



'Aspiration. Innovation. Excellence.'

School Improvement Strategy for Symphony Schools



 @Symphony_LT

Registered Office – Glen Hills Primary School, Featherby Drive, Glen Parva, Leicester. LE2 9NY.

Tel: 0116 2782535 Email – admin@symphonylearningtrust.co.uk

Symphony Learning Trust registered company number - 07941899

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School Improvement Strategy

1. Overview

Symphony Learning Trust is a Multi-Academy Trust that places outstanding learning and teaching at the heart of all its activities. Our founding ethos is that all schools in the Trust are committed to continuing to raise standards and to inspire young minds. In an ever-changing world, Symphony Learning Trust schools are committed to provide balanced, inspirational and exciting learning experiences for our pupils, with our values of aspiration, effort, tolerance and integrity underpinning this drive. The school improvement strategy of Symphony Learning Trust aims to create a self-sustaining school led system where we develop our collective expertise to enable continual school improvement, through collaboration, support and challenge.

The School Improvement Strategy identifies how we will work with individual schools and the collective group of schools within the Trust. It aims to provide clarity around the expectations, values, roles and responsibilities and ways of working, which we adopt, in the pursuit of enabling all children to achieve their maximum potential.

At the heart of our school improvement strategy is a commitment to working in partnership with all our schools, and in supporting all schools in being self-improving, committed to achieving a school-led system in order to promote and secure:

- At least good levels of achievement for all children with many children achieving outstanding outcomes
- High quality teaching
- Effective leadership and governance in all schools
- Safe schools with fair access
- Affordability and value for money.
- Access to high quality professional development for staff enabling sustained and continual improvement and developing a workforce in line with future succession planning needs and talent management policies
- Opportunities for the identification and dissemination of effective practice and engagement in research and development opportunities including teacher inquiry

2. General Principles

We believe that strong collaboration with shared accountability can lead to better progress and attainment for pupils, and help all of the schools in our Trust meet rising expectations and to improve:

- Outcomes for children
- Opportunities for economies of scale
- The robust nature of our accountability towards and for one another
- All schools’ capacity to dictate their own direction and work within their local communities, offering bespoke services which meet the needs of their specific communities

This helps us to continue to build upon the work of Symphony in which;

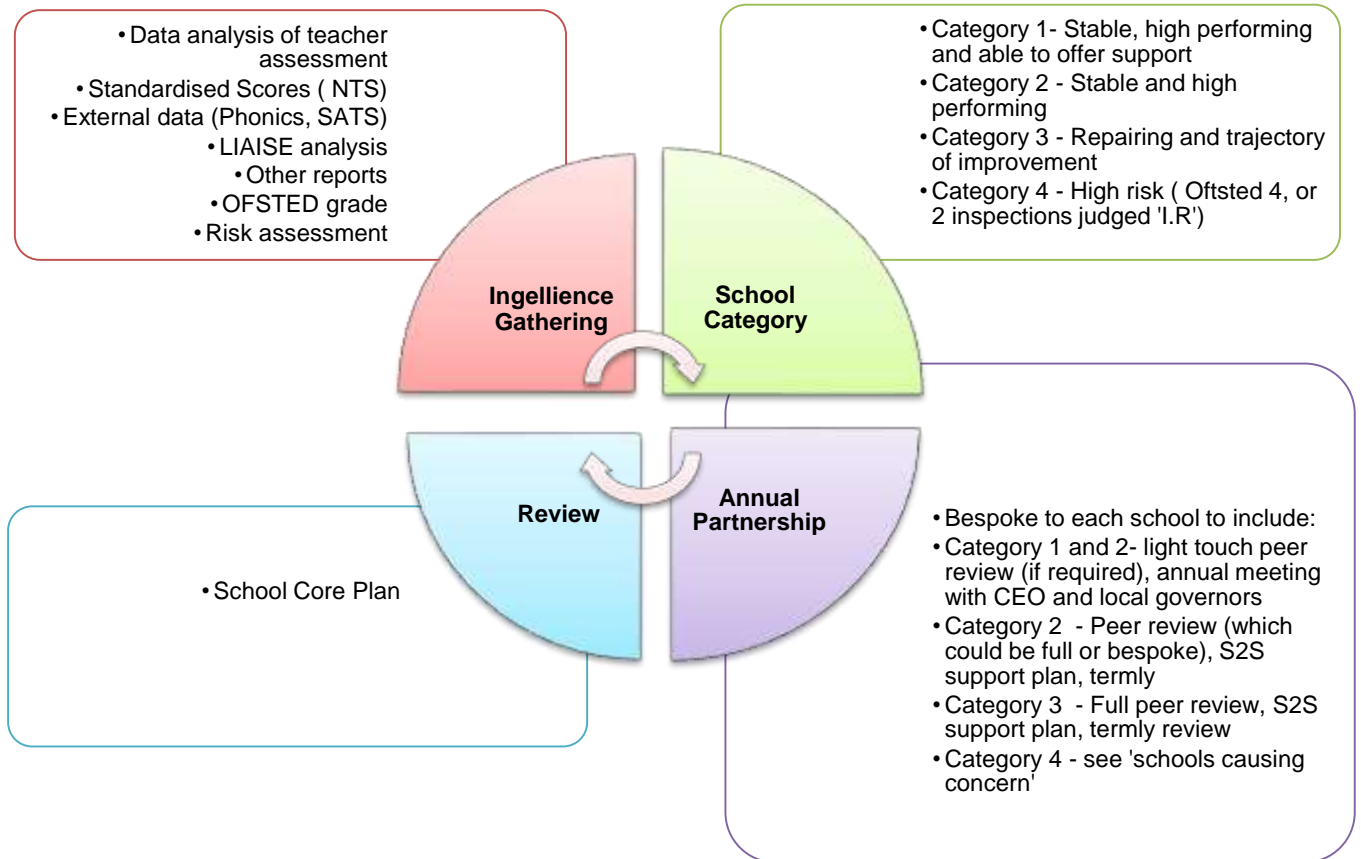
- Our school leaders and teachers share thinking and planning to spread expertise and tackle challenges together
- Our Local Governors come together to share strategic thinking, to combine skills and to support each other during challenging times

When carrying out its school improvement role, the Educational Development Group of Symphony Learning Trust will:

- Hold in regard the schools’ autonomy though valuing their self-evaluation and other evaluations
- Promote a school led system as the principal driver for constructing sustainable school improvement, for sharing good practice and being held to account
- Further the equality of opportunity across the Trust as a whole through aiming to eliminate discrimination through fostered good relationships

- Intervene at the earliest opportunity and commission bespoke support to prevent schools becoming a cause for concern
- Encourage a genuine sense of shared responsibility with children, parents and other stakeholder in relation to behaviour for learning and attendance
- Take into account the myriad of factors that impact on pupil progress and attainment across all phases

3. Symphony Learning Trust School Improvement Strategy Overview – Annual Cycle



4. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Head teachers, Head teachers and Local Governing Bodies

Executive Head/ Head teachers are responsible for providing high quality leadership for their school and for working in line with the national standards for Head teachers.

Each school also has a Local Governing Body (LGB) who have delegated responsibilities in relation monitoring, holding the school to account regarding the standards and ongoing school improvement (delegated responsibilities are identified in the individual school's Scheme of Delegation).

Symphony Learning Trust

SLT has overall responsibility for:

- Overseeing and ensuring all schools in the Trust are providing the best possible education for children within their schools.
- Supporting and challenging school leaders and Local Governing Bodies in relation to their delegated roles and responsibilities.
- In order to achieve this SLT needs to know its schools well, including individual strengths and priorities for development and in response
- Promote effective partnership and collaboration, to identify, share and develop outstanding practice
- Support schools in their provision for vulnerable learners with the school setting and beyond to provide support and challenge, for individual schools, proportionate to the assessment of need.

In response to this SLT will play a key role in:

- Carrying out regular review of data for all trust schools and ensuring swift action in relation to any areas of concern
- Overseeing the outcomes of recent Ofsted Inspections or interim assessments
- Working with individual schools to identify/ agree risks or priorities for development and monitoring the impact of the action taken
- Identifying and agreeing relevant support and intervention for individual schools requiring 'school-to-school support' and ensuring appropriate support and challenge in order to bring about rapid improvement
- Working with individual schools with short term challenges or in areas which put them at risk of 'slipping a category'
- Agreeing and providing CPD and leadership development opportunities in line with national priorities or the collective priorities of SLT schools.
- Utilising the Teaching Development Group (TDG) which comprises of Maths, Literacy, Phonics, EYFS, PP, Science and SEN centralised support lead practitioners and SLEs.

In order to meet these commitments to all of the schools, the Education Development Group within SLT includes:

The CEO, supported by the Director of Primaries;

The CEO has overall responsibility for the following aspects. These are supported by the Director of Primaries;:

- for ensuring all schools in SLT improve year-on-year and that the overall targets for the Trust and individual Trust schools are achieved.
- for the Performance Management of Executive Head/Head teachers
- for ensuring that the Trust has high quality leaders who are responsible for driving school improvement for individual schools and for the trust as a whole.

Education Development Group (CEO/ Executive Head Teachers, Head Teachers)

As the Trust grows in size the distinct roles of quality assurance and school improvement will become increasingly separate. However, at this stage, the Education Development Group will combine both sets of responsibilities into their role. In order for the Education Development Group to fulfil their responsibilities in these areas, collectively, they will have the following functions;

- Developing, implementing and driving the **School Improvement** Strategy for individual schools in the Trust, in line with individual needs.
- **Quality assuring** and monitoring the impact of school improvement in relation to all schools, including those receiving support from system leaders, and ensuring the on-going cycle of school improvement is effective.
- Targeted support in individual schools, based on priorities identified by the Education Development Group. This includes intensive support for our most vulnerable schools.
- Oversee and broker support through designated SLEs from Symphony Teaching School and Support Focus Team members into identified schools
- A range of CPD, delivered through the teaching school. This ensures that we are delivering a professional continuum for all staff, responsive to the needs and priorities of schools within the trust.
- Working with practitioners to develop resources based on shared priorities. Therefore, creating resources that benefit all schools across the trust.
- Developing a consistent vision for their area of responsibility.
- Identifying and disseminating good practice from across the Trust.
- Disseminating national practice, research and policy updates to schools and leaders across the trust.

Trustees

Trustees are responsible for:

- Holding the Trust to account in relation to its wider responsibilities, and in particular in relation to school and Trust compliance in relation to statutory and legislative requirements.
- Ensuring standards in Trust schools are raised.
- Overall decision making in relation to Symphony Learning Trust in the context that specific responsibilities being delegated to Local Governing Bodies (LGB) in line with their individual Scheme of Delegation.
- Holding the various Trust officers to account for ensuring all SLT schools improve to become good or better schools, with many achieving outstanding, in order to ensure that the very best is achieved for all children.

External Partners

The Schools' Commissioner and Regional Schools' Director (RSD) work with school leaders to promote and monitor academies and they are part of the DFE.

The Regional Schools' Commissioner is responsible for schools in their local area and have responsibility for:

- Approving new academies
- Intervening in underperforming academies
- Acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education

The RSD is supported by a board of 6 – 8 experienced academy head teachers and other sector leaders. The CEO is the main link with the RSD on behalf of Symphony Learning Trust

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is responsible for funding arrangements in relation to learners from 3 – 19 and for academies. It is also responsible for monitoring academies and therefore is the named contact for the Local Authorities in relation to specific areas such as safeguarding concerns.

The Local Authority role, in relation to school improvement, is mainly related to maintained schools however the Local Authority can discuss concerns it has about particular schools with the RSD, or it may also choose to discuss these concerns with the Trust.

In addition to this Local Authorities maintain a central responsibility for SEN and Safeguarding in relation to all schools in the Local Authority Area.

5. Symphony Learning Trust School Improvement Procedures

In line with its responsibilities, as identified above, the Trust is accountable for ensuring that all trust schools fully understand the procedures that will be followed by the Trust in order to bring about continual school improvement, either through the individual school's own ability to self-improve or through relevant support and intervention.

In response to this, the procedures followed by SLT are outlined below

School Improvement Core Offer

All schools in the SLT will receive a basic school improvement 'core offer' of :-

- A bespoke annual peer review consisting of a bespoke light touch or full review, dependent upon category.
- Termly bench marking against other Symphony schools as well as national expectations
- Membership of a full range of Subject Development Groups (English, mathematics, computing etc) which also includes school improvement groups (EYFS, SEND, Pupil Premium and year 6)
- Ongoing school improvement initiatives, as organised by the Education Development Group.

Additional support delivered by the Support Focus Team and SLEs from Symphony Teaching School will be brokered in response to risks identified funded by the school.

Further capacity through system leaders, will be brokered and funded by the school itself in line with priorities identified.

Other Challenge and support for all schools:-

- Data discussion and support
- SIP/SEF review
- Risk assessment review
- Peer review of the quality of teaching
- Staff and well- being
- Local governor support and training
- Attendance management
- Complaints and appeals
- Staff HR issues
- Exclusions
- Performance Management

'Peer reviews will focus on the following, dependent on Category of School, specific needs etc.

- Quality of teaching and impact it has upon progress through observations
- Progress through scrutiny of children's books
- Behaviour and children's well being
- Attainment and progress in regards to
 - Entry
 - EYFS
 - Year 1 Phonics screening
 - Key Stage 1
 - Key Stage 2
- Particular focus on the vulnerable groups of
 - FSM/ Pupil Premium
 - SEND
- Exclusions
- Attendance
- Governance
- Use and impact of Pupil Premium and Sports' Grants

Symphony Learning Trust Categorisation of Schools and identified risk

Through quality assurance activity, including both due diligence and partnership reviews schools risk will be categorised by the Trust. Either at the point of due diligence or the start of each academic year, all schools will be assessed informed by practice observed, previous Ofsted judgement and assessment of data. This initial judgement will inform the capacity required to support the school and the subsequent School Improvement Plan

On a termly cycle, each school's category will be re-assessed based on current quality assurance information. For category 4 schools, this will be carried out every half term. This assessment will be completed at a risk meeting of the Executive Group. This re-assessment will ensure that current provision put in place is continuously assessed, capacity is responsive to need and flexible throughout the year.

Judgement Categorisation

Directly related to the school's leadership capacity to ensure progress.



Symphony Category	Ofsted	Historic performance in relation to national benchmarks	QA Trust Visits and other intelligence	Partnership Review	Other external reports or other issues related to staffing, finance or premises
1	1 or 2	Positive	No issues	No issues	No issues
2	1 or 2	Positive	Minor issues	Minor issues	Minor issues
3	2 or 3	Variable or declining	Some issues	Some issues	Some issues
4	3 or 4	Declining	Significant issues	Significant issues	Significant issues

Core Plan

The CP is the mechanism through which the findings from; the Partnership Review, the Peer Review, outcomes from an Ofsted inspection, ongoing monitoring of school performance are developed into timely actions for improvement. The CP enables the Trust to identify and deploy appropriate resources to complete the actions and support improvement of the school.

Data Collection and analysis:

Throughout the year, there is an expectation that schools will submit a range of information and complete subsequent analysis in line with agreed data collection points. This will include data for attendance and the percentage of children on track to achieve or exceed ARE (Age Related Expectations) for a range of groups. All schools will undertake standardised tests in given year groups (PIRA/PUMA). All the information and analysis collected is a key component for the ongoing agendas to frame discussions and monitoring activities during school visits. In the autumn term, the Trust will also collect information relating the KPIs

6. Schools Causing Concern – SLT Procedures

Where a school is identified as 'causing a concern' either as a result of the category the school is placed in by Ofsted or as a result of concerns being identified/raised by the Trust, then the school and governors are required to take the relevant action in order to ensure that they work in partnership with the Trust to address the concerns, and that an appropriate level of progress is made.

If, however it is felt that the required level of progress is not being made or there is a serious concern in relation to the way the school is managed or governed which is likely to prejudice standards or performance then relevant action/ intervention will be taken by the CEO/ Chair of the Trust Board.

Although SLT hopes that this action will not be necessary it has a responsibility to ensure all head teachers and governors understand the steps which will be followed by the Trust should there be concerns which they feel are not being addressed.

The following procedures are identified in relation to schools not attaining the required accelerated progress.

Schools Causing Concern - Individual School Action Plan

If relevant, the Trust identifies/ agrees an appropriate head teacher for the school.

The availability of the Symphony Core Offer for such schools ensures curriculum, leadership and governance support



Due Diligence Procedures to understand priority development needs of the school



Individual School Action Plan – which is developed, implemented and monitored

Level One of SCC plan	
Head teacher/Governors/ School Leaders respond well to the plan and monitoring identifies improvements in line with expectations	There are concerns about the implementation of the plan and monitoring identifies insufficient progress. The causes of this are identified and discussed with the head teacher and the urgent need for these to be addressed. The Individual School Action Plan is amended to reflect any additional support required. Move to level 2
Level Two of SCC plan	
Head teacher/Governors/ School Leaders respond well to the plan and monitoring identifies improvements in line with expectations	The concerns identified earlier remain and this is discussed with the head teacher. Concerns shared with the Chair of Governors/ Governing Body. The Individual School Action Plan) is amended to reflect that additional support required. Move to level 3
Level Three of SCC plan	
Head teacher/Governors/ School Leaders respond well to the plan and monitoring identifies improvements in line with expectations	The concerns remain. The Trust clearly communicates with the LGB the issues, identifying the actions that will be taken should the required improvements not be made. The Individual School Action Plan is amended to reflect any additional support required, including any action at head or Governor level. Implications may be possible in HT Performance Management. Move to level 4
Level 4 of SCC plan	
Head teacher/Governors/ School Leaders respond well to the plan and monitoring identifies improvements in line with expectations	The concerns remain. Relevant action is taken which may include changes in leadership or at Governor level and possible involvement of the RSC.

7. Communication / Reporting

The following information identifies the opportunities available to communicate with relevant groups.

Education Development Group

Chaired by the CEO with Executive Heads / Headteachers

- Communicate the growth and development of the trust.

- Deliver the trust improvement plan.
- Identify and develop collective priorities, including growth plans
- Report on overall trust performance
- Provides policy and research updates.

Business Development Group

Chaired by the CFO with Business Team attending

- Finance updates
- GDPR requirements
- Policy updates
- Funding via bids
- Procurement of business
- Shared savings
- Identified risks

Research Development Group

- Membership to be determined for current/future Trust projects – coordinated by CEO, DoP and EDG

Subject Development Groups (every term or twice a year)

- All subject leaders in schools.

Annual Conference for school leaders and trustees

- to revisit and review the vision and ethos of Symphony Learning Trust
- share strengths and areas for development in relation to individual schools and the Trust
- agree the Trust priorities for future development

CoG Liaison Meetings

- Chaired by an allocated trustee and attended by a nominated governor from each school within the Trust.
- CEO also in attendance
- Report on trust performance
- Report on and challenge trust school improvement support for each school.
- Share best practice
- Support LGB development
- Address collective priorities
- Provides policy and research updates.

Board of Trustees

To consider and challenge the key information and KPIs in relation to development and progress of the schools in SLT and Trust as a whole. To consider and challenge the performance of the whole Trust and SLT schools.

Finance and Audit Committee (subcommittee of the Board of Trustees).

To consider and challenge the finances of the Trust and ensure the best possible value of the use of all funds in the Trust. To monitor the current budget and the three-year budget plan.

8. Monitoring of the impact of the Trust's School Improvement Strategy

The effectiveness of this strategy will be monitored through:

- Progress in relation to targets – individual school targets and SLT targets
- Progress of individual schools in relation to SLT Categorisation and Ofsted Outcomes
- Individual School Self-Evaluations
- SLT KPIs
- Evaluation of the impact of the Individual School Action Plan
- Peer reviews



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