

Apex

COLLABORATIVE TRUST

Operating Model

Welcome

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Apex Collaborative Trust. Our trust is devoted to the wellbeing and development of all our students and staff, providing the very best provision in the classroom and to offering diverse experiences that enrich our students' lives. We are ambitious for all members of our community to fulfil their potential and realise their goals.

We are a young trust, formed from the merger of South Craven Academy Trust and the Pennine Trust in 2025. As a values-led organisation, we firmly believe a healthy culture and positive relationships at all levels are the bedrock for successful organisations. Great schools are built through strong relationships, founded on trust, whilst effective professional development is the engine of improvement.

Therefore, we made development of a strong people strategy our core priority for our first year of operation. Feedback from colleagues at our most recent Apex Together event was collated and summarised as follows:

"Our greatest strength is our people. Supportive relationships between colleagues, a positive culture and a real sense of belonging make working in our schools special. Shared values guide us with one clear focus; doing what is best for children."

Schools improve most effectively together, and we are building collaboration at all levels within a 4-tier framework to ensure all schools receive the support they need to improve further. Every school has expertise to contribute and lessons to learn from other establishments. For this reason, in Apex local identity matters. Schools innovate and adapt according to context and the distinctive needs of their communities.



This guide to what we do and how we do it, summarises how we put this philosophy into practice. As the trust grows, the range of services will grow, along with opportunities for staff to develop professionally and effect wider change.

John Tarbox,
CEO



Contents

Mission, vision and values	**02**
Trust on a page	**03**
Trust services	**04**
Collaboration in action	**20**
School Improvement Model	**22**
People Strategy	**26**
Meet our team	**27**
How we implement change	**31**
Governance model	**32**
Frequently asked questions	**34**



Why Apex

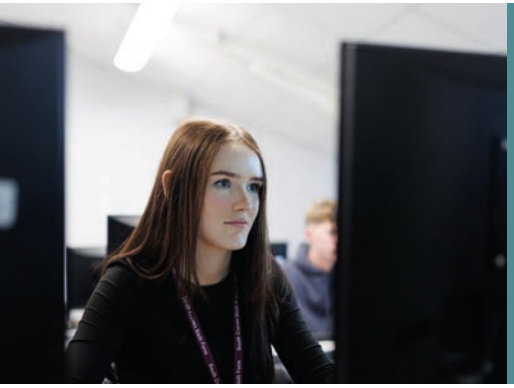
Schools might join Apex Collaborative Trust because:

- The values, ethos and philosophy of Apex aligns with those of the school
- They keep their identity
- They gain a strong network
- They access expertise and support
- They develop their staff
- They strengthen financial sustainability
- They create better opportunities for pupils
- They become part of a values-led organisation built on Ambition, Collaboration and Trust

What makes Apex different?

- Local and community focused.
- Values-led culture.
- Leadership development at all levels.
- Alignment without uniformity.

Introduction



Our Purpose

Make a difference in our communities by placing learning at the heart of all we do.



Our Vision

Be a collaborative and innovative Trust, which has the highest aspirations and provides the best opportunities for all of our students and staff to develop, thrive and succeed.



Our Values

Ambition
Collaboration
Trust

Our Trust on a Page

Our Why

Make a difference in our communities by placing learning at the heart of all we do.

What We Do

We do this by aligning our values and building a common culture across our schools. We believe a strong culture and sense of belonging are the foundations of great schools and a great trust.

We prioritise development of our people, so that we build capacity for leading change and school improvement. We are building common principles and approaches to curriculum development and pedagogy and support for leaders at all levels. This is aligned with a robust quality assurance framework and use of data and evidence-informed approaches to identify, implement and monitor progress with our priorities. We are outward facing, engaging positively with other providers and helping to shape the education landscape in our area.

How We Do It



School Improvement & Educational Development

What You Get

- Regular support, guidance and challenge from trust leaders.
- Access to a structured 4-tiered school improvement model and quality assurance framework contextualised for each phase, including involvement in structured peer review processes (details outlined in separate document).
- Involvement in a termly quality assurance health check process.
- Common approach to school development planning, implementation, and self-evaluation.
- Opportunities for leaders and staff to collaborate with other schools and share best practice.
- Apex Core Practice and teaching principles supporting pedagogy and teacher development across all phases
- Peer to peer coaching for all staff
- Peer moderation of standards across the curriculum (primary at present)
- Access to cross-phase improvement networks to share and develop best practice and build collaborative approaches.
- Phase or subject specific support.
- Ongoing participation in emerging trust wide learning communities.
- Half-termly joint CPD sessions (peer-led) focussing on school development priorities (primary phase)
- Leadership support in preparation for and during external inspections and reviews.

What You Give

- Promote the importance of trust collaboration in line with our ethos and core values.
- Take part in reviews, meetings, and quality assurance activities in your base school and across the trust in line with the 4-tiered framework.
- Openly share your school's key performance data and progress with implementation of development plans.
- Engage with professional development opportunities and contribute your expertise.
- Work with leaders to improve trust practice and review improvement priorities.
- Support a culture of professional generosity to facilitate continuous improvement and evidence-informed practice.



Curriculum & Assessment

What You Get

- Opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practice across the trust.
- Development of trust wide curriculum principles and co-development of curriculum models.
- Access to a carefully sequenced curriculum (primary).
- Accredited phonics and common approach for core subjects (primary).
- Research-informed intervention programmes and diagnostic assessment tools, with a particular focus on reading.
- Trust-wide moderation and standardisation of teacher assessment (primary).
- SEND strategy support and guidance through Apex Together SEND network.
- Pupil Premium support and guidance for strategy development and implementation through Apex Together Disadvantaged Pupils network.
- Trust wide Apex Champions Offer for wider personal development.
- Delivery of Mandarin from year 3 in trust primaries and expertise to deliver to GCSE in secondary phase.
- Collaborative pupil events – opportunities for cross-phase and cross-school enrichment experiences.

What You Give

- Promote the importance of trust collaboration and openly share curriculum, outcomes and progress.
- Implement and help shape our curriculum and assessment systems.
- Share your school's data and participate in moderation activities via trust quality assurance and health check processes.
- Take part in curriculum collaborative groups, SEND reviews, etc.
- Work with leaders to improve trust practice around curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment.



Staff Development

What You Get

- A clear CPD vision and strategy, aligned to Trust priorities, improvement plans, and staff career pathways; consistent across schools while allowing for local context and need.
- High-quality, evidence-informed CPD programmes and opportunities grounded in educational research and best practice.
- Professional Development opportunities focusing on impact on teaching quality, leadership capacity, and pupil outcomes.
- Equitable access to development opportunities ensuring fair access for all staff groups (teachers, leaders, and support staff).
- Opportunities regardless of school size or location.
- Trust-wide induction supporting consistency, belonging, and early effectiveness.
- Clear leadership development pathways with identified development routes for aspiring, middle, and senior leaders.
- Succession planning supported through coaching, networks, and stretch opportunities.
- Opportunities for staff to collaborate across schools and phases sharing expertise, best practice and developmental opportunities.
- Monitoring and evaluation of CPD impact on practice and outcomes with staff voice informing adaptation and continuous improvement.
- Access to external expertise including partnerships with sector experts or accredited programmes with thoughtful use of external providers to complement internal capacity.
- Membership of platforms to facilitate training and development, performance management, compliance, pedagogy (e.g. National College, Steplab).
- Dedicated training hub for Apex programmes, course and other development activities.

What You Give

- Engagement with the Trust's CPD vision and strategy, aligning school priorities with Trust priorities.
- A commitment to a culture of continuous, supportive development, encouraging active participation in CPD programmes, focused on improving teaching quality, leadership capacity, and pupil outcomes.
- Promotion of CPD opportunities within schools, ensuring equitable access for all staff groups, (teachers, leaders, and support staff).
- Effective support for Trust-wide induction, ensuring new staff fully engage with induction processes and expectations.
- Active involvement in talent spotting and supporting leadership potential, engaging with aspiring Trust leadership development programmes and contribution to succession planning across the Trust.
- A commitment to collaboration, ensuring mutual support, the sharing of effective practice, and high-quality professional learning to strengthen the Trust as a whole.
- Constructive engagement with external expertise, supporting Trust-approved partnerships, networks, and accredited programmes to complement internal provision.



Safeguarding

What You Get

- Central safeguarding policy development, including Safeguarding and Child Protection, CLA, Child on Child Abuse, Online Safety, Low Level Concerns, Prevent and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions.
- Guidance, training, compliance, recording and audits as necessary.
- Access to safeguarding training and resources, e.g. central provision of DSL Training.
- Help with managing safeguarding referrals and audits.
- Termly meetings of Apex Together group for safeguarding leads.
- Termly Local Governance assurance visits.

What You Give

- Embed a proactive safeguarding culture in your school in line with trust expectations and values.
- Communicate and follow safeguarding policies and procedures and ensure these are acknowledged by staff.
- Take part in all required safeguarding training and audits.
- Take part the network group and share best practice and approaches to improvements.
- Sharing of network meeting notes and updates to meeting dates.
- Sharing of relevant safeguarding data.
- Facilitation of Governor visits and addressing any issues raised in line with agreed timescales.



Behaviour & Attendance

What You Get

- Policy guidance for behaviour and attendance and co-development of core sections.
- Central policy development for Physical Intervention, Suspensions and Exclusions, Searching, Screening and Confiscation.
- Half-termly meetings and network groups for behaviour and attendance leads (Apex Together Behaviour and Apex Together Attendance).
- Trust wide CPD for key behaviour and attendance themes or areas of need, e.g. de-escalation and positive handling.
- Support with management of 15-day suspension and exclusion processes, including arrangement and clerking of meetings.
- Arrangement and clerking of all appeals.
- Monitoring and comparison of weekly attendance data.
- Access to specialist teacher advice in both phases.

What You Give

- Support the development of a positive, respectful school culture in line with the trust's values.
- Adopt and implementation of common expectations in attendance and behaviour policies and practice.
- Take part in Apex Together network groups and share your best practice and approaches to improvements.
- Participate in quality assurance peer reviews for both behaviour and attendance.
- Provide key behaviour and attendance data via trust systems.



Admissions

What You Get

- Annual updates for the admission section of your school website.
- Admission policy for your school and ensure all statutory guidance is followed and determined policies are shared with the Local Authority and added onto your website in line with statutory requirements. Co-ordination of any policy consultation including producing letters for stakeholders, updating your website and liaising with the Local Authority.
- Ranking of September admissions.
- Administration and support for in-year admissions and in-year/ bulk appeals.
- Provide up to date pupil numbers to the LA.

What You Give

- Follow admissions policies, procedures and the admission code.
- Work with the Apex Support Team on appeals and statutory processes.
- Share admissions and exclusions data as required.
- Work with the Apex support team on in-year admissions providing regular updates on ongoing applications up to the point of admission.
- Support the Apex Support Team to allow a more streamlined approach to in-year admissions in line with the requirements of the admissions code.



Governance, Complaints and Exclusions

What You Get

- Annual self-evaluation support. Support to address areas for development.
- Maintain and hold governance records i.e. business and pecuniary interests, get Information about Schools, Terms of office, etc.
- Maintenance of governor section of the school website.
- Monitor skills audit and arrange training to address any gaps.
- Governor DBS checks on appointment.
- Annual planner for governor meetings and standard agendas.
- Access to GovernorHub – our governance platform.
- Assist with governor recruitment.
- Support with parent and staff governor elections.
- Governance advice and support.
- Clerking of governor panels - including suspension, exclusion and complaint panels.
- Communication with parents and carers regarding panel dates, sharing of paperwork and outcomes.
- Support and advice on complaints.
- Production of formal responses and reports for complaints.
- Support with responses to the Department for Education and Ofsted in the event of a complaint.
- Advice on statutory guidance around exclusions and suspension.

What You Give

- Produce papers required for governor meetings within given deadlines.
- Engage with governance arrangements and attend required meetings.
- Participate in recruitment and induction of governors and committee members.
- Produce paperwork for panels as required in line with statutory guidance deadlines.
- Prepare paperwork for panels in relation to suspensions and exclusions in line with statutory guidance.
- Engage with local authorities and families as part of the processes.



Human Resources

What You Get

- Management of payroll.
- Management of pensions administration.
- Access to expert HR advice.
- Co-ordinated development and implementation of HR Policy management.
- Access to Vivup - our employee wellbeing and benefits package.
- Access to employee wellbeing resources.
- Staff wellbeing surveys
- Help with recruitment, training, and employee relations.
- Support with effective use of the Apprenticeship Levy to maximise opportunities for workforce development.
- Staff recruitment and advertising support.
- Performance management and recruitment support for senior headteachers.
- Professional development, including executive coaching for headteachers.
- Safer recruitment advice – DBS checks, Volunteers and Single Central Record.
- HR support at meetings.
- Complex case management.
- Absence management support including occupational health referrals.
- Regular payroll and pension audits.

What You Give

- Positive support for implementation of trust policies and processes.
- Follow HR policies and procedures.
- Take part in staff surveys, training, and share data as needed.
- Support recruitment and induction processes.
- Promote staff wellbeing and positive working relationships.



Communication and Marketing

What You Get

- Support with branding, media, and stakeholder communications.
- Help with crisis communications and marketing materials.
- Guidance on social media and access to Meta business suite and Meticool.
- Support with social media and marketing through regular marketing network meetings.
- Support with social media content through collaboration and sharing of materials.
- Support with the sharing of school level vacancies through our communication channels.
- Access to Trello for marketing and communication requests.
- Provide regular communications such as weekly bulletin and half-termly Trust wide newsletter.
- Termly website compliance checks and website an analytical monitoring.

What You Give

- Adhere to the branding toolkit and follow communication guidelines.
- Engage with events, surveys, and share your school's successes.
- Provide termly updates for the Trust newsletter and other material to be used for communications.
- Provide up to date information for the Trust wide calendar.
- Actively promote our values in all communications.
- Provide feedback to help improve communications.

Finance

What You Get

- Management of statutory accounting and reporting.
- Support with budgeting, financial planning, and monthly budget monitoring.
- Support with procurement and value-for-money initiatives.
- Financial health checks and training on finance systems for school staff.
- Management of external audit and internal scrutiny.
- Attendance at Local School Committee meetings.
- Identification of funding opportunities.

What You Give

- Follow financial procedures and reporting requirements, including keeping to monthly deadlines.
- Work with the finance business partner on budget setting and financial planning and integrated curriculum and financial planning.
- Participate in procurement processes and value-for-money reviews.
- Share financial data and support audit work.

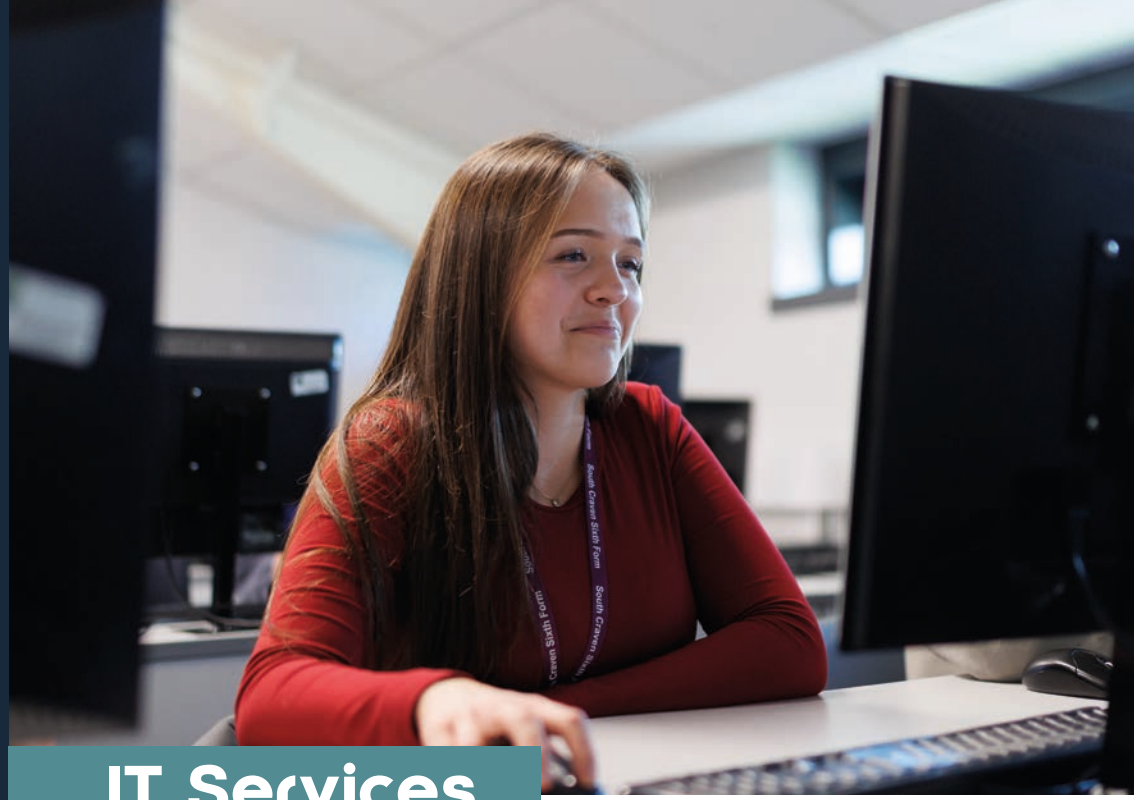
Estates & Facilities

What You Get

- Support with health and safety, compliance, and premises management.
- Guidance on capital projects, contractor management, and utilities.
- Training for site and cleaning staff.
- Help with business continuity and emergency response planning.
- Guidance on funding applications and project management.

What You Give

- Maintain your site to standards and complete required training.
- Share compliance information and participate in audits.
- Work with the Apex Support Team on capital projects and procurement.
- Support initiatives for safe and effective learning environments.
- Share your school's project and funding needs.
- Take part in projects and support new schools joining the trust.
- Provide information for due diligence and funding applications.
- Collaborate on strategic initiatives.



IT Services

What You Get

- School based ICT service and support.
- Management of ICT planning and procurement.
- Cyber security, online safety, and infrastructure management.
- Access to technical support and device management.
- Central licensing for software and services.
- Regular audits and compliance checks for Department for Education standards.
- Innovation and future-proofing advice.

What You Give

- Use ICT systems and follow policies and procedures.
- Take part in training and share feedback on needs and issues.
- Support ICT initiatives and security measures.
- Maintain accurate records of assets and usage.
- Report ICT issues through the appropriate channels.
- Ensure staff complete mandatory cyber security training.

GDPR

What You Get

- Central GDPR policy development.
- Updates on changes to national guidance.
- Guidance, training, compliance, recording and audit support as required
- Access to an accredited Data Protection Officer for advice and support on GDPR issues.
- Support with Freedom of Information requests, Subject Access Requests and data breaches.
- Support with completing Data Protection Impact Assessments for new software products.
- Regular bulletin updates on GDPR issues to raise staff awareness.
- Support on data retention and deletion expectations.

What You Give

- Ensure staff complete mandatory GDPR training.
- Raising awareness of staff on data protection and commitment to share and disseminate GDPR updates with all staff.
- Timely reporting of Freedom of Information requests, Subject Access Requests and data breaches to the Trust GDPR lead.



Collaboration in Action

APEX Learning Communities

In January 2026, staff from the three APEX primary schools came together to explore one key question: which teaching strategies have the greatest impact on pupil outcomes?

Through APEX Learning Communities, teachers worked alongside colleagues from the same year groups across the Trust, sharing successful classroom practices, discussing evidence-informed approaches and reflecting on what makes the biggest difference to learning. These professional discussions generated a wealth of practical expertise and highlighted common themes across all three schools. The findings were then reviewed by APEX Headteachers, who analysed the feedback and identified the strategies that were consistently viewed as most effective. From this collaborative work, the **APEX Core** Principles were developed.

The APEX Core Principles represent a shared approach to high-quality teaching and learning, built directly from the experience and expertise of classroom practitioners. They provide a common language and a consistent framework for effective pedagogy across the Trust.

The next phase of the project will see these principles developed and embedded through APEX Primary staff meetings, ensuring all staff have opportunities to deepen their understanding and refine their practice. This initiative demonstrates how meaningful collaboration can harness collective expertise, strengthen consistency and ultimately improve outcomes for all children across APEX schools.

Mandarin

In 2022, provision for foreign languages in the primary phase was weak, involving non-specialists with limited subject knowledge delivering bought-in programmes. In line with our value of ambition, a decision was made to introduce Mandarin as the common foreign language in both the primary phase and the secondary school in the same town, so that students had an opportunity to learn the language from year 3 through to year 11.



Learning Mandarin gives our students something many of their peers do not have. As the most widely-spoken native language in the world, and mother–tongue of a rapidly rising superpower, Mandarin is a language of the future as China's influence grows. Just as English became the main 'lingua franca', firstly through British imperial expansion and more latterly through the economic and cultural dominance of the USA, so the importance of Mandarin will only increase.

The Trust was able to join the SWIRE Chinese Language Foundation, which was a 10-year project to further the development of Mandarin provision in schools in Britain, with hub schools leading development in different regions. The Manchester Hub helped fund, recruit and support 2 full-time specialist teachers who delivered the subject in both the primary and secondary phase. This initial funding and a network of support for curriculum development, pedagogy and resources was invaluable to get the subject up and running.

5 years later, the subject is well established in all 3 primary schools and taught as a distinct subject for 1 hour each week. Students transitioning to Park High School can study the subject throughout key stage 3 and as an option in key stage 4. French is also offered as a core language for all students. The first GCSE cohort complete their exams in the summer of 2027 and, as part of their experience, participated in a heavily subsidised visit to Beijing in October 2026 along with the year 10 cohort. Funding from SWIRE for this visit and other cultural activities is set to continue in the coming years.

Apex School Improvement Model



The Apex Collaborative Trust School Improvement Framework is underpinned by our values of Ambition, Collaboration and Trust, ensuring every school receives the right level of support, challenge and partnership to secure continual improvement.

Universal: Every school in Apex Collaborative Trust both contributes to and benefits from our collective strength. Through our shared commitment to Ambition, Collaboration and Trust, all schools engage in trust-wide networks, professional development, quality assurance processes and the sharing of effective practice. This tier reflects our belief that school improvement is a collective responsibility where every school has expertise to offer and opportunities to learn from others.

Bespoke: Schools requiring focused improvement support will receive a tailored response aligned to their context and priorities. This may include preparation for Ofsted, addressing a persistent improvement challenge, or strengthening areas such as phonics, careers education or curriculum leadership. The Executive Partner or Phase Lead will coordinate the most effective support, drawing on expertise from within Apex Collaborative Trust and external specialists where appropriate. This tier reflects our commitment to Ambition, ensuring schools receive the support needed to achieve the highest standards for pupils.

Broad: Schools identified as having wider areas for development will receive targeted support. Where self-evaluation, trust quality assurance, performance data, or external review identifies priorities for improvement, schools will be partnered with an Apex school demonstrating strong practice. Where needs are more significant or sustained, a member of the Executive Team will coordinate additional support, ensuring leaders are both challenged and supported to secure improvement. This approach reflects our value of Collaboration, drawing on expertise across the Trust to share effective practice and accelerate progress.

Enhanced: Where the quality of education, leadership, safeguarding or wider provision falls below Trust expectations, a more directive improvement model is implemented. At this level, the CEO or an executive leader take increased responsibility for oversight, quality assurance and improvement planning. School leaders receive intensive support and challenge, with clear milestones, regular review points and focused intervention to secure rapid and sustainable improvement. This approach is underpinned by our value of Trust—working alongside leaders with transparency, accountability and an unwavering commitment to securing the best possible outcomes for every child.

School Improvement Model

4 Level School Improvement Approach:

The trust recognises David Carter's 4 stage model for school improvement, summarised below, which can be applied in a school context or to improve smaller areas such as subjects or aspects of provision such as SEND or safeguarding.

Stage of school improvement journey	Key leadership qualities
Phase 1: Stabilise • School requires significant improvement • No clear underpinning for the future	• Calm and reassuring leadership • Focusing on urgent priorities • Ensuring team members have the right jobs • High visibility
Phase 2: Repair • Establishing more control • Reactive decision-making • Make the school feel more like a regular school	• Embedding early improvements • Building a medium term plan • Retaining visibility, but increasing focus on quality assurance
Phase 3: Improve • More proactive leadership • Embedding strategies • Improving outcomes	• Monitoring and tracking performance is key • Shifting from management to leadership • Increasing benefits from collaboration
Phase 4: Sustain • Confidence in performance • Increase innovation in delivery	• Securing excellence • Looking to lead collaboration • Increasing focus on 3-5 year planning



We also see the improvement journey as starting with a focus on **culture and healthy relationships,** including a fundamental review of leadership and addressing under performance.

Building **effective behaviour** and care systems and **engaging** students positively within and beyond the classroom with an appropriate curriculum and embedding a few evidence-informed high leverage pedagogical approaches are the next phase of development.

A **sense of belonging** is built from the above and through targeted interventions for vulnerable and hard to reach students. A drive for improved school **attendance** follows and is easier to sustain. Increasing time and energy can be focused on pedagogy and refinement of individual practice, leading to improved outcomes for students.

People Strategy

"Our greatest strength is our people. Supportive relationships between colleagues, a positive culture and a real sense of belonging make working in our schools special. Shared values guide us with one clear focus; doing what is best for children."

Apex Colleagues January 25

Our People Vision and Strategy were cocreated by all colleagues across Apex Collaborative Trust. Through a trust-wide engagement day, every colleague was invited to share their experiences, ideas and aspirations, helping to shape the design and direction of our organisation.

The result is a vision built by our people, for our people, reflecting our shared commitment to being one united trust where everyone feels valued, supported and empowered to grow. It also provides a clear framework for our strategic priorities: developing high-quality professional learning and career pathways, strengthening collaboration and communication, supporting effective change, and fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.

Our People Vision

" We see ourselves as one united trust - working together as a single team, supporting and valuing every member."

We want to be inclusive and flexible, offer clear opportunities for growth, keep standards high, and be known as a great place to work.

Delired through five strategic objectives that shape how we work, delovep and support our people.



Meet Our Team

Chair of Trustees – Marie Burnham

Marie is the Chair of the Trust as well as the Chair of Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust, which specialises in Mental Health and Learning Disabilities. She brings over 35years experience from health services, charitable sector, private and public including NHS executive and non- executive roles. She also has a national reputation for performance and governance management both in the public and private sector; specialising in turning around failing organisations and delivering real measurable change. More recent roles include National Committee Chair for NICE, where she held responsibility for a number of committees the latest being Weight Management in Adults and Children. Marie was a Chief Executive for many years in the Acute Hospital Sector.

CEO – John Tarbox

John has worked in Lancashire schools for 36 years. He was Headteacher and then Executive Headteacher at Bowland High from 2012 until 2021. John Helped form a multi-academy trust, Achievement through Collaboration, serving as Deputy CEO. From 2019 he worked at the request of the LA, to support schools in challenging circumstances. In 2021, John joined the Trust as CEO of the Pennine Trust and 4 years later, when South Craven Academy Trust and the Pennine Trust merged to form Apex Collaborative Trust, he was appointed CEO of the new trust.

CFO – Alan O'Reilly

Alan joined the Trust as CFO in January 2024. He trained as an accountant before moving into the education sector when he joined the Learning and Skills Council over 20 years ago. He was Deputy Director of Finance at Blackpool and The Fylde College, before moving into the academy sector as CFO at Abraham Guest Academy, Cidari Multi Academy Trust and Birchwood Community Academy Trust. He has worked as a School Resource Management Advisor and as a CFO Mentor.

Executive Lead for Primary Partnerships/ Headteacher at Laneshaw Bridge Primary School – Gaynor Canty

Gaynor studied music at Leeds University, following this she completed her teacher training and began her teaching career at Laneshaw Bridge Primary School in 1995. Her experience spans the entire primary age range. Gaynor has seen Laneshaw Bridge grow from strength to strength, including its move to a new school building. Her ambition is for Laneshaw Bridge to offer outstanding education from Nursey through to Key stage 2, ensuring the children experience the school's high standards from their very first steps. Gaynor has been headteacher since 2021 and in 2025, she took on the role of Primary Partnership Lead for Apex working across the Trust's primary schools to share expertise and drive excellence.

Executive Lead for Secondary Partnerships/ Headteacher at South Craven School – Martyn Hill

Martyn has been the Headteacher at South Craven School for several years. He started his career as a teacher of German and French at Temple High School in Leeds. He moved to South Craven to be Head of German in 1999 and has been at the school ever since. He was Head of Year for five years before becoming an Assistant Headteacher leading on pastoral care and behaviour, Deputy Headteacher, DSL and Head of School before being appointed as Headteacher in 2018. He has taken on the role of Executive Lead for Secondary Partnerships at the Trust for 2 days per week, in order to support the collaboration and sharing of best practices amongst the secondary schools.

Executive Lead for People, Culture and Communications – Oliver Handley

Oliver joined Pendle Vale Collage as Headteacher in 2020. An experienced Headteacher, with a strong leadership background in schools in Yorkshire. He has worked in academies, multi- academy trust and maintained schools, including new schools, sixth forms and all- through schools. A passionate educationalist, Oliver has delivered nationally recognised qualifications, led outreach initiatives, authored educational resources and presented at national conferences for organisations including the National Institute of Teaching, The University of Greater Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Huddersfield and The PiXI Club. In this role with Apex, he is excited to help find, train and keep the very best to serve in our schools.

Director of professional Development – Katie Atherton

Katie has over 21 years of experience in education and has remained deeply committed to improving outcomes for children across East Lancashire and beyond since beginning her teaching in 2004. As a member of Park High School's Senior Leadership Team for 14years, Katie has developed extensive expertise in all areas of school leadership, including pastoral care, safeguarding, quality of education, and staff development. Now part of the Apex Support Team, Katie leads on the professional development of staff, people strategy, and partnerships building. She works closely with schools, trusts and training hubs to enhance the quality of provision across the Trust as it continues to grow and support both staff and student development across the Northwest. Katie also collaborates with the National Institute of Teaching, overseeing the implementation, delivery, and quality assurance of the ITT, ECF and NPQ programmes across the region.

Director of professional Development – John Lovell

John has worked at South Craven School for over 25years and has been a member of SLT since 2008. During that time, he has been Head of English and Assistant Headteacher. His role has seen him develop expertise in Curriculums across the school and he is a key figure in the school's Quality of Education Team; from both a delivery and quality assurance perspective. More recently, John has been the school's CPD and Teacher Development lead; a role which has allowed him to support school improvement and develop a team who nurture and support the school's ITT and ECT cohorts.

Director of People and Culture – Rebecca Ah-chin-kow

Rebecca joined the Trust in 2025 and Leads the HR team. Rebecca brings extensive senior HR leadership experience gained across multi-site and regulated organisations, alongside a genuine interest in the people challenges and opportunities within the education sector. She works closely with senior leaders and trustees to shape the people strategy. She is passionate about ethical leadership, equality, diversity and inclusion and about creating a supportive values- led environment.

Head of Governance – Helen Whitaker

Helen leads on all aspects of governance, complaints, admissions and policy development across Apex Collaborative Trust. She is responsible for ensuring that governance practices are both effective and fully compliant with statutory requirements.

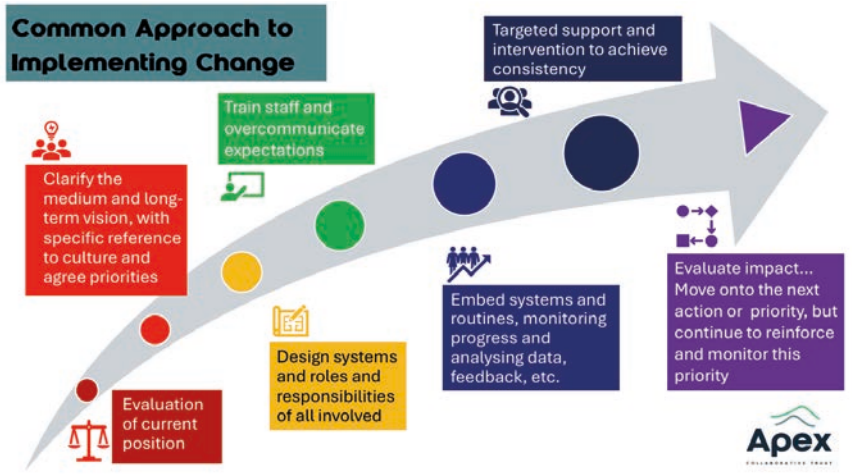
With over a decade of experience in governance and more than 20 years in education and training, Helen brings a wealth of expertise to her role. Before joining Apex, she worked with a large multi-academy trust, contributing to its development from inception and playing a key role in shaping its governance framework.

Helen has a proven track record of designing robust systems and driving meaningful change in governance structures. She is also an active Governor at a local primary school, further deepening her connection to the community.

Her core focus is to ensure that the time and talents of Governors and Trustees—as dedicated volunteers—are used to maximum effect, enabling them to champion the Trust's vision and priorities across its schools.



Leading & Managing Change



This diagram sets out a common, structured approach to implementing change:

The journey begins with an evaluation of the current position to understand existing performance, challenges and opportunities. Leaders then clarify the medium- and long-term vision, with a particular focus on our values and agreed priorities, ensuring there is a clear and compelling narrative for change. Once the desired future state has been defined, systems, processes, roles and responsibilities are designed to support delivery. Staff are then equipped through training and regular communication, with expectations reinforced consistently to build understanding and commitment across the Trust. As implementation progresses, new systems and routines are embedded into everyday practice. Progress is monitored through data, feedback and performance measures, allowing leaders to assess impact and identify areas requiring further support. Targeted interventions are then used to address inconsistencies and strengthen adoption, helping to ensure that change is implemented effectively across all teams.

The final stage is ongoing evaluation. Leaders and all relevant stakeholders review the impact of the changes, identify the next priorities for improvement, and continue to reinforce and monitor previous initiatives. This highlights that successful change is a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation and refinement rather than a one-off event.

Governance

Governance Model and key role of each tier/committee:



This governance model balances strong central governance with local accountability, ensuring clear lines of responsibility, effective scrutiny, and collaboration at every level to drive continuous improvement and deliver the trust's strategic objectives

At the top of the structure, Members act as the custodians of the trust, holding the Board of Trustees accountable for delivering the trust's vision, ensuring effective governance, and maintaining financial and educational sustainability.

The Board of Trustees is the principal decision-making body and is supported by a range of specialist committees that provide detailed scrutiny and assurance. Together, these committees support robust oversight of finance, risk, educational performance, workforce matters, and long-term strategic development.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is accountable to the Trustees for implementing the trust's strategy and leading operational delivery. The CEO is supported by the Executive Central Team, which provides trust-wide services and school improvement support. The Headteacher Board acts as a key advisory and collaborative body, bringing school leaders together to inform decision-making and drive improvement across the trust.

At school level, each school is led by a Headteacher, who is responsible for the day-to-day leadership and educational performance of the school. Each school is supported and challenged by a Local School Committee, which provides local oversight, stakeholder engagement, and assurance while operating within the trust's governance framework.



FAQS

1. Why should our school join a Multi-Academy Trust?
Joining a trust can provide access to wider expertise, school improvement support, leadership development, financial efficiencies, curriculum collaboration, and shared services. The benefits of being part of a larger family of schools that work together to improve outcomes for pupils have led the current government to state its intention for all schools to be in a strong family of schools.

2. Will we lose our school's identity?
This is one of the most common concerns. Apex Collaborative Trust will actively preserve each school's unique character, ethos, traditions, uniform, and community relationships. The Trust's role is to provide strategic oversight, coherent vision and to develop shared approaches to support, whilst allowing schools to maintain their individual identity and headteachers the capacity to focus on the quality of provision.

3. Who will govern the school after joining?
The Trust Board becomes the legal governing body responsible for all schools within the Trust. Each school will have a Local School Committee to provide local accountability, stakeholder engagement, and community input.

4. What due diligence should we undertake?
Joining a trust might be compared to a marriage. The most important issues to align on are vision and values and ethos. Geographical proximity (at least with some or a cluster of the schools) are also important for face-to-face collaboration. Other things listed below are also important, but these may change over time:

- Educational performance across the Trust
- Financial health
- Governance arrangements
- School improvement strategy
- Staff development opportunities
- Growth plans

5. What happens to school staff?
Staff transfer to the Trust under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) regulations. Existing terms and conditions are protected at the point of transfer.

6. Are teachers' pay and conditions affected?
Existing contractual terms are protected when staff transfer into the Trust. Any future changes would involve appropriate consultation processes and compliance with employment law. Apex follows School Teacher pay and Conditions and Local government terms and conditions (Green book) for support staff. We formally consult with recognised trade unions about all our staffing policies.

7. What happens to the school's finances?
Funding is received by the Trust and allocated across its schools. Apex achieves economies of scale through shared procurement, central services, and improved financial planning. Schools benefit from strong financial oversight and support. Schools receive the funding according to the national funding formula. Reserves are pooled for use according to need.

8. Will joining a trust cost the school money?
There are some conversion and legal processes associated with joining a Trust, we may be able to support with these. The financial implications would be fully explained as part of due diligence discussions. All schools pay a management fee to cover the cost of central services.

FAQS

9. Will the school own its land and buildings?
Land and buildings usually transfer to the Trust through legal agreements. The arrangements vary depending on whether the school is community, voluntary aided, foundation, or already an academy.

10. How will joining a trust improve outcomes for pupils?
Apex will either provide access to specialist expertise – either through existing trust staff or by commissioning external support, school improvement capacity, curriculum development, staff training, and collaboration between schools. These resources can accelerate improvement and support consistently high standards.

11. Will there be changes to the curriculum?
We may develop a shared curriculum approach for aspects of the curriculum, but this would be fully consulted on and would involve co-development with all schools. We also want flexibility to ensure curricula meet the specific needs of individual communities. A shared approach, e.g. to phonics or numeracy helps to reduce workload by spreading planning and development of teaching resources and increase expertise. Over time, we anticipate an increasingly collaborative approach to GCSE courses and assessment.

12. How are decisions made within the Trust?
Strategic decisions are made by the Trust Board. Operational decisions are often delegated to executive leaders (CEO, CFO and executive headteachers), headteachers, and Local School Committees according to the Trust's scheme of delegation.

13. What opportunities are available for staff?
Apex has developed a staff development offer that will grow further in coming years. Leadership development is a central part of this offer. Being in a trust offers additional career progression opportunities such as cross-school leadership roles and responsibilities and collaboration with peers. There are specialist networks for core areas of provision and a proactive approach to talent identification and development

14. .How will students' achievement and progress be monitored and where does accountability for this lie?
The Executive Headteacher for the phase, visits schools regularly so there is ongoing dialogue regarding all aspects of school life, including all areas of provision and the progress made by children. The CEO will also support this work. The approach is that of a critical friend looking at what the school can share and contribute to the wider trust, steps forward and action planning for improvement. The Local School Committee monitors standards of provision through 'champions' for SEND, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and disadvantaged pupils and the Trust Board's Learning and Welfare Committee monitors interim data and progress updates from the school and trust leaders, holding the CEO accountable for outcomes and the quality of provision in schools.

15.How is safeguarding affected by joining the Trust?
We strongly believe Safeguarding will be strengthened by joining our trust. The robust training provided, as well as the support network for DSLs and other pastoral staff, ensures that staff are even more equipped to support our children at all times. As a Trust we use CPOMS to record and manage all safeguarding incidents. This is monitored at Trust level and supported by our safeguarding champions and nominated Safeguarding Trustee.



Apex

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