



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

ACADEMY TRUST



Driving Forward

Strategic Plan
2022 to 2027

Improving our
pupil experience

Developing our staff

Enhancing our
learning environments,
facilities and resources

Growing and
sustaining our Trust

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Introduction

It has been 11 years since the University of Lincoln sponsored the establishment of the University Academy Holbeach (UAH). In 2014 the Lincolnshire Educational Trust (LET) was formed as Holbeach Primary Academy (HPA) joined the Multi Academy Trust. This was then followed by Gosberton House Academy (GHA) in 2016. In 2017, the Trust was asked to take two failing schools, Holbeach Bank Primary and The Peele Community College, Long Sutton; joining in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Throughout this period of growth, the Trust enhanced its governance and built its infrastructure for supporting and improving its academies. The Trust is very confident that growth has not diminished the academies, in fact it has been enhanced providing new opportunities for staff to develop, innovate and bid for new areas of work. The growth has helped create a continuum of education in and around Holbeach, from early years through to university and high level technical training. This has raised the aspirations of young people in the area and improved social mobility. In 2020, following a strategic review, the Trust changed its name to University of Lincoln Academy Trust (UoLAT).

In shaping the Strategic Plan, UoLAT analysed the educational climate and potential changes, whilst also continuing to learn and develop following the pandemic. It absorbed the views of its Members and Trustees, listened to and was informed by staff and governors whilst additionally taking into account the strategic review of the Trust conducted in 2020 in consultation with the Regional Schools Commissioner. Finally, the Trust listened to the views of senior staff in other multi academy trusts, researching widely the various facets of education and its future development.

The Strategic Plan sets a series of pathways for driving forward, with some measures of success with milestones. It also recognises a very fluid and dynamic educational landscape in which UoLAT needs to be agile; the Strategic Plan aims to give a sense of direction as the Trust develops.

Educational Climate

The last two years have been particularly challenging for the country, with education being constantly described as a high priority by the Government. The reality of its actions does not appear to support the case. The major government priority for education is to redesign post-16 technical and vocational provision. The Government is committed to academies and growth in the sector.

The White Paper, March 2022, set the target for all schools to join a multi-academy trust (MAT), or demonstration of planning to join one by 2030. The Government is also promoting the idea that single academy trusts either merge to become a MAT, or join with an existing MAT. They are apparently seeking to promote partnerships between MATs and local authority schools as a ‘try and see’ process. This process has potential for UoLAT, but there are also risks; investment by some trusts in a school, only for the idea of partnership to fail, wasting time and resources. This also raises questions regarding significant expenditure on areas where any trust’s budgets were not originally allocated. UoLAT is based in an area where many schools are already academies, opportunities to grow are limited. This is especially so in the special school and secondary school sectors, looking to establish a ‘second hub’ may require consideration.

The Board Trustees have indicated they would like to see growth in the Trust, but should not place any risk on its current academies; these remain its first priority. Thus, it is important to look to the future developments in the education sector so that the Strategic Plan reflects and builds on those possibilities.

The pandemic had a very significant impact upon learning. This is not just because of the days lost during closures, but also that when pupils were back in school, the use of specialist rooms was limited, curtailing vital learning. Recent research shows that the biggest loss in learning surrounded disadvantaged children, UoLAT has a disproportionate number of learners who fall within this category. This will need to be addressed via recovery plans.



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It is likely that the next few years will see some significant pressures on academy budgets, needing us to carefully assess the financial risks in driving forward. The Government has expressed a clear agenda to “level up”, but despite being in one of the most deprived areas of the Country, any significant resources earmarked to support levelling up in south Lincolnshire have yet to be seen; contrasting sharply with investment seen in Boston, Lincoln and North Cambridgeshire.

During the pandemic there was much debate surrounding the structure of state schooling, the curriculum and remote learning. It is possible that the school day and length of the school year could be extended during the next few years. There is no doubt that extending the role of remote learning will become an integral part of a schools offer to its pupils and parents. Developing the curriculum in academies will be crucial, especially in areas such as the use and impact of digital technology and protection of the environment and also ensuring it addresses the cultural and social awareness in society.

“ I think I speak on behalf of all key workers and parents of vulnerable children in saying a huge thank you for opening the school yesterday. We all watched our TVs in dismay when we learnt that schools were closing without notice. When many schools closed their doors, your can-do attitude put our children first and left the red tape until later. We know it is not easy, but our children's world is turned upside down, you always put them first and keep the ship afloat. Thank you so much.

Holbeach Primary Academy parent during the pandemic

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Another dimension which we must consider is how schools increasingly play a crucial and central role in their local community. Since the Children's Act in 2004, schools have increasingly found that their role in providing and signposting social care has grown. This includes a growing responsibility due to safeguarding and child protection legislation, but also because of the decline in the level of support from local authorities. This has resulted in schools becoming increasingly engaged in addressing this shortfall of provision. It now involves engagement in cases at much greater depth and complexity than was previously the case. The pandemic has undoubtedly increased this pressure significantly, with schools and academies used as hubs for the distribution of benefits and often assuming the role as main contact and lead professionals for the safeguarding vulnerable groups. UoLAT's Strategic Plan must recognise this shift, with its academies needing to increase their involvement in these areas, if it is to support young people and provide them with the stability they need whilst ensuring they can get the most out of their education. Continuing to build an inclusive approach to schooling, combined with a strong sense of listening to pupils and developing relationships with our parent/carers is fundamental to the way forward.

UoLAT needs to maintain strong governance at both Trust and academy levels; this will require regular review of both structures and personnel.

What is the ideal size for a Trust?

This is an aspect that the Board of Trustees rightly asked to be considered as UoLAT drives forward. It has become normal to argue that the larger an organisation, the costs to each part of the group should be lower, being delivered through efficiencies and economies of scale. However, a study in 2019 evaluating trusts concluded that this was not the case. Although they argue they were building an infrastructure for future expansion, the fact there has been very little expansion over the last two years has not appeared to have brought about reductions in central costs. That is not to say that if central teams are well managed and they test a competitive market, they cannot bring costs down. The message from government is that you need to grow your infrastructure to be able to grow, which is fine if you manage to grow. If you fail to achieve growth at the planned rate, you can quickly have financial problems.

There are many views on the ideal size for a trust, influenced by a number of factors. UoLAT's view is it depends on the mix of schools, primary, secondary, special and their Ofsted grading. Operating a trust consisting of schools in only one of these phases is more economical than a trust with a range of school phases. Trusts with a significant number of failing schools find maintaining and securing efficiencies very challenging and often find a greater demand upon resources, compared to trusts with one with or very few failing schools. We note the White Paper suggestion, that by 2030, most trusts will be on a trajectory to either serve a minimum of 7,500 pupils or run 10 schools. UoLAT's aspiration is to hit the 10 school target by 2027. UoLAT's ambition is to grow in a slow, but well managed way; taking a step-by-step approach. Surrounding the management of that approach are regular appraisals by trustees and senior executives, to ascertain capacity and the risks associated with the next stage of development.

What has UoLAT achieved?

- > A trust that has developed a coherent ethos that is affirmed by all our academies.
- > A trust that puts young people first in all its decision making.
- > All our academies are improving and developing.
- > All our academies are full and recruiting to their Published Admission Number (PAN).
- > All our academies have excellent leadership.
- > A cross phase fully inclusive trust, supported by our families and the local community.
- > A trust whose staff willingly join and we are able to retain.
- > Successful expansion of the Trust, at a manageable rate, with only a positive impact on its academies.
- > An effective experienced infrastructural team to support our academies.
- > New and improved buildings and resources for pupils and staff.
- > A new name which brings us much closer to the University of Lincoln, our sponsors.
- > A very strong infrastructure of governance at all levels of the Trust.

What have we learnt for the future?

- > We have the skills and know how to take failing schools and improve them.
- > We have a multi-talented team, which we must continue to develop.
- > Our staff are agile, resilient and can manage in a crisis.
- > Our infrastructural support is first class and flexible enough to meet needs of our academies.
- > Our relationship with parents and carers is first class.
- > We need to develop new courses and resources for post 16 education.
- > We need to drive forward to a new level with our digital technology.
- > We see our established culture of catch-up sessions in extended day schooling, Saturday sessions and holiday schools as key components of enhancing learning.
- > We need to develop our relationships with local schools as a means of possible growth.
- > We need to realise the full potential that is available from our sponsors.

“ Starting UAH, I was nervous and shy 11 year old. You, your school and staff have guided, supported and nurtured me to become the person I am today. With grateful thanks.

Student note to the Principal on leaving UAH

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In developing our strategic plan, we need to recognise it has been created following 18 months of major disruption during the Covid pandemic, that has directly challenged many aspects of school life and lead to an unstable educational and financial climate.

Creating your Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2027

Fundamental to the Strategic Plan is being secure in the ethos of the Trust, which is something that the Sponsors and Trustees are keen to see maintained and developed.

In 2020 a strategic review of the Trust by an external consultant stated:

“The Trust believes it has a moral imperative to work to improve young people’s life chances through high quality educational provision, care and support in south Lincolnshire. That ethos has permeated every conversation I have had with members of the senior staff. Whereas other Trusts work hard to develop and gain support for values, there is a real sense of that ethos being the accepted, a unifying starting point for leaders of the LET.”

This was affirmation of what the Trust stands for in “putting children first”.

UoLAT’s ethos is based on: our mission, our vision, our values and our curriculum intent, which are interrelated and fundamental to how we work as a trust.

Ethos

At the heart of the Trust’s ethos is the moral imperative to improve the life chances of all its young people. This starts by putting children and their parent/carers first in our decision making. Promoting a rich and balanced curriculum that is enjoyable, aspirational, ambitious and innovative for children. A safe, healthy and caring environment has been created in each academy, where children can grow up confidently. We have worked collectively and collaboratively across the academies to achieve the synergies that a multi-academy trust can bring. This is enhanced by the active participation of the University of Lincoln, working with the Trust. All of UoLAT’s academies are expected to uphold its mission, values and curriculum intent, whilst interpreting them to meet their local community’s needs.

Our Mission:

To inspire our young people to be confident so that they can make a positive contribution to the world in which they live, by establishing high aspirations, promoting educational excellence and providing a caring and safe environment.

Our vision is a Trust that is:

- > Constantly focus on improving the quality of education for all young people in our academies.
- > Committed to a broad and relevant curriculum, with a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom for all.
- > A first-choice destination for parents/carers, pupils and staff.
- > A community of academies that enhances the personal development of pupils, so they become confident citizens.
- > Creating lifelong learners able to update or reskill themselves throughout their lifetime.
- > Promoting an understanding of fairness, justice, equality, discrimination, mutual respect and democracy.
- > Seeking to improve social mobility for all in everything we do.
- > Providing learning environments that are exciting, stimulating and high quality.
- > Providing opportunities and delivering experiences to raise aspirations and opportunities for pupils and staff by working with the University of Lincoln.
- > Committed to equality of opportunity and support staff in progressing their careers.
- > Prioritising professional development for all staff and promoting teamwork.
- > Ambitious to grow the number of academies in the Trust in a carefully managed development, but also to develop partnerships and alliances.
- > Providing outstanding leadership and strong governance at all levels.

“LET (UOLAT) working with the University of Lincoln demonstrate best practice in raising aspirations for young people
Justine Greening (2020), Former Secretary of State for Education

An exceptional, all-inclusive school that has helped my sons’ development both socially and academically. Excellent communication and reassurance for parents too.
Parent GHA

Our Values:

- > Maximising the potential of every child and young person.
- > Providing a safe and secure environment for learning and teaching.
- > Promoting well-being: physical, emotional and mental.
- > Caring for the environment in which we learn and live.
- > Supporting parents and carers to participate in their children’s learning.
- > Nurturing and developing excellent staff to help us achieve our mission.
- > Fostering a positive learning culture that is aspirational, ambitious and innovative.
- > Working in partnership to achieve our goals.
- > Upholding exemplary behaviour that is respectful and caring.
- > Making education enjoyable and celebrating every young person’s achievement.

Our Curriculum Intent:

- > Create a curriculum that embeds the mission and values of the Trust, yet is crafted in a manner that meets the distinctive needs of each community and all the stakeholders in each academy.
- > Provide our young people with access to the knowledge, experiences and skills necessary to equip them for life. Building their cultural capital so that they are knowledgeable about a wide range of cultures and have access to a broad range of experiences to deploy during their life.
- > Consult regularly with parents, carers and young people about their curriculum needs to ensure we have the right provision which is broad and balanced, recognising that our young people learn in different ways and have different needs and interests.
- > Ensure there are different pathways to learning, yet guaranteeing equality of opportunity for all young people.
- > Prioritise learning in communication, literacy and numeracy for every young person.
- > Develop skills and knowledge that enable young people to be confident and healthy citizens in the digital world.
- > Provide opportunities for developing interest and talent in sports, music and creative arts
- > Promote learning, on occasions outside the classroom, which develops resilience and self-worth.
- > Build knowledge, skills and understanding in a way that engages and inspires young people in an intelligent, logical and sequential manner.
- > Celebrating success at all levels to help build confidence and help create develop confident and ambitious young people.

“

I joined UAH at 11 years of age and had some inspirational teachers. At 16 I started as an apprentice and through excellent support and encouragement in 2020 I was awarded Apprenticeship Plumber of the Year. This has established me on a great career path.

Student and Apprentice, UAH

The transformation of our school has been wonderful to experience, with excellent leadership, focus on high quality teaching and learning and improving the learning environment for our pupils.

Senior member of staff, UALS

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Our Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan 2022 to 2027 for the University of Lincoln Academy Trust is built on four themes:

- > **Improving our pupil experience**
- > **Developing our staff**
- > **Enhancing our learning environment, facilities and resources**
- > **Growing and sustaining our Trust**

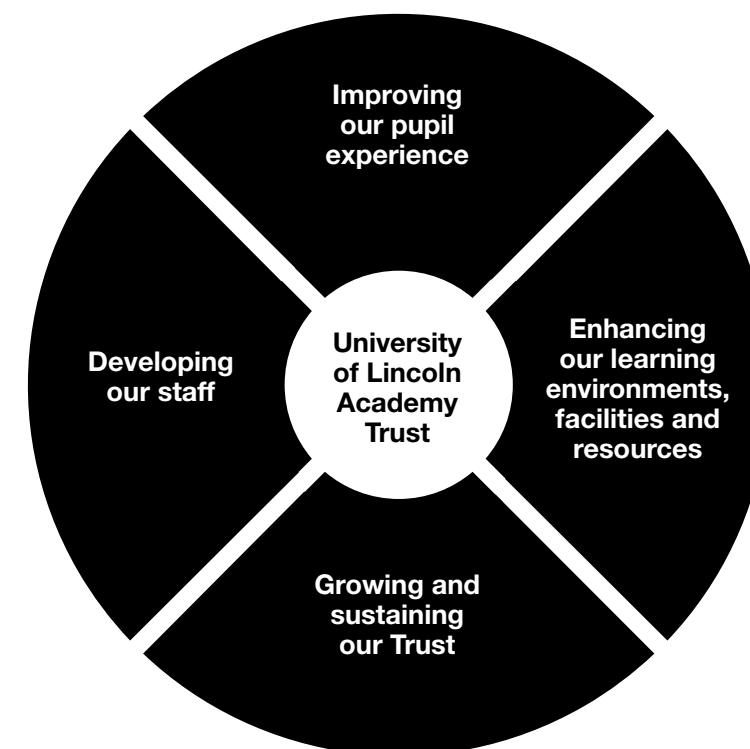
These themes will be interrelated, but drawn together by our very strong ethos, agile and excellent staff and comprehensive service infrastructure which provides UoLAT with the capability to grow with the support of the University of Lincoln. All academies in the Trust will continue to grow through strategies for improvement and by the application of its policy of earned autonomy, which empowers the Principals and their staff to demonstrate both team work, innovation and ambition. The Trust does not seek to develop a one size fits all “trust approach” to managing its academies, all of the academies are different. We seek to empower creative leadership that inspires staff to be outstanding educationalists.

University of Lincoln Academy Trust is based in an area of high deprivation, with low wage economy and a tradition of very low aspirations. It is also in an area where infrastructural services for young people and their families are poor. There are no further education facilities in the locality, UoLAT has developed those areas for students.

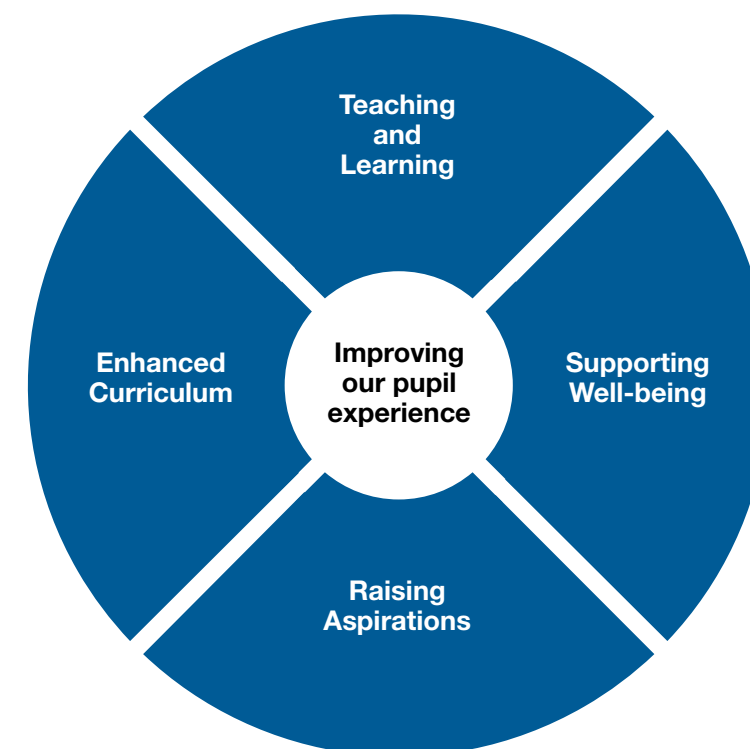
Many young people who gain qualifications could make a very positive contribution to the local economy, but often leave to work in other parts of the country. The area is situated where farming and food processing are key industries. Technological revolution is taking place, high quality engineers are going to be required, with all of the related infrastructural support services. This is the contextual setting for the Trust’s plan, with the overall aim of improving the educational experience of our young people. This in turn enables them to enjoy enhanced life chances because of our contribution and the experiences they have gained whilst in the care of the Trust.



Strategy Theme 1: Improving our pupil experience



University of Lincoln Academy Trust sees education and its support for young people and their parent/carers as a holistic experience. It will be the skilled blending of the different parts of this theme that will help to equip young people for the remainder of this century and beyond. We know teachers and schools are one of the key influencers upon future citizens and their work with young people is the core purpose for UoLAT. Improving the pupil experience is critical to success and seeing this in a very wide context ranging from a varied academic and vocational curriculum, to promoting cultural and social awareness, with an understanding of environmental issues.



The relentless pursuit to improve and enrich the **quality of teaching and learning will remain a prime driver for improving pupil experience**. Stimulating lessons that fully engage young people and give them the interest to want to learn more, will be a feature of our training and drive to enhance this core component of every academy. The high-quality teaching and learning delivered will ensure all pupils are making good progress, as a result they will achieve outcomes commensurate with their ability, enabling them to move to the next stage of their lives with confidence. Teachers will only progress in their careers within the Trust if they are good or excellent teachers. To ensure objectivity, the Trust will use staff from across its academies and employ external colleagues from partner schools, to regularly review the quality of teaching. This will be measured by pupil feedback on their experiences and action plans to address any issues.

“ You have secured an outstanding level of education through the relentless development of the quality of teaching, clearly focused school improvement plans and staff development.
Ofsted, GHA ”

At the heart of each of the academies is an enhanced curriculum, which is seen as a much broader experience than the formal curriculum. In a changing world, there is a constant need for review and reflection. For example, the impact of outdoor learning during the pandemic is good evidence to build on. Online, live lessons taught by outstanding teachers has proven to improve pupils learning under the recent and challenging conditions during the pandemic. Ensuring that young people develop into responsible citizens, with an understanding and appreciation of the wider world and the social and cultural differences within it, as well as environmental issues is key in preparing them for the 21st century. The curriculum and the breadth of opportunities offered will support UoLAT's work, nurturing learners who will be able to contribute and function in an ever changing world and society. A wide body of evidence shows that a high-quality preschool and early years' education is the best way of enabling children to progress onto a successful learning ladder. The more UoLAT can do to support developments in this area in south east Lincolnshire, the better chances there are of improving life chances of its young people.

The acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills is essential. The use of phonics in primary and secondary schools will be crucial to establishing core building blocks and addressing any skills gaps. The pandemic has further emphasised the need for information technology literacy, combined with safeguarding. UoLAT recognises that the arts, music and sport are crucial areas for learning and enjoyment, as well as a means to building self-esteem and confidence in young people. These will be seen as an integral part of the curriculum, but in areas where a pupil displays real aptitude, UoLAT will seek to provide them with further support through additional, specialist coaching or through working with the University of Lincoln.

The importance of remote learning and a robust IT infrastructure has been seen during the pandemic, this will be an important area of focus over the next five years. The area of south east Lincolnshire where UoLAT is situated has very limited further education provision, there is clear evidence students are not prepared to travel vast distances. This is especially the case where rural infrastructure, in terms of transport it is inadequate and there is limited financial support for post 16 travel. The Trust has a responsibility to facilitate these learning opportunities.

This issue was recognised 12 years ago when University Academy Holbeach (UAH) started developing post 16 provision. UAH offers a comprehensive set of courses, including A Level and vocational/occupational courses, as well as its own apprenticeship scheme. This offer will require further development as government and the Greater Lincolnshire Enterprise Partnership develops their skills agendas. Already accredited as one of the first academies in the country to deliver T Levels, this will be another area for development over the next four years. To support these objectives, UAH will be creating an employer engagement department to further develop our capacity to work with companies and organisations, enriching opportunities for our young people, this will be coupled with high quality careers advice.

“ Thank you for all the support you gave our children throughout the lock down, it was varied and stimulating and our children appreciated the support.
Parent, HPA
I cannot thank the staff enough at GHA. They have helped my son so much and their support for both him and us has been absolutely prefect.
Parent, GHA ”

The Trust is committed to putting children first, part of that must be listening to our young people and taking their views into account when planning and creating the environment in which they learn. Listening to the “pupil voice” is a core element of its ethos. A key focus is **supporting young people's well-being** and improving our pupil experience when combined with working closely with parents and carers.

Firstly, continuing to develop and ensure the Trust meets all the safeguarding and child protection regulations, through our lead officer and a whole trust approach. Many young people, of all ages, are becoming reliant on schools supporting them; something that has never been so well illustrated as through our shared experience of the pandemic. An increasing number of families are finding managing in today's world is increasing difficult, often resulting in the break-up of families or children being neglected, which raises significant safeguarding issues. In some cases, the Trust is helping to ensure children have sufficient food and/or clothing, as well as supporting and helping with mental health issues. The significant rise in pupil premium numbers and looked after children, coupled with increasing numbers of children displaying learning difficulties and requiring additional emotional support, identifies a major area of work for the Trust over the next few years.

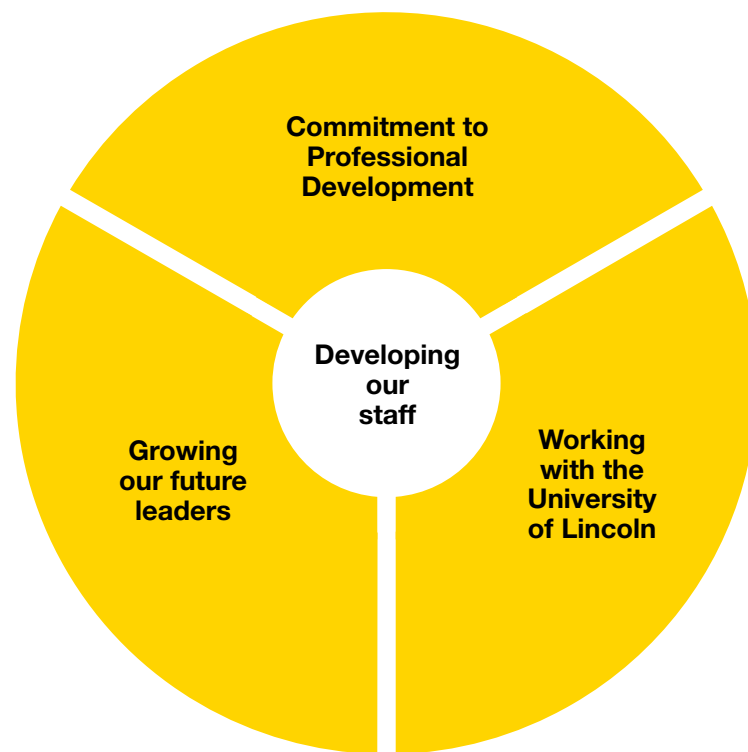
Raising aspirations for young people is a core principle of UoLAT. As the Trust develops, it is crucial that more is done than simply raise aspirations. It is important that the Trust puts young people firmly on a ladder that helps them achieve their aspirations. Ideally, the world has no ceilings and a vast range of opportunities, giving students the skills and positive attitudes to work hard and aspire could be the Trust's greatest contribution to them developing as first-class citizens for their world. A key part of raising aspirations is helping young people experience different cultures. Developing links with the University of Lincoln, giving all pupils an experience of what a university can offer is part of our Strategic Plan, as well as giving experiences of business and the world of work.

Strategy Theme 2: Developing our staff

Staff are the greatest resource and it is vital they are treated considerately and professionally. Ensuring that staff are provided with the resources needed to achieve high quality experiences for young people. UoLAT has made a commitment to staff development and as part of its philosophy, wherever possible to develop our staff from within. This approach enables the Trust to ensure its ethos is maintained and helps to retain high-quality staff.

With 430 staff, there are some very able colleagues with a vast range of talents and experience. Harnessing and developing talent will improve the Trust. In the last 2 years, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Principals of University Academy Holbeach (UAH) and University Academy Long Sutton (UALS), have been promoted from within the Trust. The new Executive Principal at GHA had previously worked for the Trust and the Chief Financial Officer is an internal appointment. It is common practice, where appropriate, to appoint middle leaders from within; showing our staff their potential career routes.

We will also enhance our staffing by bringing new blood into the Trust, where appropriate, with the view to future promotion. The Trust recognises and works with union representatives in a positive and constructive manner. The Trust's aspiration is to be an employer of first choice, supporting diversity and equal opportunities.



As a Trust, we want to recruit and retain the best staff. We believe that the most effective way of doing this is to have a strong **commitment to continuing professional development**. We envisage the development of staff in varied ways; mentoring and coaching, in-house/trust courses, enabling access to further professional qualifications and higher degrees. This is integral to performance management, with professional development always part of that process. UoLAT values its teaching assistants and support staff, ensuring there are career development opportunities. We will align with organisations who provide teacher training so that our induction programmes and early career framework is fully compliant, helping new teachers grow into their profession.

The Trust has and will continue to use the best providers for professional development. Part of the Strategic Plan is to increase working with the University of Lincoln, to develop a comprehensive set of micro-credentials that will form part of a subsidised training package for our staff, potentially being used to contribute to a higher degree. The Trust will seek to subsidise this advanced learning through the University of Lincoln. There is no doubt the pandemic has brought forward the need for increased skills in the use of IT; it is especially important in how we provide remote learning. The Strategic Plan aim is to embed support for learning and enhance learning, ensuring staff have the resources and skills to carry out their work.

“ Teachers value the many training opportunities provided. As a result, teaching is consistently good and pupils make good progress. Ofsted, UAH ”

We are proud of the reputation we have established for **growing future leaders**, across different fields within the Trust. This is absolutely fundamental to sustainability and future growth, enabling improved experiences for young people. UoLAT, in its Strategic Plan, is seeking to promote and encourage working across academies and in some cases across phases; providing new learning experiences and opportunities. We will seek to create developmental ladders, illustrating opportunities within each academy and across the Trust.

“ When summarising our findings, it is difficult not to talk about school not using superlatives such as fantastic, outstanding, amazing. However, this fails to adequately represent the hard work, dogged dedication and consistent efforts made to establish, embed and constantly improve the attitudes approaches, systems, practices, values and behaviours which sustain your success both with the children and staff, in creating a shared culture where achieving your ambition within a Rights Respecting community is both paramount and evident. Investors in People 2020, report on Platinum award for GHA ”

As one of the major parts of the Strategic Plan is to enhance **working with the University of Lincoln**. The establishment of the Trust's new name is part of helping cement and develop this important work, which will have major benefits for both staff and pupils.

The University of Lincoln has grown dramatically in the eleven years since the Trust formed. There have been new schools established; engineering and medicine, an exciting new Centre of Excellence for Agri-Food Technology and the Food Enterprise Zone at Holbeach. These provide vast opportunities, not just for professional development training, but also opportunities to take part in research or seek to fashion research to help address specific academy or Trust issues. It may also provide opportunities for some staff to help the University of Lincoln by lecturing, or by becoming an associate lecturer on a part time basis, as part of their professional development. UoLAT will establish a liaison group with the University of Lincoln that will bring together opportunities that are mutually beneficial. The use of Health and Social care facilities at the University for students on T Level courses is an excellent example.

It is hoped through its working with the University, that at some time in the future, UoLAT can be a base for apprenticeship teachers, helping recruitment for the future.

“ Glen Farrow have used UAH as their apprenticeship provider for 10 yrs. As a company we find UAH very supportive of our needs, providing a high-class level of service and education, supporting apprentice progress at every level. Thank you for the helping us develop as a company. Managing Director, Glen Farrow ”

Strategy Theme 3: Enhancing our learning environments, facilities and resources

UoLAT is focussed on improving pupils' experience and to achieve that, first class facilities are needed, along with resources that are well managed. This means the Trust must be resourceful in looking forward to new opportunities and be prepared to invest in bidding for new facilities and resources. UAH has an outstanding record of this over the last 15 years and currently is being very ambitious in driving forward with T Levels. Part of being a dynamic trust is its capacity to see opportunities and then to have the drive and expertise to see them through.

We have successfully bid for the replacement of UALS through the Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP). We have also made successful bids each year for condition improvement funding (CIF) This is costly and to date the return has been disappointing as it requires contributions from the budget of each academy involved. If UoLAT grew by approximately 250 pupils, it would be entitled to have annual school condition allocations (SCA), this would allow the Trust to develop long term improvement plans. To place matters in context; in 2021/22 if SCA had been received, the Trust would have received approximately £650,000 in CIF. Since the MAT was created in 2014, there have been two boiler replacements, in 2021/22 there was funding to replace two old mobiles and part of the curtain walling at UALS. The total income over 7 years for condition improvement is similar to what could have been received in a single year in 2020/21. Costs of annual bids have not been included, neither timing nor contributions made. Growing the Trust numbers by around 10%, would have some significant financial benefits to enhancing facilities.



Improving facilities and learning environments is an important aspect of the Strategic Plan, it will clearly help provide a high quality, first-class education. Every academy has areas where significant improvements are required, the Strategic Plan needs to prioritise and sequence where these improvements take place, identifying sources of funding to drive each project. UoLAT also needs to be constantly looking for opportunities to develop new facilities and potential funding streams for both buildings and equipment. Balancing the needs of each academy is not easy, it is important that all the Executive Team are able to come to a consensus when making recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

“The vocational curriculum is a strength of the academy. Pupils experience ‘gobsmacking’ facilities and they thrive as a result.
Ofsted, UAH”

The highest priority for improvement is UALS, the Trust has made a commitment to significant refurbishment of its buildings. It should be noted that, in 2014 Lincolnshire County Council submitted a bid to the Department for Education (DfE) to replace the school. A successful bid was submitted to put the Academy on the DfE Priority Building Programme for replacement, with the initial response from a consultant being very promising. £1,000,000 has already been spent improving parts of the Academy, so everything must be done to continue improvements until a decision and a date is announced for replacement. Much has been done, but over the first half of the Strategic Plan it continually seeks to provide funding to improve the buildings on site, as well as creating major improvement to certain teaching areas; particularly science, art & design and food technology.

A second priority is to replace the two-storey mobile at UAH which currently houses the mathematics department. This will hopefully be achieved through the recently awarded T Level bid. This is a major success and part of a series of T Level bids being developed to enhance provision for students. The demand for construction workers is high within the locality, a bid has been submitted to extend the teaching areas for those subjects.

The third area is the replacement of temporary classrooms at GHA and UALS; we should aim to have replaced all temporary classrooms by 2026.

“It has been very satisfying to see the investment made in new equipment, facilities and the school buildings since becoming a member of the University of Lincoln Academy Trust. It has lifted morale and aspirations for the staff, students and parents. There is still more to do and the plans for the future investments make me confident that education standards will be lifted higher for the Academy.
Chair of Governors, UALS”

Some developments are conditional on decisions by others, for instance at Holbeach Primary Academy (HPA) the Children’s Centre has a lease on part of its buildings. With growing numbers, those rooms are urgently required. If Lincolnshire County Council moved the Children’s Centre, investment would be needed to make that a part of the Academy. In addition, there are a range of smaller yet significant areas where our facilities need to improve - particularly outside teaching and recreational areas.

Managing resources is crucial to the Trust’s success and the first priority is to be constantly seeking best value for money. In challenging times, it is always healthy to have sound financial management and good reserves. Balancing the need to spend on new resources and maintenance, whilst being financially secure means the Trust should adhere to a reserves policy of between 4% - 5% of turnover. There is also an expectation that all academies will run within their budgets.

There are many areas where improving resources is critical and where possible, the Trust should encourage individual academies to invest their own reserves to achieve such goals. There are however some resource issues that must be tackled at Trust level, with the highest priority being given to developing the use of digital and technical learning over the next five years. UoLAT cannot afford to be left behind in both the use of digital technology for teaching, as well as using it to support and reinforce learning. A review of the digital offer will be required to formulate a future approach, which a new plan to be developed for implementation in 2024.

The new T Level courses must have the appropriate resources for highly specialist teaching, if they are to attract the right students for courses with a strong work based emphasis. This coupled with government’s drive on apprenticeships. There is need to ensure work in this critical area is further developed, with first class resources for learning.

The third trust-based area for development are communal areas for our young people, particularly outside areas, which must be fit for purpose, determining how best to improve these areas. The library at UALS is an excellent example of innovation and creativity by our staff to improve the teaching and learning area.

“The new science facilities at are fantastic and will help my studies in A Level Science.
6th form student, UAH”

New developments will form a crucial part of the Trust’s Strategic Plan. Some of the developments will be conditional on capacity to secure funding and others will relate to whether the Trust grows.

We are ambitious about creating new opportunities for our young people and being leaders in our field. Firstly, the planned new buildings at GHA are to enable the academy to become an all needs special school, under the local authority’s strategic plan for special schools. This is planned to be funded by Lincolnshire County Council with the planned completion date during the summer of 2024. The Trust’s aim is to maintain the autism specialism, as national leaders in this sector and simply expand the ‘all-needs’ role in the new buildings.

The Working Together outreach service for autism in all schools, funded by the local authority, has been run highly successfully by GHA for many years. The contract has very recently been renewed for a number of years, which is good news for both UoLAT and schools in the area. GHA has invested significantly in this area and will continue to do so.

A bid is to be planned for the new primary Free School in Holbeach, when and if it becomes available. This will be a competitive process with many trusts involved, therefore it will be important to identify an appropriate consultant to help with this work and to plan UoLAT's approach. Should the Free School not emerge, the Trust would expect some section 106 funding, to expand HPA, should the planned housing development take place.

The development of new teaching areas for T Levels and supporting the apprenticeship programme will require funding over the next four to five years. Part of the agenda could be to provide regional leadership for the development of T Levels. One area which needs to be considered for development is teaching and training in catering and hospitality, this may be appropriate for development of the UALS site, as it is a major weakness in provision in the area.

At UALS, the current contract with South Holland District Council for the lease of the Leisure Centre should be reconsidered. This should be with a view to the facility being managed by the Trust, giving more freedom of use and control over our building. The current agreement with Sport England finishes in 2026. UALS has excellent sports facilities; a leisure centre, new astro-turf and large area of grasslands. The Trust will look at funding opportunities to become a sport centre of excellence, working closely with the sports management department at the University of Lincoln.

There are likely to be further opportunities and it is important that UoLAT is agile and ambitious, being prepared to take reasonable risks, when opportunities are identified.

Strategy Theme 4: Growing and Sustaining our Trust

The Trustees of University of Lincoln Academy Trust are keen to see it grow, but not to the detriment of its existing academies. It has also been considered that the focus should continue to be within the general locality. Although it has been recognised that in the future the Trust may take a school, or small trust in another area, starting the process of a second hub. The Government published White Paper in March 2022, on education. The Paper set out a vision of all schools either in a MAT, or planning to be in a MAT by 2030. It also makes reference to MATs having 10 schools or 7,500 pupils. UoLAT's plan shows that its aspiration is to have 10 schools by 2027.

In any growth strategy there must be a balance with the number of failing schools, with good schools, ensuring the risks were not too high. Bringing new schools into the UoLAT will offer new ideas, talented staff and set new challenges, which are fundamental to sustaining the Trust long term. The Board of Trustees are also keen that the ethos, which has built up over 11 years is maintained and should be a major consideration when taking on another school or trust.



Promoting the Trust and its academies is fundamental to any growth strategy. A key aspect of growth is helping potential schools understand the Trust, what it stands for and how it works. We believe that the change of name is a good starting point for promoting the Trust.

Unfortunately, when schools decide to join a trust, they often do so through an existing friendship or relationship and rarely seek out bids from other trusts. Clearly in the case of a failing school the Regional School Commissioner (RSC) decides who takes the school.

If the school is a convertor, it can choose, although the RSC can veto such changes. UoLAT's strategy for promoting itself requires a number of strands. Firstly, the Trust must have improving academies and build its relationship with the RSC; ensuring they are confident the Trust can effectively manage and improve any new school before they join. Secondly, we must improve our communications with potential schools and trusts. This includes improving the website, so that it clearly communicates to potential customers and showcases our pupils' successes, providing positive publicity that can be disseminated in the local press. Thirdly, enhance working with local schools who may at some time in the future wish to join.

“ Since the school became an academy, senior leaders have made many improvements to the quality of education pupils receive. Ofsted, HPA ”

As UoLAT grows, building capacity will be important to ensure services and support continues to be first class. Key areas schools appear to look for help with are school improvement matters, especially coping with Ofsted inspectors. The Trust's strategy should be for one, or perhaps two of senior staff, to be trained as an Ofsted inspector. Schools often want support in the areas of IT and HR and clear help with managing finance and accounting issues. Part of the Strategy must always be to analyse what additional staff will be required, or contracts that need extending, followed by looking at the staff joining the Trust and existing staff to see where there are opportunities for staff to step up to new roles.

The current structure has centrally focused staff working within the academies, should growth become significant, there will be a need to look for additional accommodation. It is clear that over time Ofsted will look at trusts; already in the White Paper we see local Safeguarding Boards are going to be given the power to inspect trusts on a three year cycle. Thus, building the three Executive Board sub-committees; Curriculum and Standards, Safeguarding and Child Protection and SEND, will help develop whole trust approaches in these critical areas, which will strengthen the work at operational level.

“ There is a strong presumption of delegation to the Senior Leadership Team of our Academy to improve standards and raise aspirations while strong governance arrangements from the Trust and local governing committee holds the senior leadership to account. Chair of Governors, UALS ”

The Government recently suggested that growing a trust can be through **membership or partnership**. Membership would be a school or trust transferring to UoLAT, whereas a partnership would be a school or trust working with the Trust, finding out whether or not they wish to join. It should be noted that this carries potential risks of spending resource to help and assist, for the partner school/trust to potentially decide not to join. It may however be an effective way of moving forward, needing to be open minded about such approaches.

“ The decision to convert to the Trust was the best decision I have made for my school. Six years in the Trust has lived up to everything that was promised. ”

Executive Principal, GHA

Analysis shows that most schools converting from local authority maintained status, to a trust, do it through personal connections. UoLAT needs to identify and build relationships with local schools through personal contacts, as there is rarely a bidding process. In terms of south east Lincolnshire schools, the strategy will focus on a small number of potential schools identified by the Executive Management Board, seeking to work closely with them, illustrating the benefits of being an academy. This should range from helping them with specific issues such as IT, buildings, curriculum planning or to having trust staff on their governing body. This would provide two benefits; seeing what the advantages are of joining the Trust, plus it would help the Trust understand if they would fit in, making future due diligence easier. At the same time, the Trust must constantly look at single academy trusts, or small multi academy trusts who may share the same ethos, but wish to join a larger group of academies.

“ Joining the Trust 6 years ago I have found it an inspirational trust to be part of. ”

Senior Member of Staff, GHA



Risk Assessment for the Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027

It is not a simple task to assess the risks within the Strategic Plan. The current educational and political climate is very unstable at present with changes, surrounding the future funding of education, that could have implications for the Trust without any changes arising out of the plan. These assessments are based on a level playing field in terms of educational change and financial support. The risks are aligned with the Trust Risk Register headings, using the same impact ratings.

Risk 1: Educational performance and well-being of pupils – Minor

The Trust is confident that it can maintain and improve the educational performance over the period. The full impact of Covid on both pupil welfare and longer-term educational performance remains to be determined, we do not foresee its academies having any significantly different risks to other trusts. There was an expected increase in the numbers of pupils requiring additional support, plans are already in place to provide comprehensive support programmes for its young people.

Risk 2: Complying with statutory and regularity requirements, including safeguarding – Minor

The appointment of leading roles across the Trust including the new Chief Finance Officer (CFO), Safeguarding, SEND, Health and Safety, Human Resources (HR) and IT has provided the requisite expertise to ensure the Trust has highly experienced personnel to monitor all of the required compliance areas.

Risk 3: Financial – Moderate

Most undertakings will always provide an element of financial risk, but due to the larger nature of some items included in the plan, there is a slightly larger risk over a longer timeframe. Recruitment within the Trust has a positive outlook at present, which helps to stabilise the financial position. The Trust is also very keen to grow some of its own future teachers during this period, as well as improving the working relationship with the University of Lincoln. The Trust is particularly keen to grow its own training modules, such as micro-credentials, which would ensure staff are up to date and leading on the use of new technologies.

The Trust's policy is to not spend beyond its means, monthly budget monitoring included within the management accounts, is sent to Trustees, which helps maintain that discipline.

The Trust infrastructure will not be expanded upon until there is sufficient growth and it will only invest in bids which will generate new facilities and resources. This policy mitigates the risks of not growing as a Trust. Evaluation of the financial risks of expansion will be a key decision for Trustees.

The more pressing financial concerns relate to where education sits within government priorities, as the Trust seeks to address the growing social care demands and the “catch up” post Covid work; not a unique issue for UoLAT. The current high levels of inflation and future funding means Trustees and the Executive need to be prudent in its financial management. During the last decade there have been a series of pay rises given by government which were not funded, were this approach to continue there is the potential to cause future issues for the Trust. The Government's major changes to post-16 education poses potential risks, the Trust is better placed than the vast majority of others due to its development of T Levels; we expect this to mitigate risks associated with this area. However, there are a relatively small number of employers in the areas, which does increase the risks to these courses and the apprenticeship programme.

The Board of Trustees have also noted the risks associated with the two pension schemes currently run by the academies. They are the same for every school and trust, but still remains a concern.

Risk 4: Governance – Minor

The Trust has a very strong governance capacity at member and trustee level, with extremely good connections to expand, should it be required. The Executive Team are very experienced, with good connections to enable additional capacity to be drawn upon. Additionally, capacity is being built through working with the University of Lincoln.

Governance at a new school joining the Trust is a minor risk, but within the current structure there are first class local governors who could join a new school. Audit reports over the last few years indicate a strong discipline in the management of resources and new buildings, which gives confidence to the overall risk of governance.

Risk 5: Operational – Moderate

Operational risks are manageable, providing the Trust ensures it plans in advance and recruits the right staff or consultants, where required. The Trust is very experienced at managing the building of new facilities, but bidding for the new Free School will provide a challenge, this may be delayed by Lincolnshire County Council.

Updating the digital network and learning platforms will also present a sizeable risk, but the Trust has experienced staff to support the work needed. Some initiatives involve working closely with the University of Lincoln, the Trust believes the change of name and new impetus will be of great benefit. Not reaching a threshold of 3,000 students will limit the Trusts capability to improve its facilities.

There will be operational risks related to T Levels, particularly finding employer engagement. It is hoped there will be support from the University of Lincoln in some key areas. There will continue to be challenges to our apprenticeship scheme, due to many employers are SMEs or Micro-SMEs, with very limited capacity.

There is potential competition if UoLAT fails its academies, meaning that the RSC transfers either an academy, or the entire Trust to another. UoLAT believes its focus on school improvement makes this an unlikely outcome.

A further potential risk is that the University of Lincoln decides to disinvest in UoLAT and seeks a new sponsor.

Risk 6: Reputational – Minor

Some of the proposals put forward in this plan present potential reputational risks, which would need to be addressed by Trustees, as and when they arise. An example of this is bidding for new schools, which will always attract the potential for reputational risk dependent upon the success of the conversion. This plan in itself may present a reputational risk.

Risk 7: Asset Management – Moderate

Asset management presents considerable risks in the plan, with the inclusion of new schools and building upgrades. The risk primarily focuses on land and buildings, the relationship between leasehold and freehold and associated issues. The ideal situation for any acquisitions, going forward, involves freehold title, which would present more freedom and lower risk. A considerable number of sites will still operate on a leasehold title and bring lease risks with them, this has to be accounted for. These would be managed through the use of comprehensive due diligence procedures carried out by the Trust and its solicitors.

Driving Forward is University of Lincoln Academy Trust Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2027, approved by the Board of Trustees 2022. It sets out a skeleton road map for UoLAT in uncertain times following the pandemic that has seriously affected the education of most young people. It will be important to review the plan annually and to adjust in light of the educational and social climate.

The strategic plan sets a vision, clear goals and aspirations, but trustees and the executive must continue to be agile and entrepreneurial to grasp opportunities as and when they arise and not to feel constrained by the plan.

The Trust has developed a set of measures of success with milestones and the method of assessing progress with the 5 year plan. These are confidential to Members, Trustees, Chairs of Governors and Senior Executives. They will be shared with schools considering joining the Trust.

NOTES

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