



Great Academies
Education Trust

PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT 2022-23



INTRODUCTION

The strategic intent of Great Academies, as outlined in its 2019-2023 Strategic plan is to grow in a considered fashion, building partner primary school clusters in geographical proximity to Great Academies secondary academies. The partnerships will be built around the GREAT values of Genuine - Respect - Excellence - Achievement - Teamwork, ensuring that our Trust and schools are values-driven organisations.

For Great Academies, this 'considered' approach includes potential partners;

- We welcome partnership with Requires Improvement schools, and schools in any category of concern, but these must be open to full engagement with the Great Academies improvement model and have the capacity to improve, as indicated in recent s5 or s8 inspections.
- A commitment to establish or maintain the school at the heart of its community, fulfilling its civic obligations as well as providing the best possible education for the children, leading to their best possible outcomes.
- A commitment to the continuing professional development of all employees, including Initial Teacher Training (ITT), the Early Career Framework (ECF), National Professional Qualifications (NPQ), and all other professional qualifications across teaching and non-teaching staff bodies.
- A desire to ensure that the family of schools working together in a MAT is beneficial for all, including a commitment to work for the greater good of everyone.

- Preferably graded by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding and who are outward-facing and willing to bring capacity to the Trust to share our work on school improvement. For primaries, this would mean with the Trusts primary school Silver Springs, and other local primary schools. For secondaries, this would mean with our three secondary schools (Middleton Technology School, Great Academy Ashton, Copley Academy) and other existing local secondary networks. Where it is appropriate, we would also facilitate cross-phase work on generic themes.

Our intent for growth is about building capacity and strength, rather than merely increasing the number of our schools. However, the government is signalling a new approach to strategic growth, rather than incremental growth. Ideally, we would like to work in partnership with a small group of additional schools for up to a year, so that all parties become confident that a more formal partnership is of mutual benefit to all.

This paper is intended as a concise summary of what any school entering into a Trust Partnership can expect from Great Academies.



STRONG GOVERNANCE

The Trust Board is comprised of people who are successful in their current fields of employment and united in a shared commitment to support and challenge Great Academies and all of its academies to be the best they can be.

The Trust has a clear scheme of delegation and places much responsibility on each academy's Local Governing Committee, so called because each LGC is a committee of the full Board. The Board also has five other committees; Outcomes Board; SCITT Board; Finance and Resources; Audit and Risk and Remuneration. Sub-committees (such as student discipline) are established and called as required.

Governance is serviced by a full-time governance officer who is also responsible for GDPR and compliance, and as the Trust grows the intent is to extend this service. Each academy has a Data Protection Officer guided and supported by the Governance/Compliance Officer. We use the Sentry MIS to co-ordinate records of all GDPR instances and processes.

LGCs meet six times through the year and follow a standardised core agenda, with the scope to adapt the agenda to suit the context and activity in each academy.

We review this business cycle on an annual basis.

LGCs are well-supported through induction for new members and ongoing offers of high-quality training and development.

The Trust benefits from membership of the National Governors Association which includes the Learning Link online training package, the Confederation of School Trusts, and The Key for Governors, School Leaders, and MAT professionals.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The prime reason for entering any Trust Partnership should be school improvement. All of our academies are outward facing and we actively maintain the capacity to ensure that we can offer support to each other, as well as partner schools not in the MAT.

The Trust central team includes the Great Improvement and Support Team (GIST). This is led by the Education Director with extensive experience as an LA School Improvement Adviser and Ofsted HMI. The team comprises staffing that reflects and meets the priorities of the academies – core provision in mathematics and literacy and other areas reflecting need as the Trust grows. Each network group is led by either an external ‘expert’ consultant or one of our school staff. The Trust runs termly subject network groups which currently operate as cross-phase. In addition to subject network groups, we run cross-cutting theme network groups, for example, a SEND network, CEIAG, and our student Enrichment Charter group.

Bespoke leadership development is provided by the CEO, Education Director, and Finance Director. Principals meet with this Core MAT SLT team every month. The Trust executive is represented on the GMLP. The Trust also offers leadership and delivery on the new NPQs which became available in autumn 2021. We are a lead delivery partner on the NPQBC (Behaviour and Culture) and provide Visiting Fellows who deliver on the other NPQs including NPQH.

The Trust has a part-time data manager who manages all academic data, informing target setting, coordination

of outcomes from standardised assessments, and monitoring data that is predictive of student outcomes, as well as a results analysis service.

The Trust has built its school improvement model on education research, and in the first instance focuses on curriculum development, ensuring that content is broad and balanced, carefully chosen, delivered sequentially, and reviewed and refreshed regularly. Other current workstreams include the areas of assessment and teaching and learning.

Increasingly our school improvement offer is supporting schools in further developing pastoral support. We have a safeguarding leads group that meets regularly to share practice and involve local LADOs where possible. We held our first student conference in June 2022 at Old Trafford stadium and as a result are developing a Student Charter of Enrichment, and a standardised offer for careers/futures education. Our Trust is part of the national Behaviour Hubs initiative, working in partnership with the cross-phase Dixons MAT. As we grow, we intend to further pool our resources and expertise to provide services that meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and families.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are committed to our strategic plan to create the best conditions for professional development for all. The Trust has an Ofsted graded good SCITT (re-graded Good in June 2022), operating from Middleton Technology School. We have successfully applied to be re-accredited as an ITT Provider from September 2024. We recruit around 30 trainees each year and work in partnership with specialist primary ITE providers. Many of our ITT graduates progress into employment in our Trust and other local partner schools.

We have worked with Ambition Institute in the pilot and early roll-out of ECF. We are committed to continuing this partnership with a GM based delivery partner, the Forward as One (FA1) Trust (a primary phase MAT). Our staff has the opportunity in addition to mentoring ECTs, to participate in the delivery of the ECF training.

We operate performance management for all of our staff and embedded in this is a commitment to support the professional development of every staff member, including where possible training for other professional qualifications.

The Trust is keen to grow its strong workforce and provide opportunities and career pathways within the Trust and across the Trust partner schools. We actively look for potential and talent within our workforce. Staff has benefitted from secondments within the Trust, roles working across the Trust, and we have supported a number of teachers to achieve SLE status. We broker this capacity out to support other partner schools.

Becoming an academy can be a challenging experience and increase the levels of scrutiny and accountability to a variety of stakeholders and bodies. Belonging to a Trust provides advocacy and relationship management with RSC, DfE, ESFA, Ofsted, Local Authorities, other partner Trusts, unions, and regional learning partnerships. Great Academies has existing and good relations with all of these bodies.



FINANCE

In entering a Trust Partnership, our finance team is available to support partner schools on financial matters. On formally becoming an academy, a school must comply with the regulations outlined in the Academy Trust Handbook including additional duties outlined under company financial regulations. Our Finance team is led by a Finance Director who is a qualified accountant, well supported by a central finance staff team.

The Trust ensures that all statutory returns required of the DfE, ESFA, and company law are adhered to. The Trust is subject to an annual audit and undertakes an annual internal audit, ensuring propriety, regularity, and legal compliance. The Trust accounts and financial health are public documents and freely available. To 2021, they illustrate a very healthy financial position for the Trust, which we are committed to maintain.

Our finance team works with principals and academy-based staff to provide monthly management accounts and supports the reporting of these to Local Governing Committees six times a year. The Trust expectation is that all academies will operate within the annual budget generating a small annual surplus, in line with the requirements of maintaining reserves under the Trust reserves policy.

Our finance team works with principals and academy-based staff to ensure annual forecasts and 3-year budget forecasts are produced. This way we can utilise reserves sensibly and take action in advance to mitigate against potential future risks.

In 2021, we introduced new to the Trust a common financial management system (PS Financials) to support

the on-going improvements in financial management. Training is provided for all academies in the use of this and will be extended to schools working in partnership with us.

The Trust has engaged with DfE School Management Resource Assistants (SMRA) and adopted Curriculum Led Financial Planning parameters and monitoring. In 2021, we have engaged with the @SMART curriculum to support our curriculum and staffing planning and ensure improved awareness of the costs associated with every curriculum decision.

The Trust has a contract with one payroll provider (NEO) standardised across the Trust. The Trust pays staff on the 15th of each month, two weeks in arrears, two weeks in advance.

The Trust has significant levels of reserves, including a £2M endowment and over £3M additional cash reserves. The Trust has an investment strategy and based on identified needs across the Trust, an approach informing the strategic use of these reserves for the benefit of our pupils.



INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The Trust has a 'live' ICT Strategic Plan. This is overseen by an ICT strategic group, chaired by the Trust ICT Manager, who works across all of our academies. Our ICT investment and refresh come from the academies' capital allocations and Trust reserves. We also have a 'Digital Champions' network across the Trust which works alongside the ICT strategic group, ensuring synergy between technology and pedagogy. Several of our digital champions have achieved Microsoft Innovators in Education standard. Each academy has on-site technician support proportionate to need, as well as some staff who work across the Trust, including an ICT helpdesk.

The Trust has invested in standardising ICT securities across the Trust, including an approach to improved data storage and security. The Trust is championing the standardisation of online internet safety, currently procuring the highest-level sector standards for internet filtering and keystroke monitoring, both of which feature in the government's 'On-line safety' Bill.

Being part of a MAT means that we can seek economies of scale in the procurement of software programmes for information management, teaching, and in the procurement of hardware. Our ICT manager actively

works on aligning and standardising all areas of IT. This year, we will complete the process of migrating all of our academies to one Microsoft tenancy, which is providing more opportunities for our academies to benefit from a common approach. The ICT strategic plan is costed, and we have a commitment to ensure that digital technologies are embraced across the Trust's academies, and used strategically to their full potential.



ESTATES

The Trust has an Estates Manager who works across all of our academies with the academies' local site managers, caretakers, and cleaners. We do not outsource any of these functions, and in the future have the opportunity to align the 'Trust offer' for these services. The estate manager supports all H+S activity and risk management relating to the estate.

We do outsource groundworks maintenance to a number of providers and monitor the effectiveness of the service we get for each academy.

Our Estates Manager monitors all contracts relating to premises and maintains a compliance register to ensure that we are up-to-date on all contract renewals and H+S checks.

Each of our academies operates its catering service. There are future opportunities to align and standardise this service across the Trust.

As the Trust increases in size, we will become entitled to School Condition Allocation Funding (SCAF) once we have at least five schools, typically devolved to a MAT annually/bi-annually. Until then, we bid for Condition Improvement Funding (CIF) based on our greatest need. We have a good track record of success in securing grants from CIF bids. We have a strong track record of delivering capital projects of every scale. The bid writing process is undertaken by the FD and Estates Manager with the assistance of academy-based staff. We undertake detailed condition surveys and deploy reserves appropriately to meet capital needs across our estate.

COMMERCIAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Trust employs a Commercial and Marketing Manager, who also assists the Trust with internal and external communications. Each academy has a marketing and pupil recruitment strategy, co-constructed by the CMM, and each principal and activity is monitored to ensure we achieve pupil recruitment targets. Our two large secondaries are over-subscribed and at full capacity.

The CMM provides support for proactive and reactive media communications and marketing campaigns, ensuring activities cover the full marketing mix and remain within budget. This also includes writing draft press releases and sign-off by principals. The CMM provides support for our academies to develop a stronger social media presence and promote both the Great Academies 'brand' and local school 'brand' to external audiences.

The CMM coordinates our academies and Trust websites' hosting (with no additional fees to the third-party provider) and ongoing support with content management, which importantly the academies can easily control and update.

The CMM assists the Trust and the academies with income generation, lettings support additional grant funding, and sponsorship. The CMM plays an active role in supporting the academies in re-establishing themselves at the hearts of their respective communities.

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Trust HR Manager leads a central HR team of two staff who support academies on all HR matters. All people-related policies are standardised across the Trust. Increasingly, this service is supporting staff recruitment, promoting measures for staff well-being, and continuing professional development. In 2020, we undertook our first Trust-wide staff survey and the HR Manager has co-ordinated our response to that. Our whole-staff survey has become an annual activity.

The Trust HR service includes an outsourced support provision for employees through Westfield Health. All employees can benefit from this in a number of ways, including subsidised medical and dental treatment, free counselling/talking therapies, and a range of other treatments. The service also includes a staff helpline. The Trust is launching its own Well-Being Charter, reflecting our signing-up to the DfE's recently published Staff Well-Being Charter and seeking other accreditation such as the Valued Worker Scheme.

- When joining a MAT, frequently asked questions commonly relate to HR matters. For the avoidance of doubt:
- When joining a MAT, all employees are protected by the TUPE process (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations).
- Employees are entitled to join or transfer to the Teacher Pensions Scheme or Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). There may be exceptions if previous employment pensions are not Teachers Pensions or LGPS.
- All of our teachers are contracted under the national School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and Burgundy Book, and we use the STPCD advisory teacher pay rates.
- The vast majority of our non-teaching staff are paid on NJC pay spine rates.



LEGAL

We hold a retainer and contract with Hill Dickinson LLP for our legal advice and instruction as necessary. We also benefit from having legal professionals within our governance membership.

INSURANCE

The trust and its schools are insured through the RPA arrangements, as recommended by the DfE.

WORKING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND UNIONS/ PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Trust is committed to fully working in partnership with the Local Authorities where its academies are located. The Trust is a member of the Local Government Association. All Trust principals participate in Local Authority Headteacher Associations. We encourage all of our schools to work in partnership with all other local schools irrespective of whether they are primary, secondary or LA, or Trust schools.

The Trust has a Trade Union Recognition Agreement (TURA). It pays annually into locally-agreed Facility Time arrangements to support positive working with unions and professional associations (the Trust also facilitates a half-termly JCC meeting attended by the CEO and HR Manager).

Although schools are increasingly academizing and joining MATs, LAs retain several statutory service obligations, for instance in the areas of SEND, Education Welfare Services, and liaison with Public Health. The Trust and academies are committed to enabling the delivery of these statutory functions and engaging fully with LAs on all statutory services. Some of our academies still retain SLAs for several LA services, such as peripatetic music or additional (EWO) welfare support.

TRUST PARTNERSHIP LICENCE FEES

To support schools entering a partnership with the Trust, it is recognised they still would have delegated and de-delegated budgets from the Local Authority and ongoing financial commitments, contracts, and SLAs with the Local Authority and other third parties. Therefore, the approach of the Trust is to offer an initial reduced service charge 'on-licence' for access to the full range of Trust central services.

This will be agreed upon between both parties and dependant upon each partner school's context and support requirements. Bespoke partnership fees are agreed upon at the outset, and typically may be set at 2.5% of the equivalent General Annual Grant (GAG) income for up to the first year of partnership. Since 2019-20 and continuing for 2022-23, existing academies in the Trust have an annual service charge of 5.5% of GAG (the basic per capita income), with the intent to reduce this to the sector average of 5%, as the Trust grows.

Importantly for any new partner school, as we grow, we retain our commitment to provide the best quality services back to the source of the funding, i.e. back to all of our academies.





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