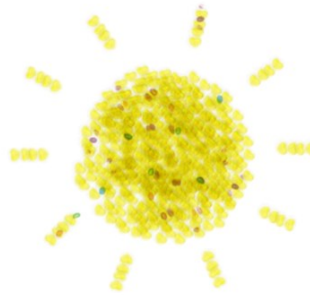
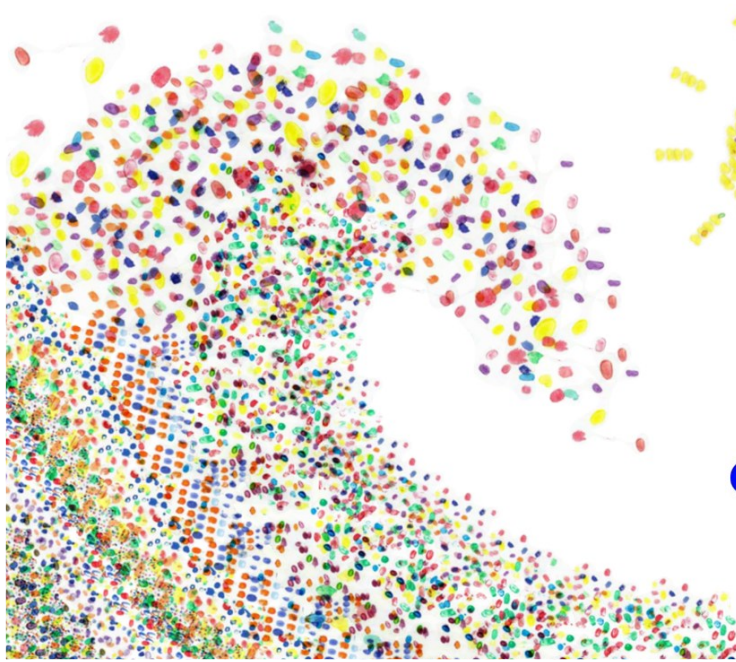


Annual Report 2025-26

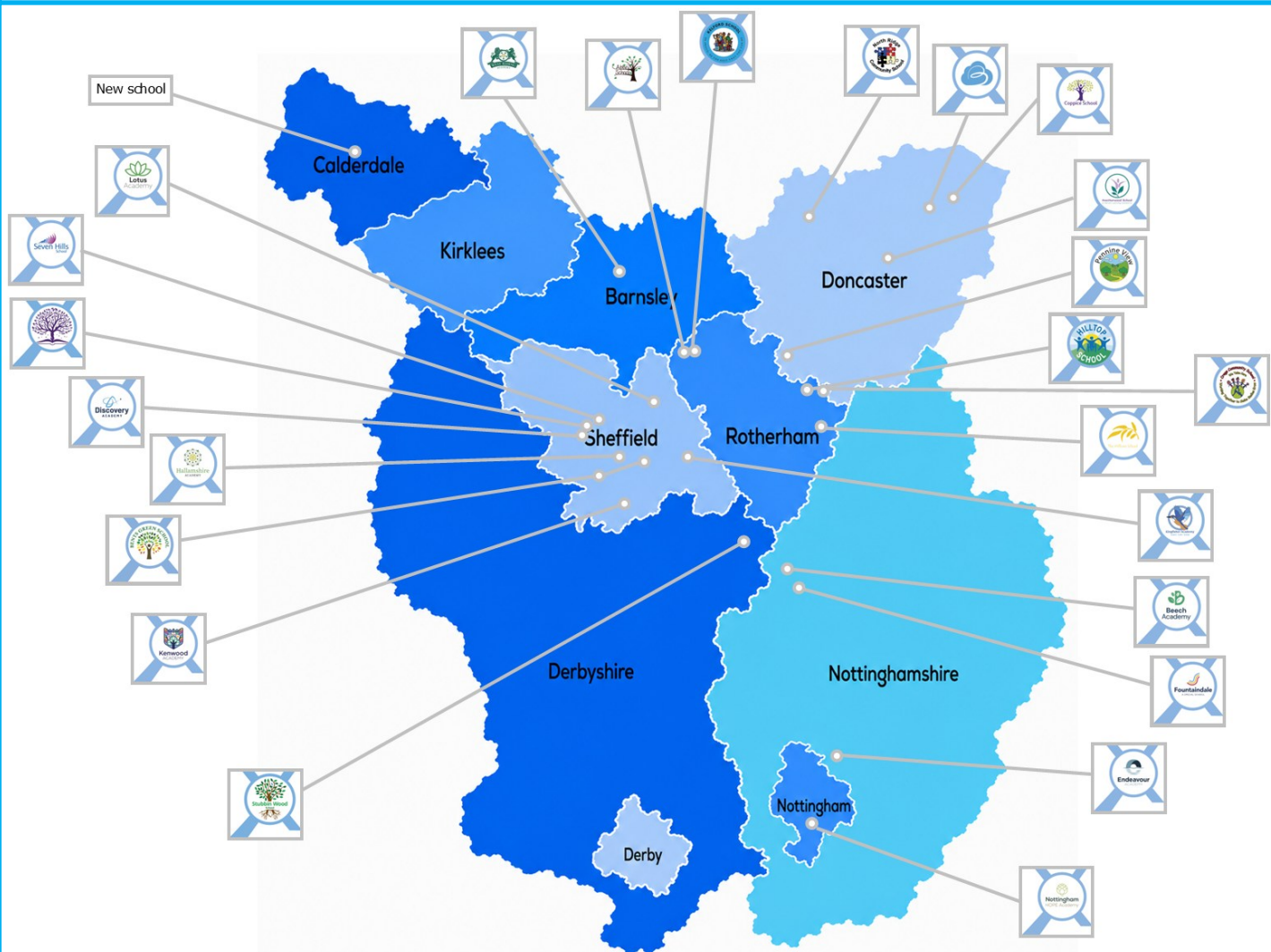


Caring
Nurturing
Child-Centred **Family-Focused**
Encouraging **Enriching**
Empowering **Passionate**
Inclusive

nexus

Multi Academy Trust

Learning together to be the best we can be



Nexus MAT geography & schools (open and those in pre-opening) as of 1 September 2026.

Some of these schools will not feature in this annual report, as they were not open schools or within the Trust during this reporting period, All open schools are detailed on pages 2 & 3.

Accounting Officer Executive Summary

On 1 June 2026 we celebrated our tenth birthday as a multi academy trust, which we marked through late June and early July with our "Festival of Fun" across all of our schools.

The cover image used for this year's annual report is a piece of artwork which all of our academies contributed to as part of our Festival of Fun, using pupil fingerprints to create a beautiful wave of positivity. Whilst we have had our fair share of challenges over the last decade, we have also achieved a huge amount of good with and for our schools, and it was a humbling process of reflection to look back over the last ten years and remember all the great things we've done, together. I'm particularly grateful to Gill Askew for her contribution as a Director over six of the last ten years. Gill gave her time and a huge amount of effort voluntarily to support and challenge us to be the best we can be. She stepped down on 31 August 2026, and we will be forever grateful for her time, effort and contribution to our MAT,



The inclusion of Luci Windle in this year's King's Birthday Honours - where she was awarded an MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) - was a tremendous personal achievement that felt like a fitting reflection of the journey of our Trust over time: Luci, one of our founding Headteachers, has achieved so much in her capacity first as Headteacher and now as Executive Headteacher, and seeing her included in this year's Honours was recognition we all celebrated with and for her. Whilst this personal accolade is wholly rooted in Luci's personal hard work and selflessness, it provides a fitting simile for the life changing work of our Trust.

The 2025-26 academic year started with us welcoming Bents Green School and Nottingham HOPE Academy into our family, and on 1 April 2026 we were very pleased to (finally!) open West Riding Academy in Barnsley, following its de-amalgamation from Kenwood Academy. We all had a shared sense of relief when we eventually got Seven Hills School over the academisation line, with the school officially joining us on 1 July 2026. This means we finish the school year with 21 open academies, with further growth being finalised for the autumn of 2026, as we seek to welcome The Levett School, Stubbin Wood School and Willow Park Academy into our Trust. We continue to progress the official opening of Hallamshire Academy, our new independent special school in Sheffield, and begin work to create our new special school in Halifax.

This year, we have commenced a new service offer for a small number of children accessing education other than at school (EOTAS), and we have continued to ensure we know our schools and that they are all in a state of continual improvement. We have shaped national policy through our engagement with the Policy Advisory Group of our sector body - the Confederation of School Trusts - and our partnership working with the Department for Education's Commercial Team. This latter joint endeavor has seen our Trust launch Nexus Services Group this year, a trading subsidiary owned 100% by our MAT (and therefore by our schools). This has seen us begin the process of driving up value for money in supply staff solutions, something we'll be turbo charging moving forward.

Locally, we have continued to work in open and constructive collaboration with our local authority partners, in what is an ever-increasingly complex SEND system. We launched our new e-sports offer in the autumn term - which is garnering more and more interest from council commissioners - and we've utilised our partnership working with council officers to create innovative solutions for more special school places. In some cases, this has led to our supporting other Trusts in their inclusion work, and this will likely grow further in the coming months and years.

The esteem our Trust now holds on the local, regional and national stage hugely outstrips what we thought was realistic back in 2016. Our application to progress merger with Ebor Academy Trust - if approved - will elevate our voice and influence further, whilst maintaining unbreakable ties to the values on which we were founded, and the ethos in which we operate. After all, if academy trusts are hardwired for one thing, it's evolution.

Here's to the next 10 years!

Warren Carratt

Chief Executive Officer (Accounting officer)

OUR ACADEMIES...



Abbey School continues to be under high demand for placements from surrounding local authorities. Abbey won the “empowering young leaders” award at the 2026 Youth Sport Trust annual conference. Abbey ended the year with 238 pupils on roll.

Bader Academy saw a change in leadership in 2025-26, with Kirsty Binks becoming the new permanent Headteacher for our academy. The school also secured the Nurture Award in the summer term, with Bader being one of the ‘most nurturing’ schools the verifier has ever assessed. Bader ended the year with 144 pupils on roll.



Beech Academy continues to face growing demand for more placements, with the Trust continuing to hold discussions with Nottinghamshire County Council to secure a new site for 2026-27 to help meet the rising need for more places. This year the school secured the “Prem Awareness” award. Beech ended the year with 113 pupils on roll. .

Bents Green School officially joined Nexus MAT as a convertor academy on 1 September 2026. . Bents Green retained its Trauma-Informed Schools accreditation in 2026, a fantastic achievement and a real recognition of the work that happens across our school every day. Bents Green ended the year with 355 pupils on roll



Coppice School has continued to be a setting which is high in demand for families. continues to be under high demand for placements from surrounding local authorities. This year the school also secured the “Prem Awareness” award. Coppice ended the year with 167 pupils on roll. .

Crags Community School continues to work towards improvement at its next inspection. Crags was awarded the Youth Sport Trust Well Schools Accreditation in 2026, and has also received reaccreditation for the Platinum School Games Mark, the first school in Rotherham to have achieved this 5 consecutive times. Crags ended the year with 431 pupils on roll.



Discovery Academy continues to face high demand for placements. continues to be under high demand for placements from surrounding local authorities. In 2026, school attained Silver award accreditation as a rights respecting school. Discovery ended the year with 121 pupils on roll.

Fountaindale School also saw a change in leadership in 2025-26, with Ben Norman becoming the new permanent Headteacher for our academy. This year the school also secured the “Prem Awareness” award. Fountaindale ended the year with 96 pupils on roll.



Endeavour Academy continues to work towards improvement at its next inspection. This year the school also secured the “Prem Awareness” award Endeavour ended the year with 106 pupils on roll.

Heatherwood School also saw a change in leadership in 2025-26, with Sam MacDonald becoming the new permanent Executive Headteacher for our academy. This year the school also secured the “Prem Awareness” award. Heatherwood ended the year with 97 pupils on roll.



Hilltop School continued to see its main site redeveloped as part of phase 2 of the Yorkshire Children’s Charity “Big Build” programme. This year the school also secured the “Prem Awareness” award. Hilltop ended the year with 188 pupils on roll.

OUR ACADEMIES...



Kelford School started the school year with the installation of three new modular classrooms. This year the school also secured the "Prem Awareness" award. Kelford ended the year with 174 pupils on roll.

Kenwood Academy was inspected in 2025-26 - the school's first ever Ofsted inspection —and was found to be either at expected or strong standard in all areas. This year the school also secured the "Prem Awareness" award. Kenwood ended the year with 218 pupils on roll.



Kingfisher Academy (née Becton School) was inspected in 2025-26 and was found to be at strong standard in all areas. The school opened an EYFS intake this year. In summer 2026, Kingfisher won a special award from Poetry By Heart, for the video of Custard the Dragon they made with some of our amazing pupils at the Sheffield Children's Hospital.

Lotus Academy continues to work towards improvement at its next inspection. The school saw a change in leadership in 2025-26, with Nigel Roberson becoming the new permanent Headteacher for our academy. In the summer term, Lotus received the Physical Literacy in PESSPA award. Lotus ended the year with 116 pupils on roll.



North Ridge Community School saw a change in leadership in 2025-26, with Jade Soler-Alcaraz becoming the new permanent Headteacher for our academy. This year the school also secured the "Prem Awareness" award. North Ridge ended the year with 178 pupils on roll.



Nottingham HOPE Academy officially joined Nexus MAT as a convertor academy on 1 September 2025. The school also completed its move to a new main site, and continues to meet the needs of pupils in Nottingham Children's Hospital and unaccompanied asylum seeking children at The Nest.



Pennine View School officially became a Voice 21 Oracy Centre of Excellence this year - the first Special School in the country to achieve this. Pennine View ended the year with 169 pupils on roll.

Seven Hills School officially joined Nexus MAT as a convertor academy on 1 July 2026. Seven Hills ended the year with 252 pupils on roll.



West Riding Academy officially opened on 1 April 2026, following de-amalgamation from Kenwood Academy. The school was a finalist this year in the Barnsley School of the Year Awards. West Riding ended the year with 79 pupils on roll.

The Willows School was inspected in 2025-26 and was found to be either at expected or strong standard in all areas, bar one. This year the school also secured the "Prem Awareness" award. The Willows ended the year with 197 pupils on roll.



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

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 The Willows (November 2025), Kenwood (February 2026), and Kingfisher (June 2026) schools. This was less secure than in previous years, an unavoidable side effect of the introduction of the new Ofsted inspection scorecard, which changed both the structure and grading system for school inspection. The schools performance dashboard continues to present an honest and accurate reflection of our academies which is moderated by the schools performance scrutiny board (a subcommittee of the Trust Board Standard's Committee), allowing for high level analysis and deep dive scrutiny by Directors.

We undertook more significant capital works across our academies, with roofing projects completing 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 made improvements at the Bents Green (Gleadless) Endeavour (Sherbrook) and Lotus sites. We have also secured additional local authority funding to expand Kelford School and improve The Bridge. We have worked with the Yorkshire Children's Charity to utilize the £3m+ investment to improve the main site of Hilltop School, with these transformation works continuing through the summer of 2026.

We have seen a positive response from our workforce, following our biennial employee opinion survey, with 53% of staff responding, a decrease from the 68% response rate in 2024. Of those staff who completed the employee opinion survey, between 75-80% have confidence in senior leaders; believe leaders are visible and approachable; believe leaders listen to staff feedback and act on it where possible; believe issues or concerns are addressed appropriately; and believe leaders act in pupils' best interests. Only 7% of staff don't look forward to coming to work most days. 92% of staff are clear about what is expected of them, and 93% of staff feel driven in their work to make the school a success.

In September 2025 the Trust launched its cutting edge e-Sports facility at Enterprise Works, which provides 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. The expansion of this is being actively progressed for 2026-27, with further suites planned for Barnsley and Nottinghamshire. We have also invested in our ICT estate, bringing all schools up to a refreshed minimum standard,

We have continued to deliver on our wider commitments for Barnsley, Doncaster Rotherham and Sheffield councils, through a combination of extended schools, consultancy and mental health support. This has ensured our families have the opportunity to access provision almost all year round.

We have commenced a new service offer for a small number of children accessing education other than at school (EOTAS), which has allowed learners with the most complex needs to continue to access education in their home locality.

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 health and growth of our MAT continues to be rooted in our investment in genuine partnership working, as has been reported in previous years.

In September 2025 we welcomed Bents Green School and Nottingham HOPE Academy into our family of schools. Bents Green has become our largest academy in terms of pupil numbers, and operates across five different sites. Nottingham HOPE Academy - whilst our second hospital school - is our first alternative provision academy, and our first in Nottingham City. Whilst we worked to welcome Seven Hills Schools into the Trust for the same date, a series of legal technicalities meant the conversion was delayed until 1 July 2026.

The Trust continued to work in conjunction with nine other MATs across the region as part of the collaborative known as the Positive Change Alliance (PCA), leading a coordinated approach to the contract management of contingent workforce agencies to help the collective drive down costs and enhance quality controls. Whilst we stepped away from the PCA in August 2026, we will continue to work with a number of Trusts from this partnership on contingent workforce arrangements and other areas of procurement.

We worked closely with Minerva Learning Trust to deliver a suite of commercial support services throughout the year, and we are delivering HR and governance support services to a number of other local trusts and schools. We have also agreed a commission with Maltby Learning Trust (soon to become Place Partnership Trust) to support their delivery of a primary specialist integrated resource.

We have worked closely with our partner local authorities to increase the supply of specialist provision in all localities, which has included the progression of the co-creation of a new independent special school in Sheffield to meet the needs of learners with the most complex needs. We have worked with officers at the city of Doncaster Council to explore the creation of a further 150 places, through the establishment of new SEND provision in Doncaster.

We have continued to work in partnership with Waterton Academy Trust to roll out our teaching assistant apprenticeship programme, and we have progressed our professional partner status with the National Institute of Teaching, delivering a bespoke pathway of initial teaching training.

We have supported Stone Soup Learns - a single academy trust in Nottingham City - by providing an off-payroll accounting officer service through 2025-26, and in the next year we will be providing CFO, HR and governance support services to this Trust.

We have continued to invest in our partnership with The Levett school, with a target academisation date of January 2027. We have also answered the Department for Education's call for help, by agreeing to take on two special schools from a failed MAT. Stubbin Wood - a special measures special school in Derbyshire - and Willow Park, a special school in Sheffield, are due to transfer for September 2026.

The Trust has also formally applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to merge with Ebor Academy Trust, with a proposed completion date of September 2027. As part of the pre-merger partnership work, we have worked in partnership with Ebor Academy Trust on some project management and corporate governance initiatives, whilst a merger advisory group of directors/trustees from both MATs has met throughout the year to provide strategic oversight of the merger process. A decision on the merger application is due to be taken by the DfE in the autumn of 2026.

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

The Trust was recognised yet again for its good work in a number of national awards' categories this year, being finalist for a second successive year at the TES awards, the NedEX awards and the Education Property Awards.

The Trust continues to be committed to the Care Leaver Covenant, and we also remain a committed and accredited national living wage employer.

In July 2026, the Trust became the first MAT to be re-accredited by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) for successful completion of the Procurement Excellence Programme (PEP), which was expanded to include Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards. This is a significant kite mark for any organisation to attain, and our being the first MAT to secure reaccreditation - with a broader field of assessment given the ESG standards - will ensure we maintain our position as a sector leader in commerciality. This has also enabled us to progress our work with the DfE commercial team.

To ensure our schools can secure best value, we have commenced operation of the MAT's trading subsidiary, Nexus Services Group (NSG). NSG is owned 100% by our MAT (and therefore by our schools), and allows us to explore innovative commercial solutions with and for state education.

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. This has included launching a "Menopause Champion" initiative.

**Consolidated revenue
expenditure in 2025/26
was £96m**

The Government has yet again set a minimum funding guarantee for special and AP schools of 0% for this year and next, which will continue to leave schools with financial pressures to alleviate from within core funding. There is a risk that the incoming Schools' Support Staff Negotiating Body could negatively impact on the competitiveness of pay, if this diverges from local government pay awards, or could, conversely, lead to an increase in unfunded pay pressures being placed on schools.

As in previous years, despite all these 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 academies 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 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 works hard to support the wider public sector system, with senior leaders represented on the Confederation of School Trusts' Policy Advisory Group, the National Network of Special Schools, 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 23-25 schools by the end of 2026-27. Nexus MAT is an established large Trust, and our annual equity funding is forecast to be well over £110m next year.

We will start the next school year with a new Secretary of State for Education, appointed by an equally new Prime Minister. It therefore remains to be seen whether there will be evolution of existing policy, or if we are entering a period with a more revolutionary approach to the organisation and accountability of all state schools. Like any other public service, our duty will be to deliver any changes prescribed by the Government, and to do this in the best way possible for the communities we serve.

The Government's SEND white paper has big ambitions for a more inclusive mainstream system with no real changes proposed to address some of the root causes of the current system dysfunctions, such as the way schools manage admissions or the mainstream accountability factors, many of which have created a disproportionate focus on attainment within a narrow suite of qualifications. In its new inspection regime, Ofsted reports that 87% of schools inspected through 2025-26 are at least at "expected" standard for inclusion, which conflicts with the problem-solving focus that policy makers and politicians have articulated as being at the heart of the SEND reforms.

The decision to not change the existing legislative environment - with tribunals already playing an unprecedented and disproportionate role in the placing of children in special schools - leaves special schools with no meaningful recourse to resist placement directions. Combined with the transfer of High Needs Block deficits onto the central Government balance sheet - with a condition of this being for councils to not plan for more state special school places in their localities - and the medium term looks very challenging indeed for our schools and our Trust. In short, it is a perfect storm of policy intent being prioritised over reality, with there being a significant difference and divergence between one and the other. This could lead to our schools becoming more overcrowded, with councils being either unwilling or unable to plan for growth whilst still needing more places.

However, we have over a decade's worth of experience in responding to these types of system challenges, and our constructive partnerships with our commissioning local authorities should help us to mitigate the emergent risks as best we can.

We are expecting Ofsted to visit a number of our schools through 2026-27, and we will continue to "do and learn" as we acclimatise to the new inspection scorecard. We have supported some of our senior leaders to become Ofsted inspectors, allowing us to pay-back into the wider schools system whilst also enhancing our range of experience. We will also be watching closely as Ofsted begin to develop the MAT inspection framework, which is likely to be piloted in the autumn of 2027.

We will continue to support the expansion of the service offer from Nexus Services Group (NSG), as we seek to enhance value for money for our schools and the wider state education sector. Having exceeded our financial targets for 2025-26, we will start 2026-27 in an evidentially strong position, with our networks and partnerships ensuring we are well placed to support further growth and expansion of NSG.

We are looking forward to growing to 26 schools in the next 12 months, with Stubbin Wood and Willow Park schools joining us on the 1 September, and The Levett School coming over in the late autumn/spring. We are also very excited to opening Hallamshire Academy in the autumn, and to commence work on our sixth new school, in Halifax, which we're opening in partnership with Calderdale Council.

The intended merger with Ebor Academy Trust would create the eighth largest MAT in the country, further elevating the collective voice and influence we can deliver for our schools and the communities we serve. Whilst this could mean next year's annual report is the final one under the banner of "Nexus MAT", the hard work applied thus far means we have a high degree of certainty that our ethos and values will endure.

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Multi Academy Trust

Learning together to be the best we can be