



Our People Strategy





Our People Strategy: Empowering Excellence at The Stour Federation

Creating the culture in order to best deliver our vision in practical ways is what this document seeks to support. School culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in the way a school operates. School culture can be used to encompass all the attitudes, expected behaviours and values that impact how the school operates. Our strategy is informed by principle-centered frameworks for effectiveness and leadership development

At the heart of Our People Strategy lies the understanding that a strong, positive school culture is essential for doing the best work of our lives. It's more than just following rules; it's about being proactive, developing positive habits and fostering an environment where everyone feels valued, supported, and empowered to flourish. We are building a culture delivered through shared endeavour, professional high expectations, warmth, inclusivity, positivity, and kindness. The intentionality of our behaviours and mindsets shape our thinking, communication, values, and North Star of flourishing people.

A strong culture is not something that happens by accident. It is built through conscious effort and a shared commitment to our guiding principles, which are organised into three key areas: **people, place and processes.**

	<p style="text-align: center;">PEOPLE</p> <p>Great people, living our values, making decisions, engaging and inspiring as we learn, grow, succeed together.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">PLACE</p> <p>Safe and inspiring places that are welcoming, have strong curriculum integrity, enable staff and children to excel, and are fully connected to the communities we serve..</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">PROCESSES</p> <p>Our processes, informed by evidence, support best practice, enabling staff and children to take ownership and accountability of their futures.</p>

It is vital we get our school and trust culture right. The danger of not getting the culture right is that this will significantly limit our progress towards ensuring sustainable excellence in each of our schools. Culture, in the communities our Trust serves, matters. These three areas, people, places, and processes, form our culture and underpin the delivery of our People Strategy. Let us work together to build a culture that empowers our children and staff to reach their full potential.

Our schools in



The Power of "Our" in Our People Strategy

The deliberate and consistent use of **OUR** throughout Our People Strategy is not merely a linguistic choice; it is a strategic imperative. It serves as a cornerstone for cultivating a synergized, high-performing, and deeply connected community across all schools in The Stour Federation.

Building a Unified Trust Identity:

- "Our schools," "our staff," "our children" fosters a sense of shared purpose and identity, transcending individual school boundaries.
- This promotes a cohesive trust culture, ensuring alignment with our overarching vision and values, and a feeling of belonging for staff across all schools.

Fostering Collective Ownership and Accountability:

- Foster a culture where our staff are empowered to take ownership of decisions within their spheres of influence, recognising that this active participation is the most effective way to develop their critical thinking, leadership, and problem-solving skills, enabling them to 'do the best work of their lives' and contribute meaningfully to the Trust's goals.
- This cultivates a culture of shared responsibility, where everyone is invested in the Trust's collective progress and the wellbeing of all pupils, staff and families.

Enhancing Collaborative Practice and Knowledge Sharing:

- "Our best practice," "our resources," "our shared expertise" emphasises the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing across the Trust.
- This facilitates the development of a strong professional learning community, where staff can learn from each other and collectively enhance their practice.

Cultivating a Culture of Compassion and Support:

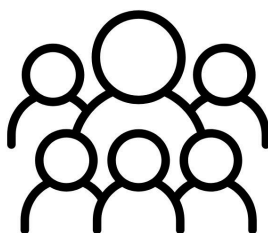
- "Our shared challenges," "our collective successes," "our commitment to wellbeing" builds a culture of compassion and mutual support.
- This fosters a sense of psychological safety, where staff feel valued, understood, and supported in their professional and personal growth.

Aligning with Trust-Wide Vision and Goals:

- "Our vision," "our North Star," "our drivers" reinforces the collective purpose and ensures that everyone is working towards shared goals.
- This aligns individual and school-level efforts with the trust's overarching strategic direction, promoting a sense of unity and purpose.

Driving Increased Engagement and Commitment:

- By distributing decision-making authority, we aim to cultivate an environment where every staff member feels deeply valued, trusted, and instrumental in shaping our Trust's future, leading to enhanced job satisfaction, collective efficacy, and a more agile organisation.
- This translates to improved staff retention, enhanced performance, and a stronger sense of collective efficacy.



PEOPLE

In The Stour Federation, our people are our greatest asset. Our People Strategy is designed to cultivate a thriving environment where every member of staff can flourish, embodying our motto: "Learn, grow, succeed together." We are committed to fostering a culture built on our RESPECT values: **relationships, excellence, service, passion, ethics, collaboration, and trust.**

Just as we strive to equip our children with the 6Cs – **character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking** – we recognise the importance of these competencies for our staff. These 6Cs are not just future-focused skills for our pupils; they are the cornerstones of effective teaching and leadership in the 21st century.

We firmly believe that by prioritising our staff's personal and professional growth and wellbeing, we are directly investing in the success of our children. This strategy is guided by the principles of continuous improvement, ensuring that we are always seeking to **sharpen the saw** and refine our practices.

Building on Strong Foundations: Our commitment to building strong **relationships** is paramount. We encourage open communication and collaborative partnerships, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support. We strive for **excellence** in all that we do, promoting a culture of high standards and continuous learning. We are dedicated to **service**, recognising the profound

impact we have on the lives of our children and each other. Our **passion** for education drives us to innovate and inspire, creating engaging and enriching learning experiences. We uphold the highest **ethical** standards, ensuring transparency and accountability in all our actions. We embrace **collaboration**, working together as a united team to achieve our shared goals. We build **trust** through honesty, integrity, and reliability.

Developing 21st Century Competencies: We recognise that the 6Cs are essential for both our children and our staff. We encourage staff to:

- Demonstrate strong **character** by acting with integrity and resilience.
- Embrace **citizenship** by fostering a sense of community and social responsibility.
- Cultivate **collaboration** by working effectively with colleagues, parents, and the wider community.
- Enhance **communication** skills to effectively convey ideas and build strong relationships.
- Foster **creativity** to develop innovative teaching methods and engage students.
- Develop **critical thinking** skills to analyze information, solve problems, and make informed decisions.

The Importance of Leadership

Our People Strategy is built upon the conviction that effective leadership is the cornerstone of exceptional education. We firmly believe that every member of our school leadership teams must possess a deep understanding of the primary curriculum, subject-specific pedagogy, assessment, and the science of how children develop and learn. This expertise is not merely desirable; it is the foundation of the credibility required to support our dedicated colleagues in refining their practice.

To truly put our staff first, our leaders must embrace a professional obligation to continuous self-improvement, committing to significant levels of personal and professional learning. This commitment ensures our leaders are experts in teaching and learning, directly enhancing their influence on student outcomes. As we know, the more leaders focus on their relationships, their work, and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater will be their influence on pupil outcomes: socially, emotionally and academically.

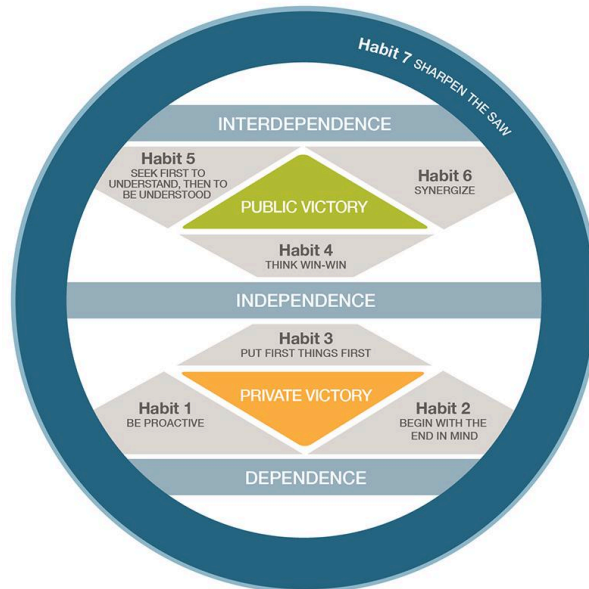
We recognise that job satisfaction is paramount. We strive to create a culture where staff find their work purposeful and intellectually stimulating, fostering a sense of challenge and trust. By implementing an evidence-informed approach, we aim to make educating more "interesting" and "intellectually attractive," thereby improving pupil outcomes and boosting staff morale simultaneously. This approach ensures that research findings complement our practical experience, creating a dynamic and effective learning environment.

Ultimately, our Trust's success hinges on challenging, nurturing, and unleashing the potential of our talented employees. By investing in their leadership development, we secure the continued effectiveness and excellence of our schools, ensuring that every child receives the highest quality education.

Our leaders are committed to empowering colleagues by fostering trust and actively delegating decision-making authority to those closest to the work, thereby acting as coaches who equip our

teams to 'play the best games of their lives' and to take greater ownership of their professional journeys.

Our operating system for achieving this is the 7 Habits of Effective People. Staff development, guided by the 7 Habits, focuses on the "character ethic" – cultivating intrinsic qualities like responsibility, integrity, and empathy – as the foundation for lasting effectiveness, rather than just outward behaviours. This reinforces the "Inside-Out" principle and the focus on collective ownership and accountability highlighted in the Trust's 2030 Strategy.



Welcoming Our People

This encompasses all activities related to attracting and hiring top talent: the 'front door' of The Stour Federation.

- ★ Enhance our employee brand, building understanding and consistency of messaging across recruitment platforms including social media, leveraging the brand of The Stour Federation as an employer of choice.
- ★ Identify, implement and monitor the success of trust-wide recruitment campaigns for key rounds of recruitment throughout the year.
- ★ Provide workforce data and analytics to governors.
- ★ Enhance the 'candidate experience' to build engagement and a sense of belonging throughout every aspect of the recruitment and onboarding process.
- ★ Utilise our trust-wide induction programme for all new starters/leaders.
- ★ Continually review and monitor all recruitment documentation, ensuring it remains relevant, attractive and modern.

Retaining Our People

This focuses on keeping our existing talent happy and engaged. It's about creating a positive, fair and supportive work environment.

- ★ Provide a safe and healthy working environment that promotes staff wellbeing and reduced levels of sickness absence.
- ★ Strong Trust Values lived by all members of the school community.
- ★ Actively reducing workload through our Workload Charter.












- ★ Recognise and proactively manage the impact of 'change' on both the workload and wellbeing of colleagues.
- ★ Ensure our digital champions and new technology adoption focuses on automation of working practices wherever possible to facilitate cumulative reduction of workload.
- ★ Ensure all leaders receive mental health awareness training and have an adult trained as Mental Health First Aider to support staff.
- ★ Ensure our staff feel valued, empowered and feel job satisfaction.
- ★ Undertake regular staff surveys and pulse checks on an ongoing basis.
- ★ Offer leaders coaching sessions to evaluate results of surveys in order to respond to staff needs appropriately.
- ★ Review, enhance and publicise our comprehensive benefits package to potential and current colleagues.

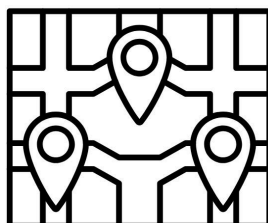
Developing Our People

This involves investing in the growth and advancement of our employees. It's about nurturing their knowledge and skills and to help them reach their full potential.

- ★ Develop a culture and mindset of continuous improvement.
- ★ Foster a coaching culture and enhance the skills and capability of all colleagues to be able to coach and be coached.
- ★ Grow our teacher, leader and individual expertise through evidence-informed approaches to professional development, building a 'research rich' culture and evidence based practice (Growing Great People).
- ★ Ensure all our staff across the Trust are supported and developed through effective development reviews and career planning.
- ★ Encourage and support teachers to undertake National Professional Qualifications (NPQs), other professional qualifications and alternative pathways through the Apprenticeship Levy.
- ★ Provide leadership workshops, giving staff the opportunity to develop their leadership and self-management skills.
- ★ Ensure all our staff have access to the latest, evidence informed personal and professional development to support their on-going career pathways.
- ★ Give staff an element of choice and involve them in CPD planning across the year to ensure needs are met alongside trust and school priorities.
- ★ Develop personal and professional leadership skills through the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People for human flourishing:

1. Be Proactive.
2. Begin with the End in Mind.
3. Put First Things First.
4. Think Win-Win.
5. Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood
6. Synergize.
7. Sharpen the Saw.

Benefit Bundle	
	Exceptional development & networking opportunities.
	Free annual flu jab.
	Free eye tests for heavy display screen users.
	Coaching available for all.
	Employee Assistance Programme.
	Blue Light Cards.
	Family friendly policies and flexible working opportunities.
	Emergency paid time off for dependents 3 days per year.
	Workload Charter.
	Supervision for leaders, Early Years staff, Specialist Resourced Provision staff and Designated Safeguarding Leads.
	Generous public sector pension schemes for all staff.



PLACE

In The Stour Federation, we believe that the physical environment plays a vital role in creating a flourishing learning community. Our People Strategy recognises the importance of providing safe, inspiring places where children excel, our staff flourish, and our communities take pride. We are

committed to creating spaces that reflect our RESPECT values and embody our motto, "Learn, grow, succeed together."

We understand that inspirational school buildings communicate a powerful message: we value our people. Our calm and orderly spaces create a sense of investment and belonging for our children. Every aspect of our buildings – from resources and classroom layouts to displays and signage – is intentionally designed to reinforce this message. We aim to begin with the end in mind, crafting environments that foster a love of learning and a sense of pride.

We are committed to providing all pupils with access to the best possible resources, ensuring effective teaching, wellbeing and learning. We prioritise evidence-based investments in reading and technology, recognizing their disproportionate impact on learning and future success.

Developing pupils' communication and language skills – oracy – is fundamental to their ability to lead fulfilling lives. Our spaces are designed to promote dialogue and collaboration, nurturing our 6Cs. We strive to ensure these are not just competencies for our pupils, but also for all staff members.

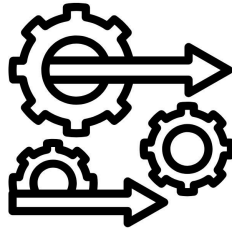
Our school environments are resourced to foster a love of reading. Our carefully chosen books and well-stocked libraries serve as special places for exploration and discovery. We understand that to sharpen the saw we need to create environments that enable children to engage with the world around them.

We celebrate pupils' achievements at every opportunity. From art creations to sports team photographs, our displays showcase their successes. We actively promote diversity and spark spiritual, moral, and social awareness through what is displayed in classrooms, on screens, and in corridors. We encourage everyone to seek first to understand, then to be understood, creating a culture where everyone feels valued and respected.

Sustainability is a core principle in all of our schools. We recognise the importance of partnership working and are committed to fostering strong links with our communities. Strong engagement with parents is at the heart of our culture, and we encourage everyone to synergise and work together.

Collaboration is a founding principle of The Stour Federation. We believe in the power of communities to solve problems through collaborative action. Each of our primary schools serves a unique community and responds to local needs.

Our aim is to create places that are not only safe and inspiring but also beacons of pride for our communities. By working together, we can ensure that our schools are places where everyone can learn, grow, and succeed.



PROCESSES

The power of our Trust-wide community is in recognising there are processes, based on well-researched evidence, that strengthen our culture in all contexts. We recognise that these processes support our schools in fostering our distinctive culture.

We understand that a unified approach, informed by research, strengthens our culture across all five schools. However, we also believe in empowering our schools to adapt to their unique contexts. This is reflected in our principle of aligned autonomy, Our Spine document provides a framework for consistent practices while allowing for local adaptation. Wildly important school goals are driven by headteachers, who are responsible for prioritisation, implementation, and impact. Progress is carefully monitored by governance at both school and Trust level, with support from external partners, ensuring we stay on track.

Our Teaching, Learning, and Curriculum Policy is Trust-wide, ensuring a consistent standard of education. However, schools determine what they focus on beyond the National Curriculum, ensuring content is relevant and inspiring for their local community. Curriculum progression maps and sequencing are aligned, promoting a cohesive learning journey.

We have established Trust-wide processes for reading, writing, maths and a Core 11, ensuring a strong foundation for learning. These processes are informed by best practices and evidence, and are designed to support teachers in delivering high-quality instruction.

We are committed to fostering creativity in all curriculum areas, encouraging teachers to turn powerful thinking into practical action. Our annual cross-Trust enrichment and sporting events for pupils and communities of practice for staff build a shared sense of identity. These experiences strengthen our collective culture.

Pupil safety is our highest priority. Our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedures are collaboratively standardised, ensuring compliance, while being enacted locally to respond to specific risks. Collaborative annual safeguarding audits provide further challenge and support. We understand that pupils feeling safe is the foundation of our culture. We believe in putting first things first by ensuring our children feel safe and secure.

We have Trust-wide procedures for pupils with SEND. We recognise the importance of investing in evidence-based provision for these pupils, ensuring they have the support they need to flourish. We encourage everyone to seek first to understand, then to be understood, when supporting these learners.

The Stour Federation Way

Our aim is to create a school community where everyone – staff, children and families and our wider communities – learns, grows, and succeeds together. We believe that when everyone feels valued and supported, we all flourish. The Stour Federation Way outlines our 10 guiding principles for continuous improvement and mutual respect for people.

The [Flourishing Schools](#) research points to the importance of developing a learning culture that is proactive and marked by continual improvement.

We are committed to building a learning culture that is proactive and is always striving to improve. Just as a gardener gently tends to their plants, we believe in "Kaizen" – making small, consistent changes for the better. This approach creates an ethic of excellence, where learning is continuous, and change is welcomed. We need a stable core to safeguard what we stand for and stay on track, but a disruptive edge to stay fresh and get better.



We understand that creating this environment requires mutual respect. Leaders at all levels must foster trust and understanding among all team members. We need a strong foundation to uphold our values, while also being open to new ideas that help us grow. Leadership is about inspiring and motivating people, while management is about organising the systems that support our work. Both are vital.

Effective leadership means clearly defining our goals, sharing a path to achieve them, and supporting our team by removing obstacles. We value everyone's ideas and contributions, recognising that our culture is shaped by our values and the behaviours and feelings of each individual.

Stories help us connect and understand our shared identity. They remind us of who we are and what we aspire to be. Clear guidelines for how we interact as a team are essential for our success. Continuous improvement and respect for people are ongoing journeys, as we are always striving to be better.

Part I Philosophy - Thinking Long Term

Principle 1. Plan for the Future

- We make decisions that benefit our staff, children, families and communities in the long run.
- We build strong relationships, taking time to connect with each other, not just focusing on tasks.
- We have a clear purpose, guiding our decisions and creating a united team focused on learning and wellbeing.
- We understand our place in the history of The Stour Federation and aim to build upon it.
- We create lasting value for our children, staff, families, and communities.
- We take responsibility for our actions and their impact.
- We encourage everyone to share their talents and ideas to reach challenging goals.

Part II: Processes - Delivering Value

Principle 2. Connect People and Processes

- We design our work to flow smoothly, quickly identifying any problems and seeking solutions..
- This improves productivity, quality, and morale.

Principle 3. Balance the Workload

- We work at a steady pace, avoiding periods of overload.
- We remove unnecessary tasks to focus on what truly matters.
- We organise our resources and schedules to create a calm and productive environment.
- We keep only what is important through prioritisation, deimplementation and standardising our systems, and maintain these habits.

Principle 4. Standardise Our Work

- Strive for stable, repeatable methods to maintain a steady rhythm in our processes. Standardised work is habit-forming and a key facilitator of building quality.
- Capture the accumulated learning about a process up to a point in time by standardising today's best practices until they become habit.
- Welcome creative and individual expression to improve upon the standardised work; then incorporate it into the new standardised work. Today's standardisation is the necessary foundation on which tomorrow's improvement will be based.
- Standardised work is the basis for empowering staff, sharing ideas for improvement and driving innovation in the workplace.

Principle 5. Build in Quality

- We prioritise quality in everything we do for our children, staff, families, and communities.
- We use effective ways to check our work.
- We value feedback, even negative feedback, as a way to improve.
- We have support systems in place to quickly address any problems.
- We are honest about weaknesses and use them to improve.

Principle 6. Use Technology Wisely

- We use technology to support our people and processes, not just because it's new.
- We test new technology before using it widely.
- We help everyone understand how to use technology effectively and safely.

Part III: People - Respect, Challenge, and Grow

Principle 7. Develop Strong Leaders

- We grow leaders from within our team, who understand our work and values.
- Leaders are role models, demonstrating our vision, values, and ways of working.
- Leaders teach and mentor others. They hold the space for new practices and act as sensors for the organisation's purpose, rather than always being central decision-makers.
- We build a culture of trust and growth and accountability, where everyone can develop their skills.
- We learn about our own and other people's strengths and weaknesses, to build strong teams.
- We work in teams to solve problems.

Principle 8. Work with Our Partners

- We treat our partners – parents, supply teachers, external professionals, etc. – as part of our team and think win-win, seeking mutual benefit and valuing relationships.
- We challenge them to grow and develop, showing we value their contribution.

Part IV: Problem Solving – Think and Act Scientifically

Principle 9. Observe and Learn

- We solve problems by being curious: observing firsthand and verifying information.
- We develop a scientific approach to problem-solving.
- We use both quick thinking and considered thinking.
- We take responsibility for our actions.
- We practise and develop good habits with support.
- One person is responsible for each action, while working with the team.

Principle 10. Align Our Goals

- We align our goals at all levels to create a clear direction.
- How we make decisions is as important as the decision itself.
- We assume the best in people.
- We regularly review and refine our work to identify areas for improvement.