

Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust School Improvement Model

At Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust, we believe that effective school improvement is fundamentally about organisational, rather than individual, capability. Our people look to the Trust to reflect the hopes, needs and aspirations of children and young people.

Predicated on the understanding that there can be little improvement for children and young people without improvement in teaching, and no improvement in teaching without professional development, our model builds knowledge, unleashes talent, motivates staff, focuses on high quality implementation and delivery, and enables effective practices to be embedded in our schools.

We set out strategies that give rise to capacity building, training, systemised processes and quality assurance that are evidence-informed and scalable across the Trust. We are constantly learning.

Purpose of our school improvement model

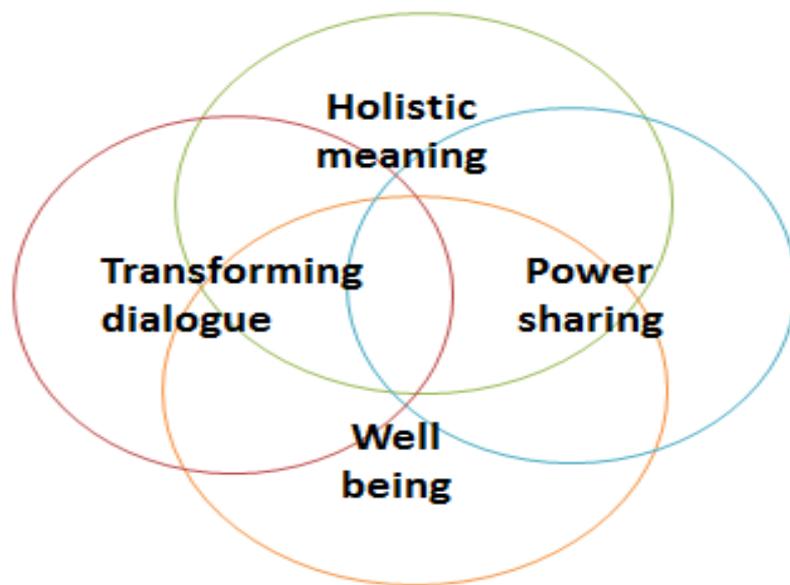
School improvement at Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust exists for one purpose: to ensure the highest quality of education for all learners.

To achieve this, we refer to our guiding principles to ensure that successful schools continue to thrive, and that schools in challenging circumstances improve to the benefit of all children and young people.

Guiding principles

At Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust, school improvement is based on Democratic Fellowship. We know that we must gain collective commitment from Trust-wide networks if we are to sustain improvement. This means we work continuously on expressive democracy (through holistic meaning development) and participatory democracy (the judicious and deliberate development of dialogue).

Below is a visual representation of interconnectedness in our values, agency, responsibility and accountability. W. Edwards Deming suggested that 95% of problems are systemic. Rather than management by number, incentivisation and sub-optimisation he argued for nourishment of the individual and team through intrinsic motivation (understanding purpose), self-esteem (through participation), dignity (by power sharing) and joy in work.



This visual enables us to use Deming's ideas and connect them to the values and principles of the cooperative movement to ensure we have congruence in our work, maintain high expectations and align to our culture and collective understanding.

Holistic meaning

This is where we work on our vision and culture. No school improvement model will work effectively without deliberate and intentional leadership in this area. We remain explicit about our culture, and we affirm this daily. We build a common language to bring our culture alive. We believe that if the message is not compelling enough, and adopted by those who lead school improvement, the work will not be scalable. By testing our collective understanding against our values we will be confident we are taking the right actions at the right time.

Power sharing

We recognise that we need top-down, bottom-up and peer-to-peer approaches within school improvement. We have mechanisms to support all of these. We give our people the agency and authority to lead. We require the highest levels of accountability and responsibility in this work. We have mechanisms that are highly effective and transferable that range from consultative voice work to activist groups and leadership opportunities. In order to ensure authenticity, we actively reject cynicism and embrace realistic optimism.

Transforming dialogue

This goes much deeper than gathering opinion, it is where true leadership is enacted. Professional development occurs when we allow structured work in this domain to flourish. Our people work in formal and informal teams to develop, evaluate and regulate school improvement. We encourage deliberate and intentional knowledge building supported by purposeful accountability.

Well-being

We know that our people will find joy in learning, work and achievement. We believe that professional self-esteem is developed by mutual respect, active participation and developing confidence to express opinions. By working in teams, narrow points of view are widened and behaviours become more inclusive. This inclusivity allows our people to reveal their gifts and grow their talents.

At Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust, school improvement is not:

- Gathering *ad hoc* ideas and trying to stitch them together. We are discerning about change and use an evidence-based approach.
- A quick fix model, although Rapid Improvement Plans are used when capacity giving is needed.
- Sticking to outdated approaches; we constantly learn and adapt and abandon what is no longer effective.
- Taking a cynical, negative and narrow approach to School Improvement. Instead, we look to develop with courage, positivity and collective agreement.

Process of School improvement

In order to agitate our model, we have committed to defining six levers that are fundamental to our core purposes. When we activate these levers, we use a set of mechanisms that rely on strong professional networks and cooperative practices.

The elements are brought alive by drive teams (co-operatives) housed in our D Vehicles that are a unique and fundamental part of school improvement work.

Drive teams test techniques to assess impact and then we embed the best practice.

The levers are:

1. **Outstanding Leadership** Great leaders make outstanding schools and Trusts. We invest in leadership development at all levels. We have a Leadership Charter that is a promise we make to our staff. Opportunities are provided for coaching, shadowing and secondments. Peer to peer support is an entitlement. No-one leads in isolation at Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust. D Lead is the driver of outstanding leadership.
2. **Participatory professional development** The assertion that cooperation lacks rigour and pace is a lazy caricature. We use effective inquiry based PDSAs, learn together and participate in coaching programmes to provide pathways to incremental but persistent improvement. By doing so we are well placed to give capacity to schools where it is needed within the Trust and across the system. We draw on internal and external expertise to ensure our work is of the highest quality. D Lead and D Learn work together as D Develop to deliver professional development.

- Inclusive Curriculum design** Ambitious and inclusive curriculum provision is at the heart of the Trust's mission to "provide the highest possible quality of education for all local children in order to ensure pupils from all backgrounds are able to succeed". Our ambition is rooted in our five guiding principles which elevate our individual and collective work to enable all children, regardless of need, to access learning which gives them the knowledge, understanding and experiences to thrive in their lives beyond the school gates and contribute as local, national and global citizens.

Effective curriculum is the responsibility of all teachers and leaders in our Trust. We work through communities of practice to define and refine our provision so that it sets a standard of excellence whilst responding to the unique context of our schools and local area.

Our curriculum is ambitious and challenging because all young people in the Trust have the right to access rich and rewarding learning which connects them to their own context but also to the wonders and complexities of a world beyond. Teachers and leaders maintain high expectations whilst adapting and scaffolding learning to ensure equitable access for disadvantaged learners and those with vulnerabilities or additional needs to enable all to thrive and succeed. Collaborative planning is a powerful vehicle for building collective responsibility for excellence and equity.

- Impactful pedagogy** Our curriculum is brought to life through effective pedagogical practice. The Teaching and Learning Charter sets out the vision and rationale for our approach and brings clarity through specific teacher actions which drive excellence in the classroom. Teaching Walkthru's provide a shared taxonomy for coaching and development whilst ensuring that work is rooted in evidence. Suites of signature strategies are codified and shared to set the standard for classroom practice

Defining and exemplifying effective pedagogical practices which reflect the needs of all of our schools is the collective endeavour of the Teacher and Learning Co-operative. The Co-operative builds shared knowledge and expertise through research and debate to enable drive teams to test and refine approaches in a range of settings to facilitate effective sharing and embedding of effective practices.

From the earliest stages of a teacher's development in the Trust, there is a focus on developing pedagogical expertise which enables all young people to succeed in the classroom

- Culture and ethos** Drawing from the wisdom of the International Co-operative Alliance, we maintain the high standards we aspire to by collectively holding each other to account. Our culture is inclusive, celebratory, and based on a strong sense of solidarity. We use our cooperative identity to create behavioural and attitudinal norms.

The culture of our Trust and our schools is central to embedding an enjoyable, rewarding working environment in which all colleagues believe the demands of their job are reasonable and manageable. We want our schools to be places where people want to work and choose to stay. Providing meaningful opportunities for voice and feedback form the foundation of school improvement across our Trust so that everyone can professionally develop, and feel their impact, their significance and their value.

All improvement across our Trust is underpinned by our Inclusion Pledge which sets out seven key principles. We are passionate about and dedicated to breaking down

barriers and supporting any vulnerabilities that children and young people experience so that they can reach their true potential and chart their own destiny.

The culture and ethos of school improvement aims to provide equal access to opportunities and resources for children and young people who might otherwise be marginalised. Through our dedication to inclusive practice, teaching and learning adapts and modifies provision to ensure every learner can participate and engage with high quality experiences and meet aspirational expectations. Reflective practice at all levels facilitates evaluation in order to make improvements.

6. **Strong quality assurance** - we use valid and reliable data to mitigate risks to the quality of education in our schools. The mechanisms we use allow us to be confident that the knowledge we have about our schools is secure and accurate, and that we have capacity to address weaknesses. We believe we will never run out of things to improve and this demands high levels of developmental accountability and early intervention. A system of reflective evaluation has been developed triangulating structured discussions on Key Performance Indicators based upon self-evaluation and peer review mechanisms. From these KPI meetings, strengths and areas for further development are identified and Trust resources can be deployed effectively for school improvement.