

# nexus

Multi Academy Trust



Annual Report

Academic Year 2018-2019

**Caring**  
**Nurturing**  
**Child-Centred Family-Focused**  
**Encouraging Enriching**  
**Empowering Passionate**  
**Inclusive**



## LEARNING TOGETHER; TO BE THE BEST WE CAN BE

### Our Mission Statement

- **Our learners and their families are at the centre of what we do;** empowered to learn and achieve; valued within our and their communities as visible, resilient, active and responsible citizens.
- **Our employees and partners are passionate about being the best that they can be;** providing opportunities for enriched learning and pathways to employment and independence.
- **Our Trust is relentlessly focused on improvement;** it values and celebrates success and builds partnerships to develop personalised provision with and for those we serve.

## Accounting Officer Executive Summary

2018-19 has been a hugely successful year for Nexus Multi Academy Trust as we have continued to take big steps forward in pursuit of the objectives set out in our 5 Year Strategic Plan.

The Trust has now completed its third full academic year of business since we were incorporated on 1st June 2016. Since our incorporation we have invested a huge amount of resource in supporting our academies to fulfil the Trust vision of being “the best we can be”.

In the last 12 months we have published our Collaborative School Improvement Framework, which outlines how we as a MAT enable and facilitate school improvement across the Trust without undermining the diversity of our provision. As a consequence, when the 3 founding academies were inspected by OfSTED in 2019, we achieved positive results across the board.

Our philosophy and values have secured significant growth of the MAT in the last academic year, with 5 schools approaching us and now in the process of converting to join Nexus in 2019-20. A real positive of this growth is that our MAT will be redefined as a mixed MAT of both mainstream and specialist provision, which in turn opens new opportunities for future growth and development. At the same time, we are in the process of opening two new academies (scheduled to open in 2020 and 2021), which will create more places for children and families; more jobs for local communities; and even more opportunities to enhance our partnerships.

Partnerships is something that has been at the heart of our achievements in 2018-19, with our [Landmarks College](#) collaboration creating a new 19-25 offer to the Rotherham locality for September 2019. Our extended services contract with RMBC has enhanced options for families locally, too, and demand for this continues to increase month-on-month.

2018-19 has had its challenges, but we finish the year in a position of financial health as a MAT with a clear view in all our academies for how we will continue to improve in 2019-20. This report will use our 7 strategic objectives to frame our key achievements in 2018-19.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren'.

Warren Carratt

Chief Executive Officer (Accounting Officer)

# 1. INCREASING QUALITY OF PROVISION FROM ALL OUR ACADEMIES



The core purpose of every academy Trust - as stipulated by the Articles of Association - is to improve the quality of educational provision for children and young people. That is why this is our first strategic objective: as this is the reason we exist. Our academies have continued to improve in many ways over the course of the past 12 months and invariably it would be difficult to capture all aspects and instances of improvement into one report, though the following gives Directors clear insight into the impact our MAT and our academies have had on the communities we serve, in conjunction with the formal reports provided throughout the year.

We have published our [Collaborative School Improvement Framework](#) which defines the model of MAT improvement and allows Directors to track progress in the individual academies and across the wider Trust. The MAT performance dashboard has also created a clearer, more summative means of

reporting to Directors on the state of our schools across a range of agreed performance indicators, which compliments - and is underpinned by - the more detailed review work which local governing bodies are commissioned to undertake.

We have had a period of stability in the personnel appointed as Directors of the MAT, and this has allowed the Trust to support Board development from a stable baseline, with the Trust engaging with the National Governance Association for individual and group Director development. This will be taken forward to its next natural phase in 19-20.

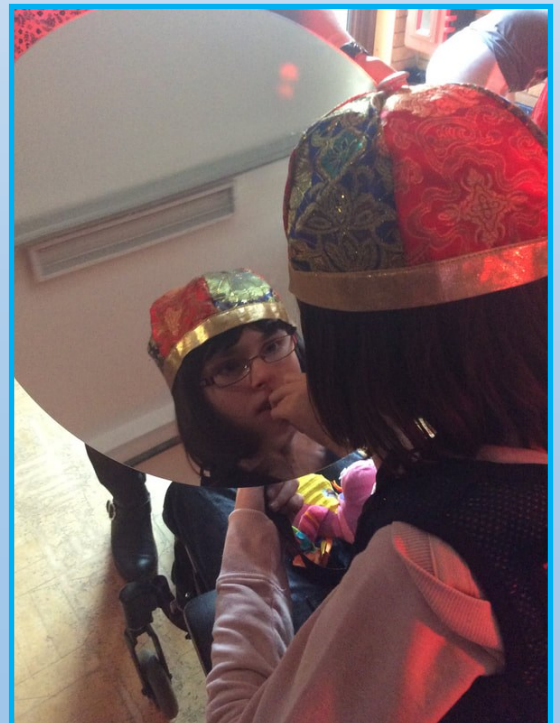
We have seen some turnover in local governance with 3 chairs leaving over the past 12 months, though all have been replaced with experienced successors. Throughout 2018-19 the Trust has appointed 16 new governors to either fill vacancies or further strengthen local governing bodies.

Thanks to the Trust's partnership with E3 Cubed we have - for the third year running - secured Condition Improvement Funding from the ESFA to improve the physical state of our academies. The additional £650,000 in 18/19 means that over the past 3 years we have secured more than £2,000,000 of capital investment to improve our schools and grow our provision.

The Trust has continued to commission external expertise to undertake detailed and rigorous audits of our practice in a range of areas, including how well we spend Pupil Premium and how effectively our safeguarding practice aligns with policy.

Throughout this academic year, the Trust has also led on an engagement programme between our academies and the Doncaster Research School which has seen middle leaders undertake action research linked to a priority area of their school improvement plan. Findings were shared at the summer Leadership Summit, with all presentations positively received.

Inclusion continues to be of paramount importance to the MAT, with only 1 permanent exclusion issued in 2018-19. This was the first in 3 years of Nexus' existence, and represents 0.02% of our total pupil population. The MAT has also published a [Safeguarding Statement of Assurance](#) for 2018-19.





In 2018-19, Abbey opened 4 new classrooms onsite as part of planned growth of the school to 140 planned places. These classrooms were purchased thanks to investment secured from Rotherham and Barnsley councils to help ensure there is sufficient space to meet ongoing, increased demand from families for a place at Abbey. The school has continued to meet a diverse range of needs and in May 2019 was found by OfSTED to be an “Outstanding” school. In 2018-19, 90% of pupils made expected or better progress.

“The exceptional curriculum is innovative and inspirational. Meticulously careful planning ensures that the needs of each pupil are addressed” - Ofsted

“Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school... They talk about how their son or daughter has been ‘transformed’ since attending Hilltop” - Ofsted

Hilltop school has continued to increase its pupil roll in the face of increased demand for places from families, and ended 2018-19 with 116 pupils. The school has continued to meet need and improve, with the creation of a new family support team having a positive impact on attendance and family engagement. In May the school was found to be “Good” by OfSTED, with significant progress made since the last inspection. In 2018-19, 85% of pupils made expected or better progress.



Kelford started 2018-19 with the opening of The View, a new vocational learning centre for sixth form pupils. This has created new pathways for young people to learn new skills in a more age-appropriate environment. The school has continued to embed the curriculum “pathways” model throughout the whole school. In March, Kelford was judged to be “Good” by OfSTED, with significant progress made since the last inspection. In 2018-19, 86% of pupils made expected or better progress.



“Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has continued to improve and ensures good learning and achievement for the pupils. The thoughtful curriculum that you have established within the school, along with subsequent training, allows teachers to plan individually for pupils” - Ofsted

2018-19 saw a new curriculum introduced at Pennine View focused on age related expectations, whilst the school has also developed bespoke provision for a number of children and young people whose social, emotional and mental health needs can often lead to very challenging and disruptive behaviors. The creation of this new provision has led to fewer fixed term exclusions and better, more personalized learning for our most vulnerable pupils. In 2018-19, the new curriculum was successfully introduced, with 78% of pupils making expected progress or better.



## 2. SPONSORING AND IMPROVING SCHOOLS IN NEED OF HELP AND SUPPORT

Whilst the Trust has not been asked to sponsor another school or academy in 2018-19, we have continued to work with partners to provide support to the wider school improvement system, with Headteachers and other senior leaders undertaking commissions for Learners First and the local authority to support a range of other schools.

The Trust has also agreed to support North Ridge Community School as an associate from September 2019 and has put a plan in place to ensure there is sufficient senior leadership capacity for the school to continue its improvement journey, following a “Requires Improvement” OfSTED judgement in the autumn of 2018. An application for the school to academise and join Nexus will go to the Department for Education in the autumn.



## 3. DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS



There have been a range of ways in which the Trust has developed new partnerships in 2018 –19.

Firstly, 5 schools are in the process of joining Nexus MAT: Crags Community Primary School; Coppice Special School; and Heatherwood Special School are all due to convert in the autumn of 2019, whilst Becton Hospital School is scheduled to join the Trust in spring 2020 along with North Ridge Community School, if the latter’s application to academise is endorsed by the Regional Schools Commissioner. Contact has also been made by a school outside of South Yorkshire to explore joining the Trust.

With the free schools we have in pre-opening, this sets the MAT on course to have 11 constituent academies by September 2021. The growth of the MAT at this time bucks the trend nationally, where voluntary academisation (as opposed to sponsorship) has slowed down in the face of Government education policy uncertainty as a result of Brexit, and 4 different individuals appointed as Secretary of State for Education in the past 3 years.

The Trust has continued to grow its Extended Services offer, with over 130 children accessing the provision delivered through our academies. This is more than 3 times the stipulated engagement figure in our contract with Rotherham Council.

The Trust has led the establishment of a MAT Strategic Partnership Board across South Yorkshire, which will create a platform for 30+ schools to explore joint procurement and shared services opportunities.

The Trust has furthered its partnership with Sheffield Hallam University through the development of a teacher training pathway specifically aimed at experienced teaching assistants who don't have A –level qualifications. A trial cohort will undertake this pilot from the autumn of 2019.

The Trust is in the early phase of developing a partnership with the Doncaster Deaf Trust, after their new Executive Principal reached out to request a meeting to explore common ground.

We have also furthered our partnership with Grenoside Community Primary School, with the commissioning of their Headteacher to provide Consultant Head support for Crags in 2019-20, as Crags do not have a Deputy Headteacher of their own.

## 4. CREATING NEW SCHOOL PROVISION TO MEET EMERGENT NEED



In the past few month we have signed off designs for both Bader Academy (Doncaster - pictured above), which is due to open in September 2020, and Discovery Academy (Sheffield), which is due to open in September 2021. We have also appointed Executive Principal Designates to both schools. An expression of interest has been registered for a second free special school in Sheffield, with applications due to be submitted in September 2019.

The Trust has also supported Hilltop and Kelford in submitting business cases for further site expansion with investment from Rotherham MBC, which have both been agreed in principle. When one factors in the creation of new satellite provision by Abbey at Horizon Community College and the development of bespoke SEMH provision at Pennine View: the Trust is evidently continuing to work strategically with local authorities to ensure we exhaust every possible avenue to grow our offer in the face of demand for places from children and families.

## 5. ENHANCING PATHWAYS FOR 19+ PROVISION

LANDMARKS in partnership with  
Nexus Multi Academy Trust



The beginning of 2018-19 saw a step change in our approach to structuring careers guidance across our academies, as we moved to a centrally-led model to ensure compliance with statutory guidance and also share our good and developing practice in meeting the Gatsby standards. Our work has led to Nexus officers being invited to prestige events in the region to share what we're doing with employers and other schools.

Beyond life at our academies, we have also worked throughout 2018-19 with the independent college [Landmarks](#) to create a new SEND 19-25 offer that better meets the needs of our school leavers. For too many years now, there hasn't been the progressive pathways in place for our students when they leave our schools, and the closure of day centre services by local authorities further reduces the options available to young adults and families. By working with a like-minded partner in Landmarks - that shares our values - we have been able to establish a new hub in Rotherham (Milestone House) which will open in September 2019 with at least 5 young people transitioning from our academies' sixth forms.

If demand for this new offer increases then there is a commitment from Landmarks to grow to meet need, and by working closely together we can help shape an integrated pathway for those leavers who want this new offer, so that we optimise their learning and experiences from their time in our academies to ensure there is a truly progressive 19+ offer in place for families.



## 6. ESTABLISHING RESIDENTIAL PROVISION FOR OUR MOST COMPLEX PUPILS

Out of all of the MATs strategic objectives, this is the one that is most dependent on local authorities committing to co-production, which is something we have thus far not been able to secure despite repeated efforts. The original plan for our Sheffield free school was for it to have residential provision included, but we supported Sheffield City Council's decision to remove this from the specification to re-purpose the budget to create a larger building to accommodate more pupil places.

Discussions remain ongoing with Local Authority commissioners to explore how the Trust can help meet their needs by establishing local residential provision, and this issue has been raised directly with the Director of Children's Services in both Rotherham and Doncaster.





## 7. ENSURING A FINANCIALLY VIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

2018-19 has been the most challenging year to date for the academies in the MAT, with two of them starting the year with an in-year deficit. Thanks to tight Trust leadership and redesigned financial management resources, we have reached a position at the year end where we have reduced both academy deficits to a manageable level that will ensue financial recovery in 2019-20 without the need for significant action to be taken, such as workforce reform and redundancy.

Whilst these outcomes are most welcome, it has been a difficult path to reach this point by the end of August 2019 and has involved a lot of direct intervention from the MAT executive with local authority commissioners to negotiate more funding where this is needed.

**Consolidated Turnover  
in 2018/19:  
£12,612,853**

During the same period, we have also restructured and strengthened the central Trust finance team to increase capacity and resource in response to audit findings. We have created and appointed to 3 new Finance & Compliance Officer posts. We have further embedded use of the new financial management system HCSS and are preparing for further changes in 2019-20 with the advent of the Education & Skills Funding Agency's new chart of accounts. At the end of 2018/19, The Trust and its constituent academies had uncommitted revenue in reserve at 6.58% of total predicted equity outturn.

Since his appointment as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education, Lord Agnew has introduced a series of changes to the Academies Financial Handbook to strengthen scrutiny of MATs and increase the steps Trusts must take to provide assurance to auditors and Government that they are a going concern. New clauses have also been added to DfE grant conditions, and our success in bidding for the MAT Development and Improvement Fund grant brought with it a requirement to have a MAT-wide external audit using the DfE's Integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning (ICFP) toolkit. This external auditor reported positively on the Trust's resource allocation and we will continue to use this tool to support future budget planning and review work.

Given the planned growth of the MAT in 2019/20, the medium term financial plan will be rewritten to reflect the revised status quo of the Trust, as well as reflect confirmed increases in costs, such as inflationary rises to pay. Craggs is due to benefit from the introduction of the national funding formula for mainstream schools in England, though the implementation date of this new funding system has already been pushed back by 12 months and at this time it is unclear when this new funding model will be in place.

## IN SUMMARY...

OfSTED have found that all of our academies have improved since their last inspections, whilst each school has been celebrated for its uniqueness. The MAT approach to supporting and managing our academies has been recognised in these inspections.

Thanks to planned growth in our academies, 132 more children receive a high quality education in specialist state provision in 2019, compared to 2016. This will increase to at least 248 by September 2020.

Since 2017, we have attracted £2,042,291 of condition improvement funding to make our schools better, more secure and safer places for children to learn and succeed.

The financial resilience created by the Trust since 2016 has allowed our academies to take a medium term response in the face of short term financial uncertainty, in a climate where many other schools are making (or have already made) workforce reductions and are seeking parental contributions to cover core staffing costs.

We have continued to plan and deliver strategic change. This in turn has secured exciting opportunities for the next phase of the Trust's growth and development into 2019/20.

As we look to 2019-20, we know we start the year with secured growth ahead of us; high quality educational provision in all our academes; and a stable workforce which will continue to deliver better and better outcomes for all our children.



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