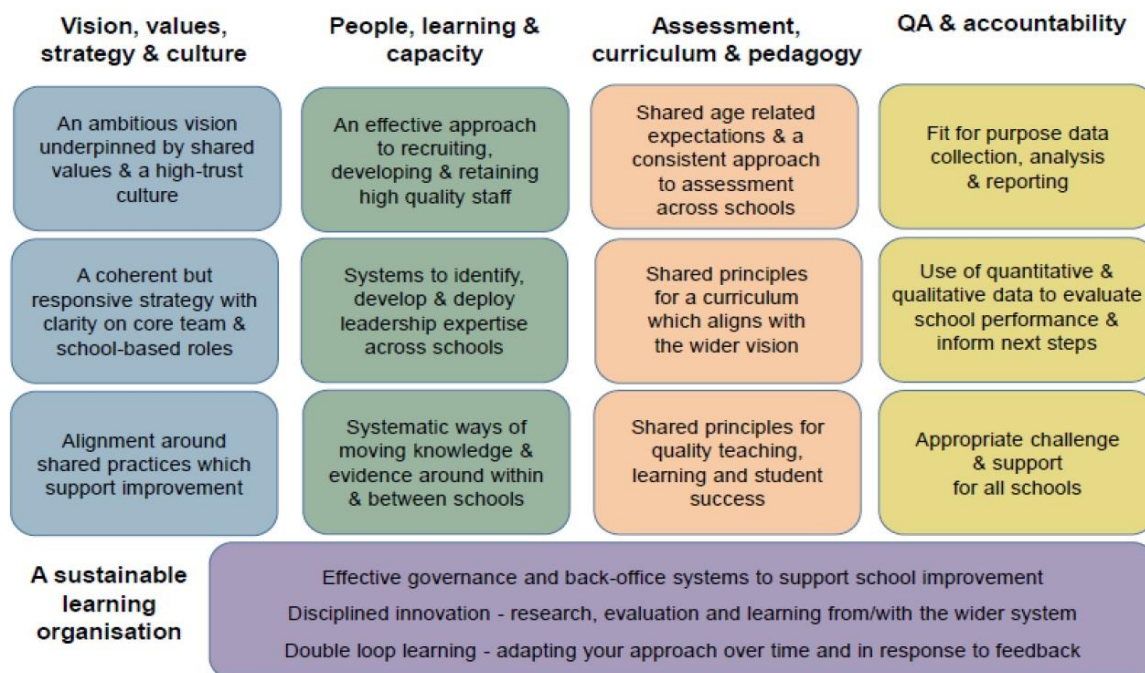

Figure 1.2: Five strategic areas for sustainable improvement in MATs and federations

Action groups will report directly to the board of trustees, outlining progress made within each of the five strategic areas.

Review

The trust improvement strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis.