

OUR DISTINCTIVE CULTURE



SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE
THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL SCHOOLS



Central Region
Schools Trust

Founded by the RSA

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES.

MISSION – SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL SCHOOLS

To promote opportunity and social justice for every child through exceptional schools.

VISION – WHAT CRST HOPES TO ACHIEVE:

As a Trust founded by The Royal Society of Arts, our exceptional schools work together to create learning that is inspirational for all: igniting imagination and enabling creativity and curiosity which results in the highest achievement.

People are valued and happy, developing their knowledge, attributes, skills and networks for success and fulfilment. In our empowered communities, everything is possible and aspirations are high. Outcomes are highly impressive.

VALUES – THE ETHICS AND DRIVERS OF CRST:



Creativity - Creativity is fostered to encourage powerful thinking into practical action.



Integrity - Integrity in everything we do, in our leadership and practice, in our approach and in the ways we build the character of our children.



Community - Building empowered communities and networks where everything is possible and aspirations are high.



Excellence - Excellence in leadership, teaching and learning, resulting in excellent outcomes for every child.



Respect - Respect for others is intrinsic in all our behaviours and ensures we embrace all strands of inclusion.

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FOREWORD

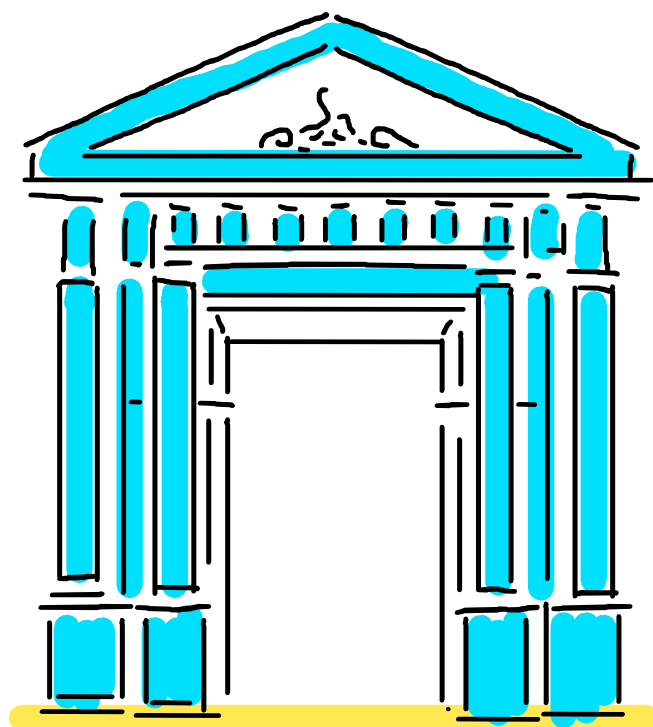
Vision - What CRST hopes to achieve:

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Staying true to the principles of our founding organisation, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (The RSA), of undertakings for the public good we take a practical view of social justice, moving from powerful thinking into practical action. We consider how our people, places and processes can best support social justice, putting this commitment into practice. Fundamental to this are inclusion and equity. Our vision seeks to articulate how we do this:

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The volumes written on defining social justice in education would fill an entire library. They range from the philosophical and often abstract concept, to the narrative, offering portraits of injustice related to schools and education. We know our vision for 'supporting social justice through exceptional schools' is a powerful rallying call to our people and provides motivation for many colleagues drawn from a myriad of sources, from the political to deeply felt personal experiences of injustice. As an organisation we take a practical view of what we need to do to support social justice.



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SUPPORTING SOCIAL JUSTICE

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.' Fullan (2007). Our guiding principles are organised into three categories: people, places and processes.

It is vital we get our school culture right. It is bigger than compliance: we are clear that our culture is delivered through shared endeavour, professional high expectations, warmth, inclusivity, positivity and kindness. It is the intentional behaviours and mindsets that shape the thinking, the communication, the values and mission. 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. Our leaders strive to establish our strong distinctive culture and we are consciously developing a shared language. In order to grow this further, and sustain our distinctive culture into the future, we need to define what it is we do that builds and secures a rich, safe culture. Without this clarity, through changing personnel and drifting norms, a strong culture can be easily eroded and eventually lost completely. This document seeks to set out this definition: what we expect, what we say and what we do.

People, places and processes. These three areas form our culture and underpin the delivery of our strategic plan as we strive to support social justice through exceptional schools.

Guy Shears
Executive Principal (CEO)



CHARLES DICKENS



QUEEN ELIZABETH II

STANDING ON THE
SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

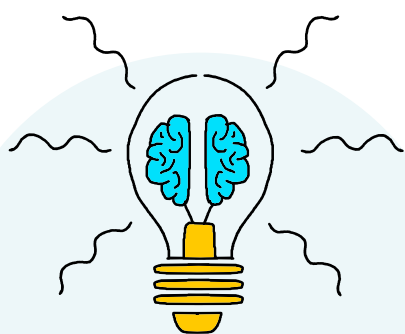
RSA PATRONS AND FELLOWS

VALUES



EXCELLENCE

EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP, TEACHING AND LEARNING, RESULTING IN EXCELLENT OUTCOMES FOR **EVERY** CHILD.



CREATIVITY

CREATIVITY IS FOSTERED TO ENCOURAGE POWERFUL THINKING INTO PRACTICAL **ACTION**.



RESPECT

RESPECT FOR OTHERS IS INTRINSIC IN ALL OUR BEHAVIOURS AND ENSURES WE EMBRACE ALL STRANDS OF **INCLUSION**.



COMMUNITY

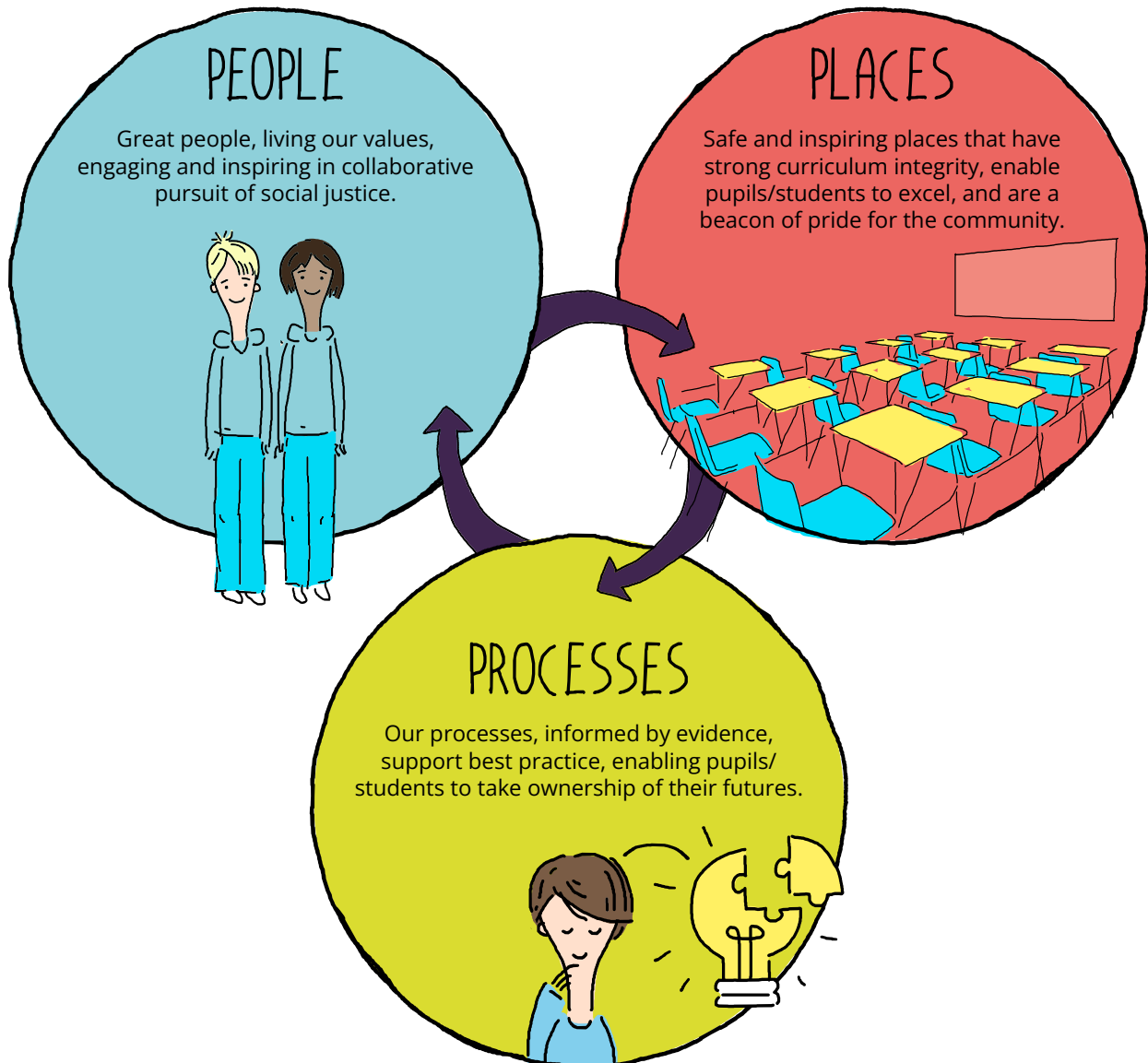
BUILDING **EMPOWERED** COMMUNITIES AND NETWORKS WHERE EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE AND ASPIRATIONS ARE HIGH.



INTEGRITY

INTEGRITY IN EVERYTHING WE DO, IN OUR LEADERSHIP AND PRACTICE, IN OUR APPROACH AND IN THE WAYS WE BUILD THE **CHARACTER** OF OUR CHILDREN.

PEOPLE. PLACES. PROCESSES.



Defining CRST's vision of our distinctive culture:

Our distinctive culture enables high quality teaching which makes a rich, challenging, ambitious, relevant curriculum – peppered with wonderful experiences beyond the classroom. This leads to pupils making great progress in their learning, all experienced in buildings which are calm, purposeful, well-resourced and well-maintained, and where every single colleague wants to come to work, every day. Our distinctive culture thrives on the synergy of 'People, Processes, and Places'.

THROUGH EXCEPTIONAL SCHOOLS

PEOPLE.

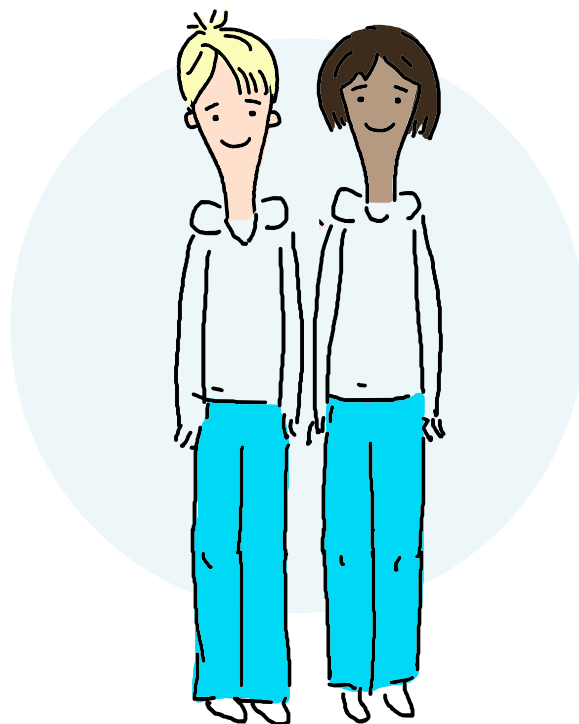
Our values matter. Integrity, excellence, creativity, community and respect are the foundations of the Central Region Schools Trust. Our people live out our values every single day. Our remarkable pupils and our expert professionals are the lifeblood of our exceptional schools, as we pursue, collaboratively, social justice. Beyond our Trust values, we believe in the strong promotion of fundamental British values in all our schools.

Our people¹ recognise our pupils both need and deserve our very best efforts to support them so that they can flourish personally and academically.

In our mission to support social justice through exceptional schools, we recognise that it is our people who will enable our pupils to thrive. In the way they talk and act, all our people demonstrate respect towards every single pupil.

Pupils learn when they feel safe and enjoy positive relationships with everyone in the school community. A genuine sense of belonging, created through our strong culture, acts as a base for pupils to explore their learning securely, no matter how demanding.

Pupils' relationships with each other are key to building a sense of community. Adults practise the behaviours they want to see in pupils. We know that how we speak to each other matters. Our people model this, consciously saying 'good morning', and holding doors open for each other. In modelling these positive interactions, we emphasise how these behaviours are the expected norm in every



school across our Trust. On duty, at the school gate and in the corridor, interactions are frequent, respectful and genuine.

We recognise that many of our pupils face challenges in their lives. We are warmly optimistic towards our pupils. The reasons behind negative behaviours are often complex and deep-rooted. We manage poor behaviour respectfully, skilfully and professionally, challenging the behaviour, not the pupil.

Our Central Professional Learning, Research and Development (CPLR&D) programmes ensure that our people understand the complex nature of growing up and are supported to be expert professionals.

We strive to build a culture of excellence, based upon the highest expectations. We praise our pupils with integrity in order to build their confidence. Our people are extremely conscious of the power of language. We know what we say to our pupils can be motivationally life changing. Authentic praise helps grow the capacity of our school communities.

1. 'Our people' is a collective term for all employees such as teachers and support professionals, but also includes volunteers such as governors, student teachers, community mentors, as well as visiting professionals from external services. We expect all to contribute to the creation of our strong culture.

We recognise how displays, exhibitions, performances, newsletters and social media are tangible manifestations of a celebratory culture and help build a sense of community.

The starting point of creativity is our knowledge-rich curriculum. Creativity – powerful thinking into practical action – is rooted in learning. We strive to ensure our pupils understand why they are learning what they are learning, to motivate them to engage with the curriculum content. At all ages, pupils are encouraged to think like scientists when learning science, to think like historians when learning history. We support pupils by actively making connections to the world beyond school to further enhance their learning.

Our leaders know a team needs a range of characteristics and skill sets. Our seven agreed staff behaviours form the basis of our how our people behave in school. Every colleague will,

1. **Prioritise the success of our young people at all times;**
2. **Be a role model;**
3. **Communicate effectively;**
4. **Keep their promises and stick to their organisational commitments;**
5. **Commit to the development of others;**
6. **Have a solution-focused approach; and**
7. **Demonstrate full commitment to the bigger picture.**

Through regular line management support, these are discussed. Our people know the impact of contributing to the greater good of the team, and recognise that by supporting effective team working, they impact positively on the lives of our pupils.

Leaders are actively open to stakeholder feedback, from across the entire school community. Our people know the power of learning from mistakes.

Our leaders have a strong commitment to positive well-being for all members of our communities and are committed to workload reduction. All schools are signed up to the DofE wellbeing charter and leaders are committed to its full implementation. We respect the right of everyone to enjoy life outside of school.

Our schools are proactively inclusive. Diversity is celebrated. Our people believe we can raise the aspirations of parents, especially in our most socio-economically challenging contexts. Parental partnership is carefully planned.

Pupils' agency is encouraged by our people. Pupil leadership is fostered in all phases; it's essential to empowering our schools' communities and developing lasting partnerships within and beyond the school gate. Our partnership with our founder, the RSA, is key in ensuring pupils are supported in developing their leadership skills.

As we pursue our mission of supporting social justice through exceptional schools, some pupils need greater access to experiences and opportunities to succeed equally well. Our people understand that it is equity (where each pupil is provided the specific resources they need to be successful) that establishes equality of access to provision.

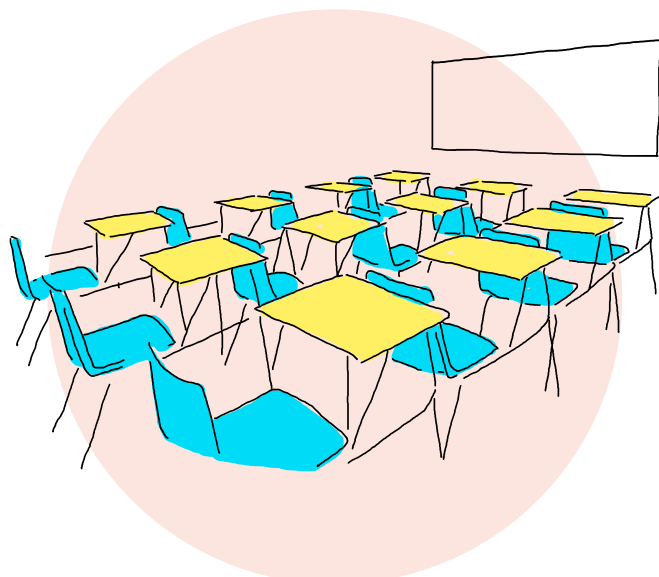
Recruitment of staff is based on the skills and experiences that will enable excellence within role, but alignment to culture is an essential element in this process; consequently, permanent appointments are only made when we feel confident that there is cultural alignment. Induction for all staff has explicit emphasis on the individual contribution to our culture.

Our people act with integrity at all times. They know, understand and uphold the principles of public office, *The Nolan Principles*².

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

PLACES.

We know how much the physical environment contributes to school culture. A key feature of our mission to support social justice is providing pupils with exceptional school buildings. Beautiful, inspirational spaces make pupils feel invested in. Pupils enjoy our fresh, clean, orderly spaces. Everything about our buildings – resources, classroom layouts, displays and signage – aim to communicate the subliminal message that we value our pupils.



The high-quality fabric of our classrooms sets the tone for learning. Our places have curriculum integrity. It is important that our classrooms provide all our pupils with the opportunity to learn content through access to the best possible resources. We support appropriate resourcing for effective teaching of a subject in any given classroom. If, for instance, pupils are learning how to play netball, we insist that the environment and equipment for learning netball enables excellence. The same applies to all learning environments across all our schools.

To think like a game designer, you need to be able to use game design tools in an environment conducive to great design thinking. Evidence-based investment in resources for reading and developing pupils' information technology skills are especially vital in all of our places, due to the disproportionate benefit to learning and future prosperity.

Developing pupils' communication and language - oracy skills - are fundamental to leading a fulfilling life. Spaces that promote dialogue, from careful resourcing in early years to quality seminar spaces for student collaboration in preparation for university and employment, can be found throughout our schools. Our school environments are resourced to support the whole school drive to instil a love of reading.

Books are carefully chosen. The well-stocked library is a special place.

No opportunity is missed to celebrate pupils' achievements. From art installations to representative sports team photographs, displays promoting our pupils' achievements are everywhere. Our corridor displays are gallery-like. The environment sparks spiritual, moral and social awareness. Diversity is proactively promoted by what is in classrooms, on screens and walls, and in displays. Sustainability is actively promoted in all our schools.

Partnership working is extremely important to our mission of social justice; we have strong partnerships and are committed to developing and fostering such strong links. Strong engagement with our parents is at the heart of our culture. Examples of other important partnerships include Teaching School Hubs, local authorities, educational groups and consultants, universities and research schools to name but a few.

One of the founding principles of our Trust is community and the belief in powerful communities being able to solve problems through collaborative action. Each school serves a unique community and responds to local needs.

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.

School improvement plans are based on local context and driven by school leaders. Planning, implementation, and impact processes are the responsibility of school principals. Progress is monitored carefully by governance at school and Trust level, supported by external school improvement partners, as part of our Trust-wide school improvement model. Effective governance at Trust and school level is vital to ensuring we develop and sustain our distinctive culture.

Templates for planning are standardised. Financial efficiency and sustainability are integral features of our framework development, implementation and review.

Our teaching and learning policy is Trust-wide, with the following standardised; our learning cycle, 10 key components of pedagogy and our KASE underpinning principles of curriculum delivery. K is for Knowledge – a knowledge-based curriculum developing subject confidence, fluency and expertise; A is for the Attributes of character we endeavour to nurture and develop – resilience, confidence, reflection and empathy; S is for Skills – developing subject skills and vital communication/language/literacy skills including a focus on oracy as well as skills of problem-solving and collaboration; and finally, E is for Experiences – ensuring pupils can access engaging experiences within and beyond the classroom which enable opportunity, inclusivity, diversity and agency.



What a school focuses upon, beyond the National Curriculum, is determined by local context to ensure children are inspired by content design relevant to their community. The curriculum progression maps and curriculum sequencing are aligned.

The fostering of creativity – powerful thinking into practical action – in all curriculum areas is a founding principle of our trust. Expectations of enrichment delivery are enshrined in our CRST enrichment guarantee, with cross-Trust learning experiences fostering a sense of Trust-wide culture such as RSA 4 and 8, charity work across the Trust and cross trust sports days.

Ensuring pupils are safe is our highest priority. Our safeguarding policies are collaboratively standardised as a framework, ensuring compliance. The policies are enacted locally, so that each school is proactively responding to local risk. Annual external safeguarding reviews are conducted to support schools. Pupils feeling safe is the bedrock of our culture.

We have a Trust-wide co-design group for developing provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, and a Trust-wide framework and policy for pupils with SEND. We recognise investment in provision for these pupils is vital and our framework seeks to ensure delivery is based on evidence.

IN PRACTICE

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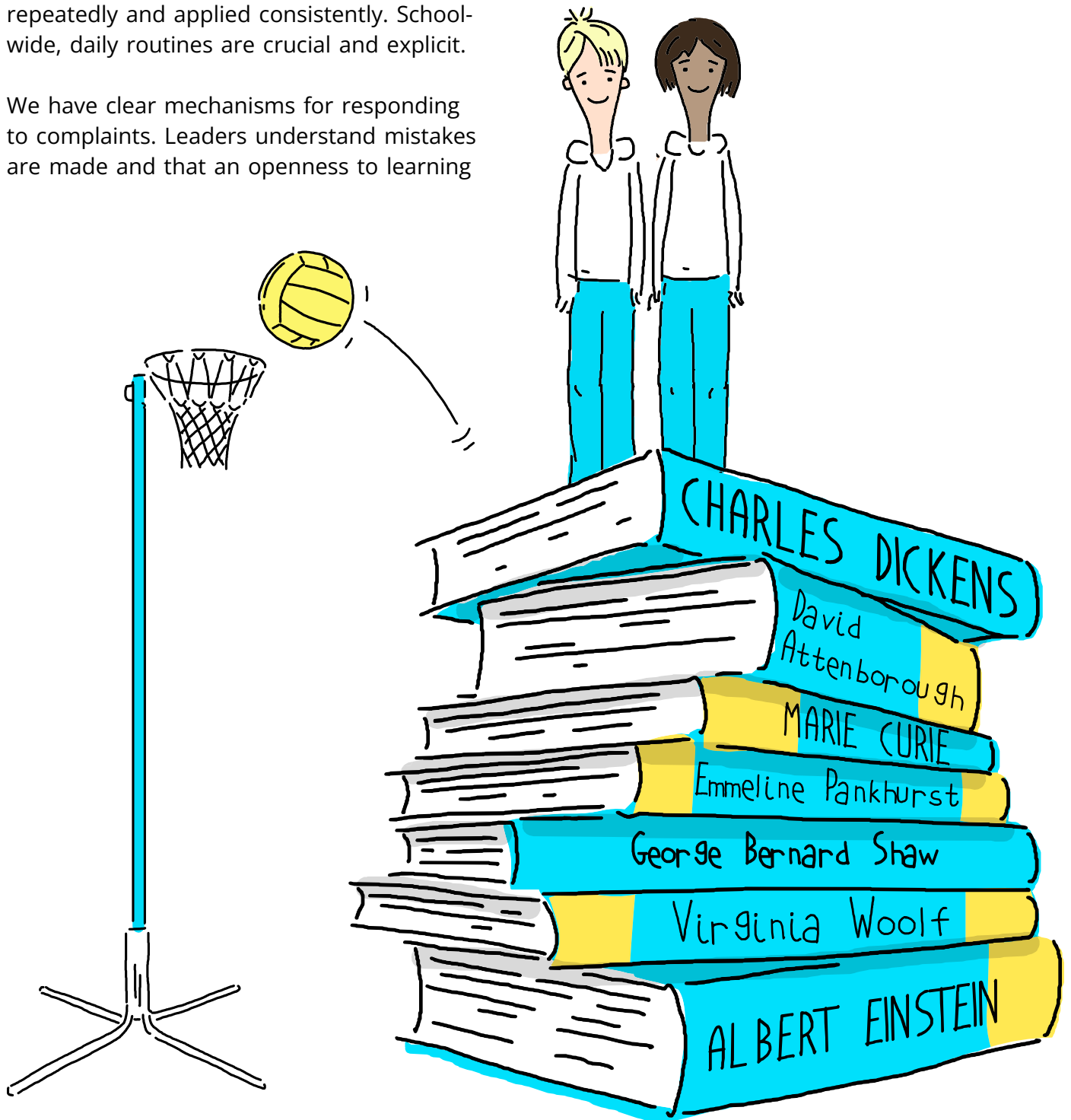
to ensure delivery is based on evidence to ensure the highest impact. All leaders rigorously monitor the impact of our strong provision for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, including those pupils with SEND. We monitor measures of self-esteem, resilience, and confidence of all pupils, and intervene positively where necessary.

Learning behaviours have to be taught explicitly. Clear social norms in schools are articulated so that they become routine. The behaviour policy within each school clarifies expectations, which are communicated repeatedly and applied consistently. School-wide, daily routines are crucial and explicit.

We have clear mechanisms for responding to complaints. Leaders understand mistakes are made and that an openness to learning

from mistakes is a key element of our culture. Complaints, where justified, highlight to us exceptions to our culture which we can learn from. Feedback to complainants is prompt.

Processes in wider business and operations functions are vital for schools. Strong processes in finance, with regular accounts meetings to support budget setting, IT, data, estates and human resources support school leaders in ensuring our infrastructure and wider processes support our core mission.



IN BRIEF

PEOPLE Great people, living our values, engaging, and inspiring in collaborative pursuit of social justice.

Our people understand and know their powerful role in fostering our distinctive, intentional culture through intentional behaviours and lived values of integrity, excellence, creativity, community and respect which shape thinking, communication and action. We:

- Ensure a safe, secure school environment by nurturing strong relationships with each other and with young people
- Create a compelling vision of the future by acting as role models both for young people and other adults, underpinned by our staff behaviours
- Encourage and empower others by being positive and optimistic, ensuring our staff understand the complexities of growing up
- Inspire young people by connecting the curriculum so that it is relevant to the real world
- Create a fair and equal learning environment for ALL by prioritising access to experiences and events for disadvantaged learners
- Have the highest expectations of young people and understand the importance of showing them how to achieve the habits that will lead them to success
- Engage with, and support parents to positively support their child's achievement
- Influence the communities around our Trust with authentic fostering of leadership and agency of young people
- Drive excellence by playing an individual role within high performing teams

PLACES Safe and inspiring places that have strong curriculum integrity, enable pupil/students to excel, and are a beacon of pride for the community.

Our people know how important it is for our schools to be a beacon of pride in their community and working together to deliver strong partnerships. Physical environment shapes and supports our distinctive culture. It is a key feature of our mission to support social justice through exceptional schools, with excellence required to ensure our young people feel valued, be inspired by, and have the right resources and surroundings to excel. We:

- Commit to ensuring our schools are a rich, accessible resource to our wider community
- Reinforce and signal the qualities of which we are most proud with an environment which reflects our CRST values, and our pride in being a Trust founded by the Royal Society of Arts
- Inspire passion and excellence in young people with an environment which reflects how young people learn, celebrating their achievement and reflecting their best qualities and aspirations
- Inspire young people to know more, be able to do more, and remember more in subject disciplines with clear expectations from leaders for design, layout, resourcing and messaging in each area of the school
- Demonstrate that we care about our students, staff and visitors with clean, orderly, light spaces, that are very well maintained
- Encourage communities to flourish by creating great spaces for dialogue to take place, both informal and formal, inside and outside
- Develop strong readers with facilities which support a love of reading is tangible
- Create community environments where everyone is safe to excel by proactively encouraging and celebrating diversity

PROCESSES Our processes, informed by evidence, support best practice, enabling pupils/students to take ownership of their futures.

CRST leaders co-design processes and frameworks that enable our distinctive culture to flourish through clarity and consistency of delivery, based on evidence, of things that matter. We do this by ensuring that we:

- Build inclusive communities of stakeholders, parents and community partners by actively seeking and listening to external voices
- Constantly learn and improve by identifying and welcoming exceptions to our cultural expectations
- Build trust and inclusion by communicating with clarity and consistency
- Build delivery frameworks on evidence based best practice, enacted through co-design, with a particular focus on:
 - Curriculum design and delivery – KASE (Knowledge, Attributes of Character, Skills, Experiences)
 - Personal development
 - CRST enrichment guarantee
 - Central Futures
 - Pupil/student agency and leadership
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Pastoral care
 - Outcomes (including excellent academic standards and attendance)
- Reinforce our cultural distinctiveness by making informed choices within our staff recruitment, selection and development activities
- Drive strategy through the lens of sustainability





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