

# nexus

Multi Academy Trust



## Annual Report

Academic Year 2019-2020

**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;
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- Our employees and partners are passionate about being the best that they can be;
- Our Trust is relentlessly focused on improvement.

## Accounting Officer Introduction

The word 'unprecedented' makes regular appearances in our everyday vocabulary, but very rarely has it been as factually accurate in describing events as it has been in 2020. This has been a year of unprecedented worry and anxiety for so many of us; a year of unprecedented state intervention into our way of life; and a year of unprecedented interruption to the learning of our children and young people.

It is impossible to make a commentary on the 2019-20 academic year without acknowledging the huge role COVID-19 has played in defining it. Who knows if we'll still have social distancing and class bubbles in another 12 months time: all we know for sure right now is that there is a Government plan to get back to normal as quickly and safely as possible, and schools are at the heart of that aspiration.

Throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period, I have been repeatedly amazed at the calm, measured and selfless attitude of staff across our Trust. When families have needed certainty and support, our academies have been there to make sure they get that offer.

It's important we remember that COVID-19 wasn't ever-present through the entirety of this academic year, and the Trust has had its own (smaller!) 'unprecedented' experiences, with the conversion of 5 schools to become academies : the biggest structural change to Nexus MAT since we formed in 2016.

We've also made key leadership appointments across the Trust this year and have worked hard to ensure our new academy, Bader, is ready to open from September 2020.

Whilst our world will continue to be a little more uncertain than usual, we go into the new academic year with a clear requirement to welcome back all pupils and staff in September and do all we can every day to ensure that the loss of education for some is redressed by all. It's impossible to not feel excited by that challenge.

As in previous years, this report has been structured around the seven strategic objectives of the Trust's Strategic Plan, which drives the work of the Trust as a whole.

Warren Carratt  
Chief Executive Officer (Accounting Officer)



## OUR ACADEMIES...



The quality of provision at **Abbey** has continued to see the school face high demand for pupil places, with a further increase in 2019-20 compared to the previous year, and yet more pupils confirmed to be on roll in September 2020. In September 2019 the school opened its new satellite at Horizon Community College, Barnsley, which has been established to meet high demand from Barnsley families. This will continue to grow each year until it reaches capacity, with a truly integrated offer in place for those pupils who will benefit from it most.

As we have progressed through 2019-20, our work to ensure **Bader** is ready to open in the autumn has naturally ramped up. Monthly Project Board meetings have overseen the development of the site and the school offer, with the Executive Head Designate Karl O'Reilly appointed from 1 Sept 2019 to play an active role in the creation of our new academy. Whilst the Bader building won't be finished until January 2021, a temporary solution - Bader @ The Bridge - has been created for Y7 pupils, with transition support planned for those pupils in primary schools or electively home educated, ahead of them joining the school in January.



**Becton** finally completed its 2 year conversion journey on 1 April 2020, at the height of societal lockdown. Becton is a special school with 3 distinct delivery units: there is Hospital School provision for tier 4 children and young people at the Becton Centre and Sheffield Children's Hospital; there is special school provision for children with ASC at the Kenwood Centre; and there is outreach support for dual registered pupils from the Moncrieffe Site. Over the past 3 years, demand for places at Kenwood has increased hugely, with demand continuing to increase from Sept 2020.

**Coppice** converted to become an academy on 1 December 2019. Based in Hatfield, Doncaster, Coppice shares Executive Head Karl O'Reilly with Bader Academy. Coppice continues to be a popular special academy with demand for places outstripping supply. The school is actively involved in the Trust's work to create a more progressive KS5 offer for learners with moderate learning difficulties in Doncaster. In 2020 the Trust secured £408,695 of Condition Improvement Funding to improve the school roof and fire safety, with works planned over the summer.



Like Becton, **Craggs** endured a long wait to complete the conversion process, having started it in 2017. The school finally converted on 1 October 2019. The final year of being an LA maintained mainstream primary school was a challenging one for Craggs, as the local funding formula decisions made by Rotherham Council failed to deliver the funding increase promised by the Government. Whilst this limited the resourcing options, the school has nonetheless continued to develop its curriculum to better meet the needs of the community we serve. 2018-19 saw the school achieve record results in Key Stage 2 SATs under the leadership of new Headteacher Liz Normington, with similarly positive results forecast for 2019-20, before all national testing was suspended.

## OUR ACADEMIES...



**Heatherwood** became a Nexus MAT academy on 1 November 2019. One of the first actions undertaken by the Trust was to confirm Lisa Suter as permanent Executive Headteacher over Heatherwood and North Ridge schools, and advertise nationally for a permanent Head of School for September 2020. The Key Stage 5 offer at Heatherwood has grown markedly this year and will grow further in 2020-21. Like Coppice, the school is actively involved in the Trust's work to create a more progressive KS5 offer for learners with moderate learning difficulties in Doncaster.

**Hilltop** started 2019-20 with a new Deputy Headteacher and clear plans in place for further adaptation to the school site with the addition of a new Therapy Suite, part funded by Rotherham Council. The school has continued to be over its planned places and in early 2020 the Trust secured additional investment from Sheffield City Council to create a new classroom to ensure we could place a number of Sheffield children. The school continued to remain open to a high number of pupils throughout the lockdown period and was the designated Nexus MAT base for Easter and Spring Bank COVID-19 holiday provision for Rotherham and Doncaster pupils.



2019-20 saw **Kelford** Headteacher Jacky Tattershall resign, following her appointment to a new role with the central Trust team. As a consequence, the Trust went to national advert to secure a replacement for September 2020. 2019-20 saw the creation of a new complex ASC resource at Kelford, part-funded by Rotherham Council. The recently created KS5 offer at The View has continued to go from strength to strength and provides additional diversity and choice for children and families.

**North Ridge** Community School converted to become a Nexus MAT academy on 1 April 2020. The school had been through a challenging period between 2016 - 2018, with successive Requires Improvement judgments from Ofsted and high turnover in the Headship. In 2018-19, Lisa Suter and Karl O'Reilly joined the school as joint Exec Heads, with Lisa taking the role on solely from September 2019 when North Ridge became a formal associate school of the Trust. In a monitoring visit in December 2019, Ofsted reported that *"Improvements are clear to see. Members of staff told me that the school is a different place now. They feel positive, enjoy coming to work and have confidence that they can play their part in making the school an even better place to learn."*



**Pennine View** had its long-awaited Ofsted inspection in March 2020, where the school was found to have improved and was judged to no longer be inadequate. The Require Improvement judgement reflected the strengths and weakness of the academy, and the lead inspector was incredibly positive about the efforts made to ensure the most vulnerable learners in education are kept engaged. The HMI reported that *"Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Trustees and governors are well-informed. They question leaders effectively and make good use of external support to quality assure the effect of actions to improve the school."*



# 1. INCREASING QUALITY OF PROVISION

Whilst there is a symbiotic relationship between Nexus MAT and our constituent academies, it is also the distinct role of 'the Trust' to ensure all of our academies are in a state of continual improvement. In recognising the distinction between the central Trust and the MAT as a whole, Directors commissioned [Learners First](#) to undertake a MAT review in the autumn of 2019. The findings of this review reflected the self-assessed strengths and weakness of the Trust and informed decision making on the revisions to the central Trust structure for September 2020.

Improving the quality of provision across all Nexus academies has continued to drive the work of Trust governance and leadership, and within the parameters of our Collaborative School Improvement Framework (CSIF) we have coordinated cross-Trust activity to support shared learning and improvement. Support & Challenge Teams - made up of pairings of Nexus Headteachers - began to be rolled out in the autumn. Networking groups for Newly and Recently Qualified Teachers have been established, and we have created a behavior leads action research group to further develop our model of active learning. We have also started a joint endeavor across all academies to secure Arts Mark status. Whilst the CSIF has been revised ahead of 2020-21, all of these initiatives will continue into the next academic year.



The Trust has continued to invest in clinical supervision for all designated safeguarding leads, provided by an independent, qualified children's social worker. Similarly, the Trust's Information Governance & ICT Strategic Lead has continued to facilitate regular training and support for e-safety leads in our academies. A consultant Head was commissioned by the Trust to support Craggs. A group of Lead Heads was assembled to provide MAT improvement capacity following the departure of the Trust's school improvement lead in August 2019.

A further £408,695 of Condition Improvement Funding was secured for improvements to Coppice.

In February 2020, the Trust hosted its second whole workforce conference, which welcomed over 450 delegates to the New York Stadium for a day focused on mental wellbeing and positivity. The day evaluated incredibly well, and the need for future investment in similar events was reinforced by the responses to the MAT's first every employee opinion survey, with the desire for cross-school collaboration and wellbeing a common theme across all academies.

The Trust ensured all leadership vacancies in our academies were filled through national recruitment campaigns, reaffirming our commitment to be an outward looking MAT that creates opportunity for all.

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



The Trust did not sponsor any schools in 2019-20, though targeted support was provided to North Ridge by bringing permanence to the Headship and providing additional, experienced leadership capacity with the reallocation of an experienced Deputy Headteacher from another Nexus academy.

We also strengthened leadership further with the creation of - and appointment to - a new Head of School post for September 2020, following a national recruitment campaign.

All our academy leaders continue to work within and across local education partnerships to support other schools in their local areas, drawing on the wider Trust resources where this is appropriate.

## 3. DEVELOPING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The growth experienced by the Trust in 2019-20 is a direct result of our effective partnership working, as is the growth and development of our existing academies through joint-endeavors with local authority commissioners, overseen by the Trust.

The Trust contract with Rotherham Council for short breaks provision has continued to widen participation with more families from partner schools also accessing the offer. 285 children are registered as service users, compared to 180 in the previous year.

New partnership working with 5 Rivers

Academy Trust and Grenoside Primary School enriched the Trust's school improvement work in 2019/20 and laid the foundations for further collaboration in future years.

The Trust has also applied to Doncaster Council for a longer term lease of The Bridge site, to utilise this as a new KS4/KS5 hub for Doncaster learners with SEND. This would create a more progressive offer for Doncaster young people and also create more space in our existing Doncaster special academies, if we could relocate KS5 provision here.





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



Artist Rendition of Discovery Academy

With Bader opening in September 2020, the Trust will shift its pre-opening work to focus on Discovery Academy, which is scheduled to open in the autumn of 2021. With an Executive Headteacher Designate already appointed, the new academy is well into the planning phase, though COVID-19 has interrupted some of the early building works which means the school won't be ready for September '21. However, the Trust is working with Sheffield Council at this early stage to consider temporary solutions so that the impact of the delay can be mitigated as effectively as possible.

The Trust was unsuccessful in its application for a second Sheffield free school, though we were shortlisted for interview. Whilst we were disappointed with this, we understand that having two schools in the pre-opening phase in January 2020 (when interviews took place) didn't allow us to empirically evidence that we have a successful track record of taking a new school from concept to opening. Our success with the opening of Bader will remedy that.

## 5. ENHANCING PATHWAYS FOR 19+ PROVISION

Our collaboration with [Landmarks College](#), to create a new SEND 19-25 offer that better meets the needs of our school leavers, has successfully completed its first year, with more pupils transitioning here in September 2020.

Whilst currently the provision at Milestone House is an offer most appropriate for Rotherham based learners, we have opened negotiations with neighboring local authorities to explore how we can work together to better meet their needs in future.





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

As in previous years, this is the one strategic objective that the Trust where progress continues to be frustrated, as local authorities continually place looked after children at great distance due to their being an insufficient supply of specialist placements locally, whilst at the same time refusing to engage locally with the Trust to create a local, better value offer. The insufficiency of provision locally is as present as it as ever been, though - unfortunately - the commitment from local authority commissioners to engage in a co-produced solution continues to be absent.



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

The financial health of the Trust as a whole has improved throughout 2019-20, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the Trust has continued to support Heads in securing fair funding for all pupils with SEND, and we have maintained a tight grip on planned and actual expenditure.

Secondly, many of the schools joining the Trust this year converted with historical surpluses which strengthen the overall financial resilience of the MAT, whilst we continue to expect all academies to have viable in-year budgets without structural deficit.

The Trust has formally requested a review of base funding for one of our special academies - North Ridge - as it is the poorest funded SLD special school in South Yorkshire, getting just over £2,000 less per pupil than the nearest comparable setting. Doncaster Council have refused this request, but have committed to review all special school funding in the near future. This matter has been raised with the Department for Education.

The roll out of the National Funding Formula will see record investment by Government in the state education system and our Medium Term Financial Strategy has been updated to reflect this, in conjunction with the evolved state of the Trust.

**Consolidated Income  
in 2019/20:**

**£21,029,873**

## IN SUMMARY...

2019-20 has been another hugely successful year for Nexus MAT. COVID-19 created many problems for so many of us, but also saw our academies go above and beyond to ensure pupils had a school place wherever a family wanted one. In this regard, the pandemic created the opportunity for our academies to be at their best, and they were.

With the expected structural changes associated with growth, we knew that this year was about managing change effectively and returning to a point of normalisation with a new status quo. In many ways, having to respond to the pandemic has meant that the Trust and its new academies have had to work together more closely, more rapidly to navigate the choppy waters of uncertainty, and as consequence we end 2019/20 with a degree of familiarity and collaboration that we likely otherwise wouldn't have.

Nexus MAT has continued to make a positive impact on all of our academies, which has (again) been recognised by Ofsted, and we go into the new academic year with a clear plan for how we can and will continue "to be the best we can be" for the communities we serve - and for those we don't yet have the privilege of serving.



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