



Stephen Sutton
Multi-Academy Trust

STRATEGIC PLAN

Jan. 2018 – Dec. 2022



“

Make every second count, never take anything for granted. Don't be afraid to try something new – life is for living.

”

DOCUMENT APPROVAL and REVIEW

Review date: **Mar. 18**

Approval needed by: **Trust Board**

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SUMMARY VERSION

Introduction

Stephen Sutton Multi-Academy Trust (SSMAT) is conceived as a partnership of primary and secondary schools in the Staffordshire/Walsall area, working together to help young people grow in confidence, as effective learners who take their opportunities.

Across the Trust, there is a strong commitment to achieving the highest possible standards through a flexible, inclusive approach, with schools and colleagues supporting each other and learning from the best educational practice. As a strongly community-focused Trust, there are close links with local industry, creating improved life and employment prospects for young people

The Trust takes its inspiration (and its name) from Stephen Sutton, who grew up in Burntwood and attended **Chase Terrace Technology College**, the first school in the Trust. Stephen was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 15. By the time he died, in 2014 at the age of 19, he had raised over £3 million for the **Teenage Cancer Trust** through his fundraising activities. Stephen inspired people all over the world through his words and actions. Through his incredible positivity, creativity, courage and ambition, Stephen's memory provides us all with the best possible role model.

The Strategic Plan creates a framework for action, over a five-year period, that is designed to optimise the Trust's capacity for the effective realisation of its mission and its key goals, taking into account the local and national context. The Plan will be reviewed on an on-going basis, with a formal evaluation and revision undertaken by the Trust Board on an annual basis. The time-scale for the Plan will continuously 'roll forwards', so that there is always a five year future planning timescale.

This document is an executive summary of the full version and can be found on the Trust's website.

Values

The core values of SSMAT are:

A PASSION TO LEARN AND TO SUCCEED

Stephen was ambitious, determined and focused, and members of this Trust aim to follow Stephen's example in taking opportunities and always looking to improve.

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

One of Stephen's defining characteristics was his openness and very straightforward style of communication. Trust is developed through the way people treat each other and strong relationships based on trust help support better outcomes.

POSITIVITY AND BRAVERY

In Jane Sutton's words, Stephen was 'as bright as a diamond and just as tough'. Stephen taught us to develop a positive outlook and work through the difficulties we face with determination and resilience.

CREATIVITY AND A SENSE OF FUN

There are lots of different ways to get great outcomes and so we encourage innovation and calculated risk-taking. Furthermore, Stephen reminded us that, 'life is for living' and it's important to have fun!



Stephen Sutton
Multi-Academy Trust

Mission and Vision

MISSION

Create and sustain continuous improvement across all schools in the Trust, through collaboration, mutual support, imagination and ambition.

VISION

An outstandingly inclusive and successful network of schools, throughout which all students thrive.

Context

There are a broad range of inter-related influential factors that provide the context in which SSMAT's strategy needs to be considered. Key risks, priorities and potential levers for improvement include:

- Academisation of schools and the rapid growth of MATs, both nationally and locally
- The strengthening roles of MATs and Teaching Schools in providing system leadership and taking roles previously played by local authorities
- Austerity, increasing cost pressures and the introduction of the National Funding Formula
- Expected rises in student numbers (both nationally and locally), especially in the secondary age range and plans for new 'free schools' in the region
- The introduction of new performance and accountability measures
- New qualifications, specifications and grading systems
- Teacher recruitment and retention challenges
- Skills needs, apprenticeships and Local Enterprise Partnership priorities
- The new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Safeguarding issues, including online safety and radicalisation
- The increasing prevalence of mental health issues, especially amongst young people.

Strategic Intent

SSMAT works as an agent for positive change in its community, with its strongest focus being on securing the best possible educational outcomes and life chances for young people. There is a strong commitment to inclusive practice and continuous improvement and a core belief that we are all capable of more than we dare to imagine.

The Trust Board has developed a set of questions, grouped into strategic areas, which create a foundation for the body of the Strategic Plan itself. Collectively, these questions and the outline responses describe the Trust's strategic intent for the next five years.

Development of the MAT

How big does SSMAT aim to be and how will it build capacity?

SSMAT aims to grow in size to five partner schools by '23, ideally, a combination of secondary and primary schools, creating the conditions for both horizontal and vertical collaboration. The Trust will assess options and viability over this period and, as appropriate, consider the argument for the further expansion of the Trust, including an analysis of the necessary structural changes that would need to be made. Growth beyond five schools is not a goal in and of itself and the Trust Board is very clear that its first priorities are to serve its community and to ensure that outcomes are strong.

CTTC is a secondary (11-18) school of 1,400 students. In order to strengthen its operational capacity, by '23 the Trust aims to have between 2,500 and 4,000 students on roll in its schools.

Based on its current situation, SSMAT has developed a Core Services Offer for its partner schools. This is revised as each new school joins the Trust, reflecting the extent of the increased complexity and challenge and the extra resources that have become available through the extra budget 'top-slice'.

What role does SSMAT aim to play with regard to system leadership?

On a basic level, SSMAT aims to play the role that a local authority used to play, but operating on a more local level, with a strong emphasis on trust and collegiality and featuring a highly developed relationship with the community.

Many of SSMAT's strategic priorities relate to areas where creative and purposeful engagement with external agencies is a prerequisite for really effective, sustained improvement. In seeking to take advantage of what other stakeholders can offer, SSMAT will be prepared to play a leading role in supporting the work of others. Furthermore, since the aim of this type of system leadership is to add value to the experiences, outcomes and prospects of society in general, there is an intrinsic moral imperative for action of this type.

Over the five year period, the Trust will work towards Teaching School Alliance status in order that it can: play a strong system leadership role; take advantage fully of the resources and networking opportunities that this status affords; and recruit, develop and retain the strongest possible staff team.

Governance

How will the SSMAT Board know that its structures are strong and that Directors and Governors have the skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively?

The Trust Board will periodically conduct a self-assessment exercise and consider the need for expert input / guidance. In order to support objectivity and improve effectiveness, the Board will also consider the value of ongoing support from national governance-related associations. In relation to identified needs, the Board will create a costed Governance Training Plan.

The Governance Training Plan will be developed to be inclusive of both directors and governors, especially as many training needs will be of shared value / concern.

What information does the SSMAT Board need in order to perform its role effectively, ensuring that expectations and standards are high, practice is inclusive and improvement is continuous?

The MAT Board will be provided with clear, concise, reliable and timely information and data relating to key outcomes, in order to: provide appropriate challenge and support; determine the need for extra resources; and consider the case for strategic re-prioritisation. There is a need for both clear, balanced retrospective analysis of outcome data (including comparisons with both previous and national data, as appropriate) and also data that allows the Board to monitor and intervene before final outcomes are determined.

A set of Key Performance Indicators will be set by the Trust Board, for each school, with the involvement of the Executive Director and the school's Headteacher / Local Governing Body. Some of these will relate to issues and measures of interest / concern across all schools, including: safeguarding; Health and Safety, 'headline' educational performance outcomes; outcomes for disadvantaged students; student attendance and behaviour; financial performance; and staff absence, retention and recruitment. The KPIs will represent an ambitious, but realistic, set of benchmarks which, if achieved, would demonstrate a school's continuous improvement. At each Trust Board meeting, the Board will consider performance in relation to the set of KPIs, providing a remit for the ongoing work of the Executive Director and the Headteacher / LGB.



School improvement model

How will strengths and weaknesses in provision in SSMAT schools be identified, addressed, monitored and evaluated?

Each school will have its own self-evaluation approach, moderated by the Executive Director, with direct involvement, as appropriate. Schools will need to ensure that self-evaluation and monitoring provide accurate, reliable and timely data in relation to the specific set of Key Performance Indicators.

For specific key issues, including safeguarding and Health and Safety, regular compliance audits will be conducted. Any significant issues will be addressed without delay and reported to the Trust Board.

Furthermore, on an annual basis, the Trust will commission external consultants to undertake a review of provision to strengthen improvement strategies in key areas.

How will SSMAT schools work with each other to develop professional practice?

An Executive Group will be set up that will comprise the Executive Director, Headteachers of partner schools and (by invitation) other key staff. This will provide the forum through which collaborative work can be agreed and Trust-wide policies can be developed.

Colleagues with particular strengths will be encouraged and incentivised to provide coaching and training for colleagues in other partner schools.

How will leaders ensure that the MAT's school improvement model is informed by best practice and that the MAT contributes to wider school improvement initiatives?

MAT colleagues, will be engaged in professional networks and training / briefing events and will share new learning across the Trust. In particular, the MAT leaders will engage with evidence-informed school improvement research, projects and programmes that support the school improvement plans and the Trust's aims.

SSMAT will seek to foster strong, collaborative relationships with other schools, learning from the best practice elsewhere, and will be ready and willing to reciprocate by accommodating visitors and providing outreach support (within sensible time and cost constraints).

Staff recruitment, development and retention

How will the Trust develop a brand, reputation, benefits package and recruitment approach that, together, attracts and retains effective staff, who share the Trust's core values and level of ambition?

SSMAT demonstrates how much it values its staff team through the way that people are treated, with a strong emphasis on equality, fairness and proportionality.

The Trust has bought a staff benefits package and will periodically review its impact, making improvements to the offer, based on feedback.

SSMAT will develop a communications strategy that will provide the MAT community with an appropriate means of finding out about key issues and an appropriate mechanism for consultation on potential SSMAT developments.

How will a Trust-wide approach to training be developed that addresses the Trust's strategic priorities, without compromising individual schools' abilities to address their own priorities and develop their own approaches?

Partner schools' training plans will be developed in consultation with other partner schools, to enable collaboration and improve cost efficiency.

A core programme of training on compliance issues, including safeguarding, Health and Safety and data protection will be organised and coordinated across schools in the Trust, including through the use of online platforms.

How will SSMAT develop an ambitious and innovative framework for leadership development that creates the foundation for strong succession planning?

SSMAT will be a 'hub' in the local area for leadership development in education, running accredited programmes relating to middle and senior leadership, governance and school business management.

The Trust Board will take a strategic, proactive approach to succession planning by identifying how 'operation critical' roles could be filled in the short, medium and long term, primarily through focusing on the development of overlapping roles, talent identification, shadow structures, coaching and other capacity-building approaches.

Relationship with the community

How will SSMAT, and its partner schools, engender a sense of ambition and purpose in young people, leading to strong career-related outcomes?

SSMAT will champion and develop strong information, advice and guidance, throughout its schools and in the local community. This will be achieved through engagement in partnership networks with local employers, training providers and FE/HE institutions?

The Trust, and its schools, will gain national recognition for leading practice in this area and will take advantage of opportunities to lead pilot projects and influence regional and national policy.

How will SSMAT use its agency to play a role in brokering and supporting opportunities for parents, and other adults in the local community, to improve their employment prospects?

Through its business connections, and through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Enterprise and Skills Boards (ESBs), SSMAT will play a role in strengthening community understanding of local job opportunities and issues relating to employability.

In conjunction with local employers and training providers, the Trust will play a role in up-skilling local community members and enabling them to get into employment and/or improve their job prospects.