

# SAND Academies Trust

## School Improvement Strategy



Supporting Achievement and Nurturing Development



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# Opening statement and Context

## Opening Statement

SAND stands for Supporting Achievement and Nurturing Development.

Our Trust ethos keeps the pupils at the centre of all that we do, and our overarching aim is to ensure the best outcomes for pupils in education, care and life opportunities.

School improvement is the key to driving this. Developing school effectiveness is at the heart of the process of raising standards. It allows us to deliver education and care for children that is of the highest quality.

Our staff are our greatest asset and work relentlessly to achieve our aims. We believe that Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff is key to school improvement. This incorporates unlocking and nurturing talent and potential in staff and growing our future leaders. Investing in our staff skill set supports our pupil outcomes and drives school improvement.

An effective Academy Trust uses its school improvement strategy to ensure accountability, drive strategic thinking and deploy resources to improve outcomes for pupils. Our schools achieve levels of autonomy by achieving good outcomes for pupils and intervention by the Trust will be in inverse proportion to the monitored success of each school. This follows the principles and guidance set out in the Scheme of Delegation.

## Context

SAND Academies Trust launched on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019 and currently has 5 schools in Gloucestershire, of which 1 is a mainstream primary school and 4 are special schools.

Please see [www.sandmat.uk](http://www.sandmat.uk) for more details of our Trust and links to each of our schools.

This document should be read in conjunction with the SAND AT Strategic Plan, which is available on our website and the SAND AT Trust Development Plan.



# Ethos and Vision

## **Our commitment**

We take our responsibility for the education, safety and wellbeing of children and young people very seriously and are committed to playing our part in developing a quality educational provision across Gloucestershire, and beyond.

- ❖ As a partnership we will achieve more together and therefore:
  - ❖ Improve outcomes, opportunities and life chances for children and young people
  - ❖ Offer more / wider support for their families
  - ❖ Share and develop staff expertise
- ❖ We will create a Trust which is child-centred, giving children and young people, families and carers a voice.
- ❖ Through collaboration we will challenge and maximise potential for our schools and individuals.
- ❖ We will ensure the individual identity of each school.
- ❖ We will develop a climate which is open to change and development.
- ❖ We will shape the future by influencing services and provisions.
- ❖ Individuals will be empowered to make decisions using research-based evidence to ensure the quality of education has sound intent, clear implementation and accountable impact.
- ❖ Community engagement will be embedded in learning experiences, both the local community of the provision and the children and young people.
- ❖ Opportunities and activities will be guided to support transitions for future learning and employment.
- ❖ Skills and knowledge of all employees will be utilised to improve educational outcomes for children and young people regardless of the accommodation where they are placed.

# Our Aims

To provide the best possible education for children and young people, including those with additional and complex needs, in both mainstream and special schools.

To achieve excellence through innovation, creativity and continuous improvement

To direct the maximum resources available to the Trust's schools, facilitating and servicing high standards

To build formal and informal partnerships across Gloucestershire and beyond

To develop a Trust which is outward looking and enterprising

To support, challenge and improve underperforming schools

To develop multi-agency working practices

To utilise internal and external providers in the pursuit of excellence based upon our pupil need

To utilise the skills and experience of staff and leaders across the Trust to the best advantage of the children and young people

To develop children and young people's independence skills and support families to take part in a parallel journey with their child and they prepare for adulthood

To provide an environment where staff can continually develop and progress their careers

To maximise value for money by continued attention to costs and streamlining and centralizing working practices where appropriate

To play a strategic role across the region by linking with other organisations such as GAPH, GASH, GASSH, G15, GSP, National Star College, University of Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire College, SGS Stroud College, training providers (Prospects and Bridge), Parent Carers (Face 2 Face), Forwards Employment, GFirst LEP, local businesses and voluntary sector organisations

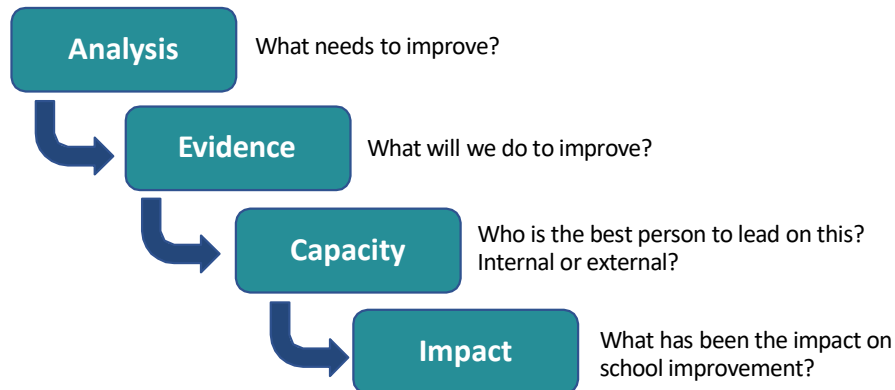


# School Improvement Model

Our School Improvement model enables incisive challenge, accountability and timely support for schools to ensure that all children within the Trust achieve the best possible outcomes and that Trust priorities are met. We have developed effective systems that inform the Trust Risk Register and ensure a rigorous approach to school improvement at all levels.

School improvement is a continuous journey to ensure that all pupils receive the best offer, and this requires a cycle and package of accountability and support that provides regular opportunities to reflect, monitor, review and mitigate throughout the academic year. Each school is individual in the support that it requires to continue to grow. We recognise using our school improvement cycle, that some schools may have an area of medium risk but be a low-risk school overall. To categorise the level of support a school requires we use a combination of school self-evaluation (SLT monitoring/SDP, SEF) and external review, therefore a school could be low-medium once the full picture is investigated but this can change over time.

SAND AT School Improvement model is based on clear, systemised approaches to school improvement, incorporating **4 key questions**:



The premise of SAND AT Improvement Strategy is that each Headteacher takes ownership of their individual school, including monitoring, actioning intervention and evidencing impact. The headteachers share good practice and innovation and support each other as appropriate to ensure good practice and expertise are maximised across the Trust. The Local Advisory Board and Trust Board's Quality of Education committee will monitor school improvement.

If a school is presenting as high risk and in need of intervention, it receives a higher level of scrutiny and support; brokered and monitored closely by the CEO. Where appropriate a Trustee working party will be set up to support this process.

# The School Improvement Cycle

Each school carries out a school improvement cycle which informs the School Development Plan. Evidence from this, headteacher reports to the Local Advisory Board (LAB), pupil progress data and EHCP outcome data will be used by the CEO and external SIPs to diagnose / analyse / identify areas for development, and to establish either the embedding of existing practice or the adoption of new interventions / initiatives.

The CEO and Quality of Education committee review each school's self-evaluation of the School Development Plan, SIP reports and SLT monitoring to ascertain the impact of school improvement. The length of the cycle will depend upon the particular needs of the school, proximity to Ofsted inspection and the nature of the school improvement.



The process provides evidence of, and a starting point for, further school improvement, and will enable the CEO to identify commonalities across all of the schools.

A school review will also be used to determine which member of Trust-wide staff, or external consultant, has the appropriate skill-set, knowledge and experience to support a particular aspect of school improvement.



# Support categories and levels of support

So that the Trust is able to focus resources effectively, schools will be categorised as needing Low, Medium or High levels of support in terms of how much school improvement support they will require throughout the school year.

The suggested characteristics below are not intended to be exhaustive or definitive but should allow the CEO and Quality of Education committee sufficient guidance to place schools in the appropriate category.

## Low

- Stable and effective leadership group
- DfE data sets are above national – mainstream schools only
- School can evidence pupil progress is at least good, mostly outstanding
- Curriculum is relevant, broad and encompasses preparation for adult life, alongside subject pathways
- Progress against EHCP outcomes is outstanding
- Stable and generally effective teaching force
- Subject leaders can evidence outstanding subject knowledge and knowledge of the quality of learning in their subject across the school
- Learning partners effectively support pupils learning
- Teaching and learning is effective, leading to good progress in raising standards
- No safeguarding concerns
- At least good pupil attendance and behaviour
- Estate in good order
- Quality of remote learning offer is assessed at least good
- Likely to remain at good or better for Ofsted grading at next inspection



# Support categories and levels of support cont...

## Medium

- New, temporary or less effective leadership group
- DfE data sets are in line with national but need improvement in some areas – mainstream schools only
- School can evidence pupil progress is good – special schools only
- Curriculum is relevant, broad and encompasses preparation for adult life, alongside subject pathways
- Progress against EHCP outcomes is good
- Subject leaders can evidence adequate subject knowledge and can evidence the quality of learning in their subject across the school
- Small proportion of new or ineffective teaching force but manageable
- Some concerns over teaching and learning leading to static or declining standards
- Safeguarding concerns – around process and/or practice
- Poor pupil behaviour and pupil attendance is not addressed
- Possible estate concerns – H&S issues
- Likely to improve on their Ofsted grading at next inspection, currently graded as Requires Improvement
- Quality of remote learning offer is assessed as good

## High

- Unstable, new, temporary or ineffective leadership group
- DfE data sets are below national – mainstream schools only
- School cannot evidence good pupil progress – special schools only
- Curriculum does not conform with Ofsted expectations or encompass preparation for adult life
- Progress against EHCP outcomes is poor
- Serious concerns over teaching force
- Serious concerns over the quality of teaching and learning leading to lower than expected outcomes
- Serious concerns over safeguarding
- Serious concerns over H&S issues
- Poor pupil behaviour and attendance
- Likely to drop an Ofsted grading at next inspection, or currently graded as special measures
- Quality of remote learning offer assessed as requiring improvement

# Monitoring and accountability

All schools have a programme of monitoring teaching and learning that is led by the senior leadership team. This will include:

- Learning walks
- Lesson visits
- Book looks
- Learning environment reviews
- Curriculum and subject reviews
- Monitoring of teacher planning and pupil progress records
- Pupil progress reviews and action plans – at individual teacher and whole school level
- Teacher performance management – linked to SDP targets and evaluated to inform the SDP
- Annual School Development Plan
- School Self-Evaluation document (SEF)
- Ofsted report and associated action plan
- Rapid Action Plan – for schools graded as special measure by Ofsted
- Pupil voice

**Assessment Data:** All schools complete data drops throughout the school year, which are used to carefully monitor pupil progress. Our mainstream school benchmarks data against national data sets and this informs school improvement targets. In special schools national benchmarking data is no longer available and pupil progress is monitored on an individual basis against Education, Health and Care Plan outcomes and individual learning outcomes.

# Monitoring and accountability

## Cont....

SLTs closely monitor pupil behaviour and attendance to evaluate the impact of targeted interventions for identified pupils, for example thrive, Elsa, lego therapy etc.

Schools maintain a remote learning offer for pupils unable to attend school. The impact is monitored by reviewing pupil progress and parent/carer feedback. Details of remote learning can be found on the school websites.

The LAB monitor the quality of education through reports from the headteacher and subject leads and focused learning walks. LAB members complete visit proformas which are shared with the CEO and Quality of Education Trustees.

The CEO and Trust Board committee monitor the improvement of each school via the CEO report to the committee, headteacher reports, external SIP review reports, pupil progress data, LAB reports, school visits and inviting key staff members from across the Trust to present.

Safeguarding is central to all aspects of school life, including the curriculum, teaching and learning and pupil care – see the Safeguarding policy. Monitoring of safeguarding is reviewed at least annually by the SIPs to ensure external scrutiny.

The Trust Quality of Education committee invites attendance from identified staff from schools to showcase good practice and monitoring of identified areas.

Schools in an Ofsted category receive additional, bespoke support and monitoring, as identified in the Rapid Action Plan (RAP), School Development Plan (SDP) and School Self-Evaluation (SEF).

All schools can call on expertise, skills and experience across the Trust in liaison with the CEO.

The Trust has an in-house best practice and development systems – including peer-to-peer support and mentoring and best practice networks – see appendix 2.

Additional support for schools is supported by the SAND AT Lead for Training and Outreach, who can identify expertise available within the Trust and monitor the impact.

The Trust has introduced a Lead for Mental Health and Wellbeing and a Lead for Safeguarding, who work across the Trust to support pupils and staff through planned interventions and advisory clinics. They will provide staff training in identified areas linked to pupil wellbeing, school improvement and staff development.

Secondments: where appropriate, a member of staff with identified expertise will be seconded to another Trust school for a period of time to support school improvement. Staff are also seconded to a named Trust school to develop expertise to drive school improvement in their own school.

# External support and scrutiny

- School Improvement Partner (SIP) consultants are commissioned at each school to support and monitor school improvement.
- Where possible, all SIPs are trained Ofsted inspectors, or have expertise in identified areas. They challenge and support the school senior leadership teams in their self-evaluations and reflections of their school and provide perspective on improvement strategies that have been successful or that are at risk of not having the desired impact. SIP reviews take place following a timetabled schedule; however, additional reviews can be commissioned via the CEO.
- The SIP conducts a "stock-take" meeting with each school, assesses a school's overall level of risk, defines specific areas for support, deploys resources for support and produces an action plan accordingly.
- The SIPs make a formal assessment against the OFSTED key areas (the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, leadership and management) in order to verify the school's self-evaluation. This triangulation provides confidence for the Trust Board that the approaches and strategies adopted by the schools are effective and fit for purpose. The visit focus will be based on the lines of enquiry decided on by both the school leadership team and the SIP and in liaison with the CEO if a school is at risk. Visit reports are shared with the Local Advisory Board and Trustees on the Quality of Education Committee. All reports have action plans that the progress of school improvement can be measured against. The impact of actions on teaching and learning and pupil outcomes is monitored by the SLT, the LAB and the Quality of Education Trustee committee.



# Continuing Professional Development

- SAND AT has a Training out Outreach department, grown on from the strength of the former Teaching School Alliance run by The Milestone School, in conjunction with Coney Hill Primary school. This provides comprehensive professional development for all staff and outreach support to both primary and special schools in the area. SAND AT Training and Outreach is a partner with Odyssey and Balcarras teaching school hubs and has a proven record in initial teacher training, enabling us to identify, support and shape future teachers for our schools.
- All staff, whatever career stage, have entitlement to high quality development in order to provide the best education and care for pupils.
- As a Trust we encourage staff to meet, collaborate and to share experiences and innovations. We are building our action research and evidence-based practice to inform teaching and learning.
- Heads, senior leaders and teachers benefit from supportive performance management with targets linked to professional development and the school development plan. Learning partners have appraisals including targets on supporting teaching and learning and identify professional development targets.
- Coaching, mentoring, support plans and CPD ensure that staff can improve their skills to support the SDP. We aim to upskill staff not 'find fault and fix'.





# Conclusion

School Improvement is an ongoing, continuous strategy designed to ensure the best outcomes for pupils alongside skill development and associated job satisfaction for staff.

Our School Improvement Strategy will ensure that all pupils are enabled and empowered to be the best learners they can be and that schools are supported to achieve this.

Keeping children at the centre of all we do is essential in our strategy and drives us in our quest to be the Schools of choice, the Trust of choice and the Employer of choice.



## Appendix 1

# SAND Academies Trust CPD Offer

Inductio	Core (All Trust staff) Statutory policies and procedures						
	<b>Leadership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core</li><li>• School</li></ul>	<b>Teachers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core</li><li>• School</li></ul>	<b>Learning Partners</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core</li><li>• School</li></ul>	<b>Playmakers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core</li><li>• School</li></ul>	<b>Support Staff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core</li><li>• School</li></ul>	<b>Central Team</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core</li></ul>	<b>Trustees/Governors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Core</li></ul>
Ongoing	<b>Statutory</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Policies and Procedures (refreshers and changes) eg: Health and Safety, Moving and Handling, Safeguarding</li><li>• Licence requirements eg: Team Teach</li></ul>	<b>Developing Potential</b> <div><b>Leadership</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• HLTA (Higher Level TA)</li><li>• NPQLT (Leading Teaching)</li><li>• NPQLBC (Leading Behaviour/Culture)</li><li>• NPQLTD (Leading Teacher Development)</li><li>• NPQSL (Senior Leaders)</li><li>• NPQH (Headteachers)</li><li>• NPQEL (Executive Leaders)</li><li>• Headteacher Induction programme</li><li>• Middle Leaders programme</li><li>• Senior Leaders programme</li><li>• Mentoring</li></ul></div> <div><b>Expertise</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early Careers Framework (ECF)</li><li>• Learning Partner Development Programme</li><li>• 'New to' programmes (eg: SPLMD, Autism, SEMH, EYFS)</li><li>• Subject/Field Masterclasses</li><li>• Ongoing CPD based on need and aspiration</li><li>• Coaching / Mentoring / Secondments</li></ul></div>			<b>Role</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bespoke mentoring/coaching/training packages to support individual needs</li></ul>		
	<b>Underpinning mechanisms and strategies</b>						
Support	Skills audit and SWOT analysis: to maximise use of in-house expertise and to ensure sustainability	Portfolios of accessible online training and information sharing: Joint Insets/Twilight/Training Days	Individual training and development plans linked to needs of current role and future aspirations	Identification of external professional training providers and practitioners to complement internal expertise	Leverage of delivery partnerships and networks ((e.g: Odyssey and Balcaras Teaching School Hubs, GSP, WGSP, TDP, SWALSS)		
	Places 'sold' to external staff to cover costs of outsourced trainers	Best practice networks: within the Trust and beyond	Trust-wide tracking of needs and monitoring of impact of delivery	Clear links to school / departmental / team / Trust development plans	Harmonised performance management processes and cycles		

## Appendix 2

# SAND School Improvement best practice groups

Trustees	Trust Board		
	<b>Trust Board meeting</b> – 6 per year Chaired by: Kerry Brimfield Attended by: Trustees, CEO (Chair of Quality of Education committee to feed back)	<b>Quality of Education committee</b> – 6 per year Chaired by: Trustee – Bob Pattenden Attended by: Trustees, CEO, school representatives where needed	
Leadership	Executive Leadership		
	<b>School Improvement meeting</b> – 6 per year (in October, January, April, July) Chaired by: CEO – Lyn Dance Attended by: School Improvement co-ordinators as listed below		
	<b>Leadership and Management</b> 4 per year – Sept, Dec, Mar, June Chaired by: SI Co-Ordinator (Lyn Dance) <b>Attended by:</b> Battledown: Nikki Teague Belmont: Kevin Day Milestone: Diane Taylor Paternoster: Annette Fidderman Willow: Peter Hales	<b>Curriculum: Teaching and Learning</b> 4 per year – Sept, Dec, Mar, June Chaired by: SI Co-Ordinator <b>Attended by:</b> Battledown: Leah Steptoe-Vellam Belmont: Chantel Yeates Milestone: Tom Lovell Paternoster: Sam Beltran Willow: Carly Tonks	<b>EYFS Forum</b>
	<b>Safeguarding</b> 4 per year – Sept, Dec, Mar, June Chaired by: SI Co-Ordinator (Kevin Day) Attended by: Battledown: Nikki Teague Belmont: Rachel Carroll Milestone: Diane Taylor Paternoster: Claire Duncan Willow: Nicky Duerden		
	<b>Interventions</b> 4 per year – Sept, Dec, Mar, June Chaired by: SI Co-Ordinator (Chantel Yeates) Attended by: Battledown: Nikki Baker Belmont: Katie Hanna Milestone: Beth Griffin Paternoster: Val Kennedy Willow: Hannah Williams	<b>Continued professional / personal development</b> 4 per year – Sept, Dec, Mar, June Chaired by: SI Co-Ordinator (Claire Murphy) Attended by: Battledown: Nikki Teague Belmont: Chantel Yeates Milestone: Stephen Dowell Paternoster: Sam Beltran Willow: Carly Tonks	<b>Behaviour and Attitudes</b> 4 per year – Sept, Dec, Mar, June Chaired by: SI Co-Ordinator Attended by: Battledown: Carissa Palmer / Karen Cooke Belmont: Paul Shand / Iliana Petrova Milestone: Dan Tyreman / Kerrie Mason Paternoster: Claire Duncan Willow: Hannah Williams
Support	Enhanced by additional support		
	<b>External Challenge and Support</b> All schools have an Ofsted Inspector SIP for 5 visits per year.	<b>SAND Training and Outreach</b> Lead: Claire Murphy	<b>SAND approved Educational Psychologist</b>

SAND Academies Trust  
School Improvement Strategy chart



## Appendix 3

### Action Plan

#### To be drawn up

#### To include

- To recruit a School Improvement Director – which will include leading formal 3 x per year school reviews for each school
- To implement formal peer review from Sept 2022
- To formalise the school support categories
- To formalise secondment programme linked to CPD and areas needing to be developed in a school
- To capture CPD strategy – including library of training videos/ Trustee and Governor training programme
- To formalise Action Research programme and share outcomes [eg EARWIG], ensure evidence-based pedagogy, review and analysis of any new T&L strategies before rolling out [impact]
- Train a SAND AT senior leader to OFSTED inspector level
- Establish a Trust-to-Trust partnership for peer-to-peer reviews and benchmarking [Three Ways School in Bath, or Fosse Way]
- Establish a programme of LAB and Q of E monitoring [eg work experience across the Trust, pupil destinations, careers education etc]