



CHARTER SCHOOLS  
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

CHARTER  
DICKENS  
PRIMARY  
SCHOOL

# TRUST DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-24



The Charter Schools Educational Trust has come a long way in a short time and is now home to six schools, a teaching school hub and a research school. We are ambitious about our future work together and being the very best home for our schools, our families, and our partners. We have spent time getting to know our schools and partners better.

It is also informed by reflecting on what we have achieved and learnt from our growth. The strategy has also been developed in the context of the pandemic and our experiences. Notably, we have reflected on the challenges of responding to constant change, preserving capacity for school improvement, the health of staff and students and the stability of this growing organisation.

We have spent time re-shaping our mission, vision, and values, which will drive our work over the coming three years. This period has also helped us re-evaluate how we communicate, grow collaboration, and ensure the impact of our work within the Trust and beyond it.

The coming years will focus on building the foundations for that work. In creating the foundations, we will ensure we have the agility and capacity to adapt and scale our impact to reach more children, young people, and communities. We hope to do this in a variety of ways. We will continue to engage in using technology and contributing to the broader educational system.



**Cassie Buchanan**  
CEO

# FORWARD



The extraordinary times we have all been living through continue to exert unprecedented pressures on us all. These pressures seem to be concentrating in our schools as the vaccination programme eases the lockdown requirements elsewhere. The Herculean efforts of our staff, our teachers and our leaders are evident everywhere, from rapidly adapting every aspect of schooling, to the daily challenge of keeping our students and staff safe.

My thanks and deep gratitude extend to each and everyone. The effects on society and the cohorts of students who have lived through it will not be known for years. What we do know is that our core values, care, and a relentless focus on children and young people comprise the north star to set our course by.

During this period our trust has grown significantly, and we have evolved our leadership, governance, and collaboration at a high pace. However, the impacts of the pandemic are material. While Cassie and her team have the vision, ambition, and capability to deliver on the promise of the Charter Trust, it is important for trustees to recognise the extent of the impact.

Our people have been stretched beyond full capacity responding to the unique challenges faced, leaving very little attention for strategic, high-commitment change.

Given these recent circumstances, some of our ambitions have inevitably, and understandably, been impacted. We have a robust plan in place for catch-up and we know that embedding trust-wide systems for operational excellence is foundational to our future capability. Much of the work ahead is centred on putting in place the platform on which to scale our impact.

The opportunity for our students, their communities, and beyond is exciting and important. I look forward to our ongoing task of inspiring and enabling the executive team to deliver this plan.

**John Godfrey**

**Chair of Trustees**

# A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR



# Our Context for Development

## Future challenges for our children and young people

### Educational and Social Gaps

In July 2021, the EEF published interim findings from a study assessing the impact of Covid-19 related disruption on outcomes, particularly the effect on disadvantaged pupils. The findings confirm that primary-age pupils have lower achievement in both reading and maths as a likely result of missed learning. In addition, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils remains large. Our pupils typically benefit from broad extracurricular programmes, which builds confidence and culture capital – disruptions to our programmes have affected our disadvantaged pupils hardest.

### Mental Health and Wellbeing

The rise of young people experiencing mental health difficulties has been steadily increasing in recent years. In July 2020, the NHS Digital Mental Health of Children and Young People in England survey found that one in six young people (16%) aged 5–15 were at probable risk of experiencing some form of mental health issue or disorder.

### Structural Inequalities

The children and young people tell us that racism and discrimination continue to affect them. Older girls have told us they have been victims of sexual harassment and assault. We also know that some of our young people face discrimination because of their sexuality, gender identity, disability and other protected characteristics.

### Destinations

For our school leavers, the pandemic has impacted employment and training opportunities and higher education experiences. We know that university will not be the best fit for the career choices, wellbeing, or talents of some of our students and we need to grow our provision to support as many of our young people as we can.

## Future challenges for our Trust

### Sustainable and healthy growth

We have grown quickly from a small Trust of two schools to a group of six schools and outreach organisations. Our ways of working and scale of support have needed to change to support this growth, which will continue. Our leaders are a new team, and they are still working hard to embed our unique values and vision in all our work. We recognise that we may need to adapt further to ensure alignment of vision, values and operating norms whilst empowering leaders to lead their schools confidently. We are committed to welcoming schools that need more significant support. We need to build the capacity to be ready for this without destabilising our existing schools.

### Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion

We are at the beginning of understanding the inequalities experienced by our staff team. We already know these inequalities won't be solved quickly. Our values underline our commitment to being a diverse and inclusive organisation where all staff feel valued, respected, and empowered to be who they are at work. We know that diversity of experience and perspective makes our organisation richer and our decisions better. A robust action plan will drive improvements and be led by a stakeholder group.

### Political and Social

During the COVID 19 pandemic, we have learnt how to become more responsive and adaptable to external change and need. It has also diluted and diverted attention from other school and organisation improvement strategies to manage immediate risks and operational changes. We lead large programmes with government funding, and we are aware that this work is vulnerable to changes in policy. A future policy may take a different approach to school improvement and multi-academy trusts. We will need to remain agile and use our recent learning to sustainably grow our impact whilst staying true to our mission, providing schools that inspire and nurture young South Londoners to excel.

### Recruitment and Retention of talented teachers

The fallout of COVID on the numbers and quality of teachers joining the profession is not yet known nationally. The new Early Career Framework provides a stronger and more consistent professional development curriculum and support for teachers joining the profession in this Trust. The challenge is ensuring the Trust has enough capacity to mentor new teachers well and then continue to build on this early-career development effectively over time.

The NFER teacher workforce survey 2020 also tells us that nationally more experienced teachers are considering leaving the profession or would consider and could afford to work reduced hours. Our schools will need to adapt structurally and culturally to support flexible working in ways that retain talented experienced staff.









## Future Opportunities for the Trust

### Institutional

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We have strong schools, leaders and governors who are committed to the mission. Individually, the schools have different strengths and much to learn from each other. We have a growing number of talented teachers who are also confident and skilled at developing others. London South Teaching School Hub leads on teacher and school leaders professional development and disseminates excellent practice. The opportunity for extraordinary outcomes collectively for pupils is sitting within our schools. Releasing it and building it into our systems and culture is the next stage of our development.

### Educational

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Increasing numbers of Southwark pupils have special educational needs. Southwark has seen a rise in the numbers of pupils with autism in particular and there are often not sufficient school places for pupils to access a blended education of mainstream and specialist support.

Within our family of schools, we could develop both the expertise and the physical spaces to meet this need if the model of specialist units in mainstream schools is proven to be financially sustainable. As expertise is further developed, there is an opportunity to grow our impact locally through outreach support and sharing resources.

### Political – The changing academies landscape

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The Department for Education is encouraging stand-alone academies to join multi-academies and supporting strong trusts to continue growing. The narrative is changing around academisation to encourage every school to be part of a strong Trust family. In this climate, we should prepare for and welcome growth in the number of schools in our Trust.

Alongside this, the rollout of T-Levels presents our secondary schools with a route to providing high-quality technical qualifications and to potentially develop specialist sites within a campus framework and expand our offer.

### Economic – the impact of COVID on the teacher workforce and pupil numbers

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The pandemic has not negatively hit teaching recruitment. Through our Teaching School Hub, we have a growing initial teacher training offer for graduates and career changers. Our partnership with Teach First supports talent recruitment from diverse and under-represented backgrounds, and we believe we are in a solid position to attract and grow a talented workforce.

Our schools have not yet suffered from falling rolls, as is the case across the South. There is an opportunity to use our brand and capacity to support schools that are struggling. We also know that London communities have a brilliant track record of adapting to change. In Southwark, organisations are working collaboratively to address the challenges to build a stronger Southwark.

We have a range of central London buildings, including a new secondary school with state-of-the-art facilities. We can further increase our income streams with lettings and think strategically about how we support community education beyond our school populations.

### Technology

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We know that digital solutions to learning gaps have evolved significantly. Across our schools, many pupils benefit from online tutoring or responsive software linked to maths or reading. Our schools have adapted to the need for flexible use of online learning. We now have the hardware and capacity to build on this further. Communication and community engagement have also adapted using digital solutions. Parents can attend more online meetings, and schools use videos to make information clearer and more available. Our plans should ensure this learning is built upon and that our use of technology remains user-centred in its design.

### Environmental

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There are increasing opportunities to improve the environmental impact of schools and reduce carbon emissions. Our schools can already get involved in programmes such as the Eco-schools. We will need to develop greater central capacity before thoroughly auditing and improving our carbon emissions and broader environmental impact at scale. As we build this capacity, we should continue to support schools to develop individually through travel plans, Eco-school applications, and reducing energy consumption.

There is also an opportunity to think about how we use our school buildings to support pupil and staff wellbeing ensuring they are attractive, calm spaces to work and learn.



**Lean central team**

Centrally, we focus on making a difference for schools and adding the most value.



**Evidence-informed**

We are the proud home of the **Charles Dickens Research school**. We engage with the research to learn how to teach and support pupils best and how to implement successful, positive change.



**Collaboration and Networking**

Each school actively works with others across our Trust, ensuring there is always a clear purpose for our collaboration. We also look outwards, working with other Trusts, Local Authorities and sectors to learn from others and achieve outcomes we couldn't alone.



**Amplifying our impact in innovative ways**

We are committed to growing our impact rather than growth for growth's sake. We use technology to share and amplify our work beyond South London.



**Prioritising wellbeing**

We invest in providing our pupils with the knowledge, skills, and support to thrive and be mentally healthy. Our staff are equally important. We are committed to improving job satisfaction, where possible, by reducing unnecessary workload, promoting flexible working and providing greater autonomy over professional development.



**Empowering School Leaders**

Our school leaders have the freedom to explore and learn from different practices as we know that authentic leadership and personal accountability are founded on ownership and self-direction. In particular, curriculum choices are made at school level.



**Growing our talent**

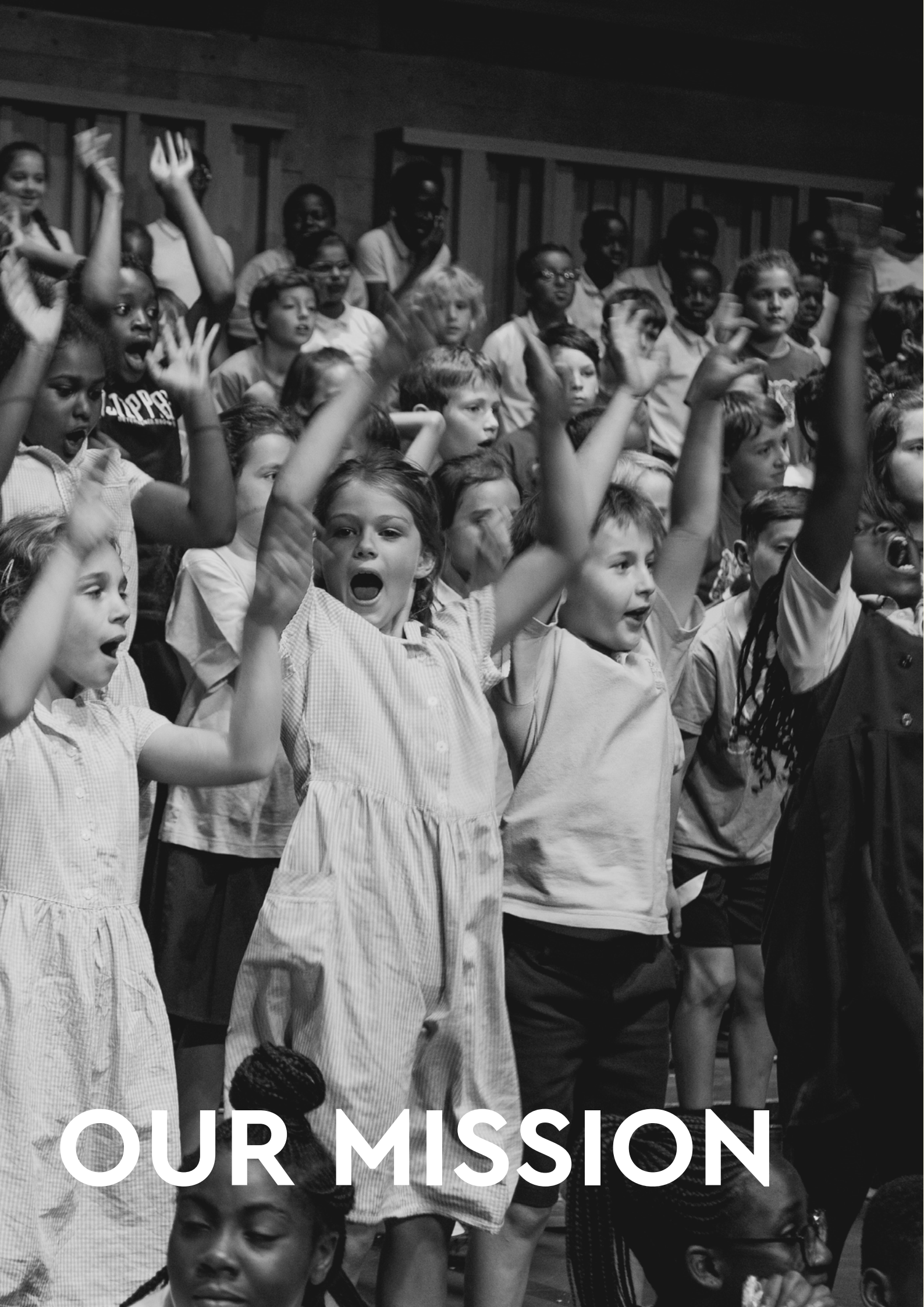
We use our professional development programmes and collaboration to recruit, progress and retain talented people and build a diverse team.



**Valuing governance**

We know the positive difference our governors and trustees can make at all levels to support school improvement and challenge our schools to pursue excellence. Training and our structures provide substantial opportunities to contribute.





# OUR MISSION

**Our Mission:** inspire and nurture children and young people in South London to excel, through education that transforms lives and strengthens our diverse communities

## SCHOOLS THAT EXCEL

All our pupils achieve highly

Greatest support for those pupils who need it most

Commitment to continuous improvement

Evidence-informed teaching within a powerful knowledge curriculum

Deliberate and proactive teaching of positive behaviours

Broad and rich opportunities for pupils to develop creativity through learning about and participation in the arts

Promoting leadership and community service for all pupils

Families valued as partners.

## PEOPLE WHO INSPIRE

A clear talent-management strategy for all roles

Trust-wide career development programme

An employer of choice in South London

Developing leaders who reflect the diversity of our community

A sector leader for staff wellbeing

A successful Teaching School Hub and EEF Research School.

## PARTNERSHIPS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Mobilising evidence-informed knowledge of 'what works'

Working together to improve outcomes for all our pupils

Sharing strong practice and resources

Promoting innovation in our schools

Amplifying our learning to improve the sector.

## SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS SERVICES AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE



### WHAT WE WILL DO

Build a strong agile school improvement model that delivers impact quickly and grows capacity

Nurture our existing schools in the pursuit of excellence

Launch a Charter Curriculum to share beyond our schools

Develop a 'broadening horizons' programme'.



### WHAT WE WILL DO

Develop a people strategy to ensure staff wellbeing and capacity building are at the heart of what we do

Create better ways for staff to feel included and well connected to each other

Publish and deliver an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan.



### WHAT WE WILL DO

Grow in size to a sustainable number of schools and to maximise the opportunities for sharing specialist capacity

Expand the central business team into areas that offer real value to schools

Build collaborative working focused on impact and building capacity.

Find meaningful ways to amplify the voices of our children and young people in leading social change

Continue to contribute to the wider sector through our Teaching School Hub and other organisations and projects.





# SCHOOLS THAT EXCEL

## Schools That Excel

**Strategic Priority 1: Building a strong agile school improvement model that delivers impact quickly and grows capacity**

### We Will Do This By:

1. Maintaining and nurturing our existing schools, to continue to establish ourselves as a centre of excellence for evidence-informed teaching and learning.
2. Launch and embedding of 'Getting to Great' foundations and quality assurance suite to identify strengths and next steps.
3. Supporting teachers to lead successful subject development, teacher development and behaviours.
4. Developing outstanding provision for SEND including specialising in autism and dyslexia
5. Launching a Charter curriculum drawing on best practices across the Trust and available for all schools to use
6. The roll-out of successful instruction coaching for all teachers
7. Developing a Trust-wide approach to data-driven evaluation to identify strengths, needs and close gaps quickly.
8. Launching a 'Charter' broadening horizons programme
9. Developing a successful technical qualifications offer for post-16 targeted towards career opportunities and attractive employers in South London.

### What will success look like in 2024

- Our schools will be externally quality assured achieving the gold standard of outstanding provision including above national average outcomes for all pupil groups
- Our schools use data intelligently to identify and understand gaps quickly and act to close them
- We will have a fully resourced high-quality curriculum available as needed by schools that reflects the evidence of what works and the very best of our provision.
- Teaching and learning will be highly effective in all classrooms
- We will be a beacon of SEND provision in South London
- All our schools will offer a strong extra-curricular offer and together a shared programme to promote creativity, mental and physical health, confidence and pupil leadership

### What we will do in 2021/22

- Schools use 'getting to great' foundation structure and intelligent data to identify gaps and areas for improvement
- School leaders engage in external peer review and quality assurance to triangulate their evaluations of school effectiveness
- School evaluation is accurate and based on intelligent data
- Strengthen SEND leadership, systems and practices to improve capacity and outcomes
- Improve behaviour and culture across the secondary phase through collaboration and re-investment in evidence-based approach
- The development of a curriculum for wellbeing and emotional intelligence
- Each school is able to fully articulate their curriculum sequencing and implementation drawing on an evidence-based approach and support where needed
- Test and Learn – development of a Charter Curriculum to support schools in need joining the trust
- Introduction of instructional coaching across all schools
- Launch of music and sports programme for primary and secondary pupils.





# PEOPLE WHO INSPIRE

## People who Inspire

### Strategic Priority 2: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Great People

#### We Will Do This By:

- Building a school improvement team including subject specialists, behaviour leads and broader learning
- Developing and publishing a People Strategy which sets out new approaches to staff recruitment, development, engagement, and retention to ensure that staff wellbeing and growth remain at the heart of what we do
- Ensuring our governors have the knowledge and skills to support and challenge our schools well and ensuring that we have a diverse and skilled board
- Ensuring that our human resources practices are robust and fit for scale
- Implementing an internal communications plan to ensure that the organisation is inclusive and well-connected
- Publishing and delivering an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan which sets out our approach to tackling disproportionality and discrimination and holds us accountable to our staff, our families, and our governors.

#### What will success look like in 2024

- We will be an organisation which lives its values and is a positive and fulfilling place to work
- Our recruitment and retention policies will be inclusive, empowering and transparent and staff will be proud to work for The Charter Schools Educational Trust
- We will have found ways to measure how attractive we are as an employer
- Staff will feel listened to, engaged and supported, all of which will ensure that they are able to deliver the best outcomes for our pupils
- All staff will be trained according the standards set out in our policies and our new people strategy with individual development plans which allow us to track progress.

#### What we will do in 2021/22

- Establish a professional development programme focused on engaging with ECF and NPQs as well as instructional coaching
- Develop a EDI strategy based on data collected in Summer 2021
- Develop a talent management strategy focused on growing subject and SEND specialists .





# PARTNERSHIPS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## Partnerships that make a difference

**Strategic priority 3: Operational Excellence – Developing a scalable and sustainable business service that relieves pressure on school leaders and provides great value for money.**

### We Will Do This By:

1. Grow in size to broaden the range of specialist capacity and to offer wider range of school improvement support without increasing financial contributions
2. Expanding the business services team to reflect the needs and capacity of the schools in the trust
3. Centralising the financial management team to increase capacity and gain economics of scale for schools
4. Developing and delivering a data and communications strategy to relieve pressure on school leaders and support timely decision making
5. Delivering an IT strategy which allows data and resources to be shared fluidly, reduces costs for individual schools and reduces data protection risks
6. Developing an overall estates plan to ensure that capital income can be targeted effectively at school improvement needs
7. Evaluating all contracts to identify where greater value for money can be achieved
8. Reducing the administrative burden on the CEO in order to increase capacity for school improvement.

### What will success look like in 2024

- Strong systems for data sharing allow Trust leaders to quickly identify gaps in the quality of provision and ensure school improvement support is targeted well
- We will have an efficient, financially sustainable and scalable business services provision that meets the needs of our schools
- We will have improved the value for money spent on contracts across the Trust, reducing costs on those that are not pupil or staff facing.

### What we will do in 2021/22

1. Increase the number of schools in the Trust who bring additional capacity and aligned values
2. Launch a shared strategic calendar
3. Agree a shared assessment cycle
4. Create and refine a new centralised finance team
5. Develop an effective communications to ensure stakeholders are informed and involved in decision making as delegated by the scheme of delegation
6. Ensure all schools are fully compliant with statutory obligations and Trust policies through
7. Implement a new scheme of delegation for governance and train governors to ensure they can provide effective support and challenge for school evaluation and improvement.



# Partnerships that make a difference

Strategic Priority 4: Organisational Culture – creating a shared culture based across the Trust which all our people value and promote.

## We Will Do This By:

1. Owning and leading our vision and values as leaders together
2. Using data and structures to plan and evaluate effectively
3. All stakeholders understand and feel part of our mission and know how they can contribute through regular opportunities for listening.
4. Developing a student participation strategy, ensuring that we amplify the voices of young people and empower them to participate in decisions which directly affect their lives. This means developing clear targets and measurable outcome indicators that will enable us to map our progress against our Student Participation Strategy.
5. Establishing a Student Board which will work alongside the Board of Trustees, allowing young people to partake in the business of developing the organisation as well as providing them with the opportunity to gain valuable skills and experience.
6. Successful implementation of a Trust-wide methodology for collaborative working focused on impact and building capacity.

## What will success look like in 2024

- Staff wellbeing is seen and known by stakeholders as a strength in each of our schools and in the way that the central team operates.
- We will retain staff and organisational knowledge through our people development programme and work that brings teams together to work collaboratively towards a shared vision.
- Collaborative working to achieve sustainable goals is seen as the norm
- Young people will have opportunities to participate in Trust and local discussions which will directly affect their lives.

## What we will do in 2021/22

1. Create regular opportunities for leaders to come together and evaluate and plan collaboratively
2. Leaders will promote our values and understand what it means to be a leader in this Trust through closer working with each other and the CEO.
3. We work together to decide our Trust priorities and our school improvement team foci.
4. Our leaders lead school improvement teams knowing and drawing upon capacity across the trust.
5. We use of our website, technology and social media to promote a sense of 'one team's and a greater understanding of what it means to be a part of the Charter Family
6. Schools use the 'getting to great' foundations along own school priorities to identify focus of school improvement
7. Our schools and the Trust use both intelligent data and listening to develop user-centred impact
8. Provide different routes for learning about our stakeholders experiences and what to improve.

# Partnerships that make a difference

Strategic Priority 5: Growing our Impact to reach more children and young people both in South London and beyond

## We Will Do This By:

1. Building impactful relationships with special schools, alternative provisions, nursery settings and colleges and growing the Trust within these groups.
2. Successful launch of new Teaching Hub whilst retaining our reputation as a lead provider of an evidence-informed collaborative approach to school improvement.
3. Sustaining strong performance in national school improvement programmes
4. Development of a large team of subject specialists across all phases to increase capacity
5. Developing and delivering a Trust outreach strategy which allows schools who are not part of the Trust to access support and services.

## What will success look like in 2024

- Sustainable growth focused on schools that provide capacity, specialist provision or require support in Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham.
- Schools in South London are able to benefit from our capacity in a variety of sustainable ways including joining the Trust, managed services and school improvement.

## What we will do in 2021/22

1. We create a school improvement offer to support schools requiring improvement/inadequate
2. We develop and deliver an enhanced induction programme for new schools
3. Develop strong relationships with special schools and alternative provisions
4. The teaching school launches its new programmes for ECF, CPD and NPQs in collaboration with Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark local authorities, MATs and legacy teaching schools.
5. A sustainable membership model for the wider teaching school offer is achieved
6. Flexible Working programme achieves its KPIs and capture its learning in an impact booklet
7. The Behaviour Hub will deliver effective school improvement for 6 schools and share its learning with schools in the Trust
8. The Research School will continue to grow in capacity through recruiting and developing more Evidence Leaders in Education in order to reach higher numbers of schools than in 2020/21.



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# Notes



