

Stour Vale Academy Trust

Creating the difference together

Strategic Priorities 2024-27

Values, Ethos and Vision

Stour Vale Academy Trust holds children and young people at the heart of all that we do. We recognise that as a multi-academy trust we exist in order to advance education for the public good. Our mission, therefore, is to improve life opportunities for children and young people by both providing the best possible education and care to pupils in Stour Vale member schools and by having a positive impact across the wider education system.

Our values are encapsulated in four words:

Integrity, Respect, Collaboration, Excellence

Our vision is to be a larger successful family of schools. Stour Vale member schools will serve their communities by providing the excellent education and care which ensures strong academic progress and a broad range of opportunities for personal development. Both individually and collectively, member schools will also have a significant positive impact on the wider education system. Further growth is key to realising our vision as it will increase our collective capacity to facilitate continuous school improvement and to provide high quality inclusive education.

Priority 1

A growing and continuously improving trust

Stour Vale is a trust committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of education and provision for all children and young people. Leaders and staff teams in all member schools and settings are empowered and enabled to accurately self-evaluate the quality and inclusivity of the education and care provided and are expertly challenged and supported as they pursue excellence. Honest, purposeful collaboration, underpinned by a deep understanding of our interdependence and appreciation of our diversity, is integral to our successful growth and evolution.

Key Priorities:

1. Our responsive improvement strategy continues to deliver tailored support and challenge for current members and to schools and providers in the process of joining Stour Vale.
2. We ensure that we have sufficient collective capacity and expertise to both enable and empower previously underperforming schools to improve sustainably and to challenge and support good schools to continuously improve.
3. Our collaborative approach supports continuous improvement and facilitates rapid and sustained improvement.
4. We practice system generosity and be proactive in building positive relationships with schools, providers and trusts.

Key Indicators of Success:

1. All Stour Vale member schools are either:
 - Continuously improving the delivery of high quality and inclusive education, or
 - Rapidly increasing the quality and inclusivity of education
2. Stour Vale Academy Trust is able to clearly demonstrate our positive impact on the wider education system and on underperforming schools in particular.
3. Stour Vale is able to evidence the direct and indirect positive impact of collaboration on continuous improvement of individual schools, providers and the whole trust.

Priority 2

A trust committed to investing in all staff

Stour Vale will be a trust which deliberately builds its capacity and develops the talent of the whole workforce. We will create a high-performing work culture by promoting a shared understanding of our purpose, vision, values and approach. We will clearly recognise the positive impact of the whole staff team on the life opportunities of children and young people and everyone's role in facilitating high-quality education and care, consistently championing the expertise and professionalism of all colleagues in the wide range of roles which surround and facilitate the provision of excellent education and care. We will seek to create opportunities that will enable all individuals across our workforce to continually improve and to progress in their careers.

Key Priorities:

1. We will continue to develop staff understanding of our purpose, vision, values and approach and the benefits of being part of a family of unique schools and settings. In turn this understanding will continue to provide the strong foundation for impactful collaboration and learning from and through research and evidence-based practice.
2. We will define and embed a professional learning framework which offers opportunities for staff in all roles to continually improve and have a greater positive impact on pupils.
3. We will review how we use the flexibility of the trust structure to facilitate sustainable improvement: by creating opportunities for career progression, through proactive succession planning and by minimising the impact of single points of failure and shortage areas.
4. We will support the recruitment, development and retention of the very best staff team by actively seeking to be an employer of choice.
5. Our culture, policies, practices and procedures will value the whole staff team, creating inclusive working environments, promoting well-being, considering workload, supporting flexible working and promoting equality and diversity. We will prioritise effective behaviour and attendance policies which create a safe and positive environment for both pupils and staff.
6. We will continue to deliver high quality training for trainee teachers by further developing partnerships with ITT providers.

Key Indicators of Success:

1. The positive impact of collaboration, underpinned by a shared understanding of our interdependence and increased capacity as a family of unique schools, is evident across the whole workforce.
2. The positive impact of learning from research and evidence-based practice is evident in all member schools and providers.
3. Stour Vale has a clearly articulated professional learning framework which offers increased professional learning opportunities for staff in all roles. This professional learning framework will define opportunities for career progression and maximise the benefits of succession planning, in turn strengthening the whole staff team and minimizing the impact of single-points of failure within Stour Vale's workforce.
4. Our culture, policies, procedures and practices, and our communication of these, position us as an employer of choice for the education workforce.
5. We make a positive impact on the future of education by continuing to deliver high quality education for trainee teachers, apprenticeships and supporting providers to deliver a range of relevant qualifications relevant to the education sector through existing and new partnerships.

Priority 3

A sustainable trust with excellent finance, operations and communication systems

Stour Vale will be a trust where our well-developed finance, operations and communications systems ensure the effective and efficient use of resources for the benefit of all member schools and the wider education system. These systems will be designed to support the effective functioning of schools within a culture where school leaders and staff are empowered and equipped to deliver high quality education and provision for pupils.

Key Priorities:

1. We maintain a sustainable long-term financial strategy and continue to demonstrate efficient and effective use of resources specifically by improving our approach to risk management and by developing a more strategic approach to procurement.

2. We maintain and invest sustainably in Stour Vale's capital infrastructure, including buildings, digital infrastructure and technology to ensure that premises and IT provision meet the needs of pupils and staff in our growing and increasingly diverse trust.
3. We continue to operate a well-planned reserves policy that provides sufficient contingency for cashflow, and any urgent expenditure and we use our resources to ensure the provision of high quality, inclusive education across all member schools and providers.
4. We have strong financial information management systems with effective oversight of all areas of compliance and have policies and processes in place to minimise the risk of fraud, data breaches and financial mismanagement.
5. Efficient communications systems and approaches enable us to effectively communicate our successes both within and beyond Stour Vale
6. Our central operation, administration and finance functions have sufficient capacity to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse trust

Key Indicators of Success:

1. Clear and effective oversight of trust finances, adherence to financial procedures and risk management ensures that Stour Vale remains financially strong, in a surplus position with stable finances a high ratio of assets-to-liabilities, and no regulatory concerns.
2. Strategic financial planning and efficient and effective use of resources ensures that Stour Vale has sufficient capacity to enable and facilitate continuous school improvement and the delivery of high quality and inclusive education.
3. Sustainable investment in Stour Vale's capital infrastructure ensures that premises and IT provision meet the needs of pupils and staff in our growing trust.
4. Strong finance and information management systems provide assurance of compliance and minimise risk.
5. Stour Vale has the capacity and expertise to effectively communicate our successes and opportunities within and beyond our trust.
6. School improvement and the delivery of high quality and inclusive education in Stour Vale member schools is facilitated and supported by comprehensive and effective central operation and financial services. As a trust we create sufficient

capacity to offer this support to schools on the journey to joining Stour Vale and where possible to practice system generosity.

Priority 4

A trust led ethically and strategically

Stour Vale will continue to be a trust where children and young people are at the heart of all decision-making, ensuring that the needs of member schools, the communities they serve and the wider education system drive and define trust strategy. Trustees, trust and school leaders sustain a culture of ethical leadership including the Seven Principles of Public Life.

1. The Stour Vale Trust Board will be made up of trustees with necessary expertise to fulfil its functions effectively and that the Board acts in accordance with the trust's ethos, values and charitable objectives.
2. There will be sufficient trustees to facilitate the effective functioning of all committees
3. We will continue to focus on the recruitment of local governors which ensures the strong local governance which secures our Scheme of Delegation

Key Indicators of Success:

1. Stour Vale is a trust where children are demonstrably at the heart of all decision-making and where the needs of pupils drive strategy.
2. Stour Vale is a trust whose leaders demonstrate ethical leadership.
3. The Stour Vale Board acts in accordance with the trust's ethos, values and charitable objectives.
4. The Stour Vale Trust Board has the necessary expertise and capacity to fulfill its functions.
5. A separate Audit and Risk Committee is established and operating effectively.
6. Stour Vale has a comprehensive approach to recruiting local governance.
7. The Stour Vale Trust Board has acted on the findings of an External Review of Governance.