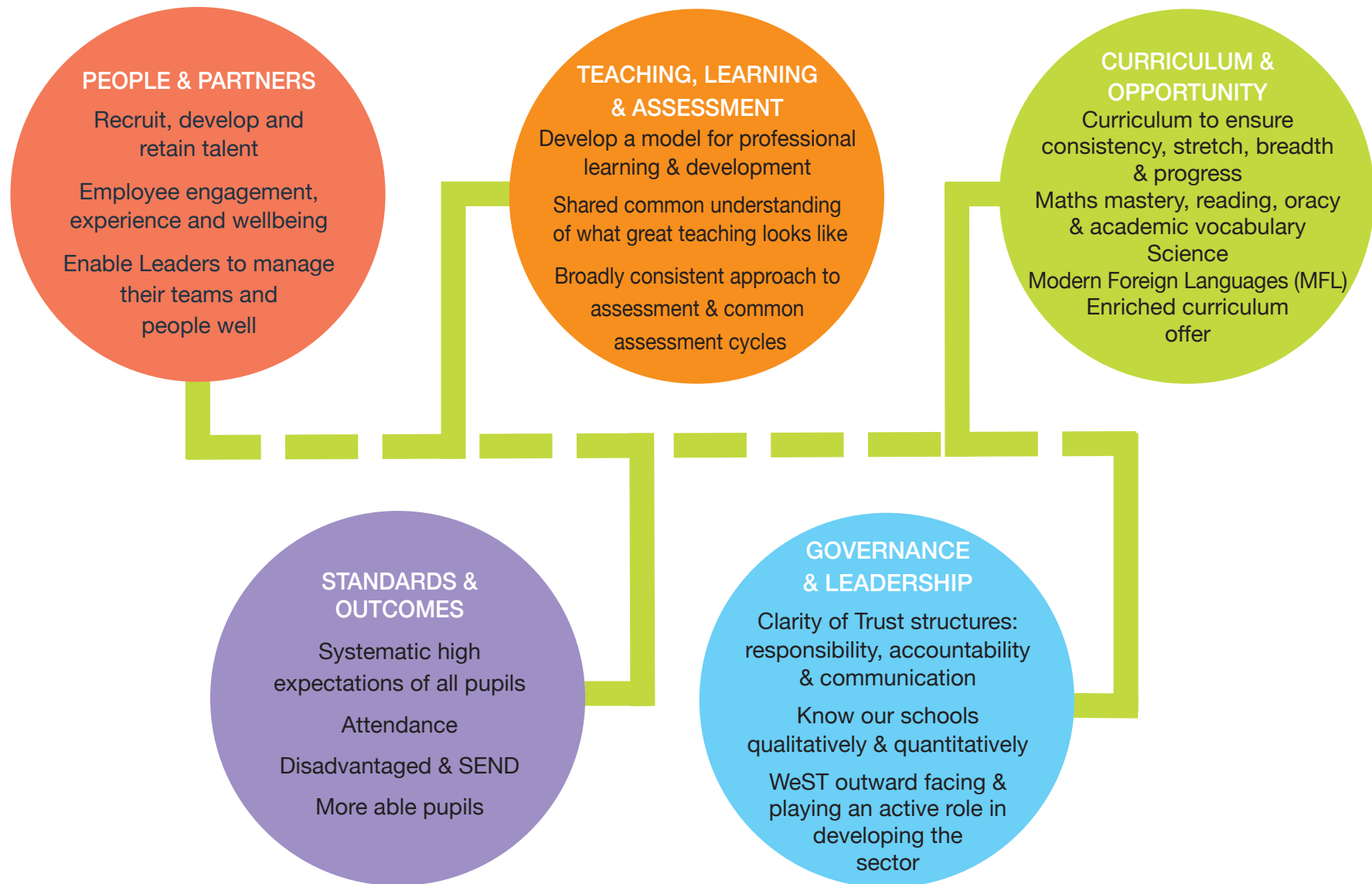


WeST Strategic Plan 2020-25



WESTCOUNTRY
SCHOOLS TRUST



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Multi-Academy Trust

Strategic Plan

learn
integrity

values

challenge flourish every child matters

opportunity

succeed stronger beliefs

transparency experience together

vision

best practice

We care passionately about our children



Rob Haring
Chief Executive Officer
Westcountry Schools Trust

From the Trust

Westcountry Schools Trust, (WeST), combines primary and secondary schools in Devon, Plymouth and Cornwall.

The Trust is a DfE recognised 'Sponsor', cohort 1 Teaching School and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) provider. Through 'The Learning Institute' (TLI) our remit extends to provision beyond the 2-19 age range to include Higher Education delivery and apprenticeship accreditation to name but two.

WeST is a complex schools trust that is maturing rapidly. We have a dedicated and well qualified central team that supports the work of some 2000 committed staff. Strong governance is provided through a knowledgeable and experienced Trust Board that is ably led by a National Leader of Governance.

WeST is aspirational for its children and staff. We seek to employ talented staff and provide carefully structured career pathways. We are passionate about our children doing well and improving their life chances regardless of socio-economic background. We want to inspire children and staff alike through quality learning spaces and buildings.

WeST is determined to harness the collective professional knowledge and expertise of the workforce so that we can:

- Develop a collective of strong schools where every WeST child is in a great school.
- Build on our existing strengths and improve outcomes for all children.
- Develop a culture of aspiration – success for all.
- Support community development to ensure WeST's footprint in the region is a great place to learn, work and live.

This strategic plan outlines our ambitions and the actions we will take to achieve our aspirant aims and goals.

WeST's Values, Beliefs and Vision

The Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST); a tight-knit family of schools based around natural geographical proximity in the south west. Initially formed as a small multi-academy trust of only two schools in 2011 the Trust has experienced several iterations of growth and change. In essence WeST, as we recognise it today, was launched in September 2017 with the ambition of delivering exceptional education for 2-19 years olds with the additional ability to provide both undergraduate and postgraduate study through The Learning Institute (TLI). Whilst school trusts are now common place across the educational landscape WeST significantly differs from many by not only having a Teaching School but through Higher Education provision via TLI.

The WeST family now extends to 22 schools of which 7 are secondary and 15 primary. All 15 primary schools naturally transition children into a WeST secondary and this is an area of work we wish to further strengthen as our work matures.

WeST holds a firm belief in giving each child every opportunity to learn and succeed in all that they do. Whilst we are a united family of schools who share common values and beliefs, all our schools are unique and hold their own identity. We believe that by working collectively, sharing what works well and jointly developing best practice we are stronger together and can provide the very best education for our children. We are proud of our schools, staff and children, and thrive on the constant challenge to do better.

Key principles

- WeST is a schools Trust that consists of two major parts: people and culture. We believe that for every school to be great we need great people and a great culture.
- We know that to be great and deliver the blend of education in which we believe, we need to be resolute and uncompromising in our approach. We will work with honesty and transparency.
- When we make decisions they will always be based on the best evidence possible and focused on making sure the 'main thing is the main thing'.
- WeST is determined to recruit, develop and retain the best staff possible. We want our staff to hold a passion and enjoyment for what they do and the difference they make.

every
child matters

Multi-Academy Trust

values
challenge
learn

vision

Together
we are
stronger
in the
community

benefits for our children and staff
flourish

succeed
stronger
beliefs
sharing
together
best
practice

Vision

We believe that by working together our collective children will be afforded improved life chances through academic success and positive relationships.

Every school in the Trust will be considered great and our performance will be ranked in the top 20% nationally.



Values

Our vision is supported through our deeply-held values:

- We care passionately about our children and want them all to succeed regardless of background or starting point.
- Relationships are the life-blood of our schools and trust is a key value of our Trust. We will work collaboratively with honesty and transparency.
- Teaching and learning is our core purpose.
- We believe in high quality continuous professional development (drawn from evidenced based research) to constantly develop staff.
- We aim to be an employer of choice - acting with integrity and providing rewarding career pathways that are carefully scaffolded.

“Leading the way in providing equal opportunities.”



Beliefs

What does it mean to be a WeST School?

The benefits for our children

The Trust believes that our children and staff benefit from the sharing of expertise and resources across the Trust, working for the benefit of all children in our schools by:

- Ensuring that a positive and supportive environment is created which promotes wellbeing and mental health in our schools.
- Improving the transition from primary to secondary school, through a shared understanding of the learning phases.
- Promoting the wellbeing of children as a core element of what we do. Every child will feel safe, happy and valued and reflect this in their respect for others ... with no child left behind.
- Instilling a culture of aspiration and high expectation across the family of schools within the Trust; sharing new and better practice.
- Maximising the progress of all our children; combining academic achievement with personal development through the provision of rich and creative learning opportunities alongside a thriving extra-curricular programme.
- Enabling children through their school experience to become problem solvers, effective communicators and resilient to the challenges that lie ahead.
- Through understanding and practice of the values of democracy, equality, freedom of expression and belief, mutual respect, acceptance of difference, children are encouraged to be naturally inclusive and responsible global citizens.

The benefits for our staff

- Enhanced staff development through increased opportunities to share best practice and professional development programmes; adding real value to the professional learning journey and career progression.
- Valued wellbeing; ensuring our staff are happy, healthy and safe.
- Smarter working through shared materials with the aim of reducing workload and minimising bureaucracy.
- Structured talent pool management with a wider platform for succession planning beyond the single school.
- Dynamic cross-phase working with a greater awareness and understanding of each sector.
- Wider opportunities for career development through intentional design, not by chance.
- Supportive governance with a clear focus on strategic development.

Together we are stronger in the community

WeST holds high standards and expectations for all, seeking to develop staff and children who are resilient, life-long learners, well-rounded and thoughtful individuals. Young people who are prepared to face the challenges of the next stages in their careers. To this end, WeST will ensure that its schools enable children to benefit not only from the academic expertise on offer, but from enrichment activities including visits, musical tuition, sporting opportunities and other cultural experiences. WeST is aware that its schools could not achieve these aspirations without the support and engagement of the communities in which they lie.

People and Partners

1.1 Recruit, develop and retain talent

- Local and Trust level strategic workforce plans which articulate ways to grow our own talent.
- Aligned and strengthened recruitment and assessment processes to improve candidate and manager experience and develop the 'WeST' employment brand.
- Trust career paths for all staff, supported by common job descriptions and role profiles.
- Well defined career stage expectations that sit comfortably with relevant professional/occupational standards.
- Trust-defined academic and leadership roles to ensure there is a clear structure and alignment of development and performance criteria together with opportunities to develop new and existing leaders.
- A common cycle and model for appraising all staff with objectives that link directly to improvement plans whilst featuring a strong element of professional growth and development.
- A Trust strategy and policy/process for talent management/deployment and succession planning.
- Leading the way in providing equal opportunities with a commitment to reduce the gender pay gap.
- Common induction and development processes across the Trust to ensure a high starter experience for all staff which is reflective of our Trust values and career paths.
- Leadership training, development and coaching to support the development of a high performance culture.

- A Trust-wide reward strategy, so that decision-making processes around reward are timely, objective and transparent.

1.2 Employee engagement, experience and wellbeing

- Developing the 'WeST Way' through joint culture building and consolidation.
- A clear and embedded set of core behaviours which underpin recruitment and appraisal and:
 - reflect our strengths and successes
 - support future challenges
 - promote a common culture across the Trust.
- A common approach with consistent terms, conditions, policies and procedures for all key areas of the employment experience.
- The use of Trust-wide staff surveys to engage with employees and create widespread and local improvement plans.
- A common model of delivery and accessibility to wellbeing at work facilities and support services.
- A partnership-based dialogue with staff and their representatives.
- Cohesive and consistent employee relations policies, procedures and practices across all establishments, supported by high-quality, consistent and solutions-focused professional advice to leaders and staff.
- Regular reviews to ensure all HR policies, practices and procedures are legislatively compliant and enable appropriate equality outcomes.

Strategic Priority 1





1.3

Enable leaders to manage their teams and people well

- A service based on strong and positive relationships with senior leaders who engage with and support the strategic and operational aspects of HR delivery which is Trust-aligned yet focused on school/business improvement.
- Coaching and developing leaders to support them in managing their teams and people well in pursuit of school/business improvement.
- A HR service that is accessible to leaders and staff and removes routine and process-related HR management and activity from senior HR practitioners enabling increased capacity for business/school improvement focused strategic, and complex operational, support.
- Senior HR practitioners with a broad range of HR, OD and change management competencies, who are trusted advisors with a good understanding of the Trust and schools/business units improvement plans, providing up to date, consistent, solutions-focused and expert advice and practice through membership of professional bodies, networking and relevant CPD.
- Effective support and development of HR staff in the core service or colocated in WeST establishments, increasing subject matter expertise through development and mentoring.
- A philosophy of continuous review and improvement of the core HR service.
- Greater use of data and analytics on our people to inform our approach to people management in pursuit of school improvement.

“A philosophy of continuous review and improvement of the core HR service.”



Teaching, Learning and Assessment

2.1 Develop a model for professional learning and development

- Each member of the staff is entitled to a well-planned and systematic approach to continuous professional development.
- WeST will provide a continuum of high quality training, for teachers, from Initial Teacher Training (ITT), through induction to Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) then Recently Qualified Teacher (RQT) leading to leadership training such as National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML).
- WeST support staff will benefit from a comprehensive induction programme followed by professional development via the relevant professional body or provider.
- WeST's expectation of Quality First Teaching will be succinct and clearly articulated.
- Establish professional subject networks within WeST but also promote connectivity with external partners including MAT's, the PTI, TSA's, LSSW and Ambition Institute.
- Annual Governance conference to ensure trustees and governors are kept abreast of sector developments and expectations.
- Lead Practitioners to lead a subject network capturing the strands of subject knowledge and pedagogical development.

2.2 What great teaching looks like

Shared and common understanding.

- Establish and share WeST's expectations of quality first teaching which will be sharp and simple.
- WeST has a Principles of Teaching and Learning handbook that is shared across all staff and is used as a platform from which to scaffold consistent great teaching. The WeST Principles of Teaching and Learning will act as a returning reference point for continuous professional development.
- WeST secondary schools share collective Schemes of Learning with common assessments at three intervals to enable meaningful comparison and data analysis.
- WeST primary schools follow the EYFS and Primary National Curriculum, applied through evidence based schemes of work. There are common assessments at three points in the year using standardised testing.

Strategic Priority 2



2.3 Common assessment cycle

Broadly consistent approach to assessment underpinned by a common assessment cycle.

- Three common data harvest points across WeST schools with data that is strategically analysed to guide future improvement.
- WeST primary schools utilising national assessment scheme that enables intelligent moderation and scrutiny.
- WeST secondary schools share collective Schemes of Learning with common assessments at three intervals to enable meaningful comparison and data analysis.
- Common assessments that incorporate 'iterative assessment'.

“WeST secondary schools share collective Schemes of Learning.”



Curriculum and Opportunity

3.1 Curriculum to ensure consistency, stretch, breadth and progress

- All WeST schools will provide a comprehensive offer for pupils from Early Years to KS5 that provides both breadth and depth and ensures that all pupils receive their full entitlement (as outlined in the National Curriculum).
- All WeST schools have a curriculum that is well thought out with a clear rationale behind its intent. Whilst each WeST school will take its own 'slant', as an adjustment to the context of the individual school, there will be strong similarities across all WeST schools.
- The learning journey is well planned to enable all pupils to gain a deep body of knowledge, identifying precisely what knowledge and skills should be gained through the appropriate sequencing the content (the narrative thread of the curriculum) and utilising the most appropriate teaching strategies that support the acquisition, retention and recall of key knowledge.
- Our curriculums will be explicitly planned to overcome 'knowledge gaps' to enable all pupils to make progress by knowing more and remembering.

3.2 Maths mastery

- All WeST schools will design a mathematics curriculum to ensure that all pupils are able to apply mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures appropriately for their age.

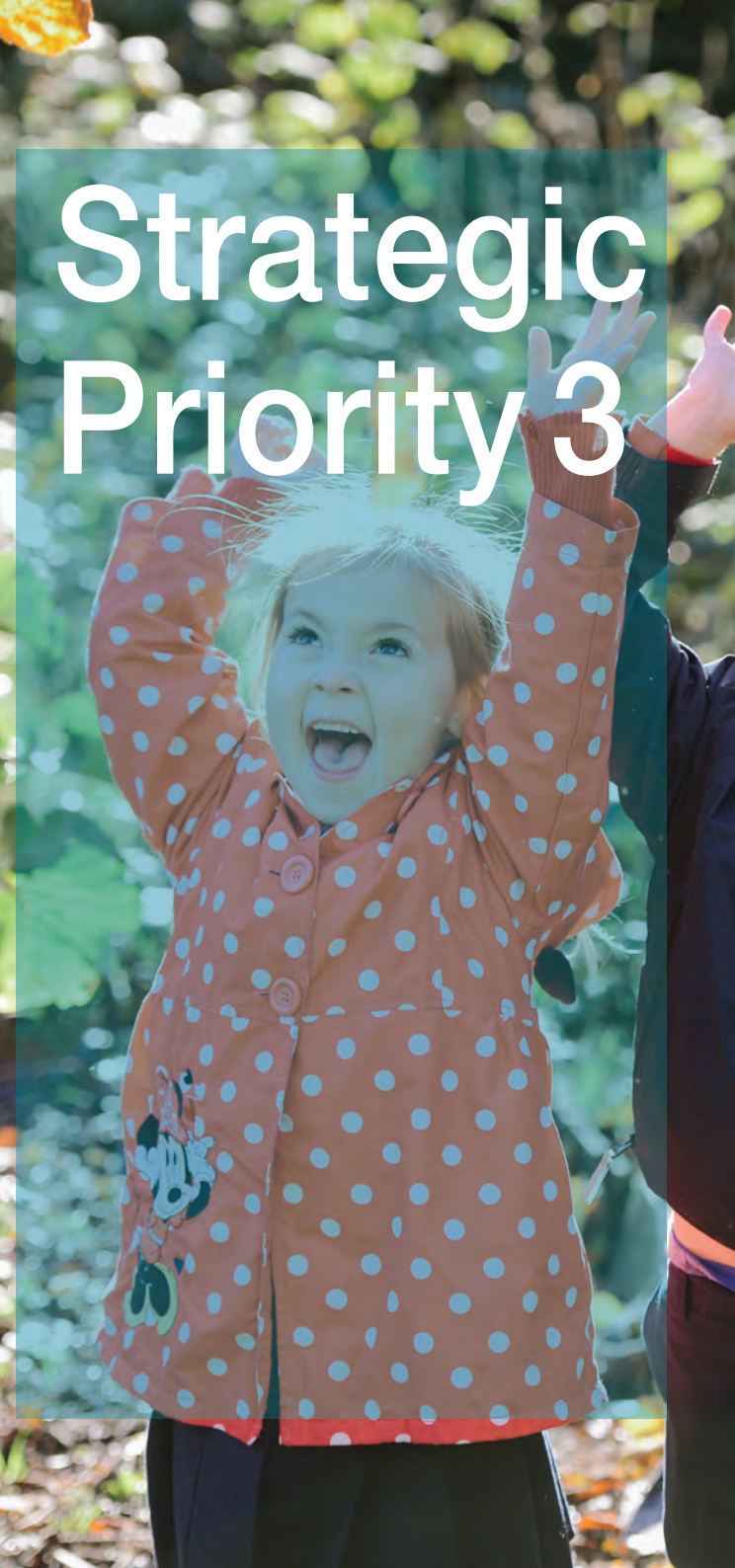
3.3 Reading, oracy and academic vocabulary

- All WeST schools will support pupils to establish a strong foundation of knowledge, vocabulary, understanding, phraseology and experience, that helps form a basis for success in difficult examinations and the challenges of adult life beyond their time in school.
- We will implement a forensic reading programme leaving the door open for options and including fantastic early reading programmes such as Read Write Inc.

3.4 Science

- The Science curriculum in all WeST schools will ensure that all pupils develop scientific knowledge and conceptual understanding through the specific disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics; develop understanding of the nature, processes and methods of science, through different types of scientific enquiry that help them to answer scientific questions about the world around them; develop and learn to apply observational, practical, modelling, enquiry, problem-solving skills and mathematical skills, both in the laboratory, in the field and in other environments; develop their ability to evaluate claims based on science through critical analysis of the methodology, evidence and conclusions, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Strategic Priority 3





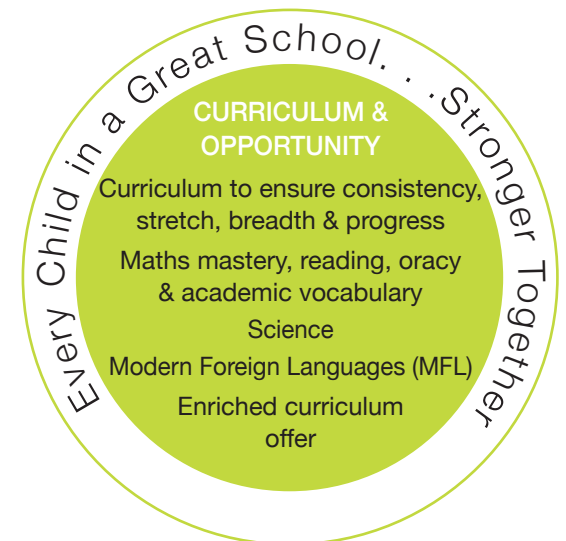
3.5 MFL

- The MFL curriculum in all WeST schools will ensure that all pupils understand and respond to spoken and written language from a variety of authentic sources; speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity, finding ways of communicating what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions, and continually improving the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation; can write at varying length, for different purposes and audiences, using the variety of grammatical structures that they have learnt; discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing in the language studied.

3.6 Enriched curriculum offer

- All WeST schools will have a curriculum that extends beyond the academic, vocational or technical and provides for pupils' broader development. All schools will work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- All WeST schools will promote the extensive personal development of pupils. Our schools will go beyond the expected, so that pupils have access to a wide, rich set of experiences. We aim to provide varied high-quality opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests.
- WeST schools will provide these rich experiences in a coherently planned way, in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities to considerably strengthen each school's offer.
- Our schools will provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society. We will support pupils to know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way.

- At secondary level our schools will prepare pupils for future success in education, employment or training. They will use the Gatsby Benchmarks to develop and improve careers provision and enable a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils from Years 7 to 13. All WeST pupils will receive unbiased information about potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance.
- All WeST schools will provide good quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.



Standards and Outcomes

4.1 Systematic high expectations of all pupils

- WeST leaders will have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils, regardless of background. This will be realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice.
- WeST leaders will aim to ensure that all pupils successfully complete their programmes of study. WeST leaders will ensure that all pupils get off to a flying start in the early years and successfully complete their programme of study. They will provide the support for staff to make this possible. Leaders will create an inclusive culture and will not allow gaming or off-rolling.
- WeST pupils will develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well. This will be reflected in results from national tests and examinations that meet government expectations, or in the qualifications obtained.
- Pupils are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. They have the knowledge and skills they need and, where relevant, they gain qualifications that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests and aspirations and the intention of their course of study.

4.2 Attendance

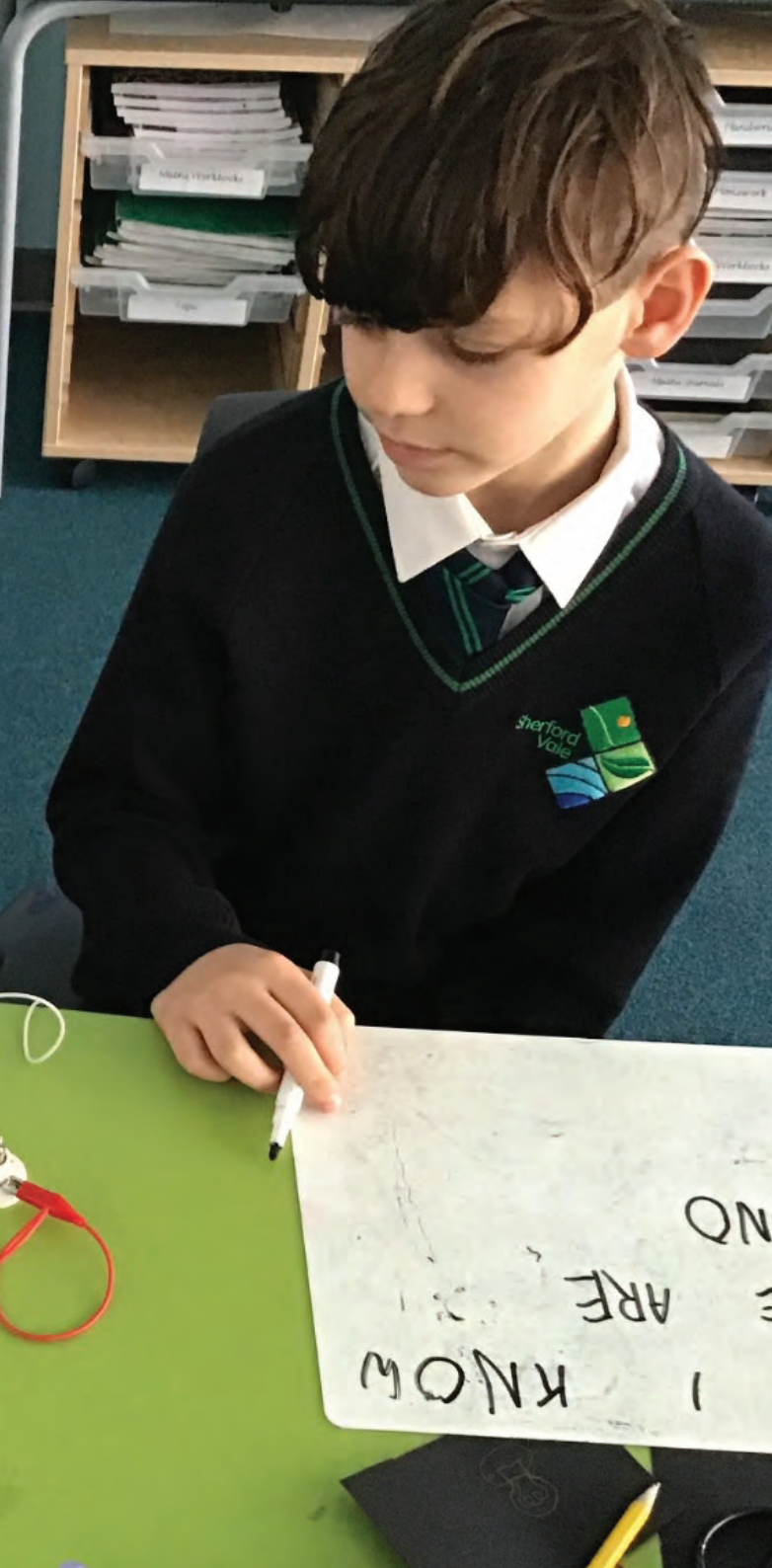
- WeST leaders will ensure that all pupils (inc. SEND and Disadvantaged) have high attendance, come to school on time and are punctual to lessons. When this is not the case, leaders will take appropriate, swift and effective action.
- We aim for rates of attendance for all groups of pupils to be above comparable national averages and in the top 20% of schools nationally.

4.3 Disadvantaged and SEND

- WeST leaders will construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and including pupils with SEND, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- The curriculum in every WeST school will be successfully adapted, designed and developed to be ambitious and meet the needs of pupils with SEND, developing their knowledge, skills and abilities to apply what they know and can do with increasing fluency and independence.
- WeST schools will ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. Disadvantaged and SEND pupils will have the knowledge and skills they need and, where relevant, gain qualifications that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests and aspirations and the intention of their course of study.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes, exceeding comparable national averages, equalling the outcomes of other pupils.

Strategic Priority 4





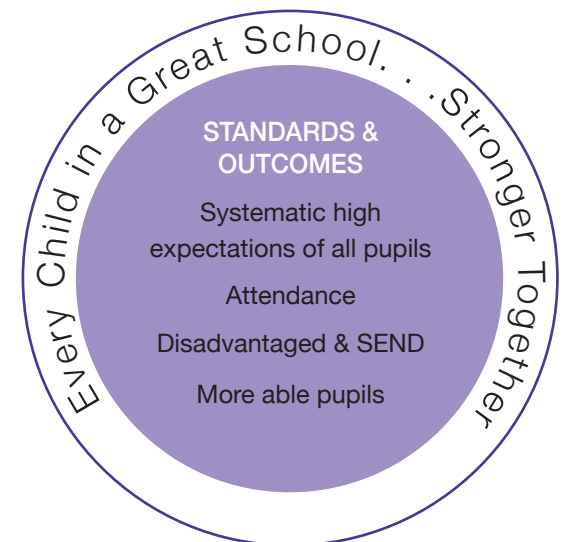
4.4 Most able pupils

- WeST leaders will ensure that the curriculum is designed and implemented with stretch and challenge at its heart to enable our most able pupils to thrive, with no upper limit to progress.

4.5 Trust outcomes

- **Trust outcomes in the Top 20% nationally**
At KS2, KS4 and KS5 we aim for all key performance measures, for all groups of pupils, to be in the top quintile nationally for pupil outcomes.

“A WeST leaders will have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils.”



Governance and Leadership

5.1 Clarity of Trust structures

Responsibility, accountability and communication.

- The educational vision of WeST is understood by all stakeholders and keenly promoted at all levels of leadership and governance. WeST schools retain their own character and individuality, whilst sharing a common purpose to secure the best possible outcomes for all our children.
- Within the family of WeST schools there is an acceptance that accountability rests with the Trust Board, but elements are effectively delegated via the Scheme of Delegation. Local Governing Boards discharge a level of scrutiny and challenge at a local level, supporting the work of the Trust.
- A WeST Trust governance handbook acts as a reference point and guides our work.
- Communication between the various levels of governance and leadership is effective. LGB's understand how their role interfaces with school leadership and the Trust Board with key documentation, information and messages flowing seamlessly between these groups.
- Trustees are strategic in ensuring our objectives are upheld, monitoring the effectiveness of individual schools, ensuring schools are performing to the best of their ability and that they receive the support they require. Trustees oversee financial security and check that the Trust is legally compliant.

5.2 Know our schools

Know our schools qualitatively and quantitatively.

- We will establish trust-wide key principles of school improvement that include: keeping **evidence-based teaching and learning** at the heart of all that we do; being **respectful** at the heart of all that we do; being respectful of the identity and character of individual schools and their strengths, as well as understanding where there are needs to make improvements; being **resourceful**, do whatever it takes, and mobilise the support needed to bring about rapid improvement; being **responsive** to the context of each school and its particular needs and adapt our strategies as circumstances change; being **relentless** in our pursuit of improvement and adopt a 'no excuses' approach – believing that every child should be in a great school; being **resilient** in persevering with improvement despite challenges and setbacks.
- We will utilise a multi-faceted risk dynamic assessment across WeST to identify each school's strengths, areas to develop and phase of school improvement, to support the deployment of resources and support to where it is needed most, underpinned by a bespoke school improvement model.

Strategic Priority 5





5.3 WeST outward facing

Outward facing and playing an active role in developing the sector.

- WeST will adopt an outward-facing approach, welcoming colleagues from others across the sector, and develop strong collaborative and mutually beneficial links with the best performing multi-academy trusts and schools.
- We will collaborate with other leaders within and beyond the Trust to share and develop common solutions, making efficient and effective use of resources to raise standards and develop leadership capability.
- Our Trust will actively seek to contribute to system-wide developments in education locally, regionally and nationally.

“WeST promotes connectivity with external partners.”

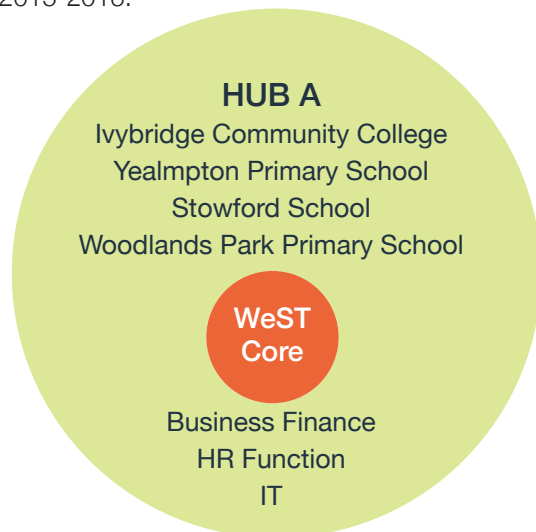


WeST's Growth Plans

2016

WeST has developed through several iterations of growth and geographical expansion and now has a footprint across south Devon, Plymouth and south east Cornwall. The initial structure was, essentially, that of a one hub model comprising of a large secondary and three of its constituent primary 'feeder' schools. Additional benefit came from the inclusion of the Teaching School. The school improvement function relied heavily on that which was already in the schools as did the business operations.

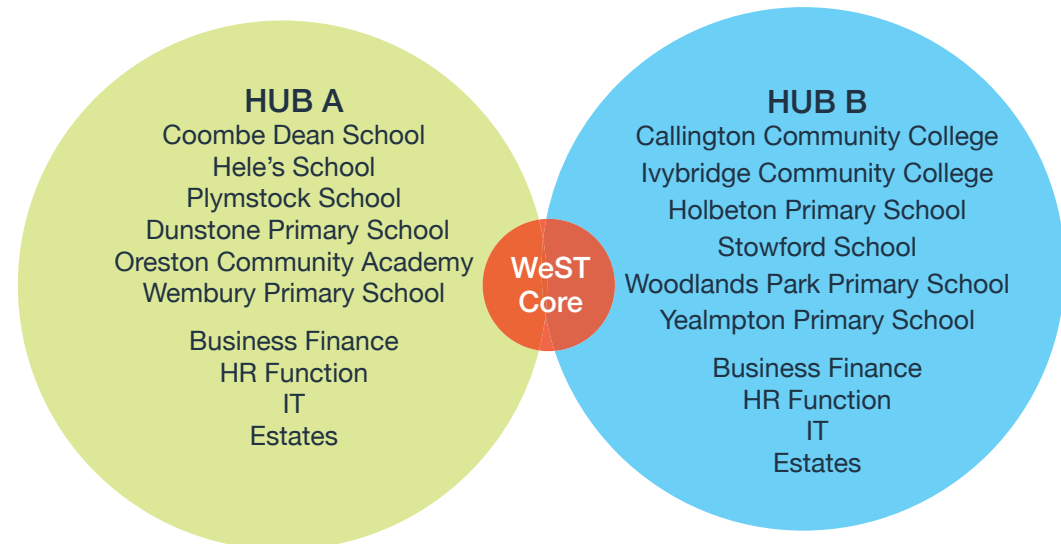
The image represents the operational structure of 2015-2016.



2017

September 2017 saw significant growth with the Trust, in essence, doubling in size. The operating model had to adapt such that it could function across an enlarged platform of schools. This was point where the 'WeST Core' was truly established with capacity brought from beyond that found in schools.

The two hub model was born.

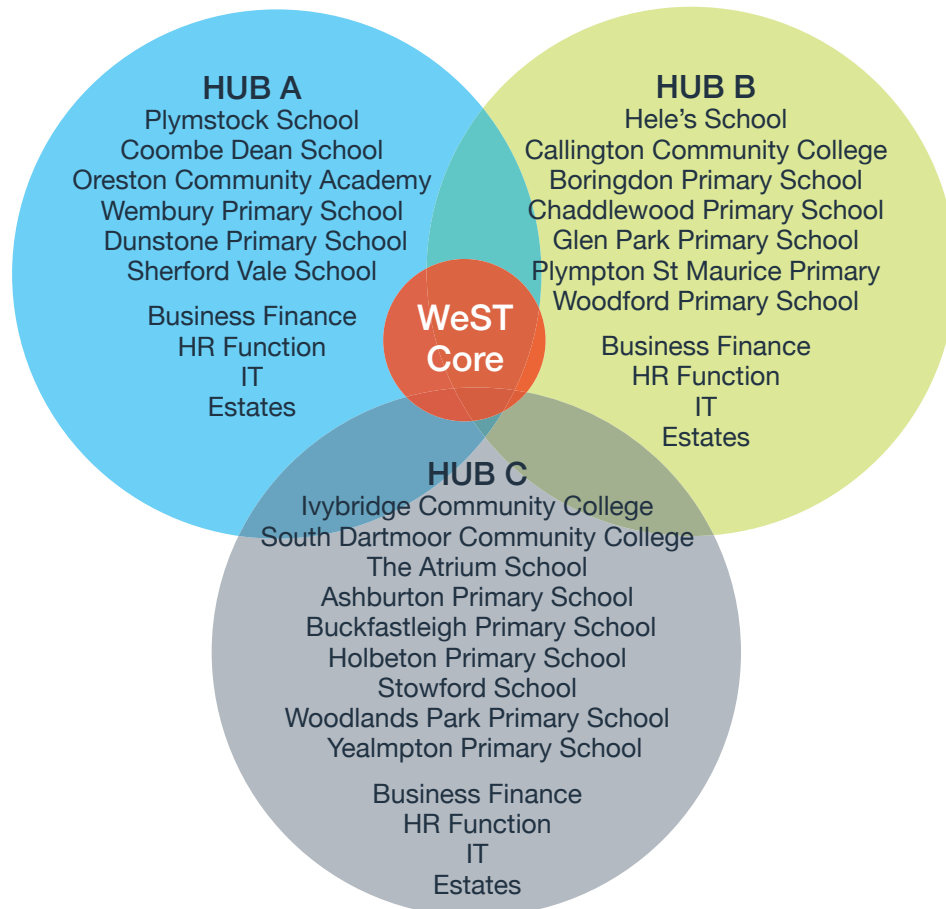


2020

Further growth came through the merger with a successful primary trust (PAT) which had a natural geographical fit with WeST which was shortly followed by another spurt of expansion in south Devon. This led to the three hub model of operation. The 'WeST Core' has been strengthened with a distinct school improvement function that has capacity to support schools beyond routine quality assurance.

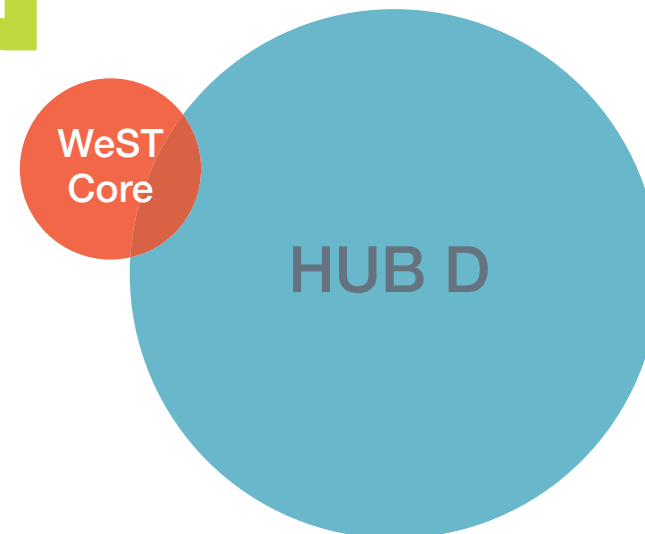
The business function has matured with specialists in their field strategically leading the elements of Finance, HR, Estates and IT.

It is at this point that the WeST Trust Board is the responsible body for 22 schools and approximately 13000 learners with a gross turnover of £70 million.



2022?

The Trust Board are open to consideration of future growth provided that is sustainable and that the WeST Core has capacity to meet need.



WeST is financially strong with reserves carried forward in 2019-20 of

£5.7m

despite all its schools being funded at or close to the Government's national minimum levels.

All schools in the Trust contribute a **fixed management fee of**

5%

of their General Annual Grant to the Trust's central service budget.

For **WeST** to achieve the strategic objectives set out in this plan, **it will make significant investment in people, curriculum, facilities and resources** particularly over the next few years. Accordingly the Trust anticipates its reserves will **reduce in the short term** to finance this investment. However, longer term, driven by growth in student numbers and the positive impact of increases in the Government's national minimum funding guarantees, the Trust expects to **operate close to its ideal level of reserves of one month's total income**.

The Trust has already invested in a high quality professional finance team, including **7 who are either chartered or similarly qualified accountants**. It does not GAG-pool, but the Trust's strong financial position does allow it to support its schools through periods of budgetary transition helping them to re-structure where necessary over realistic time-scales. The Trust's finance team works closely with each of its schools, their governors and trustees **to set and deliver a sustainable future for the Trust as a whole within the context of its strategic objectives**.

The fixed management fee of **5%** finances not just the finance team, but the **CEO and equally skilled professionals in Human Resources, Estates and IT** together with an experienced Data and GDPR Manager, and a growing School Improvement function as previously outlined in this plan headed up by the Directors of Secondary and Primary School Improvement respectively, supported by a Director of Inclusion.

Because the Trust has built such a highly professional central business team upfront, increased central service funding from any future growth of the Trust will focus predominantly on **expanding and enhancing the core School Improvement function** to underpin **the outstanding educational experience** the Trust aspires for all its learners. The Chief Financial Officer and his team will continue to play an integral part in any such future growth proposals, undertaking rigorous due diligence to ensure as far as reasonably possible that the long term financial viability of the Trust is not adversely affected by further expansion whilst the **Trust's infrastructure remains fit for purpose and the capacity for sustained school improvement is fully maintained**.

The Trust is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee. Although in future years, after the initial investment stage, the Trust will **budget to generate surpluses**, these will be small in order to retain sensible reserve levels whilst **maximising expenditure in the classroom**. The Finance team will seek to exploit any additional growth of the Trust to **generate savings from economies of scale and procurement efficiency opportunities**. Any such savings will be **reinvested back into teaching and learning** with the sole focus of continuing to improve the experience and outcomes of students in the Trust and equipping them to succeed in an ever challenging world.

WeST's Financial Plan





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Calls may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.

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