



David Ross Education Trust

Broadening Horizons

# Strategic Review

Spring 2016

[www.dret.co.uk](http://www.dret.co.uk)

## Welcome from the Chair.

The David Ross Education Trust is about improving the life chances of every child in every school within our Multi Academy Trust framework.

To do so, we need to ensure that we have world-class leadership, excellent teaching and support systems, and a relentless focus on standards.

Everyone, at whatever level they are working, is valued within the collaborative model which has been adopted.

With the continued backing and generous support of the sponsor, it has been possible to lift the ambition of the Trust to do so much more than simply conform to the particular requirements of Government or regulators. We are developing the kind of ambition that reflects itself in the aspirations of every child, and the expectations of every member of staff.

While policies may shift, political agendas may evolve and the measurements by which we are judged change, our focus will not waiver.

Everyone associated with the Trust is committed to ensuring that our students have access to an outstanding academic education and unrivalled enrichment opportunities in a network that is strong and sustainable.

This investment, coupled with the talent and expertise of the people within the Trust, will ensure that we continue to support the life chances of the thousands of young people as our mission becomes a reality.



**Lord David Blunkett**  
Chair

## Our mission and objectives

The Trust is collectively working to become the country's leading group of academies, committed to ensuring each and every one of our students has the support and opportunities to succeed.

Underpinning the mission are three strategic objectives. These are:

Our drive for academic excellence

Our desire to build a strong and sustainable network

Our aspiration to offer unrivalled enrichment opportunities to all our students

## Against our last strategic plan, there is much we can be proud of as a Trust:

- There are now 16 good and outstanding academies in the network
- The establishment of the Improvement Clusters, and the increasing role the Teaching School is playing
- In Early Years, the proportion of children achieving good levels of development increased by 11ppt from 53% to 64%
- The Trust's average for Combined Level 4s at KS2 increased by 10ppt over the last 3 years
- Over the past 3 years the proportion of students achieving 3 'good' A level (or equivalent) passes has increased by 12ppt to 71%
- KS4 results have presented a challenge but with individual success stories
- Enrichment participation has grown year on year and in 2015-16 increased by 128% in the primary sector and 38% in the secondary sector
- The Trust's finances remain strong with balances of over £4m, a sound regulatory framework and unqualified audit reports
- Capital spend has increased year on year to an annual total of over £4m with the support of the Endowment Fund
- Pupil numbers are growing in the majority of academies and with a greater proportion of first choices

## These successes have not come without learnings that need to be considered going forward:

- As we mature our aims for academic excellence, building a sustainable network and offering unrivalled enrichment opportunities need to work more closely together
- Growth enabled a critical mass to form, allowing for the development of a broader educational experience and a greater capacity for school improvement. The Trust needs to continue to release and realise the potential that our network has in a controlled and structured way
- The Trust must retain, develop and recruit outstanding leaders alongside a governance framework which holds all aspects of the business to account

## Furthermore, there is a greater awareness of the challenges that we have to overcome to continue to deliver educational transformation:

- The expectations being placed on MATs
- Accelerating school improvement to deal with the legacy of underperformance
- Growing the leadership pipeline, and ensuring quality teacher recruitment and retention
- Managing the 10-15% real cut in budgets over the next five years
- Successfully embedding the many curriculum and assessment changes
- Enhancing the transition into secondary, and making the most of KS3



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# Our approach for the future:

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Reflecting on the Trust's vision and journey thus far, five areas have been identified that Trustees believe will have the potential to make the biggest impact and have the greatest leverage on the performance of the Trust.

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## 1. Developing the DRET pedagogy for sustained school improvement

- Identifying, sharing and spreading best practice
- Talent spotting
- Growing leadership potential
- Teacher recruitment

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## 2. Leadership and Governance

- Succession planning
- Subject Cluster Leads and Specialist Leaders in Education
- Revised Schemes of Delegation and Terms of Reference
- Regional forums
- Online training for Governors

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## 3. Development of the curriculum – the educational continuum and enrichment

- Extending provision in nursery and wraparound care
- Residential education
- Reviewing post-16 education
- Specialist hubs
- Integrating enrichment into the educational curriculum

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## 4. The role of the central functions and developing the infrastructure

- IT and e-learning
- Shared services

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## 5. Financial strategy

- Ensuring the long term viability of the Trust and its academies, including very small academies
- Smoothing out the impact of pupil number fluctuations
- Smoothing out the impact of cost pressures
- Addressing the Trust's strategic priorities
- Restoring and maintaining a prudent level of balances

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## Trustees have also committed to investing in four key areas to support these developments:

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The Improvement Clusters, in partnership with the Teaching School, remain central to the Trust's improvement model. This alliance is the route by which DRET will address the legacy of underachievement, truly transforming our educational system

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ICT is at the heart of our teaching and learning ambitions and ensuring that our students are ready for life in the 21st century. We need to invest in, and value, the contribution that e-learning can make to the network

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The early years in a child's education are the building blocks on which their schooling is built. The Trust will extend nursery provision and support families by investing in high quality wrap around provision

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A child's contribution should be judged on more than just what is achieved in the classroom, it is the value they add to their community. Instilling the importance of citizenship and healthy lifestyles should sit hand in hand with academic endeavour