

 **St Chad's**  
Academies Trust

# Academy Improvement Strategy



Dear Colleagues,

The Academy Improvement Strategy (2019/20) revisits our ambition to ensure that all the children and young people in our care receive the best possible education, achieving high standards.

St Chad's Academy Trust core aims are:

- a) to secure high standards so that all children and young people can achieve;
- b) to provide a strong framework for academy improvement and the professional development of academy staff and leaders;
- c) to facilitate the long term sustainability and systematic expansion of academies and other new educational structures and partnerships.

Our aim is that all our academies will be at least good where children are offered the quality and richness of experience underpinned by our Christian values.



Sue Wedgwood

Chief Executive Officer  
St Chad's Academies Trust

## Academy Improvement Strategy

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**Our Pledges**

*Every school a good school*

*Children First*

- All children have the right to the best education that can be provided
- All academies can improve to become good and outstanding
- All children and young people in our care have an entitlement to spiritual care and guidance
- Every academy will champion the ethos, values enabling children to clearly identify themselves as children of God
- All staff have access to well-planned, bespoke professional development to meet the needs of the academy and the individual
- All staff and Local Academy Committee members have access to support for their spiritual welfare
- Partnership and collaboration with and between academies will bring about significant improvement in the education of all children in our care
- All Local Academy Committee members will receive regular support and guidance to fulfil their role in supporting and challenging the academy

## Educational Vision

*Every school a good school*

*Children First*

- The Trust provides a strong support system and accountability framework to enable our academies to flourish and improve, preserving the characteristics of a church academy. Our uniqueness will ensure that whilst providing the best possible education for our children and young people we will also provide the spiritual care and guidance for our children of God.
- We share a high ambition to make every academy a **good** academy, where Local Academy Committees, leaders and staff have high expectations and aspirations for the pupils in their care. We will provide high quality training opportunities in leadership; research and professional development, growing the 'family' of the Trust. Academies will benefit from and contribute to this strategy.
- School to school support is strength of the Trust, continuing to share best practice across academies within the Trust and outside of the Trust in a systematic and coherent manner.
- Our Christian obligation, as the Diocesan MAT, provides the platform for our success: 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good'. This will support the development of effective and creative models of system leadership whilst maintaining their individuality.
- All academies, from the high performers to the most vulnerable, will access and receive the appropriate support and challenge to improve further. All academies will be good and outstanding. St Chad's Academies Trust is committed to raising and sustaining high standards of achievement focussing on the aspirations, expectations and confidence of pupils, working with staff, the Local Academy Committee, parents and the community. In keeping the **Children First** focus of the strategy, high quality educational experiences will be the expectation across all academies.
- Professional development is a key strand of the strategy and success. Quality training and support will be provided to ensure teaching is never less than good. Our ambition is to provide and support a professional body of the highest quality.
- St Chad's Academies Trust recognises that leaders and staff are key agents of change and will work collaboratively to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils, staff, the Local Academy Committee, parents and the community.
- St Chad's Academies Trust will actively promote and support the development of thriving learning communities and work relentlessly with the Local Academy Committee to enrich and enhance parental engagement, strengthening the role of academy within the community and parish.

## Principles of our approach

*Every academy a good academy*

*Children First*

- a recognition that, while the Trust is accountable for overall standards, it is the **academy and Local Academy Committee(LAC) who are responsible for the standards** achieved by its pupils;
- recognition **that improvement comes first and foremost through high quality teaching from committed and professional teachers** whose skills and competence are recognised and respected and their professional development supported;
- recognition that the **improvement process is a collaborative one** including school to school support within the Trust and within your locality s;
- acceptance of the **importance of effective leadership** (Senior Leaders and LAC) – having a clear vision and high expectations for pupils as well as the skills to translate that vision and those expectations into reality;
- recognition that **every academy is capable of improvement**; that the academy is best placed to identify particular areas for improvement; and that sustained improvement comes from within the academy;
- acceptance that **strong support from the Trust and the LAC is vital** in ensuring that academies can deliver sustained improvement;
- recognition that there will, at times, be a **need for an external view of progress** as well as support and, where appropriate, more active interventions.



## The Partnership between the Trust and academies

*Every school a good school*

*Children First*

The Trust and academies will agree on:

- A culture of true collaboration where academies take an active role in the success of the Trust;
- What academies are expected to do for themselves;
- The way in which academies will benefit from working together to support each other's improvement;
- How the Trust will work with academies where it will add value ;
- When and how the Trust will intervene in an academy to ensure the needs, progress and outcomes for children and young people are secure and improving quickly.

Academies will:

- be led by inspirational leaders and LAC members who ensure that children have the best start in life, the best teaching and great opportunities to develop as individuals and children of God;
- become "Good" or "Outstanding";
- work collaboratively, providing support when needed and appropriate, supporting each other to provide the very best for our children;
- recruit the best teachers and support staff who are focused on teaching, learning , and actively engage in their continued professional development;
- operate as a family, knowing the Trust is with you every step of the way.

St Chad's Academies Trust will:

- be the champion of our children, families and their communities;
- facilitate creative and local solutions to secure rapid improvement in academies;
- support our academies on their journey to excellence through effective challenge and support;
- be committed to supporting academies with the greatest need so that they can succeed as well as others
- value and support all staff to succeed through quality professional development opportunities and annual performance management
- act swiftly to challenge LAC members and Principals to improve their academy's performance with integrity and transparency in the use of our intervention powers
- celebrate success of our academies;
- work closely with academy leaders to extend the provision of school to school support at all levels

**The Improvement Team**

*Every school a good school*

*Children First*

Academies will have access to an **Improvement Adviser**. Each academy will receive notionally 6 days support annually from the Improvement Adviser. The role of the Improvement Adviser will include:

- validation of the academy's judgements on leadership and management, outcomes, personal development, behaviour and attitudes, leadership and management, early years and the quality of education.
- assistance in the analysis of performance data
- advice on target setting
- monitoring of progress to targets and the effectiveness of interventions
- involvement in the Principal's performance review
- support for the Self Evaluation and Academy Improvement Plan
- Ofsted preparation, Self-Review
- advice on implementation of monitoring programmes needed to address improvement
- general advice, support and challenge
- giving due regard to the health and wellbeing of the Principal and staff

Improvement Advisers will be deployed and line managed by the Director of Learning and will have the appropriate and up to date skill set to carry out this role effectively.

Principals will contribute to the Improvement Team, modelling sustained school to school support at a strategic and operational level, including;

- Participating in reviews of academies
- Providing capacity to other academies
- Fulfilling the role of an Improvement Adviser





## Implementation of the Strategy

### Academy Self Review (ASR)

Upon conversion a joint review carried out by the Improvement Team in partnership with the Principal and Senior Leadership Team will take place. The Academy Self Review (ASR) will agree on current performance, the strengths of the academy and what the academy needs to do to secure further improvements.

The Principal, Chair of the Local Academy Committee and CEO will receive a report of the review which will detail the findings, outcomes and next steps.

The role of the Trust is to support the identified needs following the ASR and also celebrate and share good practice observed.

Frequency and timings of the ASR will be reflected by the categorisation of the individual academy. It is, however, anticipated that good and outstanding academies will want to secure validation of this nature to achieve or maintain outstanding practice. Academies categorised as 'Stabilise' will receive a review and half term updates through a Progress Board.



## Action to be taken when a school is judged to be of serious concern

### Category - Stabilise

Academies judged to be making little progress and who are entering the Stabilise category will become a cause for concern and will be given appropriate support until such time as the necessary improvements have been made. This support will be financed by the academy.

Academies may require intensive support for a number of reasons. These will be monitored centrally and may include:

- Trends over time show underperformance against national benchmarks
- Academies deemed as not improving in its provision / inadequate in Academy Self Review / Raising Achievement Board meetings / Progress Board meetings
- Rates of pupil progress are too slow showing too few making and exceeding national expectations
- Where there is consistently inadequate teaching that has not been eradicated effectively
- Where there are weaknesses in leadership and management that impact negatively on outcomes for pupils
- Where there are weaknesses in internal employee relations impacting on productivity and outcomes
- Underperformance in key subjects
- Inadequate financial management
- Inadequate Local Academy Committee – they fail to hold the academy to account
- Academies deemed Inadequate by Ofsted
- Parental complaints
- Complaints about behaviour

**The Trust will implement interventions to support academies causing concern, dependent on individual circumstances** including;

1. Review of leadership of the academy.
2. Partner with a high performing academy with agreed actions to secure rapid progress.
3. Action planning to address key issues under the five Ofsted categories, with identified support, approved by the Head of School Performance.
4. Nominated School Improvement Adviser.
5. Creation of a Progress Board.
6. Establish an Interim Executive Board to replace the LAC
7. De-delegation of management responsibilities.

#### **1. Review Leadership of the academy**

The Trust will nominate an Improvement Adviser to conduct a complete review of leadership in the academy.

This will include;

- Review of all relevant strategic documentation.
- Review of data.
- Interviews with leaders and staff.
- Interviews with the LAC.

A report will be prepared, following the leadership review, identifying next steps. Next steps may include;

- A support plan.
- Coaching from another Leader.
- Formal procedures will be triggered where there is clear evidence of non-engagement in any of the above or if there is little evidence of progress towards agreed success criteria.

## **2. Partner with a high performing school with agreed actions to secure rapid progress**

A high performing academy will be identified to support an academy causing concern. The supporting academy will have the skills and the capacity to fulfil this role. Reflecting the academy improvement strategy, the high performing academy will provide a range of support in appropriate areas. These, however, will be agreed formally with the Head of School Performance to ensure that the support provided is both appropriate and has impact. These actions will be regularly and carefully monitored through the Progress Board.

## **3. Action planning to address key issues under the Ofsted categories, with identified support, approved by the Trust Board**

An action plan template will be provided and completed by the Principal, Senior Leadership Team working with the Improvement Adviser (if a support school has been allocated they must be involved in the action planning process). This will be a robust plan with clear actions, success criteria and milestones to secure rapid improvement. The plan will be approved by the Trust Board and monitored by the Progress Board and the Raising Achievement Board. In either event there will be half termly reports to the Trust Board and the Risk and Audit Committee on progress.

## **4. Nominated Improvement Adviser**

An Improvement Adviser will be nominated to the academy. They will be the first point of contact for the academy and provide the support and challenge needed to secure swift progress. Their role will include providing support in the academy, where appropriate, and monitor additional support when necessary. The Diocesan Improvement Adviser will provide Visit Reports to the academy and the Trust evidencing progress and next steps.

## **5. Creation of a Progress Board**

The Progress Board will consist of the Principal, Chair of the LAC, and the Head of School Performance. The role of the Progress Board will be to:

- meet formally every three weeks;
- ensure that all support allocated within the agreed plan takes place and that impact is made;
- monitor the progress that the academy is making given this high level of agreed support;
- provide a written record of its proceedings to the LAC and the Trust Board.

It is the responsibility of the academy to retain all documents pertinent to the Progress Board and take minutes of the meetings. All documents must be filed coherently and retained. Copies of all documentation and minutes should be shared with the Trust.

## **6. Establish an Interim Executive Board**

An Interim Executive Board will replace the Local Academy Committee if the Trust decides that it is not functioning effectively. This may involve a comprehensive review of the Academy Committee from The Trust or an external body appointed by the Trust.

- Membership of the IEB would be between 35 members nominated by the Trust.
- The Trust would elect the Chair of the IEB
- The IEB would meet every 6 weeks (more frequently if determined to be necessary by the Chair)
- It is expected that the academy will improve rapidly within three terms, at which point the IEB would cease and the LAC will be established by the Trust.



## Quality Assurance

Through internal and external monitoring the support provided by the Trust and the School Improvement Strategy will be quality assured.

Internal quality assurance:

- Termly Raising Achievement Board where each academy is reviewed and categorized annually
- Director of Learning monitoring and evaluating the overall strategic and operational work of the Improvement Team
- Planned visits to academies by the Chair of the Trust and CEO
- Director of Learning termly report to the Trust Board
- Feedback from Principals on support and challenge provided by the Trust
- Feedback from Local Academy Committee Chairs on the support and challenge provided by the Trust
- Evaluations on all Quality Learning Circles and Forums
- Tracking of performance data and Ofsted judgements

External quality assurance:

- Ofsted inspections
- External review of the Trust

Both internal and external quality assurance processes will lead to regular reflection on services delivered, always focusing on the provision of good and effective support which leads to academies and the Trust improving

