Pickwick Academy Trust Handbook

November 2024

Contents

Please read this handbook alongside the following documentation:

- The Scheme of Delegation and Summary of roles and responsibilities of governance
- Local Governance Committee Handbook; The Academy Trust Handbook
- Our People Strategy; Small Schools Strategy; Teaching & Learning Model

1. Welcome from the Chair of the Trust Board

Thank you for taking an interest in Pickwick Academy Trust. We are made up of 15 community and church primary schools across North and South Wiltshire, and North Dorset. We are organised into three 'hubs'.

We are committed to developing a truly innovative, collaborative partnership where everyone works together to provide the best schools and outcomes for the children in our care, as our children are at the heart of everything we do.

Our work and the service we provide to our communities is delivered by teams of dedicated and professional staff and as an organisation we are fully committed to their development. Our staff lead with energy and creativity and work with humility, positivity and determination, never losing sight of our main objective – an excellent education for all our children.

We work closely with local and regional partners to enhance our operation and the delivery of our strategic objectives, which includes our school improvement and support work involving Pickwick Learning, another significant part of our Trust.

Our schools maintain their local identity as part of our operation, and in line with our governance arrangements the Trust Board recognises and relies on the valuable contribution of Local Governance Committees which operate at each school.

We have planned for and are looking forward to the next stage of growth for our Trust and are interested in hearing from schools who share our vision and values, and are looking for a strong primary-focussed Multi-Academy Trust.

On behalf of the Trust Board I would like to thank you for your interest and look forward to working with you.

Rob Ward

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Pickwick Academy Trust

2. Welcome from the Chief Executive Officer

Pickwick Academy Trust is a unique organisation. It was formed in August 2017 by four successful schools coming together through a shared vision and commitment to collaboration and continuous school improvement. These schools had built strong professional relationships as members of Pickwick Learning Teaching School Alliance, and could see the multiple benefits of working together more formally in a Trust. Over the last few years, we have been delighted to welcome eleven more schools into the Pickwick family, and we are now a mixed MAT of community and church schools.

The education of our children is the thing that drives us. Not *my* children or *your* children, but *our* children – the children in the communities that Pickwick Academy Trust serves. They are the reason we went into teaching in the first place; they are the reason we are committed to education; they are at the centre of our organisation. In all that we do, we ask ourselves, how will this impact on the outcomes and experiences of children?

Our Trust has been built on moral purpose, developmental and continuous professional learning and 'oneness' – one organisation committed to supporting all children to succeed academically, spiritually, socially and emotionally, and as caring and thoughtful global citizens. We are committed to inclusion, identifying the barriers children and families are facing, and supporting our parents as partners with us in their children's learning. We really value our fantastic staff and strive to ensure our schools are great places to work in and develop professionally.

Our curriculum is broad and balanced, uses an enquiry approach and focusses on developing strong skills and knowledge across all curriculum areas. We utilise our locality, and engage with and involve our communities and local partnerships in the work that we do. We celebrate and promote each school's unique characteristics, and the Christian distinctiveness of our church schools.

We encourage curiosity, and nurture children empowering them to develop a life-long love of learning. We build character, develop children's understanding of responsibility and have high expectations of ourselves and each other. We celebrate the successes children have in their learning and progress they make, and spend time building relationships, concentrating on mental health and well-being, and taking part in lots of outdoor activities together.

As leaders we recognise we are stewards in our schools and across our Trust, in service to our communities. We believe that we should lead with humility, look for continuous improvement opportunities and work collaboratively and collectively to make our Pickwick family of schools enjoyable and supportive environments to learn and work in.

I hope you find this handbook interesting – if you have any questions or would like to find out more about Pickwick Academy Trust please get in contact with any of our schools, give us ring or drop us an email – we'd be delighted to hear from you.

JPassmore

James Passmore, Chief Executive Officer

3. About this Handbook

This handbook is designed to introduce you to Pickwick Academy Trust, why our schools came together, who we are and what we believe in. It outlines our vision and values, provides information about how we are organised and how our governance works, and discusses the ways we collaborate together.

It describes the services we offer to our schools, what is included in the central contribution schools make as members of our Trust, and the benefits we have seen through strong collective working.

It will hopefully provide helpful information for new and existing staff, parents and governors, as well as being a useful starting point for discussions for any schools interested in joining us.

For more detailed information, this handbook should be read in conjunction with our Constitution, Articles of Association, Scheme of Delegation and associated appendices, our Local Governance Committee Handbook, our People Strategy and our Academy Trust Handbook.

Handbooks, websites and paperwork can tell you a lot about an organisation, but there's nothing better than a face-to-face or virtual conversation, or coming in to see us in one of our schools. If you would like to know more about Pickwick Academy Trust, please let us know – we'd love to talk to you about who we are and what we do.

4. Pickwick Academy Trust…our journey and schools

Our journey

Pickwick Academy Trust was formed by a group of four strong primary schools building on the positive relationships, trust and impactful school improvement work they had experienced through working together as members of Pickwick Learning Teaching School Alliance.

Pickwick Learning Teaching School Alliance

Pickwick's Teaching School started in 2014 as a Department for Education designated group of schools committed to providing support and sharing best practice in education and beyond. Its aim was simple: improving standards and life experiences for all pupils and adults within and beyond the alliance, through working together and learning from each other.

Its work focussed on training new teachers through the School Direct programme, providing high quality professional development for staff, supporting schools by brokering high quality school improvement, carrying out research projects, and identifying and deploying strong teachers and system leaders to other schools.

The Teaching School grew to include over 70 alliance member schools across BANES, Bristol, Dorset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire, until all Teaching Schools nationally closed in July 2021, replaced with fewer, larger Teaching School Hubs.

As a Trust, we remain committed to continuing and building on this work of supporting and learning from schools beyond our organisation. We have set up Pickwick Learning which continues to provide Initial Teacher Training, professional development and school improvement services; and have appointed a Professional Development Director to lead and promote this work. We oversee the Early Career Framework for primary across Wiltshire.

Formalising the partnership

With government devolving more powers away from Local Authorities, the four schools decided to formalise their relationship, deepen their partnership and benefit from shared leadership, governance and economies of scale that comes from working within a Trust.

Our schools

Aloeric Primary School, Corsham Primary School, Ivy Lane Primary School and Queen's Crescent School became Pickwick Academy Trust on 1 August 2017. In November 2019, Ludwell Primary School joined and became the fifth school in our family.

On 1 August 2021, Greentrees Primary School, Pitton CE Primary School and Winterslow CE Primary School joined our Trust and we became a 'mixed MAT' of community and church schools. On 1 November 2022, Gillingham Primary School joined us and became our first North Dorset school.

On 1 December 2023, Alderbury & West Grimstead CE Primary School and Longford CE Primary School joined the Trust. On 1 February 2024, Milton on Stour CE Primary

School; St George's CE Primary School, Bourton; St Gregory's CE Primary School, Marnhull and Wyke Primary School joined our family of schools.

Our schools are all based in Wiltshire and North Dorset and are organised into 'three hubs' – one in North Wiltshire, one in South Wiltshire and one in North Dorset.

Pickwick's central and executive team are based at 'the Pickwick offices' at Corsham Primary School's Pound Pill Site, in Corsham, but also operate out of our hubs too.

There are just over 3600 children and 520 staff learning and working in our schools.

Our schools

School	No. of classes	Head	Chair of Governors	Website	Joined
Alderbury & West Grimstead CE Primary	6	Wes Thorpe	John Fuller	www.alderbury.wilts.sch.uk	Dec 2023
Aloeric Primary	14	Tom Mullins	Tim Waldron	www.aloeric.wilts.sch.uk	Aug 2017
Corsham Primary (two sites)	25	Lindsay Fry (PP) Kerry Parker (BW)	Andy Gough	www.corsham-pri.wilts.sch.uk	Aug 2017
Gillingham Primary	10	Sue Preston	Jamie Paul	www.gillinghamprimary.dorset.sch.uk	Dec 2022
Greentrees Primary (two sites)	14	Alan Geary	Mark Wilson	www.greentrees-school.com	Aug 2021
Ivy Lane Primary	14	Helen Lammin	Kara McAveety	www.ivylane.wilts.sch.uk	Aug 2017
Longford CE Primary	3	Louise Knipe	Nic Ford & Erica Quirk	www.longford.wilts.sch.uk	Dec 2023
Ludwell Primary	4	Harriet Collins	Gideon King & Jon Rich	www.ludwell.wilts.sch.uk	Nov 2019
Milton on Stour CE Primary	5	Rhiannon Tidby	Chris Heal	www.milton.dorset.sch.uk	Feb 2024
Pitton CE Primary	3	Emma Wilkinson	Judith Lewy	www.pitton.wilts.sch.uk	Aug 2021
Queen's Crescent Primary	14	James Essam	Dan Linde	www.queenscrescent.wilts.sch.uk	Aug 2017
St George's CE Primary	4	Jill Farndale (Exec HT)	Harriet Ridout & Rich Clothier	www.bourton.dorset.sch.uk	Feb 2024
St Gregory's CE Primary	3	Jill Farndale (Exec HT)	Nick Chapman	stgregorymarnhull.dorset.sch.uk	Feb 2024
Winterslow CE Primary	7	Kate Malcolm	Henrietta Alderman	www.winterslow.wilts.sch.uk	Aug 2021
Wyke Primary	7	Ed Birkett	Barry von Clemens	gillinghamwyke.dorset.sch.uk	Feb 2024

5. Our Vision, Strategy, Mission and Values

Pickwick Academy Trust - Our Vision

Our vision is to work together to provide the **best schools and outcomes** for our children.

Pickwick Academy Trust - Our Strategy

- **Harness our collective expertise** to drive school improvement and realise the best for all children and adults working and learning in our schools
- **Celebrate and communicate the successes** in our schools to encourage aspiration and innovation
- **Provide support and challenge** for each school so that every child meets their full potential
- **Recognise and celebrate each school's uniqueness**, and the enduring Christian distinctiveness of our church schools, valuing all members of our Trust family

Pickwick Academy Trust - Our Mission

- **Team**: We work together as an inclusive family so that each school is supported and held to account for the attainment and progress of every child to enable them to meet their full potential and to ensure the highest quality teaching and leadership for our children.
- **Approach**: We provide robust support and challenge for each school on its individual journey of improvement, seeking common-sense solutions from within and outside our Trust.
- **Celebrate**: We celebrate the successes and unique characteristics of each school, valuing all children and encouraging aspiration and innovation for all, providing systems that support opportunities for those working and learning in our schools.
- **Together**: We share responsibility and harness our collective expertise, experience and spirituality to drive school improvement and achieve the best possible outcomes for all by sharing ideas, resources and best practice to ensure all schools within our Trust are successful.
- **Future**: We are committed to sustainable growth, to provide the best outcomes for the communities we serve now and in the future by aligning and resourcing central services and succession planning to ensure investment remains in quality teaching, learning and leadership.

Pickwick Academy Trust - Our Values

Our vision, strategy and mission is underpinned by our moral purpose to provide the best education and curriculum for the children we serve, and is based on the values of: aspiration; collaboration; inclusion; enjoyment and nurturing relationships, with the intention of empowering children to become life-long learners, global citizens and deep thinkers. We provide a strong ethical framework that enables children to make thoughtful, positive choices, and we are committed to providing a high quality and educationally stimulating learning environment, led by exceptional and dedicated staff.

6. The Pickwick Backbone

"The optimal balance between consistency and self-determination for schools"

Our strategy and approach to establishing our 'Pickwick Backbone' is based on the above principles, and has been informed by the work of Dixons Academies Trust, which they term 'aligned autonomy'.

There is much debate across the Trust landscape about full standardisation and complete autonomy at either end of the scale as to how aligned schools are, and/or should be, across a Multi-Academy Trust. Whilst we recognise the benefits of both approaches and all points of the scale in between, we prefer to try and find the '*optimal balance between consistency and self-determination'* for our schools.

We do require all schools within Pickwick Academy Trust to use the same pupil and personnel management system and the same software for finance and tracking pupil assessment, but will enable flexibility and ownership for school leaders over which curriculum schemes of work and branding a school chooses.

It is fundamentally important to us that we share the same Trust vision, strategy, mission and values. All pupils and staff should benefit from our best collective practices and the resources, talent, brand and reputation of Pickwick Academy Trust.

So why do we not standardise all practice across our Trust? It is because we believe that leadership and personal accountability are founded on ownership and self-direction. A culture of conformity kills innovation, stifles creativity and drives away the best staff. It is risky to have too standardised an approach as this makes it difficult to respond to changing needs and environments, and limits the opportunities to try new approaches and take risks that could make a difference to pupil outcomes. Our schools have very different contexts, sizes, locations, goals and school improvement journeys – to assume that a one-size fits all fully standardised model will deliver strongly for all these settings is unrealistic. In addition, strong schools exploring joining our Trust would be much less likely to join if they have to change all of their established practice as a result of our insistence on standardisation.

We are committed to achieving the best possible standards for all our children. We think it is the concept of balancing consistency and self-determination that is the foundation of our success so far. We are aligned on our vision, strategy, mission and values as well as our commitment to working together inclusively to support all children to thrive. We are collectively committed to being outward-facing and using evidence and research to inform our practice. We work hard to develop strong relationships with schools considering joining us, to explore whether there is an aligned synergy and commitment to being outward-facing and collaborative. We are determined to ensure our organisation has strong mutually beneficial partnerships, so the people working for us must also have agency and self-determination.

As a Trust we are ultimately responsible for the provision and outcomes in all our schools. As you would expect, we monitor regularly and challenge robustly if things are not going well and work together with our schools to ensure the children are getting the best possible provision.

The table below sets out the key areas of our work and whether we require a consistent aligned approach, or whether school leaders have the freedom and flexibility to determine themselves the approach they wish to take. If something is not defined below as an area of alignment then school leaders have delegated responsibility and freedom in this area; unless we feel a different approach is required to secure urgent school improvement, for schools in challenging circumstances.

Please note that this, alongside all sections of our Handbook, is reviewed regularly and updated at least annually, with notifications of changes sent out to Heads. Heads and/or LGCs can request positions taken in the table below to be reviewed at any time.

Backbone	Consistency – alignment to Trust required	Self-determination – freedom and flexibility to choose
Leadership & Governance		
Vision, strategy, mission, values	Commitment to Trust vision, strategy, mission and values; valuing all staff equally – one family; collaboration; outward-facing; inclusive	School vision, ethos, strategy, mission (which complements Trust's)
Leadership	Commitment and 'buy-in' to the Trust's developmental school improvement model led by our Directors of Education; strong engagement with 'the 12 visits' and fortnightly Heads meetings; regular dialogue with executive team; recruitment and performance management of Head by executive team; commitment to supporting school improvement in other Trust schools; engagement in peer review programme	Leadership and SLT structure of the school (Head remains responsible for leading school)
Church Schools	Understanding and supportive of mixed church and non-church status of Trust; commitment to maintain and celebrate both types of schools; proportion of foundation governors at LGC level must be in line with previous VA or VC status; engagement in 2 CSF developmental visits a year	Biblical underpinning; strategies for ensuring Christian Distinctiveness and communication
Safeguarding	Adherence to Trust Safeguarding Policies and use Trust SCR model; have Safeguarding link governor; use CPOMs software	Identify who will hold roles such as DSL, DDSL, first aiders etc
Governance	Adherence to Trust Scheme of Delegation and roles / responsibilities (finance decision-making no longer responsibility of governors - sits with Head/executive team); no Local Governance Committee sub-committees; at least 6 LGC meetings a year; commitment to attend governance training; link governance programme in place; use Governor Hub to store papers / meeting minutes; use school email addresses (not personal); Complete LGC self-evaluation and Governor Development Plan, and declarations of business interests annually; use LGC agenda guidance	LGC agenda content (in line with Trust guidance); Format and approach for link governance

Backbone	Consistency – alignment to Trust required	Self-determination – freedom and flexibility to choose
Quality of Education		
Curriculum	Adherence to Trust overarching Curriculum Statement; curriculum must be enquiry-led, with active pupil engagement	Curriculum approach, strategy, structure and schemes (expectation that any proposed changes are discussed with Director of Education)
Teaching & Learning	Adherence to Trust overarching Teaching & Learning model	School's Teaching & Learning model and approaches (which complements Trust's)
Assessment and feedback	Adherence to Trust Assessment policy; use Insights Tracker to record and analyse pupil data; use GAPS/PIRA and White Rose as standardised assessments twice a year Y1-5; SATs in Y6, 3 times a year (White Rose and SATs scores are recorded on SmartGrade so they can be compared nationally at different points in the year); use the Pickwick 5 ways to formatively assess as a guide; Assessment Lead attends Assessment PLC	Approaches to formative assessment, marking and feedback; use of Fischer Family Trust
Behaviour and routines	Adherence to Trust overarching Behaviour Statement and Trust policy on professional expectations	School Behaviour Policy and approaches
Attendance	Adherence to Trust Attendance Policy and letters; use CPOMs software	Strategies for driving attendance according to school context
Pupil Premium & Disadvantaged Learners	Adherence to Trust Pupil Premium Policy; Pupil Premium Lead attends Pupil Premium PLC; engage with PP reviews; have a Pupil Premium strategy	Strategies for improving provision for Pupil Premium according to school context, and how to implement ideas from Local Authority Affordable School Strategy
SEND	Adherence to Trust overarching SEND Statement; SENCO attends PLC; engage in SEND reviews	Strategies for improving provision for SEND according to school context
People (HR)		
HR	Adherence to Trust HR policies, processes and approaches around recruitment; support from Trust Head of HR; Trust colleagues attend interview panel for Head	Staffing structures for school (unless directed by Trust due to financial difficulties); recruitment of staff other than Head; Trust colleagues can help on interview panels as required by school
Workload and wellbeing	Commitment to being an Employer of Choice and looking for ways to support staff and their wellbeing, and proactively identifying ways to reduce workload	Strategies and approaches to support staff and reduce workload
Collaboration	Commitment to collaboration, being outward-facing and engaging in mutually beneficial relationships and peer review; engage in staff-led and pupil-led peer collaboration activities	Collaboration beyond Trust schools (encouraged to continue engaging in local wider collaborations)
Professional Development	Commitment to ongoing personal and professional development; attend annual joint INSET and professional learning communities (3 times a year)	Organise and run CPD according to context and needs of school (internal and external providers)
Appraisal	Heads appraisal managed by Executive Team; requirement to provide appraisal to all members off staff	Set format and approach for appraisal for staff other than the Head
Talent Management	Commitment to sharing expertise and strengths of staff through Trust Talent Map (opportunities for staff, not mandated)	Decision on whether it is appropriate to release staff to support other schools

Backbone	Consistency – alignment to Trust required	Self-determination – freedom and flexibility to choose
Policies	Adherence to Trust policies and ratification of LGC required policies (see policy approval list)	Development of additional policies, as required, at LGC level
Trade Unions	Requirement to pay into Facilities Fund; Enable TU reps to attend meetings to support staff; encourage staff to be in unions	Decisions over which union to join, or to not join a union
ITT	Commitment to support school centred ITT through Pickwick's chosen accredited provider and programme	Decision whether to offer placements for trainee teachers, depending on the needs of the children and the capacity and expertise within the school
Early Career Teachers	Commitment to use Pickwick's Early Career Programme for ECTs and Mentors and to use the same Appropriate Body	Decision over who will be induction tutor and mentor for ECT (where required)
Peer to peer review - Schools Partnership Programme	Commitment to take part in peer to peer review through the Schools Partnership Programme (Education Development Trust) and provide a lead reviewer and reviewer from their school	Freedom to decide who is best placed to be a reviewer and whether to offer this opportunity to several members of staff
Finance & Operations		
Finance	Use Trust HCSS finance system and one bank account; follow processes in Trust Financial Procedures Manual; pay 6% central contribution and 1% investment fund annually; hold (or be working towards) at least 5% unrestricted reserves; LGCs no longer hold decision-making responsibility for finance decisions; finance managers to collaborate and share best practice/expertise and line managed by Trust; Support from Trust Head of Finance	Decision-making on what to spend school budget on (discussions will be held around Trust KPIs and narrative around reasons why if outside KPI bands); setting and monitoring budget; ordering and approval of goods/services
Procurement	Procurement of large contracts such as catering, cleaning, IT support, telephones, grounds, MIS systems is led by central team with aim to align across schools (external contracts, when up for review, will be aligned with main Trust contracts, via discussion with Heads)	Procurement of smaller projects/contracts e.g. those that can be managed through normal school budget planning
Premises and H&S	Use Trust's Compliance Reporting System (Every) and Trust Risk Assessment format; provide data on H&S to Trust using H&S Audit sheet 3 times a year; staff undertake H&S training in line with Trust Training Matrix; large projects requiring tendering process led and managed centrally; develop and use 3-year premises development plan; support from Trust Head of Facilities; school facilities leads line managed by Trust	Identification, planning and delivery of small premises development projects as per 3-year plan
IT	Use Pickwick's aligned IT contract (Oakford) for support and network; Join one tenancy for Office 365; develop school IT Strategy in line with Trust IT Strategy	IT vision, approach and spending decisions
GPDR	Follow Trust consent and privacy notices; use Trust DPO for advice and support; adherence to Data Protection policies	School specific software (check DPIA requirements)
Marketing and branding	Display 'Part of Pickwick' sign and logo outside school building, logo and link to Pickwick website on school website and newsletter	School branding, newsletter style, colour scheme, uniform and marketing and communication approach

| Backbone	Consistency – alignment to Trust required	Self-determination – freedom and flexibility to choose
Sustainability and the environment	Commitment to reducing carbon footprint and educating everyone about environmentally friendly practice; have a school Sustainability Lead	Decision on which projects and approaches

7. Teaching & Learning – The Pickwick Way

Pickwick Academy Trust is a community of learners: together we provide a wide variety of exciting opportunities for children, and the adults who work with us, to learn, practice, reflect and refine so that pupils make good progress and are successful.

Teaching and Learning – The Pickwick Way supports our schools in ensuring that children remain at the heart of all teaching and learning opportunities. Schools have the freedom, and are encouraged, to shape their curriculum to meet the needs and contexts of their children and communities.

Our focus on early reading and early maths is key to unlocking the rest of the curriculum. This underpins our practice and is integral to the day-to-day experiences of the children in our schools, providing opportunities for all pupils, no matter what their starting points, to learn and thrive. Our model for Teaching and Learning (below) shows that all elements are interconnected and interdependent.

The Pickwick Way means that we have a shared Trust approach and common language to teaching and learning across all our schools, which is underpinned by research-informed practice. Each school is encouraged to innovate and develop an approach that is relevant to their community.
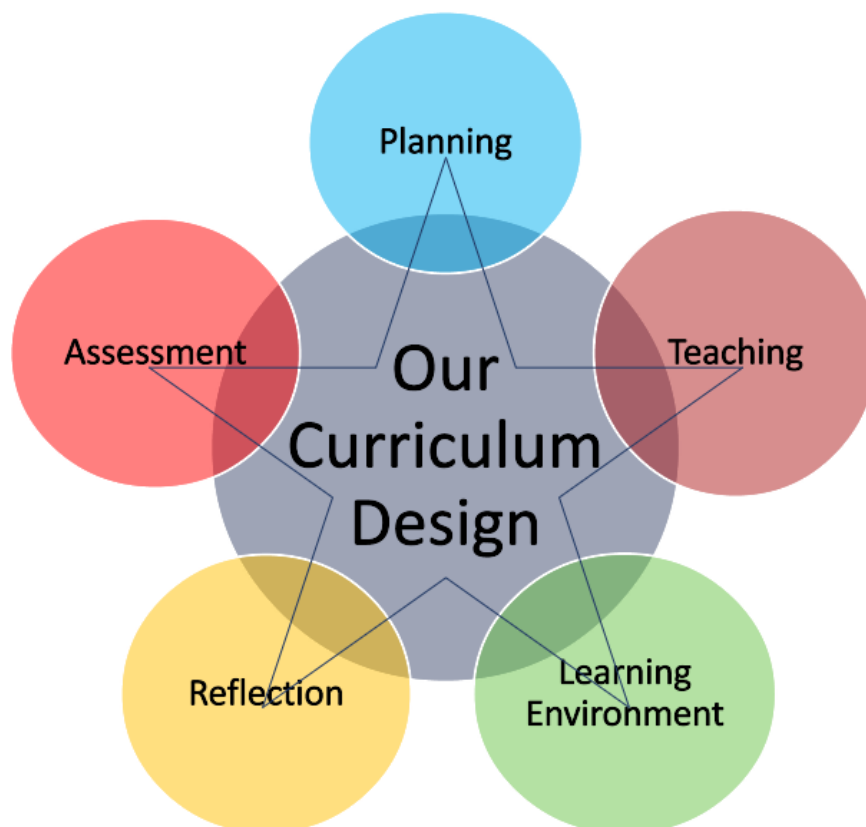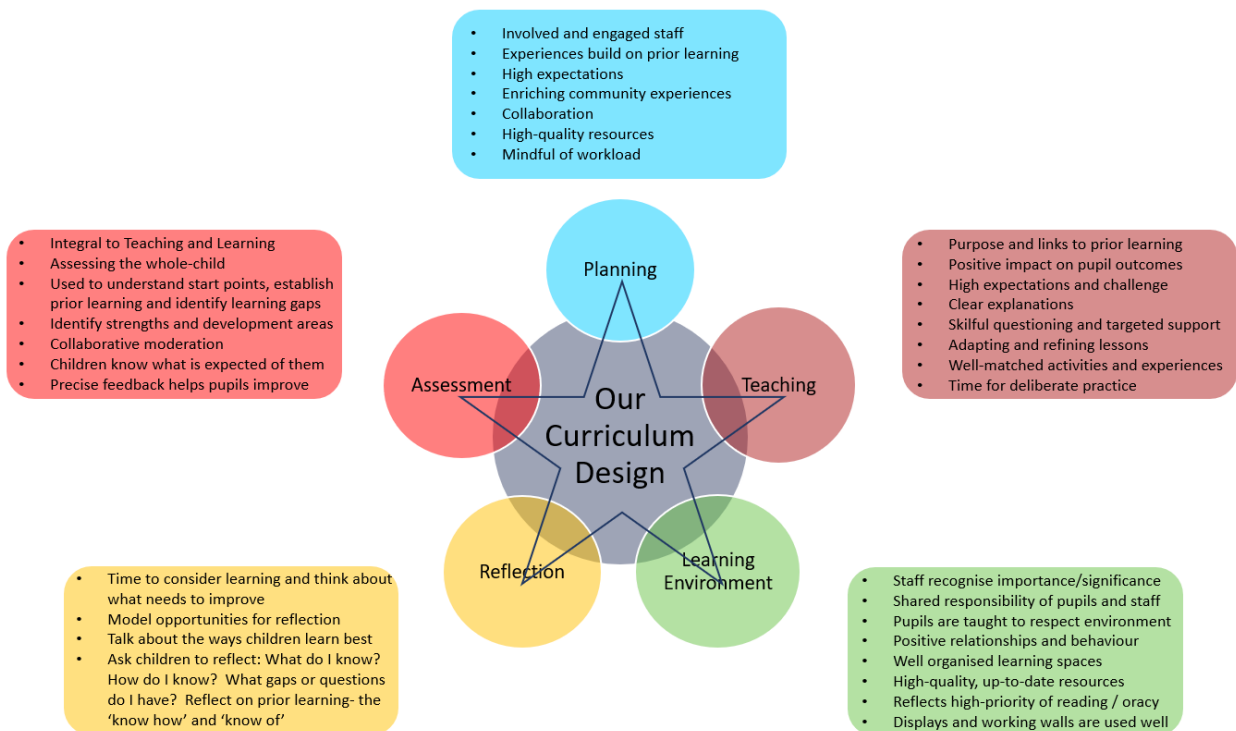
Curriculum

Curriculum Approach – The Pickwick Way:

Please see our Curriculum Statement (section 7) for further detail. In summary, our curriculum is:

- **Well-sequenced**, so that children are able to build on prior knowledge, make progress and achieve well
- **Knowledge-rich** (know of - substantive, know how – disciplinary) so that children are able to practise applying their knowledge in a range of contexts
- **Enquiry-led** and **experiential** so that children are able to ask and answer questions, develop their curiosity and demonstrate their understanding
- **Inclusive, accessible and diverse,** enabling all children in our schools to access high quality learning experiences with which they are connected and which encompass representation across our society
- **Evidence-informed**, focused on what we understand about pedagogy and cognitive development, so that children's experiences are relevant, connected and appropriate to their development or support them in knowing and remembering more
- **Localised**, so that children are able to engage in learning that is relevant to them and their community, draw on people, places and stories that enrich their understanding of their local area and build a sense of social responsibility
- **Globalised**, so that children have a wide range of opportunities to develop the international dimension of the curriculum, including a strong awareness of our role is looking after our world

Planning, Teaching, Learning Environment, Reflection and Assessment - The Pickwick Way

Planning
- Involved and engaged staff
- Experiences build on prior learning
- High expectations
- Enriching community experiences
- Collaboration
- High-quality resources
- Mindful of workload

Assessment
- Integral to Teaching and Learning
- Assessing the whole-child
- Used to understand start points, establish prior learning and identify learning gaps
- Identify strengths and development areas
- Collaborative moderation
- Children know what is expected of them
- Precise feedback helps pupils improve

Teaching
- Purpose and links to prior learning
- Positive impact on pupil outcomes
- High expectations and challenge
- Clear explanations
- Skilful questioning and targeted support
- Adapting and refining lessons
- Well-matched activities and experiences
- Time for deliberate practice

Reflection
- Time to consider learning and think about what needs to improve
- Model opportunities for reflection
- Talk about the ways children learn best
- Ask children to reflect: What do I know? How do I know? What gaps or questions do I have? Reflect on prior learning- the 'know how' and 'know of'

Learning Environment
- Staff recognise importance/significance
- Shared responsibility of pupils and staff
- Pupils are taught to respect environment
- Positive relationships and behaviour
- Well organised learning spaces
- High-quality, up-to-date resources
- Reflects high-priority of reading / oracy
- Displays and working walls are used well

Our Curriculum Design

Planning

Planning – The Pickwick Way:

- Our staff are **involved** and engaged in discussions with subject and curriculum leaders so that delivery of our curriculum enables children to understand concepts so that they know and remember more
- Experiences are planned so they **build on prior learning**; children are able to make links and build connections to existing knowledge in their long-term memory to enable them to deal with new learning
- Teachers have **high expectations** of their pupils and provide appropriate scaffolds to ensure that all children can experience success
- Staff in our schools are creative and seek ways in which they can **enrich children's experiences**, engaging with the **local community** and using the people, places and stories that help children to learn
- Teachers work **collaboratively** together, within and across our schools, to support each other and share good practise
- When planning we are mindful of **workload** and make good use of **high-quality resources** and schemes to enrich our curriculum

Teaching

High Quality Teaching – The Pickwick Way:

- Children understand the **purpose** behind what they are learning about, where this **links to previous learning** and what they are aiming for
- High quality teaching has **positive impact on pupil outcomes**, in attainment and in the progress children make
- All staff / Teachers and Support staff convey our **high expectations** of pupils: lessons are **appropriately challenging**, providing suitable scaffolds, additional support and intervention where needed and behaviour is led well so that learning is not adversely affected
- **Explanations are clear** and supported by clear modelling and worked examples
- **Questions are used skilfully** to support learning and check progress throughout lessons and sequences of lessons
- **Lessons are adapted** and **refined** in light of pupils' responses in order to maximise pupils' progress
- A range of appropriate and **well-matched activities** and **experiences** are provided
- Pupils have time to **deliberately practise** and improve their learning
- **High-quality resources** are used that support and enrich delivery of the curriculum
- Teachers and support staff work together to offer **targeted support** to enable children to be successful

Learning Environment

High Quality Learning Environments – The Pickwick Way:

- All staff recognise the importance and significance of a positive learning environment for pupils and take **shared responsibility** for ensuring that it is of high quality
- Children take **ownership** and responsibility for their classroom and their school and take pride in these spaces
- Pupils are **taught how to respect** and look after their environment
- **Positive relationships** are integral to the way that we interact with each other in the classroom, around the schools and across our organisation; children see this modelled well by all staff
- Teachers and Support staff ensure that classroom and learning spaces are **organised** so that children can access and use **high quality and up-to-date resources** independently to support them with their learning
- The classroom and school environment reflects the **high priority** that **reading** has in our schools; this is demonstrated by the word-rich environments, role-modelled reading experiences and a range of opportunities available for children to access good quality texts
- School wide and **classroom displays and working wall**s are used well to celebrate and support learning; they are well-organised, accessible, relevant and updated regularly so that they can be referred to and used by children and the adults
- Our schools see **oracy** as a central pedagogical principle and offer a range of opportunities to develop high quality talk and development of vocabulary. Opportunities to develop children's oracy are woven into the learning environment; sentence stems are available to support children, subject-specific vocabulary is shared and displayed and strategies are evident so that children can develop their skills across the curriculum.
- Children have the **tools to be able to be good learners**: they are involved and engaged in their learning
- Staff understand how **meta-cognitive strategies** can help our children to become better learners so we model our thinking for the children and provide opportunities for them to talk about how they have learned something new.
- Staff understand that the physical and unseen environment affects, and is affected by, the behaviour of our pupils so our schools work hard to ensure that **behaviour supports learning**. We explicitly teach pupils how to behave and talk to them about expectations of them. Our teachers and support staff draw on the expertise within their schools and across our Trust to help them support pupils who have behavioural needs. See our Statement of Behaviour Principles for further detail (Section 9)

Reflection

Reflection as a key part of learning – The Pickwick Way:

- All staff understand how important it is to take **time** to consider learning and think about what needs to happen next to improve; we model this for our pupils and provide **opportunities for reflection**

- We talk to children about the **ways in which they learn best**; we encourage children to learn outside of school as well as inside (through extra-curricular activities and home-learning) and begin to develop self-study skills in readiness for the next stage in their learning in KS3 and 4
- We encourage all leaders, teachers and support staff, as well as our children, to be **reflective learners** and to take opportunities to reflect and consider:
    - What do I know now?
    - How do I know?
    - What gaps or questions do I have / are there that would help me be a better learner or better in my role?
    - Who can help me get better? Who can I help?
    - What next?
- We encourage children and teachers to **reflect on prior learning**, eliciting what children already know ('know how' and 'know of') to support children in their reflections

Assessment

Assessment to support teaching and learning – The Pickwick Way:

Please see our Assessment Statement for further detail (Section 8)

- All staff know that **assessment is integral** to our practise and the teaching and learning process and helps to show clearly what a child knows, understands, can do and what they need to do next
- Teachers know that **assessment goes beyond academic achievement** and also looks at the 'whole child', their personal and social development, attitudes to work and each other.
- It is **used at every stage** in understanding starting points, establishing prior learning and possible gaps, checking children's understanding within a lesson or sequence of learning as well as at the end so that we can make appropriate adaptations as a result of assessment feedback.
- Our schools have clear milestones within their curriculum designs so that they can check that pupils are on track and that they can be responsive to pupils' needs, which then helps drive attainment and achievement for all pupils (individuals and cohorts), including disadvantaged learners.
- We support each other in ensuring our judgements about pupils' progress and attainment are **sound and consistent**, both within and across our schools.
- Our **teachers and leaders meet regularly** to share pupils' outcomes so that any concerns are raised as early as possible
- Teachers know when to use assessment in a **formative or summative** way so that its **purpose is clear** and it informs future teaching
- **Children know what is expected of them**, what they are being assessed on and **feedback** helps pupils **what they need to do to improve**.
- Assessment outcomes are **recorded** in a useful, **clear and concise way** to inform future planning.

8. Curriculum Statement

Through working alongside our schools, we strive to develop a range of opportunities and immersive experiences for all our children and families. We encourage leaders and teachers to build on the National Curriculum to provide an ambitious, rich and diverse curriculum in our schools. Our aspiration is for every pupil to develop the 'know of' (knowledge), 'know how' (skills) and dispositions needed to be successful, curious citizens. Through experiencing the curriculum by being Geographers, Scientists, Musicians, Philosophers and Authors for example, we not only enable them to move confidently into the next phase of education, but also help them to build foundations for life.

The belief that a school's curriculum and vision should reflect the local communities to enhance and enrich learning is shared across all our settings. Collaboration across our Trust helps each of our schools to create a bespoke, locally focussed curriculum that inspires our pupils with people, places and stories that our children can relate to.

We encourage our staff to continue to hone, develop and refine their understanding of the pedagogy that lies behind their curriculum, recognising how children learn and the different stages in their cognitive development, so that they can scaffold the curriculum appropriately ensuring access for all. We strive to support our schools to plan their curriculum carefully in a coherent and sequenced way, showing progression of skills and knowledge. We believe that by encouraging pupils to become more active in their learning, they are able to know and remember more.

Our approach to curriculum helps to promote curiosity and adaptability, and encourages our children to make connections across and between subjects; in many of our schools this is achieved through an enquiry-led approach. Our aim is to ensure that creativity and challenge are woven through our enquiry questions which are planned to stretch thinking, build active engagement in learning and stimulate curiosity.

Through a curriculum that is both engaging and relevant, that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of pupils, we are working hard with our families and communities to help prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life in society. PHSE is promoted and taught in all our schools, including ways in which children can keep themselves safe in their communities and online, and we ensure schools teach Relationships and Sex Education following government guidelines.

All schools must ensure their individual curriculum reflects the Pickwick Trust vision, values and ethos. Additionally, all Trustees and the staff and governors of a school with a Church of England foundation commit to protect and sustain the Christian distinctiveness of any such church school in the Trust. This is a special responsibility and happens through explicit and planned activities across the curriculum that educate for wisdom, hope, community and dignity for all. It includes building a strong partnership with the local church community and taking every opportunity to nurture the values and attitudes of Christian character in pupils, staff and leaders.

This is a special responsibility for these schools and must not be seen to encourage exclusive practice, rather a sharing of inclusive curricular practice that can be of benefit for all in the Trust.

We recognise that children's self-awareness, and awareness of others, develops as they mature and that this has a significant impact on their ability to relate to and learn about the world we live in. We work with our schools to develop interesting and appropriate experiences to help children become self-aware individuals, enabling them to learn to make connections and begin to empathise with 'big' themes such as tolerance, responsibility and culture around the world. We encourage our schools to become UNICEF 'Rights Respecting Schools' and provide opportunities to help their children understand what it means to be global citizens.

Through working with our Curriculum Leaders and learning from each other, we enable all staff to become confident subject leaders who are able to champion their subject, have the knowledge and skills needed to ensure their subjects are planned and taught effectively, to monitor the impact of their subject on pupils' learning, and to continue to develop and improve practice. We encourage collaboration between subject leaders across the Trust sharing research, processes and good practice to influence the development of the curriculum. In summary, we want to inspire curiosity, aspiration, independence and challenge for all our learners.

9. Assessment Statement

The purpose of this statement is to ensure a consistent approach for Assessment across Pickwick Academy Trust.

We have an embedded and consistent approach for assessment across the Trust. We recognise that there are a wide range of assessment approaches that our schools use. These include:

- Planning for learning
- Assessment for learning
- Target setting
- Summative assessment
- Statutory assessment

Planning for Learning

Secure knowledge of each pupil's current progress is a core element of teaching and learning. Rigorous monitoring procedures such as data analysis, observations, drop ins, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of pupil's work will inform future planning e.g. curriculum coverage, pupil feedback and support and the level of differentiation required.

Assessment for Learning

We encourage all schools in the Trust to use Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies. A range of AfL strategies are used in the classroom, these include:

- Explicit targeted learning objectives that are shared with the pupils
- Success criteria that are agreed by the pupils and teacher
- Self, peer and teacher assessment that assesses against the learning objective and/or the success criteria
- Pupils that are engaged in their learning, receiving immediate feedback on their progress

Target Setting

Target setting is a vehicle by which standards can be improved. The Trust agrees annually, through discussion with the Directors of Education and the Headteachers, to set challenging but achievable targets for all cohorts based on prior attainment. Each school will need to set targets against the following:

- Proportion achieving Age Related Expectations or Above in reading, writing and maths
- Proportion achieving expected progress in reading, writing and maths combined

- Percentage of Pupil Premium achieving Age Related Expectations or above in reading, writing and maths
- Proportion of Pupil Premium achieving expected progress in reading, writing and maths combined

Summative Assessment

Three times a year the Trust asks schools to assess all their pupils in reading, writing and maths in order to track progress against targets set. Teachers make these assessments using:

- Foundation Stage profile monitoring
- A review of pupils learning in books
- Assessing against agreed objectives on Insight tracker (a system used by all schools to record and track pupil progress)
- White Rose maths assessments
- FS2 baseline assessments
- Practice phonics screening checks (Year 1 and 2)
- Standardised assessments PUMA, PIRA and GAPS (Year 1, 3, 4, 5)
- Practice National SAT assessments (Year 2, 6)

Twice a year the standardised testing of PUMA, PIRA and GAPS and the Year 2 and 6 ongoing SAT assessments are analysed using a gap analysis tool. This allows pupils/ groups vulnerable to under achievement to be quickly identified and support prioritised in order to accelerate progress against set targets. Overall areas of development can then feed into the school's development planning.

Statutory Assessment

Statutory assessments take place annually. These include:

- Foundation stage profile judgements
- Year 1 and 2 Phonics screening
- Key stage 1 SAT in Reading, Writing and Maths
- Year 4 times tables tests
- Key stage 2 SATs in Reading, Writing, Maths and Spelling, punctuation and grammar.

End of Key Stage National Curriculum tests (SATs) are used to monitor progress and to identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum development. School leaders in conjunction with Directors of Education analyse these SAT results, using published data, and consider the implications for future school development planning. Groups that are identified as underachieving are targeted and interventions put in place to accelerate progress. Analysis and future steps are shared with all stakeholders including the trustees.

Reviewing and Monitoring Pupil Attainment and Progress

Individual pupils' progress, together with that of specific cohorts and vulnerable groups, are tracked using the Insight tracking tool. School leaders, the Local Governance Committee, the Directors of Education and the Trustees as part of the School Improvement Committee, monitor these assessments three times a year.

School data entered into Insight Tracker generates combined Pickwick data, which is monitored against prior attainment and targets by the Directors of Education. Outcomes are discussed at data meetings with Headteachers three times a year, ensuring that interventions are immediately employed to tackle any underperforming groups. Records of Directors of Education visits are shared with the Trust Board's School Improvement Committee and each school's Local Governance Committee.

Individual schools hold pupil progress meetings three times a year to identify strengths/weaknesses in performance and to plan for appropriate interventions and/or any CPD requirements. Leaders monitor pupil progress through regular lesson observations, pupil conferencing, book and planning scrutiny.

Equal opportunities and children vulnerable to under achievement

We are aware of the need to monitor for under achievement by using our data to establish whether there are any significant trends, for example, in gender, race, SEND or disadvantaged pupils. This is done by analysing results in more detail using software such as IDSR, Perspective Lite, Analysing School Performance, PIRA/PUMA/GAPS analysis etc.

We also monitor carefully and may provide additional support to children who for particular reasons may be vulnerable to under achievement, especially those in receipt of Pupil Premium.

10. Statement of Behaviour Principles

This Overarching Statement of Behaviour Principles applies to pupils when in school, engaged in extracurricular activities, when travelling to and from school, on educational visits and when being educated as a member of Pickwick Academy Trust. Each school has its own behaviour policy and these will be applied with consistency and fairness, with regard to each individual situation.

Aims

The aim of this statement is that all individuals at Pickwick Academy Trust learn to take responsibility for their own good behaviour and take the first steps to becoming valued members of British Society. We encourage our schools to have a strong ethical framework that enables children to make thoughtful, positive choices.

Rationale and Guidance

At Pickwick Academy Trust we work alongside parents to encourage children to reach their potential. We recognise that good behaviour is a requisite if we expect children to grow personally, socially and academically. We believe that good behaviour needs to be carefully developed. The welfare of the pupils is paramount.

All Pickwick Academy Trust schools:
- Encourage pupils to treat others as they would want to be treated
- Celebrate and reward good choices of behaviour
- Provide a safe, secure and happy environment
- Believe every individual in the school community needs to take responsibility for their own actions
- Support through help and encouragement
- Accept that mistakes are part of the learning process
- Respect differences, whether it be race, gender, age, sexuality, religion or disability
- Value each individual opinion
- Have a positive atmosphere and 'ethos'

The emphasis is on encouraging positive behaviour through high expectations, a focus on learning and praise and rewards.

Our behaviour principles are not primarily concerned with rule enforcement, it is a means of promoting good relationships, so that people can work together with the common purpose of helping everyone to learn. It aims to allow everyone to work together in an effective and considerate way with courtesy and respect.

It is recognised however, that on occasions sanctions are necessary to demonstrate that poor choices of behaviour are not acceptable and to deter other pupils from similar behaviour.

Pupils must own their own behaviour and understand that misbehaviour has consequences. Clear sanctions will enable the pupil to reflect on and learn from their behaviour and to make reparation wherever possible.

Some pupils, for example those with special educational needs, physical or mental health needs and looked after pupils can experience particular difficulties with behaviour and the school will seek to ensure that such pupils receive behavioural support according to their need.

11. Pupil Premium Statement

All schools within Pickwick Academy Trust have a culture of high expectations for progress of all of our pupils irrespective of academic or social disadvantage. We seek to provide an educational experience that is high quality, enjoyable and inclusive for all.

The Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) is additional funding provided by the Government to promote provision for disadvantaged students which gives them equity with their non-disadvantaged peers. The Government believes that Pupil Premium funding should be used to ensure parity of provision for academic progress or enrichment, where opportunities or experiences may be limited in the absence of educational or financial support.

The grant is provided for the following groups of students:

- Pupils with an entitlement to free school meals (FSM)
- Pupils who have been entitled to FSM in any of the last 6 years (Ever 6)
- Those pupils in care or adopted from care (LAC)

Additional funding is also available for children of parents serving in the military. This allows the schools to give pastoral support to service children during challenging times and mitigate the negative impact of family mobility or parental deployment.

Who is responsible for the effective use of the Pupil Premium grant?

At Pickwick Academy Trust our schools decide how the PPG is spent, as they are best placed to assess what additional provision should be made for the individual pupils within their responsibility.

All staff effectively contribute to the positive progress of our pupil premium pupils through identifying barriers to achieving potential of our disadvantaged pupils, robust facilitation of high attendance, CPD that highlights use of best practice, highly effective pastoral support and communication systems, including planned communication with parents/carers which is supported through our work with Achievement for All project.

Key to our objective to maximise outcomes is the provision of high-quality teaching, informed by effective monitoring and supported by the use of data, which is scrutinised by staff and leaders at all levels including Directors of Education, Trustees and Governors.

In all our schools there is a Pupil Premium lead who champions these pupils with all stakeholders. In order to share strengths and good practice across schools, leaders meet regularly as part of the pupil premium cluster group. This cluster is led by the Directors of Education to drive high quality provision for all our pupil premium pupils.

How do we maximise the use of the Pupil Premium Grant?

At Pickwick Academy Trust we:

- Ensure PPG funding and spending can be identified within the school's budget.
- Consult the Pupil Premium lead, governors, staff and parents when prioritising how funds are spent.
- Assess and monitor the individual provisions required for each pupil in receipt of the PPG and adjust provision to maximise impact.
- Use the latest research such as the Education Endowment Fund's Teaching and Learning toolkit to determine the best use of the funding to ensure maximum impact.

Pupil Premium Strategies

At Pickwick Academy Trust we encourage our schools to operate the following tiered approach to PPG spending to ensure it is both balanced and focussed:

1: **Teaching** - with a focus on 'Quality First Teaching'
2: **Targeted academic support** - such as structured interventions, small group tuition and 1 to 1 support
3: **Wider strategies** - such as attendance initiatives and behaviour support.

All our schools produce annual Pupil Premium strategies that are published on their websites. These documents make clear their PPG allocation, a summary of the main barriers to educational achievement faced by eligible pupils, plans on how to spend the pupil premium to address these barriers and the approaches that will be used. Also included in the strategies are plans on how the impact of the spending will be measured.

Monitoring

The impact of the PPG on pupil's attainment and progress in each school is monitored by the pupil premium link governor and the Directors of Education, who in turn report to the full LGC and Trustees as part of the School Improvement Committee.

12. Benefits for the children

When talking to people about the pros and cons of learning and working in a Multi-Academy Trust, we are usually asked the most important question of all: What are the benefits to the children in schools in your Trust?

This is difficult to answer in a 'sound-bite' way as everything we do, and every action we take at each level of the organisation, is intended to have a positive impact on the children in our schools, but below are some real-life examples of the benefits we have seen…

Enhanced learning opportunities for children

- Deputy Headteachers and middle leaders have met regularly to create opportunities for children to work and learn across the Trust through the 'PATCo' collaboration group; *e.g. a Trust-wide football tournament at Queen's Crescent School, as well as joint sports, music and art activities*
- Pupils have visited each other's schools to identify examples of excellent practice to share back with leaders and pupils back in their schools; *the children loved Ivy Lane School's 50 experiences notebooks and learning for life philosophy – we are exploring rolling out this approach across the MAT*
- Pupil School Councillors have presented what they think is going well and what could be improved at each school to the Board of Trustees and school leaders; *the children then presented their findings to their schools through assemblies*
- Pupils have taken part in a competition to design a Pickwick Academy Trust Dog (PAT the dog) which has been turned into a cartoon character to represent all the work the children do at Trust level; *pupils know they are part of something bigger, encouraging them to be more outward-facing and open to learning with a wider group of people*
- Through the PATCo group, children at some of our schools have been trained to self-evaluate how well their school is doing, using the 'Rights Respecting Schools' reflection areas; they have then carried out pupil-led peer reviews in each other's schools, identifying excellent practice and areas for improvement, feeding back to school leadership teams and governors.
- Aloeric Primary School's 'Achievement for All' (AfA) project supporting vulnerable learners led to the highest outcomes in the Trust; *as a result we have developed our own AfA programme, through the Teaching School, and rolled it out across all Trust schools to help close the attainment gap*

High quality leadership and governance

- Headteachers have been freed up to focus on the bits that really matter - children, teaching and learning and safeguarding; *contracts such as catering are now being managed by the central team*

- The Trust is committed to safeguarding each school's unique ethos and identity; *school names and uniforms stay the same - parents report they aren't fazed by their school joining our Trust*
- Pickwick Academy Trust leaders are driven by moral purpose – the Trust is rooted in a deep commitment to doing the right thing to ensure the best outcomes for children – schools are expected to provide the very best for their pupils; *a commitment to ensuring the highest quality learning environments and safeguarding pupils has led to important health and safety actions taking place in one school that had not been addressed prior to joining the Trust*
- Robust monitoring of pupil attainment and progress takes place – regular communication with experienced Directors of Education and external school improvement advisors ensure teaching and learning practice is of a high quality; *best practice around book scrutiny at Corsham Primary has been used to ensure consistent high quality is provided in every school*
- The Trust has worked with Local Governance Committees to support them to challenge and monitor the practice of leaders in each school through regular 360 review meetings and training – governors know clearly what the school development and improvement priorities are for their schools, and the Trust Board checks to ensure progress is being made; *regular governor training is in place across the Trust to support governors in their roles and responsibilities*
- Each school leadership team has a very clear idea of the priorities for their school which are monitored robustly and regularly by their Local Governance Committee; *for example last year leaders and governors across the Trust focussed on an in depth review of their curriculums*
- Schools in the Trust have access to leaders with a proven track record, capacity and expertise in addressing school improvement priorities which ensures every child meets their full potential; *the Chief Executive Officer is a National Leader of Education, one Director of Education is a trained SIAMS inspector, the others are all Local Leaders of Education and the Professional Development Director leads Pickwick Learning's school improvement and services arm*

Improved and sustained high quality teaching and learning

- The Trust is an organisation that is working at the forefront of new educational initiatives and research which enables us to support schools to deliver the best possible outcomes for pupils - through our partnership with the Education Development Trust and Pickwick Learning every school takes part in developmental peer review of teaching and learning; *teaching of reading at Corsham Primary and the management of behaviour at Aloeric* has improved
- Teachers' skills have improved through accessing a range of professional development courses and training (provided as part of being in the Trust); *Early Career Teacher Programme, professional learning communities programme, inspirational leadership talks, computing and reading INSETs, middle leadership training etc* - this has fed directly into higher quality teaching and learning across the schools
- Teachers have carried out scientific research projects to test ideas in the classroom and identify what strategies and provision works best – successful interventions are then used across the Trust to help children learn more effectively; *teachers at Corsham Primary carried out a research control-trial which found that fine motor letter formation has a greater impact on accurate letter formation than gross motor*

letter formation practice – we are exploring repeating this trial with a larger sample group across the Trust

- Subject leaders have come together to share expertise, carry out moderation and look at books and pupil progress; *Y6, Y2 and EYFS leaders' moderation has led to more consistency and accuracy of assessment of attainment and progress across the Trust and new assessment systems being implemented*

- Improved career progression and opportunities for talented staff allow us to recruit and retain the very highest quality people – this ensures pupils have strong leaders, teachers and teaching assistants to help them achieve their best; *highly effective senior leaders at Corsham Primary School and Queen's Crescent School who probably would have left the school to seek new challenges were able to be retained due to Headteacher career opportunities in other schools in the Trust*

- Effective succession planning and talent spotting ensures that when teachers or leaders move on to progress their careers, the Trust is able to ensure the pupils continue to receive the best; *newly developed executive leadership roles have enabled the expertise of extremely experienced Headteachers at Queen's Crescent, Corsham Primary, Greentrees and Winterslow schools to be deployed across the Trust's two hubs as Executive leaders to ensure sustained high-quality practice across the Trust*

13. People Strategy and Staff Benefits

At Pickwick Academy Trust, we recognise that the staff in our schools are the most important resource we have in providing exceptional educational experiences for our children. Research consistently highlights that quality-first teaching is the most impactful way to improve and sustain pupil outcomes.

If we are to deliver on our vision, we must ensure that we recruit the very best staff; provide targeted and ongoing professional development and training to equip them to do the job to the very best of their ability; and ensure our places of work, approaches, policies and culture enables us to retain those staff. In short, we must recruit, train and retain exceptionally well.

We are committed to being an employer of choice, and work hard to ensure our values, policies and strategies enable us to recruit, train, support and retain the very best staff. We engage with, listen to and bring people together at all levels of the organisation to ensure staff are supported, professionally challenged and well-looked after.

Our People Strategy aims and commitments

Our aim is for Pickwick Academy Trust to be an employer of choice which effectively attracts, recruits, trains, retains and looks after the very highest quality staff.

Our commitments are based around the four pillars identified in 'Talent Architects' (2018); it is our intention that all staff in all our schools will benefit from these commitments:

- Leadership, culture, climate
- Developing people
- Behaviour
- Workload and wellbeing

As an organisation we collectively commit to:

Leadership, culture, climate

- Celebrating the unique identity of each school, and encouraging innovation and sharing of best practice

- Ensuring that a culture of fairness, kindness and compassion is the golden thread underpinning our People Strategy, for all role types and levels within the organisation

- Ensuring that our policies and stated approaches align with our daily lived out actions and decisions (*"we mean what we say we stand for and we do our very best to live it"*)

- Moving from a 'request – response' approach to flexible working to one of proactive planning and encouragement of open dialogue

- Including a proactive flexible working message in all recruitment campaigns

- Promoting the wide range of benefits of working for the Trust, including strong professional development and career progression opportunities, and well-being services such as access to a staff support helpline

- Ensuring that pedagogical approaches are clear and staff understand how efficient strategies can be used, so that time in lessons is used as effectively as possible

- Encouraging all staff to engage in professional dialogue, reading and thinking at a local, national and global level

- Taking the time to reflect carefully and proactively on the needs and resources of the organisation, when recruiting for vacancies

Developing People

- Targeting CPD and training to staff skills/knowledge needs, for staff in all roles and types of work across the Trust

- Building opportunities for team teaching/working, shadowing, developing and supporting others, and peer-to-peer as part of the development of all staff across the Trust

Behaviour

- Proactively exploring the barriers that staff may face in leading and managing pupil behaviour, and identifying approaches to support

- Providing external and/or Trust and school-level support and high-quality training to empower staff in behaviour management

- Ensuring strong behaviour policies and school systems are in place to support all staff

- Valuing and using pupil voice to inform behaviour strategies and approaches

Workload and wellbeing

- Ensuring there is a culture where staff are encouraged to debate and constructively challenge established practice that could be: more efficient; reduce workload; does not have as much impact on pupil outcomes and experiences as it could

- Blocking PPA for teachers whenever possible; enabling teachers to choose whether to do their PPA onsite or at home as appropriate

- Having no more than one whole-staff team after school development/CPD session per week (and no more than two for the SLT); aligning calendars to ensure Pickwick professional development is woven into each school's scheduled training sessions; carefully considering workload impact if staff attend other sessions, e.g. 1:1 or small group training/sessions/mentoring

- Supporting and encouraging staff to identify and implement strategies for maintaining a positive, healthy and fulfilling life at work and at home that works for them (there will not be a one-size-fits all model for this)

- Encouraging staff not to access work communications on their personal devices, and setting out that there is no expectation to respond to non-emergency communications immediately or outside the hours of Monday-Friday 0730-1830

Staff Benefits

At Pickwick Academy Trust we are committed to being an employer of choice and recruiting, training and retaining the very best staff.
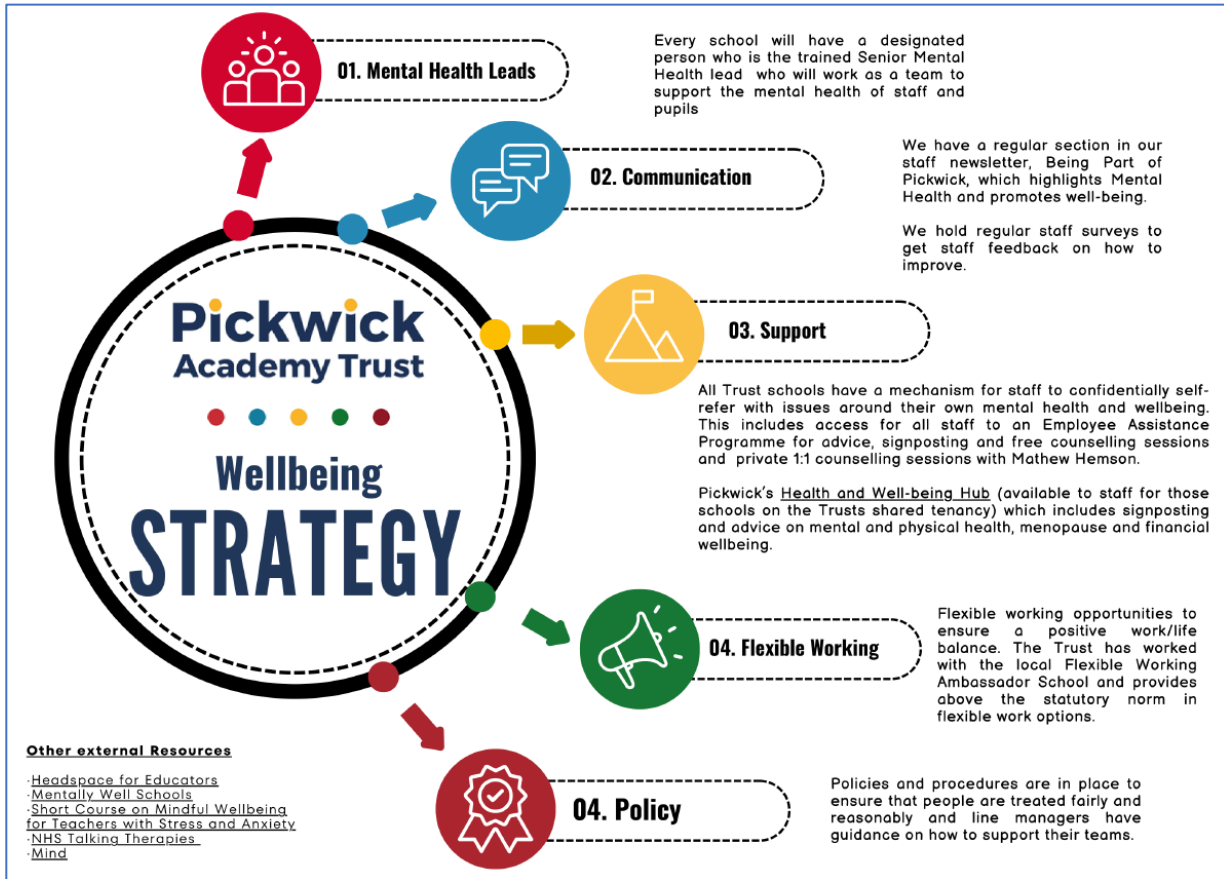
There are a wide range of benefits to working in our schools and our Trust:

- Our roles are not just jobs, they're vocations with clearly set out opportunities for career progression and professional development (CPD) at all levels and for all roles
- Full time Professional Development Director provides support across the Trust
- Opportunities to visit other schools, network, collaborate and take part in cluster groups for all roles, including senior leadership, across the Trust
- Shared curriculum development and subject leadership professional networks
- Strong induction procedures and welcome pack, and support for new staff
- Regular coaching, mentoring and peer support at all levels
- Strong wellbeing and workload support - every school has a senior mental health lead
- Strong Wellbeing Strategy and access to Employee Wellbeing support and counselling telephone support for all staff
- Generous contributory pension and holiday provision
- Family friendly policies
- Commitment to flexible working; partnered with the Flexible Working Ambassador School (Malmesbury School)
- Generous terms and conditions, and transparent policies with staff consulted directly on all key HR policies
- Strong central team and school leadership teams, all committed to and providing high level of support for staff at all levels
- People Strategy in place setting out the Trust's commitments and initiatives to support staff
- One organisation and Trust strategy, but committed to retaining and promoting each school's unique identity, ethos and approaches
- A real family and togetherness feel, where everyone is included and listened to, and ensures no one feels isolated
- Strong outreach work through Pickwick Learning, Teaching School Hub and external networks provides opportunities for staff to develop and share expertise in other schools
- Free eye tests (for those assessed as regular Display Equipment Users, and contribution towards glasses if needed specifically to perform a particular roles)
- Free annual flu jab
- Partnership with the Motor Source Group, enabling staff to benefit from discounts on new and used cars (average £4k saving on a standard new car)
- Cycle2Work scheme - salary sacrifice tax free bikes (talk to us to find out more info)
- Wiltshire Rewards (LA scheme enabling discounts across a range of retail outlets - available to Wiltshire schools)
- Discounts on gym memberships at Wiltshire Leisure centres (schools in Wiltshire are entitled to corporate discounts on memberships)
- Emergency salary advance scheme

Wellbeing Strategy

We have a well-established Wellbeing Strategy and are committed to supporting all our staff, through strong communication and support. We have Mental Health Leads in all our schools, and ensure we treat people fairly through our policies, culture and approaches.

01. Mental Health Leads

Every school will have a designated person who is the trained Senior Mental Health lead who will work as a team to support the mental health of staff and pupils

02. Communication

We have a regular section in our staff newsletter, Being Part of Pickwick, which highlights Mental Health and promotes well-being.

We hold regular staff surveys to get staff feedback on how to improve.

03. Support

All Trust schools have a mechanism for staff to confidentially self-refer with issues around their own mental health and wellbeing. This includes access for all staff to an Employee Assistance Programme for advice, signposting and free counselling sessions and private 1:1 counselling sessions with Mathew Hemson.

Pickwick's Health and Well-being Hub (available to staff for those schools on the Trusts shared tenancy) which includes signposting and advice on mental and physical health, menopause and financial wellbeing.

04. Flexible Working

Flexible working opportunities to ensure a positive work/life balance. The Trust has worked with the local Flexible Working Ambassador School and provides above the statutory norm in flexible work options.

04. Policy

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that people are treated fairly and reasonably and line managers have guidance on how to support their teams.

Other external Resources

·Headspace for Educators
·Mentally Well Schools
·Short Course on Mindful Wellbeing for Teachers with Stress and Anxiety
·NHS Talking Therapies
·Mind

14. Career Progression for all staff

We have established a clear 'Pathway of Development' for staff at all levels in Pickwick Academy Trust.

Professional Development across the Trust is overseen by our Professional Development Director who works with school leaders to identify opportunities for professional growth for staff at whatever point they are at in their career.

We encourage staff to make a personal commitment to their own professional development and have a number of network groups (our Professional Learning Communities) within schools and across the Trust where best practice is shared.

We work closely with other schools and Trusts to ensure we remain outward-facing, and there are many opportunities for staff to receive as well as provide support across our education system.

Career Stage	Personal commitment to CPD	Opportunities in own school	Opportunities through the Trust / Pickwick Learning
Support Staff, e.g. TAs	• Read and follow all school policies and procedures • Wider reading to support subject knowledge	• Observe wide range of TAs and teachers in own school – share best practice • Observation by colleagues and become mentor	• Teaching Assistant Development Programmes and courses • Access to Teaching Assistant pre-recorded suite of training including: *Early Reading and Phonics Maths Behaviour for learning SEND* • Visiting / observing lessons in other schools • Mentoring across the Trust • Apprenticeship roles for admin/finance staff
ITT Initial Teacher Trainees	• Read and follow all school policies and procedures • Join a Professional Association • Join the Chartered College • Network with other trainees • Record achievements in line with ITT expectations • Wider reading to support subject knowledge	• Schools own Induction programme • Learn from School Based Mentor • Observe wide range of teachers in own school – share best practice; observation by colleagues • Team planning and teaching	• ITT Programme • Visiting / observing lessons in other schools • Central Training through Pickwick Learning and ITT provider • Teaching & Learning Conference
Early Career Teachers (across two year ECT induction)	• Follow all school policies and procedures • Join a Professional Association • Engage in professional reading such as the TES, online and/or Twitter	• School-based induction programme • Learn from senior colleagues / mentor • Observe wide range of teachers – share best practice • Observation by colleagues	• ECPDP Programme; mentor / school support • ECT event meetings and Professional learning community (PLC) • EYFS – range of development courses • SEN – range of development courses • Curriculum – range of development courses

Career Stage	Personal commitment to CPD	Opportunities in own school	Opportunities through the Trust / Pickwick Learning
Early Career Teachers (cont.)	• Start a Professional Portfolio recording key achievements and courses • Attend all training and complete self-study in ECT time • Contribute to progress reviews and summative assessment reports	• Team planning and teaching • Shadow a subject leader before taking on subject leadership during your second year • Help run a staff meeting, whole school/class assembly • Contribute to whole school initiatives	• Visiting / observing lessons in other schools • Access to the Pickwick Subject Leader toolkit • Teaching & Learning Conference
Recently Qualified Teachers (following two-year ECT induction)	• Develop the Professional Portfolio recording key achievements, courses; include photos and examples of projects • Attend all training and complete self-study in ECT time • Do a self-audit of CPD needs by videoing teaching, discussing with colleagues and asking for pupil feedback • Join local professional network meetings • Support ECT 1s in your school • Contribute to reflection document (performance management)	• Personal research opportunity • Shadowing experienced teachers/middle leaders • Join a research group or working party • Attend an off-site visit • Observe lessons from experienced colleagues • Plan and lead a project for Pickwick Learning / Trust • Develop policy; co-ordinate a subject • Mentor trainee teachers	• Wide range of CPD – Pickwick Learning/Trust Calendar • Collaborate across Pickwick Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) • Access to the Pickwick Subject Leader toolkit • Teaching & Learning Conference • School to school support from Pickwick Specialist Leader • EYFS – range of development courses • SEN – range of development courses • Curriculum – range of development courses
Established Teachers & Aspiring Leaders	• Extend the Professional Portfolio recording key achievements and courses in preparation for subject or department leadership role • Play key role in leading an area of school improvement • Carry out research and do wider / bigger picture professional reading • Apply for additional responsibilities in school • Develop coaching and mentoring skills	• Shadowing experienced leaders • Lead a research group or working party • Provide demonstration lessons for less experienced colleagues • Develop policy; co-ordinate a core subject • Mentor ECTs • Deliver CPD to colleagues in and beyond school • Take part in coaching and mentoring • Lead a school training programme and evaluate impact; lead an offsite/residential visit • Become a Pickwick Specialist Leader	• Collaborate across Pickwick Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) • Wide range of CPD – Pickwick Learning/Trust Calendar • Access to the Pickwick Subject Leader toolkit • Targeted Leadership Programme • Teaching & Learning Conference • School to school support from Pickwick Specialist Leader colleague • EYFS – range of development courses • SEN – range of development courses • Curriculum – range of development courses • Become an ITT School Direct School Based Mentor

Career Stage	Personal commitment to CPD	Opportunities in own school	Opportunities through the Trust / Pickwick Learning
Middle / Phase Leaders Assistant Headteachers	• Professional Portfolio – recording key leadership achievements • Identify CPD that will help you progress • Contribute to local or regional middle leader networks, academic websites or books	• Work with a range of agencies; chair meetings; lead network meeting • Take part in recruitment process for TAs/Teachers • Lead a whole-school improvement training session • Shadowing senior leaders	• Teaching & Learning Conference • Collaborate across Pickwick Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) • Access to the Pickwick Subject Leader toolkit • School to school support from Pickwick Specialist Leader; become a Pickwick Specialist Leader and provide support to others • Targeted Leadership Programme
Middle / Phase Leaders Assistant Headteachers (cont.)	• Become a governor	• Manage a budget • Lead new staff induction programme • Take responsibility for key whole school issue such as data analysis and report to SLT	• Specialist National Professional Qualifications
Deputy Heads	• Professional Portfolio – recording key leadership achievements that impact on whole school development • Collaborate and support other schools locally – record achievements • Join a leadership-based professional association • Become a governor in a different school	• Shadow a Headteacher / Head of School • Coach a middle leader to support others • Formal presentations to Governors • Lead and take responsibility for the school in the absence of the Head/Executive • Organise whole school and Teaching School events • Oversee ITT across your school • Take part in recruitment process for teachers and middle leaders • Lead working groups	• Headteacher / Head of School coaching • Senior Leaders Professional Development conversations with external facilitator • Teaching & Learning Conference • Get involved in ITT leadership, moderating and training • School to school support from LLE/Head/SIP colleague • Get involved in peer to peer school reviews (SPP) • National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership • National Professional Qualification for Headship
Headteachers & Heads of School	• Professional Portfolio – recording key leadership achievements that impact on whole school development and collaborative work regionally • Collaborate and support other schools regionally • Network with other heads locally and regionally; take part in headteacher coaching	• Shadow an Executive Head/CEO • Coach Deputy Heads • Lead and take responsibility for an aspect of Trust work in the absence of the CEO/Executive Head • Organise a training event for other Heads • Responsibility for monitoring SDIP • Performance Management of Leadership Team	• Headteacher / Head of School coaching • Regular Pickwick Heads' meetings to develop strong networks of support • Become a champion of an aspect of school life that interests you and help keep colleagues across our Trust informed • 1:1 regular Director of Education support and challenge

Career Stage	Personal commitment to CPD	Opportunities in own school	Opportunities through the Trust / Pickwick Learning
	• Become a Local Leader of Education, SIP, OFSTED, SIAMS lead roles • Take part in regional or national schools forums	• Carry out learning walks and lesson observations in own and other settings • Host visits from other professionals	• Support from School Improvement Officers & NLE • Teaching & Learning Conference • School to school support from experienced Head/SIP/External Consultant/University colleague • Lead peer to peer reviews of schools (SPP) • National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership
Executive Headteachers, Directors of Education, Trust Directors, CFOO & CEOs	• Portfolio – impact on collaborative work nationally/internationally • Collaborate and support other schools nationally and internationally; create national networks • Become a National Leader of Education (NLE) • Work with RSC / DfE to advise on policy decisions; support other schools through DfE SI offer • Become a SIP, OFSTED/SIAMS Inspector, NLE	• Coach and mentor Headteachers and your leadership team • Host leadership networks and visits from other MAT leaders • Expand/open a new school; support a school in challenging circumstances	• Regional & National Conferences led by RSC/other education sector leaders • Teaching & Learning Conference • School to school support from experienced CEO/External Consultant/University colleague • National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership • MAT network meetings

15. Expectations of schools in Pickwick Academy Trust

We expect our schools to be safe, financially solvent, structurally sound, legal and compliant and educationally inspiring. We celebrate and promote each school's unique characteristics, and the Christian distinctiveness of our church schools.

We recognise that life in a school is busy and know there will be times when leaders need help and support. We also acknowledge that we can develop and learn from each other in order to achieve the best for our children and staff. This is the essence of an effective organisation – support, challenge, leadership, work processes and systems, decision making and structures and the commitment of everyone to the Trust's vision and principles.

Each school has the following strategic responsibilities:

1. To review and analyse the performance of the school, against national and local indicators, and to respond to advice from the Trust's School Improvement Leader on actions identified in order to develop and/or sustain improvement
2. To ensure that the school development plan reflects the requirement to raise standards, and to monitor and evaluate it accordingly
3. To monitor the implementation of any action plan resulting from an Ofsted/SIAMS inspection in order to improve standards and progress.
4. To establish clear information about how the curriculum is taught, evaluated and resourced in the school
5. To make recommendations to the Local Governance Committee and/or Trust Board on resources needed to meet the needs of the whole curriculum, and the sustainability of the non-statutory elements
6. To celebrate and promote Christian distinctiveness (church schools)
7. To write regular reports for the Trust's School Improvement Leader on the quality of teaching and learning, to identify areas for improvement, and to ensure that any necessary action is taken to maximise outcomes for pupils
8. To ensure that annual assessment and examination arrangements comply with national requirements
9. To ensure that requirements of pupils with varying levels of ability, from the more able to those with special needs are met
10. To submit pupil performance data to the School Improvement Leader complying with the Trust's Assessment procedures
11. To monitor the impact of Pupil Premium / Sports Funding on the achievement and attainment of pupils; to ensure that the Pupil Premium / Sports Funding is spent appropriately and that this information is easily accessible (e.g. on the school website)
12. To ensure the school is a safe place for the children to learn and play (Keeping Children Safe in Education) and that safer working practices are followed by all staff, pupils, visitors and contractors.
13. To ensure that the school buildings are cared for, maintained and safe in order to create a suitable learning environment for the children
14. To ensure that the school remains legally compliant adhering to DfE and ESFA policies and procedures

15. To ensure that the school remains financially secure; senior leaders work closely with the Trust's Chief Finance & Operating Officer and Chief Executive Officer in order to achieve financial best practice
16. To positively and proactively work in collaboration with the Trust's central team maximising resources available
17. To actively contribute to the development, growth and work of the Trust
18. For the Headteacher and Chair of Governors to attend regular meetings with senior Trust leaders
19. To invest in the professional development of all staff to maximise potential
20. To ensure agreed Trust policies and procedures are implemented and adhered to
21. Leaders and governors enable children to attend Trust-wide events and contribute to child-led initiatives, such as Pupil-led Peer Reviews
22. Senior Leadership Teams meet regularly to discuss leadership topics and succession plans

"The creation and growth of MATs has seen further benefits in terms of more formal collaboration between schools, both to improve standards and increase financial efficiencies and sustainability. There are, of course, many different and vital forms of partnerships that support school improvement. These can complement and enhance the benefits of MATs, but they are not a substitute for them."

Sir David Carter – former National Schools Commissioner

16. Central services: The contribution and what it covers

Multi-Academy Trusts are not-for-profit organisations and are funded in the same way that maintained schools are, based on the number of pupils they have. However, instead of the Local Authority top-slicing from the schools, Trust schools receive all of the funding directly from central government.

In order to provide a strong central school improvement and business service, deliver on our regulatory duties, and ensure all schools receive a high level of support and challenge, each school within Pickwick Academy Trust pays a central contribution of 6% of their General Annual Grant (GAG) funding.

This contribution pays for:

- The leadership and administration of the central team, including Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Finance & Operating Officer (CFOO), three Directors of Education, a Professional Development Director, outsourced Chief Technical Officer (CTO), and Heads of Finance, Facilities and Human Resources (HR)
- 12 developmental school improvement visits from one of our Directors of Education responsible for school improvement (e.g. support in writing SDPs, SEFs, checking safeguarding/SCR, Teaching and Learning reviews and monitoring, Ofsted/SIAMS preparation, data analysis), three including the CEO and Chair of Governors
- Business development visits from our Heads of Finance, HR and Facilities
- Finance, business, HR, staff contract management, GDPR and admin support, including provision of handbooks and documentation to support efficient practice at school level
- Telephone, email and onsite support from the central team as required by schools
- Oversight and support for CPD from our Professional Development Director
- A suite of professional development provision for staff at all levels of their careers
- Fortnightly Headteacher leadership development and briefing sessions
- Headteacher, Deputy Heads and SENCO coaching by an Executive coach
- Access to cluster groups, networks and subject development sessions
- Access to our School Partnership Programme of peer review and support
- Support in auditing and developing curriculum planning
- Regular governance training, support, documentation and guidance materials for governance
- Management of Headteacher appraisal and support from external advisor in partnership with Chair of Governors
- Central policy production and ratification
- Support and training in, and covering the costs of, the software systems Pickwick schools are required to use:
    - Governor Hub (online system for governor communication and documentation)
    - Insight Tracker (assessment package)

- - Online safeguarding system for recording and tracking safeguarding concerns (CPOMS)
    - Every (premises and Health & Safety reporting software)
    - Integris pupil and personnel management system
    - HCSS financial management and budget software
    - School communications and parent payment system (if choosing to join Trust contract)
    - Migrating into Pickwick's Office 365 tenancy
- The use of Wiltshire Payroll
- Access to Health & Safety Consultants
- Trust and school audits carried out by external auditors; Internal Assurance and Trust Health and Safety Consultants
- Tri-annual external premises assessments for school buildings
- Online recruitment services
- Email support from Data Protection Officer (DPO) alongside annual visits to ensure GDPR compliance and support
- 'Quick call' support from legal team
- Regular reviews by the Trust IT provider to ensure compliance in respect of Cyber Security, Filtering and Monitoring, and support with a 3-year plan for IT provision within each school, should the school move to the Trust IT contract and cloud-based server.
- Procurement support for larger contracts such as grounds, IT, phones, catering and cleaning
- Facilitation of Trust Board and Trust Committee meetings
- Academy conversion and TUPE management for schools wishing to convert (includes end to end support for community schools who are eligible for the £25,000 DfE conversion grant)

The rest of each school's agreed budget is delegated to the school, and the Headteacher is responsible for setting and monitoring it (with support from Pickwick's Head of Finance and Chief Finance & Operating Officer) and has the authority to spend it in line with our Scheme of Delegation.

Financial responsibility and decision-making for spending outside agreed delegation sits with the central team and Trust Board. The central team are required by the ESFA to report the latest financial position of the Trust to the Chair of Trustees on a monthly basis and to each Finance, Resource and Risk Committee. This is achieved through monthly finance reviews and regular meetings with Finance Managers and Headteachers. Local Governance Committees continue to have financial oversight and monitoring (rather than decision-making) responsibilities, and provide valuable support and challenge to school leaders and the central team.

Saving money and economies of scale are often cited as reasons for joining Trusts, but we think it's more about getting better value for the money we collectively spend without compromising on services and provision. The central contribution schools pay is likely to be more than the top-slice by the Local Authority but we believe we offer a more comprehensive and robust package of services, oversight, challenge and support.

The Trust aims to work with and support schools to align large contracts where possible. We have recently procured a new phone contract across the Trust, saving considerable cost and time for each school in terms of contract management alongside enabling easier and direct communication between schools. We have also procured central contracts for catering, cleaning, grounds and IT. All lease-based contracts, for example photocopiers, are procured by the central team to ensure compliance.
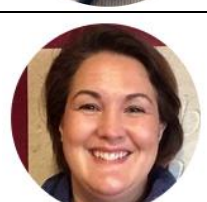
All schools are required (when existing contract expires) to join the Trust IT support contract and the Trust central cloud-based server and internet provision. This option provides a robust support provision with costs in line with the approved Trust IT support contract which ensures value for money. It also removes the significant capital outlay of procuring a standalone server at the school (c£8k) and provides additional support with school three-year strategic IT plans. Finally, it reduces the burden on individual schools to demonstrate compliance to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) and to the Board in respect of Filtering and Monitoring and Cyber Security requirements as these will be supported where possible by the Trust central team and IT support providers.

In the case of new schools joining the Trust, the central team will engage in a 'due diligence' process - Trustees recognise that schools will have varying levels of financial stability and will carefully assess the financial risk of bringing the new school into the Pickwick family.

17. Central services: The central team

The central team are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Trust and are overseen by a Board of Trustees. The team is led by the Chief Executive Officer, who is supported by the Chief Finance & Operating Officer, three Directors of Education (one for each hub of schools) and a Professional Development Director. The Directors of Education provide line management for the Headteachers in each school.
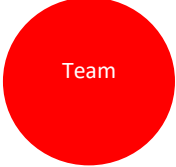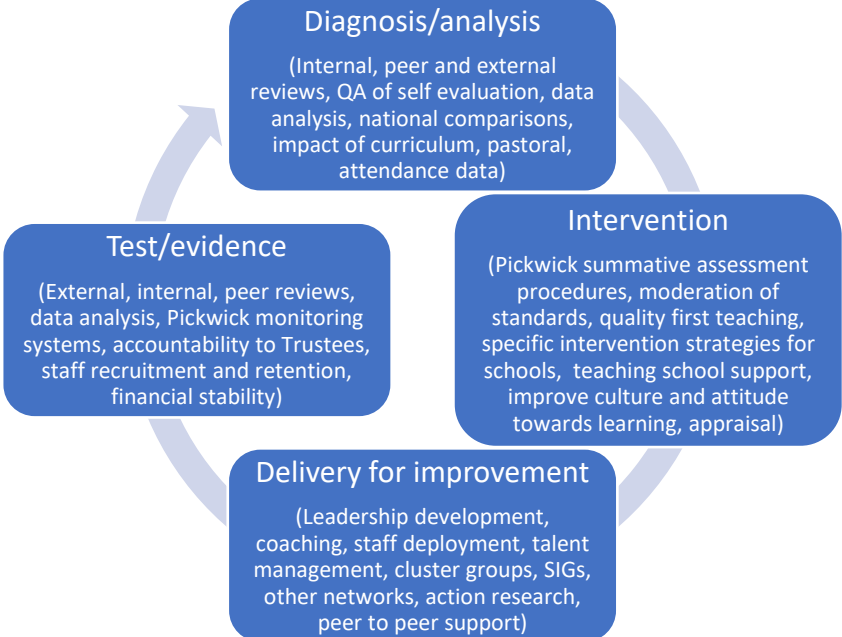
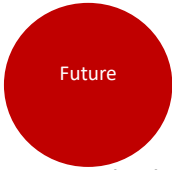| Central team	Role and Responsibility	Days per week
	James Passmore Chief Executive Officer - Accounting Officer; Strategic leadership - Executive team line management - Governance - Risk management - Growth	5 days
	Emma Oldale Chief Finance & Operating Officer - Strategic Business operations and risk - Budget development and monitoring - Line management for Business Department Heads - Health & Safety and Premises; GDPR - IT Strategy and risk	5 days
	Julia Fountain Director of Education (North Wiltshire Hub) - School Improvement - Data and assessment systems - Pupil Premium - Safeguarding - Pastoral	5 days
	Rebecca Bone Director of Education (South Wiltshire Hub) - School Improvement - Curriculum, SEF, SDIP - Church schools - SIAMS - Global learning	5 days
	Ray Picton Director of Education (North Dorset Hub) - School Improvement - International links - Professional development and ITT/ECT training - Growth development	3 days
	Amy Tapscott Professional Development Director - Staff development and training - Initial Teacher Training; Pickwick Learning; - Teaching School Hub; Early Career Framework - School Improvement Groups - External development	5 days

The Central Team and Trust Board are supported by Sam Rogers, (Professional Development and Executive Administrative Officer); Victoria Ladd, (Head of Finance); Mike Jones (Head of Facilities); Alii McAloon (Head of HR) and Sylwia Hulbert (HR & Recruitment Officer) alongside a Trust central team Finance Manager and Assistant.

18. Central services: School Improvement Strategy

School Improvement is the key to school effectiveness and is at the heart of providing the best schools and outcomes for our children. An effective School Improvement Strategy is the key to releasing potential in leaders, staff and children alike. An effective Trust uses their School Improvement Strategy to help ensure accountability, drive strategic thinking and deploy resources in order to improve outcomes for our children.

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Team

We work together as an inclusive family so that each school is supported and held to account for the attainment and progress of every child to enable them to meet their full potential and to ensure the highest quality teaching and leadership for our children.

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The School Improvement Team includes:

- James Passmore – Chief Executive Officer (Strategy, governance)
- Emma Oldale – Chief Finance & Operating Officer
- Julia Fountain – Director of Education (North Wiltshire Hub)
- Rebecca Bone – Director of Education (South Wiltshire Hub)
- Ray Picton – Director of Education (North Dorset Hub)
- Amy Tapscott – Professional Development Director
- External School Improvement Advisors are used to carry out specific School Improvement reviews & support with Headteacher appraisals

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Approach

We provide robust support and challenge for each school on its individual journey of improvement, seeking common-sense solutions from within and outside our Trust.

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Our approach to school improvement is based on Sir David Carter's model (2017) and is based on three questions:
Analysis – What needs to improve?
Evidence – What will we do to improve this?
Capacity – Who is the best person to lead on this?

The school improvement cycle starts with evaluating a school's pedagogy and quality of teaching, the consequent impact on learning and the effectiveness of the curriculum. It does this by using a diagnostic approach, setting up a system to improve the area for development and monitoring the impact of intervention:

Diagnosis/analysis
(Internal, peer and external reviews, QA of self evaluation, data analysis, national comparisons, impact of curriculum, pastoral, attendance data)

Intervention
(Pickwick summative assessment procedures, moderation of standards, quality first teaching, specific intervention strategies for schools, teaching school support, improve culture and attitude towards learning, appraisal)

Delivery for improvement
(Leadership development, coaching, staff deployment, talent management, cluster groups, SIGs, other networks, action research, peer to peer support)

Test/evidence
(External, internal, peer reviews, data analysis, Pickwick monitoring systems, accountability to Trustees, staff recruitment and retention, financial stability)

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Celebrate We celebrate the successes and unique characteristics of each school, valuing all children and encouraging aspiration and innovation for all, providing systems that support opportunities for those working and learning in our schools.	During the yearly cycle of school improvement Pickwick Directors of Education, the CEO and Professional Development Director will signpost and deploy areas of expertise, knowledge and skill within schools, across the Trust and externally that could be used to support school improvement. Subject leader cluster groups have been set up across the Pickwick schools to celebrate good practice; share ideas, expertise and skills, and to drive curriculum planning and school improvement. Examples of cluster groups include: Assessment, Pupil Collaboration Group, Maths, EYFS, SEND, Writing and Curriculum. Pickwick Learning (the professional development part of our Trust, evolved from our work previously as a Teaching School) organises and runs School Improvement Groups (SIGs) led by Headteachers across the region. These groups provide robust support and challenge to each other to help all the schools to achieve their school development priorities. There is an expectation that all Pickwick schools should attend and contribute to the success of these groups.
Together We share responsibility and harness our collective expertise, experience and spirituality to drive school improvement and achieve the best possible outcomes for all by sharing ideas and resources and best practice to ensure all schools within our Trust are successful.	Each Pickwick Academy Trust school aligns its school development plan with the Trust's priorities which have themselves been informed by the strategic direction that the Trustees, executive team and the school leadership have identified as areas for development – see Trust Development Plan. The Pickwick Trust Development Plan is aligned around four areas, and is informed through a robust evaluation using the MAT Assurance Framework. 1. Standards and School Improvement 2. Leadership and Personnel 3. Governance 4. Finance Operations and Sustainability The school improvement cycle is used to ensure that diagnosis and monitoring will deliver effective improvement. Using Professor David Hopkins' criteria for effective schools (2013), the seven key areas which will effect change and enhance educational provision for all children have been identified as: 1. Curriculum-focused school leadership 2. Supportive climate in the school 3. Emphasis on the quality of curriculum, and teaching and learning 4. Clear goals and high expectations for all children, especially disadvantaged 5. A system for effectively monitoring performance and achievement, challenging and holding leaders to account 6. Continuous professional development and support for staff 7. Targeted external support (from within schools and across the Trust, as well as beyond the Trust)
Future We are committed to sustainable growth, to provide the best outcomes for the communities we serve now and in the future by aligning and resourcing central services and succession planning to ensure investment remains in quality teaching, learning and leadership.	Our School Improvement Strategy is informed by both research and practice. It is subject to ongoing review, change and modification as necessary. It is a process of continuous dialogue about the needs of the children in our schools and how we release the potential in all. It promotes distributed leadership and development of leaders at all levels. It supports a shared language and culture of support and challenge. We have a clear focus on raising the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve outcomes for our pupils. Our School Improvement Strategy will provide new schools joining the Trust with a tried and tested model that promotes a self-improving ethos and a model of collaboration between all schools.

School Improvement Cycle

A cycle of school improvement visits has been put in place to support each Trust school. There are a minimum of 12 visits a year by Directors of Education (DoEs) to each Trust school – for two of these visits a year, the CEO and Chair of Governors are invited to attend. Depending on where a school is on its school improvement journey will determine whether the school receives Pickwick's standard or enhanced support approach. Additional more personalised or bespoke programmes of support can be put in place depending on individual school needs.

Term	Visit	Director of Education FOCUS		Lead by
		Standard Support	Enhanced Support	
1	1	SDP and SEF	SDP (or TAS if in place)	DoE/CEO
	2	Specific school focus (SDP)	SEF (Quality of Education)	DoE
2	3	Teaching & Learning Review Core subject deep dive	Teaching & Learning Review Core subject deep dive	DoE/PDD
	4	Wiltshire LA Safeguarding Audit (could be any term)	Wiltshire LA Safeguarding Audit (could be any term)	Wilts LA
3	5	Data review and analysis	Data review and analysis	DoE
	6	LA Safeguard sign off	LA Safeguard – support school in completing audit	DoE
4	7	SPP Peer Review	Teaching & Learning Review Core subject deep dive	DoE/PDD
	8	EYFS review (visit in T3/4/5)	EYFS review (visit in T3/4/5)	DoE (EYFS)
5	9	Data meeting	Data meeting	DoE
	10	Curriculum review – wider curriculum	Core subject curriculum review	PDD
6	11	Personal Development walk and pupil voice	Personal Development walk and pupil voice	DoE
	12	SDP and SEF	SDP (or TAS if in place)	DoE/CEO
1-6		Church School visit and preparing for SIAMS x2	Church School visit and preparing for SIAMS x2	DoE (CSF)

Independent external school improvement advisors are commissioned by the Trust to carry out reviews in each school to help triangulate successes and areas for improvement, and to moderate executive leaders' evaluations. The focus of these visits will depend on Trust and School priorities, and could include Pupil Premium, Teaching and Learning reviews, and/or deep dives into particular subject areas.

All internal and external reports are analysed by the executive team and are reported to Local Governance Committees, the School Improvement Committee and Trust Board.

We have strong links and partnerships with the local diocese, and we have a designated Director of Education within the executive team who oversees our work with church schools. We have Foundation and non-Foundation Trustees and Members, to ensure appropriate oversight of our family of community and church schools at all levels of the organisation.

Each school in the Trust takes part in the School Partnership Programme (SPP), a system of school to school peer review. Once a year, schools welcome a team of leaders from different schools to carry out a review. The focus is identified by the school prior to the review as an area in need of development. Each school also commits to releasing school leaders to carry out reviews in other schools in the programme.

Business and Finance Support for School Leaders

Schools are supported by a strong central business team lead by our Chief Finance & Operating Officer (CFOO). Our Heads of Human Resources, Finance and Facilities are available via telephone and email, and provide support across a range of projects. They support school and hub based finance and facilities colleagues.

Business Area	Visits and support
Chief Finance & Operating Officer (CFOO)	- A minimum of one visit a year to your school - Support for procurement and budget management
Human Resources (HR)	- At least one SCR and Personnel file check annually by - Head of HR; telephone and email support
Facilities	- Monthly meetings with Hub Facilities Manager - Annual external Health & Safety Audit - 2 internal Health & Safety / Premises Audits with Head of Facilities
Finance	- Termly financial forecast review meetings with Head of Finance (more support as required) - Annual draft budget review meetings with Head of Finance and CFOO

Systems we use across the Trust to support School Leaders

The Trust has put in a number of other systems to support school leaders in their drive for school improvement and school effectiveness (the cost of all of these are covered through each school's annual central contributions):

The Key, is a website that provides guidance and advice on a wealth of school matters including school improvement.

Governor Hub, an online system, is used by the Trust Board and Local Governance Committees (LGCs) to communicate with and between each other. Trust policies and documents are stored on it along with minutes of all Trust and LGC meetings.

Insight Tracker is an assessment tracking package that is used by assessment leads in all Trust schools. It provides systems to record formative and summative assessments, can track progress of individual and groups of children against targets and provides a range of different reports to help leaders at all levels monitor achievement in their schools. It is used to support the Trust with the moderation of assessment judgements and the collection of Trust data.

CPOMS is an online system that all staff can record safeguarding concerns and log pupil behaviour incidents on. It enables DSL and DDSL to monitor child protection concerns, keep ongoing records of actions and store relevant paperwork. SLT can monitor behaviour incidents, the number and types, and record actions taken to support pupil behaviour. It also provides up to date training modules and documents on a range of safeguarding topics.

Provision Map is an online system for setting and monitoring SEND and Pupil Premium interventions; identifying progress, impact and value for money. The executive team use 'an area dashboard' to monitor the impact of schools across the Trust.

SSCPD is an online training package for ensuring all staff and governors across the Trust are well trained in safeguarding and health and safety.

19. Central services: Professional development opportunities

We recognise that we need a balance between robust, professional challenge and compassionate, collaborative relationships in order to drive sustainable improvement in our schools. Our staff are encouraged to keep on learning and developing, using opportunities to practice and ask for feedback about their work. The most effective CPD is where these principles are used:

1. Persistent and consistent support and challenge
2. Robust and honest feedback
3. Use of data and impact measures to challenge and to focus
4. Evidence based practice to question current approaches
5. Focusing on the real needs of the staff in the school
6. Inclusive – no teacher / staff member left behind
7. Empowering – individuals take responsibility for their own CPD and seek opportunities

The continuing professional development of all our staff is overseen by the Trust's Professional Development Director, who can help schools by providing and/or signposting support. We encourage schools to support each member of staff to develop their own personal professional development plans.

The following annual CPD entitlement is available for free as one of the benefits Pickwick Academy Trust schools receive through their central contribution fees. Schools are able to ask for additional CPD outside this provision at an extra cost and can of course continue to provide their own internal CPD for their school.

Delegates	CPD provision
up to 2 delegates	**Professional Learning Networks** - A series of curriculum subject based cluster groups designed for teachers to develop and enhance their practice through a series of facilitated sessions focussing on lesson study, reflection and high-quality teaching and learning (across the curriculum, including EYFS, Outdoor Learning, Mental Health and Wellbeing, SENCO) - A series of 3 twilight sessions
1 pair of delegates	**Targeted Leadership Programme** - 1 emerging & 1 middle leader who carry out school improvement in their own school (emerging leader) or another school (middle leader) - carried out over 4 terms: free twilight training sessions supporting leaders in developing skills and behaviours, inspirational leadership talks and discussions, support to carry out improvement projects, introduction to system leadership
up to 3 delegates	**Professional Development and Learning for Teaching Assistants** - Aimed at Teaching Assistants who are, or who are aspiring to be, consistently outstanding in their practice - A series of pre-recorded sessions that can be used flexibly (1:1, group, whole TA team), focussing on areas that will support Teaching Assistants with their practice including: Early Reading and Phonics Maths Behaviour for learning SEND
Heads	**Trust Heads leadership development sessions** - Fortnightly meeting for professional development, briefings, networking and sharing best practice

Delegates	CPD provision
All governors	**Bespoke Governor Training** - A series of 6 virtually delivered bespoke governance training sessions including: Induction; Safeguarding; Pupil/Sports Premium; Preparing for inspection; Curriculum; SEND; Disadvantaged learners; Holding leaders to account and other according to governor needs. Recordings and slides available post sessions so that Governors can revisit and share across their LGCs
All Early Career Teachers	**ECT Early Career Professional Development Programme (through the Education Development Trust) and Trust support** - Support for induction tutors, mentors and ECTs in accessing and making the best use of the Early Career Professional Development Full Induction Programme - Ongoing support and professional development from the Trust's Professional Development Director and school mentors - Peer support provided through our Cluster ECT Professional Learning Community
ITT mentors and tutors	**ITT mentor support, professional development and training** - Ongoing support, training and professional development for Mentors - Accredited programmes for mentors and ITT leads in schools in NASBTT (National Association of School Based Initial Teacher Training) Level 1 and Level 2 Coaching and Mentoring, - Accredited programmes for experienced mentors and school ITT leads through NASBTT Level 1 Instructional Coaching and Level 1 Leading exceptional CPD
All staff	**Bespoke specific school-based INSET (twilights)** - 3 x bespoke training sessions for individuals, groups or whole staff team (twilights / half day)
up to 2 delegates per session	**3 x School Direct Trainee training sessions** - CPD sessions aimed at trainee teachers, which are also appropriate and relevant for qualified teachers (could be day / half day sessions)
up to 2 delegates per session	**Pickwick Learning provided CPD sessions** - Access to all Teaching School provided CPD on offer (could be twilight/day/half day sessions)
All staff	**Teaching & Learning & Trust Conferences/Professional development** - Joint Trust professional development sessions - Joint Trust INSET day and twilight
Open to all staff	**3 x Inspirational Leadership talks** - Access to 1-3 inspirational leadership talks delivered as twilights
Heads & SLT	**Inspection Preparation Support** - Sessions to support schools to prepare for inspection; support with Deep Dives, preparing for Ofsted/SIAMS telephone call; curriculum conversations
Heads & SLT	**Curriculum Review and Development** - Sessions to support curriculum review, audit and development
Admin, Facilities & Finance teams	**Admin, Facilities and Finance support** - 1:1 or small group sessions to support colleagues with school business, admin, finance, premises and Health & Safety work

20. Trust financial position

In a Multi-Academy Trust the Chief Executive Officer is the Accounting Officer and is responsible for all aspects of the Trust's work. Pickwick Academy Trust employs a Chief Finance & Operating Officer who leads on strategic financial planning and reporting to the Board; budget setting, development and monitoring. They are supported by the Head of Finance who is responsible for the consolidation and reporting of school data to the CFOO as well as the line management for Finance Managers. As a team we are responsible for delivering financial performance which supports the sustainability of the Trust, and we work closely with school leaders to achieve this.

We use external auditors to ensure our procedures are compliant and followed effectively, and are required to report budget monitoring statements to each Finance, Resources and Risk Committee, to the Trust Board and to the CEO and Chair of Trustees every month.

Alongside this, Trustees have recruited external advisors to perform the role of Internal Assurance provider for the Trust. They are responsible for reviewing focus areas that are determined by trustees each year with reference to the Trust risk register to ensure best practice. Subjects covered in respect of financial procedures have included payroll, procurement and Pupil Premium spend alongside broader topics of policies and risk.

Each school's budget is set and monitored separately, alongside the budget allocated to the central team (funded through school contributions). The Chief Finance & Operating Officer and Head of Finance work closely with Headteachers and School Business/Finance Managers, and attend regular meetings to monitor spend and provide support and challenge.

The Headteacher is responsible for the school's budget and has delegated authority to spend it in accordance with the policies and guidance issued by the Trust Board (we do not operate central purchasing). They are held to account by the central team and Trust Board.

Financial responsibility and decision-making for spending outside agreed delegation sits with the Executive Team and Trust Board. Local Governance Committees have financial oversight and monitoring (but not decision-making) responsibilities, and provide valuable support and challenge to school leaders and the central team.

The Trust has a Reserves Policy which requires each school to have, or be working towards having, a General School Reserve overall of 5% of GAG. Use of these reserves has to be agreed by the CEO and Finance Committee.

Whilst reserves are identified at individual school level, for operational purposes all reserves are amalgamated and held centrally. Some schools have less than 5% reserves and some have more. As a Trust, we are required to have an overall reserve position of at least 5%.

Situations may arise where individually identified school reserves are used for the purpose of Trust-wide development or to help another school to implement changes to achieve financial stability or school improvement. As a family of schools, we are committed to supporting each other, and prioritise development on a needs-driven basis.

The Trust Board would be required to approve the use of reserves in these circumstances. This would reduce the receiving school's reserves position rather than other school's reserves being reduced.

Achieving the Reserves Policy targets of 5% school general reserves and 1% annual contribution to the Trust Investment Fund will be assessed on an individual school's financial circumstances, including current level of reserves.

The Trust provides a Financial Handbook called 'The Pickwick Academy Trust Financial Procedures Manual' and supporting policies to ensure School Business/Finance Managers have clear information in order to comply with ESFA requirements.

The Trust's financial position is monitored by the Trust Board through the Finance Committee, and the CEO and central team are held to account by them.

We are currently exploring how we can support our schools to improve IT provision and resources across the Trust, and become a more environmentally sustainable organisation.

We have made significant investments over the last three years into improving the premises across the Trust and ensuring we are well resourced in terms of staffing.

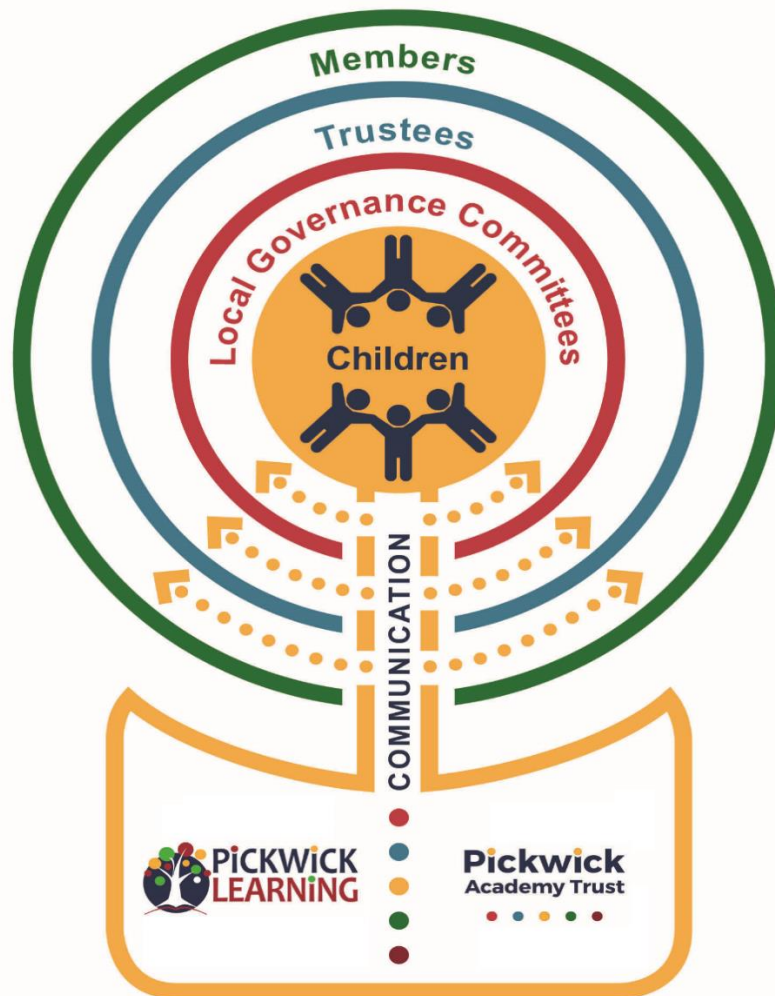We have deliberately invested in the central team as we are committed to growing our Trust to enable other like-minded, outward-facing primary schools to join us and want to ensure we have the capacity to support interested schools. Although our finances are in a stable position, we are never complacent and would require any joining schools to be in a positive financial position or be committed to working with us on a recovery plan.

21. Our organisational structure: The children at the centre of everything we do

The education of our children is the thing that drives us. Not *my* children or *your* children, but *our* children – the children in the communities that Pickwick Academy Trust serves. They are the reason we went into teaching in the first place; they are the reason we are committed to education; they are at the centre of our organisation. In all that we do, we ask ourselves, how will this impact on the outcomes and experiences of children?

Our Trust has been built on moral purpose, developmental and continuous professional development and 'oneness' – one organisation committed to supporting all children to succeed academically, socially and emotionally, and as caring and thoughtful global citizens. We are committed to inclusion, identifying the barriers children and families are facing, and supporting our parents as partners with us in their children's learning.
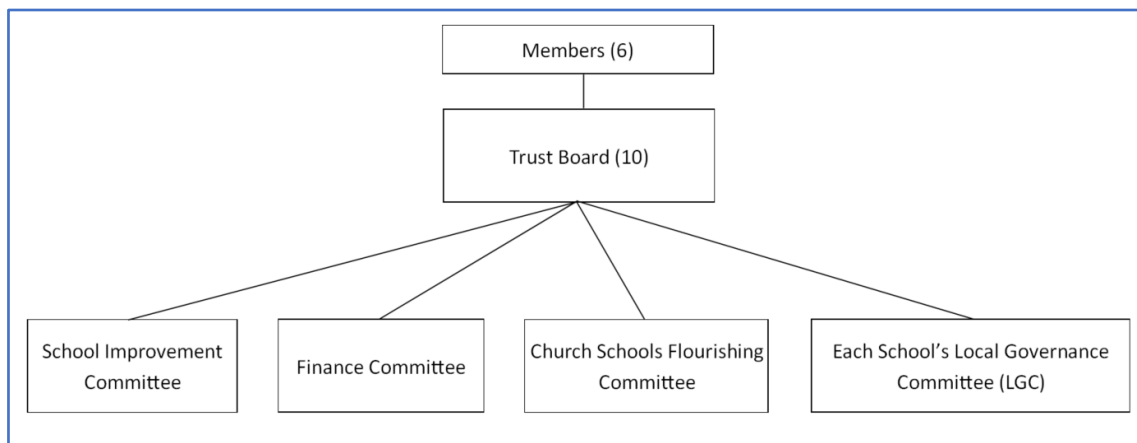
22. Our organisational structure: Governance and the central team

Governance

A traditional Local Authority maintained school Governing Body is the statutory accountable Governing Board of its school, but in a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), the Trust Board is the statutory Governing Board of all its academies. The Trust Board is overseen by a group of 'Members' who hold the Trust Board to account. Each school has a Local Governance Committee (LGC) which has delegated responsibilities defined by the Trust's Scheme of Delegation.

Each layer of governance within Pickwick Academy Trust works together to ensure schools have the resources they need to thrive, and provides support and challenge for school leaders.

Pickwick Academy Trust is a mixed MAT which means it has a mixture of community and church schools within the organisation. 50% of our Members and Trustees are Foundation, and we have strong links and partnerships with the local diocese. For church schools, the Local Governance Committee has an important role in monitoring that the enduring Christian distinctiveness is secured, celebrated and promoted.

Members (6)

Trust Board (10)

| School Improvement Committee | Finance Committee | Church Schools Flourishing Committee | Each School's Local Governance Committee (LGC) |

The central team

The central team is led by a Chief Executive Officer who is accountable for the performance of all the schools in the Trust. Three Directors of Education provide support and challenge to all the Headteachers. The Chief Finance & Operating Officer oversees the work of Finance, HR, Health & Safety and Premises, GDPR and IT compliance strategy and compliance. The central team also employs a Professional Development Director who leads on staff professional development and external development across the Trust.

The central team are held to account by the Trust Board and work closely with school leaders, Chairs of Governors and Local Governance Committees.

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                        ┌─────────────────────────┐
                        │ Chief Executive Officer │
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│ Director  │  │ Director │  │ Director │  │ Professional │  │ Chief Finance│
│    of     │  │    of    │  │    of    │  │ Development  │  │ & Operating  │
│ Education │  │ Education│  │ Education│  │  Director    │  │   Officer    │
│(North Wilts)│ │(South Wilts)│ (North Dorset)│            │  │              │
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│          Headteachers          │       │  Head of Finance, HR & Facilities │
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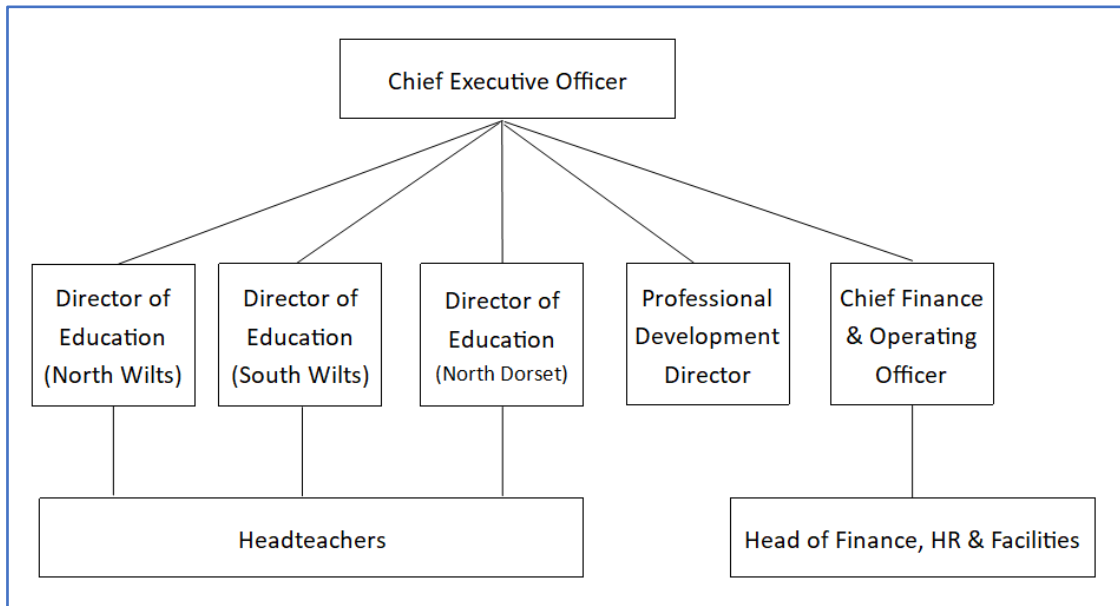
23. Governance: Members, Trustees & Local Governance Committees

Pickwick Academy Trust's 'Articles of Association' set out the legal requirements in respect of Members and Trustees and some aspects of governance, and should be read in conjunction with our 'Constitution' and 'Scheme of Delegation'. The Constitution describes the governance structure for our Trust which is outlined below.

Our Scheme of Delegation sets out the agreed delegations for the Trust Committees and Local Governance Committees. The Scheme of Delegation includes useful appendices which summarise the key delegated responsibilities for decisions and policies. Whilst powers and duties can be delegated, the responsibility for all aspects of the Trust's work remains with the Trust Board.

Members

The Members are responsible for holding the Trust Board to account. They monitor the work of the Trustees and ensure they are upholding the vision and values of the Trust. Members are responsible for appointing or removing Trustees, and provide support and challenge to the Trust Board.

We have six Members, three of which are Foundation Members. The Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) is a Corporate Member of the Trust.

Trustees

Trustees are responsible for the strategic oversight, administration and management of the Trust and all its schools. They provide support and challenge to the central team, develop and deliver the Trust's vision, and ensure compliance with government and ESFA requirements, and company and charity law.

Their core functions are:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision and ethos
2. Holding executive leaders to account
3. Overseeing effective financial performance

The Chair of the Board is responsible for ensuring effective functioning of the Board and setting professional standards of governance and accountability.

Trustees develop and approve Trust-wide policies for all the schools, ensure local governance is strong and effective and have the power to intervene if necessary. They have legal obligations through the Articles of Association of the Trust, and also under company and charity law, as trustees, for the proper conduct of the business of the Trust.

The Trust Board must be made up of Trustees with a broad range of skills and experience, and should include backgrounds encompassing: Education; Finance; Governance; Christian distinctiveness; Strategic Management and Legal. Trustees should also have experience of: Premises; Recruitment/HR and Marketing.

Trustees are also required to state at each meeting any conflicts of interest in regards to Trust business. With the exception of the Chief Executive Officer who is an employee and trustee, staff of Pickwick Academy Trust may not be trustees.

We have ten trustees, five of which are foundation trustees.

Local Governance Committees

Our Local Governance Committees (LGCs) are committees of the Trust Board and are responsible for providing support and challenge to a specific school around vision, ethos, curriculum, standards and pupil experience. LGCs have the best interests of the school and the local community at their heart.

The core functions of a Local Governance Committee are:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school
2. Holding the Head to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
3. Providing support to monitor school expenditure

Governors need to be aware of the progress the school is making through regular reviews and discussion. They also need to be aware of the challenges that the leadership is facing and of the measures being taken to meet these challenges. Support and challenge are crucial to identify and mitigate risks and also to enable the flow of reliable information and intelligence about the school's operation and performance within Pickwick Academy Trust.

The LGC is responsible for the well-being of the Headteacher and should actively promote a sensible work life balance for the Head and throughout the school.

Responsibility for all aspects of financial management, planning and budget monitoring is held at Trust Board level and implemented by the central team and school leaders. The LGC will receive summarised annual budget plans and regular summary budget monitoring reports and will provide support to monitor school expenditure.

The LGC and Headteacher will advise the Trust Board and central team regarding staffing provision and will make recommendations for discussion and approval with respect to strategic changes to the staffing structure to address challenges.

The LGC will ensure that the Christian distinctiveness of church schools, and the ethos and uniqueness of all schools, is cherished and celebrated.

Individual governors will be asked to take responsibility on behalf of the LGC for the oversight of key aspects of the life of the school as link governors. Each governor will work with the school and provide reports to the LGC and Trust Board on their link area.

These will include:

- Special educational needs and disabilities
- Safeguarding
- The allocation and effectiveness of pupil and sports premiums
- Curriculum

- SIAMS/Christian distinctiveness (church schools)

The Trust Board and Local Governance Committees work closely together. LGC Chairs meet regularly with the CEO, and nominated governors are invited to attend Trust Finance and School Improvement Committee meetings.

Local Governance Committees are accountable to the Trust Board and our governance processes are reviewed regularly to ensure that schools and school leaders are getting the support and challenge that they need. A schedule of training for new and existing governors is in place, as well as the opportunity to shadow experienced governors and share best practice.

Good governance in all types of schools is characterised by a focus on six core strategic functions:

1. **Strategic leadership** that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy
2. **Accountability** that drives up educational standards
3. **People** with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity
4. **Structures** that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities
5. **Compliance** with statutory and contractual requirements
6. **Evaluation** to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance

Local Governance Committees consist of between 6 and 9 governors for non-Church schools and up to 11 for Church schools (to ensure an appropriate balance of foundation and non-foundation local governors). One third or more of governors should be elected from the school's parent body; up to one third of governors can be staff members (the Headteacher is automatically one of these members and is a voting member of the LGC); and one third or more of governors should be appointed from the community (these members are co-opted onto the LGC because of their specific skills, interests or experience and can also be parents of children at the school). Additional people may be appointed as associate members usually to assist with specific projects of to provide expertise.

For Church of England schools which were previously Voluntary Aided, a majority of governors must be foundation, and appointed by the SDBE (staff cannot be appointed as foundation local governors). For previously Voluntary Controlled schools, at least 25% must be foundation, and appointed with the approval of the SDBE (staff cannot be appointed as foundation governors).

The LGC should meet at least six times a year and meetings should be professionally clerked. LGC meetings are aligned with Trust Board meetings and example agendas are provided to support governors when planning their sessions.

Members, Trustees and Governors are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the Trust Board's Code of Conduct for governors (see LGC Handbook).

For more information about Local Governance Committees at Pickwick Academy Trust please have a look at our Scheme of Delegation summary and Local Governance Committee Handbook. Appendices included in both these documents describe the roles and responsibilities of each layer of governance and policy approvals.

24. Growth Strategy

Pickwick Academy Trust is committed to growing our family of schools in a measured and sustainable way over the coming years. The Trust is made up of 15 community and church primary schools across North and South Wiltshire, and North Dorset and is organised into three 'hubs'.

The North Wiltshire Hub:

- Aloeric Primary School
- Corsham Primary School
- Ivy Lane Primary School
- Queen's Crescent Primary School

The South Wiltshire Hub:

- Alderbury & West Grimstead CE Primary School
- Greentrees Primary School
- Longford CE Primary School
- Pitton CE Primary School
- Winterslow CE Primary School

The North Dorset Hub:

- Gillingham Primary School
- Ludwell Primary School
- Milton on Stour CE Primary School
- St George's CE Primary School, Bourton
- St Gregory's CE Primary School, Marnhull
- Wyke Primary School

We are interested in growing our three groups of schools and would be keen to hear from outward-facing, ethically-minded schools (or groups of schools) interested in joining our primary-only Multi-Academy Trust.

Our growth strategy does not include secondaries, as we feel our expertise and experience lies in supporting and challenging in the primary sector.

Many trusts are not interested in supporting small schools to join their organisations due to the challenges around their financial sustainability. We believe that these schools are crucial and central to their communities and should be supported, through creative leadership, administrative and governance strategies, and nurtured to join strong trusts to safeguard them for the future for their communities. We have established a Small Schools Strategy (on our website) to support small schools to thrive within our Trust.

We don't have a set number of schools, hubs or pupil numbers that we are aiming for in our growth strategy, but we know that we want to make sure that growth makes sense, schools are grouped geographically, and bringing further schools into our organisation is sustainable for both the Trust and the joining schools.

25. Joining Pickwick Academy Trust: An introduction

We are interested in hearing from schools who are looking for an outward-facing, inclusive, primary-focussed and values-driven multi-academy trust to join.

We believe that all schools, leaders and communities should have a voice in how the organisation is led and grows. We think every school should retain and celebrate its unique identity, ethos, creativity and engagement with its community – we do not want to create a set of clone schools!

Who can join us?

- Community and church primary schools that identify with and share our vision and values, and wish to join a collaborative multi-academy trust
- Schools that want to continue to evolve and benefit from being part of a group of schools that support each other for the common good of all our children
- Schools that want to be part of a family of schools where actively shared best practice, research-informed initiatives and self-review help all to succeed and excel

We believe that it is easier to work together when schools are geographically proximate, and are keen that joining schools are no more than 30 minutes away from their nearest Pickwick Academy Trust school neighbour, and no more than 1.5 hours away from all our schools. We have recently established our three-hub model, so if there are several schools interested in joining together that are further away than this we would still be keen to hear from you.

When schools express an interest in joining Pickwick Academy Trust, we like to build a relationship and explore whether it is mutually beneficial to do so. We do not have a 'marketing department' or 'sales team', instead preferring to meet and discuss the benefits and challenges of working together. A process of 'due diligence' takes place next, for the Trust to understand the standards, finance, staffing, IT and premises position of the school, and for the school to dig deeper into what is included in the central contribution paid to the Trust.

This handbook will be able to tell you a lot of things about who we are but we always find it's best to talk – we'd be delighted to share why we believe Pickwick could make a positive difference for the children and staff at your school.

If you are interested in finding out more about Pickwick Academy Trust or if you would like to explore joining our family of schools please do get in touch.

Contact details:

- Write to us at our registered office address: Pound Pill, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 9YW (Companies House number: 07557894)
- Email us at: admin@pickwickacademytrust.co.uk
- Call us on: 01249 717090
- Follow us on Twitter at: @PickwickTrust

26. Joining Pickwick Academy Trust: Frequently Asked Questions

Q1) What is an academy?

An academy is a state school funded directly by the Department for Education (DfE), rather than through the Local Authority. Previously academies have tended to replace schools which had have poor results or otherwise needed to improve. Whilst there are still some schools where this continues to be the case, the vast majority of schools choosing to become academies are good and outstanding, and do so to realise the benefits of working collaboratively and accessing strong services and support from Trusts. Academies continue to serve children and families in their local area.

Q2) What is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?

A Multi-Academy Trust is a charitable trust which governs a group of schools/academies which are working together to achieve the best outcomes for children. The schools are linked in a formal way. It is set up by a group of schools, usually a local collaboration, that share a common ethos and vision. Each school will continue to have local governance provision (in Pickwick's case these are called Local Governance Committees) to which certain functions are delegated. The Trust is ultimately accountable and responsible for the performance of all its schools. Funding continues to be allocated to each school individually. Having a single Trust Board governing all schools within a Trust means there is one employer for all staff.

Q3) What are the key benefits of joining Pickwick Academy Trust?

Pickwick Academy Trust offers schools the opportunity to work closely together with shared values and aims, and to maximise their teaching and learning performance through mutual support. The benefits are:

- Enhanced and extended opportunities for pupils
- A strong culture of, and commitment to, effective collaboration between schools
- Harnessing and sharing collective expertise and joint staff professional development
- A bespoke, high quality CPD programme included as part of each school's central contribution
- A proven track record, capacity and expertise in addressing school improvement priorities to ensure every child meets their full potential
- Greater capacity to grow and develop our own leaders
- Freeing up Heads to focus on the bits that really matter – children, teaching and learning and safeguarding
- Being part of an organisation that is working at the forefront of new educational initiatives and research – supporting you to deliver the best possible outcomes for pupils
- Our commitment to being a safe haven for Church schools and enabling all adults and children to flourish
- Improved career progression and opportunities for talented staff, enabling us to recruit and retain high quality people; governor training and support
- Financial savings around joint procurement of goods and services, and efficiencies in central services (such as finance, human resources, property maintenance etc)

- A strong, experienced and hands-on central team that are accessible, understand each school's needs and requirements and are committed to the right moral purpose of improving outcomes for pupils
- Support in setting, managing and monitoring school budgets to ensure value for money
- Support in analysing school data, setting appropriate actions and monitoring improvement work
- Expertise and experience in the academy conversion process
- Strong relationships with the DfE, RSC, Teaching School Council, Teaching Schools and Universities

Q4) Will my school have autonomy?

The Oxford Dictionary definition of the word autonomy is:

"The ability to act and make decisions without being controlled by anyone else."

No school ever was, is now, or ever will be, completely autonomous. In Pickwick Academy Trust, schools retain those features which define their identity, uniqueness and Christian distinctiveness for Church schools, reflect the community that they serve and preserve their unique character and values. Trusts and their Trust Boards are accountable directly to the DfE and ESFA (rather than schools being accountable to the Local Authority) for the outcomes of their educational provision. We believe in finding the optimal balance between consistency and self-determination and have set out what we mean by this in our Pickwick Backbone (see section on this in this Handbook).

Q5) Can my school shape policy and alignment?

Yes - all schools, leaders and governors have a voice in our Trust. We share good practice and develop expertise across the Trust. We have set up communication systems and opportunities to allow knowledge sharing and for leaders at all levels to meet and discuss ways in which provision for our children can be developed and improved. We consult when proposing policy and alignment changes.

Q6) What is Pickwick Academy Trust's approach to policies?

Some policies are 'Trust-wide' and some are delegated to Local Governance Committees – this is set out in an appendix of our Scheme of Delegation and on our website (Pickwick List of Policies). Trust-wide policies are reviewed by the central team, ratified by the Board and adopted by all schools. Local Governance Committees have responsibility to develop, ratify and implement local policies.

Help will be provided to Headteachers and Local Governance Committees should there be any policies or procedures missing from what is currently in place.

Q7) Will my school be worse or better off financially as an academy and as part of a Multi-Academy Trust?

The Government is clear that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. Multi-Academy Trusts are not-for-profit organisations and are funded in the same way that maintained schools are, based on

the number of pupils they have. However, instead of the Local Authority top-slicing from the schools, Trust schools receive all of the funding from central government. In order to run the central services and administrate the work of the Trust, each school within Pickwick Academy Trust pays a central contribution of 6% of their General Annual Grant (GAG) funding.

Economies of scale are often cited as a reason for joining Trusts but we think it's more about getting better value for the money we collectively spend without compromising on services and provision. The Trust central team have run the successful procurement of contracts for IT support, catering, cleaning, grounds and telephones and will look to expand the areas covered to ensure value for money and the ability to hold contracts to account at Trust level, therefore removing the burden from schools.

If you are a currently a community school your budget management will be overseen by your Governing Body and Local Authority, therefore all finance related policies you currently have in place are not applicable to academies. The Trust will provide a Financial Procedures Manual and supporting policies to ensure your School Business/Finance Manager has clear information in order to comply with ESFA requirements.

Is you are already a Single Academy Trust you will be familiar with ESFA financial regulations. In order to ensure your School Business Manager is able to work effectively with the Trust Support Team, the Trust Financial Procedures Manual and supporting financial policies will be provided.

Q8) Will my school lose control of its own budget?

The Headteacher will continue to be responsible for setting and managing the school's budget and has delegated authority to spend it in accordance with the policies and guidance issued by the Trust Board (we do not operate central purchasing). They will be held to account by the central team and Trust Board.

The central team will provide support to the Headteacher in setting the budget, and Local Governance Committees continue to provide support in monitoring it. Decision making for spend that is outside agreed limits sits with the central team and Trust Board.

If a school leader wanted to hand over all finance responsibility to the central team, we could explore doing this, but do not currently do this for any of our schools.

Q9) Will a school's annual budget be used to support another school?

No – we do not 'GAG pool' collective school funding. The income generated from the pupils in each school is used for that school only. We charge a central contribution fee of 6% and the remaining 94% of the General Annual Grant (GAG) is delegated to the school. If the school's reserves are in an overall positive position, an additional annual 1% of GAG will be charged to use as an Investment Fund. The Trust Investment Fund is intended to support Trust-wide initiatives and development. In the past this has been used to improve premises, enhance library provision, develop outdoor areas, increase leadership capacity and purchase IT equipment and software for our schools.

Q10) Will a school's reserves be used to support other schools or Trust-wide development?

The Trust has a Reserves Policy which requires each school to have, or be working towards having, a General School Reserve overall of 5% of GAG. Use of these reserves has to be agreed by the CEO and Finance Committee.

Whilst reserves are identified at individual school level, for operational purposes all reserves are amalgamated and held centrally. Some schools have less than 5% reserves and some have more. As a Trust, we are required to have an overall reserve position of at least 5%.

Situations may arise where individually identified school reserves are used for the purpose of Trust-wide development or to help another school to implement changes to achieve financial stability or school improvement. As a family of schools, we are committed to supporting each other, and prioritise development on a needs-driven basis. The Trust Board would be required to approve the use of reserves in these circumstances. This would reduce the receiving school's reserves position rather than other school's reserves being reduced.

Achieving the Reserves Policy targets of 5% school general reserves and 1% annual contribution to the Trust Investment Fund will be assessed on an individual school's financial circumstances, including current level of reserves.

Q11) Will we be able to improve the services and support we offer as a school to our children and their families?

Children and families should directly benefit from your school's membership of our Trust through an improved capacity to buy into support services which could include speech and language, pastoral care, family support or education psychology.

Q12) What will joining a MAT actually mean for the staff and families of a school?

Life continues as usual with the ethos, values, identity and culture of the school remaining individual to the school and therefore unchanged. For children, it is unlikely that they would see much change in their day-to-day school lives. Parents / Carers are also likely to experience little visible change as a direct result of joining the MAT - the staff, uniform, premises and curriculum will all continue to be the same and we will work collaboratively with our partner schools to meet the needs and interests of our pupils.

For staff, it is pretty much business as usual too, although there are increased opportunities to work with colleagues from other schools and share best practice, as well as some of the business functions being provided by the central team. For Headteachers and school leaders, the support of the central team, strength in numbers and access to a wider network of leaders can be helpful, especially if they are new or inexperienced, or if tackling a particularly challenging period in the school's development (COVID-19 being a recent very good example!).

Staff pay and conditions is protected by TUPE transfer and we have matched our policies and terms and conditions to those of the LA. This means that even if staff get a promotion and move to a Pickwick contract, they will still have strong terms and

conditions. We match pay for staff to the nationally agreed pay-scales so staff are pay in line with those in LA schools. Pensions are unaffected.

Q13) Will our school staff end up working in a different Trust school?

This is possible, but only if existing staff choose to do this to further their career or experience a different school. There have been examples recently of staff successfully applying for promotions in other schools within the Trust. However, staff would never be directed to work in another school against their wishes – we do not have portability or mobility clauses in any of our contracts. Leaders would always take account of preferences, experience and physical location before suggesting a move; we would try and accommodate requests from staff who are interested in moving schools or who are looking for a new challenge. When a school converts and becomes an academy, staff transfer via TUPE and are employed by Pickwick Academy Trust.

Q14) Will the current Headteacher of a school remain in charge and retain their status, position and responsibility?

This is the job Headteachers are paid for and they will continue to do it. Following conversion, the Headteacher remains in charge of their school and retains their status, position and responsibility. The only change is that they are held to account by the CEO, Directors of Education and Trust Board, in partnership with the Local Governance Committee rather than by the LA and governing body. In the future if the Headteacher decides to leave the school for whatever reason, it is possible that we may explore alternative leadership structures with governors if appropriate to the needs of the school.

Q15) Who would carry out Headteacher appraisal?

Headteacher Appraisal is carried out by the CEO, in liaison with the Directors of Education (as school improvement leaders) and Chairs of Local Governance Committees. We use an experienced external advisor to support this process to ensure it is robust and externally verified. We are committed to ensuring all Headteachers have aspirational targets that match their schools and the Trusts improvement outcomes. The Trust's Chair and Vice Chair approve pay recommendations for Headteachers.

Q16) What about career progression for a Headteacher?

As our Trust grows it is possible that future Executive Headteacher and/or school improvement leadership opportunities may arise. We provide executive coaching for Headteachers as part of the school's central contribution, and Heads attend fortnightly professional development and briefing sessions. We support Heads and other senior leaders who want to undertake the NPQH and/or NPQEL qualifications.

Q17) Can Church of England Schools join?

Yes – we are a mixed Trust which means we have community and church schools. 50% of our Trustees and 50% of our Members are foundation and we have mixed articles of association. We have a dedicated Director of Education who leads on Church Schools Flourishing and who supports schools in SIAMS and recruitment in our church schools. One of our Trustees chairs our Trust Committee for Church Schools Flourishing. Many

church schools across our regions are small and rural – we have developed a Small Schools Strategy to support small schools to thrive within our Trust.

Q18) How are central services paid for?

The annual budget process includes discussion and agreement about the resources required to fund our central services.

This is expressed as a percentage contribution based on the General Annual Grant (GAG). For schools in our Trust this is 6%.

The Educational Skills and Funding Agencies (ESFA) pay all schools' funding to a Pickwick Academy Trust bank account. Funding is received on a monthly basis and is then allocated to the finance system of each school, after deduction of one month's contribution to central services (6%).

Discussions with schools who express an interest in joining Pickwick Academy Trust will include this information as part of the due diligence process. It is possible that the contribution rate will be increased where additional resources are required to assist a school which has been determined to be in a negative Ofsted category.

Q19) How much support will be given for the process of academy conversion?

The process will be project managed on your behalf by the central team together with our professional partners, HR consultants and legal teams. Local Authority schools will be able to access a £25,000 academy conversion grant to support this work. It is recommended that schools plan for and allocate additional administrative and school business manager time/resource to support the smooth running of the conversion process, both in the due diligence and post conversion stages.

Q20) What is the timescale for conversion?

From submitting an academy order to conversion usually takes 6-9 months. Time will be required before and after submitting an academy order to carry out a transparent two-way due diligence process.

Q21) Are schools still inspected separately by OFSTED if they are in a Trust?

Yes, schools continue to be inspected individually as an academy. Following conversion, Ofsted usually do not inspect a school for 18-24 months.

Q22) Will our governing body lose status and power to make decisions affecting our school?

Following conversion, the local governing body will become a Local Governance Committee (LGC). This ensures that its status as a key committee of the Trust Board is assured. The Trust becomes legally accountable for the school, so the Local Governance Committee has less statutory responsibility. The Trust Board delegates powers and responsibilities to LGCs as set out in our Scheme of Delegation (summarised in an appendix on our website for easy reference).

LGCs continue to be responsible for setting the school vision, driving school improvement and ensuring the best possible outcomes and life experiences for children.

The LGC continues to support the setting and monitoring of school budgets, but ultimate accountability and decision-making for finance sits with the executive team and Trust Board. Finance link governors are invited to the Trust's Finance Committee to ensure transparency and to provide additional support and challenge to the Board, and are encouraged to attend school budget monitoring meetings.

We believe that by sharing out the statutory responsibilities of governance and working together, LGCs become more effective in their focus to provide challenge and support in the delivery of educational excellence and to ensure the drive for outstanding outcomes for all young people. This approach also shares the workload and reduces duplication.

Q23) How do you communicate with Local Governance Committees?

The Trust subscribes to an online platform called Governor Hub. All Pickwick schools are automatically included and we have received positive feedback from Trustees and Governors. There is a shared area on the Hub where we post all Trust documentation including minutes of meetings, the Strategic and Trust Development Plan, the Scheme of Delegation, Trust policies and recordings of governor training sessions (we run six governor online training sessions a year). Local Governance Committees use Governor Hub to securely communicate with governors and post their agendas and papers on it. Notifications and messages can be uploaded and shared with all governors and trustees.

Q24) What is the bigger picture both locally and nationally?

Local Authorities have seen their role diminish, as more and more schools convert to academies, and have experienced large cuts in the services they are able to provide. This is against a backdrop of the government strongly encouraging schools to join Trusts and become academies.

We recognise that the national education landscape is constantly changing and evolving. Any directed changes from the DfE may impact on the information provided in this document which will be updated regularly. Any changes that need to be made to our policies and provision will be discussed and agreed in consultation with the Board, Local Governance Committees and Headteachers.