

Stour Vale Academy Trust

Creating the difference together

Strategic Priorities 2023-26

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 trust of continuously improving schools

Stour Vale is a trust committed to continuous improvement in all aspects of education and provision for all pupils. School leaders and staff teams in all member schools are empowered and enabled to accurately self-evaluate the quality and inclusivity of the education provided and are expertly challenged and supported to take appropriate action.

Key Priorities:

1. We will clearly define and communicate Stour Vale's effective model for school improvement. Our strategy will continue to deliver tailored support and challenge for both current member schools and schools in the process of joining Stour Vale within our responsive school improvement model.
2. We will 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. We will ensure that our collaborative work with schools, trusts and other partners is focused on securing a positive impact on the wider trust-led system and on supporting underperforming schools.

Key Indicators of Success:

1. All Stour Vale member schools are either:
 - o Continuously improving the delivery of high quality and inclusive education, or
 - o Rapidly increasing the quality and inclusivity of education
2. Stour Vale Academy Trust is able to clearly demonstrate our positive impact on the wider trust-led system and on underperforming schools in particular.

Evidence:

Stour Vale Academy Trust's self-evaluation against the requirements of an Ofsted Multi-Academy Trust Summary Evaluation and against the Trust Quality Descriptors outlined in [Commissioning High Quality Trusts Annex A - Trust Quality Descriptors](#)

School self-evaluation, validated by the executive leadership team and reported to the Trust Board, of continuous improvement/rapid improvement against the grade descriptors for graded inspections within the current Ofsted Framework and the Themes and Descriptions (Culture, Curriculum, Student Outcomes, Accessible to all, Inclusive pastoral support, Enrichment, Behaviour and attendance, Destinations, Collaboration) detailed in [Commissioning High Quality Trusts Annex A - Trust Quality Descriptors](#)

The metrics and qualitative data sources detailed for the High Quality and Inclusive Education Pillar in [Commissioning High Quality Trusts Annex B - Trust Quality Evidence](#) including:

Stour Vale trust level metrics and school level data as reported in the [DfE Performance Tables](#)

The trend in each school's attainment and progress data, where relevant particularly focusing on the trend in attainment data before and after joining Stour Vale as reported in the [DfE Performance Tables](#)

Changes in member schools' Ofsted gradings, particularly focusing on two key inspections: a school's Ofsted rating when it joined the trust and a school's current Ofsted rating.

Each member school's attainment and progress data, focusing particularly on outcomes at the end of KS2 and KS4 as they are reported in the [DfE Performance Tables](#)

Headline metrics and key verifiers of High Quality and Inclusive Education as they are described in [Commissioning High Quality Trusts Annex B - Trust Quality Evidence](#)

The headline metrics and key verifiers which evidence Stour Vale's success in delivering broad and sustainable improvement in previously underperforming schools outlined in the School Improvement Pillar of [Commissioning High Quality Trusts Annex B - Trust Quality Evidence](#)

Attendance data, including overall attendance, persistent absenteeism and severe absenteeism.

Behaviour data, including suspensions and permanent exclusions.

Destinations data

Annual Safeguarding Reviews of both Stour Vale and member schools

Evidence of collaborative work with schools, trusts and other partners which has a positive impact on the wider education system and in particular on under-performing schools.

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 teaching, not only championing the teaching profession, but also recognising the vital importance of the full range of support roles which surround and facilitate the provision of excellent education. 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 develop staff understanding of our purpose, vision, values and approach and the benefits of being part of a family of unique schools. In turn this understanding will build a 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 I TT 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
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 training for trainee teachers through by existing and new partnerships.

Evidence:

Database of the positive impact of collaboration, school-to-school support, deployment of central staff and learning from research and evidence-based learning accessible to the Board and informing our evaluation of the positive impact of trust membership.

Stour Vale Professional Learning Framework

HR policies and procedures, including Equality Impact Assessments and Workload Impact Assessments

Equality and Diversity data and the Public Sector Equality Duty

Communication both within and beyond the trust of the benefits of employment with Stour Vale

Staff engagement and well-being as evidenced by staff surveys and Ofsted reports

Staff engagement in professional learning and the quality and impact of professional learning

Workforce verifiers as outlined in [Commissioning High Quality Trusts Annex B - Trust Quality Evidence](#)

The impact of staff shortages and single-points of failure

ITT data including the overall number of trainees, employment rates and employment within Stour Vale

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 will maintain a sustainable long-term financial strategy, 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 will 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 trust.
3. As Stour Vale grows, we will continue to operate a well-planned reserves policy that provides sufficient contingency for cashflow and any urgent expenditure and we will use our resources to ensure the provision of high quality, inclusive education across all member schools.
4. We will 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. Create and embed the effective use of efficient communications systems and approaches to which will enable us to effectively communicate our successes both within and beyond Stour Vale
6. Expand central operation and financial services and resources to meet the needs of a growing 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.

Evidence:

The initial checks and additional evidence and qualitative information outlined in the Finance and Operations Pillar of [Commissioning High Quality Trusts Annex B - Trust Quality Evidence](#)

External and internal audit

Compliance audits and reviews (Information Governance Audit, Safeguarding Review, Health and Safety Review, Cyber Essentials, External Review of Governance)

Premises surveys

Minutes of the Finance Committee

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

Stour Vale's internal communications and wider marketing

Feedback from headteachers, school leaders, trust leaders, the central team, school's who choose to join Stour Vale and schools who choose not to join Stour Vale.

Evidence of Stour Vale's system contribution (TSIO, collaboration, school to school and MAT to MAT support)

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 establishment of Audit and Risk Committee which is separate from the Finance Committee

3. We will develop a more strategic approach to the recruitment of local governors which ensures the strong local governance which secures our Scheme of Delegation
4. We will commission and act on the findings of an External Review of Governance

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

Evidence:

Minutes of the Trust Board and Members' AGM

Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of the Finance Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee

External and Internal Audit

External Review of Governance and Actions Taken in Response

Local governor recruitment data