

# Academy Improvement Strategy

**Briefing Paper**

April 2018

## Introduction

This document is a draft; it outlines the approach of The Prospect Trust in supporting all academies within the Trust as they in turn support the Trust's core values. Each Trust Academy will articulate its specific improvement strategies in its annual Quality Improvement Plans. Academy improvement is our number one priority: in The Prospect Trust all academies will improve on the rising tide created by Trust initiatives. Ultimately, this is the measure by which we will be judged – and rightly so.

Academy improvement is, we fully appreciate, an important but extremely complex matter. It can only happen with the full engagement of all interested parties, prepared to consider performance honestly, openly and with a willingness to accept new solutions to seemingly intractable problems. The Prospect Trust benefits from the collective expertise of its constituent Academies and, while we do not claim to have all the answers, we do have the energy and unwavering commitment to work constructively with partners to find new ways through difficulties. A major attraction of involvement in The Prospect Trust is, we believe, that we are stronger together, collaboratively wrestling with the challenges of providing outstanding education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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### 1. Our Vision for all our Academies

The Prospect Trust will build on the considerable strengths within each Academy so that each is an exceptional beacon of excellence within their phase of education. Trust Academies will support learners in realising their goals; all members of the Trust communities - staff and councillors - will work as one to that aim. The young people entrusted to us will have a curriculum and enrichment offer which is engaging, enjoyable and provides genuine challenge and progression. Outstanding teaching alongside support to accelerate personal development will help them gain academic success and the essential skills and attitudes needed to successfully negotiate their way through a lifetime of opportunities and challenges.

All Trust Academies will strive to be distinguished in their provision and to that end will aspire to be in the top 10% of institutions nationally. As a minimum, performance measures will be benchmarked to those achieved by the top 25% of institutions nationally. The spirit and principle of this will apply across all key stages as well as to cohorts regarded as at risk of underachieving (for example, learners categorised as having a disadvantage). Consequently, illustrative measures for performance at secondary and tertiary phases might include:

Age range	Key performance measure
11 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The progress of pupils in each of the Key Stage 2 assessments (Reading, Maths and Writing) will be 'above average' and aim to be 'well above average'</li><li>• The percentage of pupils meeting expected standards in all three Key Stage 2 assessments will be at least 5% above the national average</li><li>• Pupils identified as disadvantaged will make progress that is scored as positive in each of the Key Stage 2 assessments</li><li>• Pupil attendance will be in line with that achieved by the top 25% of schools nationally</li></ul>
16 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners' GCSE Progress 8 score will be 'above average' and aim to be 'well above average'. No subject area will be identified as being in the bottom 25% nationally</li><li>• The percentage of learners gaining a grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSE will be at least 5% above the national average</li><li>• Learners identified as disadvantaged will have a Progress 8 score that is positive</li><li>• Learners' attendance will be in line with that achieved by the top 25% of institutions nationally</li></ul>
18 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Value-added by subject area is at least equal to that achieved by the top 25% of institutions nationally and there will be no subject area identified as being in the bottom 25%</li><li>• Under ALPS the teaching and learning measure is at least equal to that achieved by the top 25% institutions nationally (i.e. 'excellent' or better) and there will be no subject area identified as being in the bottom 25%</li><li>• The proportion of all learners and disadvantaged learners attaining their expected grade will be in line with that achieved in the top 25% of institutions nationally</li></ul>

## 2. How do we plan to do this?

In general, our approach is to utilise existing strengths and leverage relevant areas of success developed at Academies within the Trust. In addition, the Trust will:

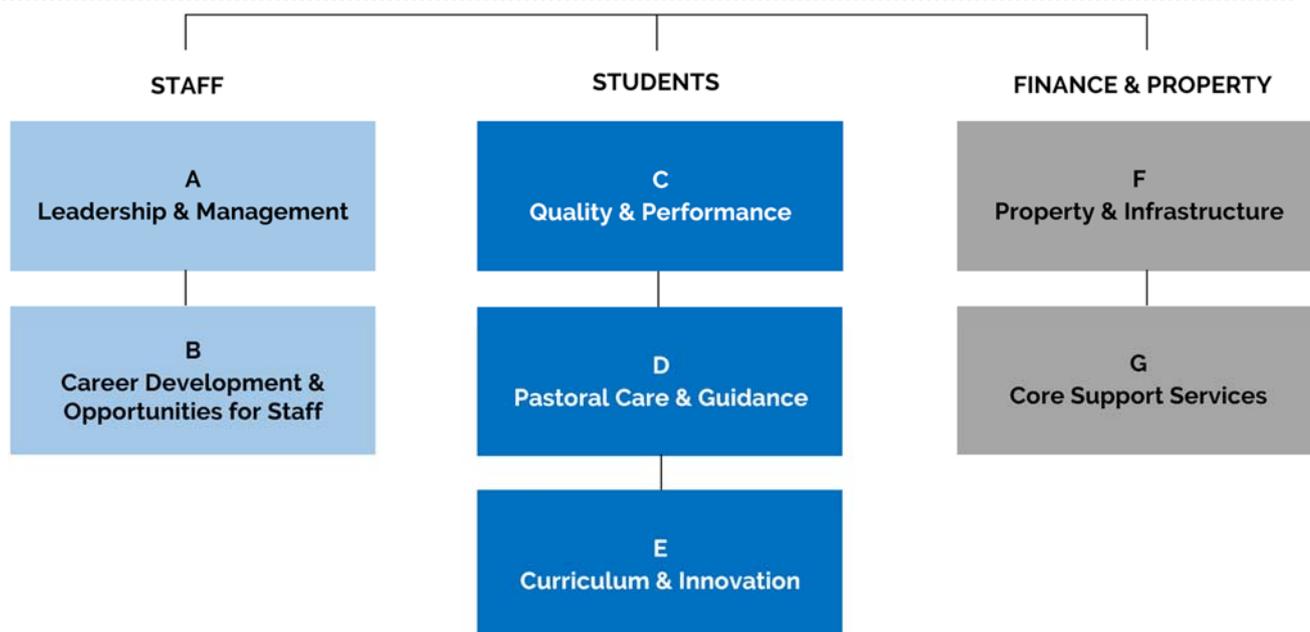
- Standardise across the Trust a value added system with access to the national database
- Agree clear and realistic 3-year performance targets in line with the top 25% benchmark as well as the expectations of similar schools where performance is measured in absolute terms (e.g. 5 + pass rates in maths or English)
- Commission a small, experienced Quality Review team, comprising experienced Trust staff and independent external experts, to undertake periodic reviews of each Trust Academy. These teams will report to the relevant Academy Quality Council and The Trust
- Use outcomes to inform target setting, professional development and be articulated through the Academy Quality Improvement Plans.

## 2. Areas we will focus on

The following notes explain our thoughts around each area:

### Academy Improvement Plan – areas of focus

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## **A) Leadership and management**

The Prospect Trust understands well that excellent leadership of our Academies is fundamental if we are to achieve distinguished student outcomes and a community of aspiration across the Trust. Inspirational leaders at all levels of the organisation, supported by talented, effective management, are essential to our vision of academy improvement. The Trust will:

- Take a systematic approach to developing inspirational, confident leaders and effective managers at all levels within and across our Academies
- Ensure the appropriate forums are set up to share best practice across and between leadership tiers in the Academies
- Review lines of accountability to ensure consistency of approach, particularly in core curriculum areas, through shared specifications, moderated assessments and common teaching approaches

## **B) Career development and opportunities for staff**

The Prospect Trust will enhance training at the Academy, offering effective targeted CPD which will provide opportunities for career advancement. The Trust will:

- Develop a programme to identify, support and train future leaders across the Trust
- Involve lead Academy staff, at curriculum level, to a shared knowledge of curriculum resources, teaching strategies and assessment
- Encourage Academy staff to participate in research-based learning, with the possibility of gaining M level accreditation, in order to accelerate pedagogic improvement
- Encourage knowledge transfer and best practice sharing, enabling effective, cohesive joint curriculum planning especially in the key areas of English, maths and science
- Provide opportunities for pre and post-16 teaching experience

## **C) Quality and performance**

The Prospect Trust benefits from the involvement of Academies with long and distinguished records of outstanding examination success. We will leverage this proven approach to driving up quality, utilising the skills and expertise of key staff to work with Academy leaders. The Trust will:

- Utilise expertise to improve self-assessment processes across the Trust, characterised by analytical rigour and the ability to identify strengths and under-performance as a precursor to targeted action, resource allocation and quality improvement
- Establish quality review panels, incorporating Academy staff and external advisors, to analyse quality of provision and performance data
- Ensure these quality review panels strengthen evidence-based self-evaluation procedures, creating quality improvement plans which are ambitious and achievable
- Utilise experience across the Trust to develop our plans for a cross-Trust peer review scheme involving sharing, moderation and quality assurance
- Charge the Academy Quality Councils with monitoring performance throughout the year using reliable data measurement and reports from the review teams to design effective intervention strategies to ensure that no learner is left behind

- Utilise experience and talent from across the Trust to address achievement gaps which will improve educational prospects
- Benchmark the Academy's performance with the best in the country in order to identify areas for improvement quickly and allocate resources accordingly
- Apply effective budget management to mean that investment in Academy resources for teaching and learning will grow
- Commit to supporting learners with additional learning needs through a combination of classroom support, allowing them to make good progress alongside their peers, and 1-1 support to address specific needs
- Support the contribution made by the curriculum of each Academy to its distinctive ethos

#### **D) Pastoral care and guidance**

Learners will receive support and guidance to help them thrive on a day-to-day basis and when they move between Academies at age 11 and 16. Additional support, including specialist provision, will help those experiencing significant challenges in their lives maintain continuity in their learning. The Trust will:

- Ensure the highest level of safeguarding practices, supported by a cross-Trust pastoral board
- Develop a Trust attendance policy; learner attendance at the Academy will be benchmarked against similar schools nationally
- Create improved progression opportunities and a shared language across education phases leading to a clearer, broader understanding of progression barriers at transition points with joint planning to address and reduce barriers to learning
- Build further on the existing excellent partnerships with business, industry and Higher Education in order to offer curriculum and developmental opportunities to learners and influence the curriculum to maximise their employment prospects. The Trust will leverage these links to further develop pupils' essential skills for employment, raise ambition and aspiration
- Extend the use of the on-line platform Kloodle into all Academies for pupils to build CVs and a portable profile which captures work experience, volunteering and enrichment activities

#### **E) Curriculum and innovation**

The Prospect Trust aspires to be recognised nationally as being a leading provider of education, shaping the future, not waiting for it. It intends to build on the large number of learners studying across the Trust and the excellent outcomes they achieve, the outstanding judgements made of its Academies and its extensive links with the Local Enterprise Partnership and businesses to develop new directions and innovation. The Trust will:

- Strengthen its offer to attract new teachers including opportunities to teach across the 11-18 year age range; gain valuable professional qualifications; access a package of other benefits
- Develop plans to create a Teaching School Alliance with Academy staff centrally involved

- Consider carefully the opportunities arising from the Sainsbury review to consider exciting opportunities for Advanced and Technical programmes which meet the skills needs of the local economy, complement existing provision offered locally and improve opportunities for enterprise and employability
- Establish an advisory board of local businesses to inform future curriculum planning
- Ensure that all learners successfully make the transition into post-16 education, apprenticeships or employment

## **F) Property and Infrastructure**

- A key strength of the Trust is a track record of actively securing improvement to buildings and facilities. Too often education has been required to wait for accommodation to fail, or become dangerous, before improvement funds have been allocated by Government or a Local Authority.
- The Trust will undertake a detailed review of the use and condition of the accommodation at each Academy. The outcome of each review will, when taken in conjunction with other key documents (such as the need assessment and quality improvement plan), enable the Trust to determine the likely expenditure necessary in the short and medium terms. It will also evaluate the extent to which the projects identified are vital to the day-to-day operation of the Academy and impact upon the learners' experience.
- Once priorities for capital investment are agreed, with accurate costs, a realistic timescale for completion of the works can be formulated. The Trust will seek to generate a surplus annually which will, in part, be used to finance its capital investment programme.

## **G) Core Support Services**

The Prospect Trust is committed to supporting each Academy to focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for learners. The Trust will be self-sufficient and capable of generating surpluses to invest in the future development of its Academies. The Trust will:

- Release each Academy's key leaders from responsibility for finance and support services which will allow them more time to focus on the core purpose of improving learners' educational performance
- Generate 'saved' leadership time resulting from the Trust's approach to managing the delivery of core services, such as Finance and Estate management, across its Academies
- Strengthen financial management and financial controls
- Generate a pool of resources to put back into approved Academy initiatives. This will be achieved by a combination of reviewing existing expenditure to find opportunities to achieve synergies and careful consideration of ways to improve income generation
- Harness the bargaining power of the Trust in procurement to improve value for money
- Release the Academy's key people from such resource intensive responsibilities allowing them more time to focus on the core purpose of improving learners' educational performance