



## School Improvement Offer



### Introduction

King's Group Academies intends to be a school improvement-led organisation, but what does this mean?

We recognise that the greatest resource available to us is the expertise of our staff; teachers, teaching assistants and back-office personnel and that, taken together, give us significant school improvement capacity. We also hold very clear expectations for performance of our schools based on national data not local prior attainment and which supports schools in setting and getting what appear to be highly aspirational targets. We aim to provide quality support for all our academies to become or maintain their outstanding status

We are also clear that our model is predicated on knowing pupils well, holding high expectations for their performance and being classroom focussed in all we do. These principles reflect the core vision and values of the MAT and drive all that we do:

Every King's Group Academy pupil will have:

Our confidence in their ability to achieve their potential, irrespective of their background or starting point;

Participation (with their parents/carers) - in shaping their education;

The opportunity to learn a language and interact with fellow King's Group pupils internationally;

A broad, challenging and engaging curriculum encouraging learning through discovery, especially through innovative use of technology; and,

Teachers and school staff who are passionate about their success.

To achieve this, we strive:

To build a positive partnership with parents/carers, expecting them to hold us to account while providing support and prompting our continuous improvement.

To foster strong local relationships with other schools, universities, colleges and employers to pave the way for our pupils to progress; and,

To create a learning environment for staff as well as pupils, where every member of the team is a stakeholder with opportunities for both professional and career development and national and international collaboration to learn and improve.

## Context

A broad literature exists to demonstrate that school-led school improvement reflects best what David Hopkins has called the 'third age of school improvement'. This is characterised by being school-led, and has a focus on reducing differences in performance across both school subjects and teachers within schools, as well as between separate schools. It was this work that underpinned the establishment of the broader academy movement and so should drive how we work as leaders of the MAT.

Headteachers have previously recognised a number of challenges in working within the MAT and these have informed the 2018-21 strategic planning cycle. Central to this is that all schools, regardless of their Ofsted status or otherwise, require a school improvement offer. Whilst our aim as a Trust is to see all our schools judged as outstanding by Ofsted, it would be wrong to think this is anyway reflects the end of a journey. We must have an offer for all schools in the MAT alongside an menu of further, targeted interventions based on the fundamental principle of continuous improvement for all.

Robert Hill, an education advisor to successive governments, has put forward a 10-point programme for school improvement, *School improvement in multi-academy trusts* (Jan. 25, 2016) and in the same article, identifies what are, in his opinion, five key aspects of successful school improvement programmes led centrally by MATs:

- They are **respectful** of the identity and character of individual academies and of a school's strengths, as well as understanding where it needs to make improvement;
- They are **resourceful** in that they do whatever it takes and mobilise the support needed to bring about improvement;
- They are **responsive** to the context of each academy and its particular needs and adapt their strategies as circumstances change;
- They are **relentless** in their pursuit of improvement and adopt a 'no excuses' approach – believing that every child can achieve; and,
- They are **resilient** in persevering with improvement despite challenges and setbacks.

Any MAT strategy should reflect Robert Hill's basic principles and ensure our programmes are based on the needs of individual schools and arise from individual school improvement plans. Our aim must be to build effective schools, regardless of any future role undertaken by Ofsted: **school improvement** reflects the planned and sustained interventions we must make to improve schools, ie to make them effective.

The literature around **school effectiveness** is very wide but there is an increasing consensus around what makes for an effective school. These characteristics include, in no particular order:

- A learning culture for pupils and staff alike
- Clear School aims and objectives
- Collaboration both within and across schools
- Effective teaching including providing opportunities to learn independently (metacognition) and time on task
- Frequent monitoring of student progress and using that information in individual planning
- Having a measured approach to improvement - doing few targeted interventions but doing them well.
- High expectations for success of both pupils and staff
- High quality leadership at all levels
- Positive Home-School relations and engagement (student and parent voice)
- Safe and orderly environment

Our aim then must be to build **effective schools**, having agreed this basic definition, but fundamentally, this must be the role of the local headteacher supported by the MAT, rather than driven by a distant model of school improvement remote from both the context and resources of individual schools. We are neither resourced to do that nor do we wish to take authority from local headteachers preferring to judge performance by the impact of the work undertaken rather than the ability to follow a centrally prescribed process.

## Expectations

The MAT has made its expectations for performance clear – that we aim to match or exceed the standards reached at the 80% percentile for similar schools, where such data is available. For key stages 2 and 4, we can find this from the Aspire/FFT database. These are extremely challenging targets for all our schools but that does not mean we should not aim to achieve them. Central to this will be the regular collection of data, and the rank ordering of children across classes so that we might learn from exceptional practice in individual schools before looking outside the school, first, and then beyond the MAT.

The situation is more nuanced at EYFS and KS1, with the government somewhat unclear as to how we will measure both success and progress here. As the new Frameworks develop we will have a clearer vision for what high level performance looks like, and so ensuring we have strong external comparators by which to judge our performance will be vital.

## School Improvement Planning

Our starting point is that all schools must have an effective school improvement plan, agreed with the Chief Executive, and owned by the local governing body and their headteacher, which could be the head of school, executive headteacher or principal. Again, there will be no prescribed model for this but it should reflect the best principles of planning, arising from a detailed positional analysis and including a small number of significant developments matched to areas requiring further challenge and improvement. This will be separate from any maintenance plan.

Mary Arnold (2017) an education consultant working in the north-west identifies in her blog, **one education**, the following characteristics of an effective improvement plan:

The school improvement plan can only be written after the school has evaluated its performance and, most importantly, thoroughly analysed the outcomes which pupils have achieved. Usually that happens in late July or early September. When analysing outcomes, data about attendance and behaviour must also be considered. Critically, the analysis of data must focus on the outcomes of statutory assessments, examination and test results for all pupils and then for groups of pupils. However, the school's internal data about different year groups and subjects must also be analysed before the school improvement plan can be drawn up.

That said, for it to be really effective, school improvement planning must also be cyclical; in other words there must be on-going review, updated planning, implementation and evaluation throughout the school year. Furthermore, just as leaders need training in how to make accurate judgements, the skills to draw up effective plans to address any areas for improvement will also require support and training for many school leaders.

Good school improvement plans focus on what will change as a result of their implementation and speaks in both quantitative and qualitative terms. An overview may be no more than a simple paragraph (a so-called 'lift pitch') describing the change that will happen as a result of successful implementation. Their focus is on changes to the pupils – **pupils will become effective and confident communicators** as well as, say, **85% will achieve ARE**. However, this overview will be associated with measurable, staged and timed targets and be clear about the difference between

the **implementation** of actions and the **impact** of those changes. This is to ensure our schools do not focus on task completion at the cost of failing to achieve behavioural change, or an increase in applications to our schools.

All actions need to be 'owned' (and possibly reflected in appraisal targets) and may be given a specific budget. Where staff need training to meet an objective, that will be picked-up separately in a training plan, usually owned by a member of the SMT, existing as an annex of the improvement plan, and aligned to the appraisal summary or training needs analysis (TNA). This is facilitated through our use of the BlueSky package to support performance management, including targeted CPD. Finally, there will be a review cycle built-in with regular reporting to the local governing body, typically through the committee structure, and a degree of external validation of impact. The key roles for the MAT are to support the assessment of performance and provide an external validation of change. In the latter case, it is probably of most value if the work of the MAT focuses on the 'so what' question, on impact not process and supports the school in its self evaluation.

To ensure efficiencies, we should move towards a model where some of the support presently procured externally is progressively moved to within the MAT, recognising also however, that external challenge to the MAT is no less important than external challenge to the school.

## **Support Models**

Support can be delivered in many ways from a termly review against a specific objective or set of action, through to supporting use of pupil premium or helping middle leaders understand how data may be best used.

## **Offer**

### **Quality Assurance Core Offer to All Schools**

Three days of allocated Quality Assurance review time with focus to be agreed with CEO. This could be a 2 day QA review on the lines of that used in Challenge Partners with a follow up day or 1 day per term. Each QA team will be staffed according to focus by colleagues from across the MAT. The review will normally be led by a headteacher, the CEO or one of the phase directors, accompanied by up to three staff. The monitoring template we will use is at the end of this document.

Feedback reports will include:

***What went well:*** *What are our strengths?*

***Even Better if:*** *Where can we improve?*

***Area of excellence:*** *What can we share?*

### **Optional Reviews / Support / CPD**

In addition, schools will be able to select from a range of options supported by staff across the group and, where necessary, external consultants. Work might include:

- Pupil Premium Review / Support with writing Pupil Premium Strategy / CPD for staff on catering for the needs of pupils in receipt of the PPG
- Inclusion Reviews / Support for developing Inclusion, Diversity, EAL pupils / CPD for Teaching Staff or Support Staff
- SEN review of impact, use of funding, etc / Support for newly appointed Senco, support staff working with SEND pupils, 1 to 1 TAs

- Subject specialism reviews / Support for Subject development including assessment of foundation subjects / Enhancing the curriculum e.g. P4C, Metacognition
- Specific inset such as using FFT or My Concern / Support for new Assessment Leaders
- Leadership review / Support for senior leaders e.g. difficult conversations / Development of Middle Leaders & Subject Leaders / Preparation for senior & middle leaders with Ofsted-type meetings

### **Supporting Structures**

It is important that we have confidence in those undertaking work outside their schools and so support and training where necessary should be provided. Headteachers will want a pen portrait of individuals and a photo for safeguarding purposes. Reports should, as far as is possible, be template-based and easy to complete.

All work should be agreed in advance between the respective parties with actions and expected outcomes stated clearly. The CEO would act as a guarantor of works and mediate should there be any issues during or after the assignment.

### **The programme**

Each school identifies priorities for school improvement for the current academic year in liaison with the KGA School Improvement Leader Debbie Anderson :-

Core QA offer 3 days per school: Preferred Model and timings

Optional review/ support /CPD 3 days per school: Focus and timing



# Monitoring / Evidence Form



School

<b>Observer/Person doing the monitoring &amp; role</b>		<b>Date Time</b>		to
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Activity (please tick)							
<b>Lesson obs</b>		<b>Work analysis</b>		<b>Discussion</b>		<b>Other</b>	

**Focus** (purpose of activity)

<b>Year / Class</b>		<b>Mixed ability (Y or N)</b>		<b>Subject</b>		<b>No in class</b>	
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Notes

**Evaluation**

<b>Strengths (WWW)</b>	<b>Areas for development (EBI)</b>

<b>T, L &amp; A</b>		<b>PDBW</b>		<b>L &amp; M</b>		<b>Outcomes</b>	
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