

CEO Review of the year 2022/23

Fidelity, consistency, integrity

This year we have introduced this as our new mantra. These three words have been at the heart of all that we do. It has been a busy year, with the publication of our three year strategic plan, setting out what we hope to achieve under our five pillars: safeguarding, pupils, people, resources, stakeholders. The plan was generated with input from all our stakeholders. This is underpinning and driving our work moving forward.

Curriculum development and Ofsted

All schools have worked hard to develop their broad curriculum. Our headteachers and teachers are knowledgeable about what makes an effective curriculum, and we are seeing this in our schools. Wollaston is a good example of a school who have worked hard on developing a curriculum that works for their children. Staff here have a secure knowledge of what a curriculum should be and are implementing this with fidelity, consistency and integrity.

As well as developing the wider curriculum, we have also put a significant focus into developing our schools reading, writing and mathematics curriculums and pedagogy. This has been led by our school improvement leaders, however we have also drawn on the expertise in our schools. Staff at The Abbey, have supported the trust in the development and implementation of the Power Maths programme across most of our schools.

Trust curriculum development was also recognised in the successful Ofsted inspections at five of our schools. The developments to their curriculum supported the schools in achieving or maintaining a 'good' judgement. Given that Hall Meadow had not received an inspection since 2008, staff at Hall Meadow did a superb job in demonstrating the significant improvements made. There have been major changes at the school, and to the Ofsted framework in 14 years. The 'good' outcome was well earned and well deserved.

Five schools were inspected in 2022/23. Hall, Meadow, Little Harrowden, The Abbey, Kingsley and Standens Barn all maintained or were judged to be 'good'. Well done to the staff at all schools for their hard work and commitment to the pupils and families in their school.

Co-operation, collaboration and training

This year we have continued to develop co-operation and collaboration between the schools. Headteachers and central team received leadership training together, strengthening the relationship between the centre and the schools. Monthly headteachers' and central team meetings allow leaders to share their expertise and to contribute to the strategic direction of the trust, aligned with the strategic plan. Our headteachers are also supporting each other, and sharing expertise across the trust.

The central team continue to visit schools regularly. Among many significant projects this year, Dawn Chapman has successfully overseen improvement works in our schools, including the replacement of five boilers. This much needed work may have been prohibitively expensive were the schools to have managed this alone. In June, Becci Denbigh, our new CFO, joined the trust. She has already had a big impact on the trust process and procedures for managing funds. We received another positive audit outcome, and Becci is working closely with school leaders to help them to know and understand their school budgets. Carole Kirby is continuing to work tirelessly with our trustees and local academy committees (LAC) to ensure effective governance and accountability across the trust. She has been ably joined this year by Maria Page, our Deputy Lead Governance Professional, who is establishing supportive relationships with our local academy chairs. This is developing the links between the LACs, the trust board and the central team.

Challenges

INMAT and its schools have faced challenges this year. Some of these are aligned with the national picture. Recruitment and retention has been an ongoing problem. It is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit teachers and support staff. However, we have begun to 'grow our own', with staff from across the trust taking up leadership roles. Beth Renshaw, new headteacher at Little Harrowden Primary School is an excellent example of where we have found the best people from within our organisation.

Training for deputy and assistant headteachers as well as subject leaders is providing our staff with the knowledge and expertise they need to progress in their careers, and to take the next step within the trust. This year we have also increased our profile in the education sector. Word of mouth, supported by our increasing media presence, proficiently managed by Hollie Matthews, is beginning to attract more candidates to apply for our jobs.

Pupil numbers are down across the county. However, we are seeing the impact of our reputation on rising numbers at some of our schools. Having had several years of falling roles, at St James Infants more families are choosing the school as their first choice.

In Conclusion...

The past year has been one of development and consolidation. The hard work of all our staff is beginning to pay dividends. All schools now have a curriculum in place in all 13 subjects, and all teach an accredited phonics programme. The three year strategic plan sets out the direction for the trust. Our financial position is healthy enabling us to support and develop our schools for the future.

INMAT continues to drive improvement through fidelity, consistency and integrity.

Helen Williams

Chief Executive Officer