

TRUST DEVELOPMENT PLAN 25/26

STRONG POLICIES, STRONG LEADERS, STRONG SERVICES



THINKING SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST



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Transforming Life Chances



OUR VISION AT THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST

Every young person in our community deserves to have the best opportunities at life regardless of their individual circumstances.

Education is the key to accessing these opportunities and we support and develop every member of our community to:

- **Think about their Thinking**
- **Be their Best Self**
- **Shape their Success**

In this way Thinking Schools Academy Trust Transforms Life Chances.

OUR VALUES

Child First

To provide a stimulating learning environment for all where learners feel safe to explore knowledge and understanding.

Aspire

To be the best they can be. We believe that all staff and pupils can aspire for personal and professional prowess and become empowered through the 'Thinking' philosophy.

Challenge

To actively shape the minds, attitudes and habits of young people through a framework of cognitive education that enables them to become the master of their own destiny.

Achieve

For all stakeholders to demonstrate the highest levels of thinking and habits. We want our pupils to be questioning in nature, achieving the highest levels of independent and interdependent prowess.





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REFLECTIONS FROM STUART GARDNER

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/2025

This time last year, I found myself reflecting on how a new government might shape the future of education for us all. A year on, I think it's fair to say, "the more things change, the more they stay the same" (Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr, 1849).

Yes, one-word Ofsted judgements are gone, yet the accountability system still treats schools as if they remain. Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) has been replaced by Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) teams, same mission, different badge. We hear regular commitments to supporting teacher and school leader wellbeing, but the delayed response to the Ofsted consultation leaves schools with just half a term to prepare for a new inspection scorecard. And while there is a clear push to improve attendance, outcomes and inclusivity, real-terms funding is unlikely to grow at all during this parliament. So, I think it's safe to say we've yet to see a true shift in our national leaders' commitment to, or vision for, education.

Therefore, it is up to us as school and Trust leaders to have a clear vision for the future of education in our schools and ensure we deliver on our ambition to transform the life chances of the young people in our community. This is exactly what we have done this year as we have driven our strong policies, strong leaders, and strong services agenda.

For the first time, we have a codified series of policies within our MADE framework that define our Trust expectations and core provisions in all our schools. To support this, we are developing toolkits to assist schools that are not meeting our expectations. This groundbreaking development could potentially become a blueprint for other federated trusts that lack a centrally driven approach to education delivery.

During the course of this year, Mandy's Leadership Principles have been so well received that she has had to conduct a roadshow across the trust to present to multiple audiences on the key themes of: Start with Why; Owning it; High Challenge; High Support; Collaborate; Communicate Well; and Advocacy. These have now been codified in our Trust Leadership Guided Pathways that will be shared with all leaders next year.

The Thinking Solutions for Education team has delivered some major projects this year. The opening of Maritime Academy was a huge undertaking, with staff working day and night to ensure the school was ready to welcome children on the first day of term. We now have an HR portal that is fit for purpose, and by September, almost all our schools will have transitioned to the Arbor MIS. The scale of moving the HR details of over 2,500 staff and the education records of over 16,500 students cannot be underestimated.

It's also important to acknowledge the financial challenges faced across the sector and within the Trust this year. I am incredibly proud of how the entire organisation has navigated a tough year, one in which we've had to make difficult decisions to keep the Trust financially sustainable while remaining focused on delivering the best possible education for our young people.

What's particularly impressive is that we've done all of this while still delivering on the "day job", ensuring our young people are supported to achieve their personal best. During Term 6, I've had the pleasure of visiting most of our schools and seeing first-hand the incredible work happening every day. It's clear that, in practice, we live up to our name; The THINKING Schools Academy Trust. Our young people are nurtured and challenged to develop their understanding and application of metacognition, becoming consciously competent thinkers equipped with the skills and knowledge to shape their own success.

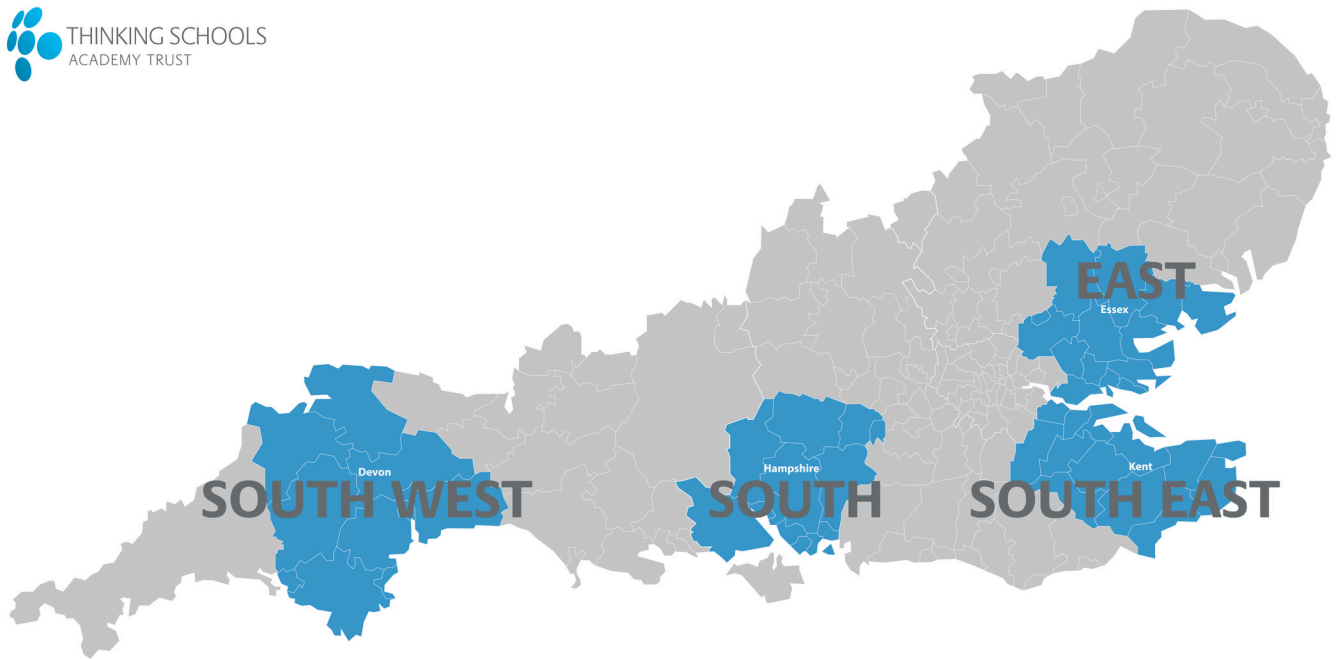
As I look ahead to the coming year, I do so with real hope and optimism. Our ambition for schools has never been clearer, and our structures to support improvement have never been more aligned. We're building a leadership culture that will have a lasting, positive impact across the organisation. Our journey towards Investors in People accreditation continues, strengthening how we support and value our colleagues. And Thinking Solutions for Education is preparing to launch its commercialisation project — a bold step that will see us offering services to the wider sector, generating additional financial support for our Trust schools.

This is a truly exciting time for our organisation, and I look forward to reflecting on our shared successes in this space next year.

OUR FOCUS

ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/2026

Our Trust now has 26 schools, supporting over 16,500 pupils across three regions. We are fortunate to have a wide range of schools in our Trust, including all phases of education from Nursery to our Sixth Form provision, this is a huge asset to our organisation as we grow our networks across all regions.



SOUTH WEST



SOUTH



SOUTH EAST



EAST





**26
ACADEMIES**

**16,500
STUDENTS**

**2,500
STAFF**



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OUR FOCUS

ACADEMIC YEAR 2024/2025

2025/26 is year two of our plan to evolve the Trust operating mode to create a more sustainable, connected approach that enables our schools to thrive collectively.

Creating strong, effective schools, united by a common belief in **Transforming the Life Chances** of children through the application of a metacognitive approach to education.

Develop a Trust culture built on the foundation of:

Strong Policies

Strong Leaders

Strong Services

We will be building on the foundations of 2024/25:

- Embedding the first wave of Strong Policies and creating the second wave for launch in 2026/27.
- Building on the launch of the Strong Leader framework for School and Trust leaders so that all leaders in the organisation can benefit from this approach.
- Embedding the new Thinking Solutions for Education structures to deliver cost-effective high-quality services both to Thinking Schools Academy Trust and external clients.

Our ambition remains the same: to build strong, effective schools, united by a shared belief in transforming children's life chances through a metacognitive approach to education. Central to this is a Trust-wide culture rooted in strong leadership, clear purpose, and collaborative support - designed to empower staff and deliver the best outcomes for every child.

This development plan sets out key priorities and activities that will guide our work over the year.



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STRONG POLICIES

2024-2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

- In consultation we created Strong Policies for Thinking Teaching and Learning; Reading; SEND; Attendance and Primary / Secondary Outcomes.
- Ofsted:
 - Maritime Academy achieved Good at their first inspections.
 - Goodwin Academy achieved Good, improving from Requires Improvement.
 - 21/26 Schools are now judged as Good or better by Ofsted.
 - 100% of schools who have had 2+ Ofsted inspections with the Trust are Good or better.
- Three schools gained accreditation this year: BRI (L1), PHSG (L1), and PLM (L1).
- Four schools were re-accredited this year: Cedar (L2), MJR (L2), NHCA (L2), and GCA (L2).
- A total of 17 out of 26 schools are now accredited.
 - The other accredited Thinking Schools are: FUZ, HGS, MAR, MIS, MWI, NHP, PEN (x2), RGS, and TVA.
 - There are 9 schools accredited at Level 1 and 9 schools at Level 2.
- We have seen continued improvements in our Trust Phonics Results.
- We continue to perform above National for the Year 4 Multiplication Check.
- We expect KS2 performance to be around National.
- We expect KS4 performance to be similar to last year.
- We expect KS5 to demonstrate improved value added in our schools this year.
- We have reduced Trust Persistent Absence by 5% and improved overall Trust attendance to 90.8%

2025-2026 PRIORITIES

1A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To implement and embed Wave I of the MADE framework, we will deliver the ongoing development of toolkits for TTL, Reading, SEND, Attendance, and Primary and Secondary Outcomes.
1B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To consult and create Wave 2 of the MADE framework, we will focus on Behaviour, Curriculum, and Writing and Oracy.
1C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To create, consult, and launch the new Pay and Professional Growth policy, we will ensure good principles of accountability at all levels.

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS

Mandy Gage, Deputy CEO of Education, led the Regional Director Team and Education Strategy Team in 2024/25 to collaboratively create the first wave of strong policies within the MADE framework. These policies will be implemented at the school level with the support and guidance of Regional Directors in 2025/26. The Wave 2 policies will be led by individual members of the Educational Executive Team and co-constructed with school leaders, ready for implementation in 2026/27. Janina Villalta, Director of People, will be working in consultation with Trust and school leaders to develop a new Pay and Professional Growth policy.

OUR FUTURE AMBITIONS

- To have embedded meeting and peer support networks across all levels of our organisation, including school leaders, senior leaders, middle leaders, subject leaders and support staff leaders. In this way all our staff have access to best practice and support to ensure the best possible provision in all our schools.
- To have policies that define Trust expectations of performance, outline the core ways of working all schools will engage with and the enhanced toolkit that schools can use as a safety net, supported by the Trust when they are not performing as expected.



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STRONG LEADERS

2024-2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

- We launched our Leadership Principles with Trust and School Leaders.
- We have developed Guided Pathways through the Leadership Principles to support the cascade of these principles throughout the Trust in 2025/26.
- Thinking Solutions for Education supported 15 middle leaders through management training.
- We won the Trust Employer of the Year Award at the National MAT Awards.
- We launched our Trust leadership book club, which is well attended every term and provides the opportunity to reflect on our own leadership and gather great ideas to develop as leaders.

2025-2026 PRIORITIES

2A	To ensure metacognition is deeply embedded as our “why,” we will streamline our Trust wording and refine our communications strategy to develop a shared understanding of the Trust dividend, further promoting advocacy and belonging.
2B	To launch the TSAT Leadership Principles Toolkit and monitor the impact of these across our Trust
2C	To develop a Trust coaching principles framework
2D	To prepare leaders and the Trust for inspection under the new Ofsted framework, through resources and training

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS

To achieve a common Trust language and understanding of our Why, What, and How, we will review our current language and, through consultation, agree on a common approach to Trust language and branding for launch in 2026/27. We will work closely with all leaders to deepen our culture of metacognition, allowing for its deliberate application throughout the organization. The Leadership Principles Toolkit will be available to leaders across the organization and will contribute to staff “Development of Self” in their professional growth targets. We will collaborate with existing inspectors to fully understand the implications of the new framework and support school leaders in applying this understanding in preparation for inspection.

OUR FUTURE AMBITIONS

- To establish a consistent language and branding for our Trust that is used across the organisation and captures our unique metacognitive approach.
- To support our staff in becoming the best leaders and their best selves through a culture of coaching and development.
- To ensure all our schools are self-improving and are either already Good or better, or are moving towards this standard in a sustainable and timely manner.



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STRONG SERVICES

2024-2025 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Launched the Commercial Vision to TSfE leaders, where the Commercial Team outlined their strategic direction and implementation plan to middle leaders across the trust.
- Thinking Technology successfully migrated all schools to a new Management Information System (MIS), enhancing efficiency and enabling more automated, streamlined data management.
- Thinking Personnel replaced legacy payroll systems with a modern, reliable solution, providing over 2,500 staff members with a trusted platform for accurate and timely payroll processing.

2025-2026 PRIORITIES

3A	To embed principles of operational excellence and review the services to ensure they are delivering value for money for all stakeholders and develop a new TSfE way of working
3B	To implement the commercialisation strategy of the TSfE services to achieve in excess of £1 million of gross income to provide benefit to both TSAT schools and external clients
3C	To deliver on the commitments within the People Strategy with a focus on reward, retention & recognition and how we as an employer we are ensuring we meet ED&I commitments
3D	To launch the TSAT sustainability strategy informed by pupil and staff voice and develop key milestones towards meeting our ethical and legal duties and providing a positive impact on society
3E	To deliver the Digital Learning and Technology Strategy Year 2 – Embedding effective use of new MIS and develop a plan for effective use of AI across the whole Trust
3F	To use performance data of TSfE services and benchmarking data to inform the future financial sustainability of the Trust

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS

This year, our services will continue to grow from strength to strength, driven by our newly aligned operational directorates: Commercial, Finance, People, and Operations. These teams have been structured to provide targeted support and focus, ensuring that we deliver with clarity and impact. As the year progresses, each directorate will share key updates on their strategic priorities, bringing forward their service experts to lead the way in shaping practical and trusted solutions that support schools and the wider sector.

OUR FUTURE AMBITIONS

- We plan to fully embed the OpEx (Operational Excellence) model into our service delivery to ensure high-quality support for our schools and stakeholders, while exemplifying the highest professional standards.
- We aim to develop a robust working framework, supported by our digital strategy, that incorporates AI, EdTech, and positions the trust at the forefront of innovation in these areas.
- We will work closely with the Student Council to establish firm and actionable plans to advance our sustainability goals.

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