



Strategic Plan, 2023 - 2028

Stronger Together...
Every Child in a
Great School

Life-changing Learning



Contents

From the Trust	05
Our Values, Beliefs and Vision's	06
Strategic Priority One - People and Partners	10
Strategic Priority Two - High Quality and Inclusive education	15
Strategic Priority Three - School Improvement	24
Strategic Priority Four - Finance, Growth and Operations	26
Strategic Priority Five - Governance and Leadership	28
WeST's Growth Plans	32

WeST Strategic Priorities



From the Trust



Rob Haring
Chief Executive Officer
WeST Country Schools Trust

Welcome to Westcountry Schools Trust, (WeST). WeST's very special model allows each of our schools to prosper locally and to express its own character while being part of a strong family of schools. We firmly believe that with this model we can achieve our vision - Every child in a great school - and this strategic plan explains how.

Each school within WeST acts as an "anchor" in its community, deeply ingrained and committed to addressing the unique requirements of the locality it serves. We outline how each school will prioritise the specific needs of its community and receive the necessary support to achieve success in its distinctive manner.

We describe the ways each school will focus on the needs of its community and be supported to succeed in its own particular way. We describe how our central structure delivers rigorous Trust-wide standards and superb professional development and career pathways for staff.

This plan elucidates how our central structure ensures the implementation of rigorous standards across the entire Trust, offering exceptional opportunities for professional development and career advancement for our dedicated staff.

"We set out the steps we are taking to grow an all-encompassing culture of ambition and commitment to the communities of the South West"

Add all this together and you get to the heart of WeST's purpose - life-changing education.

When these elements coalesce, they encapsulate the core essence of WeST's mission: to provide transformative education that reshapes lives. We invite you to peruse this document and share your thoughts. This journey is one we are collectively undertaking, and we extend an invitation for you to join us.

Rob Haring
Chief Executive Officer
Westcountry Schools Trust

Our Values, Beliefs and Vision

The Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST); a tight-knit family of schools based around natural geographical proximity on the South West peninsula. Initially formed as a small multi-academy trust of only two schools in 2011, the Trust has experienced several iterations of growth and change.

WeST, as we recognise it today, was launched in September 2017 with the ambition of delivering exceptional education for 2-19 year olds, whilst offering significant additionality through teacher and support staff development. While school trusts are now commonplace across the educational landscape, WeST adds significant value by offering a Central School Improvement provision, including subject advisors and shared services.

The WeST family now extends to 26 schools of which 7 are secondary and 19 primary. All 19 primary schools naturally transition children into a WeST secondary, and this is an area of work we are increasingly strengthening as the Trust matures.

WeST holds a firm belief in giving each child every opportunity to learn and succeed in all that they do. While 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 seek further improvement.



Mission:

Empowering children to impact positively on society



Vision:

Every child in a great school

“WeST has a trusting, open ethos, meaning the conversations we as staff have, not only have a greater impact on us, but also the children we are educating.”



“The organisation as a whole wants to invest in everyone that works for them, and that’s really important”



Values from our leaders:



Collaboration:

Creating a shared vision and working effectively across boundaries in an equitable and inclusive way to skilfully influence and engage others. Building and securing value from relationships, developing self and others to achieve positive outcomes. Appreciate and nurture external relationships; learning from the best, nationally.



Aspiration:

Having high expectations, modelling the delivery of high-quality outcomes. Showing passion, persistence, and resilience in seeking creative solutions to strive for continuous improvement and excellence.



Integrity:

Acting always with the interests of children and young people at our heart, and consistent and uncompromising adherence to strong moral and ethical principles. Communicating with transparency and respect, creating a working environment based on trust and honesty.



Compassion:

Recognising need in others and acting with positive intention to promote well-being and improve outcomes.

Strategic Priority One

People and Partners

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



From Our Team:

WeST aims to be an employer of choice. It is only with high-quality teaching, support, and professional staff that we will achieve the Trust's vision of every child in a great school. We aim to attract the best people by providing clearly defined, well-structured, and flexible career opportunities, by striving continuously to improve the experience of working for WeST, by taking seriously the well-being of each individual, and by making WeST a community to which we are all proud to belong.

Recruit, develop, deploy and retain talent

How we will recruit, develop, deploy and retain our people

- WeST leaders will develop local and Trust-level strategic workforce plans to grow our own talent.
- Recruitment and assessment processes will be further aligned across all WeST schools to improve the experience for both candidates and managers, support job mobility, career growth, and develop the 'WeST' employment brand.
- WeST leaders will be able to articulate career paths for our staff, supported by common job descriptions and role profiles.
- School improvement and career growth will be supported by well-defined career stage expectations that sit comfortably with professional/occupational standards, talents, including deliberate succession planning.
- School improvement and career growth will be supported by well-defined career stage expectations that sit comfortably with professional/occupational standards.
- WeST leaders will operate a common cycle and model for personal development reviews (PDR), that support professional growth and career development with school improvement at the heart.

- We will continually review and develop our strategy for making the best of everyone's talents, including deliberate succession planning.
- We will lead the way in ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion with a commitment to reduce the gender pay gap.
- We will actively seek opportunities for flexible working across all sectors of our workforce.
- WeST leaders will operate common induction processes across schools to ensure a high starter experience for all staff which is reflective of our Trust values and career paths.
- We will develop a structured programme of leadership training, development, and coaching to support the development of a high-performance culture.
- WeST leaders will work within a common reward strategy supporting timely, objective, and transparent decisions.

Employee engagement, experience and wellbeing

We are committed to developing a WeST way of employee engagement. WeST Leaders will act with consistency and pro-

fessionalism to ensure that all employees enjoy a healthy work culture with access to responsive and quality advice, support, and well-being services. Our leaders will develop the 'WeST Way' through joint culture building and consolidation, working through a clear and embedded set of core behaviours derived from WeST values which underpin recruitment and appraisal and:

1. Reflect our strengths and successes
 2. Support future challenges
 3. Promote a common culture across the Trust.
- We will develop a common approach with consistent terms, conditions, policies and procedures for all key areas of the employment experience.
 - We will use Trust-wide surveys to engage employees and inform improvement planning.
 - Our staff will enjoy a common model of delivery and accessibility to health and well-being at work facilities and support services.
 - We will provide colleagues of all backgrounds and cultures with a meaningful voice within the organisation.
 - We will actively seek to ensure our leadership is representative of the communities we serve and those of modern Britain, actively monitoring and evaluating the impact of our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Enabling leaders to manage their teams and people well

- Through the clarity of our mission and purposeful strategy, we will inspire, motivate, and encourage our people to give their best and succeed.
- We will make WeST a compelling place to work, whereby all employees benefit from a well-designed talent management strategy.
- Our agreed values will underpin our collective work and act as a 'compass' in guiding our endeavors and decision making.
- WeST leaders will be supported and equipped to coach and develop their teams in pursuit of school/business improvement.
- The HR service will be accessible to leaders and staff with a readily understood delivery model designed to provide professional expertise at the appropriate level, ranging from routine and process-related HR management and activity through to strategic business/school improvement and complex operational support.
- WeST will adopt a philosophy of continuous review and improvement for the benefit of the Trust and its schools.
- Leaders' decisions in pursuit of school improvement will be informed by greater use of data and analytics on our people.





Strategic Priority Two

High Quality and Inclusive Education

“Children get one chance at education and it is our duty, it’s our moral imperative to make sure they get the very best chance.”

From Our Team:

At WeST we want the children in our care to have the best start in life. At the heart of our curriculum, primary and secondary, will be oracy and literacy - every child a reader. Our children will have an education rich with well-chosen knowledge. They’ll become better or improved thinkers, problem solvers and learners, set up to gain excellent qualifications and pursue good careers. They will also be better equipped to understand news and commentary, to question and challenge ideas, and to participate in a healthy democratic society. WeST pupils should leave our schools having learned the best of what has been thought and said, and with a desire to pass such knowledge on.

Curriculum to ensure consistency, stretch, breadth and progress

- Leaders in all schools will be able to articulate the purpose of their curriculum and the reasons why curriculum decisions have been made, including subjects, resources, extra and co-curricular activities, and pastoral development.
- Every subject and pastoral area will be clear about their chosen topics, the sequencing and the delivery model.
- The implementation of the curriculum will be well designed in every school and area, identifying high-quality common approaches and ensuring teaching is never consistently less than good.
- The impact of the curriculum will be assessed in a variety of ways, seeking to maximize the positive impact for young people, in line with the Trust mission statement. This will include high-quality destinations, excellent results in public examinations, and positive outcomes for the attitudes and dispositions of young people at every stage.
- 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.
- Our aim is for Trust outcomes in the Top 20% nationally. At KS2, KS4, and KS5 our aim is for all key performance measures, for all groups of pupils, to be in the top quintile nationally for pupil outcomes.
- At Secondary Level we aim for 55% of students in all schools to achieve a strong pass in both English and Maths.

Reading, oracy and academic vocabulary

- 'Every child a reader' will be an improvement priority for all schools. In primary schools, there will be a Trust-wide consistent approach to phonics and early reading using Read, Write, Inc. All secondary staff will be trained to support reading development. All Secondary schools will have a structured reading program and NGRT assessment information will be used to intervene where necessary to ensure all students can read well enough to access the curriculum.
- All Primary and Secondary schools will adopt structured writing programs that enable students to write fluently and with excellent vocabulary, in line or exceeding their peers nationally
- Pupils will be supported to develop a good level of oracy and establish a strong foundation of vocabulary, knowledge, and understanding, phraseology, and experience, a basis for success in challenging examinations and for overcoming the challenges of adult life.
- WeST schools will identify core conceptual and disciplinary vocabulary to be learnt through the curriculum.

Maths Mastery

- The mathematics curriculum in all our schools will ensure pupils are able to apply knowledge, concepts and procedures appropriately for their age.
- NCETM programmes will be used for CPD development across all schools. Procedural and conceptual understanding will be at the heart of curriculum design.

Science

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

Modern foreign languages

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

Enriched curriculum offer

- All 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 schools will promote the extensive personal development of pupils, going beyond the expected. We aim to provide varied high-quality

opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests and gain a wide, rich set of experiences.

- WeST schools will provide these rich experiences in a coherently planned way both in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, considerably strengthening 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. Schools 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 schools will provide good quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.



Disadvantaged and SEND

- WeST leaders will construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- The curriculum in every WeST school will be successfully designed, scaffolded, 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.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND will achieve the best possible outcomes, exceeding comparable national averages and equaling the outcomes of other pupils.
- We seek to ensure that students' learning needs are met at every stage and in every area, so that they can participate successfully in the full curriculum. Aspirations are as high for these students as they are for all students, and our schools are careful not to narrow the curriculum or lower expectations.

Most able

- 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.

Trust outcomes

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

Attendance

- WeST leaders will ensure that all pupils (including 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 attendance rates that are above comparable national averages and in the top 20% of schools nationally. The national picture is fluctuating so we aim for an attendance average of 95% or better and a persistent absence rate of 13% or lower in all of our schools.

Assessment

- The Trust aims to ensure effective use of both formative and summative assessment at all levels.
- Within classrooms and from one lesson to the next, teachers will assess student work at a granular level, intervening skillfully where appropriate to ensure progress.
- Summative assessment at key points will be examined forensically and used to carefully judge the impact of the taught curriculum. Adaptations will be made where assessment indicates that students have not learned or understood important knowledge and skills effectively.
- Assessments in National Examinations are taken seriously at WeST. Students, particularly at Secondary level, need the maximum opportunity to achieve well in their qualifications. Intervention is offered to enable a fuller understanding of the syllabus, and key groups are scrutinized to ensure equality of outcome.



Strategic Priority Three

School Improvement

From Our Team:

The Trust's strong central governance and leadership drive all our schools to greater success and allow each to flourish in its own way. This essential support is delivered through clear communications, transparent systems of accountability, and a strategic and resourced approach to improvement. We are aligned at every level behind our goal of delivering life-changing education. And because we are serious about our responsibility to society, we are open, collaborative, and keen to work beyond the Trust to improve education for all.

Developing a model for professional learning and development

- Each member of 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 Education (ITE), through induction as an Early Career Teacher (ECT), onwards to subject or thematic training opportunities, and leading to leadership training such as National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).
- WeST support staff will benefit from a comprehensive induction programme followed by professional development via the relevant professional body or provider.
- Teachers and leaders will receive thoughtfully structured curriculum training, to include development of oracy and disciplinary vocabulary based on academic research and evidence-based practice.
- Curriculum design will be a key tenet of each school improvement plan. Such work will be supported by the school improvement team through the development of subject communities (EBACC)

Developing great teaching

- We will review teaching, learning and assessment across 2-19 – the years a child spends in our schools – and ensure a coherent experience for all.
- We will build subject and professional networks.

“We will use research to inform our approaches to teaching and learning and train our teachers on the most effective approaches”

- We will take a consistent approach to assessment: formative use of summative assessment is the norm.
- We will expand and strengthen our school improvement team by appointing skilled experts in their subject or phase areas.

- Procedures for school improvement commissioning, school offers and activity will be clarified for all.
- We will redefine the role of Directors to work across all age groups and ensure the SI Team is trained and supported to work across the 2-19 age range.
- We will define school improvement offers based on category of concern. We will audit our schools and follow up through targeted school improvement action.

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

- We will have three common data harvest points across WeST schools with data that is strategically analysed to guide future improvement.
- WeST primary schools will utilise national assessment.
- Our assessment scheme will enable intelligent moderation and scrutiny.
- Common assessments that incorporate iterative assessment.



Strategic Priority Four

Finance, Growth and Operations

WeST is a not-for-profit company investing for the long-term in the children of the South West. We have built a highly professional central finance team whose role is to support local leaders, governors and trustees to improve their schools, to ensure a sustainable future for the Trust and to channel savings and profits to the classroom, where it matters most.

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.

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.

“WeST is financially strong with reserves being carried forward from 2020 - 2021 of £7.8 million.”

The Trust has already invested in a high-quality professional finance team, including seven qualified accountants. It does not GAG-pool, but the Trust's strong financial position allows it to support its schools through periods of budgetary transition, helping them to re-structure

where necessary over realistic timescales. 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 central recharge of 5% doesn't finance just the finance team but the School Improvement Team, and other core work streams such as HR, Estates and IT.

The Trust has built a highly professional central business team upfront. Any increased central service funding from future growth can therefore be invested predominantly in expanding and enhancing the core School Improvement function that underpins the outstanding educational experience we aspire to for all our learners. The Chief Financial Officer and his team will continue to play an integral part in any 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. Meanwhile, they will ensure that 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 into teaching and learning with the sole focus of continuing to improve the experience and outcomes of pupils in the Trust and equipping them to succeed in an ever more challenging world.



Strategic Priority Five

Governance and Leadership

“It doesn’t matter where you are in the organisation, there is a route for you, and there is career progression for you. It’s really important that we’re investing in our entire workforce.”



From Our Team:

The Trust’s strong central governance and leadership drives all our schools to greater success and allows each to flourish in its own way. This essential support is delivered through clear communications, transparent systems of accountability and a strategic and resourced approach to improvement. We are aligned at every level behind our goal of delivering life-changing education. And because we are serious about our responsibility to society, we are open, collaborative and keen to work beyond the Trust to improve education for all.

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. Governance arrangements exercise scrutiny and challenge in our schools, 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. Local governors understand how their roles interface with school leadership and the Trust Board and key documentation, information and messages flow 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 receiving the trustees oversee financial security and check that the Trust is legally compliant.
- We are committed to local governance and will continue our governing boards through our ‘Hub Advisory Board’ model. This will allow us to focus the time and capacity of our valued local governors but ensure that geographically, schools are working together in sensible ways.
- We will evaluate our HAB model over the course of three years to ensure efficacy and sustainability, making adjustments and adaptations in response to our findings.

Outward facing and playing an active role in developing the sector

- WeST acknowledges its civic role and will actively engage with partners and stakeholders in the local area to contribute to the Public Good and provide a coherent public service for children and families.
- WeST recognises that no single trust has every solution. WeST will adopt an outward-facing approach, developing strong collaborative and mutually beneficial links with other trusts and schools.
- We will collaborate with other leaders 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 systemwide developments in education locally, regionally, and nationally.

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 of the identity and character of individual schools and their strengths, as well as understanding where improvements can be made
- Being resourceful, doing whatever it takes to bring about rapid improvement
- Being responsive to the context of each school and its particular needs and adapting our strategies as circumstances change
- Being relentless in our pursuit of improvement - every child in a great school, no excuses
- Being resilient in persevering despite challenges and setbacks.
- We will use a multi-faceted dynamic risk assessment to identify each school's strengths, areas to develop and phase of school improvement. Informed by bespoke school improvement models, we will deploy resources to areas of greatest need.



WeST's Growth Plans

2016

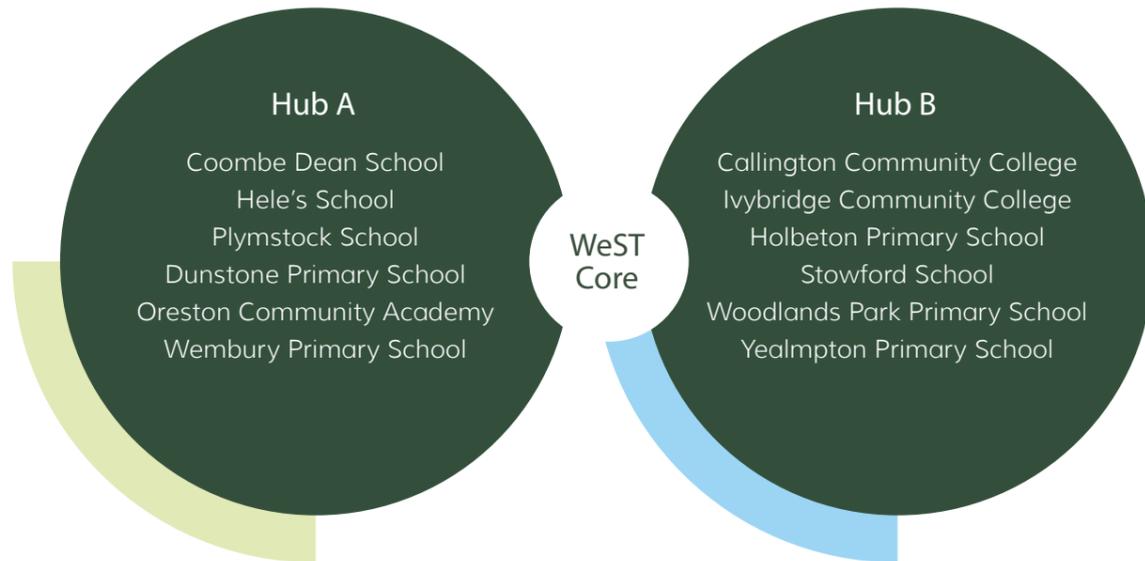
WeST has developed through several iterations of growth and geographical expansion and now has a footprint across south Devon, Plymouth and south east Cornwall. The initial structure was, essentially, that of a one hub model comprising of a large secondary and three of its constituent primary 'feeder 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.



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 the point where the 'WeST Core' was truly established with capacity brought from beyond that found in schools.

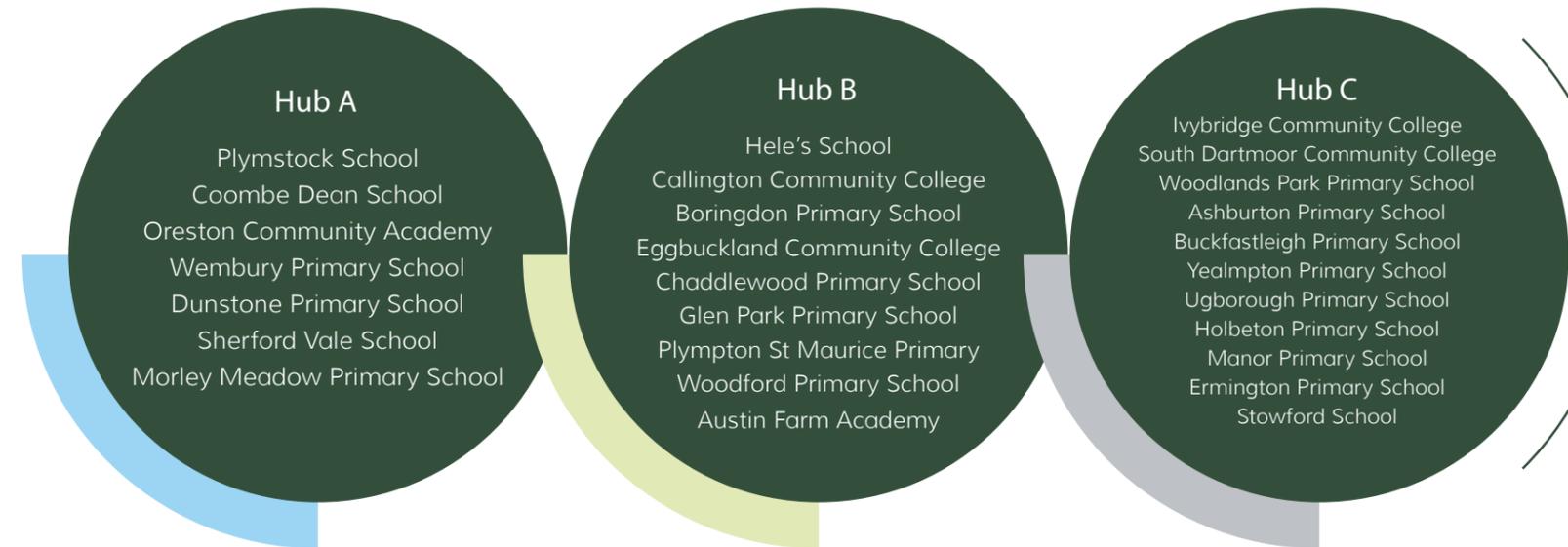
The two hub model was born.



2022

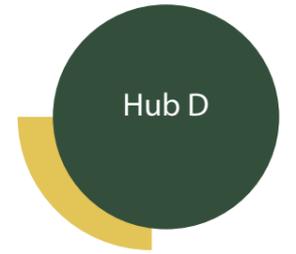
Further growth came through the merger with a successful primary trust (PAT) which had a natural geographical fit with WeST which was shortly followed by another spurt of expansion in South Devon. This led to the three hub model of operation. The 'WeST Core' has been strengthened with a distinct school 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 27 schools and approximately 14,000 learners with a gross turnover of £90 million.



2024 and Beyond

The Trust Board is proactively pursuing growth, aiming to reach a target of 20,000 students in the next 3 to 5 years. This strategic expansion will grant WeST the capability to effectively sustain the growth of our Central school improvement model. It will also facilitate expansion beyond the scope of EBACC advisor support. Moreover, this growth will ensure that the network of Secondary best practices becomes as robust as the one currently demonstrating remarkable success in our Primary sector. Anticipated growth is likely to lead to the establishment of Hub D.





Contact

Westcountry Schools Trust,
51 Encombe Street
Plymouth
Devon
PL9 7GN

t: 01752 891790

e: admin@westst.org.uk