



VIKING ACADEMY TRUST

Executive Headteacher: Mrs Michaela Lewis BA'Ed (Hons)
eht@vikingacademytrust.com

Chilton Lane
Ramsgate
Kent
CT11 0LQ
T. 01843 597695
F. 01843 852872

Viking Academy Trust Growth Plan 2023-24

All plans, short, medium and long term are linked to the mission of the Viking Academy Trust; namely to empower children through education, 'One Childhood, One Chance'.

The principal task facing the Trust is to continue to provide excellent educational standards and to ensure that every child achieves his/her personal best.

Our main objectives for the future are:

- *to raise pupil achievement and progress in all subjects;*
- *for teaching and learning to be outstanding for all pupils;*
- *for vulnerable groups, including pupil premium pupils, to progress at the same rate as other groups.*
- *To continue to manage budget reductions and consider new ways to generate income.*

The Trust's intention is to ensure each Viking school provides a first-class educational experience for every Viking child. Growth for the Trust will only happen when existing Viking schools are secure and stable without the risk of expansion undermining the strength of our current provision. When we have the capacity to make a difference, we will feel morally bound to do so.

Short Term: *The Viking Academy Trust aims to continue with its model of working within a geographical hub with our three primary-only academies located in the Isle of Thanet.*

Medium & Long Term: *The Trust currently has capacity to grow through the sponsorship of new schools, underperforming schools and Free schools, however it is always open to considering maintained schools who wish to join us.*

The Trust has no plans to extend outside of Kent or move in to the secondary phase.



Chilton Primary School
Mrs Kate Law ~ Head of School
www.chiltonprimarieschool.co.uk



Ramsgate Arts Primary School
Mr Nicholas Budge ~ Head of School
www.ramsgateartsprimary.co.uk



Upton Junior School
Miss Darci Arthur
~ Head of School
www.uptonjunior.com

As stated above, expansion will only be considered if the Trust Board are confident that the current Viking provision will remain stable.

The Trust still considers the NGA report relevant (published June 2019) '**Moving MATS Forward, the Power of Governance**'. Particularly, section 9: Growth, location & sustainability:

9. Growth, location and sustainability

There is still a lack of evidence linking size and growth to 'success'. There is general agreement that some MATs have grown too quickly and, in recent years, the DfE has concentrated on advice around how to grow sustainably. Growth has often come at the expense of community focus, and understanding of place (e.g. an understanding of where the MAT fits alongside other schools and public services in the areas it serves and how it is going to ensure it sits alongside, rather than being isolated from, the wider public sector), and it is not yet clear that this can be avoided in large MATs, especially if they are dispersed across the country.

The idea of having a vision and a growth strategy which has a moral imperative and a charitable mission at its core - helping other pupils rather than just your own - is sometimes neglected. Instead, MATs are often growing in an un-orchestrated way, without it always being clearly linked to governance decision making and without giving appropriate consideration about the rationale for growth and whether they have the infrastructure needed to deal with growth, such as if they could effectively offer school improvement/advice if the school is some distance away. The government has been keen for single academies to become MATs and for high performing MATs to expand, and some MATs have reported that they have been placed under pressure on some to do so. Naturally those approached by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) are flattered to be asked, want to be helpful and can be tempted to say 'yes' too quickly.

Although it has been argued that trust growth is necessary to ensure financial sustainability and school improvement capacity, there has not been definitive evidence published to substantiate this. More recently, there has also been a focus on trusts merging to create larger, potentially more sustainable trusts.

However, it is arguable that large trusts, especially dispersed ones, cannot as easily understand their schools and their communities and this impedes good decision making by senior executives and boards of trustees. It also reduces trust and accountability between the community and trustees. This challenge is not questioning the motives of individuals involved and while there are some civic minded larger trusts, the structure which allows them to be dislocated from place may not be a valid one for a crucial public service.



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