

GROWTH PAPER
March 2023

Governance Offer

School Improvement Offer

Operational Delivery Offer

Finance Delivery Offer

Background

Great Heights Academy Trust's (GHAT) current planning is for measured growth of around two schools per year. Our overall aim is to incorporate good or outstanding schools, with a significant improvement capacity, in addition to schools that are vulnerable when they join the Trust. We anticipate that, in order to be in a position to benefit from economies of scale and to continue to have a significant educational impact over a number of schools, the Trust needs to work towards having at least 10 to 12 schools. These could be grouped in clusters of up to 6 schools in Calderdale, Kirklees and Leeds.

The DfE White Paper "Opportunity For All" was very supportive of multi-academy trusts (MATs) and encouraged all schools and academies to be part of a family of schools in a strong academy trust. The recommendation that MATs serve a minimum of 7,500 pupils or run at least 10 schools was a good base to aspire to. From April 2023, GHAT will serve around 4,500 pupils and run eight schools. We plan for continued Trust growth: 2 further schools in 2023/24 and again in 2024/25, which would take the Trust to 12 schools by September 2024.

Proposal

GHAT plans for measured growth, so that we can continue to support our current trust schools effectively, with quality and standards maintained, whilst it is probable that other schools, academies and small academy trusts may ask to join GHAT. In addition to prospective joiners sharing the vision and values of GHAT and being relatively close (probably in Calderdale, Kirklees or Leeds) our parameters for future growth are:

Good or outstanding schools/academies – probably via a voluntary approach

- Significant school improvement capacity
- Strong senior and middle leadership
- Sound financial position – now and in the future
- No significant intake issues

Vulnerable schools – probably proposed by the Regional Director

- Potential to contribute to the Trust school improvement capacity in the medium term
- Senior and middle leadership have the potential to be strong in the near future
- To have or have the potential to have a balanced budget in the near future
- Any significant intake issues are capable of resolution in the near future

Key agreements as part of growth include:

- MAT mission and purpose
- Vision and values
- Schemes of delegations
- Linking MAT operating models and structures to enact the above
- Centralised services and offers
- School Improvement, support and challenge offers
- Governance support
- Alignment with performance outcome indicators

With any potential joiners, we would be keen to discuss and plan appropriately for areas such as 'autonomy', 'culture' and 'funding' – aligning and/or revisiting our current schemes of delegation in connection with the [Academy Trust Handbook](#).

As part of this growth strategy these agreements will need constant review and evaluation to sense-check, adapt and adjust strategies in order to respond to changes of scale. A trust board sub-committee for MAT growth would be proposed in support of change management.

We recently explored our agreed values as part of our new 2-18 trust growth which provide a current positioning from our staff and leaders.

“What are the features of a high trust working environment?”



Growth Rationale and Capacity

Use of existing expertise is key to maximising our delivery offers including:

- GHAT regional and national activity continues to connect our academies to expertise beyond that available locally: our unique roles in national School Improvement (TSIO) and workforce development (SCITT, Research School & English Hub)
- Successful SCITT training both primary and secondary students
- Good knowledge and positive relationships with partners within Kirklees, Calderdale and Leeds Services.
- Strong track record of school improvement, see our School Improvement support and challenge offer; all three Ofsted reports during 2021-22 referenced the positive impact of GHAT involvement
- The contribution from our core team expertise including our designations continues to enable us to prioritise 'developing great teachers' alongside 'staff retention planning' and meaningful collaborations

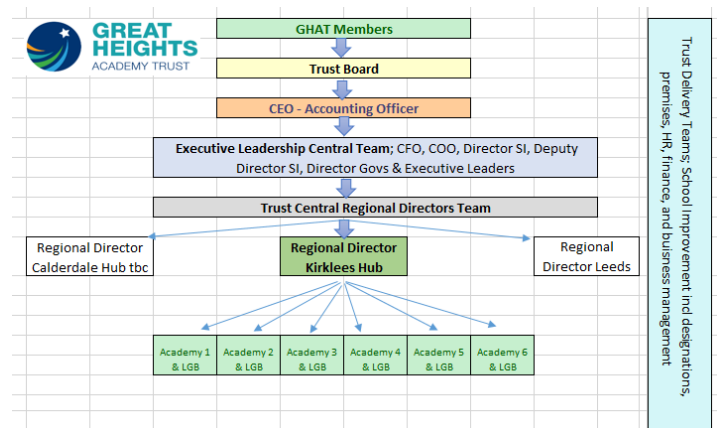
A major growth element is a strengthened 2-18 offer within all our localities. Our current secondary offer, is supported via expertise and connectivity to partners including:

- Newly appointed Deputy Director of School Improvement for secondary with recent Headship experience and specialism in curriculum development. Supported by Executive Leadership from our 2 new secondary partner academies joining us from February 2023
- External SIP partner – Mr Alan Giles – Secondary Headship/Leadership & Ofsted expertise to date
- Strong secondary leadership experience within the trust board with the Chair and Vice-Chair roles
- Secondary partnerships - Oldham 6th Form College – Associate Research School and East Manchester TSH

Capacity Planning for Growth at Scale

Our operating models which are led by the CEO, CFO and COO require continuous development of teams and systems. Streamlining processes, system development and scaling up of operating teams is key to the clarity of our offers and to safeguard against potential workload and wellbeing strains during any growth period.

The creation of a trust central regional team to develop a hub-based offer is a major part of the 2023-24 offer.



Trust Growth – Risk management

"It's all about school-led improvement and the key thing about due diligence is having a robust process which identifies any potential risk to your MAT in taking on a new school...effective due diligence determines what the school needs to improve and whether your MAT has the capacity to drive that improvement. It also asks questions around how you are going to manage costings and finances. The due diligence process will uncover whether there are any other liabilities hanging over that school, from the poor state of the school building to the possibility of a parent or teacher suing the school. It will go through all the major areas and leave you with this question to ask: 'As a MAT, where are those resources required to improve this school going to come...'"

[Achieving Successful and Sustainable Growth](#) – Optimus Education

A key aspect of trust growth is the robustness of our due diligence, the use of external advisors to assess risks and future positioning as part of a trust board sub-committee to support acceptance of conversions.

A. Bennett CEO & C. Midgley CoG