



People Strategy 2025–30



University
Schools Trust
A transformational education



"We know that schools can't become the best places to learn and grow unless we make them the best place for staff to learn and grow too."

Gillian Kemp, Trust Leader

Foreword

At University School's Trust, our people are at the heart of everything we do. That is why, as Trust Leader, I am proud to champion the UST People Strategy.

This strategy showcases the shared vision of our Board of Trustees and senior leaders, a collective promise to deliver across the board for our unique, dedicated and talented workforce.

In the continuously evolving education landscape, we remain steadfast in our endeavour to be the employer of choice and to be a standout MultiAcademy Trust that invests heavily in retaining and attracting staff who feel passionate about providing our young people with a transformational education. We know that schools can't become the best places to learn and grow unless we make them the best place for staff to learn and grow too.

As set out in more detail within the People Strategy, the Trust is committed to offering a robust and transparent approach that ensures our people feel equipped and supported to perform at the highest level, both in and outside of the workplace.

The People Strategy is unequivocally holistic, wedding teams from across the organisation, including facilities, IT, communications and the School of Education. Led by our HR Team, everyone is united in achieving the strategy's vision.

Whilst we continue to work towards enhancing all aspects of the employee lifecycle, the UST People Strategy shines a spotlight on our key strategic priorities for the next five years. These include retaining our high-performing staff, embedding the UST culture and a feeling of belonging across our schools, and ensuring all our employees are supported in achieving their personal and professional career aspirations.

Our Trust is made up of incredible people and this strategy will help us all to be even better at what we do and to reach our full potential.

Gillian Kemp
UST Trust Leader



Mission Statement

As set out in the UST Vision, guided by and collaborating with our Partners:

The Trust is a family of inclusive schools where collaborative partnerships deliver a transformational education which, in turn, empowers our pupils and the communities they come from to realise their full potential. A culture of high expectations nurtures a drive to achieve excellence and to take ownership of future academic and vocational learning paths to equip our pupils as global citizens and inspire their communities.

The People Strategy weaves this vision into our approach and has been developed to empower our people by fostering a culture of innovation, psychological safety and inclusion, where every individual feels valued, passionate and driven to excel in their role.

We remain committed to developing, retaining and attracting talented individuals, enhancing employee wellbeing, and creating a workplace where everyone can thrive.

Guiding Principles

The People Strategy aims to align HR practices with the Trust's strategic objectives and to promote a culture that supports the organisation's vision and values.

When the HR function is in tune with the organisation's overarching values, it can actively contribute to shaping the desired culture. This is based around showing **CARE** for all those associated with the Trust.

In line with the overarching UST Values, the People Strategy is underpinned by the following principles:

- **C**ollaborate – We value everyone's opinions, learning from one another to create an innovative and high functioning working environment
- **A**dvocate – We celebrate success, championing each other and recognising their achievements
- **R**espect – We embed psychological safety, creating a workplace where all staff believe in the importance of challenge in a secure environment
- **E**ndeavour – We work hard, knowing that in doing so, regardless of our role, we can provide the transformational education that our students deserve.

Focus Areas

Recent research indicates that the top five people-orientated challenges facing the national education workforce are:

1. Shortage of teachers
2. Retention of top educators
3. Lack of training and career development
4. Barriers in communication, and
5. Endless paperwork

The People Strategy is a roadmap to navigating these issues. By focusing firmly on employee well-being, quality professional development, reducing workload and improving overall job satisfaction we will overcome the sector-wide obstacles, reducing disenfranchisement and removing barriers that prevent all staff from flourishing.

Careful consideration has been given to how a cohesive approach will face these challenges head-on so that the Trust is recognised as an employer of choice, both for existing and prospective staff.

The next five years will see us integrate new, innovative approaches with our existing model, something which we are continuously honing and adapting, with a focus on seven key areas:

1. Organisational Culture
2. Policy and Practice
3. Systems, Processes and Structures
4. Working Practices
5. Talent Management
6. Reward and Recognition
7. Innovation and Inspiration

1. Organisational Culture



AIM: To embed a positive, constructive and cohesive structure to enable a physiologically safe environment that promotes innovation, respect, ethical integrity and high performance.

Staff Engagement

We aim to elevate our approach to staff engagement and to foster a culture of engagement and empowerment within the workforce by making active listening a priority, giving regular feedback for improving future performance, ensuring transparency with decision making and recognising and rewarding participation.

We envisage achieving this through a variety of different mediums including:

- Strengthening the role of line managers by setting clear remits of responsibility and providing the necessary upskilling and training to positively manage their staff
- Consulting on staff incentives such as staff benefits, through nominated employee representatives who work closely with HR to coordinate feedback from staff prior to implementation
- Creating a Wellbeing Committee made up of representatives from each school
- Strengthening our relationship with workplace union reps and introducing termly meetings for Headteachers and Executives to discuss topical issues at local and/or central level
- Introduction of a purposeful annual staff survey to measure organisational performance as well as regular temperature checks on hot topics/issues
- Celebrating the achievements of our staff body.

Trust Vision and Values

To sit alongside the vision and values of the Trust, we will explore the culture of the organisation and how this creates belonging and loyalty from our employees.

We will work to ensure all staff are knowledgeable on the history, and the future of the Trust, and the role each individual plays in its success so everyone feels part of the journey.

We look towards promoting psychological safety at work and allowing for open, transparent communication which allows for mistakes to be made without fear of blame and that creates a working environment where employees can respectfully express themselves without fear of judgment or recrimination.

We will embed this ethos through key areas, including line management modelling and agreed practices, improved induction processes, the introduction of a Trust-wide INSET day and increasing visibility of the central team on the ground within our schools, helping to deliver positive messaging to our staff and students.

Internal Communication

To aid our intention to build trust and boost employee morale, we are committed to improving our internal communications, so employees feel that they are well-informed, heard and included in the process of change.

We will do this by delivering a dynamic communication programme that includes weekly job bulletins and opportunities for promotion, termly newsletters, the creation of a HR Hub where staff can readily access key information (policies, procedures, forms, advice etc), monthly in-person HR clinics and the continuation of the UST Wellbeing Awareness sessions.





2. Policy and Practice

AIM: To implement robust policies that clearly set out the responsibilities of our schools, guiding behaviour, provision of education and the work of staff and governors ensuring equality and fairness in their application.

Consistent Application of Policy

We will provide clarity regarding to our policies, ensuring procedures are robustly defined at each stage in the process to reduce ambiguity.

By articulating expectations and procedures consistently and transparently we will ensure that all employees are knowingly accountable for their actions and that policies are applied in a fair and unbiased manner.

Introduction of a Resolution Framework

The introduction of a Resolution Framework will support managers to resolve issues through early intervention. The framework will offer a simpler focus for recurring issues and its implementation will create a culture of openness and advice for tackling low-level staffing concerns such as punctuality, dress code and professional expectations.

The framework will aim to upskill managers and provide them with a suitable restorative approach for low-level concerns, based on good practice, and will support them to align behaviours with the organisation's values, in line with organisational culture.

Effective Training Programme

To support the consistent implementation of Trust policies, a suite of e-training will be developed for employees and managers to access as required.

A programme of training will be created for colleagues with remits of responsibility (e.g. line managers) and the HR team will further support these individuals with in-person training and coaching (as part of INSET days, Twilight, meetings etc).



3. Systems, Processes and Structures



AIM: To streamline and organise essential HR processes to improve overall efficiency and automation, to ensure employee details are easier to manage, improve retention and engagement rates and improve outcomes for our students.

Improved Utilisation of Existing Systems

A key element to improving efficiency lies with better utilisation of our existing systems. We aim to continue refining our HRIS (ITrent) to improve employee record keeping and reporting.

Introducing modules such as integrated recruitment and onboarding will support with streamlining the HR service provided and will improve the user experience and result in considerable time and resources savings.

The eventual integration of the HRIS with Arbor will negate the need for manual duplication of information and will improve the accuracy and quality of data, whilst ensuring compliance. The ability to automate reporting will also ensure the timely sharing of information (such as sickness absence trigger reports) with senior leaders and managers.

The consolidation of manual processes into existing systems (such as probation reporting and requesting special leave) will improve quality and increase accountability – and will ensure record keeping is accurate and managed according to pre-determined GDPR/retention periods.

Data Driven Decision Making

We look towards using facts, metrics, and data to guide strategic decisions that align with your goals, objectives, and initiatives.

Our intention is for data-driven decision making to become the norm and to create a culture that encourages critical thinking and curiosity. With better utilisation of our HRIS system we will work towards using data to improve the HR provisions to schools (such as identifying patterns of absence or adapting our recruitment to reach a desired target audience).

The addition of automated reports will drive efficiency and equip managers with the necessary data to improve outcomes and to respond to issues in real-time.

Workforce Planning

In the current climate of restricted budgets, a workforce plan is essential for assessing staffing needs at any one time and working with HR to identify the most costeffective ways to fill any gaps, whilst ensuring minimal impact on service delivery.

The creation and accurate management of the establishment list will provide an accurate forecast of staffing needs across the Trust and will ensure we employ the right people, with the necessary skills and the right time (with a focus on retention and internal promotion opportunities in the first instance).

To mitigate the effects of the current recruitment crisis within the education sector, staffing foresight and succession planning are essential. The introduction of a central workforce establishment list will increase accountability for decision making and will help to identify and provide opportunities for future growth within budget (such as job sharing across the trust).

The establishment lists will be embedding within the HRIS system to further improve staff management and recruitment practices and to support with the creation of accurate staffing budgets.

4. Working Practices



AIM: To adopt people-centric change and implement an ethos of visibility and inclusion through strong induction programmes, regular reviews, and empowering line managers to model empathetic resilience and personal responsibility.

Embedding Induction Policy

Effective induction helps to improve employee engagement. Studies have demonstrated that new hire retention is improved by 82% and productivity is up by 70% in schools with a considered and comprehensive onboarding process.

The onboarding process begins as soon as an offer of employment is made and continues through to successful completion of probation.

The UST Induction policy and supplementary process document is driven by good practice. Its planned implementation across all our schools, alongside a localised programme of induction, will provide a consistent approach to welcoming new staff to the Trust.

Further work will take place to interlink the induction process into the UST probation process and will ensure further alignment of performance expectations.

Effective Line Management

Beneficial learning experiences arise when employees are supported by respected colleagues. As a Trust we aim to equip our managers with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their team successfully, creating a more agile organisation that meets the demands of our students and a supportive culture where our people can flourish.

For the Trust to be successful in this aim, our line managers need to be seen as credible leaders. With a focus on modelling, good practice and building an environment of trust and support, we commit to furnishing our managers with a programme of in-depth training and support.

As our line managers grow in confidence, we aim to offer further support in the form of coaching, mentoring and one-to-one advisory meetings and training opportunities.

Managing Performance

As a Trust we are committed to exploring alternative models for appraisal that are purposeful and that challenge the perceptions of an annual appraisal being a tick-box exercise with the purpose of determining pay progression eligibility.

Alongside our plans to transform our staff recognition, upskill our line managers and develop a programme for managing talent, we will look to revolutionise our current annual appraisal process and make it central to the way in which we build trust and empower our employees to excel in their role.

We aim to give employees ownership of their performance management through self-directed professional development within a collaborative and collegiate environment.

With personal responsibility and ownership of their portfolio of CPD, employees will drive their performance and be assessed through regular reviews, including line management meetings, lesson observations and 360-degree feedback (all of which are already in place within many of our schools).

5. Talent Management



AIM: Through the UST School of Education, design and develop a clear structure for talent management across the Trust, which focuses on nurturing our people at all levels and creating a culture of succession planning and excellence which will positively impact the continued growth of the Trust.

Continued Professional Development (CPD)

CPD increases employee motivation, confidence, and commitment to their role; learning new skills and applying them in the workplace can lead to a more effective working environment.

To supplement the desire to change the way in which we manage staff performance, the Trust is committed to delivering appropriate and impactful development opportunities for all employees to improve practice, enhance their existing skills and develop talented practitioners throughout the organisation.

The introduction of a CPD portfolio will encourage individuals to take ownership of their development journey and will enable learning to become conscious and proactive, rather than passive and reactive. Each individual will be empowered by responsibility for documenting their development journey and keeping a record of the increasing skills, knowledge and experience they gain throughout their career with the Trust.

Increased opportunities to learn, both formally and informally (such as shadowing, observations and volunteering), will be available to all staff at all levels within the scope of current practice and anticipated future changes, that meet the needs of the organisation.

Career Pathways

The introduction of clearly defined career pathways will outline the Trust's expectations and aspirations for individuals at their relevant career level.

The pathways will provide:

- A consistent, equitable mechanism for assessing and rewarding an individual's contribution to the organisation, aligned with the Trust's values and behaviours and the People Strategy
- A framework for line managers to talk with team members about their career aspirations, the opportunities available to them within the Trust and their path to success
- Clarity of expectations to help members of staff to take more responsibility for the management of their own careers, and to help managers to assess performance.

Opportunities to explore alternative pathways or progression routes will be available for staff to access including, but not limited to, trial days, observations mentoring and secondment placements.

Aspirational Leaders

The introduction of an Aspirational Leaders Programme will provide opportunities for employees recognised as high-performing, with a sustained commitment to professional development and a desire to progress into a leadership role.

The Trust is committed to identifying and developing future leaders from within the organisation and to introducing a programme of bespoke development opportunities and exposure to leadership that will allow employees to demonstrate and strengthen key qualities such as integrity, self-awareness, courage, respect, compassion and resilience, as well as gaining tangible experience of what leadership entails.

6. Reward and Recognition



AIM: To recognise and reward professional accomplishments in a way that boosts employee morale, engagement, productivity and organisational loyalty.

UST Wellbeing Charter

According to research by the charity Mind, 60% of employees said that they would feel more motivated, and more likely to recommend their organisation as a good place to work, if their employer took action to support mental wellbeing.

As a Trust we intend to sign the DFE Wellbeing Charter and publicly commit to actively promoting mental health and wellbeing through policy and practise.

As part of our review process, we will be exploring the effects our existing policies and procedures have on our employees' mental health and determining what we can do as a responsible employer to minimise the impact of these (e.g. providing further clarity on the different stages of the process, training, educating staff on personal responsibility with regards to wellness, streamlining current HR processes which are unnecessarily time consuming).

Partnering this approach with the creation of a UST Wellbeing Committee, with representatives from each of our schools, will encourage collaboration between staff and HR on initiatives such as:

- Identifying relevant topics for the UST wellbeing awareness sessions
- Conducting an employee wellness survey
- Introducing local initiatives with a wellbeing focus (e.g. walking meetings)
- Reviewing staff benefits
- Boosting staff morale.

Staff Benefits

Employee benefits are an indirect form of compensation that organisations provide to their staff through programmes, policies or services. A good benefits package will convey the message to our staff that we care about them – and is also a great way to attract new recruits and to stand out amongst the competition.

The Trust aims to design an evolving benefits package that meets the expectations of the modern workforce and promotes the values of the organisation, such as our commitment to improving staff wellbeing.

In addition to mandatory employee benefits (such as flexible working, annual leave, pension and sick pay), supplementary benefits like private medical insurance, dental and vision coverage, and life insurance are fast becoming the basic standard for many organisations. Feasibility studies will be carried out to determine where this is possible.

As part of this process, we are keen to explore benefits which will support mental and physical health. Through our staff voice representatives, we will explore benefits that are seen as priorities for our staff – including funded and salary sacrifice schemes.

Peer Recognition

Employee recognition is part of a positive organisational culture and can be considered of an individual's efforts, behaviour or performance at work. Recognition can be private or public and can be informal or part of a formal recognition scheme.

Alongside the introduction of 360-feedback as a performance management tool, the Trust will also focus on other forms of recognition that can be implemented across the organisation. This will include initiatives such as acknowledging long service, in-the-moment peer feedback (through channels such as Kudos), regular positive feedback through line management meetings, recognising personal achievements of teams and/or individuals that enrich the workplace.

UST is committed to creating a Trust-wide awards programme where staff from across the schools can nominate individuals/teams for recognition across numerous categories linked to the Trust's values.

7. Innovation and Inspiration



AIM: To cultivate a culture of innovation and inspiration that empowers staff and enhances pupil outcomes through emerging technologies, improved facilities and visionary partnerships.

AI Technology

Incorporating AI into our multi-academy trust's operations is a pivotal element of our People Strategy, aimed at enhancing staff wellbeing and productivity.

By leveraging AI technologies, we can streamline administrative tasks, allowing our educators and support staff to focus more on their core responsibilities: delivering high-quality education and fostering student development.

This strategic integration not only reduces workload but also empowers our staff to engage in more meaningful and impactful work, ultimately creating a more dynamic and supportive working environment.

As we continue to innovate, we are committed to using AI to cultivate a culture of efficiency and excellence, making our trust an attractive and forward-thinking place for potential recruits

Working Environment

We are dedicated to cultivating working environments that are not only functional but also empowering and conducive to the growth and wellbeing of our staff and students.

We prioritise the creation of spaces that inspire collaboration, innovation, and excellence, ensuring that each academy is equipped with the necessary resources and infrastructure to support our educational mission.

By investing in state-of-the-art facilities, fostering a culture of inclusivity and support, and continuously seeking feedback from our community, we aim to provide a dynamic and adaptable environment where everyone can thrive.

Our commitment to a fit-for-purpose work environment underscores our broader vision of educational excellence and holistic development for all members of our trust.

Partnership Benefits

By engaging with our external partners we can significantly enhance staff's learning and broader experience by providing access to specialised training, resources and expertise.

Collaborations with universities, industry professionals and educational organisations can offer workshops, seminars and mentorship programmes that keep staff updated with the latest advancements in their fields. These partnerships can also facilitate hands-on experiences and real-world applications of theoretical knowledge, enriching the teaching process.

Additionally, external partners can support professional development through networking opportunities, enabling staff to share best practices and innovative teaching strategies. This collaborative approach fosters a culture of continuous improvement and inspires staff to deliver high quality education.



UST House, Limehouse Causeway, London E14 8AQ 020
3405 9340 info@ust.london
www.ust.london