Alpha Backbone

The purpose of the Alpha Backbone is to provide clarity on those things that are consistent across the Trust. It also outlines either explicitly or by omission those things that academies have autonomy to deliver. The Alpha backbone is reviewed annually by the Executive group and is agreed by Trust board in the first meeting of the academic year. The Alpha backbone sets the strategy direction and provides the parameters for academies to implement policies. It is a process and not a destination. A component of the backbone one year may be dropped in another because it outlives its usefulness or because it is a time for further innovation and testing.

Why should we work together to support a wider educational movement?

- We share the same purpose and values.
- All Alpha students and staff should benefit from our best collective practice.
- On some priorities we can make a greater difference to our communities working together.
- It is right we model our civic leadership role supporting the local area.
- We all benefit from the collective Alpha resources and working together can make delivery simpler to also support workload.
- A divisional leadership structure sub-optimises performance and tends to lead to cliques and fragmentation.

Why Autonomy?

- Leadership and personal accountability are founded on ownership and self-direction.
- If there is no variation in how we work, there will be no opportunity for us to learn from different practices.
- A culture of conformity kills innovation and drives away the best staff.
- Standardisation fails to respond to changing needs and fails to adapt to a changing environment.
- Micromanagement breeds indifference.
- Autonomy is the foundation for success.

Backbone	Clarity
Culture	• Culture is driven by an academy purpose statement that is succinct and measurable and connects to the wider Trust purpose statement. • Purpose statements are supported by a clear set of values that link to the Trust values of Ambition, Respect, Resilience. • A clearly defined set of staff leadership behaviours build cohesive/effective leadership teams and are reviewed annually. • Clearly defined student learning habits exist that describe the social norms expected. • Minimal politics and strong relationships support belonging and high morale. • Strategies are kept simple to create clarity. • We are outward facing, and research driven. • We value diversity as much as commonality.
Workload	• Time is released for collaborative planning. • Policies on assessment ensure unnecessary workload burdens are removed. • Strategic planning, performance management and line management ensures clarity of who must do what. • Clear expectations around communication are agreed at each academy and supported through a digital communicator. • Learning platform is in place that supports staff to share best practice and support workload. • Academy autonomy on the wellbeing and workload strategy in place at each academy. • Annual Trust review of strategies in place across all academies with good practice shared. • Termly reports to Trust board on staff wellbeing and workload. • Staff pulse and other staff forums support feedback to Trust Board.
Curriculum	• Curriculum strategy informed by the Trust policy which follows the national curriculum. • Core subjects (plus Humanities secondary) have topics and assessment objectives aligned for each year with academy autonomy on sequence and how it is implemented within the year (not tier 4). • Aligned exam specifications in KS4 EBacc subjects with the opportunity for a department with confidence to research a new specification as a pilot. • Vocational pathways with strong links with post 16 providers established at secondary. • Ambitious alternative curriculum in place at secondary to support our most vulnerable learners. • Nurture provision in place to support high needs as appropriate. • Leaders participate in subject networks across the Trust, where applicable, to develop and share best practice. • Primary subject networks have representative from secondary to support all through curriculum progression. • Learning from curriculum transition pilot (Discovery + Maple) to be shared across the Trust.
Teaching & Staff Development	• Academy autonomy in what T+L strategies will enable the delivery of the curriculum. • Academy autonomy to determine a consistent formative assessment policy. • Research informed pedagogy supported by the R+D framework (unless tier 4). • Each academy represented in Trust wide R+D program. • Ambition that all teachers will receive regular coaching (Tier 1 + 2). • Trust Board approves calendar of inset days. • Staff development Trust policy in place with provision to support all career stages. • Trust SCITT delivery partner in partnership with Teach First. • Partnership with Teaching hub and universities to support ECF and apprenticeships. • Membership entitlement for all staff with Chartered College.

Achievement Secondary	**Assessment Calendar** • Common assessment calendar consistent across secondary academies which show key times for assessment points over the academic year. • Trust achievement networks held each half term to quality assure processes on the assessment calendar. **Target Setting** • Target setting approach to be used over both Academies using P8 fine estimates and refined where student performance in Maths and English is markedly different. • Uplift all student targets from P8 estimates. Additional uplift for disadvantaged students using average scores to equalise targets. • Targets set for each student at KS3 (using WT/EX/GD in Y7 & Y8 and Grades 1-9 in Y9) and KS4 (Grades 1-9) • Targets to be increased for students who show trend (over 2 assessment points) above Target grade (academy discretion for other targets uplifted). • Targets communicated and visible to students. **Tracking** • Teacher assessment data inputted into Go4Schools 2 x per year. • KS3 - Current grades entered using Working Towards/Expected/Greater Depth using 6-point scale (WT/WT+/EX/EX+/GD/GD+) for Y7&Y8. Y9 current grade using grades 1-9 scale. • KS4 - Current and Projected grades (1-9) used throughout with tolerance limits at each Assessment point between Current & Projected grades (additional evidence required for students outside tolerance). • BTEC tracker accessible to key staff to track completion and weekly attendance in assessment window. Pre moderated results to be provided to students 2 weeks before end of window to allow student to gauge improvement required. Window results released after external moderation agreed for all BTECs. **Summative / Spiral Assessment** • Student revision checklists is produced including clear support & guidance for students to source their revision. • Common Spiral assessment papers created using Assessment objectives for end-of-year assessments for English/Maths/Science/Humanities. • End-of-year spiral assessments (Y7-10); common Y11 mocks x 1; within set window for all subjects who use summative assessment. • Assessments use at least 25% of the Assessment objectives from previous year/s. • Half of KS3 Spiral Assessment to test 'expected' assessment objectives, but also include 'working towards' and 'greater depth' questions. • Mark scheme with grade boundaries created and Quality assured by Assistant Principals i/c of Achievement. • Standardisation/Marking CPD for Year 11 and one other priority year group at each assessment point for English; Maths; Science; Humanities. • Cross Trust Moderation with 5% sample in EBACC subjects for Year 11 and one other priority year at each assessment point. Subjects with trend of achievement concern - over 10% sample, including external marking where possible. • External Assessments used in KS3 & KS4 where possible to validate internal judgements. **Intervention** Post Spiral Assessment • Question Level Analysis (QLA)) used immediately after each spiral assessment for every student to reflect on progress and plan actions to improve. • Common areas of focus highlighted on QLA following every assessment point with intervention planned and implemented by subject teachers. • Immediate reteach of specific common areas of weakness with retest where QLA scores and overall grades are updated to reflect impact of reteach, before grades entered on Go4Schools. • Intervention for students who fall well below target (shown as RED on G4S) by subject teachers. Pastoral staff through RAP meetings provide intervention where students have underachieved in multiple subjects. • Frequent Progress checks in place for Core/Ebacc subjects in KS4 between assessments. • Where subjects perform below national expectations Trust Achievement Lead to check consistency of Achievement processes as part of subject curriculum reviews. **Tuition** • Tuition Intervention – Common process – Common Tuition Plan; Parent contract and meeting; Tuition record to show attendance & progress; SLT QA; common tutor responsibilities to follow up attendance and review tuition at end of sessions. **Reporting** • To parents x2 per year. Interim reports x1 per year and full report consisting of form tutor comment x1 per year. At least one Parent Evening per year group. All reports to include Attainment & Progress and include attitudinal profile/comments. • To Principal/CEO x2 per year using common data analysis template • To governors x2 per year through Academy card, and in governors' meetings using Achievement template. • Where subjects perform below national expectations Trust Achievement Lead to check consistency of Achievement processes as part of subject curriculum reviews.

Achievement Primary	**Assessment Calendar** • Common assessment calendar consistent across primary academies, which show key times for assessment points over the academic year. **Target Setting** • Target setting approach to be used across all academies based on previous attainment. • Flight paths devised to enable pupils working below the expected standard to make accelerated progress. • Targets set for each pupil using WTS/EXS/GDS **Tracking** • Teacher assessment data inputted into DC Pro 3 x per year but reported on the academy card 2 x per year (Dec and July). • Current grades entered using WTS/EXS/GDS **Summative Assessment** Reading and Mathematics: • NFER standardised tests used to quality assure formative assessments in reading and mathematics 3x per year. • Cross Trust Moderation with 10% sampling in reading, writing and maths in each year and at each reported assessment point. **Wider Curriculum:** • Feedback delivered in lessons (verbal/written). • Lessons contain a regular section of recap/recall. • Key knowledge from units/topics assessed using end points/ assessments/ showcase events/ opportunities to share knowledge. • Measurement of progress is seen through pupil voice, work scans, lesson visits, matching planning to delivery. **Intervention** Post Assessment • Question Level Analysis (QLA) used in conjunction with formative assessment to reflect on progress and plan actions to improve. • Pupil progress meetings held termly with SLT to agree priority pupils and actions identified for improvement. • Identify intervention areas. Invitation letter to parents. Record to show attendance & progress; SLT QA; Review tuition at end of sessions. **Reporting** • Written reports to parents once a year. Interim reports x2 per year. • Two Parent Evenings per year group to discuss achievement. • Academy card provides governors regular achievement update at each local governing board. A more in-depth analysis provided twice a year using a common achievement report template.

Behaviour & Attendance	• Trust behaviour and attendance policies set out strategy and expectations with an academy appendix that specifies how each academy will implement process to meet the core policy expectations. • Trust behaviour and attendance network review policies annually and shares best practice. • Each academy has autonomy to develop "what we do" processes that supports the academy learning habits and good attendance. • Each academy has autonomy to create a behaviour and attendance curriculum through pastoral time /PSHE to meet their specific needs. • Secondary sanction table with clear escalation protocol and agreement on FTE and PEX • Protocol in place on managed moves, off site directions and use of external AP. • Clear protocols in place with education welfare to check on the rigour of attendance policies. • CEO attendance visits to support and quality assure attendance policy implementation. • Clear continuum of inclusion provision in place to support barriers to learning with interventions first focussed on finding the root cause. • Mental health provision in every academy • SRE core policy • Trust Board approves academy uniform and supplier.
Safeguarding	• Trust safeguarding policy with implementation evaluated by executive Trust lead for Safeguarding. • SCR checklist with regular spot checks. • Trust safeguarding ½ termly briefings. • Named safeguarding officers at every academy who are highly and regularly trained on a breadth of safeguarding issues. • Annual statutory training (staff and governors). • Annual review of safeguarding with termly risk reviews. • DSL job description: all new Principals DSL trained. • Standard safeguarding report structure (reviewed by LGB and Trust Board termly). • Supervision expectations for all staff within the safeguarding team. • Safeguarding online management system; My Concern. • Trust safeguarding network to review policies, receive training and share best practice. • Safeguarding Training delivered by Executive Trust Lead (NSPCC Trained trainer).
SEND	• Trust SEND policy with implementation evaluated by executive Trust lead for SEND. • Named qualified SENCos in each academy. • Standard SEND report structure (reviewed by LGB and Trust Board termly) • Agreement around SEND categories and processes for identifying need • Mainstream teaching for all SEND. • SEND online management system for passports, recording of interventions and supporting the Assess, Plan, Do, Review process: Provision Map • SEND register reviewed termly. • Termly consultation opportunities with parents/carers to support co-production of pupil passports. • Annual Trust SEND Review. • Interventions reviewed termly for impact. • SENCos involved in Quality of Education monitoring processes. • Trust inclusion network to review policies, receive training and shares best practice.
Character & Careers	• Universal Character curriculum from Nursery to year 8 which include an annual Alpha Day for each year group (Alpha Day involves children from at least 2 Alpha academies working together). • Each academy has autonomy to design their character programme and track impact. • Gatsby benchmarks assessed annually. • Trust Futures programme implemented at each academy from year 4 to post 16. • Both Character and Futures programme embed the development of key employability skills within their programme. • Champion departments identified to provide an enhanced careers curriculum within their subjects. • All teaching and support staff understand the post 16 pathways linked to subjects and the attainment requirements. • Ambition day at the start of year 7 to support each child having an ambition sentence that gets reviewed termly. • Post 16 ambition day in year 9 held before children chose their GCSE options. • Trust Careers advisor level 6 qualified.

Leadership	- Trust school improvement strategy provides clarity on the different stages of school improvement, leadership and type of support and oversight provided by the Trust. - Trust health checks support leadership development and evaluate confidence in academy self-evaluation. - Trust leaders support academy run curriculum reviews (particularly underperforming departments) - Standard template for academy development plans. - Academy card sets targets and provides live update on progress. - Cycle of performance monitoring in place to inform impact evaluation and to direct next steps. - Perspective used to write academy self-evaluation form against the Ofsted framework. - Academy risk register, with executive summary informs live risks and is regularly reviewed with SLT and governors. - Trust appraisal and capability policy in place. - Leadership appraisal objectives link to academy card targets. - Trust executive meeting, including Principals/Heads of Academy, meets half termly to review and develop Trust strategy. - Bi-annual Principal/Vice Principal strategic days. - Annual Trust senior leadership conference. - Trust Leadership CPD, including individual leadership coaching, calendared, and reviewed annually. - Trust Induction programme for all new Principals and Vice Principals. - Trust Induction Programme for all new middle leaders/ SLT.
HR	- Succession plans at every academy. - Trust HR policies and procedures in place – updated in line with employment law & legislation changes. - Trust structure: salary ranges and pay reviews. - Face Ed recruitment system – online process management and maintenance. - SAM People HR System – online cloud-based service to manage attendance, capability, pay and people records. - Subscription to a number of recruitment platforms (TES, Indeed, social media). - Recruitment documentation supported by central team (adverts, recruitment pack, social media and website. advertising, job descriptions, person specifications). - External up to date legal support. - Internal support/advice/guidance on all aspects of operational HR. - Union and professional associations and negotiation. - Occupational health provider and employee assistance programme (including counselling), negotiation, liaison & engagement. Advertise to Trust employees and maintain records. - Safer recruitment legislation-central management. - Absence management tracking and logging. - Reorganisation, restructure, TUPE advice. - DBS guidance. - GDPR – updates. - SCR overview & Management. - HR Induction process – plan, deliver & monitor. - Work collaboratively with other local trusts and agencies for best practice & policy support. - SCITT recruitment & interview process. Update DFE portal.

Governance	• LGBs appoint governors. This is following agreed good practice guidelines i.e expressions of interest invited for staff and parent governor vacancies and an election where more than one candidate. Independent governors to be appointed following interview by the LGB chair and Principal and a recommendation made by them to other governors. • Members board appoints trustees following a collaborative recruitment and interview process. • Regular chairs meeting supports effective and timely communication between the different boards. • Clarity of roles and responsibilities with Terms of Reference. • Effective use of 'links'. • Scheme of delegation; articles of association. • Annual cycle; agenda and workplan. • Key performance indicators (attendance, training log, compliance checklist, governor success criteria, skills audit) • 3-4 LGB meetings and C+I subcommittee. • 6 Trust board meetings with Standards, ICE and AFR sub committees. • 3 Members meetings including the annual AGM. • Standard report templates. • Independent, experienced Clerk. • Training and induction for governors reviewed annually. • Governance External review (every 3 years). • Special meetings – e.g., Exclusions/Appeals/Complaints. • Membership of external professional organisations (The Key/NGA/CST). • Central clerks to provide support/minuting for tier 3 academy C&I meetings. • 3 Governance Conferences to be provided as part of governor CPD support.
Finance	• Trust policies and procedures. • Pooled reserves. • Banking and cash management; purchasing and procurement; capital expenditure. • Iris Live, Financials; reporting; IMP budgeting and forecasting software. • Payroll. • System audits (internal and external auditors). • Risk Management. • Insurance. • Utility Management. • Annual budget planning and five-year forecasting. • Completion and submission of all financial returns completed for ESFA, Company House and Charity commission. • Central procurement and benchmarking. • Identification of funding opportunities and letting of Academy sports facilities. • Financial planning advice and guidance. • Central contract management. • Trust Asset register – maintenance • Surplus funds investment. • Trust business managers meeting to review policies, receive training and share best practice. • Schools Capital Allocation- programme management

Digital	• Trust digital strategy supported by Trust digital lead and reviewed termly by Trust digital steering group. • Primary academies resourced so every child has a 1:1 device in KS2. • Trust led managed service (remote and on-site) and IT planning. • E-safety guidance. • Website design/support/helpdesk/development/statutory requirements. • Server-based services: MIS; catering; printing; access control; CCTV; digital marketing solution; Inventory; file services; unified communications; backup; infrastructure. • Service and project delivery processes: ITIL; Prince2. • End user computing (inc. devices) – see IT options document. • Procurement process; central budget for replacement strategy and planned growth. • Access to Trust learning platform (Launchpad). • On-site technical support. • Media development to promote the Trust – note this bit was not included on AE version. • Cyber training & infrastructure. • AI training for all staff to support with workload. • Trust wide digital skills curriculum for learners. • Collaborative digital CPD area to share best practice. Access to Google Education tools and training.
Estates Health & Safety	• Statutory practice and core policies (including GDPR & child protection/safeguarding). • Central budget for statutory compliance. • Mandatory training. • Evolve risk assessments. • Smartlog recording, training, recording of statutory compliance (curriculum and estates). • Format of monthly walk around (health and safety spot checks). • Estates contract management (refer to health and safety policy) for compliance and best value. • Programme of site and department audits. • Capital project tendering/management. • PFI Management/ Estates Management. • Health & Safety Trust meetings. • Capital investment plans. • Legal advice on lettings and agreements with third parties. • Workplace audits and inspections. • Trust central risk assessments. • Standard risk assessments and guidance in response to significant national events. • Trust sustainability network to review Trust sustainability strategy and share best practice from pilot academy.
Parent/ Community Engagement	• Each academy has a parental/community engagement strategy in place. • Trust digital strategy to promote effective 2-way communication between academies and their community. • A calendar of community events at every academy. • Trust partnership in several locally driven strategies- Family hubs, Thrive at Five, PEIA, independent schools' sector. • The Trust will use websites and social media to communicate information, inspire stakeholders and respond to significant national events. • Senior Trust leader to support marketing and communications plan to promote the Trust, improve community engagement, focus on attendance, and enhance recruitment.