

SUPPORTING ACHIEVEMENT AND NURTURING DEVELOPMENT

We are a
Gloucestershire based
mixed multi-academy Trust

SAND
ACADEMIES TRUST
Supporting Achievement Nurturing Development

Annual Report

2024 - 2025



Welcome

SAND Academies Trust is a Gloucestershire-based mixed multi-academy Trust educating and caring for 1,700 children in five special schools and three mainstream primary settings across the county.

In every school our focus is on building inclusive communities, which means we support our teams to enable the best provision for our pupils, families, parents and carers, no matter their background or circumstance.

Our schools are beacons of excellence in Gloucestershire with six Ofsted inspections in two years, all resulting in Good or Outstanding judgements. We have ensured that we have a stable financial position and a sustainable future in which to invest in our children's education, wellbeing and life chances coupled with attracting, retaining and offering career opportunities to our teams.

As a Trust we provide substantial continual training and outreach, alongside professional and responsive central services to support our schools. Crucially, we strive to support a culture that promotes our common purpose clearly and where the individual character and personality of our schools are maintained.

Nothing we do would be possible without the support of our incredible teams, our Local Advisory Boards and supporters.

In every role, they work hard to give our children and young people the very best possible education, and we never take their dedication for granted.

Martin Hughes,
Chief Executive Officer

Antonia Noble,
Chair of Trustees



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.

Our Journey

SAND Academies Trust was incorporated in June 2019 with The Milestone School and Paternoster School in the Trust.

Through 2020 and 2021, the Trust grew to include Battledown Centre for Children & Families, Belmont School and the first mainstream school, Willow Primary Academy.

In 2022, the Trust was delighted to be approved as the sponsor for a new special school in Stroud, Sladewood Academy. The school opened successfully in September 2023.

In September 2024, we were delighted to welcome Calton Primary, a large mainstream primary school with around 550 pupils, and in July 2025 Tredworth Infant & Nursery joined the Trust with 220 pupils on roll. With Willow Primary, our three mainstream settings now represent a hub of excellence in the heart of Gloucestershire.

We will continue to grow the Trust over the coming years with the intention of becoming a mixed multi-academy trust of choice in Gloucestershire.



JUNE 2019

SAND Academies Trust is incorporated with The **Milestone School** as the sponsor academy. A special school for pupils 2-16 years in Gloucester, with 330 children currently on roll.

JUNE 2019

Paternoster School joins the Trust. A special school in Cirencester supporting pupils aged 4-16 with SLD and PMLD. Paternoster currently has 67 children on roll.

APRIL 2020

The Trust welcomes **Battledown Centre for Children and Families**, a special school in Cheltenham for pupils aged 2-11 years. Battledown caters for children with a range of additional needs.

JULY 2020

Based in Cheltenham, **Belmont School** supports children and young people with communication and interaction, cognition and learning, and sensory/physical needs. The school accommodates 183 students aged 4-16 years.

APRIL 2021

Willow Primary Academy is the first mainstream primary school to join the Trust. The school is based in Gloucester and has an attached Specialist Resource Centre.

SEPTEMBER 2023

The Trust opens a new special school in Stroud for primary children with additional needs. **Sladewood Academy** currently caters for 55 pupils.

SEPTEMBER 2024

Calton Primary joins the Trust with capacity for 630 children. Based in Gloucester, Calton is a mainstream primary school.

JULY 2025

The addition of **Tredworth Infant** to the SAND family creates a hub of three mainstream schools in the heart of Gloucester. The Infant and Nursery setting has 220 pupils on roll.



Our Schools

THE MILESTONE SCHOOL

A vibrant and inclusive community supporting pupils with severe, complex and profound and multiple needs, we strive to enable every child to achieve their full potential. Our approach is pupil-centred and holistic, providing a high quality, individualised education with a strong emphasis on developing communication, life and independence skills. Through academic, social and enrichment activities, our learners are prepared and empowered to take their next steps into adulthood. We are incredibly proud of our school and the pupils, families and staff who work so hard to create a caring, purposeful and positive environment.

BELMONT SCHOOL

Our students join us with a wide range of learning needs and bring with them a wonderful mix of interests, challenges, personalities, and talents. At Belmont we offer a holistic approach to education, wrapping creative and specialist teaching around social and emotional wellbeing. While learning with us, the children are cared for, valued, and challenged in our relational school. All young people are supported to achieve the best possible outcomes during their time at Belmont and beyond.

BATTLEDOWN CENTRE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

With an excellent reputation for outstanding practice in meeting the additional needs of our children, Battledown's learning community is focused on continuous improvement and enrichment, consistently striving for the best possible outcomes for our children and families. Driven by a belief that learning should be rewarding and enjoyable for all, we aim to equip children with the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to make informed choices and lead happy and rewarding lives.

PATERNOSTER SCHOOL

Our vision is to provide a creative, exciting and engaging curriculum with learning experiences to enable our children to gain the knowledge, skills and understanding to develop as active and valued members of our community. Our team offers a flexible, individual programme for every pupil, and we celebrate every single achievement while helping them to progress to the next stage of their development. Paternoster's caring, happy and friendly environment is supportive to all pupils and families, and we are constantly striving for the best outcomes for our children.

SLADEWOOD ACADEMY

At Sladewood, we have created a community of play, laughter, acceptance, curiosity, empathy and a love of learning – and where strong relationships are at the heart of what we do. Learning is approached creatively, using strategies for communication and interaction, thrive, trauma, and restorative practice to support our children's social and emotional wellbeing. As a whole team, and with the support of the community and our partner agencies, we can help prepare our children for a future where they have the confidence, self-esteem and independence to achieve their very best.

WILLOW PRIMARY ACADEMY

Throughout our school and our attached specialist resource, The Piper Centre, everyone takes pride in all they do. Our aim is to make every one of our 210 pupils feel valued and successful, to achieve and to understand themselves as individuals. The children are at the heart of everything we do, developing academically and socially in our friendly environment which offers safety and security while nurturing confidence and independence.

CALTON PRIMARY

Calton is a welcoming three-form entry mainstream primary school and is an integral part of a diverse and thriving community. Our vision to be a nurturing, inclusive learning environment, enabling everyone to be their best, is at the heart of all we do. Calton's recent investment in a specialist resource base within the school is in line with our commitment to building inclusive communities. Families are actively encouraged to be involved in the life of the school where they can be confident of a warm welcome by staff who are passionate about meeting the needs of every pupil.

TREDWORTH INFANT & NURSERY

Our strapline of 'Be Proud, Be Brilliant, Belong' is more than a banner on our website, it denotes the deep connection between belonging and representation and underpins every decision we make. It is echoed in our curriculum, giving children opportunities to be proud of themselves and what they can achieve, enabling them to do their best and be a part of our school and wider community. Part of SAND Academies Trust from 1st July 2025, our school is part of a city hub of mainstream primary excellence with Willow and Calton.

Case Studies

CAMERON

Cameron joined Belmont as a Year 1 whirlwind, fighting against school every step of the way. Dysregulated and easily triggered, Cameron's primary years bubbled with emotion and frustration as he battled with his diagnosis of bilateral sensorineural hearing loss and Oppositional Defiant Disorder with features of ASD and AHD.

As his hearing loss impacted his language development and communication, Cameron's frustrations spilled over into violent and destructive episodes. And this may have defined him had it not been for the unwavering commitment of the Belmont team to work with Cameron and his family to find a way forward.

With the support of skilled classroom staff and interventions practitioners, Cameron found himself able to build healthy and trusting relationships. Using the reflective and relational practices that are the cornerstone of life at Belmont, Cam began to

reflect and think about his choices in a positive and meaningful way. He adopted an outstanding work ethic, achieving all his targets, while building lasting friendships with his peers.

Today, after his 11-year journey at Belmont, Cameron is proudly preparing for his next steps into college, and a foundation skills course that will lead to a supported internship. And it's here that he will continue to thrive, rooted in the deep investment that he, and Belmont, have made in his future.



Case Studies

BETHANY

By age six, Bethany had a history of challenging behaviour and fixed-term suspensions from another mainstream school. Her struggle with emotional regulation would manifest in refusal, and physical outbursts, only heightened by each traumatic transition.

When Bethany moved to Willow in January this year, the school quickly recognised her academic potential alongside her emotional challenges. In partnership with mum, the team quickly implemented a robust 12-week Pastoral Support Plan, focusing on Bethany's emotional regulation so that she could continue to achieve academically.



Through consistent language, positive praise and 1-1 adult support Bethany began developing essential emotional thinking skills. Innovative strategies, including calming techniques, empowered her self-regulation. Whereas she had previously employed behaviours that would see her removed from class, Willow shifted Bethany's mindset by only excusing her from the classroom for positive reasons.

The impact was swift and profound: within weeks, Bethany's behaviour, classroom engagement and relationships improved significantly, demonstrating the powerful potential unlocked through dedicated, tailored support. Willow continues to work closely with Bethany, their efforts bearing fruit with every happy smile she brings to the room.

Case Studies

ALFIE

Alfie's two years at Sladewood tell a magical story of hope and inspiration. Joining school in his Reception Year with Cerebral Palsy, complex medical needs, and delays in his learning, Alfie's interactions had been primarily with adults. He had limited social communication, some challenging behaviours, and was often upset going into school.



The Sladewood team put in place individualised interventions for Alfie's emotional wellbeing, intensive speech and language therapy and Occupational Therapy, and the impact is immeasurable. Alfie has formed the most meaningful friendships, fostered through imaginative play and conversations. And, supported by his dedicated 1-1 support and the safe school environment, he takes safe risks, wanting to be mobile and part of absolutely everything.

This year Alfie took an enormous step forward in happily taking school transport from home to Sladewood every day. This has built not only Alfie's confidence, but also that of his family who are seeing him truly thrive.

"Alfie is so courageous, showing everyone that he doesn't let his condition shape him in any way. He is curious and amazes us every day with his bravery," says Katy Hanna, Headteacher. 'Now that his needs are being met, Alfie's beautiful personality shines more brightly every day'.



Our Trust

OUR CENTRAL SERVICES TEAM

Our experienced and skilled Central Trust team provides business and operational expertise and support for all schools. Having centralised processes enables schools to have the time and resources to focus on their key priorities and aims in respect of the educational offer to their pupils. The Trust has expanded the support functions to ensure we always have capacity to provide first-class support to our schools.

TRAINING & OUTREACH

As finalist in the Circle 2 Success Regional Awards for Talent, Training and Development, this service aims to not only provide training and support for our own

Trust schools, but also to identify and co-ordinate expertise using skilled practitioners to play a greater role in recruiting and training new entrants to the profession. The team leads peer-to-peer professional and leadership development, identifies and develops leadership potential through succession planning and talent management, and provides support for other settings and parents/carers.

In 2024/2025 we provided 42,000 hours of training and development for our teams and worked closely with many schools in Gloucestershire, sharing our expertise and learning from each other. This area is one of the most significant that the Trust will grow and develop over the coming years.



GOVERNANCE

We have an experienced and dedicated Board of Trustees who are supported by a knowledgeable Governance Professional. Each school has a Local Advisory Board (LAB) which plays a key part in the governance structure by supporting Trustees to fulfil their strategic functions at a local level and within the powers delegated to them.

SAND
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Supporting Achievement, Nurturing Development

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

8



ROLES AT TRUST

885



CPD & TRAINING HOURS A YEAR

42,000



PUPILS UNDER OUR CARE

1,711



Highlights from the year

- ✔ We were delighted that **Calton Primary School** joined our Trust in September '24, a wonderful mainstream school providing excellent education in a diverse and thriving community. The building of 'The Space' was a particular highlight for pupils who need additional support. The school had a robust year focusing on inclusion, equity, and achievement. The school successfully embedded support strategies for disadvantaged pupils and EAL learners, with positive results in engagement and progress. Family partnerships were strong, with high turnout at learning workshops, stay and plays, and other celebratory events.
- ✔ A school rated Ofsted Good since the day it opened, **Tredworth Infant** joined in July '25 and is a welcome addition to the Trust. Providing an inclusive educational approach to all they do, we know both special and mainstream settings will benefit from collaborative working with Tredworth. With Willow, Calton and now Tredworth, we have a hub of excellence in the city of Gloucester.



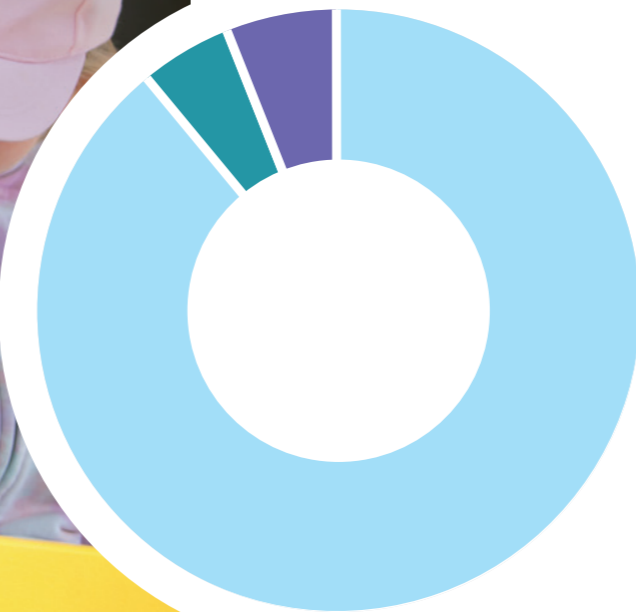
“As a result of a well-thought-out curriculum and high expectations, children get off to a flying start.”

- ✔ **Belmont** has had an outstanding year, not least due to the reaffirmation of its Outstanding status by Ofsted following a rigorous two-day inspection. Inspectors were notably impressed by the relational practice, student engagement, and the teaching standards across the school. The school has also earned the Healthy Schools Award, recognising its commitment to student wellbeing. Student progress has been strong, particularly in English and Maths, with literacy scores jumping from 56% to 73% thanks to focused phonics strategies.
- ✔ **Battledown Centre** reported a highly positive year, marked by exceptional pupil attendance at 94.58%. The school staged a number of enrichment days including World Book Day, Boccia Day, and a Read Write Inc (RWI) support day, which led to significant literacy progress among pupils. New Headteacher Darren Heatley has continued the school's tradition of strong parental engagement and enthusiastic feedback, with plans to involve staff and families in refreshing the school's vision and values from September.
- ✔ **Willow and Piper Centre:** our school improvement journey prioritised inclusivity by fostering a welcoming, respectful environment for all pupils and staff. We promoted equity through inclusive practices, trauma-informed approaches, and curriculum adaptation to meet diverse needs. Professional development continued to enhance staff capacity to support every learner. Pupil voice, wellbeing, and staff collaboration remain central to our ethos, creating a culture of belonging, mutual respect, and high expectations.
- ✔ **The Milestone School** demonstrated remarkable resilience and optimism this year in navigating severe flooding on site: with staff quickly adapting, pupils were soon back at school, supported by the installation of modular classrooms. Discussions with the DfE continue on future site development to benefit our pupils and the wider community. Curriculum innovation was central, while pupils thrived through rich experiences including residentials, performances and themed learning days. Stakeholder engagement was strong with a 221% rise in family feedback and greater pupil voice in shaping priorities. An Ofsted judgement of Good across all areas confirmed the school's continued upward trajectory.



- ✔ **Sladewood** continued to build a culture of nurture and aspiration, with improved attendance and a dynamic enrichment curriculum fostering resilience and engagement. External feedback commended the school's embedded safeguarding culture and vision of 'Together We Will Thrive' – embodying an ethos of belonging. A structured environment continues to support and meet pupil needs, with strong collaboration across the staff team. The school has made huge strides in curriculum mapping, and leaders continue to promote a spirit of learning, empathy, and growth.
- ✔ With its continued focus on community and development, **Paternoster** goes from strength to strength. High attendance levels were recorded, and significant achievements included the success of sensory interventions, high parental satisfaction, and impactful staff training, including trauma-informed practice. The Trust's external advisor praised the school's inclusive ethos, staff dedication, and strong leadership. The commitment to reflective practice and shared learning has positioned Paternoster as a school that is both compassionate and ambitious.

What do we do with our funding?



HOW WE USE OUR FUNDING (£MILLIONS)

Salaries of all our teams	£25.1m	87%
School Resources & Equipment	£2.3m	8%
Overheads, buildings and administration	£1.0m	5%
Direct Costs to the Academy	£28.4m	

Based on forecast summary expenditure for year: 2024-2025

- Salaries of all our teams
- School Resources and Equipment
- Overheads and administration

Overarching Strategic Statement

We will **Build Inclusive Communities** that ensure our schools are beacons of excellence and our pupils, parents and teams are at the heart of all we do.

With strong Governance and sustainability, we will grow organically with the right schools at the right time, where each party will tangibly benefit the pupil's outcomes and life chances.

Maintain and foster our key relationships between Special and Mainstream education.

The focus for confident growth

We will approach like-minded special and mainstream primary schools in our County.

There may be opportunities to expand to other Counties where the geography still allows us to assist readily if needed.

We will work with our partners at the Local Authority and the Department for Education and engage with strategic planning and decision making regionally and nationally.

We will employ our resources to enhance and adapt the learning environment, develop and nurture our staff and utilise technology to benefit our pupils and workforce.

The Trust will provide exceptional support to our schools and enhance our Training and Outreach provision to the wider Community.



The relationship between special and mainstream schools

We will leverage all our expertise to utilize the collaborative relationship between mainstream and special schools ensuring **continuous school improvement**.

SAND will work with mainstream schools to help **inclusion**, training and outreach.

Mainstream schools will work with our special schools on subject leadership and curriculum.

Pillars of success – The Methodology

To achieve this vision, we will reinforce the individual strategic pillars of Trust of Choice, Schools of Choice and Employer of Choice which dovetail into detailed and measurable targets.

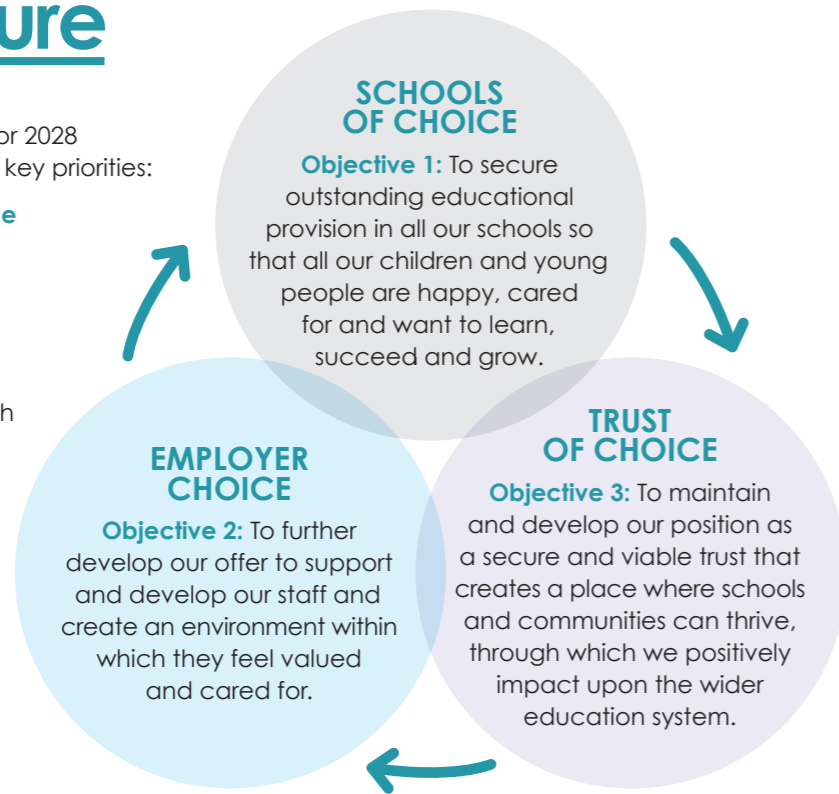
Our plans for the future

We will deliver on our vision for 2028 through the delivery of three key priorities:

- ✔ **to be the schools of choice**
- ✔ **the employer of choice**
- ✔ **and the trust of choice**

In order to achieve the strategic vision, we will focus on three key objectives, which capture our strategy for 2023 to 2028.

Each objective has associated goals and key performance indicators against which these targets will be measured.



Finally

Thank you to all our staff, parents, carers and pupils for making this Trust an incredible place. Special thanks also go to our Local Advisory Board members, Friends of each school who have tirelessly worked with the Headteachers, and charitable organisations such as The Pied Piper Appeal, whose continual support has, undoubtedly, helped so many children in our schools and the county.



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