WCAT

Wakefield City Academies Trust – Strategy Plan

A document which considers a structured approach for improving pupil outcomes, whilst focussing on financial control and operational improvement within WCAT during 2016-2019.

This document represents the views and aspirations of the Board of Directors and Executive of WCAT. It provides a vision of an organisation that places people at its heart whilst working in a financially prudent way that will ensure sustainability and provide a platform for growth.

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Introduction

The key requirements for Wakefield City Academies Trust (WCAT) moving forward are the improvement of pupil outcomes and operational performance and the development of a financially sustainable organisation. This will be achieved by developing a compelling education proposition which puts focus on the pupil, and an employer proposition which ensures WCAT becomes an employer of choice.

Focus

WCAT needs to design and deliver a curriculum which appeals to current and potential pupils. It needs to engage all WCAT staff in the delivery of first class educational practice. Operationally the organisation will develop core services and grow excellent working relationships with its service and product suppliers.

WCAT will ensure its systems, processes and structure reflect its strategic intent. As a consequence, it will reduce overheads and unnecessary costs and re-engineer support processes and IT systems to deliver a pupil-centric business proposition. To effect this transformation, this document examines the strategy required and considers it from an external and internal perspective. Overall, however, its focus is on the "Pupil".

To support the delivery of the organisational proposition, changes will have to be made to the structure and infrastructure of the business. A culture needs to be developed where excellence in performance comes as standard and where our people are at the heart of the organisation.

The rationale and planning process are outlined. The benefits of the proposals are covered from a financial and operational context. The paper is based on a view that a relationship-driven and service-based approach will enable an improvement in the absorption of overheads, increase pupil numbers and improve their expected outcomes.

The development of a medium-term holistic approach rather than a tactical focus will future proof the organisation.

By having performance measures that enable true learning and communication to be achieved, it is envisaged the Executive and the Board of Directors will ensure a step change in the organisation's performance. These actions will impact positively on pupil outcomes and the environment and communities where our academies are located.

Strategic Analysis

The working group considered the drivers of change in the environment, some of the competitive pressures the organisation faces and used the EFQM model (European Foundation for Quality Management) to frame elements of strength and weakness within our current practice and structure. Auditing environmental influences, it was identified the following areas will have an impact on the education/ academy sector / West Yorkshire area over the next three years:

Political
- Potential changes in RSC (Regional Schools Commissioner)
- Changes to the curriculum
- Performance measures – pupil outcomes – attainment driven
- Changes to the political landscape
- Funding & National funding formula. Changes to pupil premium
- Environmental legislation could impose additional operational costs
- Changes to local authority would impact links to the academies
- Grammar schools – Academy debate
- Employment law

Socio economic
- Changes to population demographics
- Social mobility – within environment where our academies are located
- Social mobility of teachers
- Attitude to education / Levels of education
- The expectations of education

Economic
- Business Cycles Changes in GSP (Gross State Product) and impact of Brexit
- Supply strategy – changes to OJEU (The Official Journal of the European Union is the central database for European public sector tender notices.)
- The landscape for future jobs - e.g. digital and its impact on the curriculum and pupil outcomes
- Union industrial action due to economic change
- Changes to TUPE – standardisation, risks to equal pay and best practice
- GAG (General Annual Grant) Funding and the effects of policy and inflation
- The impact of the "green foot print"
- Energy availability and cost
- Access to funding to support development and expansion

Technical
- Rates of obsolescence – capital equipment change / replacement
- Pupil assessment practice
- IT development
- A focus on technical excellence
- The focus on technological effort
- The speed of technology transfer

All of these factors will have an impact to a greater or lesser effect and will have to be considered and built in to our strategic plan and operational activity. It is of paramount importance that early action is taken by the Executive and the Board to mitigate the effect on the organisation and the delivery of education.

A process of continuous market scanning needs to be developed, and the Board strengthened where knowledge gaps and lack of experience are identified.

Resources competence and strategic capability

The EFQM model considers drivers and results as part of its excellence framework. Within the drivers the concept of our strength and weakness was considered as a means of understanding the strategic capability of the organisation.

A similar approach was adopted for our staff and pupils to identify where the organisation creates value for its pupils, the local environments in which we operate and our employees.

This is all viewed from the context of a network of interlinked elements which are required in a high performance organisation.

Simply stated, cause/effect thinking maintains there is a strong and direct relationship between delivering excellent services (as a result of design, employee engagement and management exceeding customer outcomes and effective structure and infrastructure management), an organisation's financial performance (such as reduced operating costs and the effective use of funds) and the broader aspects of organisational performance (such as pupil outcomes, pupil attraction and pupil retention).

The Drivers network.

The results network
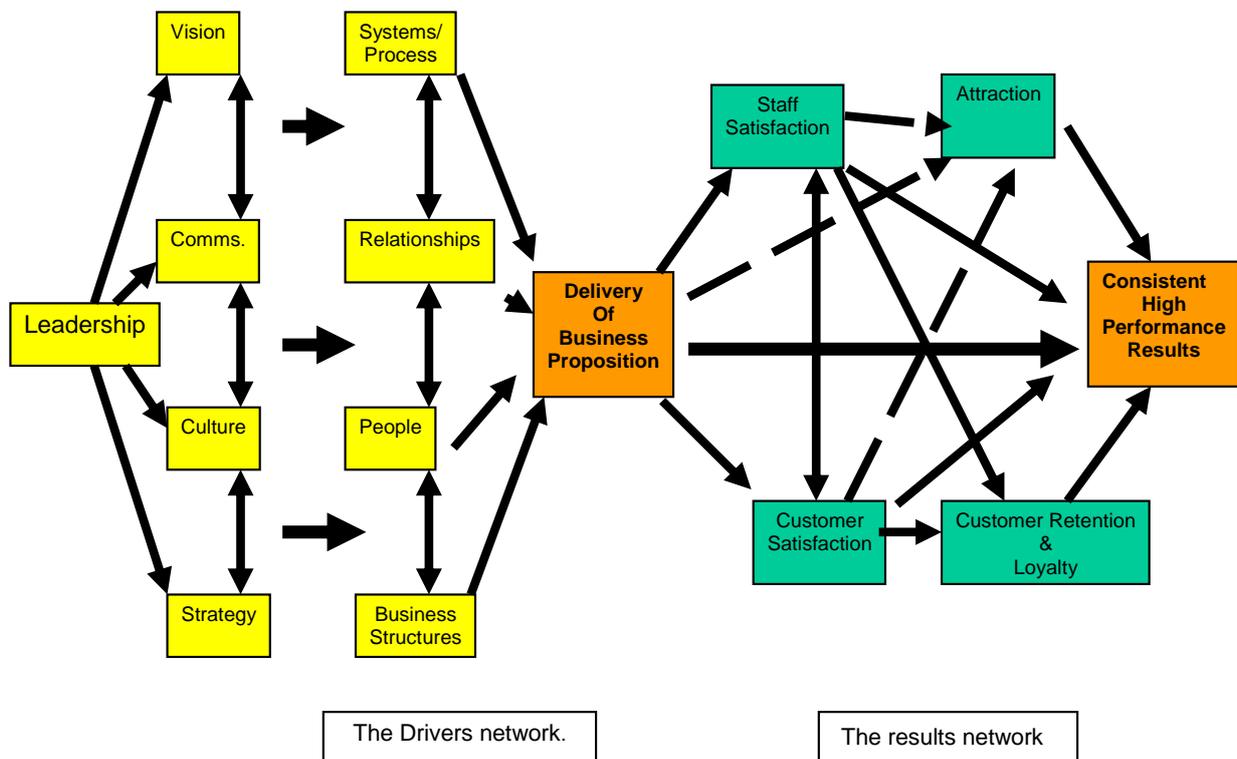
Vision *"with effort everything is possible"*

Communicate the vision and the direction of the Trust to its employees, customers and shareholders and get their commitment to the values and objectives of the Trust and to remove obstacles to our vision.

The nemesis of exertion, energy determination and struggle is procrastination and inertia. The issue here is to identify three, four or possibly five things that could really make a difference within the organisation and with which people can identify and believe in. For example, innovation in our teaching, building our reputation in the communities in which we operate, or simply creating the awareness of the need for change.

We need to have a message that is simple but compelling, has sufficient clarity and focus to remain intact as it moves through layers of communication and interpretation.

Trust and commitment will be crucial to the journey. It is important that the emotional pulse of the organisation is established and understood. There is a clear link to the work that will need to be undertaken to influence the harmonisation of the plural cultural aspects of the Trust.

Our strategic intent is simple to articulate

WCAT seeks to:

1. Develop and improve pupil outcomes;

2. Significantly grow the numbers of our pupil population in our current academies over a three-year period;

3. Add value and contribute to the local environments where our academies are located;

4. Be an employer of choice;

5. Consolidate in terms of the number of academies within the Trust but develop new services for schools and organisations who desire to convert to academies in future; and

6. Be a financially stable entity.

Leadership

The Trust has appointed an iCEO whose skill set and enthusiasm for the organisation has maintained an even keel position during a transitional period. There is a requirement to appoint a substantive CEO.

The Board has recently appointed a new Chairman who is quickly building his knowledge of the organisation and its requirements.

The Members & Board of Directors

The Members will increase to 5 during years 1 & 2 and will include local business and educational-focused individuals. The Directors will increase to 9. There are gaps relative to audit, HR, Secondary education and public relations. Governance will be developed in conjunction with the recently appointed Governance and Compliance Officer. The Scheme of Delegation will be reviewed and redeveloped.

<u>The Role of the Board Committees</u>

The Committees are under development and will be fully functioning and to the desired strength to provide rigour and challenge and accountability to the Executive by the end of the first term in Year 1. A primary focus will be on reviewing and updating as necessary the Schemes of Delegation.

<u>Skills Audit and Development</u>

A full skills audit and Training Needs Analysis will be undertaken within the management cadre of the business team and the educational team. This will support the desire of the Board to create an internal market for our excellent staff, to develop career progression and support individual career development plans. See also People (page 13).

<u>Ownership and Accountability</u>

Leadership development is central to the strategic intent of the organisation. It requires focus and ownership. A dedicated member of the HR Committee will be tasked with ensuring the Executive grasps and focuses on the development of our current and future leaders. A programme is to be developed and progress against objectives reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Communication

Effective communication is about getting people's attention and getting them to take action.

We will develop a structured communications strategy that ensures our pupils, our staff, external agencies, the communities in which we operate and the organisations within our supply chain know our aims and ambitions.

We will set our strategic objectives and our expected outcomes. A budget will be set to support the programme. The target groups will be clearly addressed and the appropriate channel choices adopted within an integrated programme. The programme will be measured in its effectiveness in supporting the changes made by the Board and its impact on supporting our cultural development.

A Director with responsibility for effective communication within the Trust is to be appointed.

Culture

An agenda of putting people at the heart of organisational purpose.

The WCAT paradigm – The way "We" see the world.

Artefacts – the visible aspects of the organisation – its structure, processes, symbols and physical evidence.

Espoused Values – strategies goals and philosophies - e.g. we value creativity and initiative.

Underlying assumptions - our unconsciously held views, stories. The ultimate source of values and action.

The shape of organisational life is changing and will be continuous. WCAT will have to be more responsive to the needs of its pupils and the local communities / economies in which it operates. There are 4 primary strategies for cultural change:

- Progressive
- Consultative
- Educative
- Corrosive

Our approach will be a mix of the first three. To measure our journey, we will assess the success of the change process through simple parameters of commonality and expressiveness.

Central to this will be the vision of the organisation and the effectiveness of our communications strategy. We will assess the capacity for change, remove obstacles to our vision and establish a sense of urgency with short term wins and finally reframe the new reality.

It is recognised that this will not be easy or short term. However, a commitment to our strategic intent by Members, Directors, SLT, LGBs and the operational Headteachers within the academies is central to everything that WCAT must stand for.

A Director with responsibility for cultural development within the Trust is to be appointed as part of this commitment to developing a progressive and inclusive organisation.

Strategy

Moving forward, the strategic choice of the Trust will be to protect and build on its current position. It may consider withdrawal where it does not have the competence to compete or deliver its proposition. It will consolidate, protect and strengthen its position in geographical areas.

The organisation has developed a number of services that it can actively sell into the education / academy market. These products and services will be developed.

Strategic Planning

This will continue to be developed and reviewed on an inclusive basis to include senior managers and Directors in the design and implementation of our organisational and educational strategy. This will be on a review basis against a strategic measurement plan – balanced scorecard and will follow a PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) approach on a half-yearly basis.

Strategic Control

This will be shared with the Executive and Board via the Regional Directors of Education through to operational delivery by way of the in situ Headteacher and the local SLT. This can be considered as organisational parenting. Leaders at all levels can be involved with the development of the strategic intent of the organisation on the same basis that they are responsible and accountable for the effective implementation, delivery and management of the desired outcome.

Basically you set it – you deliver it.

WCAT

Trust Structure (proposed)

Executive Structure

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                            │     CEO     │
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│RDE Central│ │    COO    │ │    CFO    │ │ RDE South │ │ TIP (ACO) │
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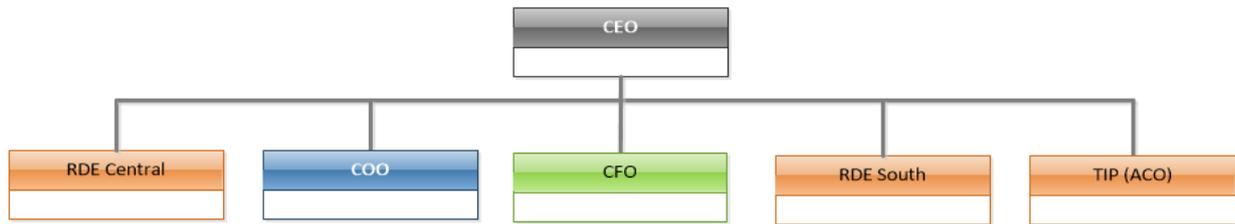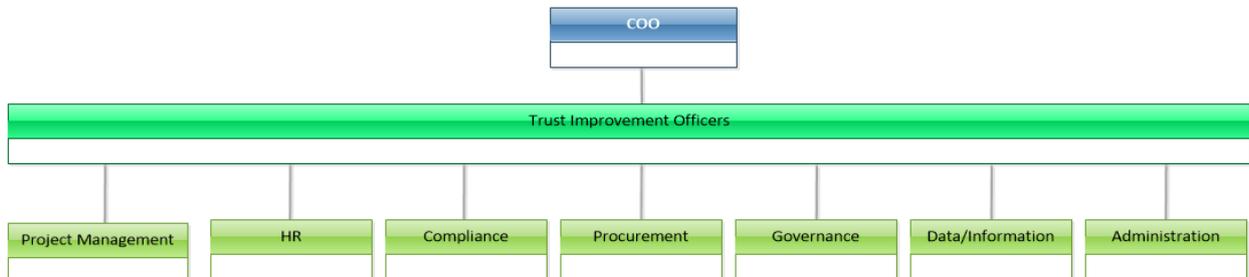
The short and medium term strategy is to centralise processes, systems and frameworks from 23 independent individual academies into a corporate entity (WCAT) and promote the brand which is associated with quality, clarity and integrity.

Non-Educational Business Structure

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                        │     COO     │
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        │            Trust Improvement Officers             │
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│  Project ││  HR  ││Compliance││Procurement││Governance││Data/Information││Administration│
│Management││      ││          ││           ││          ││                ││              │
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We have the Governance & Compliance Officer joining the organisation in October 2016 when we can evaluate the role of the Local Governing Body (LGB) and which will provide clarity and develop the links with LGB members.

Under the delegation of authority transfer, it is the Trust responsibility to ensure the elements that would be covered by a sub-committee have a dedicated focus provided by the Trust. If used ineffectively sub-committees can dilute the decision process and extend the timeline and this has the potential to create problems. Clarity, skill set and experience are crucial.

It does not stop the full LGB checking and balancing the position using local awareness and the information provided by the Trust. The other factors are skills and time that these sub-committees require to be taken into consideration. The current position is we explain the delegated authority and level the choice of committees with the LGB.

Education Structure
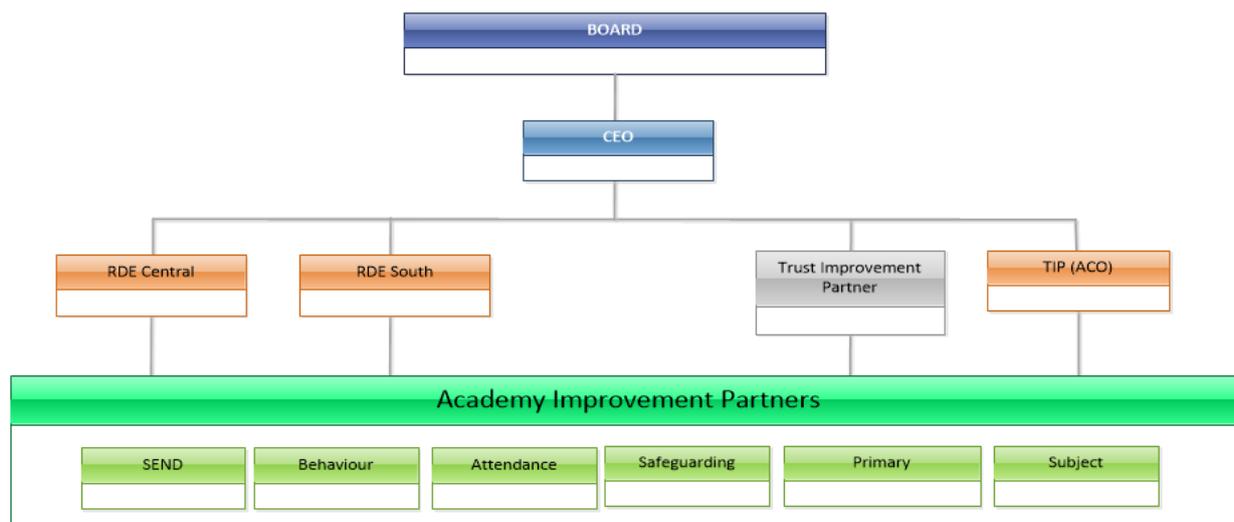
RDE (Regional Directors of Education), this is an important role with a clear requirement on delivery management.

TIP (ACO), Trust Improvement Partner (Assessment-Curriculum-Outcomes), this is a critical role in having someone responsible for the outcomes which WCAT will be judged on. Every academy will be using a standard system, process and policy in this critical area. All AIP (Academy Improvement Partners), Headteachers, Data Managers and Heads of Department have received training, information and support in readiness for this academic year.

TIP (Trust Improvement Partner), this is a role that we have piloted over the last term with positive outcomes. It is not a full time role, it is a professional network of support where a Headteacher supports a number of other Headteachers to share and embed good practice and standards. The lead Headteacher has support/mentoring from the RDE for the Central Hub, this enables us to grow and develop our own.

AIP (Academy Improvement Partners), the AIP have contributed to the standardisation of the new assessment frameworks by creating the supporting documentation alongside TIP (ACO). In addition, the single observation policy and application that all academies will use next academic year will provide the much-needed analytical information direct from source that will result in support and challenge. Information that decisions can be made is key from both of these elements. It is expected as the proactive and strategic ways of working, at an operational level, will free up more time which will allow the Trust to consider redeploying some AIPs into roles within the academies where their skills are required.

Systems & Process

Various parts of the organisation may have differing perspectives and priorities which can lead to actions which may be thought of as functionally appropriate but are internally inconsistent.

Review, design and communicate are the key elements facing the Scheme of Delegation, followed by manage as it is changed to reflect the strategic intent of the Trust.

The critical point here is that of alignment, as it is rare that change to experience, outcome, operation or value can be made in isolation.

Exploiting experience is of great importance to ensure that the design criteria reflect the desired outcomes in terms of not creating inertia, enabling professional freedom whilst managing risk.

Control through performance measurement is required and measured at both a functional level and strategic level will have to be implemented to provide the necessary communication to the business.

Ideas incubator: a review / feasibility team will be created from teachers/ Headteachers/ Executive/ Directors and chaired by the Chairman to develop blue sky projects e.g. 2yr provision; Cradle to work - a horizontal strategy.

Finally, strategic evaluation on a regular basis is required to ensure that all the operational systems and processes reflect the changing needs of the organisation and the developing skill set and knowledge of the staff and teams working within the Trust to ensure that levels of self-esteem are increased. This is a learning organisation not a bureaucracy.

Business Relationships

External Commercial Relationships

Our business relationships should be considered from two perspectives. One is cost driven based on the purchase of a specific product. The other is capability driven where we are considering the service outcome and how it affects our ability to provide our services to our pupils. In this instance we are primarily purchasing a trading relationship.

Supply chain management: analysis of our overheads and expenses identifies there are considerable savings to be made through an effective procurement strategy and management strategy. This is simply supply chain management and it must develop into a core competence of the organisation.

A review process of suppliers is a central element of this function and will be commenced in the new academic year. The effectiveness of delivery and the assessment of value will be central to how our trading relationships are procured and delivery managed. There is an urgent requirement for an assessment of the current and future needs of the Trust and how those demands are best achieved.

Educational – Internal

The educational structure operates within Hubs to give the required support challenge and visibility. The short and medium term strategy is to develop, identify, and recruit senior leaders with the skills to meet the needs and beyond of these crucial roles to improved outcomes. This will also provide a professional environment within the Core and in each Academy to place WCAT as an employer of choice.

External Relationships

The organisation will seek to develop multi-point relationships with the RSC and their teams and other government bodies. Our information strategy will be central to this process.

Local Governing Bodies: the Chairman of WCAT will hold quarterly meetings with all Chairs of the LGB and visit all Boards during their meetings on a quarterly basis. It is critical that ambiguity is removed from the message that the Trust wishes to convey. Additionally, the message contained within this strategy document may contradict with currently held views. It is imperative that our strategic intent is presented and embraced by all the constituent parts of the Trust.

Trade Unions

As a Multi Academy Trust, WCAT seeks to give constant witness to sound teaching. As a result, WCAT is committed to the support and development of all its people. WCAT sees the quality and the experience of its workforce as a critical element on which the Trust's success should be judged. In recognition of this it is right that WCAT should give formal recognition to employee unions and to engage with them proactively and constructively.

People

One aim - "Attract, develop and retain the best talent"

Strategic HRM (Human Resource Management)

The organisation's strategic HRM services are provided via the private sector. The move away from Local Authority HRM services could be viewed as a contentious decision, however the outsourcing of HRM has delivered enormous commercial and reputational benefits. Saving money and a reduction in operating costs, the control of legal risks and improved compliance, the streamlining of HR functions and the consistent delivery of HR advice, allows the organisation to focus on its core business. There remains a number of key HR operational functions which the organisation needs to address, the recent change to the Board and the realignment of the Executive will support the introduction of these changes.

Recruitment and Vacancy Management

It is a fundamental requirement the organisation is held in high regard within all sectors and rapidly gains the reputation of being the employer of choice and thereby attracts the right people through:

- a refinement of the organisation's current ad-hoc recruitment strategy

- having a clear competitive advantage

- outsourcing of supply recruitment to the market leader

- supporting lifestyle planning

- keeping employees motivated by providing the right work environment

- having a clear communications strategy

- ensuring staff feel involved, understanding the vision and values of the organisation, what is our corporate culture?

- offering career progression within both teaching and associate staff roles.

Recruitment and vacancy management will be reported on within the HR committee on a monthly basis.

Induction

The aim of the organisation's 'fresh' induction programme is to assist the newcomer to adjust as quickly as possible into the new working environment.

The induction programme will endorse the importance of the individual's role and the contribution they make to the success of the organisation, whilst achieving maximum working efficiency in the shortest period of time. The organisation's ethos and strategic vision will flow throughout the induction programme to reinforce the culture and vision that each of the organisation's strategies has an ultimate benefit for the success of every child within our care.

Development and Appraisal

The organisation will implement a clear CPD (Continuing Professional Development) programme for all its employees, teaching and associate staff, thereby ensuring that standards across the company are high and consistent, whilst also benefiting the employees' career progression and advancement. Having a number of employees undertake CPD allows for the sharing of best practice and support. Structured programmes of CPD will also contribute to maximising employees' potential, improve morale and provide a useful benchmark for the annual appraisal process.

The organisation is currently in discussions with all Trade Unions to support the introduction of corporate appraisal systems to support teaching and associate staff. Embedding this system into the organisation's culture at the earliest opportunity will provide numerous benefits in improving pupil outcomes and creating an environment that is progressive and focused on delivery. The appraisal system will recognise valued performers, communicate the organisation's strategic vision and ethos, ensure consistency, communicate deficiencies, and provide motivation and opportunities to express job satisfaction, whilst providing an opportunity to support individual training and development requirements.

Sickness Management

Managing sickness absence can be challenging. The organisation has benefited from the outsourcing of strategic HR services which has provided a commercial understanding to the processes which are currently in place. There is a fundamental requirement for the organisation to harmonise all HR policies developing an overall approach to absence by linking attendance to job design, good employment relations, health and safety, flexible working and effective disciplinary procedures. Keeping people at work and helping them get back to work as soon as possible can help maintain an employee's health and wellbeing and improve organisational effectiveness. Long term sickness absence will be reported on within the HR committee on a monthly basis.

An Internal Market

The organisation has no internal market strategy. None of our portfolio of academies are treated as internal customers. Systems will be developed to ensure that our internal customers are convinced of the organisation's vision and worth just as aggressively as if they were external customers. The strategic review of the Scheme of Delegation will support the introduction of a suite of corporate services. One of the organisation's key performance indicators must be the alignment of every aspect of its internal business and financial operations to ensure they are as capable as possible and fit for purpose to provide value to our internal customer base. Ultimately, this organisation will operate in an efficient, cost effective, coordinated and standardised way, providing a more consistent education experience to our pupils.

Contingency and Succession Planning

There are many reasons why the organisation needs to have a contingency and succession planning policy. The most important reason is we rely heavily on staff to provide services to meet the organisation's vision. There will always be a statutory requirement to deliver education to the pupils within our care. There is an essential requirement for the organisation to consider the academic, reputational and financial risks by the failure to provide educational, business and financial services due to key members of staff departing. The Board and Executive can demonstrate robust leadership by having the strategies and processes in place to ensure that contingency and succession planning occur smoothly, with little disruption to the organisation's operations. The contingency and succession planning will address:

- vacancies in senior or key positions occurring simultaneously in numerous educational organisations and clear indicators there are statistically fewer people available to fill them

- retirements continue to increase due to educational demands etc., simultaneously the school age populations continues to grow, driving the demand for senior education management expertise
- younger managers and middle leaders interested in moving up have the skills and experience required

With careful planning and preparation, the organisation can manage the changes that result from a generational transfer of leadership as well as the ongoing changes that occur regularly when academies are issued with challenging judgments which result in key employees exiting the organisation. Effective succession planning supports organisational stability and sustainability by ensuring there is an established process to meet staffing requirements.

<u>Supply Strategy</u>

A single supply strategy implemented to provide a significant cost saving. It is clear that "supply" is the "effect" in a cause and effect relationship. The challenge remains with implementation of the strategy to identify and manage the issues around the causes of supply.

Proposed Action & Time Frames for Completion

Y1 (2016-17) Y2 (2017-18) Y3 (2018-19)
T = Term

	Y1 T1	Y1 T2	Y1 T3	Y2 T1	Y2 T2	Y2 T3	Y3 T1	Y3 T2	Y3 T3
Action									
CEO appointment			X						
Strategic planning process		X	X		X	X		X	X
Current Supplier Review	X			X			X		
Negotiate current supply arrangements		X			X			X	
Finance operating system		X							
Schemes of Delegation & Review	X	X		X			X		
Supply strategy	X			X			X		
Succession plan & review		X							
Sickness plan and review	X								
Recruitment and vacancy management	X								
Appraisal process			X						
Communications strategy		X							
Trade Union agreement	X	X	X		X			X	
School Job roles		x							
LGB interface	X								
Training Needs Analysis & Personal Development Plans		X							
Cultural review			X			X			X
Director team	X								
Member team	X								
Committees	X								
Ideas Incubator	X								