UNITY
Community Academy Partnership

"Our mission has been to develop a staff team who are highly skilled, compassionate, collegiate, collaborative and who put children first."

SImon Watkins, Unity leadership team

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An introduction to our CommUnity Academy Partnership

Working with each other to enable all members of our communities to flourish and grow in safe, nurturing, inspiring and supportive environments where challenge is embraced.

A partnership of academy trusts driven by a shared vision of, and passion for, genuine...

...Care
Collaboration
Cohesion
Co-operation
Culture
Challenge
Coaching
Community
Curriculum

Who are we?

Ludlow Junior Academy is a thriving locality focused school looking to extend its partnership working to continually improve outcomes for families and to provide excellent development opportunities for staff in order to secure high achievement for all.

We are a strong, 5 form entry well established SAT looking to identify partners who would like to join with us to develop a coherent, high performing and locality focused MAT where schools share a commitment to raise standards, support families, promote wellbeing, retain their individual identities and be committed to continual improvement.

Why a MAT and why now?

Government White Paper calls for a fairer and stronger school system

Context & ambition

- All children will benefit from being taught in a strong MAT, or their school will have plans to join/ form one
- All schools will provide a high quality and inclusive education within the resilient structure of a strong trust
- The best trusts will work where they are needed most, levelling up standards and transforming under performing schools
- Every part of the system will be held accountable to a set of clear roles and responsibilities

Key policies

- **A fully trust-led system with a single regulatory approach**, through growth of strong trusts and establishment of new ones including trusts establishes by LAs
- **By 2030 all pupils will be taught in a strong MAT** or their school has plans to join/form one
- **Clear roles across the school system** with LAs empowered to champion children's interests and a new collaborative standard requiring trusts to work with other partners
- Education Investment Areas (EIAs) to receive increased funding (extra in priority areas)
- Digital infrastructure investment to all schools can take advantage of modern tech

Our schools White Paper vision, ambitions and strategy to deliver

Vision

A school system that helps every child to fulfil their potential by ensuring that they receive the right support, in the right place at the right time - founded on world-class literacy and numeracy as the cornerstone of an excellent education

Ambitions by 2030

- Key stage 2: 90% of pupils meeting the expected standards in maths and reading at Key stage 2
- Key stage 4: National GCSE average grade in both English language and in maths increased from 4.5 in 2019 to 5

Our strategy

Teachers:

Ensure we have excellent teachers in all areas of the country.

By 2030 every child will be taught by an excellent teacher, trained in the best evidenced approaches.

Standards:

Support our teachers to deliver high standards for all pupils, with a focus on behaviours and attendance, and access to the best evidenced resources.

By 2030, every child will be taught a broad and ambitious curriculum in a school with high expectations.

Targeted support

Deploy targeted support for those who need it most, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantages children.

By 2030, every child who falls behind in English or maths will get the right support to get back on track.

System

Underpinning this is a stronger school system, including fair and adequate core funding and every school belonging to a strong trust with strong leadership and governance.

By 2030, all children will benefit from bsing taught in a family of schools, with their school in a strong multi-academy trust or with plans to join or form one

Working in Unity

An opportunity for our partnership schools to recruit, develop and celebrate excellent teachers and support staff who are focused on raising standards, providing highly personalised support and making a difference to our families every day.

Building on local relationships

We have continued to be a strong and consistent member of our local area and have maintained positive relationships with local schools and the LA. Our staff have worked beyond our school to support the development of skills, knowledge and understanding of colleagues in other schools in order to secure improvement capacity.

- We work in close partnership with our SIO
- We have provided a range of outreach support to schools
- We have staff who have been moderators for writing
- A number of staff were designated as lead practioners for PTSA
- We have supported self evaluation and observation in schools as part of peer to peer support
- We continue to develop even better links with our families and are developing new parent forums
- Our trustees are local and want to see children in Southampton and the nearest localities prospering and being inspired
- Our staff attend locality based training and our ECTs network with ECT colleagues in the city
- Strong partnerships with local universities and ITT providers to help develop new teachers and offer training placements and immersion days

"We want to create a strong network of partnership schools to pool talent, create professional networks and give the very best opportunities to staff".

Simon Watkins, Unity leadership team

How we will work

We will use an information rich, data driven approach to identify core needs, improvement priorities and focus area in order to work with partners to deliver and embed sustained improvement.

Our mainstay will always be quality first teaching and developing learning professionals and colleagues at all levels to develop strong, passionate, cohesive and effective teams.

Maintaining identity and locality focus

Unity is very clear that the individual identity and special characteristics of partnership schools should be embraced and celebrated. As a successful SAT we have been very attuned to our locality needs and identity and have worked hard to create positive links, partnerships and a curriculum which is best suited to our learners and their families.

We want our partnership schools to be as individual as we are in terms of identity, special characteristics and style. However, we want to unite our partner schools with a shared vision for support, challenge and inspiration at all levels.

We see ourselves as working alongside our partner schools to develop excellent staff in exciting classrooms with engaging content so that enthusiastic learners can fulfil their true potential.

We see our partnership model as a 'bridging opportunity' for schools to share talent, expertise, drive and capacity to maintain their own improvement aspirations.

We do not see each partner school becoming a mirror of another and we value diversity and individuality.

A community of partnership schools working as a collaborative team to support the very best outcomes for all.

However, we will want to drive school improvement, talent spotting, wider opportunities and the sharing of expertise so that every partnership school can benefit from the strengths of their partners.

We envisage a collegiate approach underlined with non negotiable expectations for strong outcomes.

We expect to see a strong sense of wellbeing, welcoming and safety in all of our schools and hope to develop the sense of 'family' which we know is so important in our school across our partnership of schools.

Our aim is to create a shared learning community which embraces the very best of every partnership school and then drives the identification and delivery of improvement priorities in order to ensure the very best provision for families.

We will be underpinned by a strong sense of moral purpose, hope, aspiration, safety, security and well-being for all

Governance

Unity is supported by a very strong and well balance trustee board. They have a wide range of expertise and professional backgrounds to support and challenge the work of the SAT and future MAT.
These include:

- Finance, business and audit leadership/management
- ICT – development, design, procurement, evaluation
- Charity works – including social housing and linked businesses
- Education – senior role in existing locality provision beyond Ludlow
- Health and safety and estates development
- Support, challenge and drive for senior leaders and the executive head
- Good partnerships with the local authority and the SIO

Senior leadership team

Simon Watkins Executive head teacher at Unity Ludlow.
CEO - 3rd headship role in the city.

35 years of teaching experience in primary and junior schools across Southampton and Hampshire progressing from NQT to year leader, subject/ aspect leader, deputy head and then head teacher.

Multiple successful Ofsted inspections and has worked with the LA, PTSA/ PPAT, NCSL and BSF on a range of projects. One of the longest serving heads in the city.

Gillie Hotston Deputy head at Unity Ludlow.

Began at Ludlow as an NQT and has progressed through most senior roles en route to deputy headship. Gillie is now the SENDco and oversees broad, effective and diverse provision for a rich variety of pupils. We are very proud of our inclusive achievements, innovative approaches – including our learning mentor programme and Sunshine provision as well as our full commitment to family and staff wellbeing.

Gillie has cultivated a strong locality network of contacts and professionals to support the best interests of our pupils, families and staff.

Emma Stevenson – Deputy head teacher at Unity Ludlow and lead for analysis of data, pupil progress meetings, professional development of staff in these areas and combining this with a strong but fair approach to attendance and punctuality. Emma has an extremely analytical and strategic approach to problem solving/resource planning and is a key player in ensuring that needs are met, impact and impetus are maintained and that staff are valued and celebrated.

Vanessa Chandler- Deputy head and lead teacher for professional development at Unity Ludlow, pathways planning and staff liaison. Vanessa is a lead moderator for the authority and brings a wealth of expertise to all areas of curriculum planning but with a particular passion and talent for the development of writing, the planning and teaching of writing and has a conspicuous strength in supporting/mentoring staff through the moderation of writing outcomes. She has forged excellent partnerships with other schools through this work

Debbie Rooke – School business manager at Unity Ludlow and the lead for all aspects of our business and financial planning. Debbie is exceedingly well experienced in all aspects of local authority and academy school finances and has built a strong network of supporting professionals beyond the school. Debbie leads and manages our finances, administrative team and business interests in order to secure our ongoing success as a stand alone academy business and to ensure that we have the targeted funds to support the ongoing development / improvement of teaching/learning and the school estate

Steering Group

Our steering group brings together a wealth of experience and strengths across a broad range of areas and has been validated by OfSTED, the LA, internal scrutiny, external audit and the ESFA.

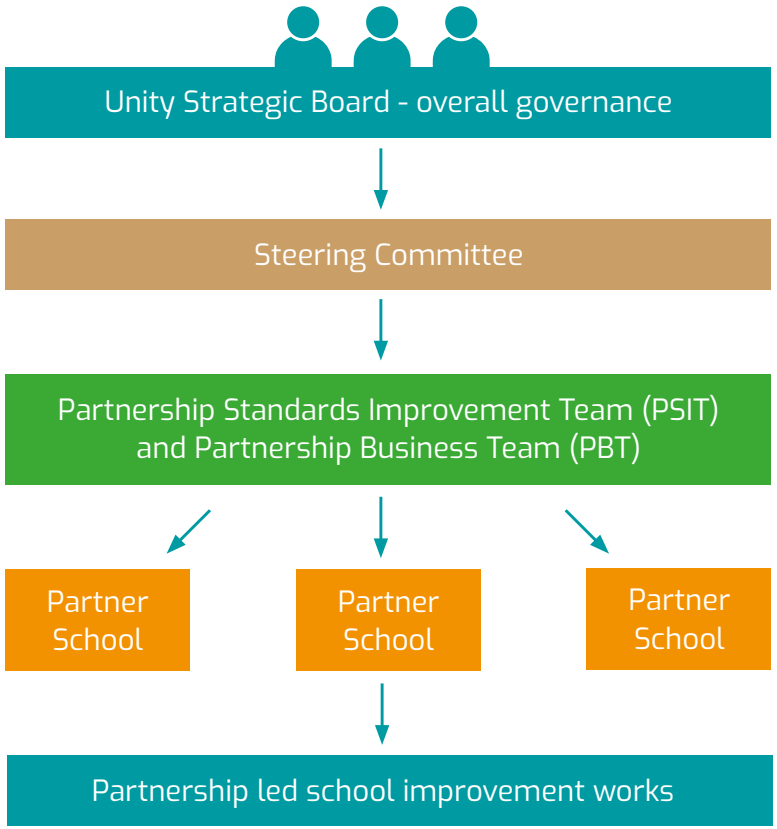
The Unity executive head teacher/CEO will be responsible for the overall success of the partnership schools – on an individual basis and as a collective.

The EHT/CEO will work closely with the steering group and sub groups to maximise the school improvement agenda and to identify ways to develop the unique strengths/talents evident in partnership schools.

The EHT/CEO will be responsible for developing and maintaining:

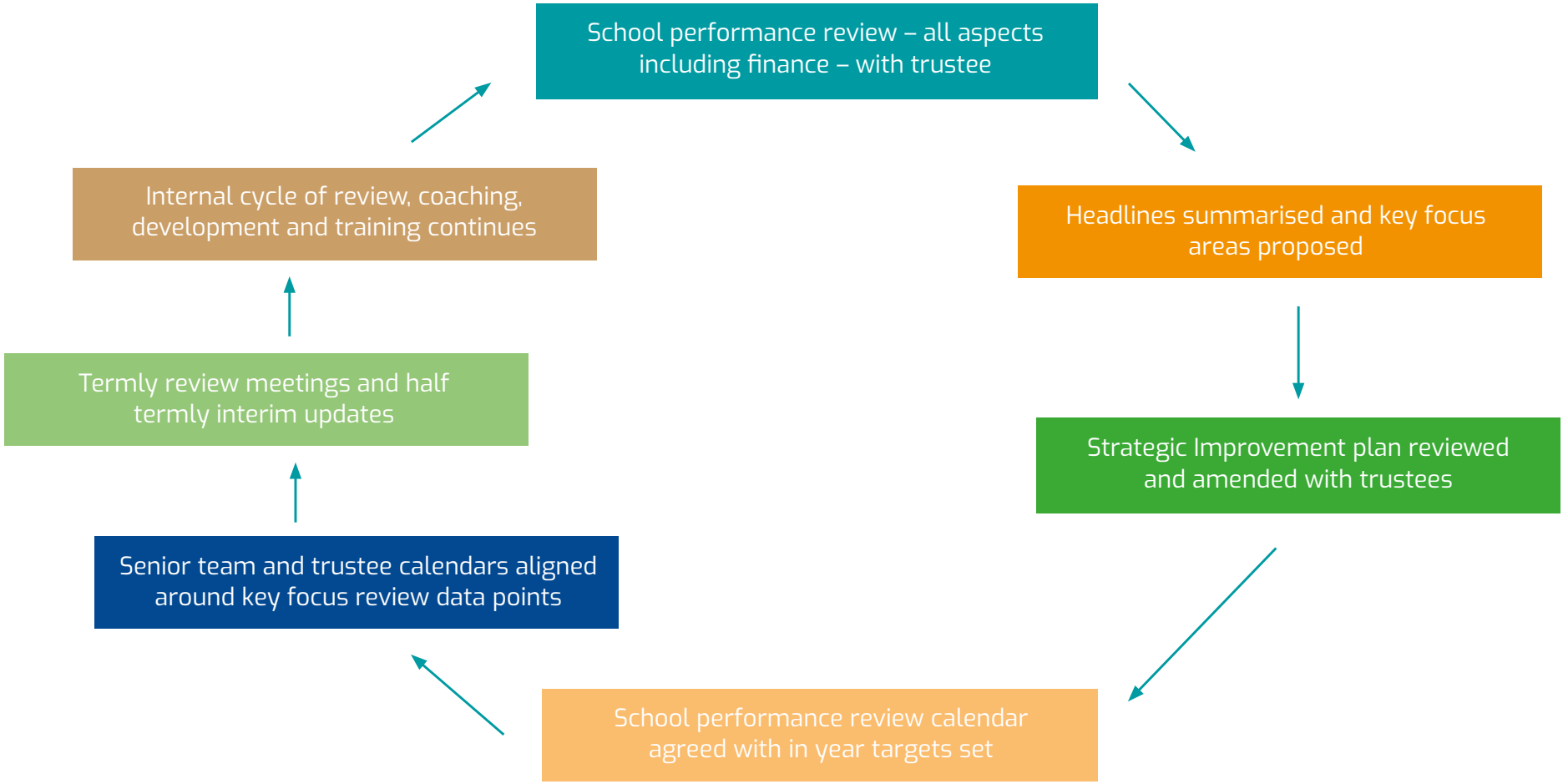
1. Strategic overview of deployment of Partnership Schools Improvement resources including senior leaders, coaches, lead practitioners and advisory/ support staff. Appropriate groups will be informed of deployment planning based on needs analysis and dialogue
2. The Steering Group will meet half termly and produce an effectiveness and outcomes report termly – based on the reports and analysis from across the partnership
3. The Leads of Subgroups will provide a termly update to the steering Group – with half termly interim updates being recorded
4. The Steering Group will be kept abreast of key deployments and outcomes for whole school work by relevant Subgroup Leads and will validate outcomes through support and challenge
5. The Steering Group will provide support and challenge for school improvement works and will offer further advice, guidance and development capacity as required
6. The Steering Group will be kept informed of the progress of the approved action plans through regular update and observations
7. The Steering Group will evaluate work within Schools via the monitoring of the Partnership Action Plan
8. The Steering Group will receive reports of final evaluations and review outcomes. These will inform next steps planning
9. Minutes will be taken at each Steering Group meeting and will focus on school improvement, deployment, impact and development of capacity
10. One week before each meeting the partnership headlines will be disseminated and individual school feedback provided via the steering group or subgroups
11. Subgroups must include steering group development priorities on their development agendas as appropriate

Structure



Professional developement forums, coaching, developing capacity, sharing experitse, growth mindset, standards driven, commitment to safeguarding and wellbeing, sustainable and purposeful improvement.

Improvement cycle - Unity



Contracts, unions and pay – working in Unity

Prior to conversion to academy status in 2012 many of our staff were concerned about news, reports and evidence that some academies were treating staff poorly or were intent on changing pay and conditions.

At Ludlow we did not academise to cut costs or weaken our staff rights. Quite the opposite.

On transfer we undertook a very clear 'no detriment' stance to being part of our staff team:

- Qualified teachers to teach and paid, as a minimum, in line with STPCD
- All support staff paid in line with Southampton/local pay scales and updated accordingly
- Recognition of any service/entitlements that we would have recognised as a local authority school
- No sweeping change of contracts and conditions
- No hidden agenda of gradual change
- Full recognition of professional associations and fostering positive working relationships with them

A strong and sustained commitment to staff wellbeing and CPD

Inspection feedback & validation

OFSTED have validated us as a good school since our conversion to academy status in 2012. We are very proud to have maintained 'Good' continuously, for over 10 years, and have celebrated many outstanding achievements in that time.

Our relationship with the local authority is equally positive and our SIO, Alison Philpott, has validated our continuously good provision, internal review processes, continuing professional development strategy and aspects of outstanding provision, including our support for ECTs and our learning mentor scheme.

OFTSED – March 2020 (a week before lockdown)

- Pupils enjoy coming to this school because they are happy and safe here. They like learning, because teachers make lessons interesting and challenging.
- Pupils show determination and stick to a task until it is finished, even when they meet unexpected difficulties. They want to do well and meet teachers' high expectations
- This is a friendly school where pupils are polite, kind and considerate
- Staff help them to find effective ways of regulating their behaviour.
- Leaders want pupils to be well prepared for life beyond junior school

- Staff provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school. Pupils apply for jobs, including as sports leaders, 'playground pals' and part of the 'site squad', helping to look after the school grounds. They receive training to do these jobs and take pride in their wor
- Senior leaders have high expectations for all pupils. The school's curriculum enables pupils to achieve well and to be ready for secondary school. This is equally true for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
- Teachers make sure that all pupils have access to the full curriculum, carefully adapting it for pupils with SEND.
- Curriculum leaders know the subject they manage well
- Leaders are determined that pupils will gain a knowledge of the local area and its history. For example, pupils learn about Southampton's role in manufacturing Spitfires in the Second World War and the bombing that that city suffered
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They teach confidently and accurately. Before starting on something new, teachers go over previous learning. If pupils have gaps in their learning, teachers usually spot them and address them. Teachers explain ideas clearly.
- Pupils really enjoy learning. They are engaged and interested in lessons. Pupils work well together, share ideas and listen carefully to one another. Pupils' interest and engagement mean they behave well. Staff manage the challenging behaviour of a few pupils effectively
- Leaders provide very well for pupils' wider personal development. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school. These include quiet activities for pupils who find playtimes difficult. Pupils enjoy sporting and musical clubs. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils have every opportunity to participate in these
- Senior leaders provide everyone who works at the school with up-to-date training. Staff are vigilant and always watch out for signs that a pupil may be at risk. They follow the school's policies and procedures carefully
- Senior leaders work extensively with external agencies to secure the well-being of pupils who are most at risk
- Pupils have a strong understanding of online safety. They appreciate that not everything they see online is true and that some people might not be who they claim to be. Pupils know to check with an adult if they find anything worrying or suspicious
- Staff leave no stone unturned in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND

Ludlow Inspection Report,
10-11 March 2022
Full report available via OfSTED

Take the next step...

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UNITY

Ludlow Junior School