



# **School Improvement Policy**

**January 2025**

**Approved by the Trust Board on: 10 February 2025**

**To be reviewed February 2026.**

## Contents

1. Aims.....	2
2. Support for schools.....	3
3. School causing concern.....	4
4. Raising Achievement Board (RAB).....	4
5. Interim Local Academy Committee (ILAC).....	4
6. Monitoring and review.....	5
7. Linked policies.....	5
8. Appendix 1: Raising Achievement Board Terms of Reference.....	6
9. Appendix 2: Interim Local Academy Committee Terms of Reference.....	8

### 1. Policy Aims:

The Trust school improvement policy outlines our intent to create a community of high performing schools. The central school improvement function will interact seamlessly with existing expertise in our schools to enable continual improvement through collaboration, support, and challenge. It provides clarity of the expectation for each school within Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (DDAT) and is a commitment to promote and secure:

- The Trust values, vision, and priorities, underpinned by our Christian ethos.
- Pupil and student development, who learn to be the best version of themselves and make a positive contribution to society.
- Highly effective leadership, at all levels, promoting strong governance in all schools.
- High quality inclusive education that secures high levels of attainment and progress for all pupils and students.
- A safe and caring environment where everyone can flourish.
- The identification and dissemination of effective teaching practice and high-quality curricula.
- Peer to peer support and networking opportunities both within and outside the Trust.
- The effective recruitment, retention, and wellbeing of all staff.
- Career progression within the Trust secured through effective support and development so that strong educational practitioners are the norm and effective school, and Trust leaders of the future are developed.
- The use of research evidence and networks to support best practice.
- A system of school improvement which is increasingly less dependent on the executive and members of the SSIO team but self-directing and sustaining across the schools.
- Best use of resources and value for money.

This Trust school improvement policy recognises the principles on which the Trust was founded. The policy recognises each school's individual community and identity. It also ensures that intervention to promote rapid school improvement can be applied

at the earliest possible opportunity where required and to prevent schools becoming a cause for concern.

## **2. Support for Schools**

All schools receive support and challenge through regular visits from members of the school improvement team (SIT). All SIT members have specific responsibilities. The support and challenge are bespoke to each school and driven by identified needs. School improvement visits are proportionate to the assessed needs of each school.

School improvement plans and school self-evaluation documentation are updated termly by school leaders to ensure the accurate self-assessment of priorities and to support ongoing school improvement.

To ensure all schools in the trust are fully supported, all members of the SIT meet fortnightly to discuss the latest outcomes and information from their visits to schools. This information is triangulated with sources of information from other DDAT departments to inform strategic improvement and ensure appropriate action is taken to fully support the schools and by the schools themselves.

Trust wide strategy documents direct everyday practice in schools. Whole and bespoke school reviews and audits are planned cyclically and according to identified needs.

At a minimum, Pupil headline data is collected from all schools. using teacher assessments underpinned by standardised tests. This data gives a trust wide picture of strengths and weaknesses, which is reported to Trustees, and is again used to measure the performance of DDAT schools and inform high quality inclusive teaching. Likewise statutory test outcomes are rigorously analysed centrally.

School health check meetings are held at least annually, and more frequently where there is a need. These enable a two-way flow of information between school and DDAT central functions, which again strengthens triangulation and coordination of all functions. The school health check meetings cover all Ofsted categories as well as health and safety, internal audit, and other financial/non-financial controls. As part of this process headteachers are expected to address any identified areas and demonstrate impact within agreed timelines.

DDAT provides high-quality training and CPD offers for all staff. The offer is extensive, led by both internal and external experts, and includes termly headteacher briefings, subject and leadership networks, conferences, Early Careers Teachers (ECT) training support and coaching as well as a range of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs); this list is not exhaustive. The training offer is reviewed termly and informed by stakeholder feedback.

Given the many talented practitioners in the DDAT schools, SIT members draw on this expertise to support colleagues in other schools sometimes when there is a need. This may be at senior leader level or in the classroom. This is carefully planned, monitored, and implemented with base school leaders.

Headteacher appraisal is supported by the SIT members working with local academy committees. This helps to ensure trust oversight of key targets for school leaders, linked to the school and Trust development plans.

All schools are fully supported through inspection processes by appropriately identified members of the school improvement team, who have the necessary expertise.

School performance information is shared with the Education and Standards Committee of the Trust board three times per year. Key senior leaders from across DDAT are invited to present to the committee on specific areas as required.

### **3. Schools Causing Concern:**

A school becoming a category of concern is based upon:

- The Trust's judgement in relation to the overall effectiveness of the school highlights concerns - these are schools that have struggled to improve their overall effectiveness and to deliver a good standard of education to all pupils.
- Schools are not bringing about sufficient sustained improvement and are not fully engaging with the standard support package offered by the Trust.
- When the Trust has evidence, a school has failed to uphold its statutory duty to safeguard its pupils.
- When a school first joins the trust, or in exceptional circumstances where governance is considered at risk of failing in its responsibilities, or there are significant financial concerns.

As reflected in the scheme of delegation the Deputy CEO will recommend to the CEO a school causing concern, for the CEO to decide and inform the Education and Standards Committee of this designation and action required to improve. The Trust Board can appoint additional LAC members at any time to support and strengthen the LAC.

In response to this categorisation, it will be agreed to form either:

#### **4. Raising Achievement Board (RAB)**

The RAB provides interim expertise and high-quality support and challenge to support future improvement, focusing on high educational achievement standards. The RAB may be chaired by a member of the Central Executive Team / Trustee / Associate Trustee. The RAB will also include members of the School Improvement Team and Local Academy Committee (LAC). The RAB will be established for two terms in the first instance, with an option to extend on a termly basis. The CEO will recommend to the Education and Standards Committee the exit of the school from the RAB.

#### **5. Interim Local Academy Committee (ILAC)**

In exceptional circumstances the current LAC may be removed, and an Interim Local Academy Committee (ILAC) will be formed where a new school has a small or weak governance body, or where governance is considered at risk of failing in its responsibilities, or there are significant financial concerns.

The ILAC provides interim expertise and high-quality governance to support future improvement, including promoting high educational achievement standards. The ILAC may be chaired by a member of the Central Executive Team and as well as fulfilling the responsibilities of an LAC, will specifically work towards recruiting and training local LAC members to form a LAC. The ILAC will be established for two terms in the first instance, with an option to extend it on a termly basis until a fully functioning LAC can be established.

The Trust Board will keep these arrangements under review. External support may be brought in to support schools where there is insufficient capacity and or a gap in expertise within DDAT. This support must be agreed in advance with the CEO. In such cases where the Trust feel it is necessary; they will commission external reviews in key areas where needed.

## **6. Monitoring and Review:**

Effectiveness of this policy will be monitored on an annual basis by the Education and Standards Policy.

## **7. Linked Policies:**

Teacher appraisal policy.

## Appendix 1

### Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (Company No. 08980079) ("DDAT")

#### 1. Raising Achievement Board Terms of Reference

Chair of Committee:	The Raising Achievement Board (RAB) may be chaired by a member of the Central Executive Team, a Trustee or an Associate Trustee.
Clerk:	The Trust Board will agree the RAB clerking arrangements based on the Governance Professional's recommendation. The Governance Professional or their delegate will consult with the CEO.
Membership:	The RAB will include members of the Central Executive Team, members of the School Improvement Team and Local Academy Committee (LAC). Trustees or Associate Trustees (external experts) may also be members.
Role of Associate Trustees:	Associate Trustees are external experts providing independent expertise and challenge. They do not hold governance responsibilities or decision-making authority. They contribute to discussions and recommendations but are not formal voting members.
Quorum:	Three members.
Meetings:	The RAB will be established for two terms in the first instance, with an option to extend on a termly basis. Meeting cycle to be agreed i.e. monthly.
Purpose:	The RAB provides interim expertise and high-quality support and challenge to support future sustainable improvement, focusing on high educational achievement standards. The RAB is an advisory board and does not hold delegated decision-making authority.

The purpose of the RAB is detailed above in addition to the requirements set out in the LAC Terms of Reference, covering:

#### 1. Standards

- 1.1. Ensure that the Trust's vision, ethos and strategy is adopted and applied by school leaders.
- 1.2. Work with senior leaders to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to address them in line with the Trust's strategic objectives.
- 1.3. Monitor school performance and improvement through regular reviews of performance data, including exam results, attendance rates, and pupil progress.
- 1.4. Ensure that the Trust's curriculum is being provided to pupils in an appropriate manner for the school's context.
- 1.5. Ensure that the required policies and procedures are in place and that the school is operating effectively in line with these policies.

- 1.6. Establish a strong relationship with the headteacher in order to provide effective support and challenge, including providing feedback to their performance management process.
- 1.7. The RAB will monitor and challenge how well all pupils are doing, as well as looking at significant and vulnerable groups notably those with SEND and who are in receipt of Pupil Premium. This includes:
  - Pupils' attainment (including comparisons to targets).
  - Pupils' progress (including comparisons to targets).
  - Pupils' behaviour.
  - Pupils' attendance (including comparisons to targets).
  - The extent to which pupils feel safe.
  - The extent to which pupils contribute to the Academy and the wider community.
  - The extent to which pupils flourish through the school's theologically rooted vision, values and ethos.
  - The quality of teaching and learning, and the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of pupils.
  - The effectiveness with which the Academy promotes inclusive practice.
- 1.8. All data provided at RAB meetings will have been validated by the Central team, School Improvement Team and Headteachers will use a standardised format for their Head of School report and dashboard on pupil performance.
- 1.9. For schools with a Church of England designation, ensure that the school's distinctive Christian vision is articulated as the driver for raising standards and the flourishing of adults and children.

## **2. Reporting and Accountability**

- 2.1. The RAB will submit recommendations to the Education and Standards Committee, which retains final decision-making authority. In instances requiring immediate attention between scheduled meetings, the Chair of the Board is authorised to make decisions on behalf of the Education and Standards Committee. Such decisions will be promptly communicated to all Education and Standards Committee members through the Governance Professional and presented for ratification at the next scheduled committee meeting.
- 2.2. Meeting summaries and key findings will be reported to the Trust Board via the Education and Standards Committee.
- 2.3. The Trust Board retains the right to review and amend the scope and function of the RAB as needed.

## **3. Training**

- 3.1. In order to support this aspect of their work, all representatives of the RAB will receive comprehensive training from the Trust on the following areas:
  - School improvement planning.
  - School self-evaluation framework.
  - Ofsted Common Inspection Framework and School Inspection Handbook, with particular regard to the governance and the effectiveness of leadership and management. This will include pre-inspection training for all RABs.

These Terms of Reference must be reviewed by the Trust Board annually.

<b>Approved by DDAT Board on:</b>	10 February 2025
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## Appendix 2

### **Derby Diocesan Academy Trust (Company No. 08980079) ("DDAT")**

#### **2. Interim Local Academy Committee Terms of Reference**

Chair of Committee:	The Interim Local Academy Committee (ILAC) may be chaired by a member of the Central Executive Team.
Clerk:	The Trust Board will agree the ILAC clerking arrangements based on the Governance Professional's recommendation. The Governance Professional or their delegate will consult with the CEO.
Membership:	The ILAC may include members of the Central Executive Team, members of the School Improvement Team, Trustees or Associate Trustees working towards recruiting and training Local Academy Committee (LAC) members to form a LAC.
Quorum:	Three members.
Meetings:	The ILAC will be established for two terms in the first instance, with an option to extend on a termly basis until a fully functioning LAC can be established. Meeting cycle to be agreed i.e. monthly, until transferred to a LAC.
Purpose:	In exceptional circumstances the current LAC may be removed, and an ILAC will be formed where a new school has a small or weak governance body, or where governance is considered at risk of failing in its responsibilities, or there are significant financial concerns.  The ILAC provides interim expertise and high-quality governance to support future sustainable improvement, including promoting high educational achievement standards.

The purpose of the ILAC is to operate as the Local Academy Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, LAC Terms of Reference and DDAT Code of Conduct for Trustees and LACs:

#### **1. Standards**

- 1.1. Ensure that the Trust's vision, ethos and strategy is adopted and applied by school leaders.
- 1.2. Work with senior leaders to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to address them in line with the Trust's strategic objectives.
- 1.3. Monitor school performance and improvement through regular reviews of performance data, including exam results, attendance rates, and pupil progress.
- 1.4. Ensure that the Trust's curriculum is being provided to pupils in an appropriate manner for the school's context.



- 1.5. Ensure that the required policies and procedures are in place and that the school is operating effectively in line with these policies.
- 1.6. Establish a strong relationship with the headteacher in order to provide effective support and challenge, including providing feedback to their performance management process.

## **2. Stakeholder engagement**

- 2.1. Consult stakeholders (parents, staff and pupils) and use insights to inform decision-making.
- 2.2. Help stakeholders to understand the Trust's values and vision for the future.
- 2.3. Provide the Trust board with insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by the school's local community.

## **3. Safeguarding**

- 3.1. Foster a culture that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and staff in the school.
- 3.2. Ensure that the adopted safeguarding policies and procedures reflect the safeguarding challenges and context of the school.
- 3.3. Monitor the implementation of safeguarding policies and the effectiveness of procedures.
- 3.4. Designate a link ILAC Member to take leadership responsibility for safeguarding.
- 3.5. Monitor the school's estate, ensuring that appropriate policies are adopted and followed in order to keep pupils and staff safe.

## **4. SEND**

- 4.1. Ensure that the Trust policy for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is implemented and adapted to the specific school context where necessary.
- 4.2. Seek assurance that staff are trained to implement pupil strategies and support plans.
- 4.3. Ensure pupils with SEND have the resources they need to succeed.
- 4.4. Designate a link ILAC Member to take leadership responsibility for SEND.
- 4.5. Work in partnership with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and other stakeholders across the Trust community to ensure that pupils with SEND are well-supported and included in all aspects of school life.
- 4.6. Monitor the overall effectiveness of the school's SEND provision, referring to pupil outcomes and other relevant data.

## **5. Financial Oversight**

- 5.1. Appoint an ILAC member who will be responsible for Finance.
- 5.2. Review the annual budget for the school.
- 5.3. Monitor income, expenditure and cash flow of the school.
- 5.4. Maintain a register of ILAC members' business and personal interests.
- 5.5. Determine and monitor the use of Pupil Premium and Sport Premium.

- 5.6. Enter into contracts up to the limits of delegation as specified within the DDAT Financial Handbook and within an agreed budget.
- 5.7. Support the Trust Board in its monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of any central services or functions provided or procured by the Trust.

**6. Christian Distinctiveness – applicable to schools with a CE Foundation**

- 6.1. Challenge and support leaders to ensure the distinctive character of worship and religious education are strong.
- 6.2. Support and challenge leaders to ensure that the school's Christian vision and values are rooted in the local community and lived day-to-day in the decisions made.

**7. Recruitment and training of LAC members**

- 7.1. Liaise with the ILAC Clerk and school leaders to hold parent and staff elections.
- 7.2. Liaise with the Diocesan Board of Education or Parochial Church Council representative in the first instance to recruit Trust Governors.
- 7.3. Create a recruitment campaign, seeking advice from the Governor Support Manager, for routes to consider.
- 7.4. Ensure all newly recruited LAC members receive access to training to support their role.

**These Terms of Reference must be reviewed by the Trust Board annually.**

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