



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

1. Introduction

School improvement is done by schools. Heads and school leaders are responsible for the quality of education in their schools. The Cranmer Education Trust leverages the expertise, experience and creativity within and across the family to make it available for all, enabling every school to continuously improve and ensure transformation is achievable, manageable and even enjoyable, because we really are all in this together.

2. Collaboration

Our culture is collaborative. Our school leaders work together to:

- Develop frameworks and principles of best practice. These include safeguarding, behaviour and culture, and the principles of pedagogy. Our ethos leadership network supports our designated CE schools on those areas which are central for church schools, and our community schools on values, worship and RE where schools opt in. A group of our primary schools, with our Head of School Improvement, are collaboratively developing an English curriculum for both reading and writing. We are creating a framework for best practice in SEND based on our involvement in national research and the very specific advice from a senior HMI.
- Provide curriculum expertise, particularly in subject-specific pedagogy and assessment. Our team of curriculum leaders is drawn from across our schools. All are experienced experts in their field who have been involved and trained in school-to-school support. They are released by their schools for agreed periods of time to support middle leaders through our Trust Leadership Communities (TLCs) of curriculum leaders. Along with our Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs), they also provide bespoke support for schools.

3. The Resource Stays in the Schools

We deliberately have a lean centre. The Trust Head of School Improvement leads the TLCs and oversees the library of best practice. In our case, it is actually a suitcase of exemplars, focused particularly on how to implement and sustain improvement – what leaders need to do and how to do it.

4. Operating Model

Our operating model is based on proportionate support and challenge. All our schools have agency. The stronger schools are in the quality of education they provide, the greater their agency to be creative and innovative, which will benefit all.

Where schools are more vulnerable, whether because of Ofsted judgements, or a decline in outcomes, or major leadership and/or staffing changes, there is a higher level of support, involving our headteachers and Head of School Improvement.

5. Great Schools are based on Great Teaching

Cranmer is a national leader of teacher training and development. We run the **East Manchester Teaching School Hub (EMTSH)** which provides the Early Career Framework

training and the full range of National Professional Qualifications, ensuring that our staff have ready access to high-quality training and development. Our Hub is a strategic partner of University College London (UCL) who developed the programmes. We deliberately chose UCL because of the academic research base and the flexibility they allow for contextualised delivery. This means that our provision is always tailored to the context of our schools by the people who work in them, providing our trust schools and wider partnership with the opportunity to become facilitators and mentors, developing their own practice as they help to develop other professionals and become part of a community of system leadership.

We also run our own School-Centred Initial Teacher Training program (SCITT), **Manchester Nexus**, training circa 60 new teachers per year, broadly two-thirds in secondary and one-third in primary. The SCITT provides both a pipeline for recruitment (most of our trainees stay in the area) and a further means of developing, and retaining, our great staff as they become mentors.

Whilst the government has pulled back on some of the specialist hubs (languages and computing), our Kinder Languages Hub has won national funding to continue our work in developing the teaching of languages.

Our teacher training and development work is all pulled together and coordinated by **The Cranmer Institute** which also accredits SLEs and provides commissioned work including for LAs, such as the leadership of subject networks for both primary and secondary.

6. Specialist Independent Advice

We always look outward and commission **specialist independent advice** for our schools. Schools and trusts are heavily regulated and it's important that we are directly engaging with the people who lead that regulation, and that school leaders understand exactly what the expectations and benchmarks are. Therefore, all of our schools have an independent School Improvement Partner (SIP); an experienced Headteacher and someone with Ofsted or wider systems leadership experience. This is supplemented by our team of school leaders and HMI from other regions who we can call on to provide coaching reviews in our schools, which can be as broad or as tightly focused as the school needs. These help with action planning, particularly in the context of changes in Ofsted frameworks. The next step is to involve our headteachers in the **coaching reviews** so that we are constantly learning from experts and one another, and building our collective as much as individual school

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7. Operating Model

School improvement does not happen in a vacuum. Schools have to be financially on the ball. Heads need good and reliable HR advice, policies and procedures. They need to be absolutely sure that staff will be paid, and the right amount. They need to know there is specialist legal advice when needed. Together we need to have good working relationships with the professional organizations. Schools need to communicate well with their community. They may need to manage some difficult situations. They must constantly build a positive narrative for their school. Leaders need to know that their operations are efficient and effective – that their ICT services are robust, they are cyber-secure, data is properly

managed, contracts are well managed, and the children are fed, the site well maintained, and capital needs identified and planned for. They have to keep up to date with policy requirements.

We believe that headteachers need to know and understand all the aspects of a big and complex organization. Heads lead on quality of education, but without the services above, and the ability to manage your budget and decide the priorities, you are operating with one hand tied. If not both. In finance the trust sets the budget parameters and expects the school to manage its own, setting its own priorities, and being financially disciplined. The business manager is supported and advised by the finance team; in small primary schools the finance team works directly with the Head to set and profile the budget, and the trust's procedures support the office manager or finance clerk in the transactional work. The finance team is only a phone call away.

The trust is the employer and has a single set of employment policies which are negotiated with the unions, and which apply to all schools and employees. Every school has a named HR adviser who will advise on policy implementation and case work. We run our own payroll. School staff run recruitment using trust policy and procedures; small primaries are fully supported by the central trust services on this so the Head knows that it is done properly and in a timely way.

Every secondary school has a school-based network manager; small primaries are supported by their hub school. ICT leads work with the trust's director of ICT to ensure investment in and updating and security of all our estate. School business managers work with the Operations Director to ensure our services and contracts are well managed and work for our schools, and that estates planning anticipates and prepares for capital investment.

"How you turn up" is critical for school reputations. Our creative and marketing lead, with the support of the Ops Director, advises schools on their social media and actively creating the images and video that have such impact in communicating the school and what it stands for. And if the worst happens and a story which is damaging happens – which it will, in every organization, however well run – we have PR advice which includes a conversation with the press to take the heat away from the Head who has to manage the fall-out within.