



**ACHIEVING MORE TOGETHER**

# Ormiston Academies Trust

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School Improvement Strategy 2019

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## School Improvement Strategy 2019

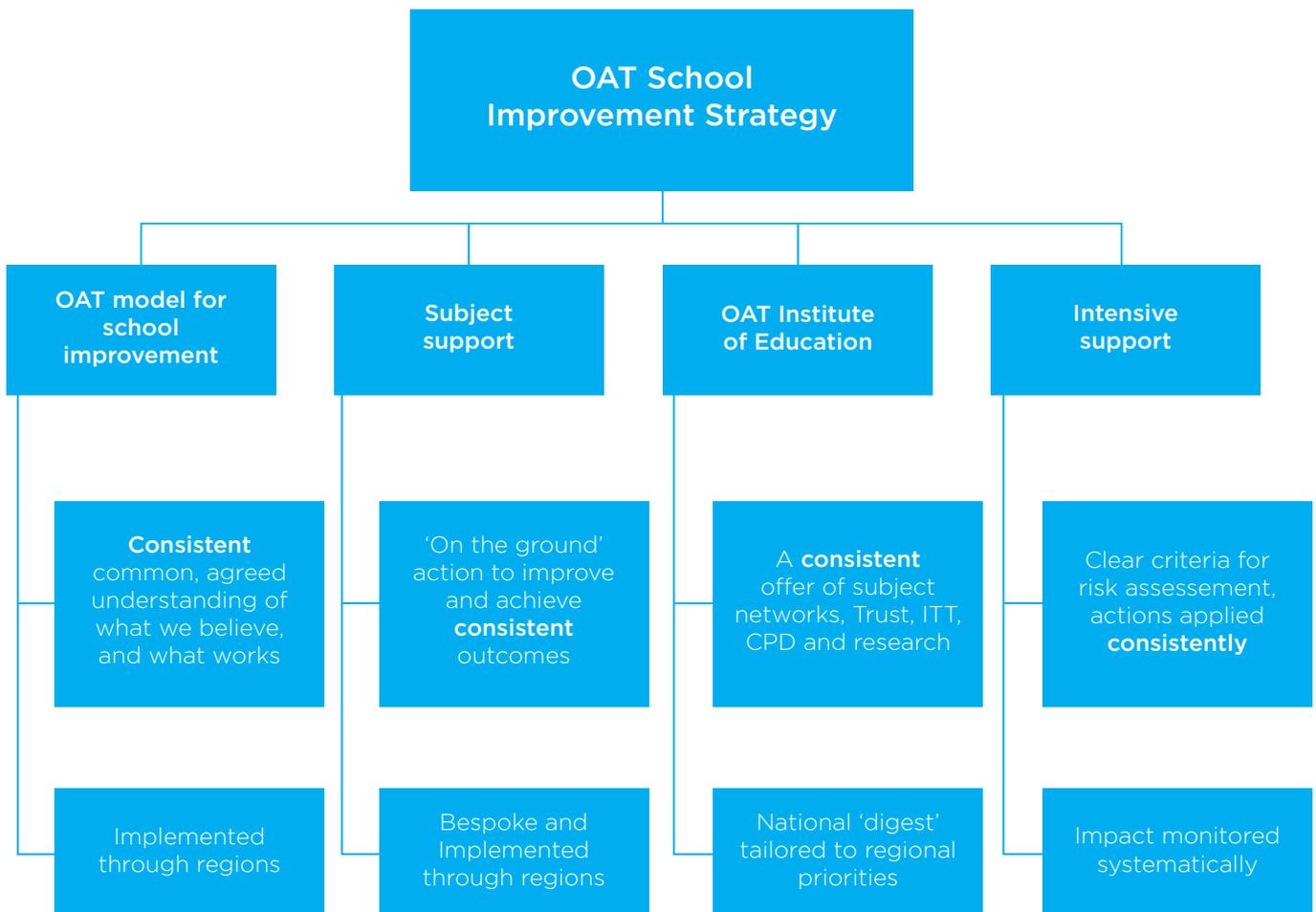
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# Four strand strategy

At Ormiston Academies Trust we are constantly refining and improving the way we support, challenge and improve our schools.

The strategy is based on four areas, co-ordinated on a national scale by the national director of education and implemented/supported regionally through the regional directors and primary director. The structure of central school improvement can be found in appendix 1. This document complements the overall Trust strategy based on **TEACH - DEVELOP - CHANGE** which is the five-year strategy to transform the way we serve our communities, and needs to be considered alongside the overall strategy.

Our approach has four strands with a model for school improvement, delivered through subject support, the Institute of Education and the intensive support for 'high risk' schools. For each of the 7 elements detailed guidance and support are available to support our academies.



# OAT model for school improvement

The guiding principle for school improvement is to make the biggest difference to the life chances of the pupils in schools.

This model is used to drive continual improvement accepting that school improvement is the responsibility of us all. Each school and each region will have their identity but will work for the 'greater good' of all the pupils we serve. This means resources need to be flexible and deployed across all schools where necessary.

This model will clarify what 'makes the difference' and act as a benchmark to measure progress. It will provide 'guidance' for regional directors, primary director and advisors and as a result will direct school improvement. It is to be used intelligently, and not as a checklist of minimum operating standards.

Our schools, advisors, regional directors and primary director will consider the quality of the:

- Leadership and vision
- Curriculum
- Classroom provision
- Professional development
- Behaviour attendance and systems
- Intervention strategies
- Self-evaluation and development planning



## Leadership and vision

Schools that improve emphasise the importance of focused leadership.

A clear vision should underpin leadership decisions and as a part of the OAT family, this vision should also reflect the wider vision of the Trust. The team members will drive the changes needed and work with all staff to ensure that they know what to do and are equipped to make it happen.

Schools that improve emphasise a vision that has support from governors, school leaders, teachers, pupils, parents/carers and the wider community.

A vision that is underpinned by a set of values and a strong ethos provides a good basis for making changes that take you forward.

To consider:

- The vision needs to focus on the most important role of the school – to help pupils to learn and make progress in all aspects of their development.
- A strong vision supports the decision-making process because, if every decision is linked to the vision, it will be focused on priorities. A strong, clear, vision that gives priority to pupils' learning will help everyone to move in the right direction.
- The vision and culture can provide a good touchstone against which to reflect on practice.
- The vision needs to be both ambitious and achievable, taking account of the school's current position and articulating what the school will look like in 3 – 5 years' time and the overall OAT strategy.
- Accountability is crucial – every member of staff needs to understand their role in helping pupils to make the maximum progress during their time at the school.
- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will need to be able to provide clear direction and set clear expectations, as well as providing the support and development that middle leaders need to do their jobs effectively.



# Curriculum

## The Trust that makes the biggest difference - improving life-chances

A core aim of all schools should be to drive social mobility and improve life chances, especially for the most vulnerable. Attainment in the core subjects, facilitating subjects and primary non-core subjects, will contribute to the life chances and increase the future choices available to pupils.

The curriculum is the vital overarching framework. It should be broad and balanced setting out aims, including the knowledge and understanding pupils need to succeed. OAT have developed the principles for Key Stage 1 and 2 where we believe that solid foundations in learning should be established from the very start. In the early years this means providing a stimulating and rich environment in which play based learning is supported with sensitive and informed adult interactions. As children progress through Key Stage 1, excellent teaching in core and non-core subjects is enhanced by an enriched curriculum to engage and enthuse. Key skills and deepening knowledge are developed in Key stage 2 so that all children are ready and well equipped for the next stage in their education.

At Key Stage 3, schools will teach the full range of national curriculum subjects using the principles and design being developed by OAT. Schemes should be shared so they can be adapted, but build on the central themes.

At Key Stage 4 we believe that it is appropriate for many of our pupils to access the EBacc suite of qualifications. This route should not be compulsory, but pupils will be guided to EBacc qualifications and/or facilitating subjects where it is appropriate. Equal opportunity should be given to all groups, especially for the mid and high ability disadvantaged group of learners.

All pupils will study English language, English literature, mathematics, science (trilogy or separate), PE, and PHSE / religious education. In addition, all pupils will be entitled to attain a modern foreign language, history, geography and computer science (in some combination). The arts, vocational subjects, social sciences and technology qualifications are valuable subjects and will be supported by the schools and offered as options to support the broad curriculum offer.

Post-16 will need to be tailored to the local context and offer, ensuring our pupils progress to the most appropriate course and level of study.

## Knowledge rich curriculum

All pupils will receive a curriculum with a solid foundation in knowledge, with skills such as oracy, numeracy and literacy. Without this, pupils will not be able to access the rest of their learning. In our schools the curriculum will be specific (what pupils learn at each stage will be clearly stated), cumulative (built on prior learning with opportunities to revisit knowledge), Imaginative (teachers should use their skills to develop memory, resilience, thinking, creativity and confidence) and delivered with rigour (to challenge pupils at all stages).

It is vital that schools value and develop the curriculum outside of the traditional classroom. These enriching opportunities will contribute to the education of the whole child and are central to OAT values.

See our curriculum statement [here](#).

## Classroom provision

Schools improve when teaching is consistently strong and effective. The work on vision, leadership and behaviour are all about setting a context in which teaching is effective and pupils learn and achieve.

'Good' teaching is not one particular approach or another, it is a craft with a variety of tools to 'educate' the person. It should be stimulating, motivating, interesting and impart knowledge and attributes to equip students for the next chapter of their life journey. Techniques and style will change depending on context and the needs of learners. It is much more than 'teaching to the test' as this can limit the level pupils reach.

To consider:

- The school will need to be confident that it knows how to identify and develop effective teaching, and how it will know that pupils are learning and making progress.
- There needs to be open and honest dialogue between teachers about recognising strengths and areas for development.
- Evaluations of teaching quality need to take account of the progress that pupils are making.
- A wide range of sources at teacher and class level including learning walks, peer assessment, student voice and assessment outcomes should all contribute to a wider discussion between teachers and their line managers about their strengths and development needs.
- A clear and open approach to improving teaching will help ensure that improvements made in one area can be developed elsewhere.

**The quality of teaching makes the biggest difference to learning outcomes. Pedagogy matters.**



# Professional development

Effective Continuing Professional Development (CPD) should be at the heart of our work to engage, develop and retain talented staff in the schools within our region. Our CPD should adhere to the following key principles:

- Built around participants' needs
- Subject specific content
- A clear, logical thread
- Involves explicit discussion, reflection and active research
- External input
- Collaborative learning
- Powerful leadership

Within each school, CPD programmes will vary according to the needs of a particular context. We should offer an extensive CPD programme across our schools, which would be open to all. The OAT Institute of Education has a digest to direct support and training from initial teacher training to executive leadership. The Trust will 'train its own' but continue to be outward looking to get the best from the wider system.

To consider:

- Generic CPD will be necessary to meet the needs of the school.
- Subject specific CPD makes a big difference to classroom practice.



# Behaviour attendance and systems

Pupils need to attend school and behave well if they are to learn and make progress. Staff must communicate clear expectations of behaviour and attendance, reflective of the school's vision, culture and ethos.

Consistency is key to improving behaviour, and in line with the school's behaviour and attendance policy, this requires the school to have a clear, unwavering and known position on what is acceptable and what is not. This should be evident in the way teachers guide and respond to their pupils at all times of the school day.

To consider:

- Think of behaviour as factors that have an impact on learning. Differentiate between poor behaviour and readiness for learning, as different methods will be required to address these.
- Be systematic in the implementation of the behaviour and attendance policy.
  - Train all staff
  - Inform pupils
  - Inform parents
  - Be consistent
  - Be relentless
  - No excuses
- Senior leaders need to step up and lead in this area. Senior leaders need to be highly visible (e.g. welcoming pupils at the start of the school day, during lesson change overs, in lessons and during the lunch period). Potential risk areas and 'hot spots' need to be identified and well-staffed.
- As behaviour improves, pupils should be encouraged to 'self-regulate' and take a proactive role in maintaining and developing standards of excellence.
- Middle leaders must take responsibility for their areas and not pass on responsibility to others.
- Class teachers also need to take responsibility for their lessons and not pass on responsibility to others.
- Attending school and reducing persistent absence for all groups is a key driver of school improvement. Schools need to be relentless in their approach especially the most vulnerable.
- Any form of unofficial exclusions, off rolling or encouraging elective home education are not appropriate and have no place in OAT schools.

# Intervention strategies

Wave one quality teaching across all years and all groups is the key to quality outcomes and improving life chances. Resources should be targeted to the classroom. However, at points it is necessary to intervene to accelerate progress.

This may be to support early reading difficulties, Year 7 catch up, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 intervention to ensure pupils reach their potential, or at any point in the learning journey when support is needed. Specific interventions may be needed to support pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

To consider:

- The quality of teaching makes the biggest difference to learning outcomes. Pedagogy matters.
- Interventions should be evidence based and retained only if evaluation shows a clear and positive impact.
- There are a number of interventions that don't work: e.g. large groups returning after school being re-taught undifferentiated work that isn't focused on the precise skills/knowledge that pupils lack.
- Do not routinely rely on last minute interventions.
- Do ensure interventions target the right group of pupils.
- Establish clear accountability for intervention strategies.
- Facilitate departments working together to coordinate pupil support.
- Create a clear monitoring, evaluation and review cycle to check progress.
- Research suggests promising strategies include:
  - Rigorous monitoring and use of data.
  - Raising pupil aspirations using engagement/aspiration programmes.
  - Engaging parents (particularly hard-to-reach parents) and raising parental aspirations.
  - Developing social and emotional competencies.
  - Supporting school transitions.
  - Providing strong and visionary leadership.
  - Small group or 1:1 teaching.
  - Peer tutoring.

## Self-evaluation and planning

Ormiston Academies Trust recognises the importance of self-evaluation as a crucial part of our schools' ongoing cycle of review and improvement planning. A self-evaluation summary is an important tool in this process, which enables schools to draw together an evaluation of different aspects of their work leading to an evaluation of the quality of education provided overall. There is no fixed time in the year when a self-evaluation might be completed. This will depend on the individual circumstances of each school.

Although Ofsted have no mandate for schools to upload and store their self-evaluation summary, we acknowledge that inspectors will ask our leaders to make a self-evaluation summary available.

The Trust requires schools to produce an school development plan every academic year. These documents directly reflect the work that will need to be done in order to achieve targets set and serve as a live and ongoing record of progress towards achieving targets and other school improvement priorities. Although the plan is frequently considered and evaluated over the course of an academic year by middle and senior leaders in the schools, it is also a document that is well-organised, succinct, unambiguous, data-driven and well presented; such that it can be presented to and understood by all stakeholders at any given moment throughout the course of the academic year.

To consider:

- Is there a systematic cycle of self-evaluation and development planning?
- Is the improvement plan really focussing on improvements rather than a list of jobs that need to be completed?
- Is it clear what success looks like and who is responsible for actions?



## Subject support

Schools need additional capacity to maintain their standards and improve where necessary.

We have a team of regional lead practitioners to support classroom practice focussing on raising standards and supporting colleagues. The team will grow as the development of the operating model delivers efficiencies.

Activities include:

- In lessons – teaching pupils.
- Team teaching to develop practice.
- Splitting ‘priority groups’ to maximise achievement and enable catch up where necessary.
- Small group intervention across the ability range, in line with trust priorities.
- Joint planning with teachers at all levels.
- Moderating assessment – setting the standard.
- QA (*Quality Assurance*) – as subject experts making sure standards are high.
- Contributing to the development of trust-wide schemes of work.

The Trust is geographically spread, and the need is not uniform – regions will have access to this support. At the moment it is English, mathematics and science, but the team will grow to include humanities, MFL and Arts lead practitioners. As well as these staff, we have a large number of specialist leaders of education (SLEs) to deploy across the regions, raising standards. These are vital as some of our schools are geographically spread – so the subject support for the west will look different to the subject support in the north.



## Institute of education

As a large system Trust we are committed to training new entrants to the profession and developing our existing staff. We want to 'grow our own' and do this at several levels. From providing experience for teaching assistants and ITE applicants, to professional development for executive principals.

### Subject networks

These are national and regional events to share ideas and also drive the curriculum and pedagogy. Networks exist for the core subjects and non core subjects as well as post-16, behaviour and careers.

### Professional development

Regions deliver CPD across clusters and there is a full menu of NPQ programs as well as access to Masters qualifications. The Institute of Education brings this together in a cohesive manner so that all staff have access and the quality and the principles of OAT are central to the training.

### Initial Teaching Training (ITT)

Teachers are our biggest asset. The key to success is high quality teachers in our schools. We have an Ormiston SCITT and teaching school which will eventually enable us to train the clear majority of our staff. We proactively recruit specialists in all areas to ensure high quality provision.

### Research

We are committed to basing our work on evidence and work with different partners to develop best practice. This is through the networks and also through national organisations. This is done in partnership with our Masters programme.



# Intensive support

In schools, one of the elements that leads to sustained improvement is reducing in school variation. As a Trust, we also need to reduce inter-school variation. As a result we have differing degrees of support we give to schools which is based on need and not entitlement.

## Schools are risk assessed and categorised as:

- High risk
- Some risk
- Low risk

## Example criteria for risk assessment:

- Progress – looking at all progress 8 elements and DA overall progress 8
- Attainment – ability on intake is taken into account
- Attendance and exclusions
- Leadership capacity/capability/HR issue
- Safeguarding
- Previous inspection judgement
- Inspection window
- Finance

There are separate criteria for primary schools and post-16 providers. In total there are 30 criteria which are monitored three times a year. Regional directors and primary director have responsibility for their schools. Progress boards sit frequently to evaluate the position and direct support where it is needed. Progress Boards are a systematic way to monitor the progress of schools. The national director of education works with the team to release resource where necessary.

## High risk schools:

- Regional directors and primary director to produce a tailored plan and report actions and impact to the national director monthly, and to executive team and SIS each term. National director to visit the high risk school each half term (attending progress board) to evaluate progress.
- Lead practitioner (lead teacher) to work in these schools for extended periods of time.
- Extra support from other schools and teaching schools. We have large numbers of SLEs to be deployed in all subject areas.

## Some risk schools:

- Regional directors and primary director to produce a tailored plan and report actions and impact to the national director on a termly basis.
- Lead Practitioner (lead teacher) to work in these schools.
- Some support based on the need of the school.

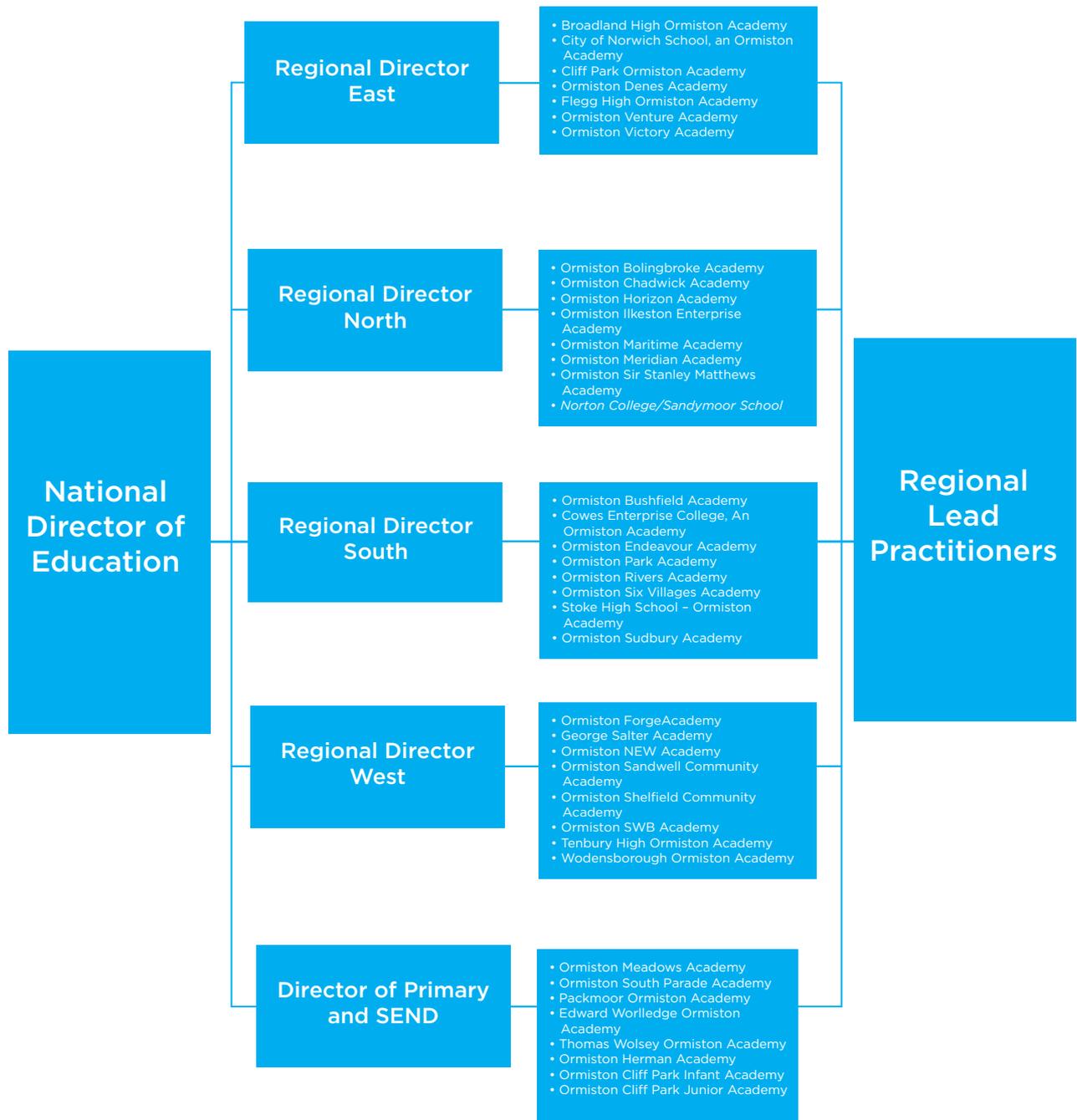
## Low risk schools:

- Regional directors and primary director to produce a tailored plan and report actions and impact to the national director on a termly basis.

*N.B. all schools have progress boards to monitor progress.*

# Appendix 1

Structure of the central school improvement support.



## Appendix 2

### Support

Bespoke action plans are drawn up by regional directors and primary director and support plans are designed. Each regional director primary director has a team of practitioners to deploy as necessary and a budget to broker further support. Each of the 7 element of the school improvement model has a digest of ideas and support for RDs/PD to pull from. For example, if attendance is a particular issue in an academy, the relevant RD/PD can draw down guidance and source the best practice from the Trust to implement.

This support is linked to the work of the OAT Institute of Education which has subject networks and CPD at all levels to support improvement.

### Monitoring

Academy principals are line managed by regional directors or the primary director. This means that they are key in the monitoring and evaluation of academy progress. One of the mechanisms for monitoring academies is through a Strategic Progress Board (SPB). At the start of an academic cycle the academy targets are set as are the key lines of enquiry that the SPB will monitor. It is at this point the relevant support package is designed using centrally employed lead practitioners as well as SLEs in our academies.

The SPB is chaired by the RD/PD and consists of the senior leaders from the school and the chair of governors. For each element (targets and key lines of enquiry), impact statements are produced which highlight actions and impact in each area. Progress boards take place between 4 and 6 times a year.

The outcomes of the Strategic Progress Boards are summarised on a common format and reported to the executive team three times a year. Here the overall Trust, region and academy progress is evaluated, and the necessary action is taken.

The outcomes of these meetings are then scrutinised by the School Improvement Sub-Committee, again three times a year. This committee is a sub-committee of the Trust board.

October	February	May	August
4 to 6 Progress Boards throughout the year.			
<b>Executive Team</b> Review targets and monitor progress towards targets and actions taken from DC1 and take action as necessary.	<b>Executive Team</b> Review targets and monitor progress towards targets and actions taken from DC2 and take action as necessary.	<b>Executive Team</b> Review targets and monitor progress towards targets and actions taken from DC3 and take action as necessary.	<b>Executive Team</b> Review outcomes.
<b>SI Sub-Committee</b> Review targets and monitor progress towards targets and actions taken from DC1 and the response from the directors and executive.	<b>SI Sub-Committee</b> Review targets and monitor progress towards targets and actions taken from DC2 and the response from the directors and executive.	<b>SI Sub-Committee</b> Review targets and monitor progress towards targets and actions taken from DC2 and the response from the directors and executive.	<b>SI Sub-Committee</b> Review outcomes.
SI Sub-Committee report back to the full Trust Board.			