



**DDAT**  
Derby Diocesan Academy Trust

# Strategic Growth Plan

2020-2022

# Introduction

Since being established in 2014, DDAT has grown successfully as a Diocesan MAT to now be a thriving and effective family of 28 schools consisting of 3 infant schools, 3 junior schools, 21 primary schools and 1 secondary school. Based in the East Midlands region of England, DDAT enjoys a strong and productive relationship with all the DDAT family of schools but is also an outward looking organisation that benefits and supports schools and organisations across Derby and Derbyshire.

Within the DDAT family, there are 7029 children and young people, and 1026 members of staff in schools. DDAT and DDAT2 have a combined annual income of £35m.

In an ever-changing landscape, DDAT must remain flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of stakeholders to ensure the organisation continues to be high-performing and recognised for its positive impact on communities within the region. Alongside the Executive leadership, the DDAT Trust Board regularly review risks and opportunities and consider these alongside DDAT's 'DNA' of a Christian organisation established to ensure 'Life in all its fullness' for all children and young people.

Our growth plans are continually adapted to ensure the Trust remains sustainable and that growth is impactful and in line with the vision. We will continue to extend the Trust's reach and impact across the region through growth that is underpinned by capacity to effectively support schools. We will continue to prioritise Church schools who are judged to require rapid intervention, balanced with building capacity within schools themselves and adding community schools where their vision is aligned with our own.

DDAT's pipeline of schools has always been prioritised by need and this will continue to be implemented in the next three years of growth. A mixed economy of schools at different stages of their developmental journey benefits all schools, not just those who are judged to require rapid improvement. We will ensure that each DDAT school continues to grow together as part of the family through the development of the strong local hub network, with an additional focus on secondary capacity.







# Strategic Principles for Growth

**Performance and Improvement:** The high-performance of DDAT schools (educationally, financially and operationally) is protected and enhanced by growth.

**Mixed Economy:** The balance of schools by phase, size, performance and geographical location is retained and developed to become 'all-through' provision.

**Capacity:** Capacity to support schools continues to be front-loaded centrally and expanded through investment in staff within the DDAT schools.

**Impact:** Schools judged to require intervention are prioritised and receive the support needed to improve from DDAT: Galatians 6:2 *'Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ'*.

**Continual Improvement:** Being a reflective organisation where we are always seeking to learn and continue to improve standards ever higher in **all** DDAT schools.

**Working Together:** Retaining the DDAT family approach with a tangible sense of belonging, whilst developing a strong network of local and regional hubs.

**Outward Facing:** Standing ready to support all within Derby and Derbyshire whilst identifying opportunities to have a positive impact outside the traditional boundaries of the Diocese.

**Strong Oversight:** A strong, skills-based Board of Directors with knowledge and experience of DDAT schools and their context. Able to control growth in accordance with the plan and at a pace that is beneficial to all within the Trust and those who wish to join.



# Immediate Actions and Priorities to Support Successful Growth in 2020/21

## Supporting DDAT Schools through COVID-19

Throughout the global pandemic, the DDAT central team have focused resources and capacity on ensuring that schools can continue to operate as fully as possible in a safe and secure environment. Recognising the immediate challenges schools faced, the DDAT team have worked to provide school leaders with everything they need to navigate the extreme circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The DDAT Central Team will continue to adapt to the needs of the DDAT family of schools and provide advice to ensure that schools feel confident and secure that they are operating within the complex guidance that is regularly updated by Government departments.

## Ambition Trust Diagnostic

From January 2021, a Trust-wide review will be completed by Ambition to build a complete picture of DDAT; where it is competent and where the areas of challenge are. The Diagnostic will support DDAT on its developmental journey and initially will involve a survey of around 100 questions that focus on ten core strategic areas. The survey respondents will include a range of individuals and teams including the Executive Team, the Diocese of Derby, Headteachers, Teachers, TAs and Local Governing Bodies. The survey will be followed up by a visit from two reviewers who will conduct more in-depth discussions with Senior Leaders within the Trust. Following a review of all information collated a full report will be shared with the Trust Board which will include suggested actions that could lead to further success and change.

## Contract Harmonisation

On joining the DDAT family of schools, all contracts of employment in place at the time of conversion transfer unchanged to DDAT. This has led to inconsistencies across the Trust in terms of pay and job responsibilities in certain roles. To address this and ensure fairness and equity in a number of roles, a harmonisation feasibility investigation will begin in December 2020.



# Growth Criteria

All schools joining the Trust must, over time, add value to our educational offer for children and young people across the DDAT family of schools. DDAT recognise that schools will join us with differing levels of effectiveness; some may require significant additional support at the point of joining and will be a net beneficiary until they can demonstrate good or better effectiveness. However, the experience of supporting these schools provides valuable professional development opportunities for staff at other schools within the Trust (teaching and back-office staff) and we recognise that all schools, regardless of current effectiveness, will have something to offer within or across the family of schools. The following principles will guide our growth strategy:



**Christian Values:** Whilst not necessarily rooted in a Christian narrative, all schools joining DDAT must be able to demonstrate that their values are aligned to those of the Trust.



**Location:** All joining schools, whether Free School, Converter or Sponsored academies, must be located so that they can fully engage and contribute to Trust improvement and development.



**Contribution:** Joining schools must be outward facing and be ready and willing to contribute to all aspects of the Trust. This will be measured during the due diligence phase of the academy conversion process.



**Secondary Capacity:** Interest from Secondary schools will be prioritised within the pipeline of schools waiting to join DDAT to provide further capacity and opportunities for collaborative working with Derby Cathedral School. Plans to establish a second secondary Free School within Derby and Derbyshire will be explored with the relevant Local Authorities and Department for Education.





## Growth Criteria



**Sustainable Growth:** Growth will be based on there being sufficient capacity within the central team and within the DDAT family of schools to adequately support and develop joining schools. Typically, no more than 5 schools will join DDAT within one academic year.



**Sponsored Academies:** Priority will always be given to any Church school within the Diocese that is judged to require intervention. Likewise, should a community school require the support gained from membership of DDAT, this school will be prioritised within the pipeline of schools. This is in line with the Church of England's vision of 'common good for the whole community'.



**Understanding and Knowledge:** Through due diligence completed at an early stage of the conversion process, the DDAT Executive Team will assess the suitability of schools joining the Trust and recommendations on levels of risk will be made to the Board of Directors.



**Financially Viable:** All schools/academies will need to prove that they are financially viable or that the leadership/structural model adopted on entry is financially viable. If a recovery plan is in place, this must be robust and approved by both the RSC and the Board of Trustees prior to the school joining the Trust.



# Capacity for School Improvement



DDAT's entire structure is built around effective school improvement which has resulted in all school's judged to be Inadequate on joining the trust, subsequently receiving at least a 'Good' judgement following intervention from a highly skilled team of school improvement professionals. The skills and experience of the school improvement team are also applied to all schools within the DDAT family who receive a minimum number of visits regardless of their current effectiveness.

Capacity for school improvement is not only provided through the DDAT Central Team but through a number of sources as follows:

**Board of Trustees:** Trustees are appointed based on their skill set and experience. The current board of Trustees have a wide range of expertise including in the areas of Christian distinctiveness, safeguarding, finance, education, risk management, and strategic planning. Their robust oversight, scrutiny and challenge is evident in all meetings and their knowledge of the context of all schools within the DDAT family is being developed as a strategic priority.

**Executive Team:** The DDAT Executive Team (consisting of CEO, Deputy CEO and Head of School Improvement, CFO and COO) are highly skilled in their respective disciplines. Bringing together significant experience in school improvement, school leadership, finance and school operations results in capacity to improve school effectiveness across the school, not just in educational progress and outcomes.

# Capacity for School Improvement

**School Improvement Team:** All full-time members of the DDAT school improvement team are trained Ofsted Lead Inspectors with successful backgrounds in primary and secondary school leadership. In addition, part-time members of the DDAT school improvement team are used to provide capacity in particular areas and have taken on national roles in their areas of expertise.

**Lead Practitioners of Teaching and Learning:** The recent addition of a Lead Practitioner for Teaching and Learning (with specific experience in Key Stage 2) has had significant impact in the first year of active deployment. As such, an additional Practitioner for Teaching and Learning (with specific experience in KS1) will be added to the team to ensure breadth of knowledge and capacity to provide direct support to teachers in the DDAT family of schools.

**Local Governing Bodies:** DDAT recognises the value of the community perspective, skills and knowledge brought to schools through a Local Governing Body and celebrates the contribution individuals make on a voluntary basis.

**Capacity within Schools:** Through investment in CPD, staff within DDAT schools are well supported in their professional journey. Utilising the knowledge and experience of highly effective staff within schools to have a wider impact outside their own school is a key element of DDAT CPD. This is on a voluntary basis for staff who wish to move ahead with their careers and there is no pressure placed on staff to operate across schools. As an outward looking organisation, DDAT also recognises the experience of staff within schools that are part of the wider Diocese and works in partnership with the Diocese to offer opportunities where possible.

**Network Support Leaders:** Recognising the talent within DDAT schools, networks of support are established to provide opportunities for staff to share and develop ideas, review practice and discuss updates to guidance. Potential leaders for these networks are identified by the DDAT school improvement team as part of their in-depth review of effectiveness in schools.







# Capacity for School Improvement

**External Partners:** DDAT is fortunate to have excellent relationships with a number of external partners, where collaborative working is used to benefit all within the DDAT family for schools. Partners include: Derby Diocese, Local MATs (e.g., QEGSMAT, Archway Learning Trust, White Hills Park Trust), Ambition Institute, Derby University, Derby College, Derby City Council, Derbyshire County Council, and One Education.

**Strategic Steering Group (SSG):** The SSG was formed to allow headteachers within the DDAT family of schools to contribute to the strategic plans of the Trust. The contribution of this group in setting the strategic direction is vital to ensure the relevance of plans to schools and also to act as a sounding board for the DDAT Executive Team.

**Curriculum Support:** DDAT recognises that each school is unique and therefore the curriculum in place must be tailored to the pupils and community the school serves. As such, curriculum principles are provided to DDAT schools so that their own curriculum can be bespoke to the needs of pupils.

**Assessment:** As with the DDAT curriculum principles, the assessments used by DDAT schools must be aligned to their own context. As such, DDAT schools are free to use their own assessment practices with the caveat that testing supports teacher assessment in each school and can therefore provide the trust with standardised scores. These assessments are carried out at the agreed assessment points throughout the school year (Christmas, Easter, End of Year). Although individual schools will be using their chosen assessment model, they are able to enter their standardised scores into FFT. Therefore, the Trust will retain oversight of performance data through the deployment of FFT Aspire Pupil Tracking.

**Hub Model:** The hub model is developing organically as more schools are choosing to join DDAT in a number of key locations across the County and within the City of Derby. Hub models of school business management as well as executive headteacher models are deployed where applicable to ensure that small schools are viable and that public funds are discharged responsibly to maximise investment in teaching and learning.

**Central Services:** Strong operational and system leadership in place centrally to support: Finance, Operations, HR, School Improvement, Marketing, Communications, Governance, Site and Buildings, Health and Safety, and Procurement.

# Expansion of the DDAT School Improvement Model

The provision for school improvement within DDAT is well established in the primary phase and is developing in secondary. The improvements seen within all schools that joined the Trust with an Inadequate judgement is testament to the effective and robust school improvement model in place and the capacity of the DDAT team to ensure that schools are supported to provide the very best education for children in their care and to deliver this at pace.

Careful monitoring and review of the school improvement offer has highlighted the following areas for development and investment:

**Post-COVID School Improvement Approach:** The uncertain times as a result of the global pandemic has resulted in the entire education landscape having to become more responsive, reactive, and adaptive. The DDAT Central Team has worked alongside school leaders to help them plan, prepare and implement guidance as a result of the pandemic and as such has witnessed the role of a Senior Leader become predominantly focussed on the daily safe operation of a school. However, as schools become more accustomed to the 'new normal' there is a need for unrelenting focus on school improvement, even more so to ensure lost learning during lockdown for pupils is quickly addressed. Therefore, the School Improvement approach must also adapt in its methods of delivery ensuring a careful balance of challenge and support that is customised to each individual school based on what is needed at the point of delivery and is mindful of the wellbeing of all staff in school.





# Expansion of the DDAT School Improvement Model

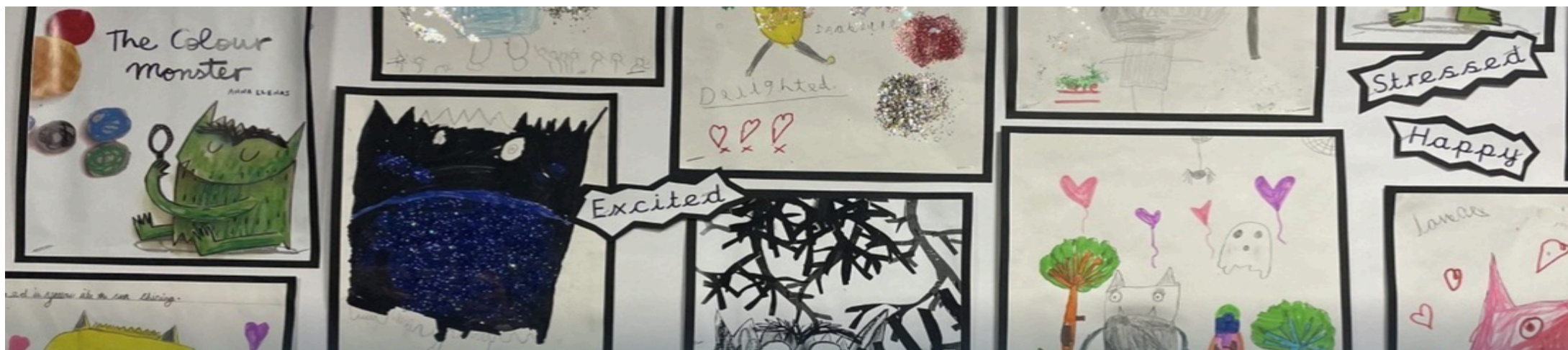
**Increase Capacity for SEND and Inclusion:** DDAT is extremely fortunate to have access to significant expertise in the area of SEND and Inclusion, both through a dedicated Senior School Improvement Officer and through a network of talented and dedicated SENDCOs working in each school, and in some cases across a number of DDAT schools. However, the DDAT central team has identified a need for further support in our schools where queries from school leaders regarding SEND and Inclusion matters are increasing. Therefore, the DDAT central team will respond to this need and identify additional capacity in the next 12 months to ensure school leaders are supported in their care for children with SEND.

**Lead Practitioner Deployment:** Following a review of the impact of DDAT's first Lead Practitioner of Teaching and Learning, where a number of schools have benefitted from this direct support for teaching staff, this model will be rolled out further by the appointment of a second Lead Practitioner with a focus on Key Stage 1.

**Wider Improvement:** The DDAT central team recognise that quite often in an underperforming school, the problems are not confined to teaching and learning. As such, it is essential that when delivering a programme of rapid improvement, there is a close partnership across all functions of the central team. Mechanisms for further partnership working across functions of the central team will be explored and a model developed for continual monitoring across all areas of school performance.

**Implementation of Trust-Wide Safeguarding Strategy:** A Trust-Wide Safeguarding Strategy will be implemented in the 2020/21 academic year to consolidate the Trust's view that safeguarding should be at the heart of every school. The Trust's expectations on safeguarding and how this will be monitored and checked will be made clear for schools.

**Implementation of Trust Disadvantaged Statement of Principles:** A set of principles outlining the Trust's expectations for school support to our most disadvantaged pupils and families will set out a framework for which each individual school can plan their own bespoke disadvantaged strategy. This document will act as a starting point for schools to implement a tiered approach to pupil premium spending.



# Expansion of the Operational Model

## Human Resources (HR)

DDAT provide a comprehensive HR offer to all the schools within the Trust, including a variety of administrative and operational functions which ensure a consistent and equitable approach to HR is applied. With dedicated HR professionals and a centrally managed email address for all HR enquiries, this streamlined approach ensures that school leaders are able to discuss matters in a confidential and timely manner, receiving expert guidance and strategies to deal with a vast array of HR casework and policy issues.

Weekly reviews of casework across the Trust by the DDAT HR and DDAT Executive teams ensures oversight of a wide variety of issues as well as presenting an opportunity for emerging trends to be noted and acted upon.

To develop the HR offer, a programme of CPD for Senior Leaders will be designed and implemented initially to Headteachers but also to Deputy Headteachers and Assistant Headteachers to develop their understanding of this area of school management. Training will be delivered in-house by Senior HR Officers and will also draw upon the expertise of a team of Employment Lawyers where necessary. A termly programme of training on a particular area of personnel management will be produced for the following 24 months.

The introduction of bi-annual HR forums for attendance by School Business Managers will facilitate discussion on any pertinent HR issues within schools and will allow advice and guidance to be distributed by the HR Team.





# Expansion of the Operational Model

## Finance

DDAT does not offer its schools a centralised finance service due to its commitment to schools retaining the autonomy to manage budgets in the best way possible to serve their children and communities. Instead, schools receive support from the DDAT Finance Team alongside standardised budgeting and accounting systems to give them the tools to manage their budgets effectively. The finance team through the CFO, Finance Manager, Finance Assistant and Services for Schools (S4S) support schools through regular visits and training. School Business Managers are supported fully in completing monthly reporting packs which allow the trust to carefully monitor the discharge of public funds and ensure schools have robust and accurate budgets, realistic spending plans, and remain financially sustainable.

To develop the finance offer, a new model of Executive Business Managers within hubs will be developed further to ease the pressure on office staff within schools. Executive Business Managers will take on the strategic aspects of business management which can be done remotely, which will allow staff in school to concentrate on the day-to-day business needs such as ordering, administration tasks, attendance monitoring, marketing, communication etc. This model will be implemented as and when staffing changes happen routinely in schools and will not be enforced.

The introduction of bi-annual finance forums for attendance by School Business Managers will facilitate discussion on any pertinent finance issues within schools and will allow advice and guidance to be distributed by the finance team.





# Growth Proposal

DDAT is committed to growth that is sustainable and that ensures the whole organisation benefits immediately as new schools join. In order to do this, there is an established pattern for growth whereby the right infrastructure is in place ahead of the requirement for additional support and challenge to schools. DDAT will continue with this successful strategy and to facilitate this will consider a number of new positions and/or capacity in the following areas:

- SEND and Inclusion to ensure schools have immediate access to support and capacity in this area.
- Lead Practitioner of Teaching and Learning to focus on direct support to teaching staff in Key Stage 1.
- Executive Business Managers to deliver strategic aspects of school business and ensure efficiencies across a number of schools.
- Additional capacity to monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding at Trust level and within schools. Funding accessed through a successful TCaF application will be utilised to supplement in-house audits and further areas for support will be discussed with One Education, e.g. training for schools on Early Help.