

Stour Vale Academy Trust

Creating the difference together

Strategic Priorities 2026-29

Values, Ethos and Vision

Stour Vale Academy Trust holds children and young people at the heart of all that we do. We ensure that the needs of member schools and settings, the communities they serve and the wider education and civic system drive and define trust strategy. We recognise that as a multi-academy trust we exist in order to advance education for the public good. Our mission, therefore, is to improve life opportunities for children and young people by both providing the best possible education and care to pupils in Stour Vale member schools and by having a positive impact across the wider education system.

Our values are encapsulated in four words:

Integrity, Respect, Collaboration, Excellence

Our vision is to be a growing, evolving, diverse and outward facing family of successful and inclusive schools and settings, committed to our shared values, ethos and approach of secured autonomy. Stour Vale member schools and settings will serve their communities by providing high quality and inclusive education. Recognising our interdependence, continuous improvement in all schools and settings will be driven by our commitment to the success of every school and setting and fuelled by effective collaboration. Consequently, both individually and collectively, member schools and settings will have a significant positive impact on the wider education system.

Priority 1

A family of continuously improving schools and settings

Stour Vale has an established culture of continuous improvement which is evident in all member schools and settings and throughout the central team. Headteachers, nursery managers and leaders in all member schools and settings are empowered and enabled to accurately self-evaluate the quality and inclusivity of the education and are expertly challenged and supported as they pursue excellence. Effective collaboration, underpinned by a deep understanding of our interdependence and appreciation of each school and setting's individuality, is integral to continuous improvement.

Key Priorities:

1. Our responsive improvement strategy ensures the momentum of continuous improvement in all schools and settings.
2. We have sufficient system leader expertise and collective capacity to empower all school and setting leaders to drive continuous improvement.
3. Collaboration has a demonstrable positive impact on the quality and inclusivity of education.

Key Indicators of Success:

1. All Stour Vale member schools are either:
 - Continuously improving the delivery of high quality and inclusive education, or
 - Rapidly increasing the quality and inclusivity of education
2. Stour Vale has an established track record of transforming previously under-performing schools.
3. Stour Vale is able to evidence the direct and indirect positive impact of collaboration on the continuous improvement of individual schools, settings and the trust as a whole.

Priority 2

A trust committed to investing in all staff

Stour Vale is a trust which deliberately builds its capacity and develops the talent of the whole workforce. We create a high-performing work culture by promoting a shared understanding of our purpose, vision, values and approach. We actively promote

collaboration and celebrate its positive impact on high quality and inclusive education, professional learning and workload. We consistently champion the expertise and professionalism of all colleagues in the wide range of school, setting and central team roles which surround and facilitate the provision of high quality and inclusive education. We will seek to create opportunities that will enable all individuals across our workforce to continually improve and to progress in their careers.

Key Priorities:

1. We consistently develop staff understanding of our purpose, vision, values and approach and the benefits of being part of a growing family of unique schools and settings. In turn, this understanding will continue to provide a strong foundation for impactful collaboration and learning from and through research and evidence-based practice.
2. Our culture, policies, practices and procedures value the whole staff team, creating inclusive working environments. We promote well-being, consider workload, support flexible working and promote equality and diversity. We prioritise effective behaviour and attendance policies which create a safe and positive environment for staff as well as children and young people.
3. We use the flexibility of the trust structure to facilitate sustainable improvement: by creating opportunities for career progression, through proactive succession planning, and minimising the impact of single points of failure and shortage areas.
4. We provide or promote a wide range of professional learning which offers opportunities for staff in all roles to continually improve, enabling them to have a greater positive impact on pupils and equipping them to progress in their career.
5. We deliver high-quality education for trainee teachers seeking opportunities to expand, to maximise the impact of effective ITT on the quality of teaching in member schools and to embed ITT within Stour Vale's wider professional learning offer.

Key Indicators of Success:

1. Stour Vale is able to evidence the direct and indirect positive impact of collaboration and learning through research and evidence-based practices on workload, professional learning, expertise and career progression.
2. Colleagues in a wide range of roles progress in their careers equipped by timely and relevant professional learning.
3. Well-considered succession planning not only facilitates career progression but also secures our collective capacity for continuous improvement and minimises the impact of single points of failure and shortage areas.

4. Staff survey, recruitment, progression and retention data evidence that Stour Vale's shared moral purpose, culture, opportunities for professional learning and career progression position us as an employer of choice for the education workforce.
5. We make a positive impact on the future of education by delivering high-quality teacher training through existing and new partnerships.
6. We can evidence the positive impact of our delivery of high-quality ITT on the quality of teaching in member schools and the professional development of the wider workforce.

Priority 3

A sustainable trust with excellent finance, operations and communication systems

Stour Vale will be a trust where our well-developed finance, operations and communications systems ensure the effective and efficient use of resources for the benefit of the children and young people who attend its member schools and settings. These systems will be designed to support the effective functioning of schools within a culture where school leaders and staff are empowered and equipped to deliver high-quality education and provision for children and young people.

Key Priorities:

1. Stour Vale sets a stable, accurate, and sustainable long-term strategy, which minimises volatility and maximises stability.
2. Stour Vale demonstrates efficient and effective use of resources which delivers value for money
3. Strong oversight of all areas of compliance ensures that Stour Vale minimises the risk of fraud, financial mismanagement, data breaches and health and safety breaches.
4. Stour Vale's capital infrastructure, including buildings and estates, digital infrastructure and technology are maintained and continuously improved.
5. Central operation, administration and finance functions have sufficient capacity, communicate effectively and operate together as one interconnected central team focused on meeting the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse trust.
6. Efficient communications systems and approaches enable us to effectively communicate our successes both within and beyond Stour Vale.

Key Indicators of Success:

1. Budget monitoring and forecasting is accurate, thereby empowering school and trust leaders to make well-informed financial decisions. Consistent monitoring, accurate forecasting and wise decision making ensure that Stour Vale remains financially strong, in a surplus position with stable finances and a high ratio of assets to liabilities.
2. We operate a well-planned reserves policy that provides sufficient contingency for cashflow and any urgent expenditure and which maximises the return on our reserves. In turn, this increases the financial resources available to facilitate the provision of high quality and inclusive education.
3. We are able to demonstrate that we have actively sought and where possible secured good value for money.
4. Clear and effective oversight of trust finances, adherence to financial procedures, oversight of all areas of compliance and risk management ensures compliance and minimises risk.
5. Sustainable investment in Stour Vale's capital and digital infrastructure ensures that premises and IT provision meet the needs of children, young people and staff in our growing trust.
6. The effective and well-coordinated functioning of the whole central team enables and empowers schools and settings to focus on the continuous improvement of high quality and inclusive education.
7. Stour Vale has the capacity and expertise to effectively communicate our successes and opportunities within and beyond our trust.

Priority 4

A growing trust which has a positive impact more widely, across and beyond the education system

Stour Vale proactively seeks to build positive relationships with schools, settings, trusts and other civic partners. By working collaboratively and by practising professional generosity, we make a positive impact on the wider education system and fulfill our civic responsibility. Effective collaboration and sharing of expertise across our family of schools in turn builds the capacity which enables Stour Vale to collaborate and to offer support and challenge beyond our family of schools.

Stour Vale is actively seeking to grow. We build positive relationships with schools and settings who share our ethos and values and are considering joining a trust. We are also building the capacity to be the destination trust for trusts who share our ethos and values and who are seeking a larger trust with which to merge.

Key Priorities:

1. Stour Vale works collaboratively to make a demonstrable positive impact across the wider education system and beyond, seeking opportunities to both learn from others and to share our experience, capacity and expertise.
2. Stour Vale maximises the opportunities to have a positive impact across the wider education system and to grow.
3. Stour Vale builds relationships with schools, settings and trusts, which lead to further growth.

Key Indicators of Success:

1. Stour Vale is able to evidence the direct and indirect positive impact of collaboration and professional generosity across the wider education system and beyond.
2. Stour Vale continues to grow sustainably whilst retaining our values, ethos and approach of secured autonomy and culture of belonging to a supportive family of schools and settings.