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Ethos Academy Trust

School Improvement Strategy

2022- 2023



Nurturing inclusive learning communities

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Introduction

Ethos Academy Trust believes in school improvement through a partnership model. This brings drive, expertise and capacity to the school improvement agenda. Our Trust mission is to draw upon the expertise of our specialist staff and wider partners to provide timely, personalised support, intervention and provision in order to **maximise the life chances of all children and young people**, informed by a thorough understanding of their strengths and needs.

We aim to allow our school leaders and staff to develop the individual character of our academies so they can best serve their local communities. Our improvement strategy is based on each academy's capacity to improve and is underpinned by the Ethos Academy Trust core values:

ETHOS CORE VALUES

LEADING 

with integrity

- Championing honesty and transparency
- Building trusting relationships

THINKING 

innovatively

- Finding creative solutions
- Meeting individual needs

IMPROVING 

continuously

- Raising standards
- Developing strong and effective leaders

ENCOURAGING 

freedom and responsibility

- Working collaboratively
- Investing in effective partnerships

CELEBRATING 

achievement

- Improving academic progress
- Enriching personal development

These core values permeate our ideology, conversations and practice across our teams.

Aims of the School Improvement Strategy

As a Trust, children are at the heart of all we do; this School Improvement Strategy aims to support all of our academies to provide the best possible provision and outcomes for pupils.

Ethos Academy Trust recognises that there is much to celebrate in every academy and looks to develop academies that are diverse and that reflect the communities they serve; individuality and creativity are celebrated. The improvement strategy:

- Identifies how we will work with individual academies and the collective group of schools within the Trust;
- Provides clarity around the expectations, values, roles and responsibilities (Appendix B) and ways of working (Appendix C), in the pursuit of enabling all children to achieve their maximum potential.

At the heart of our improvement strategy is a commitment to working in partnership with all schools to support and empower them to become self-improving and committed to achieving a school-led system which promotes and secures:

- Outstanding levels of achievement for all children and groups of children;
- High quality teaching and learning;
- Effective leadership and governance;
- Safe schools with fair access;
- Access to high quality professional development for staff, enabling sustained and continual improvement and the development of a workforce in line with future succession planning needs;
- Opportunities for the identification and dissemination of effective practice and engagement in research and development opportunities;
- Affordability and value for money.

Our improvement strategy has been shaped by the concept of strong collaboration, so that the skills and talents that exist within the Trust can be of benefit to all. While each one of our academies is unique, we understand that the mutual challenge, support and partnership that we offer each other as a Trust working together, will enable our academies to flourish and continue to develop into centres of excellence.

The Chief Executive Officer and Director of Education will strategically coordinate and shape all educational elements organised centrally by the Trust so that they benefit the individual improvement journeys of each of our academies. These will include joint CPD and the development of new Trust initiatives.

As a Trust, we expect that our academies will work in a collaborative way that supports improvement specific to each setting, as well as wider growth and development as an effective team of academies. We believe that strong collaboration with shared accountability can lead to better progress and attainment for pupils and help all of the schools in our Trust to meet rising expectations and to continuously develop.

Professional honesty is key. Trust executive leaders know the academies well because of the strong working partnership with school leaders. It is only by being honest and transparent with a balance of credible challenge and effective support, that we can move forward and get the best for all children and staff.

All schools in the Trust, or joining the Trust, will be annually assessed as to their current performance profile. This assessment will be agreed during a meeting chaired by the Chief Executive Officer and will involve the Trust's Director of Education, the Trust's Chief Finance and Operations Officer, the academy's Head Teacher and the Academy Performance Review Committee's Chair or a Trustee.

During this meeting a range of information will be considered as part of the decision-making process:

- OFSTED Report, grading and whether the school needs to prepare for an imminent inspection;
- Judgements from any external assurance visits;
- Any internal audits, e.g., Safeguarding/ SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities);
- Leaders' self-evaluation and action planning;
- Latest data on school performance/ progress including comparison to historic data for trends;
- Surveys from staff, students and parents;
- Internal assessments from the Director of Education and HR, Finance, Operations (including Estates) and HR members from the Executive Team (see appendix A).

This assessment will be reviewed across the year and can be updated at any stage should circumstances change.

Each school will receive at least 6 days' support from the Director of Education, who will work alongside school leaders against a structured plan of support and challenge.

Half Termly Peer Learning Conversations will then be facilitated by the Director of Education; these will involve Headteachers meeting to discuss and share best practice identified as part of recent visits. Where academies are demonstrating a high level of success and strong capacity for further improvement, it is important that they are able to operate in conditions that enable them to continue this journey. There is also a moral imperative for such academies to share their expertise for the good of the Trust and the wider education system as a whole. Such academies will have much to share for the benefit of others.

Some academies will be in more challenging positions. Where this is the case, the Trust will maintain a higher degree of involvement and oversight in order to ensure that appropriate steps are being taken to strengthen capacity and effect rapid improvement. These schools will receive additional support from the Director of Education, alongside other Trust leaders as appropriate.

The following peer to peer school improvement frameworks will be developed over the next 12 months:

Partnership Networks

Chaired by a Head Teacher and made up of leaders and specialists from each academy, these groups will meet half termly with a focus on sharing best practice. Each Network will develop an auditing tool and conduct annual peer audits.

Peer Reviews

As an extension of the peer learning conversations, Head Teachers will facilitate an annual peer review and subsequent report with key recommendations for improvement.

Lead Practitioners

A directory will be developed of lead practitioners in all areas across all schools. Schools requiring enhanced support, training or advice in key areas may be paired with expertise through this forum.

Trust Intervention

Trust intervention will be proportionate based on the success and current evaluation of the school. The Trust works on the principle that successful schools are self-managing with a little, well-timed, intervention. Where academies are less successful there will be a greater degree of intervention, i.e., the principle of earned autonomy.

The Trust has the right to intervene in any school at any time; however, it is within the ethos of the organisation to work in a transparent way that embeds partnership and honesty at the heart of all it does. The Trust will always endeavour to intervene in a proactive and constructive manner. Where formal intervention is required, the Headteacher and Chair of the Academy Performance Review Committee will be notified in writing by the Chief Executive. It would be an exceptional circumstance where such a notification would be a shock; as the Trust will avoid this at all costs in an attempt to ensure that the school is self-sustaining. Where formal intervention is required, a Task Group will be established and half termly meetings held to check on progress towards the school improvement priorities. Additional support will be outlined which could include:

- consultancy support;
- support from another school or schools, including secondment of key staff;
- appointment of an executive or associate leader;
- deployment of a Trust leader, NLE, LLE, SLE;
- appointment of additional Academy Performance Review members.

Where there are leadership concerns, the agreed capability procedure will be used.

School Improvement Categories

The Ethos Academy Trust categories for School Improvement are based upon Sir David Carter’s four stage Model of School Improvement as illustrated in the table below:

Category / Descriptor	Likely Key Features	Engagement
<p>Stabilise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School requires significant improvement • No clear underpinning for the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainment and progress measures are below average and showing no signs of sustained improvement. • Little evidence of clear and sustained focus on school improvement. • Morale and perception of school is low – high staff and pupil absence. • Need to improve rapidly within a given review period. • Deficits in Safeguarding and Health and Safety. • Recent notable changes (e.g., OFSTED special measures, joining the trust) impacting on culture/Ethos. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly Reviews led by Director of Education using Head Teachers report to frame support and challenge. This will include RAG of current academy performance. • A minimum of 12 days engagement from Education Improvement Professionals (from within and beyond the Trust as required). • Half termly progress meeting with Chief Executive Officer. • Additional bespoke support in place to promote rapid improvement. • Direct Intervention by Chief Executive Officer to: • Secure effective senior leadership, which may include the engagement of an Executive Headteacher and additional APRC members; • Implement a robust and rigorous Academy Improvement Plan and monitoring and evaluation schedule, underpinned by half termly Rapid Improvement Plans; • Ensure that leadership at all levels can bring about sustained improvement; • Secure quality first teaching throughout the school using expertise from across the Trust; • Rapidly raise standards of attainment and accelerate progress across the school. • Engagement with peer support including; Network Groups, lead practitioners and Head Teacher peer review. • Head Teacher engagement in professional coaching.

<p>Repair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing more control • Reactive decision-making • Make the school feel more like a regular school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates some capacity to bring about improvement and / or sustain improvement in a number of areas. • Leaders engage with, and act on the support and advice of Trust leaders and external professionals. • Attainment and progress measures are inconsistent, showing some signs of improvement, although not quickly enough over time. • Safeguarding is judged at least adequate. • Leadership team has a clear action plan to support improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly Reviews led by Director of Education using Head Teachers report to frame support and challenge. This will include RAG of current academy performance. • 12 days' equivalent engagement across the year from Education Improvement Professionals (from within and beyond the Trust as required). • Termly quality assurance of pupil progress and attainment. • Full involvement in Peer Learning Conversations and Partnership Meetings. • Annual Governance Review and bespoke support delivered as needed. • External reviews if required. • Possibility of Executive Headteacher support in place to secure rapid improvement. • Engagement with peer support including; Network Groups, lead practitioners and Head Teacher peer review. • Head Teacher engagement in professional coaching.
<p>Improve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More proactive leadership • Embedding strategies • Improving outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the capacity to bring about improvement in their own organisation through a clear focus on what they need to achieve to become excellent. • Provides some support to others within the Trust. • Accurately self-evaluates and prioritises next steps for improvement. • Attainment and progress measures are likely to be at least average and improving over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly Reviews led by Director of Education using Head Teachers report to frame support and challenge. This will include RAG of current academy performance. • 6 days' equivalent engagement from Education Improvement Professionals (from within and beyond the Trust as required). • Termly quality assurance of pupil progress and attainment. • Identified strengths in practice will be shared across the Trust. • Full involvement in Peer Learning Conversations and Partnership Meetings. • Governance Review every 2 years. • Take a proactive leading role in the peer-to-peer school improvement development including; Network

		<p>Groups, lead practitioners and Head Teacher peer review.</p>
<p>Sustain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence in performance • Increase innovation in delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares best practice, committing to developing excellent teachers and support staff across the Trust and delivering school-to-school support within the Trust. • Continues to develop and grow their own effectiveness. • Grows leaders at every level. • Attainment and progress measures are likely to be above average or well above average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly Reviews led by Director of Education using Head Teachers report to frame support and challenge. This will include RAG of current academy performance. • 6 days' equivalent engagement from Education Improvement Professionals (from within and beyond the Trust as required). • Termly quality assurance of pupil progress and attainment. • Share best practice with other schools with a focus across a range of areas e.g., curriculum, quality of teaching and learning and leadership. • Take a proactive leading role in the peer-to-peer school improvement development including; Network Groups, lead practitioners and Head Teacher peer review. • Share excellent expertise across the Trust. • Governance Review every 4 years.

Appendix A: School Performance Assurance Framework

The Director of Education will use the following quality assurance framework to facilitate self-evaluation with the Head Teachers, to enable identification and prioritisation of school improvement support.

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Behaviour			
Attendance			
Persistent Absence			
Suspensions			
Partial Timetables			
Teaching and Learning Effectiveness			
Safeguarding			
Progress Reading			
Progress Writing			
Mathematics			
Leadership and vision			
Progress towards School Development priorities			

Key	Assured	Actions are in place	Intervention required
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Operational elements of the school HR, Estates and finance will also be assessed in the following areas:

This school performance assurance framework will then be discussed termly in Central Team meetings to help identify risks, prioritise support and direct resources to support effective school development.

Appendix B: Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Ethos Academy Trust

It is the role of Ethos Academy Trust to:

- challenge;
- support;
- celebrate success and innovation;
- help academies access the right support at the right time;
- intervene where there are concerns.

Role of Local Academy Performance Review Committees (Governing Boards)

It is the role of the local APRC to challenge and support school leaders to help them realise the Trust's Commitment. The agenda of APRC members should be the agenda of the school, i.e., they are appointed to help accelerate progress and raise standards. APRC members should not be distracted by issues which are not part of the 'core business', as outlined in the APRC Terms of Reference.

Role of the CEO

It is the role of the CEO to:

- strategically coordinate and shape all educational elements organised centrally by the Trust so that they benefit the individual improvement journeys of each of our academies;
- work in close partnership with the Director of School Improvement to monitor academy performance;
- review and report on the RAG rating of schools on a termly basis.

Role of the Director of Education

It is the role of the Director of School Improvement to:

- work with the leadership team to evaluate the work of the school;
- support leaders in their drive for excellence;
- challenge leaders to raise the bar and think differently;
- suggest areas and ideas for improvement;
- advise the Trust Board on the effectiveness of the school;
- signpost best practice;
- work with staff on all levels to improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- deliver CPD as appropriate to individual or groups of staff as necessary;
- identify when intervention is necessary;
- ensure that the school is prepared for inspection.

Role of Headteachers

It is the role of the Headteacher to:

- be ambitious for the success of the school and the Trust, showing relentless determination;
- model Ethos Academy Trust core values;
- ensure that teaching maximises pupil progress;
- hold staff to account for their practice and the outcomes the pupils achieve;
- take responsibility for the success of the school;
- take responsibility for the wider success of the Trust and all its pupils;
- strategically deploy resources to maximise progress;
- challenge, support and develop people;
- work with integrity and respect;

- value diversity and equality;
- work in partnership with the community;
- value both effort and excellence.

There is an expectation that the Headteacher will take the lead role in ensuring that all visits by the Trust's CEO and Director of Education are effective and efficient by making sure that the correct information and people are available and prepared.

Appendix C: Working Protocols

We know that the very best schools:

- are self-managing with highly effective leadership;
- have a developmental, responsive professional development offer, so that every teacher and member of support staff in every classroom is as good as they can be;
- have an ambitious curriculum model (the ‘what’) delivered through a clear teaching and learning strategy;
- know what is going on in classrooms and signpost staff to best practice;
- look outside their own school for new ideas;
- use data analysis to target improvement and provide support on a school-wide and targeted basis, including strategies to remove barriers to learning;
- have staff who take responsibility for their work and do not make excuses;
- challenge and support, i.e., staff challenge and support each other; accepting this is not the sole responsibility of leaders;
- engage parents / carers with learning and wider school / academy life.

As such, we are committed to operating within the following working protocols in maximising the impact of school improvement in all our academies:

The Trust will:	Academies will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be transparent about its commitment for success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all stakeholders understand the commitment and drive of the school and wider Trust.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure it knows each school sufficiently well to make well-rounded and effective judgments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be well prepared for meeting and provide the necessary information and evidence to enable well-rounded judgments to be made.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge and support each school in a clear and unambiguous way, creating an atmosphere of professional respect and trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with challenge and support; understanding that it is always geared at ensuring the school is the best it can be.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, celebrate, share and disseminate effective practice to improve standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify, celebrate, share and disseminate effective practice to improve standards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target appropriate support to secure improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for support and raise concerns where appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have clear processes for identifying where early support is required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the process of early identification. • Engage with support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervene and hold school leaders to account. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the Trust’s role in intervention. • Engage with intervention.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture, support and develop leaders in a collegiate atmosphere to recruit and retain excellent people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurture, support and develop leaders in a collegiate atmosphere to recruit and retain excellent people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in professional dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in professional dialogue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that confidentiality is respected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that confidentiality is respected.