



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	• A clear Trust purpose statement and Values informs individual academy purpose and value statements. • Clearly defined routines exist that support the values in each academy and the expected social norms. • A Trust wide inclusion framework supports the values of the Trust in all academies. • The Trust value of Belonging is supported in all academies by developing a strong relational approach with a clearly defined set of staff behaviours. • Leadership culture operates under a high support and challenge approach to improve and maintain high standards. • Our context informs us of our challenges to identify the right support, but is never used as an excuse to lower standards. • We are outward facing, and research driven. • We value diversity as much as commonality.
Workload/ Well-being	• The Trust ensures all academies follow national policies to support workload. • The use of technology and AI across the Trust is being optimised to reduce workload with the ambition to remove unnecessary marking by 2028. • Alpha day entitlement for all staff. • Learning platform is in place that supports staff to share best practice and support workload. • Termly staff survey on well-being conducted in partnership with professional associations. Survey results reviewed with Trust Board and termly JCNC meetings. • The Trust employs an employee assistance programme (Life and Progress) which supports well-being at work and home. • The Trust commissions Tap GP which is a 7 day week GP doctors service for employees and their children under 16. • Free onsite Gym facility for all employees with additional 25% reduction at Nuffield Health Fitness Gym. • Cycle scheme available to all employees.
Curriculum and Teaching	• The Trust curriculum and teaching strategy informs the broad principles all academies adopt and implement. • The Trust curriculum and teaching policy follows and is at least as ambitious as the National Curriculum. • The Trust Futures policy informs curriculum development (WMBACC) in all academies through: a) The introduction of Raspberry Pi digital qualification in secondary academies b) The myFuture employment gateways introduced from KS2 and selected in Year 9 to inform the KS4 curriculum c) A skills continuum of employment competencies from primary to secondary supports the Myfuture gateways • Academies have autonomy in the specific Teaching and Learning strategies. • The Trust encourages alignment in core subjects (plus humanities for secondary) on sequencing and lesson development to reduce workload and share best practice. • Core subjects and humanity subjects across the Trust follow the same exam boards with consistent assessments in KS3 and KS4. • Vocational pathways with strong links with post 16 providers are established at secondary.

	• Ambitious alternative curriculum in place to support our most vulnerable learners. • SEND resource provisions and other nurture provisions in place to support high needs.
Staff Development	• Trust staff and leadership development policy in place that outlines the professional development entitlement across the Trust. • Each academy represented in a Trust wide R+D program. • Trust Board approves calendar of inset days. • Trust Conference and Staff Excellence awards every 2 years to promote shared development and celebration of excellence. • Trust Teacher Development Strategic Lead coordinates Initial Teacher Training programmes across 5 pipelines. • All unqualified teachers become Associate Teachers and are on a development pathway to achieve QTS. • Trust SCITT delivery partner with Teach First. • Partnership with Teaching Hub and universities to support ECF and apprenticeships. • Membership entitlement for all education-based staff with Chartered College. • All newly recruited support staff roles in learning and teaching are offered the opportunity to access a teaching pathway to QTS
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 • Academy dashboard Headline Targets set by mid-September • KS3 & KS4 'Target setting' approach to be used over both academies using P8 fine estimates and refined for Year 11 following analysis of student progress by the end of Year 10 using Headline Targets (WT4,4+, 5+ & 7+) • Uplift all student targets from P8 estimates. Additional uplift for disadvantaged and vulnerable students using average scores to equalise targets. • Targets in KS3 use WT/EX/GD grade set, and Grades 1-9 in KS4 • 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 Arbor 2 x per year. • KS3 - Current grades entered using Working Towards/Expected/Greater Depth using 6-point scale (WT/WT+/EX/EX+/GD/GD+) Grade set for Y7-9. • KS4 - Current grades (1-9) Grade set used at each Assessment point. • BTEC tracker to track completion for each assessment on Arbor. 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 are produced including clear support & guidance for students to source their revision.

	• Common Trust 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 through 'Improvement week' and grades entered on Arbor. • Intervention/Adaptive practice for students who fall well below target (shown on Arbor) by subject teachers. • Intervention required by students is identified by Senior leaders and Trust Achievement leads. Trust Achievement leads to plan and implement subject intervention at KS3 & 4. This is prioritised for vulnerable learners and provided by Academy staff. • Frequent Year 11 Progress checks in place for Core/EBacc subjects in KS4 between assessments which assess progress against KS4 Group Targets • Where subjects perform below national expectations Trust Achievement Lead to check consistency of Achievement processes as part of subject curriculum reviews. Foundational Literacy & Numeracy • Clear whole-school strategy: A well-communicated literacy and numeracy vision aligned to the School Improvement Plan, with shared responsibility across all subjects. • Curriculum integration: Explicit, planned opportunities for reading, writing, vocabulary, and numeracy skills embedded across subjects, with clear progression from KS2. • High-quality teaching: Consistent classroom practice where staff model key skills, address misconceptions, and support students to apply literacy and numeracy confidently. • Assessment and targeted support: Robust identification of student needs (e.g. reading age, number fluency) with effective, evidence-informed interventions and regular impact tracking.
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	- Monitoring and impact: Ongoing QA (learning walks, book looks, student voice) demonstrates improved confidence, closing gaps for disadvantaged/SEND students, and stronger overall attainment. KS4 Tuition/P6 - Common process –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 and Trustees x2 per year through Academy/ Trust dashboards, and in Governors’ meetings using Achievement template.
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 Arbor 3 x per year but reported on the academy dashboard 2 x per year (Feb and Oct). - 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 end of unit end points. 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 effectiveness 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 dashboard provides governors a regular achievement update at each Local Governing Board. A more in-depth analysis provided twice a year using a common achievement report template. • Trust dashboards provide Trustees a comparative analysis of all AAT attainment x2 per year.
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 academy routines and good attendance. • Trust behaviour meetings support a child at risk of permanent exclusion before more formal disciplinary processes are applied. • Each academy has autonomy to create a behaviour and attendance curriculum through pastoral time /PSHE to meet their specific needs and support belonging. • 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 support and quality assure attendance policy implementation. • SRE core policy. • Trust Board approves academy uniform and supplier.
Inclusion	• A Trust wide inclusion framework informs inclusion strategy and policy in all academies. • Clear continuum of inclusion provision in place to support barriers to learning with interventions first focussed on finding the root cause. • Trust Board approve and evaluate the impact of additional funding to support pupil premium students after review from the local governing board. • 123 Trust inclusion intervention policy in secondary provides clarity on type of assessment and staged responses to meet need. • 123 Trust inclusion intervention policy-all secondary children at stage 2 and 3 are reviewed every 12 weeks by the CEO and Executive Trust lead to measure impact and support next steps. • Woodland’s Alternative Provision centrally managed by the Trust Lead. • Deputy Safeguarding and Mental Health Trust Lead monitors and supports the development of the mental health provision in every academy.
Safeguarding	• Trust safeguarding policy with implementation evaluated by Executive Trust lead for Inclusion and 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 informs SEND policy and practice in all academies. Implementation is evaluated annually by executive Trust lead for Inclusion and Safeguarding. • Trust primary SEND lead to provide specific support for primary academies. • 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 Resource Provision in both secondaries and Sneyd primary academy. • 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 share best practice.
Careers, advice and guidance	• Trust Futures policy supports all academies delivering career education, advice and guidance. • Trust Executive Lead coordinates quality and delivery of the futures policy across the Trust (including curriculum development-see curriculum/teaching- WMBACC) • Trust Careers leads and MyFuture gateway leads support senior leaders in academies implement the futures policy. • Employability skills framework supports futures policy and informs session aims of Alpha gateway days (Nursery to Year 8) and Y7 ambition gateway day. • All children from Year 7 have an ambition statement linked to one of the my future gateways. • Gatsby benchmarks and NEET data assessed annually. • Trust Careers Advisor level 6 qualified for individual meetings.
Leadership	• CEO approval required for any significant policy change in how an academy implements Trust policies. • CEO approval required for any operational change that will exceed a resource budget of £5000. • Trust/Academy development plans and Targets reviewed by the CEO and agreed by Trust board every October. • Standard template for development plans and SEF.

	• Electronic Academy / Trust Dashboards identify set targets agreed by the Trust and provide live data on progress (updated monthly). • Cycle of performance monitoring in place in all academies to inform impact evaluation and to direct next steps. • Academy and Central Trust risk registers, with executive summary, informs live risks and is regularly reviewed with SLT, Governors and Trustees. • Trust appraisal and capability policy in place. • Leadership appraisal objectives link to academy dashboard targets. • Trust Executive meeting, including Principals, meets half termly to review and develop Trust strategy. • Bi-annual Principal/Vice Principal strategic days. • Annual Trust senior and middle leadership conferences. • Trust Induction programme for all new Principals and SLT. • Training programme for all new middle leaders • Full extent of Trust leadership CPD outlined in the Trust staff and leadership development policy. • Succession plans at every academy – support academies with planning and development
School improvement	• Trust School Improvement strategy provides clarity on the different stages of school improvement support and oversight provided by the Trust. • Trust Health Checks support leadership development and evaluate confidence in academy self-evaluation. • Trust wide agreement on curriculum reviews and tiers of support (1-5) in place to develop curriculum. Additional Trust capacity for those curriculum areas requiring more significant support (tier 3-5). • Trust strategic staffing model developed to direct additional Trust capacity to work with staff developing their practice e.g. ECTs, staff on support plans. • Trust School Improvement support reviewed every 4 weeks to evaluate impact and direct support to where it is needed. • Trust calendar of monitoring and development visits published annually.
HR	• Trust HR policies and procedures in place – updated in line with employment law & legislation changes. • Discretionary leave applied consistently in line with Trust policies, including basic Alpha Day entitlement. • Trust structure: salary ranges and pay reviews with automatic pay progression within a set scale. • Sam People Recruit (formally Face-Ed) management and maintenance of online system and processes. • SAM People HR System – online cloud-based service to manage attendance, capability, pay and people records. • Performance Management collation and tracking across Trust. Support with transfer and set up to digital/ paperless review. • Subscription to recruitment platforms where appropriate, (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. • Staff benefits – research, benchmark, launch and communicate. • 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. • Coordinate recruitment and selection across SCITT, apprenticeship, and wider teaching pathways, working collaboratively with training providers and ensuring accurate and timely management of DfE application systems.
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. • Trust Board approves academy hours, after review from the local governing board. • Trust Board approve the staffing and leadership model after recommendation from the Executive. • Trust Board approve international residential visits beyond Europe, Local governing boards approve European and UK residential visits. • Annual cycle; agenda and workplan. • Key performance indicators (attendance, training log, compliance checklist, governor success criteria, skills audit). • 3 LGB meetings and C+I subcommittee. • 4 Trust Board meetings with Standards, ICE and AFR sub committees meeting termly. • 1 parent forum annually led by the LGB. • 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. • Trust centrally coordinated management of permanent exclusion disciplinary panels. • Trust centrally coordinated management of complaints with the Trust leading the organisation on all stage 3 complaints.

	• Annual training for governors who sit on disciplinary panels as part of the behaviour policy. • Membership of external professional organisations (The Key/NGA/CST). • Central clerks to provide support/minuting for tier 3/4 academy C&I meetings. • 2 Governance Conferences to be provided as part of governor CPD support.
Finance	• Trust policies and procedures – produced to reflect changes in legislation or statutory guidance. • Pooled reserves. • Banking and cash management; purchasing and procurement; capital expenditure. • Iris Live, Financials; reporting; IMP budgeting and forecasting software. • Payroll including contracts of employment, teacher pay statements, ‘Myview’ and pension/payroll update. • Central Financial Monitoring. • 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 DfE, Companies 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. • Lead and manage all financial audits • 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. • Procurement of academy uniform and staff uniform contracts. • Trust regularly conducts value for money exercise.
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. • Secondary academies resourced so every child has a 1:1 device in the Maths curriculum. • 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).

	• There is a blend of remote/online support backed up with on-site technical support when required. • Media development to promote the Trust. • Cyber training & infrastructure. • AI training for all staff to support with workload and the future skills agenda. • 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. • Prepare a new policy in line with new legislation • E Visit risk assessments. (Note – we use E visit not Evolve) • 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. /Post PFI 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. • Compliance around plant and equipment. • Health & safety legislation requirements rolled out.
Parent/Community Engagement	• Each academy has a parental/community engagement strategy in place. • Trust media team to promote effective communication between academies and their community. Focus areas- MyFuture gateways, Attendance, Recruitment, celebrating our academies, advertising community events. • The Trust will use websites and social media to respond to significant national events. • A calendar of community events at every academy. • Trust partnership in several locally driven strategies- Family hubs, Thrive at Five, CEO Futures Forum, Local Area Education strategy Boards, independent schools' sector. • The Trust coordinates a termly review of communications reach and stakeholder feedback (Parents and students).