

Our approach to academy improvement

We believe that each academy has something to offer another by way of great ideas, resources and people. We also believe that each academy in Sussex Learning Trust has a responsibility for every child educated within the Trust. Therefore, all academies within the Trust enjoy ‘equal footing’ irrespective of their OFSTED grading or pupil number. Our commitment to each child, each community, is that SLT will deploy its methods and resources to enable its academies to find ways in which it can continually improve their standards.

Academy improvement initiatives should be proportionate. Naturally, at times, some of our academies will require more support than others but there is always the standard SLT package of academy Improvement that each and every academy receives on an annual basis. Where there is increased and/or immediate need (see below) then the Trust will allocate more resources accordingly.

“May I take this opportunity to thank you for your significant contribution to the turning round of this school which has been much appreciated by everyone at WSCC.” *Nigel Jupp (Cabinet Member for Learning & Skills West Sussex County Council).*

Sussex Learning Trust’s Scheme of Delegation makes provision for the Local Governing Body and its Headteacher to have significant levels of delegated autonomy. The Trust’s role in academy Improvement is explained below. There are three basic standards that SLT requires its academies to provide and achieve:-

- a safe learning environment for the children,
- at least ‘good’ outcomes for the children
- to meet the previous standards within its agreed budget allocation.

Self evaluation, Improvement Planning and Annual Reviews

Always the starting point. Drawing on external and internal sources of information, the Headteacher and CEO or DCEO (with the input of the LGB) will agree the current standards of the academy against

Inclusion	Curriculum and teaching	Achievement	Attendance and behaviour	Personal development and well-being	Early Years	Leadership and governance	Safeguarding
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From this, the Academy Development Plan (ADP) is written, outlining the areas that the academy wishes to prioritise.¹ The Trust expects each academy to deliver outstanding standards, outcomes and opportunities for their learners driven by a rich and broad curriculum.

¹ This in turn informs the Head’s, LT’s and whole academy Review, Development & Progression objectives (previously Appraisal) and the CPD of each colleague.

A Senior Executive for each academy

The Senior Executive Team includes the CEO and Deputy CEO (Dir. Primary)². Our Headteachers are Line Managed by a Senior Executive, either the CEO or DCEO who provide immediate and constant access to advice, guidance etc. Where a new joining academy is a Primary school, the Deputy CEO (DCEO) will obviously advise the CEO and bring their expertise to bear in terms of strategy, knowledge etc. of the phase. The DCEO is assisted by an Assistant Dir. of Primary to ensure appropriate capacity.

The Senior Executive for each academy is responsible for ensuring that, through the leadership of the headteacher, aspirations and standards continue to rise over the short, medium and long term. Scales of efficiencies are realised and best practice is shared across all settings. The Senior Executive Line Manages the Headteacher in partnership with the LGB. Amongst other things the Senior Executive will

- Work alongside the Headteacher in respect of the development of the academy's curriculum; contributing to the needs based budget setting for each academy in conjunction with the Finance team;
- Serve the LGB with advice, guidance and challenge, where appropriate
- Ensure that 'standard' and bespoke academy improvement activities meet both national policy and local expectations so that the academy's provision and outcomes meet external requirements/accountability frameworks and ensuring that all learners benefit;
- coordinate and monitor internal and externally led projects.
- support bid writing for that academy
- with the Head, ensure that preparations for Ofsted and other external agency evaluations and inspections of the Trust are thorough and accurate.

Immediate & Strategic Intervention

The Trust understands that some academies are in a position where there is an immediate need for intervention. For example, where standards or informed predictions suggest that the pupils or students in the academy are not meeting (or likely to meet) their potential or national expectations. This will require immediate intervention in that the children cannot be allowed to 'fail'. In such cases the Trust will deploy intensive support by way of physical and human resources. Immediate intervention is a 'short term fix' and not sustainable so, at the same time, strategic intervention will be required to address the issue 'lower down' in the academy's year groups so that the presenting issue does not reoccur in future years. Naturally, the intention is that as quickly as possible the systemic issue is rectified but the Senior Executive, as a skilled school improvement practitioner, will need to co-plan with the Headteacher a proportionate response which is likely to still require some immediate intervention for the upcoming year groups until the strategic intervention has embedded.

Where immediate intervention is required the Senior Executive may be quite prescriptive in the approaches required for that academy to improve at pace.

² The CEO and DCEO are the educational standards leads - both of whom are experienced Headteachers. Other members are the CFO & Chief People Officer (CPO) & Chief Estates & Development Officer (CEDO)

A recent case study

On the threshold of joining SLT, the Trust and LA believed this school to be inadequate, even though an historic OFSTED has judged it as 'good'. The support we provided included:-

- Full time Consultant Head for 2 terms
- 3 weeks immersive Behaviour support to address significant dysregulation
- Consultant SENDCo
- The CEO (NLE) was on site adding leadership capacity for two solid weeks.

This intensive support introduced

- a new Teaching and Learning Policy,
- Introduced new expectations of pupil behaviour and redesigned packages of support for the most dysregulated learners leading to a transformation of pupil behaviour
- trained staff to apply it using digital resources provided,
- increased accountability for teachers and leaders,
- introduced a more rigorous Attendance Policy to parents,
- Took the finance and budgeting responsibilities away from the Head to focus on the above

The academy is now a dramatically better place for children and staff to learn and work and it is well on its way to being entirely transformed. The Trust was able to appoint a new Headteacher in a very timely fashion.

Collaboration & peer support

The Education Development Team is made up of colleagues across each of our constituent academies which means that the bulk of academy Improvement work is delivered on a reciprocal model of mutual benefit. For academies that are 'good', the Trust only prescribes that all of our academies are entirely open to peer challenge and support. Some ways we facilitate this include

- All Heads meet regularly and discuss, amongst other things, the issues or challenges that their settings are facing (Executive Team meetings) along with what is going well and initiatives that may be of interest to colleagues academies
- A strategy of peer to peer support, which involves colleague Heads invited in to look at specific aspects of academy
- Each academy has a named Senior Executive responsible for liaising with their counterparts to ensure that learning and CPD opportunities are frequent across settings and phases.

Central Education Services and our commitment to supporting improvements

The Senior Executive Team is responsible for leading the improvement activities across the Trust. The team is expanding to reflect the growth of the Trust and the needs and requirements of our constituent academies. Each academy has a lead Senior Executive (see above) whose responsibility it is to commission and/or carry out 'standard' pieces of work which are funded by the Annual

Partnership Contribution that each academy pays into all of which will naturally help inform and shape the academy's self-evaluation.

Our experience in providing impactful School Improvement work

SLT is very clear in its mission:-

- To promote and support the best interests of children in the communities we serve
- To advance education for the public benefit
- To exercise civic duties and responsibilities for the wider good of the local community

Since 2015 we have been widely involved in the school led improvement initiative. Within our Trust, the transformation of the former Heywood Primary school into the great school it is today, proudly serving an area of significant deprivation has been our proudest achievement in this respect. However, we have also been commissioned by:-

- West Sussex LA
- East Sussex LA
- Department for Education
- Multi-academy Trusts
- School Governors

At the last count, we have supported over 25 schools across all phases of education. Projects are naturally bespoke to the needs of the school, but some examples include:-

- Mentoring of new Heads
- Coaching of existing Heads
- Subject leadership
- Phase leadership
- Staff retention initiatives
- Supporting capability procedures
- Improvement planning
- Pupil Premium reviews
- Schools that have received 2 consecutive RI judgements
- Behaviour management

Each of our member academies engages with our Trust wide Quality Assurance processes which ensure that we are always focussed on improving what we 'do' and 'how we do it'.

Quality Assurance

1. Context

Quality assurance (QA) within Sussex Learning Trust involves the systematic audit and review of practice, programmes, systems and processes in order to achieve the Trust's vision to provide **'world class' formational and transformational opportunities** helping our young people realise their **potential** and equipping them in their journey towards personal **fulfilment** and

responsible **citizenship**.

The Trust adopts a strengths-based approach to quality assurance, focused on identifying and building upon effective practice to foster a culture of continuous learning. Our QA system balances support and challenge, delivered collaboratively under the belief that we are stronger together.

2. Purpose and scope

Trust officers maintain a clear understanding of each academy’s priorities, including outcomes from reviews, Ofsted recommendations, and emerging policy. Where common needs are identified, they inform the Trust Strategic Plan.

The QA model ensures all SLT academies collaborate to improve outcomes for children, with a focus on:

- Oversight and challenge
- Support and system leadership
- Targeted intervention

QA underpins accountability and continuous improvement, enabling leaders to respond to pupil needs and secure high-quality education for all.

This framework ensures a fair, consistent approach to academy improvement, aligned with the Trust’s strategic priorities. It establishes a transparent, systematic, and evidence-based process for reviewing self-evaluation and improvement planning, enabling executive leaders and governors to validate and strengthen the judgements of senior leaders.

Quality assurance is both supportive and developmental. It enables effective evaluation at academy and Trust level, ensures appropriate support is provided, and allows for the celebration and sharing of best practice.

3. Quality Assurance Systems and Processes

The Trust recognises that the core business of academies is to offer a high quality of education to the community it serves. Therefore, our process places this at the heart of all activity. An annual quality assurance schedule is agreed with the Senior Leaders. This is done with careful attention to each academy’s calendar and the importance of supporting a healthy work–life balance for school leaders and staff.

The Trust has a number of established systems and processes in place to offer robust quality assurance of school self-evaluation:

Quality of Education			
Leadership and management	Curriculum and pedagogy	Behaviour and attitudes	Personal development

Partnership meetings Line management Budget reviews Safeguarding audit External scrutiny Stakeholder surveys Risk register review Link governor roles	Partnership meetings Pupil data reviews QoE/curriculum reviews SEND review Staff voice Pupil voice External review Trust network/forum Link governor roles	Partnership meetings Pupil data reviews QoE/curriculum reviews Behaviour, safeguarding and attendance reviews Pupil voice Staff voice Link governor roles	Partnership meetings QoE/curriculum reviews Behaviour, safeguarding and attendance reviews Pupil voice Staff voice Link governor roles
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SED

Senior Leaders have agreed a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) which align to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework and go beyond it, to reflect Trust priorities, and the wider legal and statutory duties. Headteachers are required to self-assess the strength of practice for each indicator, using the defined rating system. This process of self-evaluation will be integral to all QA activities and will be reviewed and agreed on an on-going basis, and at bi annual Partnership Meetings.

Data Submissions

A range of data is collated centrally and used to form questions for further enquiry. The data will be up to date and available via the intranet:

- ADP/SED;
- Tracking and outcomes data in, at least English & Mathematics;
- Attendance;
- Behaviour;
- Safeguarding;
- SEND information;
- PP strategy;
- Risk register.

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Partnership meetings

Senior leaders and Chairs of Governing bodies and the Central team will engage in bi-annual partnership meetings to engage in a process of self-evaluation against the SED and test the robustness of the academy's provision in relation to strengths and areas for improvement. At the Partnership meeting, specific areas of Central team support, including milestones and clear lines of accountability will be agreed.

Academies' Performance Update

Senior Central staff will collate and review evidence from quality assurance activities on a termly basis to: ● Review SED and ADP;

- Identify the priorities for the Education team and wider Central team's work; •
- Identify best practice, innovations and shared areas for improvement across the Trust.

4. Governance

Academies' Performance updates will be reported to Trustees at least every term.

The role of the Lead Trustee responsible for Quality assurance is to focus on the following key areas:

- Fit for purpose analysis and reporting of school and group-wide performance data •
- Use quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate school performance and to inform next steps •
- Appropriate challenge and support for member academies