

# Our People Strategy



# Message from CEO & Board Chair

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## 'Our People Strategy was developed by our own employees from all areas of the Trust...'

At Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we recognise that our people are our greatest asset and underpin everything we do to Transform the Life Chances of our young people. Our commitment to embedding a culture of excellence is reflected in our People Strategy, which has been created to align with the vision and values of our Trust, and reflects our vision to value and nurture our staff. It outlines our continuous aim to embed a supportive, challenging and rewarding environment where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, grow, and inspire others to be their best selves.

In 2021, the Trust established a Wellbeing Strategy Group to uphold the Department of Education's Wellbeing Charter and strive to become an employer of choice, attracting and retaining top talent to lead the way in making sure our pupils receive the best education and opportunities in life.

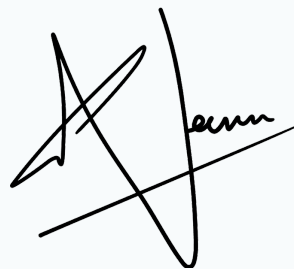
At Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we have worked closely with leaders, staff, and teams via a variety of channels, including Think Ahead Surveys, Welbee Survey, Investors in People assessments and discussions with Unions and staff representatives.

We are proud to say that this strategy is fully represented by and for our people and would like to thank you for your support in shaping our plans and sharing your insightful feedback.

Whether you are beginning your career with Thinking Schools Academy Trust or whether you have been working with us for some time, we encourage you to continue embracing our culture of excellence. We strive towards high expectations with support, knowledge and challenge where everyone has the chance to thrive and make a difference. We are a community committed to working together to Transform the Life Chances of our young people.



**Stuart Gardner**  
CEO, Thinking Schools Academy Trust



**Gerard Newman**  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

# Introduction

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## **“Schools can’t become the best places for students to learn and grow unless we make them the best places for staff to work and grow”**

Our People Strategy is one of our most important commitments, underpinning everything that we do and places people at the heart of our work. We educate our young people to think about their thinking, be their best self and shape their success.

Our vision is for every school and service to deliver outcomes that transform life chances, requiring every one of us to play our part. Our staff are our greatest asset and how they feel at work matters. This strategy outlines our approach to people development, talent management and transformative, ethical leadership. It sets out how we can have confidence in the support and opportunities we receive as we strive to be our best selves. It is important to us that we continue to be recognised as a great employer, building on our Investors in People and Investors in Wellbeing accreditations in early 2024.

We are committed to attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing the best staff for our Trust family and ensuring that they reflect the diversity of the schools and communities that we serve.

Expectations of people have changed and we need to be able to respond positively to this. We need to find new ways of working, take pride and excitement in the work we are doing, as well as being mindful of the needs of our people and the importance of creating some stability and sense of security and belonging.

We recognise that the world of work is changing rapidly along with the expectations of our stakeholders and we want to be innovative and at the forefront of this changing landscape, providing the most productive and rewarding environment for our People. People’s lives are becoming multi-staged, not linear, and we want to ensure that we can provide an environment where flexibility and choice are paramount. We understand that whilst money is important, families, friendships, mental health, wellbeing, a sense of true belonging and personal satisfaction are just as crucial.

Our People Strategy is ambitious and builds on our learning over recent years, how we respond to problems, experiment with a response, see if that works and, if not, change track. Whilst we need to retain those skills, we also need to transition to a place of greater stability.

The People Strategy provides a framework to create strong foundations on which to build over coming years. We need to be able to set clear expectations for our people, based on trust and engagement. We need to build strong and effective relationships, supporting people to flourish and develop and to get the best from our people as an employer. We need to make informed choices which benefit us all, building on successes and productivity in ever-challenging times.



Inclusivity runs throughout the People strategy and reflects the new approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), embedded into all aspects of our people work as standard practice.

All policies and processes will be inclusive by design and our people development programmes will include opportunities to develop skills to have open conversations, learn from others lived experiences and gain a greater appreciation of the systemic and societal inequalities that those with protected characteristics may face. Sitting under the strategy there will be a range of detailed action plans, including sector and EDI accreditations.

From a wellbeing perspective, we need to understand how we can work better together, how we can collectively make a difference and deliver on TSAT ambitions. This will involve looking at areas such as job design, understanding the expectations of our people, providing support which builds on success and developing our people. We need to understand what it means for us to be agile, working in different ways that work well for individuals and teams, in the education context.

How we communicate as a community is going to be key and our Trust intranet and Think Ahead system will support us in this aim. We need to understand what is happening with people through our one-on-one conversations that are taking place. Success will be dependent on cultivating effective mechanisms which enable people to speak up, listen to what they are saying and take action.

Being agile, listening, celebrating difference, responding, checking-in, experimenting and going again will enable us to embed this People Strategy and realise the potential in all of us. Our focus on inclusivity, ambition, openness, fairness and respect has to underpin everything we do.





# Our People Strategy

“Our People Strategy places our people at the heart of our work and underpins all that we do. This strategy outlines our approach to people development and people management. It sets out how each of us can have confidence in the support and opportunities we receive as we aim to ‘be our best selves’.

It supports our responsibility to build an organisation which prioritises equality, ethical and inclusive leadership and fairness.

Our primary objective is to implement our People Strategy; build a culture that creates the right climate for success for all and reflects our values.

Vision 2024-2029	Our Strategic Aims	How we will achieve this?
<b>Every school delivering outcomes that transform life chances</b>	Expected or better outcomes for ALL children and young people which allow them to be successful in their chosen pathway and future lives	The TSAT School Improvement Strategy
	A great employer and investor in people, able to attract, manage, retain and develop staff to be their best selves	The TSAT People Strategy (including wellbeing) TSAT EDI Strategy
	A Trust and employer of choice, working in collaboration with each other and our wider communities	Trust Sustainability & Growth Strategy Professional Growth Strategy Leadership frameworks

# Our Strategy Aims

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## Transformative Leaders

Transforming life chances through ethical and strong leadership, in an inclusive culture



## Support

Support our staff and their Wellbeing to provide a healthy, positive and purposeful environment



## Advocacy

Advocate for our people, value their individual and collaborative contribution, recognising, rewarding and retaining our staff



## Talent Management

Talent management, attraction, recruitment, development and retention of great people with the right values, skills and knowledge

Our aims will be facilitated by a commitment to support effective behaviour management of our young people, ensuring a healthy and productive working environment for all.

# How will our People Strategy help?

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# Transformative Leaders

Transforming life chances through ethical and strong leadership, in an inclusive culture

## Our Vision

Transformative leaders engage with and influence others, by paying attention to their needs, increasing motivation, and providing an ethical framework for decisions. Leaders and managers will be empowered to communicate with, and lead their teams, aligned to TSAT's inclusive culture. Everyone will have a clear set of accountabilities and responsibilities which support this Strategy and aims of TSAT. Our decisions and actions will be values driven. We want all staff to feel a sense of belonging and that they can genuinely contribute to the development and success of the organisation. It is important that all of us can play a part in shaping the direction of the Trust and in raising concerns with confidence, should they arise. Our individual differences make us unique and should be viewed as a benefit.

Our collective capacity is built through collaboration. This is non-negotiable and central to how we work. We wish all our staff to feel valued and believe that their contributions matter. A person's direct line management has a significant impact on their motivation and engagement at work, while line managers are often influenced by the leadership style and approach set by the senior leadership team. "It is often said that people don't leave an organisation they leave a manager". Effective, ethical and inclusive leadership, with open communication and feedback is key.

## Our themes & commitments

### Living our Values & Behaviours

- Live TSAT's values and behaviours – behaving in ways which support this commitment
- Ensure TSAT's values are at the heart of everything we do and shape the way we operate at every level
- Ensure our leaders are role models, leading by example, trusted by people in the organisation
- Ensure leaders provide clarity around purpose, vision and objectives
- Ensure leaders motivate and inspire people to achieve results above and beyond what is expected of them and be their best selves
- Create a culture based on fairness and transparency

### Collaborative contribution

- Put participation, collaboration and teamwork at the heart of the Trust's approach to decision making
- Implement effective mechanisms for enabling everyone to contribute;
- Provide central services to schools with expertise and value, supporting them to transform life chances – ensuring we do the right things, in the right way and the right cost
- Ensure our central teams are trusted, solution-focused, approachable, manage time and resources effectively
- Adopt a clear and transparent way of communicating with each other and with the world, championing the free exchange of ideas.
- Use intelligent insight to review our progress and address any shortfalls in a timely and supportive way;

### Leading & Inspiring People

- Maintain awareness of future challenges for the organisation and consciously develop leadership capabilities, and partner with stakeholders to respond to these.
- Define future leadership capabilities in line with the TSAT's values and leaders will meet these challenges
- Enable our people to take the lead in setting stretching objectives that support and respond to Trust/school goals and plans for change
- Empower our people to challenge the status quo to improve the organisation's performance
- Empower our leaders by providing leadership and coaching frameworks and supporting them to make pragmatic decisions in their roles
- Develop leadership capability
- Line managers know what is expected of them to lead, manage and develop their people effectively
- Ensure our people have confidence in leadership and management capabilities within the organisation



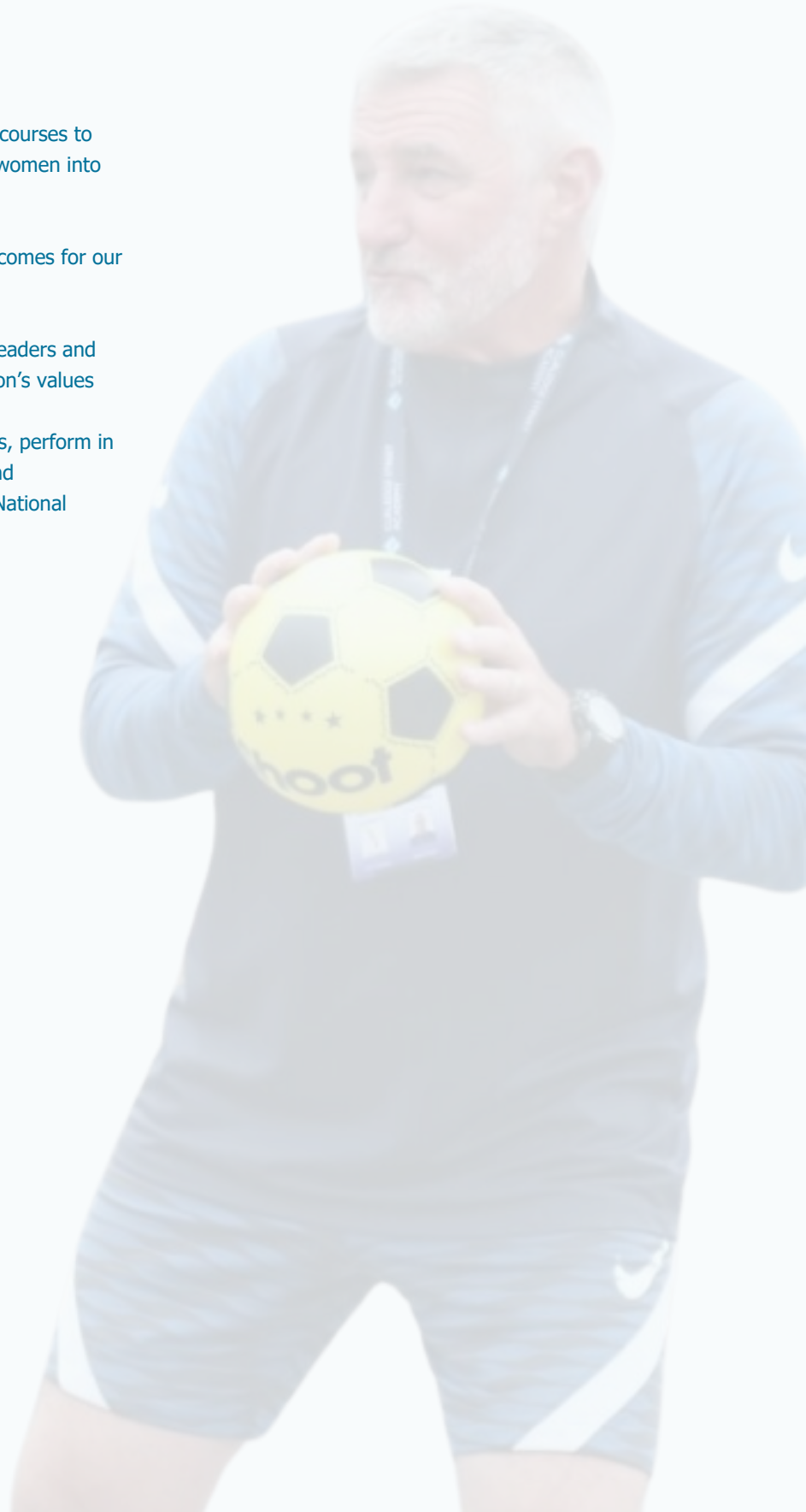
# Transformative Leaders

Transforming life chances through ethical and strong leadership,  
in an inclusive culture

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## Our measures of success

- Develop our Leadership programmes and courses to future proof our Trust direction including women into leadership and key EDI commitments
- Leaders' effectiveness is measured by outcomes for our young people
- Staff surveys evidence increased trust in leaders and their leadership in line with the organisation's values
- Leaders will meet TSAT's ASK expectations, perform in line with NOLAN principles of public life and demonstrate behaviours specified by the National College Ethical Leadership framework







# Support

Support our staff and their Wellbeing to provide a healthy, positive and purposeful environment

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## Our Vision

We want to be recognised as a place where staff can develop their careers and achieve their ambitions, through high quality professional learning and supportive accountability. We will ensure that resources, systems and processes are in place which enable people to be as effective as they can be.

We will ensure that policies are underpinned by effective learning programmes and we continue the development of effective staff networks and forums. We will look to provide support for our staff which mirrors that provided to the student community and reflects best practice across the HR and education sectors.

We aim to provide a healthy, positive and purposeful environment for all staff that promotes their wellbeing and enables them to be their best self. The physical environment, local management of people in individual schools and departments, and provision of innovative wellbeing initiatives all contribute to a positive, productive, and rewarding environment which is at the heart of the Strategy.

## Clarity of roles and structuring work

- Provide clarity in all aspects of people management, ensuring consistency of approach, expectation and entitlement;
- Cultivate a culture of trust and empowerment, ensuring there is a golden thread between the accountabilities and responsibilities in teams and Trust strategies
- Support all our staff to be able to see clearly the contribution they make to achieving our strategic priorities;
- Encourage our people to use their initiative to lead and take ownership over delivering the organisation's objectives;
- Ensure wellbeing is integrated as an essential part of all Trust roles
- Line managers support people to deliver the organisation's objectives People know what to expect from their line manager and provide feedback on how they are managed and developed
- HR Partnering focuses on their key role in supporting the delivery of Trust and Local Development Plans, ensuring that HR resources are aligned where they achieve greatest impact
- HR Partners support with coaching and delivery of all aspects of people related activities which promote engagement, organisational performance and drive organisational culture aligned to TSAT's values.
- Effective partnerships will promote a whole system approach in relation to the delivery of the people elements of the Strategy

## Our themes & commitments

### Managing of Professional Growth

- Develop people's personal and professional skills and knowledge using professional growth models throughout their careers, providing ongoing support to help them be their best self
- Ensure everyone takes responsibility for continuous improvement, looking forward to the world around them for new ideas and innovation to deliver change in line with this;
- Nurture innovation and act quickly in response to new ideas and opportunities;
- Expect and actively support our people to strive for high performance at all times
- Secure a professional growth process which enables staff development and wellbeing to be an integral part of discussions on a regular basis;
- Actively promote professional learning opportunities;
- Support the individual development of staff through well targeted interventions;
- Professional Growth Policy and Think Ahead system supports the development and growth of our people

### Culture of equality & wellbeing

- Provide a healthy, happy, and purposeful environment for all staff that promotes their wellbeing and enables them to be their best self.
- Provide an environment where health and wellbeing are actively promoted, and supported, where people are valued for their contribution, empowered to manage their workload effectively and feel engaged with the wider Trust.
- Ensure that our equality, diversity and inclusion vision and strategy is implemented and that all of our policies and processes reflect our commitment to this area; Develop an EDI strategy.
- Creating a flexible working culture across the Trust that offers progressive and creative opportunities for all staff both formally and informally
- Actively support the physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing of staff through our mental health and wellbeing strategy;
- Seek to ensure that our policies are family friendly and enable flexible working opportunities to be genuinely explored

## Our measures of success

- The Trust meets expectations set out for the six HSE management standards and demonstrates improved outcomes from the Wellbeing surveys
- The Gender Pay Gap report shows positive impact in key areas identified from previous report's analysis and strategy adopted
- Ethnicity Pay Gap reporting shows success in key areas identified from previous report's analysis and strategy adopted
- Recognition of our EDI commitment through a minimum of 2 accreditations such as Disability confident, Respecting Rights Awards, Investors in Diversity, Age-Friendly Employer Pledge
- Introduction of maternity coaching and retirement planning support our staff at key stages of their life
- Benefits offer provides a range of options, valued by staff
- Staff absence rate is below the regional/education average



# Advocacy

Advocate for our people, value their individual and collaborative contribution, recognising, rewarding and retaining our staff

## Our Vision

All staff have a sense of purpose and autonomy in their roles, shaping their success and being masters of their own destiny, enabling everyone to feel able to participate and achieve their potential. We want to create an environment in which all our people understand the role they play in supporting our children and young people to be successful. It is important that they feel valued and are effectively rewarded for what they do. This is as much about the little things we do to look after our our people.

## Our themes & commitments

Recognising and rewarding	Empowering and involving	Sustainable success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Recognise and reward our people through the year in a way which is meaningful to them;</li><li>Involve staff voice in designing TSAT's approach to recognising and rewarding people</li><li>Create a culture of appreciation, where people feel valued and are recognised for their efforts and performance</li><li>Develop our employee benefits and encourage their uptake on a regular basis;</li><li>Fostering staff potential to grow and develop to 'be their best selves' and fulfil their ambition within our Trust</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Listen to new ideas that will deliver positive outcomes for the organisation, our staff and our young people</li><li>Give and seek timely feedback on an informal basis, engaging in performance discussions and coaching are a core part of the day-to-day running of the organisation</li><li>Support all our staff to be able to see clearly the contribution they make to achieving our strategic priorities;</li><li>Ensure Trust structures encourage people to create formal and informal networks to maximise collaboration</li><li>Capture staff voice in work that we undertake</li><li>Review and improve policies and practices regularly to speed up decision making and increase individual ownership</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Ensure our people feel comfortable to challenge behaviours that are not in line with the organisation's values and ensure people are held to account</li><li>Advocate for the Education sector as a whole and champion change where needed</li><li>View change as 'business as usual', where mistakes are accepted and valued, as an opportunity for learning and improvement</li><li>Change is communicated in a timely and transparent way across the organisation</li><li>Benefits of change are measured and captured.</li><li>Successes and failures are openly communicated</li><li>People that demonstrate optimism and drive are selected to champion change and support others to understand and engage with it</li></ul>

## Our measures of success

- High engagement in staff surveys (75%+)
- Repeated survey/questions show improvement in identified areas;
- Networking within Education sector and communities lead to rewarding relationships and commercial opportunity
- Intranet supports communication strategy and leads to improvement in transparency, increased access to key information for staff, leading to higher staff satisfaction and communication ratings in staff surveys
- The Trust secures the highest level of IIP and Wellbeing Accreditation within the next 6 years
- Recognition strategies are valued and rated as effective/appreciated by majority of staff
- Staff value training and development offer, leading to improvement in retention rates.



# Talent Management

Talent management, attraction, recruitment, development and retention of great people with the right values, skills and knowledge

## Our Vision

Strategic talent management aims to build a high-performance workplace; foster a learning climate, add value to the TSAT employer brand and promote diversity. We aim to recruit the best people by attracting staff from a range of contexts and from all walks of life, drawing the best talent to us. We aim to ensure that we have talent management processes that attract, identify, develop, engage, and retain individuals. To be effective, this will align with our Strategic Trust objectives.

Talented individuals can make a significant difference to organisational performance, through their contribution and by reaching their potential. Talent management will focus on the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention, and deployment of those individuals, because of their potential or the critical role they have. This includes all our people, as everyone has skills and strengths that can be developed and can support our overall aims.

We want to be recognised as a place where staff can develop their careers and achieve their ambitions, through high quality professional learning and supportive accountability. Our collective capacity is built through collaboration. This is non-negotiable and central to how we work. Career pathways will be supported by effective role design, promotion processes, mentoring and sponsorship. Joining up career pathway planning with recruitment, succession planning, and redeployment will bring improved workforce planning and a sustainable resourcing model.

## Our themes & commitments

### Talent attraction & Retention

- Develop our 'employer brand' so that we build our reputation with pride. Our staff are our greatest ambassadors and what they say about 'what it's like to work here' is powerful;
- Promote equity and diversity in recruitment by thinking about where and how we advertise, making clear that we actively seek colleagues from diverse backgrounds;
- Promote an inclusive and diverse workforce
- Work towards recognise accreditation for our EDI commitment
- Ensure a consistent approach to recruitment across all our schools and central teams;
- Empower our leaders so that they are equipped and resourced to make excellent recruitment decisions;
- Enable all new staff to be successful in role and Trust, through effective induction
- Be pivotal in leading our sector by taking chances to improve and enhance our Employee Value Proposition

### Building Capability and pathways for future roles

- Create a pipeline of talent which secures succession planning and which enables staff to see and secure their next steps;
- Design roles in order to meet the changing needs of communities, markets, organisational strategy and employees
- Look to the future to identify and plan the capabilities people will need to deliver success
- Build a professional learning offer which encourages staff to take responsibility for their own development, supported by our Thinking Horizons offer. This offer will emphasise collaboration and the sharing of practice and will focus on professionalism and pedagogy;
- Embed continuous learning as part of the culture of the organisation; Ensuring our people take ownership of their own learning and development to effectively support the organisations objectives and build capability and sustainable success;

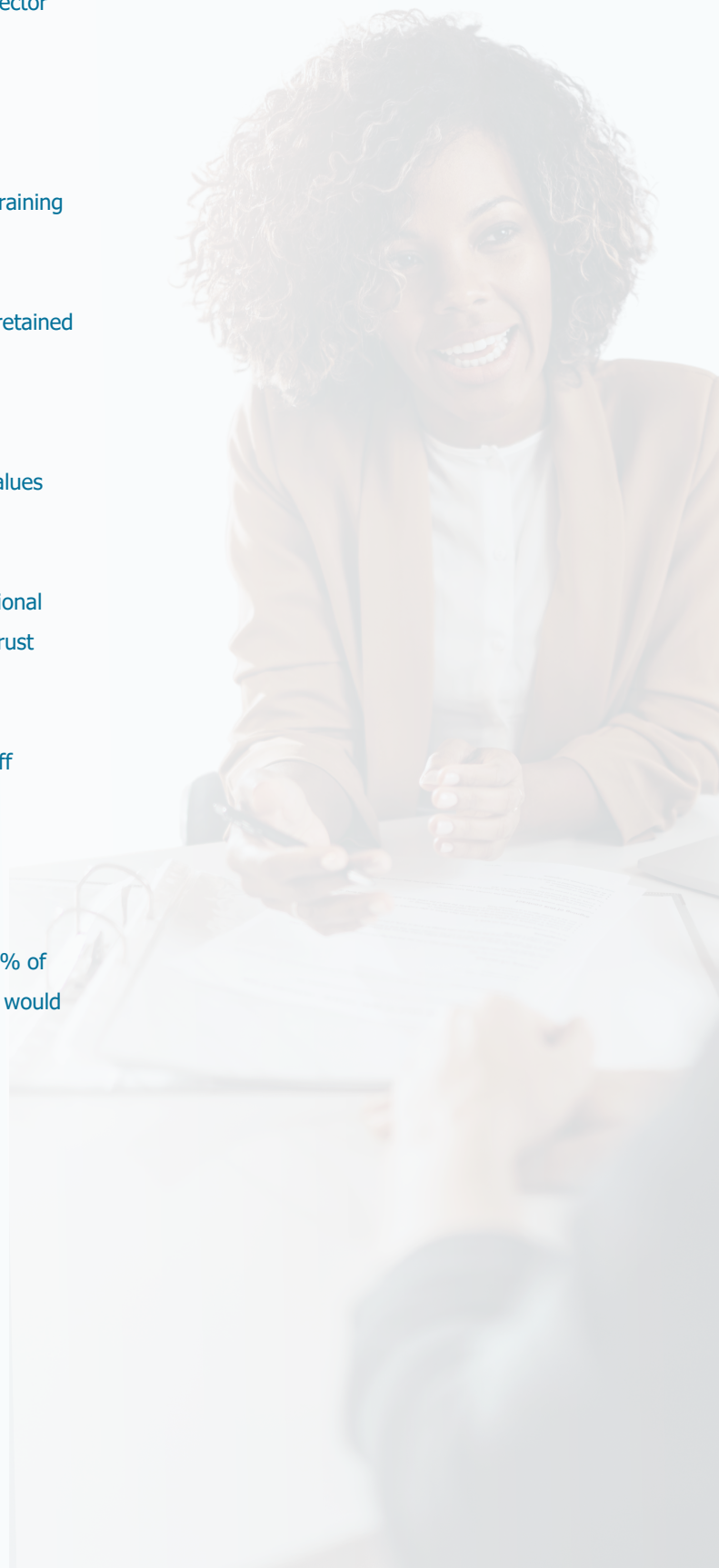


# Talent Management

Talent management, attraction, recruitment, development and retention of great people with the right values, skills and knowledge

## Our measures of success

- Staff turn-over is below regional average for education sector
- Induction and successful probationary periods leads to increased sense of belonging and retention rates
- 50% of all staff to undertake at least one EDI IHASCO Training course, including unconscious bias
- Improve retention rates annually to achieve 60% being retained for 1+ years
- Vacancies successfully achieve a range of appropriately qualified/experienced staff with the competencies and values that match those of our trust commitments;
- Vacancies are filled increasingly through internal promotional opportunities to support talent development pathways Trust wide
- Talent pipelines map to each role ensuring clarity for staff progress and succession planning
- Utilise our apprenticeship levy by at least 75% per year.
- Create a positive culture and an employer by brand – 70% of staff feeling like they belong within the organisation and would recommend TSAT as an employer of choice.





# How will this be integrated into our every day work?

Our People Strategy is everyone's responsibility and must become part of our daily roles.


Our strategy will form part of the TSAT Trust Development and School/Service Development plans from 2024 onwards, with appropriate targets for each of the Trust's 6 Pillars of Development.

<b>Success through learning</b>	Delivering success through learning by providing a great curriculum and teaching to remember.
<b>Evolution of self</b>	We promote a culture of self-improvement and provide Thinking Tools to support our students and staff to become their best selves
<b>Growing great leaders</b>	Enabling staff to access high-quality, personalised CPD opportunities that ensure they are supported in achieving their career aspirations.
<b>Building with confidence</b>	Through the effective use of professional development, quality assurance, and data analysis, we work to ensure we know our schools and provide the support they need to be their best.
<b>Delivering value for money</b>	Showing a commitment to delivering value for money, ensuring the right services are provided in the right way, at the right cost.
<b>Trust of choice</b>	By supporting our schools, students, and staff to be their best selves and celebrating our collective achievements, we aspire to be the Trust of choice for parents choosing a school for their child and for staff considering the next step in their career.

# Policies and Guidance

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## Policies that will underpin our People Strategy

- Adoption, maternity, maternity support (paternity) leave, shared parental leave policies
  - Code of conduct
  - Benefits – including company car
  - Dignity at Work, Bullying & Harassment
  - Early Career Teacher Induction
  - Equality & EDI
  - Flexible working including hybrid working
  - Job Evaluation
  - Managing Performance Concerns and Capability procedures
  - Menopause
  - Pay
  - Probation
  - Recruitment & DBS
  - Restructure & Redundancy
  - Sickness absence management
  - Leave, special discretionary leave policies
  - Think Ahead Professional Growth
  - TSTARS – recognition
  - Wellbeing
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# Next steps

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Thinking Personnel, our team of HR experts, will ensure that policies are relevant and up to date, and provide clarity for staff who will be supported in understanding the processes around them; In some areas work to achieve our commitments will involve reviewing existing policies, many of which are outdated and cumbersome. In other areas it will involve developing new policy and practice.

We will review and develop the underpinning HR management information systems, which will be key to improving service delivery, the efficiency of administrative processes and reporting capability. We aim to share accurate and timely management information with schools to inform their decision making.

There will be increased use of benchmarking within education and beyond to support decision making.

We will refine and improve communications between the Trust with staff and with Schools.

We will continue to have an open and transparent dialogue with Trade Unions and Staff Representative Groups, together with close collaboration and consultation between HR, the Executive Team, Heads and Schools, which is essential to shaping the action and implementation plans to achieve credible outcomes.

The Trust Development Plan will be integral to the delivery of the People Strategy, enabling schools to align this with their school improvement plan.



# Our People Journey

