

Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust

School Improvement Strategy 2024-25

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BDAT School Improvement Strategy 2023-2024

Context

BDAT is a Church of England Diocesan Academy Trust set up to support and build a collaborative family of academies in Bradford and the surrounding area.

As a Trust we were initially created to support schools in challenging circumstances to work with them to achieve their rapid improvement. We now support schools of all OFSTED categories including Good and Outstanding academies.

We currently support 15 primary schools and 5 secondary schools within our Trust, through a model of schools-supporting-schools and guidance from the centre.

We are able to support both Church and non-Church schools as we believe our values to be inclusive to all faiths rather than exclusively Christian.

Launched in 2022, the BDAT 3 year strategy is called [**One Trust, One Family, Where Every Child Belongs**](#) and sets out the 7 core strategic priorities across BDAT. It is not surprising that Quality of Education, shortly followed by safeguarding our young people are the two priorities that sit at the top of our priority list.

Overview

This strategic overview outlines BDAT's overarching approach to school improvement, describing the underlying philosophy and principles, the improvement systems and processes and the roles that different individuals and agencies play. Although the school improvement strategy applies to schools within the Trust, we also have a responsibility to the wider system and the principles described here will guide our work with others.

The information is intended to provide clarity to everyone working in and with the Trust. It should offer guidance and support to our various levels of governance. It will also inform our strategic partners and is also intended to describe and give account for our work to the students, parents/carers, families, and communities that we serve.

Our Approach

As an established family of schools, we are positioned well to deliver high quality school improvement both centrally and through school-to-school support through staff CPD and by harnessing the collaborative power of our internal networks and professional learning communities. This is overseen by secure governance, at Trust level where the Board retains strategic oversight for school standards and through local governing bodies who can offer challenge and support applicable to the individual school context.

As a Trust, the BDAT Education team have adopted the principle of Standardised Process and Personalised Practice. This supports schools to benefit from the most effective school improvement thinking, applied within the context of the school.

Our school improvement approach is underpinned by both our core values of ICARE, as well as the principle that school-to-school improvement collaborative practice involves both high challenge and high support. Practice will be informed by research and will be evidenced based both from within and outside of our family of schools.

Resource allocated to schools will be determined by the need of the school at a particular time. In determining a school's level of need within the MAT, we will undertake continual evaluation processes to assess strengths, areas for development and overall risk in relation to school improvement, as well as Ofsted and SIAMS inspection outcomes. This process in collaboration with the academy leadership will identify both BDAT wide priorities as well as inform individual support priorities.

As part of the BDAT approach, the Education Director will with the school leadership monitor progress against priorities through the year to ensure that school improvement remains agile and responsive to need.

Accountability: Roles and responsibilities

Governance

BDAT Board of Trustees

The BDAT Trust Board is the accountable body for the education standards across the MAT. They are responsible for setting the Trust education vision, overseeing school performance and providing support and challenge. In practice the Board delegates detailed education scrutiny to a Primary and Secondary education committee.

BDAT Trustees Education Committee

The education committees have responsible for the detailed monitoring and challenge of educational performance and outcomes across all schools to ensure that the Trust's vision and values underpin its work and direction of travel. These committees monitor and challenge the performance of the trust central educational provision and the implementation of plans focusing on school improvement.

Local Governing Bodies

Local Governing Bodies (LGB) are an important part of the BDAT Governance Structure. While legally they are delegated sub committees of the BDAT Board, which is the accountable body for all schools in the MAT, BDAT views LGB's as the local eyes and ears of each of our schools. They are essential in securing the unique identity of each school and acting as the voice of the local community and families. Under the BDAT Scheme of Delegation each LGB has three core functions:

1. Establishing the strategic direction for the Academy, including responsibility for the agreed signing off of and monitoring progress against the School Improvement Plan from a strategic perspective.
2. Ensuring operational accountability, including contributing to self-evaluation.
3. Ensuring financial probity

Educational Improvement

BDAT: Central Education Improvement Team

We have a small, yet experienced central education team, which consists of

Primary	Craig Lee	Director of Primary
	Ann Morritt	Deputy Director of Primary
	Kathryn Young	Deputy Director of Primary
	Reem Briggs	Deputy Director of Primary
Secondary	Jason Kenneally	Director of Secondary
	Emma Sey	Deputy Director of Secondary

The central education team has responsibility for ensuring the BDAT principles of school Improvement are met through the deployment of resources both internally and externally to provide a supportive network, professional challenge and expert guidance to our academies. The specific deployment of the

educational central team is based on a flexible leadership model according to the progress of the Trust strategic plan and the individual needs of each school.

The purpose and principles of school improvement at BDAT

The core purpose of the education support offer at BDAT is to maintain and drive rapid school improvement. The BDAT approach can be described as:

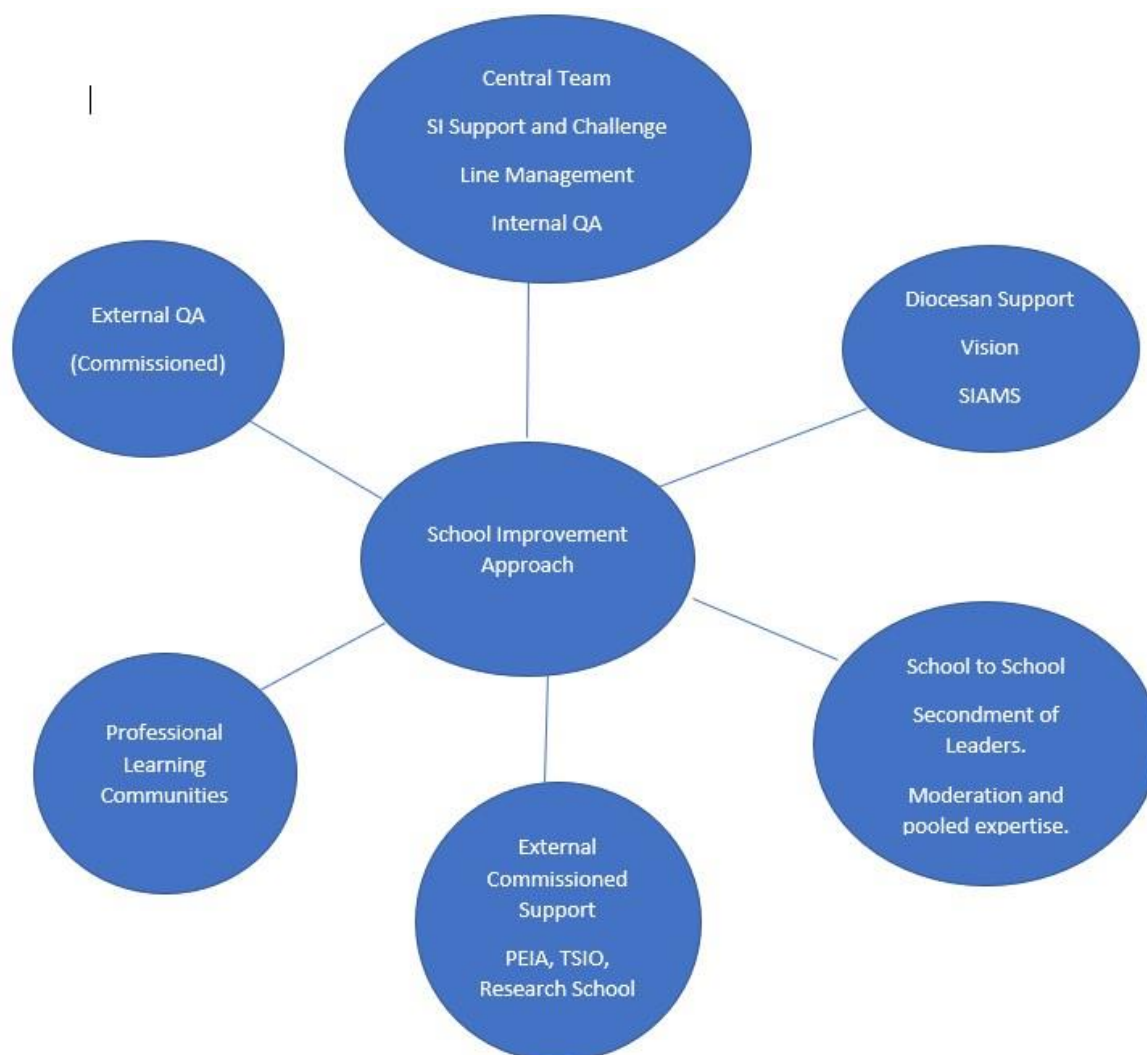
- A centrally led school to school improvement model, whereby academies are supported to share best practice and collaboratively work together to provide the highest quality of education to the communities they serve.
- Standardised processes while allowing schools freedom in their practice. This model is designed to be flexible in order to support the particular context and needs of the individual academy, as well as having the capacity and flexibility to evolve and respond to the national agenda. We recognise that school improvement is complex and the increasing standardised process and aligned practice has been and continues to evolve through the connectivity and collaboration of the family of schools at both phases and across phases. To facilitate this model of work there are several tiers of accountability.
- Direction as required. Where schools are struggling or there is evidence that impact is not being seen as rapidly as required, the BDAT scheme of delegation does provide the BDAT central Board and Executive the powers to step in and direct change including changes to practice, leadership or governance. This is very unusual within the MAT due to the strong partnership working we have in place and regular communications between the Trust and schools.

This school improvement approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- Continuous, sustainable improvement is an integral part of everything we do each day.
- Curriculum design is fundamental to school improvement. Our schools have a context-specific approach to curriculum design to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the communities we serve.
- Reflective practice and curiosity about teaching, learning and assessment support continuous improvement.
- Ensuring highly effective collaborative networks across Trust schools, that are based on sound evidence-informed practice.
- External audit and internal school review provide an appropriate oversight useful check on the success or otherwise of our improvement work.
- Sharing of improvement strategies within each academy and across/beyond the Trust should also help others to improve. Sharing an analysis of successful practice ('what works') is expected within a climate of professional trust and respect.
- Improvement activity should be systematic, evidence-based and be informed and evaluated by valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative data.
- We ensure that there is an effective and timely risk assessment of each school which leads to a meaningful overview and informs high quality strategic planning and development.
- Professional learning communities supporting and developing individuals, groups and schools to improve and continue good practice in all areas including non educational.

- Delivering quality Trust wide training to support Trust and school development.
- Co-ordinating national, local and Trust wide training to drive Trust and school improvement.

The following key activities underpin the Trust School Improvement Approach:



Professional Learning Communities

There are various PLCs across the BDAT family that support the horizontal collaboration and connection to raise standards across the individual academies and the BDAT family. The PLCs are led by academy leaders and facilitated by the central team, thus reinforcing professional development opportunities for senior colleagues. The PLCs drive improvement in relation to strategic areas across the Trust consolidating standardised processes and supporting aligned practice.

Examples of Professional Learning Communities are:

- Quality of Education
- Culture and Ethos
- Attendance
- Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance
- SEND -operating as both single and cross phase.
- Talent Management
- Curriculum
- Human Resources
- Safeguarding

Subject Professional Learning Communities

Curriculum and Subject leaders are empowered to work collaboratively to develop curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to ensure best practice both locally and nationally are implemented as appropriate with the academies. Practice also includes assessment moderation and support. These networks are facilitated by senior leaders from across the academy.

Internal Regular and Routine Monitoring and Evaluation:

The Board of Trustees is accountable for standards in the Trust. They discharge their accountability through the Chief Executive Officer who therefore needs to be assured that all schools are making appropriate progress against their planned improvements and that school improvement activity is impacting positively at the right pace to secure a high quality of education for the students.

This assurance is achieved through regular and routine school visits by the CEO and the Education team. Monitoring of school development priorities and externally led peer reviews are undertaken routinely. School Improvement support and challenge visits will increase in frequency and type if a school is judged to be 'causing concern'.

The Trust has a quality assurance calendar to support all school visits so schools know how and when they will be routinely held to account, the purpose of the visits and both parties can be assured QA covers all areas of education and wider student provision e.g. Alternative Provision, pupil premium, SEND, attendance within our academies etc.

Externally Led Peer Reviews

Undertaken at least annually these reviews are undertaken to check that the perception and evaluation of school and trust leaders aligns with that of recent HMI or expert colleagues. Each review is led by an external experienced educationalist and supported by colleagues from across the BDAT family. The attendance and review work of the internal peer colleagues is part of the Trust's commitment to developing its leaders and is in agreement with the headteacher. The focus of the reviews is decided in collaboration between a member of the central Education Improvement Team and the Headteacher, based on school priorities and KPIs. The aim of the review is to ensure that the academy is making progress towards achieving its improvement priorities.

The review involves a range of activities both pre and during the actual review day including learning walks, student voice, interviews with colleagues, and leaders and analysis of key documentation.

The cost of the first review is funded by the Trust top slice. Additional external reviews can be purchased at request of the school or Trust at a cost to the Academy.

All review findings are shared with school leaders and staff, governors and BDAT Trustees and executive leaders.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Within the Academy

Supportive Academy Improvement Planning and Self Evaluation

At the beginning of the academic year, each Academy Headteacher produces a School Improvement Plan (SIP) and a Self Evaluation Plan (SEF). These are based on a review of student outcomes, the end of year position, Ofsted AFIs and identified academy priorities.

All academies follow the EEF logic model principles when developing their School Improvement Plan and are supported by the central team as appropriate who quality assure the process and the agreed priorities. The final agreed SIP/SEF is agreed at the Local Governing Body who will monitor progress towards the principles and impact of this work across the academic year.

As part of the central team support and challenge, progress being made against the identified priorities and KPIs will be monitored termly.

The Self Evaluation is based on an evaluation of current school position and is reviewed biannually as a minimum by the academy leadership and then in discussion with a member of the central Education Improvement Team so that an agreed position is established. The SEF is also presented to the local governing body, so that they have a strategic overview of the position of the academy.

Headteachers will hold leaders within the academy responsible and accountable for their specific areas of focus within the SIP through effective line management and demonstrating impact within their area of responsibility.

Local Governing Bodies will challenge the impact of interventions through data supplied to them through Headteachers reports and against the overall priorities identified in the academy improvement plan.

External Partnerships beyond BDAT

BDAT prides itself on being an outward facing and collaborative Trust. We believe in being a provider of system leadership and also a beneficiary. We know if we do not look beyond our Trust we will only be as good as the schools in our Trust and we always want to aim to be better.

As such BDAT is open and receptive to support from national DFE initiatives, working with national partners, engaging with school improvement programmes, learning from the EEF and working with other schools and Academy Trusts. Recent 2023 examples of initiatives and partners we are working with include:

- Ambition Institute as a delivery partner for early careers teachers
- Bradford/Leeds Teaching School hub for engagement with ICT and school improvement programmes
- DFE TSIO programme for school to school support in association with Cockburn MAT

- DFE Behaviour Hub in association with Dixons MAT
- Bradford Teaching School
- Bradford Priority Education Investment Area (Attendance)
- DFE Attendance Hub
- The Church of England Foundation for Education Leadership for support with SIAMS and Christian ethos
- Teach First Leading Together Programme
- Ambition Institute as an NPQ delivery partner on adaptive teaching
- Dixons research school leading on a SEND project and previously a disadvantage project.
- Plus, other local and national MAT and school partners for specific school improvement projects.

We are proud of our work to support and be supported by other partners as we believe working collaboratively can only make BDAT schools and the school system stronger for our young people.