**Active Learning Trust** **Next steps: recovery, development and improvement planning**

**Guidance**

The document can and should be used

* flexibly by school leaders
* to support and guide school development and strategic thinking over the short and longer term.
* to consider and plan how to move forward in terms of the well-being, quality of education and achievement of pupils.

Throughout, in blue font, there are key prompts, questions and ideas for discussion and consideration. These are not exhaustive nor meant as a check list. However, they could be used as a ‘working alongside’ document during planning meetings.   
  
Additionally, there are some attached planning documents that may be used or adapted for this process. They contain some possible priorities from headteacher discussions outside of the Trust which may help: These are meant to be used flexibly and adapted as appropriate and are in no way a definitive list of actions. However, there must be a clear, evidence-based rationale for why decisions have been taken and how the school priorities have been adapted. Whilst it is important to think about missed learning this should not be the over-riding factor nor should the core business and on-going priorities of schools be shelved. It is expected that the plan for 2020/21 makes explicit links to previous priorities.   
  
The Trust will be monitoring the quality of provision and its impact, along with the pace of returning to ‘normal’, (within the Government advice and guidance). As the lines of accountability are formed up the Trust will be challenging the implementation and impact of school plans.   
  
**The attached planning document guidance**

* **The first table** in each priority outlines some considerations, or prompts, which may need to be taken in to account and are to encourage ‘big picture’ thinking. Again, these are in blue font. Leaders can add to or delete these as appropriate for their setting.
* **The second table** in each priority is a suggested format for planning:
* **Rationale:** what is the reason for this focus (underpinned by evidence)?
* **Action:** what you will do to achieve this priority?
* **Success criteria/measure:** a clear impact that will measure the success and effectiveness of the action undertaken.
* **Timescale/resources/cost:** Realisticduration for the action to be carried out. Consideration about what resources and cost may be required so this can be budgeted and monitored by governors and Trust.
* **Monitoring/Key questions/Accountable lead:** Whatevidence will be collected, when and by whom to demonstrate effectiveness? What are the key questions that need to be asked to ensure there is rigour in the monitoring process? Who will be held to account for this and by whom?
* **Evaluation:** Use the evidence from the monitoring to produce and share a balanced evaluation and next steps. Have a clear process for dissemination and triangulation of evidence.
* **The RAG rating** may be a helpful, visual tool but can be deleted or replaced.

**Some anticipated questions**

**Q: Why are we doing this? We all know school leaders are exhausted!**

Irrespective of COVID-19, schools need (and would be expected) to produce a school development/ improvement plan for 2020-21. However, a number of schools are already planning for next year and have good strategic plans in place.   
  
The Trust recognises that Headteachers and other leaders need to have a break and it is not expected that the summer holidays are taken up with writing plans without writing plans. Every school should at least have a broad-brush plan by the end of July which has been sent to the Trust to help plan CPD and other provision ready for September.

**Q: Do I have to use this document?**

The documents are optional and are only for schools who have not yet firmed up their plans

**Q: Are we lessening the focus on well-being by concentrating on a range of different things?**

Well-being consideration is woven throughout these documents and is included in all risk assessments alongside health and safety. Well-being is also closely linked to academic achievement so schools need a curriculum that is delivering quality education.

**Q: Are we giving sufficient focus to improving attainment and progress and to improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils?**

Every headteacher will have these things at the foremost of their thinking as they plan. In that respect, this year is no different to any other. However, we know that COVID is likely to have widened the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others. So, approaches to – for example – the spending of pupil premium funding may need to be re-evaluated. There will also need to be clear planning for the use of additional intervention funding from the government and the Trust will be monitoring the impact of this.

**Q: Is the right way forward really to encourage and promote ‘rapid’ development?**

It is nationally recognised that pupils returning to school will have lost a considerable amount of education. This lost ground needs to be made up to ensure the best life chances for pupils. The document encourages this thinking, so that at the forefront of the plan and actions is leaders’ ambition in making sure that pupils catch up as quickly as possible but with compassionate leadership at the heart of everything that is done. There will need to be a balance.

**Q: There is a thread around thinking about the wider curriculum. Isn’t it more important to focus on basic skills first, then broaden when pupils have caught up with their reading, writing and mathematics skills?**

The Trust view is that the teaching of basic skills in isolation, or in preparation to complete a task, is proven *not* to give pupils a deep knowledge and understanding. Access to a well-thought through curriculum that meets pupils’ needs will help them to catch up and prepare them for the next stages of their education. Pupils also have an entitlement to more than reading, writing and maths nor should there be lessons crammed with missed content.

**Q: Are we saying that schools need to ditch all the work that they have already done on their improvement plans and start again?**

Definitely not; it will be worth reviewing draft plans in the light of the ‘blue text’ prompts within the document and the evolving post-COVID situation.

**Q: Are we saying that all schools must use the planning template and produce a completed copy of this document?**

No but the Trust would encourage schools to use the documentation to review their own plans as it might identify some missed aspects or help firm up other areas. The most important thing is the strategic thinking that sits behind any plan. The blue text contains prompts to encourage that thinking.

**Q: Should a HT expect to complete all of this planning by themselves?**

Some heads will want to but this isn’t good practice. Leaders, and this includes governors, should have some involvement as this also build ownership. However, the Trust recognises that school sizes and contexts differ hugely but it is important to at least involve as many leaders as possible in the thinking process.

**Q: What if schools don’t re-open in the end, or have to close again?**

Leaders need to plan on the basis that we will be back to something like ‘normal’ in September. If that changes, the thinking you have done will not be wasted. Schools will return at some point, for all pupils. Plans are always adapted because situations evolve. COVID is another – albeit extreme – example of that.

**Q: If schools get an Ofsted visit in the autumn, will they have to give the inspector any particular documentation?**

We await official guidance as to the nature of any ‘additional’ Ofsted visits that are to take place in the autumn. The *Inspection Handbook* sets out documents that schools are and are not required to provide during a S5 inspection. If the purpose of an Ofsted visit is to see how effectively schools are recovering from the COVID period, then you will want to share the school’s plans with the inspectors – in whatever format those are kept. Leaders – as ever - will need to be able to articulate their plans, the rationale for them and the difference that they are making.

**Q: So are we doing this to help heads through an Ofsted visit?**

The planning schools need to do is for the benefit of pupils and that would be an Ofsted expectation too. It would need to happen even if Ofsted visits were not on the radar. However, any headteacher would want to share with Ofsted their plans, both for the current situation, and how that will develop - in the form of a school improvement plan. So, this isn’t an additional burden or an administrative task.

**Q: What is the role of governors in this process?**

It is the same role that they currently should have in terms of discussing, monitoring and evaluating progress towards the school’s improvement plans and agreeing priorities for the next year.