



United Learning
The best in everyone™



The best in everyone

Our Strategy 2021-26

Introduction

The years leading up to the first Covid-related lockdown in English schools in March 2020 had been ones of sustained growth and success in our Group. The response of United Learning schools to lockdown focused sharply on what mattered most: educating every child, come what may; safety; and sustainability.

Faced with a generational challenge, working together at scale made all the difference. We drew on the best across our schools to the benefit of all, invested in our priorities and had capacity to respond quickly in rapidly changing circumstances. We reached out to help locally and nationally beyond United Learning. We learned much.

We know that schools did exceptional work to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, but also that no child was untouched by it. We have a strong sense that children have done a national service in the Covid years and that society owes them a debt. We make 'recovery' and putting children on track to make a success of their lives our first priority for this strategy period.

We also reaffirm our mission – bringing out the best in everyone – and our vision: to provide an exceptional education, preparing young people for life; and spreading that beyond our schools through influencing educational practice and policy. In that context, this document sets out our strategic aims and objectives for the next five years and our key commitments along the way.





Our strategic aims

- **Great places to learn** – *because of the educational quality of our schools, their development of the whole person and the preparation they offer for life, the pastoral care they offer and the quality of the environment and relationships.*
- **Great places to work** – *because our schools offer an excellent professional experience, high quality relationships with students and other colleagues, excellent professional growth and opportunities, and a high quality working environment and resources.*
- **A great group to join** – *because of the quality of support we offer schools with compliance, the 'back office', education and school improvement and the high quality collaboration between schools.*
- **A great contribution beyond the group** – *because United Learning has a commitment to local communities, the national education system and the wider world.*

Great places to learn

Our schools aim to bring out the best in all their pupils, regardless of their starting points or backgrounds. Over the next five years, we will work together to ensure that in all our schools:

The culture of high expectations, courtesy and achievement brings out the best in children and young people.

The inviting atmosphere and environment, and the climate of service, care and valuing every individual equally make our schools great places to be.

The depth, breadth and quality of the curriculum and the quality of its teaching enable children and young people to become knowledgeable citizens able to think, learn and take control of their destiny.

The focus on character, on preparation for life, on listening, giving responsibility and expecting service develops rounded people who can make good choices.



Our commitments to our pupils

We set high expectations for our all our pupils, in all our schools. They have the right to expect an exceptional education in return. They will:

- be taught a curriculum that frees them to think and act powerfully in their lives: deep subject-based learning that exposes them to difficult concepts and gives them the tools they need to succeed;
- have access to curriculum resources and tools to help them extend their learning in and out of school;
- have the opportunity to participate and excel in a wide range of activities to develop their interests and abilities: play in intra- and inter-school fixtures in a choice of at least two sports; learn an instrument or join a choir; perform – music, dance or drama – in public; show leadership; and engage in at least two acts of service to others;
- be exposed to people, ideas and opportunities that stretch their horizons and deepen their understanding of the world around them, developing their sense of themselves as citizens, in their communities and globally;
- be supported to develop the skills and characteristics that will enable them to thrive in their future lives and careers: leadership; team-working; resilience; integrity; self-discipline; compassion; and respect for self and others; and
- be supported to think about and plan for their next steps, including through hearing from employers about careers and the world of work and (for older pupils) at least one visit to a university.

Great places to work

Our schools aim to bring out the best in all the adults who work in them, for the benefit of the children they serve and their own careers. Over the next five years, we will work together to ensure that in all our schools:

The excellent behaviour and commitment to learning of pupils make teaching joyful.

The high expectations of all staff are matched by excellent professional training and development enabling colleagues to meet those expectations.

The quality of the environment and the physical and digital resources enable colleagues to give of their best every day.

The commitment to inclusion and fairness means that everyone is encouraged to aspire, learn, succeed and progress in their career and is rewarded for doing so.

The culture of leadership in every role means colleagues are expected to take responsibility and can take the initiative to make a difference every day.



Our commitments to our colleagues

We set high expectations for all our staff, in all our schools and in our central team. They should expect excellent support, to enable them to give of their best. They will:

- work in a purposeful, calm environment, where staff and pupils show respect for one another, in physical spaces that are fit for the demands of their role;
- have access to high-quality centrally-developed resources, tools and expert support relevant to their role, reducing workload and freeing them to focus on local adaptation, meeting pupils' needs and those of the school community;
- be rewarded well for the work that they do, with competitive pay rates and meaningful wider benefits, underpinned by our commitment to maintaining teachers' pay above national rates;
- have access to high-quality professional development aligned with their role and career stage, supporting them to develop the skills they need to progress to the next stage in their career;
- be encouraged to show leadership and take responsibility for their own work, regardless of their role or career stage, and have their ideas and contributions taken seriously;
- be supported, through meaningful professional conversations, to learn, develop and succeed in their role and progress in their career; and
- be equipped with the digital tools and resources they need to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

A great group to join

We aim that every school in the group can express its own identity while benefitting from being part of a larger whole. Over the next five years, we will work together to ensure that we are a group of schools in which:

The consistently high-quality central services provide a strong platform for all schools, enable excellent educational and professional development and save money.

The established cluster model ensures strong local as well as national support.

The group-wide networks ensure that every colleague in the organisation is connected to many others with the same role in schools elsewhere.

Sound financial and commercial acumen ensure that resources are deployed skilfully to maximum effect, enabling investment in people and in the physical and digital infrastructure.



Our commitments to our schools

All our schools aim to exemplify the Framework for Excellence. Our central teams focus on supporting them to do so. All our schools will:

- maintain and develop their own identity as part of a diverse group of schools sharing common principles and values and a determination to offer excellence to their communities;
- collaborate meaningfully with other United Learning schools locally and nationally to develop and share excellent practice and offer opportunities to staff and pupils;
- receive advice, support and challenge from excellent practitioners who understand their context and have the skills to support rapid improvement;
- have access to excellent resources and excellent professional development opportunities;
- benefit from 'back office' services which are cheaper and better than any school could offer alone;
- be supported to use resources efficiently so that money is directed to the priorities; and
- benefit from investment in people and infrastructure to deliver on the aims of this strategy for their pupils, their staff and their communities.

A great contribution beyond the group

We aim to have a positive impact on our local communities beyond the school, the national education system and the wider world. Over the next five years, we will work together to ensure that:

We influence education policy and practice beyond our schools and are seen as people who will be active leaders and participants in promoting what is right nationally.

We support other schools and trusts in their work and development where we have the capacity, capability and resources to do so.

We contribute in every local community in which we have a presence, through the service of pupils, through supporting families and through community hubs.

We ensure that our work is sustainable and seek to avoid negative impact on the environment and climate.



Our commitments to our communities

As a group of schools, we recognise our commitments to local communities, the national education system and wider society. We are committed to:

- enabling our pupils to engage in service and voluntary activity locally and globally;
- developing our pupils as citizens with an ethical compass, a strong sense of their responsibilities to others and conscious of the impact they can have on their community, society and the planet;
- establishing community hubs in all our local clusters, bringing schools together with other local service providers to support families and the wider community;
- supporting all colleagues, including our most senior leaders, to make a positive difference to the education world beyond United Learning;
- sharing what we do best with others, through collaboration and opening our doors, and by making available high quality, value for money services to schools outside United Learning;
- growing our ability to offer training and professional development to staff outside United Learning;
- influencing policy development and practice nationally, informed by a strong understanding of the evidence and our own practice; and
- reducing the carbon emissions associated with our operations, towards our goal of net zero by 2030.



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