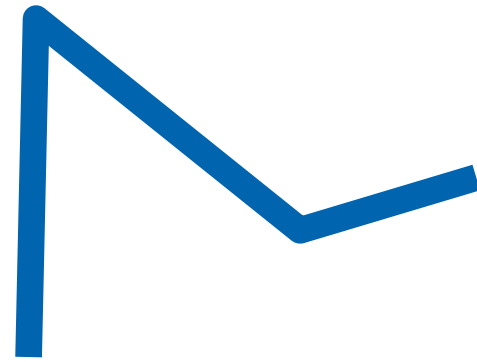




Great Academies
Education Trust

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022 SUMMARY



CONTENTS

	Page
Thank you from Paul Jones, Chair of Trustees	3
Our Objectives	4
Our Vision	4
Our Values	4
Executive summary	5
Strategic Planning	9
Governance and committee work	12
Appendices	
Appendix 1 2021-2022 Audited Accounts and Financial Statements	

THANK YOU FROM OUR CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

As Chair of Great Academies Education Trust, I would first of all like to thank all members of staff across the trust for their incredible work during 2021-22. The Board is well-aware of the challenges faced during the pandemic and staff deserve great credit for the way they have contributed to the trust as we have hopefully emerged from the most difficult of times.

Whilst our academic outcomes may not yet be where we want them to be, our intent as trustees has been to strategically invest reserves to both support rapid improvement in outcomes for our students and to ensure that we have warm, safe and secure schools where our students and staff can thrive. We have confidence that we are on the right track and to demonstrate our commitment moving into 2022-23, we have committed another £504K additional resource to support the trust school improvement programmes.

We are committed to becoming recognized as an employer of choice, and it has been pleasing to see an 11% increase in staff who recognize the importance of our values in our annual staff survey. We are signed up the DfE staff Wellbeing Charter and have developed and enhanced this through our own GAET Wellbeing Charter for staff.

I'd like to commend all of our students and offer my congratulations to every student for their achievements and in particular those in Year 6 and Year 11 for their successes in external examinations. We are also developing our GAET Student Enrichment Charter demonstrating our commitment to give every student a great and rounded education with lots of additional opportunities. I was delighted to attend the trust's first ever student conference in June 2022 at Old Trafford and the ambition and expectations of our students was impressive and something we wholeheartedly support.

Finally, I'd like to thank all members of our Board and the Chairs and members of our committees. Everyone involved in our governance demonstrates the greatest levels of commitment to get the best outcomes for our students, schools and communities and your input is greatly appreciated.

Paul Jones

Chair of Board of Trustees

OBJECTIVES

Under the terms of its Funding Agreement with the DfE, the trust's objects are:

Advancing education by:

- Establishing, maintaining, managing and developing schools offering a broad and balanced curriculum
- Promoting the physical, intellectual and social development of all children and young people, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged
- Developing the capacity and skills of those who are socially and economically disadvantaged in such a way that helps meet their needs and enables them to participate more fully in their communities and society at large
- Providing recreational and leisure time facilities in the interest of social welfare for the local communities in which the academies reside, especially those who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disablement, poverty or social and economic circumstances.

Our aim is to provide outstanding schools to improve the academic achievement of all our children and young people and increase their life chances and opportunities for successful and fulfilled lives as well-educated future citizens. Our objectives are qualified in our vision and embodied in the way we live our values.

Our Vision for the Trust

Great Academies Education Trust will be a truly outstanding, outward facing multi-academy trust supporting its academies, from their starting points, to become outstanding schools.

All pupils will make exceptional academic progress in all subjects and regardless of age or stage will be ready for their next steps and become work and college ready.

Our academies will be schools where pupils are valued as individuals, where they will have opportunities to achieve highly, lead strongly and develop into confident, responsible and successful young adults.

Our Trust values

- **Genuine** - mutually trusting, open, honest and reflective.
- **Respect(ful)** to all.
- **Excellent** at what they do, striving for excellence and intolerant of mediocrity.
- **Achievement focussed**-understanding that academic excellence is the goal and high aspirations key to each child achieving their academic potential .
- **Together**-believing that we can make the biggest difference when we work as a strong team.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We feel that a great deal of progress has been made on many fronts as we have emerged from the constraints, limitations and challenges of the impact of the pandemic during 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

- A significant step forward for the trust in its work to become recognized as a strong trust was gaining accreditation to be a SCITT provider from September 2024, one of only 179 accredited providers in the country. The SCITT was inspected in May 2022 and successfully retained its Ofsted good grading.
- Our students completed the return to full public examinations in 2022, and broadly speaking achieved in line with outcomes in 2019.
- We developed our Trust Charter for Enrichment for students and initiated the first of what we intend will become annual trust-wide student conferences.
- We undertook our second annual staff-wide survey and have acted upon the outcomes of these surveys. There was an 11% improvement in staff perceptions on the clarity of values and vision of the trust. 73% of staff felt that their views were made known to their line managers. 83% of staff felt confident they could identify and know how to deal with any incidents of peer-on-peer sexual harassment in line with new 2021 guidance.
- We engaged increasingly with a variety of external partners during the year. We commissioned the best external consultants to support our school improvement work including a number of nationally recognized experts. We commissioned targeted and bespoke support for Copley Academy and Great Academy Ashton (GAA) to support them on their journeys to improve from outstanding improvement to become recognized as good schools.
- Silver Springs Primary Academy was upgraded from requires improvement to good by Ofsted in July 2022.
- Copley Academy was upgraded from inadequate to requires improvement by Ofsted in January 2022.
- In terms of the buy-in of our communities and preference for school places; Middleton Technology School (MTS) again achieved its benchmark recruitment number and maintained its Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 270 Year 7 pupils based on first preferences, remaining over-subscribed. Year 7 entry at Great Academy Ashton was very positive and exceeded the PAN with a 21.7% increase in first-choice applications from 2021 applications and a 37.4% increase in first-choice applications from 2020 applications. Copley Academy, on the back of being able to market its improved Ofsted grading, has regained community confidence and is likely to approach if not exceed PAN in 2023.
- 2021-2022 saw the introduction of a new trust brand strategy which incorporated the trusts story, mission, and values. This included modernising the logo and colour palette and extending new communication style into each school to present and reinforce our united education partnerships within Tameside and Rochdale.
 - All four principals were supported through the launch of their new bespoke and fully compliant websites which were aligned with the trust brand and guidance

provided by the Department of Education. This ensures that the information schools are required to publish remains easily available.

- Around 100 primary schools were regularly engaged in communications and Year 6 transition activities across the trust. A new programme to support primary school pupils was launched at Great Academy Ashton. The Excel Academy attracted over 40 highest attaining primary school pupils who have a keen interest in English, Science and Mathematics.
- We invested £3.17m into fixed assets across the trust including but not limited to key capital building programmes to develop a purpose designed library at Great Academy Ashton, 4 external canopies at Middleton Technology School and a trust-wide digital excellence programme to improve the use of digital devices throughout teaching and learning. This capital expenditure also included ongoing and new Capital Improvement Funded (CIF) projects at Copley Academy to improve the quality of the building.
- The trust commissioned a full audit of all assets in order to establish an online system for managing, acquiring and disposing of assets. This was supported by a series of condition reports of the estate in order to identify key capital priorities over the next 3-5 years. These will support the development of a 3-year capital plan in 2022-23.
- The trust invested in a new finance system in 2021-22. This enables increased levels of scrutiny of spend at an academy level and broadened the accountability for financial reporting.
- All of our schools have been identified as lying within the governments Priority Education Investment Areas. We are actively engaging with this new agenda and seeking opportunities from it to increase the rate of improvement in our academies.
- Two of our schools (Copley Academy and Great Academy Ashton) have come under scope in the DfE newly introduced definition of Coasting Schools, by virtue of not being graded good in each of their last two respective inspections. We are working with the DfE Regional Director to give assurances that our commitment to these schools is unwavering and that we are making progress towards becoming recognized as a strong trust.
- Ambition / FA1 Partnership

The trust's strategic partnership with FA1/ Ambition was further strengthened in 2021/22. As part of this arrangement GAET colleagues from the 4 academies are involved as participants or facilitators (Visiting Fellows) on a number of the national NPQ programmes. Subject mentors, Professional Mentors and Early Career Teachers (ECTs) benefitted from continued involvement in the national ECF programme. Maths ECTs from MTS (and their mentors) have been selected to take part in the Maths-specific ECF pilot for 2022/23.

GAET colleague engagement with Ambition / FA1 Trust partnership (to Jan 23 – number of people involved)	
ECTs	21
ECF Professional Mentors	4
ECF Subject mentors	21
NPQ participants	41
NPQ Visiting Fellows	7
total	94

- GAET Networks
 - GAET Improvement Networks run regularly throughout the year, bringing together colleagues from across the academies. These networks provide continuous professional development (CPD) and enable colleagues to discuss priorities and collaborate on improvement initiatives.
 - Colleagues are further supported in school by network leaders through a cycle of regular academy improvement visits.
 - Leaders are also involved in the trust's 'Collaborative Review' process – providing support and challenge to contribute to the ongoing evaluation of the Quality of Education (Ofsted framework) in our academies.

GAET Improvement networks 2021/22:	Art Improvement Network	Assessment development working group	Attendance Improvement Network
Behaviour Improvement Network	Careers & Futures Thinking Network	Computing Improvement Network	Curriculum, Teaching, Learning & Assessment Leaders Network
Data managers network	Design Technology Improvement Network	DSL Leaders Network	English Improvement Network
Geography Improvement Network	History Improvement Network	Literacy Improvement Network	Maths Improvement Network
MFL Improvement Network	Music Improvement Network	PE Improvement Network	Professional Mentor (ECF) Leaders Network
PSHE Improvement Network	Pupil Premium Leaders Network	Science Improvement Network	SEND Improvement Network

- In addition to the regular networks, all GAET schools were invited to take part in the following opportunities during 2021/22:
 - The National Literacy Trust Development Programme – a comprehensive 'Disciplinary Literacy' CPD programme
 - A 3-part curriculum development programme for senior leaders led by Christine Counsell:
 - The arguments for knowledge in a curriculum, and implications for subjects
 - Deep engagement with subject: why subject-specificity matters and what it looks like

- Deep engagement with subject: how SLT can discern and nurture it
- A series of Ofsted subject briefings related to: English, mathematics, science, history, PE, geography.
- GAET Network Impact Survey – March 2022
Two surveys took place – one aimed at participants of the networks (mostly subject leaders or equivalent), the other aimed at the Principals and SLT line managers of those that attend the networks.
- Response Rate:
The survey ran for 2 weeks during March and was conducted online. Response rates were high. It is understood that around 55 colleagues regularly attend a network. 50 individual responses were received.
- Responses:
“In my subject area I think that network activity has helped me to further develop the following this year... ”
 - The Curriculum (81% AGREE)
 - Subject Leadership (70% AGREE)
 - Teaching & Learning (70% AGREE)

“It has been really useful to collaborate with others in different contexts”.

“I have really enjoyed the support from our network meetings as they have enabled me to integrate not just into my role in the school but also within the network. They have also provided additional direction on certain areas.”

“I liked having external hosts that we could take fresh ideas from and get them to look and evaluate our curriculum”.

“I enjoy and value the opportunity to collaborate with other leaders from across and beyond the trust”.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

In February 2022, Trustees, Chairs of LGCs, MAT SLT and our Principals met to revisit, refresh and update our 2019-2023 Strategic Plan to cover the 2022-2025 period. We agreed on eight strategic priorities under five headings of Pupils and Communities; Performance; Our People; Finance and Resources; Structure, support and operations.

OUR PUPILS AND COMMUNITIES

1. To provide Great Academies' students with a rounded experience including wider achievements and enrichment

In addition to securing great academic outcomes, we will ensure that all of our students benefit from and experience a wide entitlement to extra-curricular activity. After consulting with stakeholders and drawing on good practice (MTS Enrichment for all), by August 2022 this will be enshrined in the 'GAET Charter of Enrichment for Students'. By August 2023, we will have monitored participation and have measurable outcomes in terms of student wider extra-curricular activities and by 2025, an education with GAET will be synonymous with benefiting from a rounded and world-class education.

2. To develop 'Great Academies In The Community' partnerships with our local communities

By September 2022, we will co-ordinate the outward facing dimension of each academy with their local community stakeholders including; parent bodies, local authority representatives, partner schools and trusts, the business community, and third sector organisations. By the end of 2023, all academies will have thriving programmes of engagement with community stakeholders and become increasingly recognised as being truly at the heart of their communities.

OUR PERFORMANCE

3. To design and deliver the best possible curriculum and teaching standards leading to the best outcomes for all of our students

Our focus will be on curriculum in its broadest sense, covering the entire experience of the Great Academies' education. Our starting point will be the intended design and delivery of our curriculum. We aim for our students to achieve the best possible academic outcomes and to have a broad, rounded education experience in all of our academies. All measures such as academic outcomes, student attendance and exclusions data, will reach and then improve upon national average data. We will achieve this by systematically implementing our school improvement model, including a relentless focus on improving the quality of provision in our schools, and specifically ensuring teaching that is routinely great. We will place a great emphasis on the importance of literacy and numeracy, and undertake a trust-wide approach to improving standards in reading. High levels of attendance also come from supportive and caring staff who ensure that an exciting broad curriculum awaits our students.

We have invested and significantly broadened the scope of our highly skilled and talented school improvement team. All of our curriculum leaders and coordinators are ably supported through a range of regular trust-wide collaborative meetings that aim to further improve not only the curriculum, but to help all teachers further improve the quality of their teaching.

We are also working together to further develop and improve our approaches to assessment to help us get an even better insight into how well our pupils are learning and what more we need to do to help them. We have also really strengthened our trust wide approach to assessing pupils reading skills and competencies and proactively helping them build both their ability to read and enjoy reading. This is why we have partnered with the National Literacy Trust to help us continue to further improve.

We also recognise the importance of supporting all of our children and young people to be ready for the next stages of their education. That is why all of our schools are making excellent progress to achieving the National Quality in Careers standard at both primary and secondary level.

Our school improvement team are also outward facing and keen to learn, share and develop their expertise further. That is why all of our central team are now qualified visiting fellows in the delivery of various National Professional Qualification (NPQ) programmes. Our school improvement model uses Collaborative Education Reviews to help and support further school improvement. These have been both popular and have shown significant impact. That is why our Director of Education is also working with several other MATs/schools across the region to share not only what we do but learn from others to enhance our own provision.

Our work to enrich the curriculum continues to move at a pace. Following our collaborative work with schools, including our first Enrichment Conference at Old Trafford, schools are able to show how they are broadening the scope of their wider curriculum offer. This includes greater opportunities for pupils to learn more about the climate, sustainability, wider range of activities that appeal to pupils interests as well as groups for groups including LGBTQ+, in which several schools are in the process of gaining the Rainbow Flag Award for their work on inclusion.

We seek continuous improvement when it comes to keeping children safe. That is why we have a well embedded improvement cycle (biannual reviews) led by highly experienced colleagues who work with many schools and academies across the country.

In terms of impact and outcomes, our high aspiration is that by September 2025, we will be in the top 20% performing MATs for secondary academies, and SSPA will be in the top 10% nationally in the DfE primary performance tables. This requires an immediate focus from 2022 on current Y4 and Y9, and a plan for sustained improvement with subsequent years. By September 2027, all of our long-standing academies will be in the top 5% of similar schools, meaning that our MAT will be in the top 5% of similar MATs.

New academies joining the trust will be given appropriate targets to support the overall objective for the trust within a three-year period from the point of joining. All performance measures will improve on FFT 50, meet FFT 20, and reach FFT 5 over this time. Where the Covid pandemic has delayed DfE performance tables in 2020 and 2021, we will continue to scrutinise our academies performance against the most reliable data sets that we can source or national average data that is published by DfE.

4. To work towards greater sustainability including a carbon net zero status.

This is a newly introduced strategic objective for the trust and will develop over time. The DfE draft strategy “sustainability and climate change” was published in November 2021 and a final strategy was issued in April 2022. By September 2025 our approach to sustainability will be embedded across the trust and we will be contributing to the 2030 Sustainability Agenda. We will have reviewed how we teach about; sustainability; the environment; climate change; and

achieving net zero carbon emissions. We will give our students a voice in the strategic direction that we take, including school-level projects and competitions. We will aim to reduce our overall consumption year on year, including projects around increasingly sustainable transport and improved estates and ways of working. We will seek involvement for our students in the national Education Nature Park & Climate Leaders Award and promote progression into Green Skills and Careers.

OUR PEOPLE

5. To develop and promote staff good health and well-being through Charters for our People

As we move out of the 2020-21 two years of pandemic, we recognise we can strengthen our offer to support and promote staff well-being and good health. In 2020, we introduced our first trust wide staff survey, which we will maintain as an annual process securing the best possible response rate from staff. We will ensure that we respond to and act on the main themes emerging from staff surveys. In September 2022, we signed up to the DfE well-being charter and all of our academies will be signed up the Great Academies Staff Well-Being Charter.

OUR FINANCE AND RESOURCES

6. To manage our finances and resources efficiently to secure and sustain the best provision and opportunities for the future

Curriculum led financial planning (CLFP) will be understood by all leaders and managers and schools will recognise the imperative to reach balanced income and expenditure in-year budgets. This will be supported by monthly financial reports, quarterly LGC and termly Financial Accountability Meetings (FAMs). All schools will return a surplus of at least 3% of GAG in order to sustain total reserves of at least 10% of in Year GAG and enable a strategic estates management and an ICT refresh-programme.

OUR STRUCTURE, SUPPORT AND OPERATIONS

7. To develop and provide Great Academies Central Services through our central structure, support and operations

By September 2022, we will have completed a process of alignment across our academies to ensure efficient practices and protocols are standardised against agreed practices of excellence, including our Great School Improvement Model, our finance, HR, governance, estates and ICT functions. These will clearly define the capacity and bespoke support systems required by and offered to each current and future academy.

8. To grow Great Academies Education Trust

By September 2022, 23 and 24, we will have maintained a pipeline of potential partner schools who may join our MAT, supported by marketing materials and a strategy to engage new prospective partner schools. We will be clear on the 'Ws' of who, when, where and why, as well as ensuring that we have the capacity for sensible growth. By September 2024, we will have at least three more primary schools in our trust and by September 2025 we will have developed two clusters of around 4-6 schools in each of Rochdale and Tameside, with a view and strategy for growth into other regional areas in the north. If our local partner primary schools are slow to work with us, we will look for primary partners further afield.

GOVERNANCE – THE WORK OF OUR COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

- The trust has strengthened governance functions at all levels and has commissioned an external Trust Governance Review to take place in 2022-23. This intent was formally approved in July 2022 by trustees.
- Members and Trustees held the trust's first AGM in January 2022, to start an annual cycle of future AGMs.
- Additional Members and Governors were successfully recruited to bring governance in line with the Academy Trust Handbook (2022).
- Governors had several opportunities to meet virtually to attend governance function training sessions to improve their ability to complete their governance functions. Areas of focus were identified as areas of need for training by trustees and LGC members.

Outcomes (committee) Board (OCB)

In 2021-22, we recognised that we were returning back to arrangements for assessments and measures of attainment that had been utilised before the impact of the pandemic on public examinations during 2020 and 2021.

- The OCB was reassured that our curriculum development had continued across the trust and that this was being validated in external Ofsted inspections that took place. Therefore, with greater confidence in the written curriculum our attention became increasingly focused on the delivery and assessment of the curriculums.
- The trust has recognised a return to increased accountability for outcomes with the return to DfE comparison tables showing performance by a range of measures, albeit with strong caveats of caution from the DfE about avoiding making comparisons due to the discriminatory impact of Covid.
- We made no compromise or allowance for the potential impact of the pandemic when setting targets for 2022 outcomes. All targets were considered and approved by the Outcomes Board and each schools' LGC. The OCB recognised early in the year that the agreed targets were becoming less realistic as the year progressed. In the event, our academies fell short of most academic targets.
- In SSPA, the best performance was at KS2 and in particular in mathematics outcomes, with the academy overall just short of national averages. The areas of focus arising from the results are the need to support KS1 children to increase their rate of catch up, and across all phases to increase the students achieving at the higher levels of 'Greater Depth'.
- In Copley Academy, there were small improvements compared back to 2019 by most measures, which we consider to be the green shoots of recovery based on the hard work taking place to transform the academy. We recognise that there is still some way to go to achieve local and national averages, but the results have started to turn the right way across all measures.

- Great Academy Ashton and Middleton Technology School both had mixed sets of results and both schools recognise that the results are not yet where we want them to be. However Middleton Technology School continues to remain one of the higher performing schools in the Rochdale area.
- With much more settled and continuous attendance of staff and students, we are now able to undertake more rapid improvement work for 2023, and common assessments in the core subjects across KS4 in all three secondaries gives predictive data suggesting 2023 will be a year of improvement.
- Other significant areas of work of the OCB included;
 - Review of the introduction of a new software programme 'Reading Plus', in all four academies. Early signs being reported to the OCB are of notable gains in reading levels in target groups of students.
 - Review and reporting (also on school websites) of the approach to improving outcomes for students identified as recipients for Pupil Premium funding.
 - The OCB recognises the strong work undertaken in each academy to safeguard students, but it has encouraged the MAT and school leaders to be ambitious for best practice in the area of safeguarding. To achieve this, the MAT has contracted on behalf of all academies with the external consultants Anchored Schools, who undertook audits of our practice against the recognised best practice, and developed action plans to further raise standards of safeguarding in the academies across the trust. Much excellent practice has been recognised, but we continue to guard against complacency and strive for the strongest possible culture of safeguarding across the trust.
 - The OCB recognised the imperative of improving student attendance and has been fully supportive of the initiative to engage with the external consultants SOL Attendance. Data on attendance, absence, persistent and severely persistent absence is now monitored and acted upon in consistent fashion across all schools.
 - The OCB has monitored the work of the academies in the DfE Behaviour Hub pilot. GAA has been our lead school in the initiative through 2021-22, and all schools have benefitted from working with our partner Lead MAT (Dixons MAT) as the year progressed. The academies have seen increased levels of challenging, and at times isolated incidents of disruptive, behaviour as students have come back after lockdown periods to the strict parameters of school disciplinary codes. We therefore have seen temporary increased levels of exclusion and suspension in 2021-22 in all secondary schools, but these are still well below historical levels for the schools and the work is ongoing with targets and strategy to reduce these instances of behaviour that can result in suspension or exclusion.

Finance and Resources Committee (FRC)

We have seen significant change and improvements made in the finance function across the trust during 2021-22. The major initiative has been the introduction of a new market leading finance system (Iris PS Financials (PSF)) launched in September 2021 along with adoption of the DfE Chart of Accounts and the training of central and school staff in the use of it.

- The PSF system went live successfully on 1st September 2021. With a newly adopted Chart of Accounts in line with DfE/ESFA requirements, there was a marked step forward in the quality and presentation of finance data. The system also supports increased scrutiny of spend at an academy level and increased accountability for

financial monitoring and reporting.

- In addition, more timely management accounts with a target delivery of working-day 10 each month, the committee received monthly management accounts detailing; income; expenditure; variances; forecasts; cash flow. This is being extended in 2022 to include monthly fund and balance sheet account balances.
- Three of our academies operated well against revenue budgets agreed for the year, notably Copley Academy and SSPA managing their costs to bring back positive variances on the full year.
- The greatest challenge for all schools was managing the increased levels of both Covid and non-Covid related sickness absence and the resultant and necessary agency cover costs.
- At GAA, this challenge was compounded by late receipt of invoices for the Hard FM contract and the disproportionately high costs of this contract. However, in the second part of the year, once the potential deficit risk level had become clear, tight spending controls from the centre and at the academy, ensured the deficit level was contained and accurately reported on to the year end.
- The committee supported, challenged and approved several business cases to ensure strategic capital investment drawn down from reserves to benefit students in all schools. The biggest projects approved were four external canopy covers at MTS, completed in year. A similar project at GAA is being undertaken and we anticipate the four canopy-covered areas will be complete in spring 2023. The intent is to create and enable dry/shaded, outdoor covered recreation and learning spaces for students and to reduce the risk of increased transmission of airborne infections when students are confined indoors. From the early evidence at MTS, the canopies are making a difference and helping develop the culture and ethos we want in our academies.
- Other capital investment has seen significant CIF funded development of the Copley Academy estate including renovated kitchen areas, replaced fascia and window areas and safe asbestos removal. The FRC approved submission for Copley Academy to come under consideration for the DfE Schools Rebuilding Programme in 2022. Initially the academy was accepted under consideration for the programme. However, the academy was also the successful recipient of additional CIF funded air ventilation works which have now started. Unsurprisingly, the academy is no longer being considered for the SRP, but in the meantime benefitting from extensive capital improvement in the fabric of the existing estate.
- GAA had a business case approved to create an internal library space, recognising the importance to promote literacy and reading and coinciding with the significant investment in Reading Plus.
- The committee approved the continuation of the Digital Excellence programme which followed on from the purchase of additional laptop devices during the covid pandemic but extended the remit to the improvement in digital devices to support teaching and learning. As a result, the trust has funded a 3-year commitment to the 'Reading Plus' programme and purchased devices to support the rollout of this programme. The trust has also invested in additional digital screens in classrooms at Copley Academy and VR headsets at SSPA. This programme will continue into 2022-23 with the purchase of additional specialist software for art and design, phonics support, and other devices such as specialist tablets.
- All schools benefitted from many minor works and the installation during the year of improved corporate signage on our adjacent roads, entrances to site, entrances to buildings and in some cases curriculum related murals enhancing corridor areas.

- The trust has maintained a strong financial position as evidence in the Financial Statements (which are included as an appendix to this report and are available on the trust website <https://www.greatacademies.co.uk/our-trust/finance/>).
- Free reserves have been maintained at £5.4m, a level above 10% of in-year GAG in line with the trust's reserves policy but which has been strategically reduced during 2021-22 through investment in capital areas as mentioned. This has had a positive impact throughout the trust on improvements in the estate, the IT provision and in supporting our schools to deliver on academic outcomes.
- The trust cash balance is also a healthy £5.2m, and the reduction from prior year £7m is due to the payment of outstanding debts, and the strategic investment in capital programmes. The trust is therefore able to weather the majority of financial storms and remains in a strong position to continue supporting our schools.
- The trust also creates a modest income through the letting of our sports facilities at Great Academy Ashton for community usage. This is managed alongside programmes run by the Manchester United Foundation who use the facilities for no cost as part of vision to support increased enrichment and engagement with our communities.
- Trust-wide staff costs are closely monitored and benchmarked in order to remain an employer of choice, whilst ensuring value for money. Detailed analysis of our staff costs and our higher paid employees is available in our financial statements and on our trust website.

Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

In the light of ESFA guidance, Trustees established a new Audit and Risk Committee in 2021-22, in part to separate out the management of the audits and risks from the Finance and Resources Committee.

- The trust introduced a new risk register format and trained audiences from Trustees, LGCs and school leaders in the identification, assessment, management and mitigation of risk. This was done in a phased manner, and in a second stage of implementation introduces stakeholders to the four Ts (Tolerate, Treat, Terminate, Transfer) of risk management.
- The trust risk register has recorded matters of risk including strategic, infrastructure and financial risks, maintaining a list of the ten matters of highest risk, reported in each committee meeting and to full Board.
- The four schools developed their own risk-registers during 2021-22, reflecting both generic trust-wide risks and the context specific risks relating to the individual school. LGCs review school risk registers in alternate meetings three times a year.
- The committee recognised that after a long period of stability with the same audit firm, it was time to engage a new Auditor for external audit for 2021-22. This engagement was completed and deadlines were met with the trust filing an unqualified set of accounts and financial statements for 2021-22.
- The previous internal auditors have been retained to undertake the focused internal scrutiny for 2021-22. This was completed to schedule and filed to deadline for 2021-22.
- The trust met all ESFA reporting deadlines for 2021-22 including the submission of balanced budgets, and reporting on the trust estate.
- The management is responding as required and as necessary to matters arising from

both internal audit and external audit, the latter are summarised in the management response letter to the statements.

SCITT (committee) Board (SCB)

The trust formally incorporated the SCITT into the trust operating model during 2021. The SCITT has for some time come under the 'soft' partnership auspices of the trust, having formally been established in partnership with the Rochdale Secondary Schools' Pioneer Trust.

- During 2021-22, trust leaders and school leaders from MTS determined that the trust would strategically benefit from retaining a SCITT, a DfE hallmark of a 'strong trust'. The DfE had determined that any Body wishing to retain responsibility for ITE as an Accredited body was required to undergo assessment during 2022, for delivery in 2024.
- The trust submitted an application to the DfE in the first of only two accreditation rounds. The trust was initially unsuccessful but received encouraging and informative feedback from the DfE, so re-applied with more detail in the second and final round.
- The trust was successful in its application and will be one of only 179 accredited Providers for ITE in the country from 2024.
- In the meantime, the SCITT has continued to successfully recruit, train and secure employment for around 25 entrants to the profession on an annual basis. In the light of the successful accreditation, the intent is to scale up the offer and to seek potential delivery partners.
- In May 2022, the SCITT underwent Ofsted inspection. It retained a grading of good against the ITE Inspection Framework, a great achievement against a more exacting framework.

Remuneration Committee (RemCom)

The committee met twice during the year fulfilled its obligations regarding Pay Policy, and approvals of remuneration changes.

In addition, the RemCom reviewed and updated approvals for a wide range of People/HR policies, the following policies;

- In addition, the RemCom reviewed and updated approvals for the following policies;
 - Teacher Pay Policy
 - Recruitment Policy
 - Maternity Policy
 - Adoption Policy
 - Shared Parental Leave Policy – Birth
 - Shared Parental Leave Policy – Adoption
 - Flexible Working Policy
 - Grievance Procedure
 - Paternity Policy
 - Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - Procedure for managing allegations against staff
 - Redundancy Policy
 - Management of Sickness Absence Policy
 - Support Staff Appraisal Policy

- The policies below were also drafted for comments from the Remuneration Committee:
 - Wellbeing Policy
 - Menopause Policy

- The trust completed its second annual trust wide survey, and the results have been used to inform the HR/People aspects of the committee and the MAT/School leaders work.

- The RemCom undertook due diligence of the at times conflicting advice and expectations relating to the outcome of the Harpur/Brazel case (relating to historical variances in TTO holiday payment rates). The trust has committed to reflect the outcomes and reparations agreed by other employers in Tameside and Rochdale respectively.

- The support staff appraisal policy and accompanying documents have been reviewed with the aim of strengthening the individual performance of staff within each academy, and the trust as a whole.

- The Single Central Record has been updated to an online format through CPOMS. This platform ensures that any gaps to documentation requirements are quickly addressed

- 8 members of staff have undertaken an Apprenticeship which has been funded through the Apprenticeship Levy, of these 8, 5 members of staff have either completed their apprenticeship or it is still ongoing. Apprenticeships undertaken were:
 - Level 3 Information Communications Technician
 - Level 3 HR Support
 - Level 7 Senior Leader

Great Academies in numbers:

506
employees

3600
students

£3.2
Million
Capital
invested

21 Early
Career
Teachers

98% of
PAN in
secondary
admissions

2024
Accredited
SCITT
Provider

24 new
teachers
trained

72%
Expected
standard
in KS2
maths

£80K
invested in
digital
excellence

41 staff
training
on new
model
NPQs

£1.8M
Capital
Investment
Fund
secured

Thank You

As your Chief Executive Officer, I would like to thank; our trust board; committee members; all of our dedicated and professional teachers and support staff; our students and their families who make Great Academies Education Trust and its schools the wonderful places that they are to work, develop and learn.

We are determined to overcome any frustration of the last year that the pandemic may have slowed our progress down. What has emerged is a strong trust and group of schools with incredible levels of resilience and tenacity, and a determined and united team to accelerate our schools' respective journeys of improvement. I hope this report captures some of the great things achieved last year, and with the continued spirit and determination of all, I am certain that we have fantastic opportunities ahead for Great Academies Education Trust.

Brendan Loughran

CEO



**Great Academies
Education Trust**