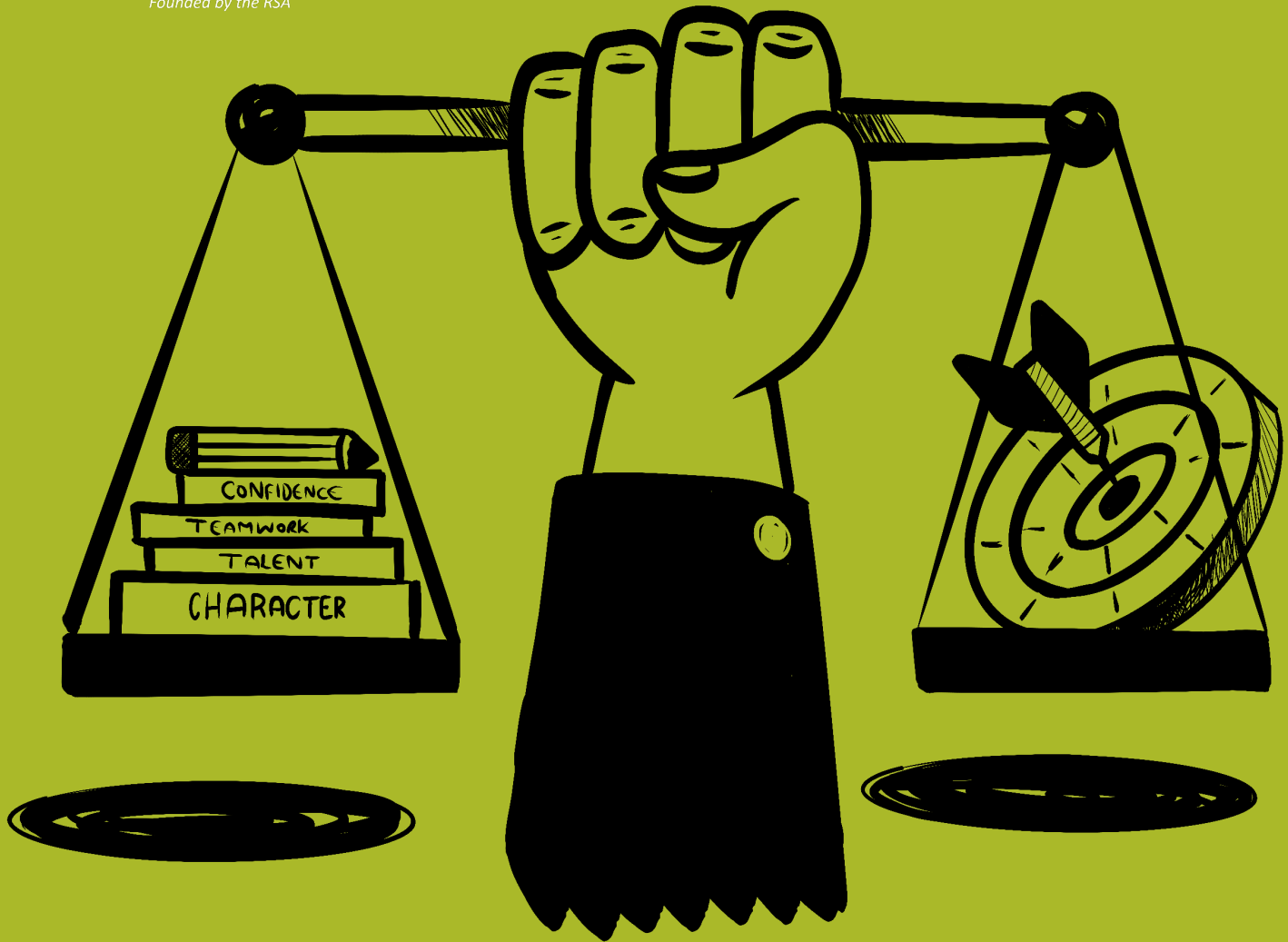




Central Region
Schools Trust

Founded by the RSA



OUR DISTINCTIVE CULTURE

Supporting Social Justice Through Exceptional Schools



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IN A NUTSHELL

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Introduction

'Supporting social justice through exceptional schools'

Staying true to the principles of our founding organisation, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (The RSA), of undertakings for the public good we take a practical view of social justice, moving from powerful thinking into practical action. We consider how our people, places and processes can best support social justice, putting this commitment into practice. Fundamental to this are inclusion and equity. Our vision seeks to articulate how we do this:

As a Trust founded by The Royal Society of Arts, our exceptional schools work together to create learning that is inspirational for all: igniting imagination and enabling creativity and curiosity which results in the highest achievement. People are valued and happy, developing their knowledge, attributes, skills and networks for success and fulfilment. In our empowered communities, everything is possible and aspirations are high.

Creating the culture in order to best deliver our vision in practical ways is what this document seeks to support. School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. 'School culture' can be used to encompass

all the attitudes, expected behaviours and values that impact how the school operates.' Fullan (2007). Our guiding principles are organised into three categories: people, places and processes.

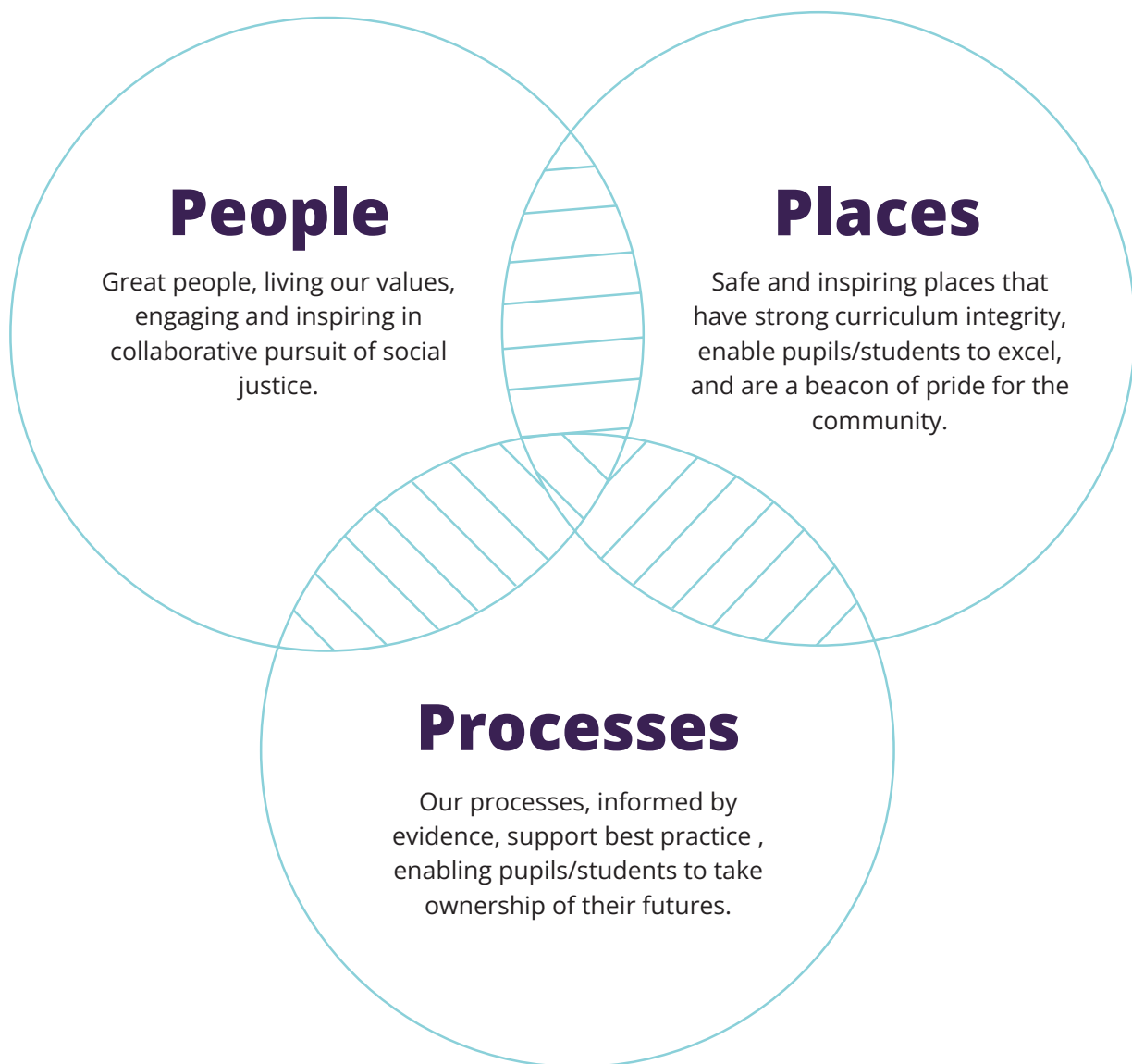
It is vital we get our school culture right. It is bigger than compliance: we are clear that our culture is delivered through shared endeavour, professional high expectations, warmth, inclusivity, positivity and kindness. It is the intentional behaviours and mindsets that shape the thinking, the communication, the values and mission. The danger of not getting the culture right is that this will significantly limit our progress towards ensuring sustainable excellence in each of our schools.

Culture, in the communities our Trust serves, matters. Our leaders strive to establish our strong distinctive culture and we are consciously developing a shared language. In order to grow this further, and sustain our strong culture into the future, we need to define what it is we do that builds and secures a rich, safe culture. Without this clarity, through changing personnel and drifting norms, a strong culture can be easily eroded and eventually lost completely. This document seeks to set out this definition: what we expect, what we say and what we do.

The volumes written on defining social justice in education would fill an entire library. They range from the philosophical and often abstract concept, to the narrative, offering portraits of injustice related to schools and education. We know our vision for 'supporting social justice through exceptional schools' is a powerful rallying call to our people and provides motivation for many colleagues drawn from a myriad of sources, from the political to deeply felt personal experiences of injustice. As an organisation we take a practical view of what we need to do to support social justice.

People, places and processes. These three areas form our culture and underpin the delivery of our strategic plan as we strive to support social justice through exceptional schools.

In a Nutshell



PEOPLE

PLACES

PROCESSES

ALLE ES ESSES

People

Our people understand and know their powerful role in fostering our distinctive and intentional culture through their behaviours and mindsets which shape thinking, communication and action to support social justice. We...

Ensure a safe, secure school environment by nurturing strong relationships with each other and with pupils/ students



Create a compelling vision of the future by acting as role models both for pupils/students and other adults

Engage with and support parents to positively support their child's achievement



Influence the communities around our Trust with authentic fostering of leadership and agency of pupils/ students

Drive excellence by playing an individual role within high performing teams expect all our people to follow the Trust's agreed behaviours:

Leading by example

Effectively communicating

Keeping promises and sticking to the organisational commitments

Committing to line management and development of others

Having a solution focused approach

Putting the success of the team before your own

Demonstrating full commitment to the bigger picture

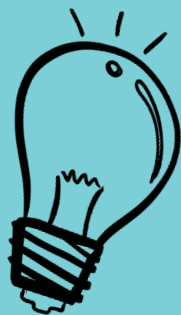
Create a fair and equal learning environment by prioritising access to experiences and events for disadvantaged pupils/students



Have a strong commitment to positive well-being and positive mental health for all members of our communities and are committed to workload reduction

Inspire pupils/students through the delivery of our curriculum

Encourage and empower others by being respectful, positive and optimistic



Have the highest expectations of pupils/students and understand the importance of showing them how to achieve the habits that will lead them to success



Places

Our people know how much the physical environment shapes and supports our distinctive culture. It is a key feature of our mission to support social justice through exceptional schools, with excellence required to ensure our pupils/students feel valued, be inspired by, and have the right resources and surroundings to excel. We...

Encourage communities to flourish by creating great spaces for dialogue to take place, both informal and formal, inside and outside.



Create an environment where everyone is safe to excel by proactively encouraging and celebrating diversity, inclusivity, spiritual development and by embracing all cultures.

Inspire passion and excellence in pupils/students with an environment which reflects how they learn, celebrating their achievement and reflecting their best qualities and aspirations.



Develop strong readers with facilities which tangibly support a love of reading.

Reinforce and signal the qualities of which we are most proud with an environment which reflects our CRST values and pride in being a Trust founded by the RSA.

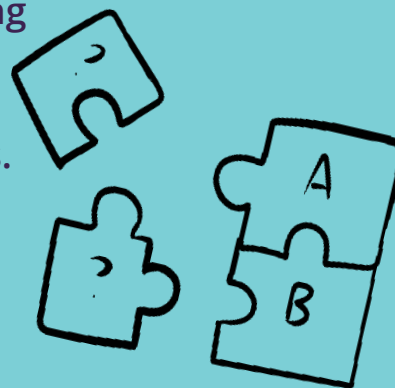


Inspire pupils/students to know more, be able to do more, and remember more in subject disciplines with clear expectations from leaders for design, layout, resourcing and messaging in each area of the school demonstrating that we care about our students, staff and visitors with clean, orderly, light spaces, that are well maintained.

Processes

Our leaders co-design processes and frameworks that enable our distinctive culture to flourish through clarity and consistency of delivery, based on the evidence of things that matter. We...

Constantly learn and improve by identifying and welcoming exceptions to our cultural expectations.



Build trust and inclusion by communicating with clarity and consistency.

Ensure reliable growth by building delivery frameworks on evidence based best practice:

Curriculum delivery (K-ASE, including CRST enrichment guarantee)

Teaching and learning policy

Consistent and moderated assessment

Disadvantaged and vulnerable strategy

Special Educational Needs strategy

Behaviour and Rewards strategy

Safeguarding policy and practice

Build inclusive communities of stakeholders, parents and community partners by actively seeking and listening to external voices.



Reinforce our cultural distinctiveness by making informed choices within our staff recruitment, selection and development activities.

Have strong operational systems, processes and frameworks to support school improvement that are efficient, affordable and sustainable:

Finance

Governance

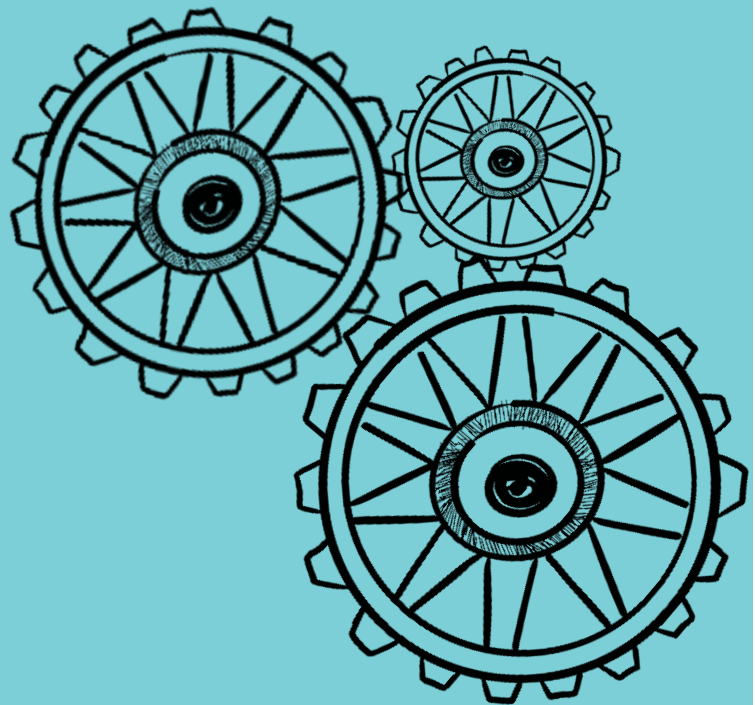
IT/data

HR

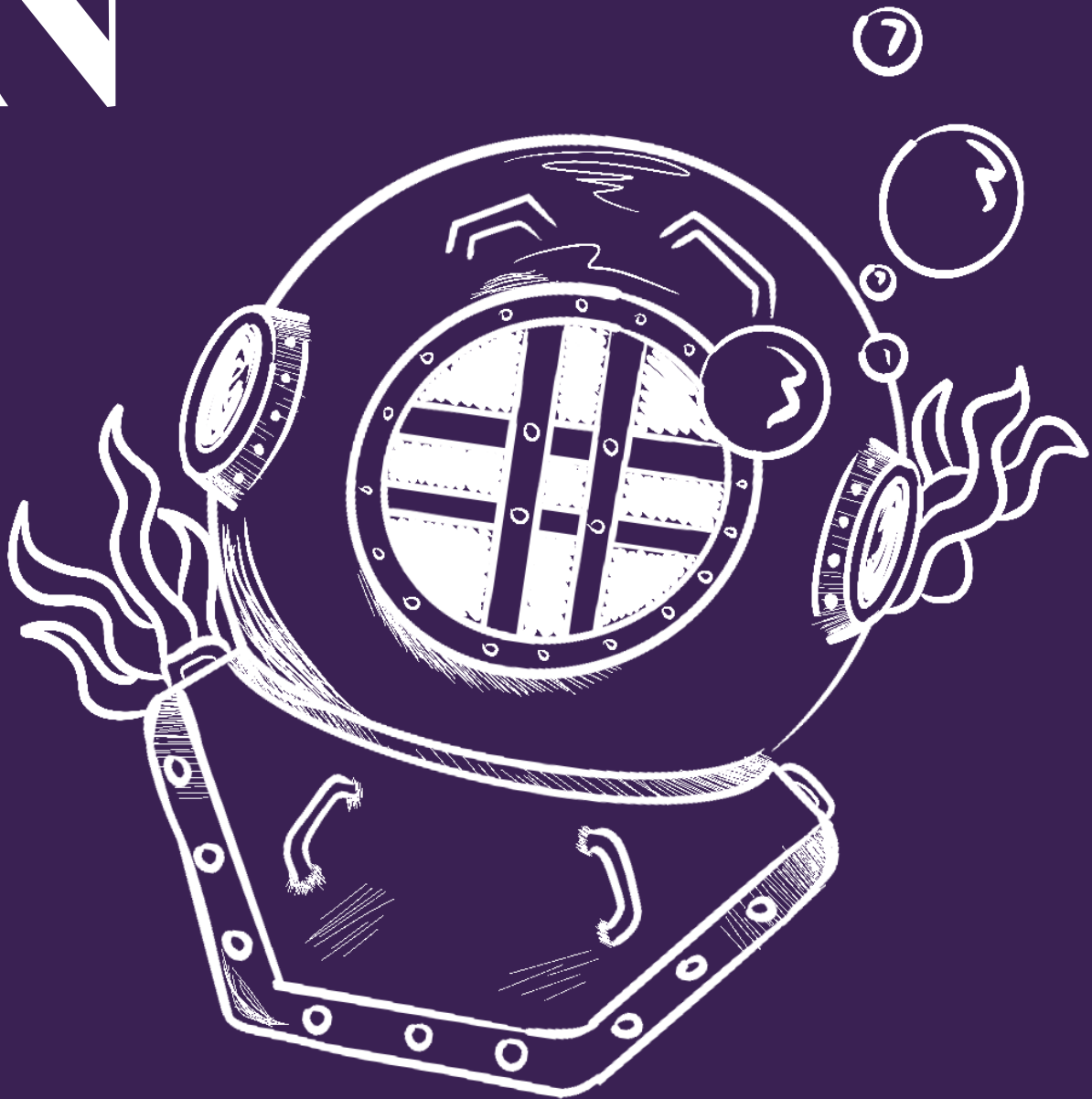
Estates

Health and Safety

Risk Management



DIVING FURTHER IN



People

Our people* go the extra mile. We recognise our pupils/students need and deserve our very best efforts and energy to support them so that they can flourish and achieve excellence.

In our mission to support social justice through exceptional schools, we recognise that it is people who will enable the pupils/students to flourish, and they go about this through conscious knowledge of what we do, how we behave and what we say, both in speech and body language which will make the positive difference.

Pupils/students learn when they feel safe, secure, and have positive, trusting relationships with adults and other pupils/students. We know the pupils'/students' relationships with their teachers and support staff, and the sense of belonging created through our strong culture, act as a secure base. From here, pupils/students can explore their learning, knowing they can return to where they feel safe if something is challenging.

We recognise that many of our pupils/students have or are experiencing issues in their lives. We are consciously positive and optimistic and display non-possessive warmth to our pupils/students and other members of our community. Adults consider that the reasons behind negative behaviours are complex and sometimes deep-rooted and utilise consistency and high levels of skill and professionalism when dealing with them. We know it is okay to state that a behaviour

is not liked. To infer the pupil/student is not liked is never okay.

We strive to build a culture of high expectation, achievement and effort through high levels of praise and reward in order to build pupil/student self-esteem, confidence and recognition of progress and success. Our people are extremely conscious of the power of language. Our Central Professional Learning, Research and Development (CPLR&D) programmes are designed to ensure that our people know and understand the complex nature of childhood and adolescent experiences and are trauma informed. They know when to have fun and when to be serious. We know that a single, casual 'put-down' can have a significant, long-lasting impact.

We recognise 'banter' can be dangerous and the potential of an individual to be motivated by a comment of praise or positivity. We know that these can, at rare moments, lead to life changing positive upward motivation and esteem building. Maximising authentic use of praise therefore increases the potential of the community. It can only help us achieve excellence. Strong, creative, motivating approaches to rewards are paramount to building this culture. We recognise displays, exhibitions, performances, newsletters and social media are all powerful in building a school community where a pupil/student knows success and investment in them is tangible.

Pupil/student relationships with each other are key to community and individual success. Quality interactions between adults and pupils/students are vital. Adults know their visible interactions with each other support modelling and building community. We know rich, genuine dialogue, interaction and courtesy matter.

Adults in our community model this, consciously saying 'good morning', holding doors for each other and for pupils/students and seeking to help each other where possible. In modelling these positive interactions, adults ensure that these behaviours become the norm between pupils/students in schools and throughout the Trust. Adults actively seek and hold conversations with pupils/students. On duty, at the gate in the morning and in the evening, in the corridor, interactions are frequent, rich and genuine.

We passionately support pupils/students in having a strong understanding of the purpose of the curriculum they are following. We work hard to ensure the pupils/students understand what they are doing, and why, in order to motivate them to engage fully in the learning. At all ages, pupils/students are encouraged to think like and 'be' scientists when learning science, historians when learning history etc. Adults support pupils/students by actively making connections to the world beyond school to further enhance their motivation.

Our leaders know their actions and words matter. Our leaders are honest with each other, recognising the strengths and

weaknesses that each of us have, knowing a team needs a range of characters and skill sets. Through very regular line management support, these are discussed as part of our 'Let's Talk People' strategy. The CRST agreed behaviours are utilised by all leaders to help maximise positive impact of our leadership work. Our people know the impact of contributing to the team and recognise that by supporting the effective working of the teams they are a member of, they impact positively on the lives of our pupils/students. Leaders ensure any anti-culture behaviours are dealt with early, 'squashing a tadpole' meaning behaviours do not fester and consequently impacting negatively on the lives of our pupils/students. Leaders are actively open to stakeholder feedback, including community and parents. Our people know the power of learning from mistakes. Exceptions to the culture are a vital part of strengthening it.

Our leaders have strong commitment to positive well-being and positive mental health for all members of our communities and are committed to workload reduction. All schools are signed up to the DfE wellbeing charter and leaders commit to strong implementation.

We have no tolerance in our communities of discriminatory or prejudicial language or behaviour in any shape or form. Our schools are proactively inclusive. Diversity is celebrated.

Pupils'/students' agency is harnessed and facilitated by our people. Authentic community action and pupil/student

leadership are fostered and encouraged in all year groups. This is an essential element in fulfilling our aim of building empowered communities and developing lasting partnerships; and, of course partnerships will be essential to developing agency for our pupils/students. Our partnership with our founder, the RSA, and our support for the RSA Education Network is a key partnership to support us in ensuring pupils/students are invested in to develop their leadership roles and programmes as an essential plank in our development of culture. Our people understand that equality does not mean equal experience. As we pursue our mission of supporting social justice through exceptional schools, some pupils/students need greater access to experiences and

opportunities to succeed equally well. In terms of professional development, we invest heavily in our people. From pre-career and career entrant level in Teach Central, and then through our CPLR&D programmes once employed, learning opportunities through to senior leadership for all professionals are in place to support the delivery of excellence.

Our people know, understand and uphold the principles of public office (The Nolan Principles).

**'our people' is a collective term for all employees such as teachers and support professionals, but also includes volunteers such as governors, student teachers, community mentors, as well as visiting professionals from external services. We expect all to contribute to the creation of our strong culture.*



Places

We know how much the physical environment contributes to culture. It is a key feature of our mission to support social justice through exceptional schools. Our campus environments reflect our values, and support delivery of excellence as schools within a Trust founded by the RSA.

We aspire to high quality, beautiful spaces that inspire and make pupils/students feel invested in. This goes beyond the bricks and mortar, but they matter too. Fresh, clean, orderly spaces, with clear expectations for each area of a school (e.g. classrooms, corridors, outdoor spaces, communal spaces). The messages that are then sent through resources, layout, features, displays and aesthetic including signage and wording matter. Sustainability is actively promoted in all our schools. Pupils/students know when they are being invested in and when they are not. It is a rule in our schools that they will see very regular change and improvements – somewhere, somehow. It is not left to chance.

We aim for our places to have curriculum integrity: well-resourced classrooms, study areas, libraries, gyms etc that reflect the breadth of opportunity a pupil/student will experience are expected. Our school leaders define how classrooms are. Schools must excite and inspire through the quality of resource. Our environments reflect how are pupils/students learn. Spaces that promote dialogue, from careful resourcing in early years to quality seminar spaces for student collaboration in preparation for university and high-quality employment are planned for carefully and resourced. Outdoor and indoor

spaces that promote discussion are evident and used. Our school environments are resourced to support the whole school drive to instil a love of reading.

Pupils'/students' achievements are celebrated throughout the school campus. No opportunity is missed to utilise space. Art installations, representative sports team photographs, displays promoting leadership agency community projects, pupil/student work celebrations are planned and expected. Corridor displays are professional and gallery like.

The environment sparks spiritual, moral, social and cultural thinking and awareness, and diversity and inclusion are proactively ignited by what is in classrooms, on screens and walls, in exhibitions/displays. These are often children driven. Books are carefully chosen and ubiquitous. The library is a special place.

Our school environment and resourcing aim to spark those with a passion (and inspire those with a yet untapped potential passion) in sport, literature, the arts, design, computing, geography, science, maths etc – all subjects. To think like a scientist, you must have the right scientific environment. To think like a game designer, you need to be able to use game design tools in an environment conducive to great design thinking. To be an athlete, you need the facility to develop into one. The challenge is to support at each stage of education the development of pupils/students in all areas of learning in the right environments, with the opportunity to specialise at the right

time into specific areas. Our school environments are carefully thought through to best do this, with the best resource we can provide.

Evidence-based investment in the resourcing for reading and of IT infrastructure are recognised as especially vital in all of our places, due to the disproportionate benefit to learning.

Curriculum integrity of place is a key concept for us. We define the minimum resource level for effective teaching of a subject in any given classroom. We define what great looks like in each area. Our aim is to ensure, if for instance teaching netball, that the environment and equipment are of suitable quality to enable excellence in curriculum implementation and impact. The same applies to our Early years settings, a Year 4 classroom and how it is set up and resourced for maths, reading, geography etc; a secondary history classroom...and so on.

By defining quality of environment, learning prompts, expected equipment, books, use of walls and so on, we can then look to ensure equity of experience through investment so that pupils/ students in all of our settings learn in spaces that have increasingly strong curriculum integrity.



Processes

One of the founding principles of our Trust, an organisation founded by the RSA, is community and the belief in powerful communities being able to solve problems through powerful action. Each school serves a unique community and must respond to local needs. The power of our Trust-wide community is in recognising there are processes and frameworks, based on well researched evidence, that strengthen our culture in all contexts. We recognise that these frameworks support our schools in fostering our distinctive culture and enable leaders to support and challenge each other across the Trust in ensuring sustained strong culture. We believe in strong promotion of fundamental British values in all of our schools.

Our distinctive culture exists within a community context. Routine approaches to hearing stakeholder voice are expected, some of which are carried out Trust-wide, with much locally explored. Leaders always respond where appropriate.

Our people believe we can challenge and raise the aspirations of parents where needed. Parental partnership is carefully planned and managed. Tight mechanisms for responding to complaints are in place and leaders understand mistakes are made – openness to learning from them is a key element of our culture. Complaints, where justified, highlight to us exceptions to culture to be learned from and acted upon.



Feedback to stakeholders is expected and is swift.

School improvement plans are based on local context. Planning, implementation, and impact are monitored carefully by governance at school and Trust level, by leaders and by external school improvement partners as part of our Trust-wide school improvement model. Effective governance at Trust and school level is vital to ensuring we maintain and develop our culture. Our governance framework is shaped by best-practice expectations and is reviewed routinely to ensure excellence.

We have Trust-wide expected frameworks for schools to operate in, following collaborative

co-design based on rich evidence. Broad frameworks allow localised response in order to ensure local community need is met. Templates for planning are standardised and utilised consistently, as we know that leaders benefit from seeing other strong plans. Financial efficiency and sustainability are integral features of our framework development, implementation and review. New frameworks and processes undergo equality impact evaluations before roll-out.

Our pedagogy policy is Trust-wide, with the following standardised; our learning cycle, 10 key components of pedagogy and our K-ASE underpinning principles of curriculum delivery. Of course, what a school is focused upon is down to local context. The curriculum



progression maps, and sequencing are standardised. Delivery is locally designed to ensure children are inspired in their own context, with content design relevant to their community. The fostering of creativity (powerful thinking into practical action) in all curriculum areas is a founding principle of our Trust. Expectations of enrichment delivery are enshrined in our CRST distinctive enrichment guarantee – delivery is localised (with cross-Trust learning experiences enhancing deliver and fostering a sense of Trust-wide culture).

Our approaches to ensuring pupils/students are safe are our highest priority. Pupil/student support forms the bedrock of our school communities with co-designed standard practices to best support them. The safeguarding policy and practice are collaboratively standardised as a framework, ensuring compliance. The policies are owned and developed locally, so that each school is proactively responding to local issues and risks. Annual external safeguarding reviews are required to support schools. Pupils/students feeling safe and secure is the bedrock of our culture.

We have a Trust-wide strategy and framework for developing provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils/students and for pupils/students with SEND. We recognise investment in provision for these pupils/students is vital and our framework seeks to ensure delivery is

based on evidence to ensure the highest impact. All leaders rigorously monitor the disproportionately strong provision and impact for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils/students, including those with SEND. We monitor measures of self-esteem, resilience, and confidence of all pupils/students and intervene positively.

Learning behaviours are actively taught and reinforced as routine language and approach. Clear social norms are articulated – they are simple and routine. The behaviour policy and expected practice give clarity and are consistently communicated and applied. Opportunities for reinforcement are mapped into the school routines. Class and school-wide routines are explicit, for instance arrival to school, starts of lessons, transitions, assemblies etc.

Recruitment of staff is based, of course, on the skills and experiences that will enable excellence within role, but alignment to culture is an essential element in this process. Permanent appointments are only made where there is confidence in this alignment. We seek to recruit people with an ability to deliver high quality customer service in all functions. Induction for all staff has explicit emphasis on the individual contribution to our culture. Staff development and career progression is planned and monitored, with progression for a professional at the right time always viewed as a positive.





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