# Warrington Primary Academy Trust

Business Plan 2025 – 2028

External Copy

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# Contents

# 1. Executive Summary

Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT) is a family of nine primary schools in Warrington, Widnes and Frodsham, educating around 2,500 pupils and employing 400 staff. Since 2016 we've grown steadily and built a strong track record: every school is now good or better, including those that joined us with significant challenges. We move quickly, but in a way that feels supportive rather than overwhelming.

At the heart of the Trust is a simple idea: if we look after our people and use our data well, children will thrive. WPAT is recognised as a centre of excellence for professional development. Through our Teaching School Hub and development pathways our people can access a career of development within the Trust. Subject and phase networks, coaching, peer review and specialist teams in areas such as SEND, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance all contribute to a culture where staff learn with and from each other to drive continual improvement.

We treat data as a tool for insight and learning. Common approaches to assessment, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and finance give leaders clear, comparable information across schools. Trust dashboards, moderation and regular review meetings help us see quickly where pupils – especially those who are disadvantaged or have SEND – need more support, and which strategies are making the most difference. Data, professional judgement and pupil voice sit side by side in our decisions.

Our school improvement work follows a clear, phased model giving everyone a shared language for where a school is, what support it will receive and what success will look like. Combined with targeted deployment of our specialist teams, this approach has underpinned rapid improvement in schools joining the Trust with weaker outcomes, while protecting what is already strong.

All of this sits on firm foundations of governance and leadership. Members, the Trust Board and our Local Governance Committees work within a clear scheme of delegation and risk framework. Local governors keep schools rooted in their communities and ensure a scrutiny of the quality of each school's provision. The Board holds the Trust to account for our four priorities:

1. Being first choice for families
2. Strong outcomes for all
3. Great people and culture, and,
4. Secure, sustainable growth.

The next stage of our growth is exciting. We have the development of Bruche as an all-through school in 2026 and we are proactively seeking the addition of like-minded schools and small Trusts to strengthen our collective offer to the community.

The business plan that follows sets out in more detail our context and values, KPIs and improvement model; how we develop people and use data, how we are governed and run, and how we will grow and invest in our pupils and people over the next three years.

## 2. Introducing Warrington Primary Academy Trust

Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT) was established in 2016 when three Warrington primary schools, Evelyn Street, Bruche and Penketh converted to a multi-academy trust.

At the start of this business plan (September 2025) we are now nine schools, with 400 employees and 2,500 pupils managing an annual income of £18m.

The Trust has a clear strategy for growth, ensuring that we remain focused on sustainable school improvement articulated in the Trust's guiding principle **"To deliver a first class education through partnership, innovation, school improvement and accountability"**.

Schools joining the Trust do so with the prime aim of improving their schools and others. We do this through the development of career pathways supported by targeted bespoke continuous professional development for all staff. This is achieved by our Trust focusing on fulfilling its core values.

1.1 Core Values

In our schools, there are local expressions of values and purpose. Uniting them all are 3 core values that drive our behaviour, attitudes and decision making:

**Children First**
• We have high expectations for every child. Everything we do as an organisation is in the interest of children first and foremost

**Resilience**
• We are unrelenting in our pursuit of excellence whether it is for educational outcomes or for the business function of WPAT

**Pioneering**
• We are passionate about learning about practice that will improve our children's lives and their outcomes
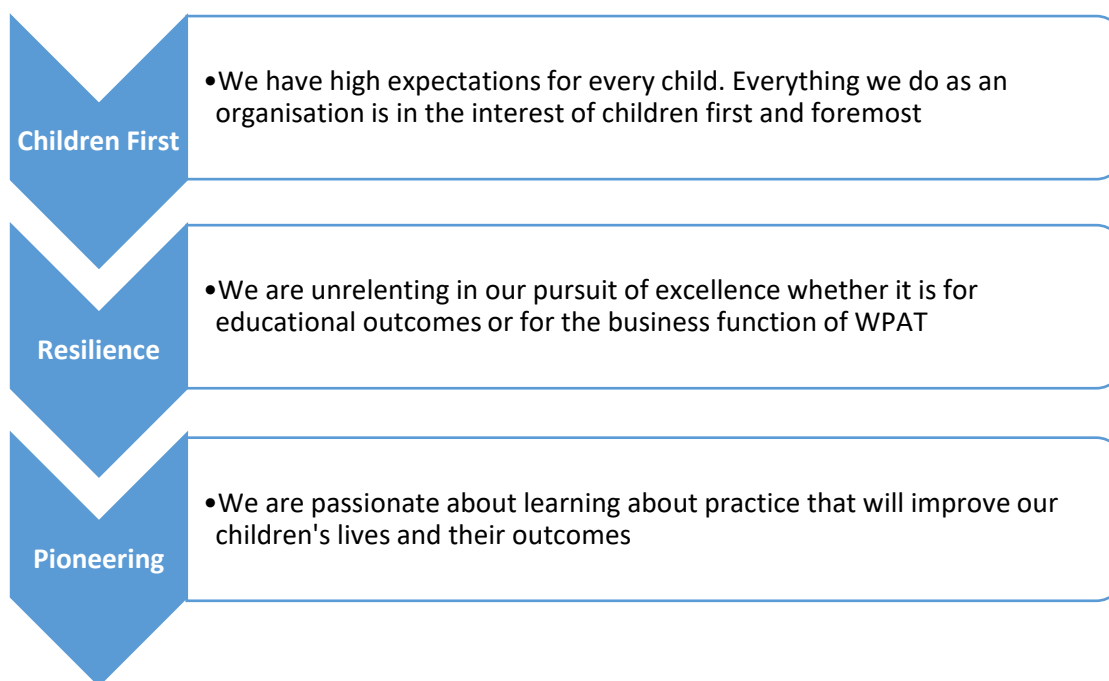
*Figure. 1: WPAT's core values*

Our values are fundamental to everything the Trust represents and they run through all elements of school improvement. They are understood and owned by all members of the

school community. In addition to our core values, as a publicly funded organisation, staff and volunteers operate to the seven *Nolan Principles of Public Life*[1].

## 1.2 Trust KPIs

To maintain a clear process of accountability in our governance, we have set overarching KPIs for the next 3 years which collect the activities of WPAT into a strategic reporting framework.

Together these KPIs enable the Trust Board to focus in detail on championing the 5 pillars of academy trust quality (High-quality and inclusive education; school improvement; workforce; finance and operations; and, governance and leadership).

The core KPIs for WPAT in 2025 to 2028 are:

> **KPI1 - First Choice for Families**
> WPAT schools provide an attractive offer to parents/carers for their children's education. Parents/carers understand what we offer, how we operate and why their children would benefit from learning with us.
>
> **KPI 2 - Strong Outcomes for All**
> WPAT schools have a relentless focus on improvement that provides the best opportunities for each child to progress. Our curriculum design, leadership behaviour and collaborative practice provides a high quality education for all our children.
>
> **KPI 3 - Great People, Great Culture**
> WPAT is a learning organisation enabling its people to sustain high performance in pursuit of our mission and values. Our approach to career development nurtures talent from entry roles to senior leadership.
>
> **KPI 4 - Secure, Sustainable Growth**
> WPAT is a well-run, safe organisation that actively collaborates to support the wider education system. Through our partnerships we are a centre for excellence known for its desire to pioneer and innovate.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2

1.3 School Community

WPAT is (as of September 2025) a community of nine primary schools in the Warrington area (x6), Widnes (x2) and Frodsham (x1). All schools are rated as Good or better by Ofsted.

| School | Date of Conversion | Current Ofsted Grade | Date of last Ofsted Grade |
|---|---|---|---|
| Evelyn Street | August 2016 | Outstanding | July 2024 |
| Penketh | August 2016 | Good | March 2023 |
| Bruche | September 2016 | Good | November 2022 |
| Beamont | May 2018 | Good | October 2022 |
| Alderman Bolton | May 2018 | Good | October 2022 |
| Ditton | July 2019 | Good | October 2023 |
| Callands | April 2025 | Good | October 2024 |
| Kingsway | December 2020 | Good | September 2023 |
| Frodsham | May 2022 | Good | February 2025 |

*Figure 2: Current WPAT Schools*

WPAT is a MAT that has a track record of improving schools and having a positive impact on improving pupil outcomes. For example, the three schools that converted to WPAT have all significantly improved their performance in a short space of time:

- Ditton moved from Inadequate to Good.
- Kingsway moved from Inadequate to Good.
- Frodsham moved from Inadequate to Good with some outstanding features.

Our school community is diverse. We have large, urban schools and we include a smaller, rural primary school. We have schools based in localities with high measures of deprivation as well as more affluent districts.

The strong results of our schools show a high expectation on the ability of all of our children. For example, in Warrington four of the top ten primary schools are from WPAT and the top performing primary school is a WPAT school – Bruche Primary (April 2025).

We have developed expertise in integrating Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) specialist provision into our mainstream settings and as at September 2025 have five local authority funded designated provisions in our schools. We expect this number to grow.

WPAT is a highly regarded multi-academy trust with a strong track record of supporting schools in the Trust and beyond. Our leaders are commissioned to work with schools in need of support through national programmes (e.g., the DfE's Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) team) and also by local partners (e.g., Local Authorities). We have bid for and been designated for national support hub contracts. We are also proactive in wider systems design and delivery of systems leadership. This proactive, outward facing approach will continue. We know that by sharing knowledge, expertise and good practice our core values and high standards are enabling the wider education system to provide better provision for more children.

# 3. High Performance Structures

### 2.1 Systems Leadership

WPAT is a growing multi-academy trust that continually develops its structures and systems to enable our people to deliver a first class education to our pupils. Led by a strategic leadership team, trust wide plans are set and performance monitored. Our structure is influenced by the intent to share knowledge and skills to raise the quality of education provided to children in our trust and in schools outside of WPAT.

A series of specialist peer Network groups are convened to support communication across our schools, generate consistency and provide a detailed focus on each topic. Staff and governors participate in the networks to ensure consistent practice and coordinated improvement in the daily life of our schools and in our governance.
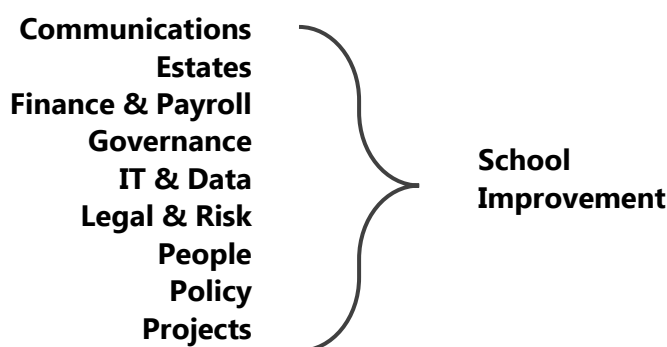
A Headteacher's Team meeting is convened monthly to coordinate school leadership information and ensure active engagement in trust planning by all schools.

All schools are led by an experienced Headteacher, or Executive Headteacher, with local autonomy given to good and outstanding schools.

### 2.2 Central Services

Behind the scenes a central services team is deployed to provide practical guidance and resources to our schools in order to underpin the delivery of the best educational experience WPAT can provide. At the same time these services deliver appropriate internal scrutiny and compliance as delegated by the Trust Board.

To manage resources carefully, central services are provided by a small core team and a series of service-level agreements with expert professionals and suppliers. The central services offer covers a broad range of core services that together provide the support to our school improvement activities:

**Communications
Estates
Finance & Payroll
Governance
IT & Data
Legal & Risk
People
Policy
Projects**

} **School Improvement**

From these services a series of strategies emerge, several of which are outlined in later sections:

- **Governance and Policy** have been designed to provide local scrutiny, monitoring and support through Local Governance Committees of our schools, detailed

accountability for all activities by our Trust Board and its sub committees). The Trustees are then overseen by a Members Board. More detail is provided in section 3 below.

- A **People Strategy** has been developed to enhance our ability to both recruit well and retain and develop staff at all levels. Driven by our core values a detailed explanation of our approach is contained in section 6.

- Based on research into how to effectively engage our core audiences, we operate to an **External Communications** Strategy that is refreshed annually and allows for local school identity and a clear trust wide presence. See section 7 below for full details.

- Led by our Chief Financial Officer we adopt well managed and sustainable **financial plans** for our trust. Section 9 details this in more depth.

- Our **School Business Managers** coordinate the local administration and reporting functions in our schools. Working together as a specialist team they enable the conditions that underpin a first class education.

- To recognise the growing importance of IT, we have formulated an **IT and Digital** Strategy and built an internal structure to coordinate IT related plans. WPAT has historically embraced technological challenges, e.g., equipping our staff and children to ensure full engagement in home learning during the Covid pandemic.

- An experienced team manage internal processes, data storage, reporting and data analysis to ensure data compliance with General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. Through a **Data Strategy** we deploy a data driven approach to the Trust's decisions and activities. We measure change and monitor progress in not just our assessment of pupils but also in our delivery of services and positions of leadership.

- Our **Estates Strategy** operates to a 5-year rolling plan ensuring sites are safe, well maintained and fully utilised. Our structure includes site and trust wide staff to maintain, monitor and develop our sites. WPAT's intent is to create safe, exciting and inspiring learning spaces for our pupils, both indoors and outdoors, further enhancing their educational experience. We continuously improve the resilience of our school estates both land and buildings through our own investment and by seeking external capital sources. To date we have secured £6.5m of funding to make significant improvements to all our sites. By September 2027, a new high school building costing £13.1m will be opening on our Bruche school site as it becomes Warrington's first All Through School for children aged 2 to 16 years.

- Our approach to environmental sustainability is threaded through our services and driven by a climate action plan. We consistently promote innovation in energy efficiency, links to the curriculum to aid learning and are committed to seek new ways in which to build sustainability, thereby reducing our carbon footprint and ultimately creating a better future for our children. A **Climate Action** plan ensures a clear focus on both daily and long term initiatives to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship.

- A specialist **school improvement service** also operates alongside central services to ensure consistency of knowledge, practices and training across our schools. See section 5 below for more detail.

We are also an outward facing multi-academy trust and to that purpose we are pleased to provide:

- The *Teaching School Hub* is a Department for Education designated service, for all 292 schools, covering all phases in Halton, Warrington and Wigan. Under the banner of **Generate Teaching Hub**, we deliver the golden thread of professional development through a teacher's career – from initial teacher training through to executive leadership. At any one time, more than 1,000 teachers and school leaders are engaged on our programmes. This designation is appointed to Evelyn Street as our lead school, and was first secured in 2021; it continues until at least 2028. As one of only 87 Teaching School Hubs in the country, this places WPAT at the heart of education policy and delivery for professional development. The Teaching School Hub is designed as a network to access the expertise of teachers and leaders of all phases and support wider systems leadership across the region. In addition, the Teaching School Hub is part of several regional collaborations specifically leading on the strategic leadership of Initial Teacher Training.
- Through Evelyn Street we are a founding and core strategic partner to the **Liverpool City Region and Beyond Early Years Stronger Practice Hub**, supporting early year's educators in ten local authorities across the Northwest region. WPAT leaders support this programme and are actively involved in delivery. This programme has funding until 2029.
- Evelyn Street was a designated **Behaviour Hub Lead Primary School** until the national programme ended in early 2025. As there is significant need for this support locally, we continued activities by hosting behaviour open days for other schools to visit. We are also piloting a local year-long peer support programme for headteachers in Halton.
- WPAT leaders are proactive and keen to share knowledge and expertise. This sharing enhances the local provision of education but is also a key part of our leadership development pathway to ensure we recruit and retain the best talent for our schools. School and Trust leaders are frequently deployed by other schools, trusts and local authorities to provide systems leadership support in the region. Our Director of Education is a **DfE RISE Adviser**.

Our structure is constantly reviewed to ensure we adapt and evolve at the pace a growing multi-academy trust requires. Our intent is to be as effective and efficient as possible to ensure WPAT's resources can be deployed for the maximum benefit to our pupils.

## 4. Leadership & Governance

WPAT is a well led multi-academy trust that embraces the benefits of pooling resources and expertise whilst encouraging local autonomy and meeting the needs of local school communities.

### 3.1 Accountability Structure

WPAT is governed by a clearly defined structure of accountability. Our governance operates within the regulatory requirements of the Department for Education's Academy Trust Handbook (September 2025) and in reference to the Academy Trust Governance Guide (June 2025). This is translated into an internal reference document known as the Scheme of Delegation, which sets out how the authority of the Trust Board is delegated across the multi-academy trust.

Staff from central services support our governance function by coordinating recruitment and ensuring full compliance with training programmes, attendance, meeting preparation, information sharing, record keeping and reporting. This includes specialist clerks, which includes National Leaders in Governance, who can provide expert advice and guidance to all governance groupings.
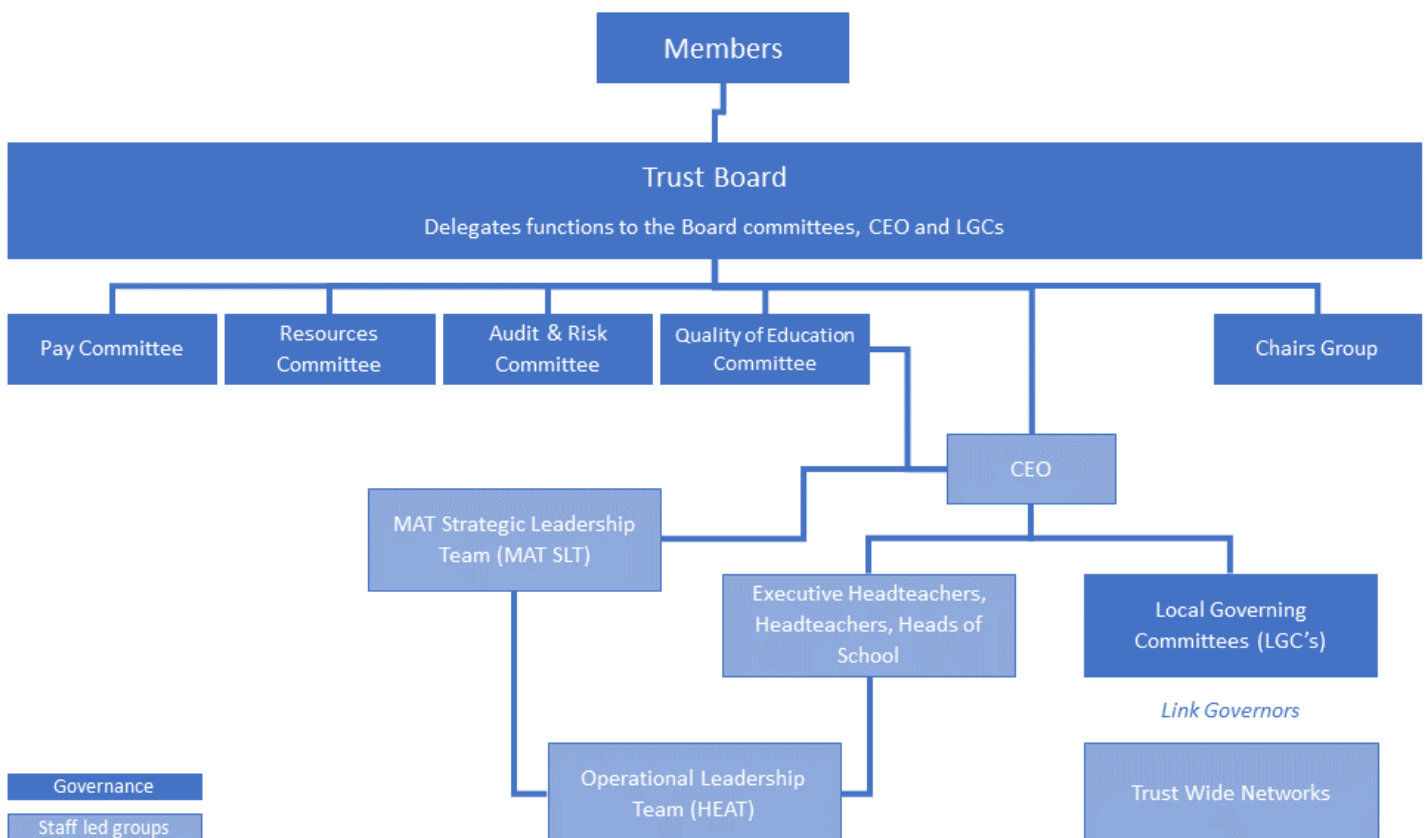


*Figure. 3: WPAT's governance structure, September 2025*

Our governance structure (see figure 3 above) consists of several interconnected roles, each with defined terms of reference:

- **Members:** A small group of individuals whose key role is to appoint the Trustees and oversee the major decisions of WPAT. The Members are responsible for ensuring the Trust operates within its articles of association.

- **Trust Board**: the legal accountable body for the Trust that has between 6 and 12 individuals at any one time. A Chair and Vice Chair are appointed annually. The Board is responsible to the Secretary of State for Education for the effectiveness of each of the Trust's schools. The Board fulfil the legal duties of company directors and of charity trustees; they are referred to within the Trust as "Trustees". Whilst the Board can choose to delegate some of its functions, it cannot delegate its responsibilities. The Board meets termly with a planned agenda and at least once a year to set strategic direction (e.g., in an annual away day and/or to conduct a self-review of governance).

- **Trust Committees** – the Trust Board has set up Trust Committees that report to it directly; each one is chaired by a Trustee:

  - *Quality of Education* committee is convened three times a year to provide scrutiny on the teaching and learning in our schools, specifically monitoring the Trust's approach to school improvement.
  - *Audit and Risk* committee, which meets three times a year, monitors the compliance of the Trust to financial and legal regulators, as well as its forecasting and mitigation to risk.
  - *Pay and HR* committee is convened at least twice a year to monitor the Trust wide pay policy and scrutinise senior staff contracts.
  - *Resources* committee meets up to six times a year to monitor how the financial, people and physical resources of the Trust are managed.

  These have been established to enable review, scrutiny and discussion of key areas in order to ensure the Board has sufficient understanding and oversight. The members of the Trust Committees are Trustees. Detailed committee roles are set out in each committee's terms of reference.

- **Local Governance Committees** - the Board has established one Local Governance Committee for each school. The members of the Local Governance Committee are Governors. They have a key responsibility of scrutinising, monitoring and supporting at a local level, with a particular focus on pupil progress and attainment and quality of teaching and learning. They provide input into school plans and policies, community and stakeholder engagement, and review alignment with the Trust's strategy, approach, guiding principle and values. To ensure strong communication, one staff member from the central services team is on a Local Governance Committee. All Local Governance Committee Chairs also meet regularly with the Trust Chair in the Chairs Group meeting each term to aid communication within the governance

structure.

After a period of research and consultation our leadership structure has been set around four levels (see figure 4 below for a description of each level) to define the roles required and enable WPAT to deploy strategies to recruit, develop and retain great leaders as we grow.

Leaders in WPAT have not only their own duties but they also actively contribute and/or lead a strategic area across the Trust. This engagement in trust wide networks, projects or activities enables our leaders to influence the development of the Trust and receive pathways for career development.

| Level 1 In School Leader | Level 2 School Leadership | Level 3 Multi School Leader | Level 4 Strategic Leadership |
|---|---|---|---|
| *E.g., Deputy Headteacher, Key Stage Leader* | *E.g., Headteacher, Head of School* | *E.g., Executive Headteacher* | *E.g., Chief Executive Officer, Director of Education* |

*Figure. 4: A description of WPAT's 4 leadership levels*

- **MAT Strategic Leadership Team**: The Chief Executive Officer leads a MAT Strategic Leadership Team (MAT SLT) that includes the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Education. The Chief Executive Officer is the Trust's Accounting Officer and has personal responsibility to the Department for Education.

- **Trust Leaders**: responsible for delivering the educational and operational outcomes for WPAT as set by the Board. Trust leaders come together as a Headteacher's Team on a monthly basis to coordinate resources, services and plans across all WPAT schools. Membership of this group includes the MAT Strategic Leadership Team and:

  - **Executive Headteacher:** This role creates lasting improvement, e.g., line managing a new headteacher or one where a school needs to raise its performance. Where schools within the Trust are deemed to require a high level of additional support, for example for a school joining the Trust or one facing internal challenges, the Trust can appoint an Executive Headteacher. The role may be temporary (known as an Executive Headteacher Deployment) to resolve current issues or a more permanent solution (called an Executive Headteacher Position) to provide greater efficiencies. An Executive Head role will have strategic responsibility for their own substantive school and at least one other school with clear outcomes set to monitor impact and change.

  - **Headteacher**: Is the individual who has ultimate responsibility for a school in line with the Trust's strategy, approach, guiding principle and values. The Headteacher oversees the daily functions of their school managing the people and resources, and works with governors to provide a first-class education to all pupils within their school. They are the key point of contact for parents and local stakeholders. They are line managed by the Chief Executive Officer and performance managed not only by their contribution to the improvement of

their school but also the contribution they make to the improvement of other schools within WPAT.

- o **Head of School**: Where appropriate we appoint a Head of School, who has day to day leadership and management responsibility for a school but they are line managed by an Executive Headteacher who retains overall accountability for the school. Delegated roles and responsibilities of the headship are agreed in line with the context of the school; these are gradually increased over time with the Head of School. It is seen as a transitional role to support aspiring/developing leaders. They are the key point of contact for parents and local stakeholders.

- **School Leadership Teams:** In every school there is a senior leadership team. There is no one model for an SLT structure as it reflects the context, size and needs of each school. The focus is on team leadership, planning and managing specific areas of school leadership, e.g., teaching and learning, assessment or pupil premium. Examples would be a Deputy/Assistant Headteacher, Key Stage Leader, SEN Coordinator. They are appointed by the school leader and their responsibilities focused on the school. WPAT is proactive in offering career development and where these school leaders have specialist knowledge or an identified professional development need they are encouraged to co-lead multi-school services such as our peer led Networks (see the School Improvement section 5 below for more detail).

## 3.2 Monitoring

For our Members, who meet twice a year, a set programme enables the reviewing of strategic documentation. This includes a detailed annual report from the Trustees.

At the Trust Board level WPAT's activities are monitored through reporting each term on the Trust's KPIs as they align to the Department for Education's MAT Assurance Framework. The Trust Board receive a pre-planned agenda of reports every term that include a focus on KPIs.

The Trust Board is supplemented by detailed scrutiny from four Sub-Committees with their own Terms of Reference. This ensures detailed reviews of core leadership functions are maintained and allows the Trust Board to remain effective by managing the volume and presentation of information in a timely and pre-filtered manner.

At a school governance level, Local Governance Committees use a School Development Plan to monitor progress. A programme of agendas for each termly meeting is set by the Trust to support each committee. This scrutiny is enhanced by a termly challenge meeting between each Headteacher (and / or Executive Headteacher) with the CEO and Director of Education.

## 3.3 Policy

Central services arrange a programme of work to ensure policies are coordinated centrally where appropriate and reviewed as per requirements. This releases schools from duplicating workloads and they can focus on school specific policy.

A policy and audit Tracker is coordinated with a trust wide governance calendar to ensure clear lines of, and dates for, reporting throughout each year are understood.

Regular compliance checks are made centrally, through an audit of websites and a termly summary report is produced and shared to show policy status for the Trust and all schools.

## 3.4 Recruitment and Training

There is a continual need to promote the governance roles available in WPAT to ensure an inclusive, diverse mix of governors, trustees and members.

Led by the central services an active communications campaign is undertaken every term. We proactively engage our parents and carers communities around each school, local businesses, charities and public agencies.

Our training and development for governors is vital to maintain effective local governance. In house governors are provided with 'link' topics (such as behaviour, safeguarding for example) and focus on monitoring this topic in the school. Trustees are invited to attend these meetings for insight and development. In addition, link governor network meetings align with staff Networks to ensure communication of priorities and practices to staff and governors. External training is provided by membership of the National Governance Association and every governor is given access to an online professional development platform to provide tailored, statutory and additional training.

Trust Board and Local Governance Committees practise reflection and assessment at the end of meetings, examining the value and impact they have made. This is complemented by self-evaluation points in the annual calendar to record analysis of each governance grouping. External Governance Reviews are undertaken for the Trust Board every two years, along with annual 360 degree self-assessments.

# 5. External Context

To support our strategic decision making, WPAT undertakes a regular review of relevant external forces (based on a PESTLE analysis – examining the political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors we can foresee). Listed below is a summary of key forces under six themes. This section concludes with learning points for strategic decision makers in WPAT.

## 4.1 Political and Policy

WPAT operates within a complex and evolving political landscape that presents both significant challenges and strategic opportunities to navigate. The government's withdrawal of funding for MAT development and growth has created uncertainty on Department for Education strategy. Locally, Warrington Borough Council is operating under a Best Value inspection.

The Trust's multi-local authority footprint (Warrington, Halton and Cheshire West and Chester Councils) presents a need for differentiated approaches to planning, networking and opportunity building.

The proposed Cheshire and Warrington devolution arrangements present medium-term uncertainties that could fundamentally reshape local government structures and education commissioning.

The enhanced statutory duties around SEND provision are creating increased pressure across all three local authorities and will create opportunities for WPAT's schools to provide support.

A clear focus on the early years has emerged in the first year of this current government and expansion of school provision has been set in place; this is expected to continue.

## 4.2 Economic Context

The Trust operates in an environment of stark economic inequality that demands sophisticated resource allocation strategies.

Our schools demonstrate a wide range of needs, from one school with just 10% of pupils accessing Free Schools Meals through to another with 77%. We have a school with 6% of children recognised as English as an Additional Language, all the way up to one with 60%. Our SEND pupils range from 15% of a school population to 46%.[2]

Figure 5, below, illustrates the range of school populations we embrace. Each blue dot on a line represents one of our nine schools; the orange dots indicate the average position for WPAT schools. Each of the four lines is measured from nil to 100%, left to right. The further on the right of the line the higher the percentage of pupils in that WPAT school that are recorded by a characteristic associated by educational research with specific needs or challenges.

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[2] The data is from 2024/25 and excludes nursery provision.

*Figure. 5: An infographic of WPAT's school community, July 2025*

The disparity is compounded by the hidden poverty challenge, with research indicating that 2,000 children in Warrington live in poverty but don't qualify for Free School Meals, rising to 2,500 when universal infant provision is excluded. National research (2025[3]) identifies poverty as a consistent safeguarding issue, *"A new cohort of working families are no longer managing to make ends meet in the cost-of-living crisis."* This will impact on issues such as health and family functioning creating issues that appear in schools. Reasons perhaps, for the 2025 launch of a Poverty Commission in the borough which WPAT has supported.

Warrington has recently been rated in an improved position within the national deprivation rankings, moving to 114th out of 296 local authorities in 2025 (compared to being the 148th most deprived local authority out of 317 authorities in 2019), but this masks significant ward-level variation. The Dedicated Schools Grant high needs allocation increased by 33% during 2021 and 2025 reflecting growing SEND demand that particularly impacts our higher-deprivation schools. School transport costs have risen by 79% over five years for SEND pupils, driving policy changes that affect family accessibility to our provision. In 2025, Warrington Council is reported to have the third largest debt level of all local authorities and ministerial envoys have been appointed to support, challenge and advise the council.

The economic profile of our catchment areas create distinct challenges for workforce recruitment and retention. Halton Council's deprivation ranking has increased (from the 23rd most deprived local authority in England out of 317 in 2019 to the 16th out of 296 authorities

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[3] ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Research – Phase 9 https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/news-views/2025/january/latest-research-shows-changes-in-safeguarding-pressures/

in 2025) and the area prioritises skills and employment recovery initiatives. Frodsham is a low income, small urban area nestled inside a more rural, affluent county. Higher-deprivation areas traditionally struggle with teacher retention.

## 4.3 Social Demographics and Community Needs

The Trust serves communities with dramatically different social profiles that require nuanced understanding and tailored approaches from leadership.

Demographics across our catchments reveal important implications for future planning. Areas around our higher-deprivation schools show high proportions of children aged 0-4, which may indicate more sustained primary place demand, while our more affluent catchments demonstrate potentially declining birth rates. The 15-19 age group in Warrington is forecast to grow by 11% by 2028, creating secondary transition pressures that affect our Year 6 transitions.

SEND prevalence across our trust reflects broader regional patterns, Warrington's January 2024 school census shows 5,666 pupils with SEND; 12.3% receive SEN Support and 4.6% have an EHCP; while Halton's SEND rate exceeds 16%. The demands of safeguarding are increasing and requiring schools to allocate more resources to address issues and work with multi-agencies, e.g., 90% of teachers in a national NSPCC/NASUWT survey (2023) had witnessed a rise in safeguarding referrals, and 84% had observed a rise in emotional abuse. A wider increase in the prevalence of mental health issues compounds this trend.

In the sector, research is showing the changing nature of the under-25s in the views of teaching and the attraction of the profession.

Retention is also an issue in the sector as a whole as, *"teacher leaving rates have not significantly improved since the pandemic"* (NFER, 2025) and affecting the filling of vacancies.

## 4.4 Technological Infrastructure and Digital Equity

WPAT operates across areas with varying digital infrastructure quality. Our higher-deprivation schools serve significant populations of mobile-first households where families rely primarily on smartphones for internet access, creating barriers to home learning and digital homework completion.

Online safety is a rising issue of interest that seems only to be expanding. The updated Academy Trust Handbook 2025 mandates that trusts work towards six core digital and technology standards by 2030, and it has a prohibition on paying cyber ransom demands emphasising the critical importance of robust cyber security measures.

The advances in computing through AI is challenging traditional teaching and learning methods as well as disrupting approaches to knowledge creation, business structures and expectations of services (OECD, 2025).

## 4.5 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

The Trust faces an increasingly complex legal and regulatory environment requiring enhanced governance oversight and compliance monitoring, e.g., redefined attendance enforcement powers under recent legislation require robust policies and procedures as well as challenges to school stakeholder engagement. The sector is expecting a revised approach to school inspections from Ofsted but not all the details of this change are as yet clear. MATs are also preparing for the potential of some form of inspection which is as yet undefined.

Safeguarding responsibilities continue to evolve with the implementation of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill passed in 2024. This has mandated school engagement in multi-agency working and information sharing protocols for child protection, supporting children in care and greater provision of breakfast clubs. This is drawing already limited schools resources to support more staff time, training and duties. Fair Access Protocol requirements for in-year admissions may create additional legal obligations and challenges to school planning.

## 4.6 Environmental Factors and Health Implications

Environmental health considerations significantly impact our schools and communities, with air quality, climate change adaptation, and outdoor learning opportunities varying considerably across our geographic spread. The Academy Trust Handbook 2025 requires all trusts to have climate action plans in place by the end of the 2025/26 academic year, representing a significant new compliance requirement.

Climate resilience planning must consider the differential impacts on our various communities, with flood risk, heat vulnerability, and transport disruption affecting schools differently. This integration of sustainability into core governance expectations requires environmental factors to be considered in all strategic decision-making processes.

## 4.7 Strategic Implications for Trust Leadership

This PESTLE analysis reveals that WPAT operates in an environment of significant opportunity alongside substantial challenge. Our strategic priorities must focus on equity without compromising excellence, ensuring that our most disadvantaged communities receive additional support while maintaining high expectations across all schools. The challenges are broad and many outside of the scope of schools, therefore continued careful management of our resources is required to ensure school and Trust plans champion the most effective deployment of staff, innovative solutions to challenges and financial reserves that can manage sudden, unforeseen demands.

# 6. School Improvement

WPAT has a clear and continued focus on school improvement, our approach is grounded in improving school leadership to create sustainable improvements for our pupils. It is a core tenet of how we operate and a reason why schools improve rapidly and sustainably within our trust community.

Fulfilling the Trust's **KPI2 Strong Outcomes for All**, the school improvement services are led by a Director of Education. To ensure continual progress the service operates to 6 objectives and progress is monitored by the CEO:

 i. Establish and sustain high-quality teaching for all pupils.
 ii. Enable the Trust to establish and sustain an aligned, broad, rich, and coherent curriculum entitlement that is ambitious for all pupils.
 iii. Ensure that schools within the Trust establish and sustain a welcoming, inclusive, predictable, and safe environment for pupils.
 iv. Ensure disadvantaged/vulnerable pupils and those with SEND experience success in line with their peers.
 v. Quality assure the quality of education across the Trust.

To ensure the value of putting children first is at the heart of WPAT leadership decision making, school improvement is embedded into our resource allocation with our 5-year road map approach to school planning. Ensuring the Trust and each of our schools is achieving sustainable financial health indicators enables high-quality teaching and learning to function effectively.

Our strategy recognises that school improvement is not a static concept, it is ever evolving as the drive for higher standards demands creativity and innovation; it should be a constant state of productive restlessness and agitation. The strategy therefore covers a range of interventions and support that can be tailored to each school and adapted as the school's needs develop. The Trust has invested in developing an educational team of consultants and lead practitioners within our schools to offer systems leader support. This is enabled through a coordinated system of peer moderation across our schools (and with other trusts), learning walks and a team of independent School Improvement Partners visiting and reporting on each school every term.

## 5.1 Phases

To support all schools to strive for continual improvement, to mitigate risk and to determine the services we provide for our schools, we profile each school using a four-phase improvement model. These four phases include:

- Phase 1 - Stabilise
- Phase 2 - Repair
- Phase 3 - Improve
- Phase 4 - Sustain

This profile determines the amount of support provided and the nature of this support. All schools are matched against this four-phase model as part of the due diligence process when joining the Trust, and through systematic quality assurance they are reviewed annually. The level of support and a plan for improvement is created from these ratings. Our intent is to have all schools that have been in the Trust achieving phase 1 within three years of joining.

## 5.2 Networks

To ensure consistency of practice and knowledge, peer groups of school leaders and governors operate around Networks focused on key issues, e.g., attendance and behaviour, inclusion, safeguarding, SEND, curriculum.

These Networks are led by specialists within the Trust and supported by the Director of Education. Annually the need for, and focus of, each network is reviewed to allow for flexibility in our support to schools.

The peer groups provide a platform to share information, develop expertise, conduct moderation and reinforce our high performance standards. They enable cross-school communication and provide a systems leadership model within WPAT.

These staff Networks are connected to a Link Governor briefing on the same topic, ensuring our governance leaders understand the priorities and practices in WPAT. This is a crucial tool to training our governors and advancing the ability of our Local Governance Committees to both support schools in their mission and uphold local accountability.

## 5.3 SEND

WPAT operates a culture of high expectations of success for all pupils, including those with SEND. Beyond ensuring that all schools within the Trust comply with their statutory duties relating to SEND, school leaders are scrutinised to create an inclusive learning environment for individual children. This is to ensure children with SEND have equal access to a broad, rich curriculum and can learn in mainstream classrooms where it is in their best interests.

WPAT has a growing number of Local Authority designated provisions for children with SEND (primarily for pupils with autism) within mainstream settings that enables individualised learning approaches. This sits alongside a clear pathway to re-integration into mainstream classes, where appropriate. With 5 direct provision bases, covering key stage 1 and 2, in four schools we expect this offer to grow.

A systematic and planned SEND related professional development programme is provided to teaching and non-teaching staff to ensure staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of all pupils. This includes maintaining a consistent evidence base to record keeping and management information systems. Our rigorous approach to SEND registers in each school, establishing effective arrangements for the early identification of SEND and ensuring strategic deployment of resources enables our schools to offer a high-

quality provision. This enables staff to develop meaningful and strong relationships with parents, carers and external agencies.

## 5.4 Safeguarding

All Trust schools operate a common safeguarding policy aligned to the Department for Education's Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance; specific amendments are included where relevant to account for each school's individual context. This policy is updated annually and shared with all schools during their annual safeguarding training at the start of the year.

The Trust has invested in a common electronic record keeping system that supports the school and Trust wide monitoring of safeguarding. It focuses on quality of record keeping, effective action, trends and emerging patterns at school and trust level. It supports the Trust and school Governance oversight on the quality and effective practice to keep children safe and forms the basis for statistical termly analysis in Headteacher and CEO Reports for both groups to inform their strategic decisions.

Each school in the Trust has:

- A senior leader designated as the safeguarding officer.
- An independent safeguarding audit annually.
- A welfare team system that is variable in scale and structure across the Trust's schools (so it relates to each school's size and context) but consistently addresses safeguarding, attendance, SEND and identified vulnerable families.

## 5.5 Attendance

To ensure all schools within the Trust comply with their statutory duties relating to attendance, WPAT leaders maintain a clear focus on setting and sustaining a culture of high attendance and punctuality for all pupils. Attendance audits are conducted every 3 years in each school. School leaders monitor attendance and promptly addressing issues when they arise. Through our peer networks we identify systems to support good attendance and share across the whole Trust. Working supportively with families and external partners each school implements processes to reduce pupil absence and persistent absence.

In addition, all WPAT schools utilise regular Local Authority external support through an SLA to support the rigour and application of processes that support pupils having good attendance.

## 5.6 Behaviour

With our lead school being chosen as a Behaviour Hub primary lead (in 2021-2024) WPAT has maintained a legacy of high behavioural expectations for all pupils, and ensuring pupils are proactively supported to meet those expectations. This is done with a focus on clear, consistent approach to everyday systems and norms. The Trust allocates resources to tackle poor attendance and punctuality, ensuring that low attendance does not become a barrier to pupil learning, attainment, and wellbeing. We are mindful to ensure that schools meet their

statutory duties and recognise that where a pupil may have SEND, this may affect their behaviour. This includes ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to policies and practice if the pupil has SEND and that these adjustments are reviewed regularly. With the prevalence of internet engagement in modern society, staff remain alert to cyberbullying and online safety issues, responding quickly when issues arise. Trust wide systems to monitor and track behaviour create a data driven approach to improving our behaviour strategies.

## 5.7 Curriculum

WPAT operates the national curriculum and has a mature approach to curriculum leadership, setting a trust wide curriculum statement which school leaders can adapt, with permission, provided it supports continual pupil progress.

The strategic intent of WPAT's ambitions for its curriculum is measured as one that provides:

1. Personal development that develops the character of the child.
2. Provides academic rigour.
3. Develops world responsibility.
4. Provides experiences that supports preparation for adult life and the world of work

The culture and expectation of all schools is to maintain up to date, evidence informed teaching to implement the curriculum.

Trust wide network groups ensure that strong curriculum expertise is identified and deployed strategically across the Trust. Collaboration and moderation is used to build capacity and expertise across the Trust and alleviate workload.

WPAT is focused upon practices that denote high quality and give our pupils the best opportunities to progress. This includes:

- Embedding a culture of reading including supporting all pupils to develop their vocabulary and read fluently.
- The development of early literacy through high-quality systematic synthetic phonics e.g., delivering and implementing selected programmes which are quality assured and delivered by highly trained staff.
- Ensuring the curriculum embeds knowledge of safeguarding in an age-appropriate way e.g., the teaching of online safety across the curriculum.
- Ensuring all pupils, including our most vulnerable and, in particular, those with SEND are prepared well for adult life, including their next steps in education; make progress and experience good health; independent living; and participate in their community.
- High quality early years to give pupils best start in life, with a clear driver to focus upon three prime areas: language communication and literacy, physical development, and, personal development.

To support this, WPAT has implemented systems that monitor and track the quality of curriculum across the Trust for all pupils.

## 5.8 Data Management

WPAT has Trust wide standard performance data handling procedures for collecting, reporting analysis and auditing all its information.

Robust reporting systems have been timetabled into Trust calendars to ensure accurate information on school performance is circulated in a timely manner to the appropriate bodies to influence and target resources to support improved pupil outcomes.

We use data to drive compliance with our plans and analysis of:

- Attendance and absence management.
- Pupil engagement (and other stakeholders, including parents/carers).
- Pupil outcomes.
- Pupil Premium audits.
- Safeguarding.
- SEND.

Our systems then provide data to monitor and track the quality of teaching across the Trust, i.e. making use of metrics to ensure that priority areas for improvement are identified; benchmarking performance, and; setting clear school-level objectives for key metrics including Phonics Screening Check; Multiplication Tables Check; Key Stage 2 attainment in reading, writing and maths.

# 7. People

WPAT's people strategy is driven through **KPI 3 Great People, Great Culture** and has three overarching areas:

1. Culture (including behaviour, values, high expectations and well-being)
2. CPD and Career Pathways
3. Workforce Engagement

In alignment with our growth model (see Section 8 below), WPAT's focus on developing its people also facilitates the continued change and expansion of the Trust for the benefit of all schools in the Trust. It ensures our guiding principle is sustained as it is the people in our organisation that deliver the organisation's ambition and values on a daily basis.

## 6.1 Culture

WPAT is a values driven organisation operating to a guiding principle. We attract and retain people who want to contribute to continually improving our offer of education to children.

At all levels, and in both teaching and support roles, we have high expectations. Our pupils only have one opportunity to complete each school year with WPAT, so our people strive for continual improvement to offer a high quality experience in all our schools (see figure 6 below). Our teaching, central and administration staff work together to achieve pupil progress, by both valuing and enabling each other to deliver high performance.
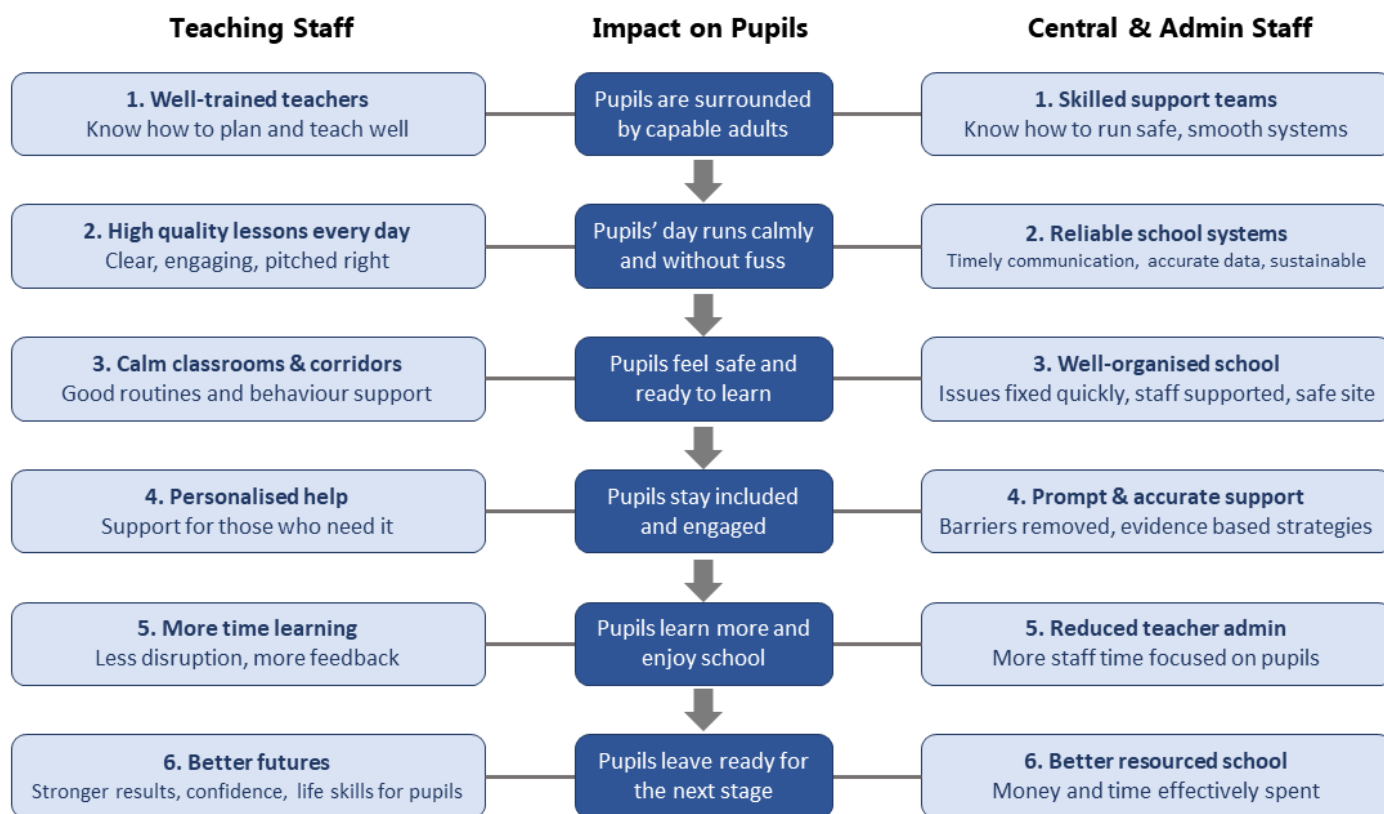
| Teaching Staff | Impact on Pupils | Central & Admin Staff |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Well-trained teachers** Know how to plan and teach well | Pupils are surrounded by capable adults | **1. Skilled support teams** Know how to run safe, smooth systems |
| **2. High quality lessons every day** Clear, engaging, pitched right | Pupils' day runs calmly and without fuss | **2. Reliable school systems** Timely communication, accurate data, sustainable |
| **3. Calm classrooms & corridors** Good routines and behaviour support | Pupils feel safe and ready to learn | **3. Well-organised school** Issues fixed quickly, staff supported, safe site |
| **4. Personalised help** Support for those who need it | Pupils stay included and engaged | **4. Prompt & accurate support** Barriers removed, evidence based strategies |
| **5. More time learning** Less disruption, more feedback | Pupils learn more and enjoy school | **5. Reduced teacher admin** More staff time focused on pupils |
| **6. Better futures** Stronger results, confidence, life skills for pupils | Pupils leave ready for the next stage | **6. Better resourced school** Money and time effectively spent |

*Figure. 6: Impact of workforce culture on pupils*

Our core values define how we operate on a daily basis and drive our behaviours. This is supplemented by our training and development and staff engagement approach (see sections 6.2 and 6.3 below).

We continually review and update our well-being provision for staff. This includes a proactive, positive dialogue with the teaching unions. WPAT provides a comprehensive health and well-being package available to all Trust staff through the *School Advisory Service.* This offers confidential access to services tailored to each staff member's need such as counselling, physiotherapy, legal advice and more.

Each school appoints mental health advisers and maintains an action plan for support to pupils and staff. Designated Safeguarding Leads are supported with formal supervision in recognition of the unique, complex role they provide in assisting our pupils and their families. We will continue to access the training and resources from the DfE's workload reduction toolkit and health and well-being initiatives, e.g., the Senior Mental Health Lead Training Courses.

Through our Teaching School Hub – one of only 87 Department for Education designated centres for excellence in teacher professional development - we champion parental leave providing free access for staff through the services of the teacher parental support charity MTPT Project. Our policies are structured to provide workload and wellbeing support to staff. This includes sickness cover insurance allowing WPAT resources to support our staff.

## 6.2 CPD & Career Pathways

We know that *"high quality teaching improves pupil outcomes, and effective professional development offers a crucial tool to develop teaching quality and enhance children's outcomes in the classroom"* (EEF).

To that purpose, we lead a Teaching School Hub – known as Generate Teaching Hub - coordinating and facilitating coherent, high quality, evidenced based professional development to almost 300 schools of all phases across local authorities of Halton, Warrington and Wigan. Designated since 2021, Generate Teaching Hub has more than 1,000 teachers and leaders registered on its programmes at any one time. This includes teacher training, early career teacher development and assessment, plus all ten specialist and leadership National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). Coordinating a network of schools and trusts in the locality we are *the* professional development provider.

Building on the designation as a Behaviour Hub we continue to access and share high quality training and resources with other schools. Through open days showcasing our behaviour systems and norms through to piloting peer network programmes with schools we have mentored. We are seen as a source of quality and knowledge by local authorities, trusts and schools.

Every staff member in WPAT has a defined training plan upon induction and annual updates to remain compliant. We also offer access to accredited programmes, bespoke training and self-directed learning platforms.

WPAT will continue to build upon the golden thread of professional development, established for the profession by the DfE to ensure staff are moving along a career pathway of improvement from entry roles to senior leadership.

For teaching staff, WPAT monitors and facilitates advancement through a structured CPD pathway to leadership roles. Our Leadership Pathway has 4 levels from in-school all the way through to strategic MAT leadership. This researched pathway enables teachers to choose routes to senior roles and to refine specialist leader roles. Graduated to account to the behaviours needed at different leadership levels, the pathway supports the building of experience and skills.

For all staff a professional development framework has been piloted and is being rolled out in 2026 to all schools. A Development Partner approach drives professional growth and development in our staff. In turn this improves the learning environment for pupils and enhances their chances of success. Developing our staff raises standards, dispositions and attitudes of our pupils which enable them to function as positive contributors to society. At the heart of opportunities to develop staff is a distributed project leadership approach. Through our networks, peer support offers and work groups, staff are encouraged to take ownership of plans and policy across the Trust in a controlled manner. These ongoing opportunities provide a development platform for new or less experienced staff to test and learn their leadership skills. They also enable more experienced colleagues to share knowledge, refine communication skills and lead change.

To retain senior leaders, WPAT has mapped a range of options for Executive Headteacher roles, providing flexible opportunities for interim, permanent and strategic roles in the Trust.

For central and administrative support staff we have opportunities to move from school, to multi-school, to Trust wide positions. As our organisation has grown, we are now in a position to build a career pathway for central and administrative roles. This will include reviewing structures, benchmarking good practice in other Trusts, research and matching to organisational development plans. Creating a clear pathway central and administrative that parallels that for teaching staff, will be a priority development (see 6.4 below) in this plan.

## 6.3 Workforce Engagement

WPAT's people operate across multiple sites and local authorities, in different communities and in a variety of school sizes. We know there is no one size fits all approach to managing people, so we blend a centralised approach with local autonomy to achieve the best results. Central services provides legal and regulatory advice and support, whilst headteachers manage their teams on a local basis.

Our people are a key stakeholder in our provision of education and in our focus on continual improvement, we move swiftly to embrace change when we can see this will benefit our children.

To retain an effective dialogue with our workforce we communicate through an intranet, staff meetings, CEO briefings and headteacher communications. To provide quantitative evidence, termly staff surveys are carried out and findings aggregated for departmental, school and trust wide analysis. Data is monitored carefully, especially in terms of absence to identify how WPAT can best support and enable our people in their roles. Exit interviews are offered to ensure WPAT reflects on its approach to retention.

Our school improvement structure of specialist Networks (see 5.2 above) provides multiple opportunities for staff to engage with peers in other schools and to influence the quality of delivery. Practical Trust wide forums such as the Business Managers Network, Maintenance Officers Group. Climate Action Group and the IT and Digital Group allow for broad representation and engagement from staff in operational plans.

## 6.4 People Priorities 2025/26

As WPAT continues to grow, we are identifying opportunities to create greater coherence in the planning and delivery of people related practice across our schools. We are balancing a consistency of message across the MAT whilst recognising that each of our schools has its own context and culture.

To effectively implement learning from our development activities, we have taken the three core elements of *Education Endowment Foundation's* implementation guidance[4] as standards to deploy in the Trust:

1. We adopt **appropriate behaviours** by engaging colleagues, enabling them to train together as peers and offering structured opportunities to effectively reflect on learning and change.
2. We have **accounted for contextual factors** such as what each school locally requires and what is standardised across the Trust.
3. We set a **structured workforce development approach that can flex and adapt** to emerging needs and be a platform for implementation.

This is brought together by reviewing the evidence and data. Learning from professional development must be implemented and school and Trust leaders are key to enabling our people to apply and share their knowledge gained. Therefore, Headteachers and departmental leads take responsibility for training and development plans for staff. In particular, headteachers align professional development to whole school development plans.

Centrally, we procure specialist Trust wide training and ensure compliance with statutory obligations (e.g., safeguarding, health and safety, prevent).

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[4] https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/eef-guidance-reports/implementation/a_schools_guide_to_implementation_-_summary_of_recommendations_v1.1.0_2025-04-16-085325_rerk.pdf

# 8. External Communications

Marketing and communications of WPAT are driven by the central team and delivered through collaboration with all our schools, e.g., each school manages its own social media accounts whilst having access to specialist PR and marketing expertise through the central services. We balance a consistency of message across the MAT whilst recognising that each of our schools has its own context, community and brand.

To fulfil **KPI1 First Choice for Families**, the expectations of the marketing and business development function in our central team is as follows:

1. To ensure a coordinated approach to marketing across the MAT for the recruitment of pupils and also of our workforce.
2. To promote the brand and values of WPAT to the public.
3. To engage and onboard new schools to the MAT.

## 7.1 WPAT Audiences

Through research we have six core audiences as a MAT:

i. Children who attend a WPAT school.
ii. Parents/Carers of children who attend WPAT schools or may consider their child attending one of our schools.
iii. Governors of WPAT schools or individuals who are considering volunteering as a governor.
iv. Teaching staff in WPAT schools or professionals seeking to apply to work in a WPAT school.
v. Schools who may have a leadership considering joining a MAT.
vi. External Stakeholders including local authorities, Regional Schools Commissioner, Department for Education and Ofsted.

We recognise that there are more audiences, and that even the 6 listed can each be broken down into further segments. However, to ensure a targeted response and to best utilise limited resources carefully we are focusing upon the 6 groups listed above. Behind each audience we have built an evidence based profile of interests and perspectives to assist in tailoring our communications.

# 9. Growth Model

8.1 Growth Strategy

In April 2024, the Trust Board confirmed a Growth Model for WPAT to fulfil **KPI 4 Secure, Sustainable Growth.** This set out a careful plan to grow sustainably, adapt our structures to suit the stages of growth and to seek to be achieving a Trust of around 20 to 30 schools (6,000+ pupils) in the next five years. No fixed number of type of schools are set as a target because WPAT is not focused on growth in and of itself. We are open to schools to join at the right time and in the best way that suits their context, so that we find schools that complement our values and culture, in order to strengthen the entire Trust.

The rationale for our growth model is three-fold:

   i.   To expand WPAT's offer of education excellence to our children, young people and families.
   ii.  To build a community of schools that act as a beacon for positive change in the most vulnerable of communities.
   iii. To safeguard the guiding principle and values that WPAT has forged.

WPAT's model is based on a *growth from within approach* for our people development, giving teaching and support staff systems leadership responsibilities to enable a pathway of whole career development. See the People section 6 above.

We also set two priorities in 2024 which remain the same as we begin this 3 year plan:

   1. Develop and expand a secondary school offer (which is beginning with the creation of Bruche Academy, an all through school in 2026 for children aged 2 to 16 years).
   2. Be ready to absorb a group of schools from a distinct geographical area or a small MAT.

The change in funding for MAT growth by the incoming government in 2024 has removed some financial support. However, through careful management of the Trust's resources and our experience of re-setting new schools for greater school improvement we are able to continue to seek new schools to join WPAT.

Our growth model is deliberately not setting a fixed goal. The growth of MATs is a controlled marketplace that is not driven by consumer supply and demand. With the change in government in 2024 and the number of schools already in a MAT the opportunities are more set than ever. The education system is also a complex network of interdependent parties - schools, trusts, federations, dioceses, local authorities and policy makers - that all influence what is right to do when for maintained schools.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6,000 or more pupils | Academics all based in north west | 1st free school |
| 3+ Secondary schools | 1+ Specialist Independent SEN School | 15+ primary schools |
| Teaching School Hub | No individual school more than 30 min drive from another | 10 or more Designated Provision bases |

*Figure. 7: The future forecasted mix of WPAT the education community*

WPAT has set a desire by the academic year 2030 to have a mixed community of provision (see figure 7 above) that complements member schools and enables the development of collaboration through effective systems leadership. This business plan is designed to move us forward in that journey, through:

## 8.2 Strong Due Diligence

Our growth is based upon a robust process of due diligence which provides a clear understanding, informed by evidence of school improvement, leadership, finance, estates, HR, resourcing, ICT, outcomes for pupils, governance, health and safety, and safeguarding. Crucially this process will identify key risks and any liabilities that the Trust may inherit.

Through this process of due diligence, the school will be identified within a phase of improvement. This phase of improvement will inform if the Trust has the capacity to provide appropriate support.

WPAT has also redesigned its leadership and support structures to prepare for growth. This includes a Director of Education to drive continual school improvement and a Chief Finance Officer to ensure sustainable planning. To truly strengthen through growth, we recognise that our systems and processes must be ready to scale and adapt.

## 8.3 Managed On-boarding

WPAT has learnt that giving new schools time to embed into our networks, deliver managed change and maximise professional trust on-boarding must be carefully managed.

Our on-boarding approach is spread over six phases, from supporting an enquiring school to assess why they want to join a MAT and how best to approach the process. Guides and templates for each step of the way are produced by WPAT and an emphasis is placed on building trust between senior leaders to ensure the values and vision of each organisation is in alignment. Figure 8 below sets out the phases of on-boarding for a new school.

Schools embarking on joining WPAT are encouraged to access our leadership and peer-support structures prior to joining. This generosity of spirit increases trust, provides

opportunities for professional dialogue across schools and allows a new school to fully learn our culture and embrace values.

WPAT has expertise in conducting due diligence on a new school joining our Trust and also on the legal processing and Academy Order application that must be adhered to. A procedure for officers seeking authority from, and enabling the evaluation by the Trust Board, has been developed.
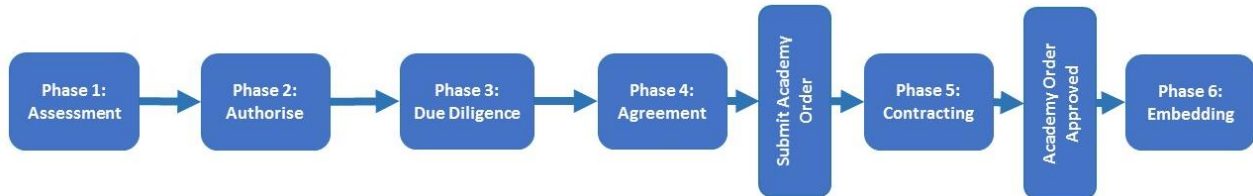


*Figure 8: WPAT Onboarding process*

# 10.  Financial & Legal

To underpin all that we do, and to specifically fulfil **KPI 4 Secure, Sustainable Growth** WPAT has invested in an experienced finance team to have oversight of the Trust's financial systems. This comprises of a Chief Financial Officer (who is a financial accountant) and a Finance Manager working with a team of School Business Managers.

To maintain effective financial control, we have developed a comprehensive Financial Regulations document. The implementation of this document is supported through our comprehensive e-learning training package. Our core team work closely with our schools to set clear budgets, manage payments and expenditure, forecast resource allocation and comply with regulations.

The preparation of our annual financial statements is conducted in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction, providing a true and fair view of the Trust's financial position

## 9.1 Internal Assessment & Planning

An internal cycle of reporting and monitoring is in place to ensure good practice and transparency of expenditure. Robust policies and procedures around financial authority, procurement processes and measuring value for money ensure careful use of public funds. This includes:

- Forecasting: Use of five year financial forecasts to anticipate future funding and expenditure needs.
- Integrated Financial Planning: Alignment of financial plans with the Trust's strategic objectives, ensuring resources are directed towards educational priorities.
- Regular Monitoring: Monthly management accounts reviewed by trustees to monitor performance against budget and inform decision-making.
- Robust Internal Controls: Implementation of control systems to prevent and detect fraud, theft, and irregularities.

## 9.2 Transparency and Audit

We supplement strong financial management with a series of systems to transparently scrutinise and assess practices through independent auditing and sound risk management:

- Independent Scrutiny: Regular internal audits conducted by individuals or organisations independent of the Trust's management.
- Audit and Risk Committee Oversight: The committee directs the scrutiny of risk and ensures findings are addressed appropriately.
- Reporting: Findings from internal scrutiny are reported to the board and used to improve financial management practices.
- External Audit: Engagement of external auditors to conduct statutory audits and provide assurance on regularity.
- Public Disclosure: Publication of audited accounts and relevant financial information to stakeholders and the public.

## 9.3 Investing in our Schools

WPAT has been successful at securing additional funding for our schools, allowing us to significantly improve the estate. To date £7m in capital funding has been secured from the Developed Formula Capital and invested in the WPAT buildings for the benefit of our communities. In 2026, we will be expanding one of our primary schools with £13.1m from Section 106 funding and creating the first all through school in Warrington.

We have a Reserves Policy outlining the purpose and planned use of reserves, ensuring financial sustainability, and an Investment Strategy that considers risk, liquidity, and ethical considerations, aligning with the Trust's objectives.

## 9.4 Risk Management

In line with the guidance of the Academy Trust Handbook 2025, WPAT maintains a comprehensive risk register at Trust and school level, which is regularly reviewed and updated to manage potential financial and operational risks.

We have extensive procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of our children, visitors and staff. The risk register in each school is reported to Local Governance Committees and then to the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Trust wide strategic risk register is overseen by the Audit and Risk Committee each term. It is produced and scrutinised to develop a robust but clear response to known risks. The awareness of risk management has been brought into more formal mechanisms and is being promoted as an everyday task by all in the business functions of the Trust. A critical incident team is maintained and established plans and protocols are in place to ensure continuity of operations in the event of significant disruptions.

## 9.5 Forecast 2025 to 2028

Looking ahead, we can forecast a steady income of around £18m income per annum for the next 3 years. See figure 9 below. Our proactive planning and horizon scanning we know pressures will come upon primary schools in our locality due to falling birth rates; the impact of these have been accounted for in the forecasts below.

Though the Trust forecasts a surplus year on year, the strategic challenge is to carefully monitor the reducing surplus. Our mitigation for this can be seen in our reserves strategy forecasting a growth in general reserves to provide resources to support our school community.

| | 2025/26 | 2026/27 | 2027/28 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reserve Brought Forward** | 1,261,755 | 1,538,427 | 1,703,698 |
| **In Year Income** | 18,629,754 | 18,319,923 | 18,067,791 |
| **Staff Costs** | 13,673,541 | 13,588,717 | 13,482,569 |
| **Premises Costs** | 1,414,720 | 1,421,590 | 1,479,960 |
| **Curriculum Costs** | 1,543,361 | 1,432,555 | 1,445,445 |
| **Other Operational Costs** | 1,721,460 | 1,711,790 | 1,643,331 |
| **In Year Total Surplus/Deficit** | **276,672** | **165,271** | **16,486** |
| **Total Forecast General Reserve** | **1,538,427** | **1,703,698** | **1,720,184** |

*Figure 9: DRAFT 3 year financial forecast*

Our initial Bruche Academy all through school growth is forecast to add £500,000 income and expenditure in the first year, £960,000 for 2027/28.

Additional income for specialist programmes (e.g., DfE approved hubs) or capital grants (e.g., we secured £1.1m in condition investment fund in 2025) will equally impact the income and expenditure lines.

WPAT's growth will be added to this sound financial platform as schools are confirmed. We do not set financial targets as the timing and size of schools that join us are not predictable. A small rural school with less than 100 pupils that fits our Trust values is as valuable as a large secondary school. The budgets are simply not comparable.

# Appendix 1 - Glossary

## 10.1 Core Internal Documents

Within WPAT we have a number of core documents that assist in the governance, management and monitoring of the activities in our multi-academy trust.

- **Articles of Association** is the foundational legal document that outlines the purpose, governance structure, and operating rules for a multi-academy trust. They essentially define how the Trust will be run, including the responsibilities of trustees, the appointment process, and procedures for meetings and decision-making.
- **Business plan** explains what WPAT does and its strategic plans. It is as a point of reference to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) over the next 3 years, measure progress and the evolution of expectations.
- **CEO's Report** is a termly document produced by the senior leadership team in WPAT for the Trust Board. Using the KPIs it reports on progress, risk and strategy.
- **Curriculum Statement** provides WPAT's overarching strategic intent for design, pedagogy and assessment of teaching and learning across all schools in the Trust. It sets the standards for personal development, academic rigor, world responsibilities, adult life and careers.
- **Headteacher's Report** is a termly document produced by the school leadership teams for each Local Governance Committee. It details core activities relating to pupil progress, school improvement, resource and risk management plus school development. WPAT has a set template for this report.
- **Risk Register** identifies, assesses, and manages potential risks to WPAT's objectives. It acts as a central repository for information on risks, helping the Trust to monitor and mitigate them effectively. It is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in the Trust's environment and activities.
- **Scheme of Delegation** is established to inform those involved in governance and oversight in WPAT where the decision making, advisory and other responsibilities lie within the Trust. All updates and amendments are aligned with the annual review cycles for each Trust Committee Terms of Reference and Job Descriptions of responsible officers.
- **School Development Plan** is produced annually by school leadership and outlines the priorities and actions for improving a school's performance within the larger MAT framework. It acts as a roadmap for achieving specific, measurable goals related to student outcomes, teaching quality, and overall school effectiveness. It connects to the Trust's overall school improvement strategy and ensures alignment across all schools.
- **School Improvement Strategy** is a comprehensive plan, updated annually, that outlines how the Trust will support and enhance the performance of its schools and manage a school's leadership autonomy. It focuses on improving teaching and learning, leadership, and overall school effectiveness, while also fostering collaboration and sharing best practices among schools within the Trust.

- **Trust Report to Members** is an annual document summarising the previous academic year produced by Trustees for the Members. It aligns reporting to the KPIs and provides an overview to the activities of the strategic leadership of the Trust.

## 10.2 Core External Documents

*Department for Education*
- **Academy Trust Governance Guide** (June 2025) is a non-statutory guidance document for trustees, executive leaders, local committee governors, governance professionals and academy trust members defining high quality governance. It contains an explanation of legal/regulatory requirements and good practice.
- **Academy Trust Handbook** (September 2025), also known as the academies financial handbook, this is a [statutory guide](#) that outlines the financial management and other control requirements for academy trusts in the UK. It serves as a framework for multi-academy trusts as publicly funded bodies, ensuring they operate with financial responsibility and accountability. The handbook is updated annually and provides details on roles and responsibilities, financial requirements, internal scrutiny, annual accounts, and the regulator's role in overseeing trusts.
- **MAT Assurance Framework**: The primary purpose of the [MAT Assurance Framework](#) is to help the Trust understand its current capacity to support and drive school improvement through the delivery of the Business plan. Then to use diagnostic tools to evaluate, monitor and report progress across 14 performance elements.

*Audits and Assessment*
- **Audited Accounts** are an annual statutory requirement conducted by an independent, external and qualified company. It ensures that WPAT is maintaining adequate accounting records and enables the preparation of an annual report and accounts in accordance with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) and Department for Education's Accounts Direction.
- **Health and Safety Review** is an annual process of auditing and assessing health and safety practices across the whole Trust. Conducted by an independent organisation this ensures WPAT is focused on continually improving its policies and practices to ensure safety. Any recommendations from the review are then implemented and monitored.
- **Internal Audit Report** is an annual independent report from an external auditor into financial, human resources and health and safety systems and practices in WPAT. It is conducted by a different independent auditor than the one who compiles our annual accounts and it samples different practices across the Trust each year. It informs senior leaders, the Board, and other stakeholders of audit observations, related risks, and areas for improvement.

## 10.3 Key Terms

To coordinate a common understanding of language we have defined some core terms within the management and leadership of WPAT.

- **Key Performance Indicator (or KPI):** These provide a way for the Trust Board to measure how well WPAT is performing in relation to our guiding principle and core values. They act as a vital navigational instrument, enabling a clear picture of the current levels of performance. This is an important decision-making tool to reduce the complex nature of WPAT's work when making strategic decisions.[5]
- **Leader:** A role that is responsible for why a team of people and/or a function operate the way that they do.
- **Manager:** A role that is responsible for what, when, where and how a team of people and/or a function operates.
- **Networks:** WPAT has a series of network groups focused on core issues that are Trust wide (e.g., attendance, safeguarding). They have a leader/s and defined membership. They provide information, training and evidence based guidance on their theme. The value of the networks is to support consistency of understanding and application across the Trust. They also provide a platform for leadership development and enable staff from schools and departments to interact. Appointed Link Governors to each Network, join a briefing after each meeting to disseminate insight to Local Governance Committees. They are regularly reviewed and updated to remain relevant.
- **Process:** A series of actions which are carried out in order to achieve a particular result, they are usually repetitive in a nature and of themselves do not have a defined end point.
- **Project:** A project is a set of tasks that must be completed within a defined timeline to accomplish a specific set of goals.
- **School:** When a school converts to join a multi-academy trust they become known as an Academy. WPAT has chosen to continue to use the term school.
- **Systems Leader** – A change enabler who works beyond their own school to build up the capabilities and capacity of another school/s. They collaborate with others to identify and address systemic challenges, share best practices, and ultimately enhance the learning experiences and outcomes for all students. This involves a shift from focusing solely on their own context to influencing and contributing to the wider educational landscape.
- **Teams:** Staff and/or volunteers who are gathered, where appropriate and effective, into teams either by role, location or task. Our definition of a team is: *A small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.*[6]

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[5] Adapted from Bernard Marr's definition of KPIs.
[6] Katzenbach & Smith 1993, The Wisdom of Teams