



South Gloucestershire and Stroud

Academy Trust

Strategy

2021/22 – 2025/26

Introduction

South Gloucestershire and Stroud Academy Trust (SGSAT) was brought about in response to the need to sponsor a school in Cinderford in 2015, which required a new partner. SGS College, the parent sponsor of the SGSAT, prioritised the aims:

1. To enhance the quality of the experience we provide for our learners and our staff
2. To develop responsive partnerships with all our learners, employers, public services, the local community and with other education providers

SGS College will make their expertise and economies of scale available to SGSAT if, and when the SGSAT require them, at cost: however, the SGSAT is an independent Trust and will make arrangements for support from the most appropriate and cost effective source.

SGSAT will provide an opportunity to support Academy schools in the Greater Gloucestershire sub-region, although this may be grown to contiguous areas, if, by doing so it will strengthen the MAT and provide further economies of scale. Strong, responsive and solvent schools are essential for young people in local communities to thrive. SGSAT has been established to enhance the chances of securing the best education for young people and our communities.

This Trust strategy document establishes a strategic direction for SGSAT for the next four years. The idea of this plan is to be flexible enough for us to continue to respond imaginatively and effectively to opportunities. We have tried to make it succinct, easy to read and simple to understand.

The next few years will continue to be challenging ones for the school sector. The country has been hit hard by the Coronavirus pandemic and recovery timescales are unknown. Funding going forward is uncertain whilst demographically extraordinary growth is predicted over the medium term.

The Trust will look to maximise the skills and resources available to SGSAT primarily the Greater Gloucestershire area to support its mission, including working with the Regional Schools Commissioner, schools, colleges, universities, Local Authorities and partner agencies, the local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other MATs and training providers in our region, to ensure SGSAT maximises its service to the schools within the Trust.

We are committed to improving access to education in communities we serve at Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Special School level. We are committed to the aim of delivering a high quality and broad educational experience across the Trust; the continued improvement of schools within our Trust is absolutely fundamental. Whilst being responsive and innovative, the MAT must also maintain a strong financial position in each school and as a MAT against potential budgetary pressures. The Trust will focus on increasing the efficiency of Schools and maintaining a surplus whilst striving to move schools to Outstanding.

Kevin Hamblin

Chief Executive Officer

Our Vision

'Broader, Further, Higher'

SGSAT will support schools to improve pupil attainment and distance travelled through an innovative and well-constructed curriculum appropriate to each school's setting and the recruiting, training and retaining of excellent staff in our schools. We shall achieve this through:

1. the provision and coordination of effective performance management and professional development/capacity building, continuous improvement and promoting leading practice through peer support and knowledge exchange
2. SGSAT will provide efficient, effective and coordinated non curriculum services to each school to:
 - a. Drive down the costs of these services for each school;
 - b. Add value in the services they could access individually; and
 - c. Ensure more budget is focused on pupil facing services.

Our Mission

'The South Gloucestershire and Stroud Academy Trust will focus on the development of the whole child by involving pupils, parents/carers, staff and the community in a supportive, aspirational and caring environment. We will positively promote and nurture the academic, moral, social, physical and creative growth of the children in our care.'

Our Values

1. Our aspirations

We aspire to be a great community consisting of great schools.

'it is only in great schools that talent, skills and the change makers of the future are spotted, nurtured and developed.' -Sir Nick Weller.

We will aim for excellence in all we do: in our teaching, in the depth and breadth of our learning experiences, and in the personal qualities of the people within our community.

2. Our Qualities

All members of our community will be effective communicators, who are confident, curious, creative, independent, self-reflective, respectful, resilient, resourceful and enterprising.

Our Educational Character

- Learners are treated as individuals and we will facilitate their learning from the start of their learning journey
- The curriculum offer and wider educational experience will adapt to the needs of the cohort, and will reflect a learner's ability and needs
- We will ensure ambition is fostered, resilience is a core strength and progression at all levels is a primary outcome for each pupil
- We will create a visionary and innovative way of providing learning that fosters a sense of belonging.
- Learners are prepared for employment, or further progression, with the aim of producing well-rounded individuals who can respect each other and make a positive contribution to society
- There is an inclusive environment for staff and learners with equality of opportunity, where diversity is respected
- Teaching and learning will excite and inspire
- The teaching and promotion of 'Enterprise' will be a core theme through all our school.
- The success of learners and staff is championed and celebrated.
- Each individual is treated with integrity, respect and dignity
- A culture of openness prevails
- Continuous improvement is expected amongst pupils and staff.

Planning Context

The environment for education

During this planning period we anticipate:

- An increase in school numbers will be evidenced, with this pressure beginning to affect secondary schools in the medium term.
- The current over-supply of small post-16 providers will be reduced as funding in schools comes under pressure.
- Continued change in the national curriculum.
- There will be greater demand for flexible modes of delivery, especially via new technologies.
- Although financial pressures may ease slightly, this will allow a period of increased competition as more successful schools will seek greater numbers to maintain surpluses.
- The ongoing uncertainty the post Covid-19 situation may delay/retard economic recovery.
- Productive working relationships with local schools and other training providers to improve standards will be encouraged by the Regional Schools Commissioner and Local Authorities.
- Growth in SEND pupil numbers in local special schools as the County places pupils in the local provision rather than high cost out of area providers.
- The RSC will continue to advocate for fewer, larger Trusts

Strategic Analysis

We enjoy advantages and assets upon which we will build:

- Our sponsor, SGS College, is a strong, successful and influential local provider that is large enough to provide a wide range of support services, as required, to the Trust.
- The MAT is relatively new and as such can ensure that the approach, policies and procedures are 'best of breed' taking advice from the learning and experience of more established MATs.
- Considerable range of expertise is available from SGS College and other partners, such as the University of Gloucestershire and our school improvement partners.
- Access to experienced staff capable of delivering academic, vocational and work-based programmes.
- Positive relationship with local media and an effective marketing team.
- Active collaborative relationships with other education providers, local authorities and employers.
- The Local Authorities (Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire and Bristol); Regional Schools Commissioner and Department for Education are supportive of the MAT.
- Experience of opening free schools.
- Successfully taking a school out of special measures.
- Growth within our existing schools is possible over the medium term

We operate under a number of challenges some of which are within our influence and control while others are not:

- Highly competitive market place with many schools striving for market share will reduce as primary numbers feed through to secondary. As demographic increases come through, this will ease.
- Many parents and pupils willing to travel to schools which are considered high performing.
- Pressure on funding will continue.
- Limited public knowledge of the full range of our work.
- Poor condition of the Forest High School estate with limited chance of a complete refurbishment which places the school at risk.
- Poor performance of Forest High School feeder schools at Key Stage 2.
- Challenge of recruitment and retention of students at a rurally located UTC.
- Recruitment and retention of specialist staff to a small Trust with school specific requirements.

Where are we now?

SGSAT has sponsored one 11-16 school and has successfully opened a University Technical College and Special Free School in September 2017.

Our first school, Forest High School was sponsored in March 2015, was originally inspected by Ofsted and placed in Special Measures in 2015. The school exited special measures in July 2018.

The founding CEO and Executive Team are in place, and three Headteachers started in September 2019. A new Chair of the Trust Board was appointed in in early 2021. One school currently requires improvement, and all our schools are expected to be inspected in 21/22.

Statement of Intent

SGSAT has a distinctive role as a major provider of secondary and specialist education in Greater Gloucestershire. We recognise the importance of placing our students at the centre of everything we do and for preparing them for progression into mainstream secondary or tertiary education, apprenticeships or higher education, and employment. We also recognise the need for all our work to be of the highest possible standard. Excellence will continue to be our goal.

Our primary targets in support of this statement include:

- Success rates will improve annually to take all our schools to “good or outstanding” within four years of opening / joining the MAT, depending on their starting points.
- Improvement of School Performance in line with School Improvement Plans.
- Each school will be supported to develop a Local School Board which will have responsibilities to assist the work of the Trust Board and ensure the school performance is maintained.
- For the Trust to produce an annual surplus of at least 2% by July 2024, to be used for the future benefit of the schools within the Trust.

Our Strategic Priorities

1. To enhance the quality of education we provide to our students
2. Staff Recruitment, Retention, Development and Succession Planning
3. To develop responsive partnerships with all our students and staff, employers, public services, the local community and with other education providers
4. Trust Growth
5. To provide the necessary resources including the built environment and IT services that equips our schools for the delivery of high-quality learning.

Strategic Priority 1: To enhance the quality of education we provide to our students

The quality of the student experience we offer remains crucial to the success of our students. Our ability to recruit and retain students depends upon that success and their satisfaction with the experience. We intend to build on the distinctiveness of our provision over the next four years, and our tradition of supporting students in their studies. Employability of our students is a key consideration. We will work to ensure that, across the MAT, learning is contextualised, current and personalised, adding significant value to individuals and their communities.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Guaranteeing that the student experience offered at each school in our Trust stands out and the curriculum is well designed and contextualised.
- Developing and implementing a 'catch-up' plan across all schools post-covid, recognising that all children will not be at the level they would have been at if the pandemic had not arose.
- Preparing students to make a positive contribution for employment in a rapidly changing world through programmes where learning is a mixture of theory, practice and support.
- Implementing a revised learning, teaching and assessment strategy to improve students' learning experience and bring greater variety of modes of course delivery using new technologies.
- Ensuring we meet the highest standards for the personal development, wellbeing and safeguarding of our students.
- Providing interventions and approaches which will support the progress of all learners irrespective of their starting points and learning needs.
- Encouraging and celebrating the success of our students and staff.
- Listening and responding to the views of our students, staff, community and employers.
- The quality of teaching and learning will continue to improve annually, supported by targeted staff development and coaching programmes.
- Our approach to Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) will be developed and embedded into each mainstream school.
- Our added value scores, where available, will have most courses significantly positive, with no significant negatives.

Strategic Priority 2: To anticipate and meet demand through the development of effective Staff Recruitment, Retention, Development and Succession Planning

If we are to succeed in this Strategy, we must have the right people and resources and use them effectively. To do this well we shall need to be enterprising yet prudent. The highest priority will be to recruit, retain and motivate high calibre staff. Without them, none of this will be possible.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Implementing and regularly reviewing our Human Resources Strategy to guide us in successful recruitment, retention and succession, and to ensure that all staff and Trustees continue to develop their skills in response to predicted Schools Sector needs and personal development goals.
- Develop a strong leadership and management team at MAT and local level including Trustees and Local School Boards.
- To provide extensive training of staff across the MAT to encourage internal progression for staff across the MAT.
- Revising staff development policy and succession planning mechanisms to ensure our flexible staff are supported, motivated and continually developed to meet the changing demands of education.
- Develop the skills of our teaching staff so that teaching practice is the result of careful reflection, and advance planning where the learning, achievement and progression of our students is at the heart of every teacher's planning.
- Develop the budgetary awareness, personnel management and leadership skills of our leaders and managers.
- Ensure there is a supportive yet robust performance management and appraisal scheme throughout the MAT.
- Investing in integrated information and communications technology to enhance teaching and learning and ensure efficient operations and management across all schools.

Strategic Priority 3: To enhance the quality of experience we provide for our students and staff by developing responsive partnerships with all our students and staff, employers, public services, the local community and with other education providers

Engagement with other education institutions, businesses, public services and the community is increasingly acknowledged to be a fundamental, with the objective of transferring knowledge between partners.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Through future collaborative ventures, we will form partnerships with other providers and MATs to improve the outcomes of our communities.
- Encouraging local businesses and public sector organisations to engage with the schools within the MAT, especially in vocational and career education programmes.
- Championing the involvement of staff and students in the community, particularly opportunities for volunteering.
- Continuing to take a lead in area-wide initiatives in the local communities supported by our various schools; and playing an active role in the development of Local Enterprise Partnerships in the West of England and Gloucestershire.
- Tracking destination data and student satisfaction through robust data collection.
- Being responsive to the needs of groups within the locality by making school facilities available.

Strategic Priority 4: To develop responsive partnerships with all our students and staff and all our stakeholders through Trust Growth

The increase in Academies and the move away from Local Authority control / support has caused some schools to struggle to cope with the range of issues that any large organisation will deal with over time. These operational issues including HR, legal, financial and Management Information are often distractions from the academic delivery and performance of the school. The MAT will take on these non-academic services and will provide expertise if, and when, required, allowing leaders and staff in schools to focus on the curriculum and students.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- To improve the profile of all the schools in the MAT and increase the numbers of students in each new school.
- To grow the number of schools in the MAT across Primary, Secondary and Special Schools in geographic clusters of each element through the submission of Free School bids, presumption or sponsorship to at least six schools within the lifetime of this plan
- To provide support and training for the Trust Board and all school boards across the MAT to provide a consistently outstanding approach to Governance.

Strategic Priority 5: To provide the necessary Resources including the built environment and IT services that equips our schools for the delivery of high-quality learning

To provide high quality learning and working environments which learners are entitled to expect. Learning environments at each school should improve continually and will require regular review and investment to secure each school's future as a popular choice for students.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- To repair / replace sub-standard facilities at TFHS
- The Trust and constituent Schools have a focus on estates & Health & Safety with the aim of identifying issues and work required to maintain and improve the environment.
- Ensuring that our students have a learning environment which places them at the centre of the process and provides approaches appropriate to their own individual need.
- Providing an IT Strategy which is future-proofed and takes account of technological developments and cyber threats

To develop a costed Estates Strategy which would support this plan across each school