

# nexus

Multi Academy Trust

*Learning together to be the best we can be*

## Annual Report 2024-25



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

# Accounting Officer Executive Summary



2024-25 marked our tenth academic year of operation, having opened the Trust in 2015-16. Over those ten academic years, we have worked hard with our growing family of schools to fulfil the Trust vision of “Learning together, to be the best we can be”, and these last 12 months have continued to build on the huge successes we’ve enjoyed over the last decade.

Whilst our Trust has both special and mainstream schools, we do have a majority of specialist settings and it has therefore been another challenging year for our MAT with demand for placements outstripping the sufficient supply of provision. We are working well with all our local authority commissioners to try and keep our schools ahead of this demand curve, with lots of expansion projects being undertaken this year and into 2025-26. Creating new schools as well as extending and improving our existing estate has been central to this work, and we have secured unprecedented multi-million pound investment from our partner councils to ensure our schools are positioned as strongly as possible to meet current and future demands. Without the support and strategic intervention of our Trust, I am without doubt that our schools would otherwise be overwhelmed and at serious risk of declining in quality.

There remains an unclear policy position from the Government in regards to SEND, who - now, having been in power for over 12 months - have promised a white paper in the autumn of 2025. However, there is also a cacophony of different fora in place to advise on the wider system and the impact this has on learners with SEND, with a national curriculum and assessment review group, an expert advisory group on inclusion, an Ofsted advisory group on inclusion, and - most recently - an inclusion taskforce all being convened over the last 12 months. All of these different fora risk creating confusion and/or obfuscation, at a time when, day to day, special schools face a tidal wave of demand. We have continued to work closely with our sector body, the Confederation of School Trusts, to contribute to a report that crystallises the financial impact of Government policy over the last 11 years on special schools, in the hope we can start to see a step change in future, with a greater value placed on the essential work that state specials deliver. Here’s hoping...

The Nexus MAT Board of Directors has, over this last year, explored the potential for a merger with another MAT, Ebor Academy Trust. This exploratory work started in September 2024 and cumulated with stakeholder consultation in July 2025. If the merger were to progress, it would create one of the largest MATs in the country, spanning all the way from Scarborough down to south Nottinghamshire with a balanced mix of special and mainstream primary schools.

This has been a significant strategic undertaking for the Board, alongside overseeing the continued growth of Nexus MAT. At the same time as doing this, the Board has received Ofsted inspection reports for five our academies, securing good or better in all areas - something we’re all really proud of, and reflection of our strength in school leadership, improvement and quality assurance.

It continues to be my absolute privilege to hold this office, and to submit this annual report of our shared achievements throughout the 2024-25 academic year. Thank you.

Warren Carratt

Chief Executive Officer (Accounting officer)

# OUR ACADEMIES...



Abbey School continues to be under high demand for placements from the surrounding local authorities. The school was inspected in May 2025 and retained its previous grade of Outstanding, with the Senior HMI leading the inspection commending school leaders for their hard work. There were 233 pupils on roll this year.



Bader Academy was inspected in July 2025, and was found to be "Good" in all areas by Ofsted, building on its "Requires Improvement" judgement in 2023. This is a fair reflection of the journey the school has been on, since opening mid-pandemic in September 2020. There were 119 pupils on roll this year.



Becton School has continued to support some of our society's most medically vulnerable pupils in tier 4 NHS care and through medical education of pupils dual rolled at our Chapel House setting. The school will be renamed as "Kingfisher Academy" from September 2025.



Beech Academy continues to face growing demand for more placements, with the Trust entering into discussions with Nottinghamshire County Council to secure a new site for 2025-26 to help meet the rising need for more places. There were 114 pupils on roll this year.



Coppice School has continued to be a setting which more and more families want for their child, and further expansion works are planned for 2025-26 to ensure we have the space to meet the needs of current and future pupils. There were 167 pupils on roll this year.



Craggs Community School continues to work towards improvement at its next inspection, though the new Ofsted framework will change how this will be assessed. The school, like many mainstream primaries nationally, has seen a reduction in pupil numbers over recent years. There were 344 pupils on roll this year.



Discovery Academy continues to face high demand for placements. The school had its first Ofsted inspection in June 2025, being found to be "Good" in all areas. There were 110 pupils on roll this year.



Fountaindale School was inspected by Ofsted in May 2025 and was found to be "Good" in all areas, an exceptional achievement for a school that, at its last full inspection, was closed due to safety concerns, before being sponsored by Nexus MAT. The school expanded this year, in the face of increased demand for places. There were 94 pupils on roll this year.



Endeavour Academy opened on 1 October 2024, as a new academy following the sponsorship of its predecessor school, Derrymount School, which was found to be inadequate by Ofsted before joining Nexus MAT. Throughout the last year, school and Trust leaders have worked to accelerate improvements in school. There were 90 pupils on roll this year.

# OUR ACADEMIES...



Heatherwood School continues to grow and evolve, meeting the needs of more pupils this year compared to previous ones, with a more diverse cohort of pupils attending the school. There were 94 pupils on roll this year.

Hilltop School was inspected in February 2025 and was found to remain a “Good” school by Ofsted. The school had leadership changes throughout the year, with a new Executive Headteacher being appointed in February, a post shared with North Ridge Community School. There were 183 pupils on roll this year, with the large-scale Yorkshire Children’s Charity rebuild programme starting over the summer.



Kelford School started the school year by co-locating pupils at the Trust’s new key stage 4/5 site, Enterprise Works, whilst reducing its footprint at the Forest View site it shares with Hilltop School. Due to growth, three new modular classrooms will be installed over the summer. There were 155 pupils on roll this year.

Kenwood Academy ended the school year with approval for the West Riding campus to be de-amalgamated and become it’s own new academy, likely in January 2026. The school opened its new provision at Enterprise Works in September 2024, and continues to face high demand for more places. There were 256 pupils on roll this year, 62 of which attend the West Riding campus.



Lotus Academy opened on 1 September 2024, as a new academy following the sponsorship of its predecessor school, Holgate Meadows, which was found to be inadequate by Ofsted before joining Nexus MAT. The Trust appointed a new Executive Headteacher in the summer term, a post shared with Bader Academy. Throughout the last year, school and Trust leaders have worked to accelerate improvements in school. There were 97 pupils on roll this year.

North Ridge Community School was inspected in November 2024, securing “Good” and “Outstanding” judgments for the quality of provision. The school is increasing its capacity further for September 2025 with the addition of a new modular at The Bridge for Key Stage 4/5 pupils. There were 159 pupils on roll this year.



Pennine View School opened the doors to its hub at McAuley Catholic High School in September 2024, which has helped to enhance the inclusivity of the local offer in Doncaster. There were 158 pupils on roll this year.

The Willows School continues to face significant demand for more places, and expansion work of the school site will be undertaken over the summer to create more flexible space for pupils and staff. There were 191 pupils on roll this year.



# STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASING QUALITY OF PROVISION IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM

In September 2024, we opened our shared Key Stage 4 & 5 centre, Enterprise Works, with four schools sharing this space to provide an ambitious and progressive learning pathway for young people, alongside the central Trust team.

The Collaborative School Improvement Framework (CSIF) continues to drive quality assurance and improvement activity across our MAT, and the work of the central trust team alongside school leaders ensures that Directors were anticipatory of the outcomes of the Ofsted inspections we had at Abbey, Bader, Discovery, Fountainsdale, Hilltop and North Ridge schools. The schools performance dashboard continues to present an honest and accurate reflection of our academies, allowing for deep dive scrutiny by Directors.

We completed significant capital works across of our academies, with roofing projects taking place at Coppice, Heatherwood and Kelford schools, which has made huge improvements to those three sites and ensured we have a more secure and sustainable estate. We have also used local authority funding to expand Fountainsdale school and increase capacity at Coppice and North Ridge schools. We have worked with the Yorkshire Children's Charity to secure £3m investment to improve the main site of Hilltop School, with these transformation works starting in the summer of 2025.

Our Trust continued to maintain high retention rates of our workforce, validating the amazing results of our 2024 employee opinion survey, where 98% of employees feel driven in their work to make their school a success; 94% of employees look forward to coming to work most days; 95% of employees have confidence in their school leadership team, and believe that the school is managed effectively.

In February 2025 the Trust hosted a whole-MAT conference, where 1,400 staff from across our family of schools came together to learn and develop. The focus was wellbeing and positivity, with the event evaluating really well.

We have introduced new systems and processes which streamline bureaucracy and reduce workload for teachers and school leaders, with the implementation of a new health and safety system (IAMCompliant) and a new purchase-to-pay system (Planergy).

The Trust has also invested in the creation of a cutting edge e-Sports facility at Enterprise Works, which will provide an enhanced digital curriculum offer for a number of our schools as well as being made available to other schools and commissioners across our geographical footprint.

We have also continued to deliver on our commercial commitments for an extended schools service for Rotherham Council, a mental health commission for Sheffield City Council, and a SEND consultancy offer for Doncaster Council.

The Trust has continued to meet the high standards of safeguarding expected of us, as reflected in the annual Statement of Assurance from the Named Safeguarding Director, which is published on the Trust website.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS TO BETTER MEET NEED

The continued health and growth of our MAT continues to be rooted in our investment in genuine partnership working.

Throughout 2024-25 we worked with Bents Green, Nottingham Hospital and Home Education Learning Centre and Seven Hills schools to progress academisation, as these three settings convert to join our MAT in the autumn of 2025. We supported the Levett School on its improvement journey through the last academic year, which contributed to the school being found "Good" in all areas in April 2025. We are also working with other schools in the local area to explore academisation.

The Trust worked in conjunction with nine other MATs across the region as part of the collaborative known as the Positive Change Alliance, sharing our best-practice approach to the contract management of workforce agencies to help the collective drive down costs and enhance quality controls. We have also been commissioned by another local Trust to provide commercial service support, and we are delivering HR and governance support services to other local trusts and schools.

**FLEXIBLE  
WORKING  
AMBASSADOR  
MATS AND  
SCHOOLS**

We have exceeded the performance targets set as part of the Department for Education's Flexible Working Ambassador programme, and we have therefore increased our commission to enhance our reach to more schools and settings, nationally.

We have worked closely with our partner local authorities to increase the supply of specialist provision in all areas, which has included the co-creation of a new independent special school in Sheffield to meet the needs of learners with the most complex needs, without their needing to leave the city area. We are also working to create a further 100 places across our Doncaster special schools for September 2026, drawing down additional capital investment and supporting the local authority in meeting its sufficiency needs.

We have continued to work in partnership with Waterton Academy Trust to roll out our teaching assistant apprenticeship programme, and we have become a named professional partner of the National Institute of Teaching, through which we will deliver a bespoke pathway of initial teaching training into 2025-26.

In July 2025 we hosted the Department for Education's Strategy Unit for their annual development day, bringing policy makers to the front line of state education and using this as an opportunity to share the positives and challenges that the sector is facing right now.

The Trust launched its training and development offer, the Enterprise Learning Institute, in September 2024 and this has started to expand its reach to other schools across the region.

The Trust has also formally consulted on a proposed merger with Ebor Academy Trust, with a suggested completion date of September 2026. At the same time, Nexus MAT has been approached by another smaller Trust with a view to coming together in 2027. Both of these initiatives are being actively explored into 2025-26 and may or may not go through to completion, though they herald significant potential for how we can create something new to establish ourselves as a national influencer on behalf of the communities we serve, beyond the confines of the geographical footprint we currently occupy.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: MAINTAINING A FINANCIALLY VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND ETHICALLY DRIVEN MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

The Trust was recognised for its good work in a number of national awards' categories this year, being named inclusive trust of the year at MATA, and being finalist for the TES awards, School Estates awards and the National Governance Association annual awards.

The Trust Board of Directors managed a period of change, with three of our longest serving Directors stepping down on 31 August 2024. Three "advisors" to the Board were ready and waiting to take the place of these retiring Directors, and this transition was managed seamlessly. Victoria Morris stepped down as Director on 31 August 2025, and the Directors approved a replacement for her in July, bringing in some additional experience of special school leadership by appointing a serving Headteacher to the Board of Directors.

The Trust continues to be committed to the Care Leaver Covenant, and we also remain a committed and accredited national living wage employer. In the summer of 2024, we became only the second multi academy trust nationally to receive the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) accreditation, an internationally recognised kite mark of good practice, and the Trust is currently the only Trust to hold the CIPS kitemark. This has helped spearhead our capacity to provide support to other Trusts locally and nationally.

The Trust has continued on its journey towards sustainability and decarbonisation, linked into our capital improvement programme, with new electric vehicle charging points installed across the majority of our estate. The Trust has continued to offer staff discounted access to the Westfield Health programme, and we have also utilised our Staff Parliament to consult on new ways of supporting employee wellbeing.

The Government has continued to set a minimum funding guarantee for specials schools of 0% for this year and next, which will continue to leave special and alternative provision schools with financial pressures to alleviate. There is also a risk that the proposed Schools' Support Staff Negotiating Body could negatively impact on the competitiveness of pay, if this diverges from local government pay awards.

**Consolidated revenue  
expenditure in 2024/25  
was £75.9m**

Yet again, despite all those challenges, good financial management by our schools and our trust has ensured we have contingency funds available to support our schools through short-term uncertainty, protecting jobs and ensuring our schools are placed in a strong position to grow in response to the increased needs of children and families, with as much stability as possible.

However, there still remains a clear and present need for all schools to see real terms funding enhancements that put us beyond the position in 2010, and the state of the public finances makes this a real challenge for government and a real risk to mitigate for all schools.

The Trust also works hard to support the wider public sector system, with senior leaders represented on the Confederation of School Trusts' Policy Advisory Group, the Headteacher Reference Group, the South Yorkshire Police & Crime Panel, local parent/carers forums, local authority schools' forums, the Teacher Pension Scheme Pension Board and by individuals undertaking governance roles in other local trusts and schools.

## LOOKING TO THE NEXT ANNUAL REPORT...

Our Trust is on course to be 22 to 25 schools by the end of 2025-26. Nexus MAT is now an established large Trust, and our annual equity funding is forecast to be over £100m next year.

Sheffield is the locality where we will have the most schools, with a growing presence in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City. Merger with Ebor Academy Trust would create a new MAT with around 50 schools, with a strong presence across the Yorkshire and Humber region across special, alternative provision and mainstream primary. However, Nexus MAT is under no external pressure to merge, and the Trust would continue to flourish and grow if the merger were not to proceed. Excitingly, either way our schools will continue to be part of an eco-system that keeps decision making as close as possible to the communities we serve, and uses our collective endeavor to innovate and improve.

The policy horizon for state education isn't clear, with the Government suggesting radical reforms to and for the SEND system whilst the path to achieving this appears to be fraught with difficulty and conflicting agendas. The Government wants to enhance expectations and standards for mainstream schools, whilst simultaneously expecting them to be more inclusive than they have collectively been over the last decade, when demand for specialist provision has increased exponentially. Add in the challenge put forth by the Government's own back-benchers to early policy decisions - such as the winter fuel allowance and the intended changes to welfare - and this leaves a huge amount of uncertainty for how stated policy intent can transition to policy publication and implementation, with the next election creeping ever closer and opinion polls on the decline. The lack of any significant economic growth over the last 12 months also leaves big fiscal challenges for HM Treasury and, in turn, the Department for Education, and these challenges all passport on to schools.

We also have a new Ofsted inspection framework being rushed into place in the autumn, which breaks a promise that school leaders would have a full term's notice to digest what these new expectations mean, before inspection starts. Whilst overall grades went last year, the new framework appears to bring some risks alongside some positive changes, with the Chief Inspector being clear that attainment holds primacy in determining how well a school is delivering education. It remains to be seen how the Department's new RISE initiative will both impact those schools already eligible for intervention and also support those schools falling foul of the new inspection framework.

Despite the risks we face, our Trust continues to invest heavily in capacity to meet the demands of the partnerships we hold dear, and to ensure we can manage both risks and opportunities as they emerge. Our learning from the COVID pandemic five years ago was that, together, we are stronger and together we can face into any challenge and come through it better than we were before. We should, therefore, look to the next annual report with confidence and excitement for what the new academic year holds, and for how we can and will respond to the twists and turns of the road ahead. Together.

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