



AtC Delivering Operational Excellence SLA Framework 2026-2027



The AtC Operational Excellence SLA Framework (now in its second edition) provides a strategic roadmap for operational delivery across all Achievement through Collaboration schools and partner services. It identifies the core needs of our teachers, pupils, and stakeholders to better support our schools. We believe that Operational Excellence enables Teaching Excellence by aligning some central functions to the needs of our schools/communities. This framework ensures non teaching processes are delivered right the first time, on time, and every time, while reinforcing accountability and alignment with [DfE's Trust Quality Descriptions](#) and [CST's Domains of High Quality Trusts](#).

Our AY 2026-27 framework will operate through three distinct strands. These strands unite our schools through shared purpose and common values, while celebrating the unique identity of each individual school and the community it serves.

The first strand is '**Our Trust**'. We have agreed some shared approaches to service delivery, ensuring every school across the Trust benefits from a consistent baseline of agreed core services, contracts and standards. This provides the operational consistency and reliability for all children, staff and schools.

The second strand is '**Our Schools**'. Whilst every school benefits from a shared foundation, we also provide additional common services tailored to the needs of some particular phases and contexts, such as primary and secondary. This ensures schools receive support that reflects some shared context/needs, whilst retaining their own distinct identity.

The third strand is '**Our School**'. This is what makes every AtC school unique. These are the services, procedures and contracts shaped by the strengths, characteristics and priorities of an individual school's children, staff and community, ensuring that elements of operational delivery reflect the specific needs and aspirations of the place each school serves.

As part of our commitment to high standards, continuous improvement, and transparency, we will prioritise the following developments in the coming academic year:

- Seeking to define clear response times for queries, requests and incident resolution.
- Further developing a suite of SOPs to ensure clarity, consistency and reliability in service delivery.
- Implement clear escalation pathways to the Educational or Operational DCEO, and ultimately the CEO, to ensure the prompt resolution of all service issues.
- Robust performance monitoring and regular service reviews, featuring enhanced DCEO led quality assurance, to ensure our services remain effective, responsive and high quality; supported by a robust contracts register managed by the CFO and their team to drive continuous improvement in contract management.
- Progress our three-year strategic plans for People and Finance into their second year, and review our Estates Strategy in Autumn 2026 to ensure alignment with the DfE's long-term national estates roadmap.
- Greater transparency around charging operating models/structures, including:
 - an overview of charges for services centrally procured by the Trust on behalf of schools (for example Arbor MIS), drawing on the AI development and Arbor roadmap to reduce workload for our school-based staff and leaders, with annual cost breakdowns; and
 - clarification of services recommended by the Trust but procured or funded directly by schools or partners, including any associated support, service standards or coordination provided by central teams.

This framework remains underpinned through a culture of collaboration and operational excellence. Building on the foundations established in our inaugural year, the 2026-27 academic year marks a shift toward greater maturity and precision. By formalizing our operations through the systematic rollout of comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures and Minimum Service Standards, we will deliver the consistency, transparency, and accountability required to empower our school leaders. Ultimately, our commitment is to ensure that every colleague experiences a genuine and material improvement in the quality and impact of the support they receive, allowing them to focus entirely on delivering outstanding education for our pupils.

Craig Holden

Deputy CEO (Operations)

AtC Operational Excellence SLA Framework 2026-2027

Version 3 - updated for AY 2026-27

01 Sept 2026



Our Values Proposition

Our Trust offer to young people, based on our understanding of need and the context we serve and in which our Trust operates



Achieve: ensuring all children have the knowledge, skills and character to shape future success for themselves and their world	Achievement means we place value on fully developing each child's potential, recognising and valuing all learning. We are inclusive and strive for equity for every child. Achievement means that our pupils, enabled through powerful knowledge and empowered through transformational competencies, are equipped to overcome any barrier to a successful future. Achievement means our pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain, that they lead fulfilling lives and remain lifelong learners.
Belong: individual schools united through common purpose and shared values	Valuing the identities, heritage and cultures of each of our children, adults and schools builds a culture of belonging where individuals and groups flourish and contribute to each other's successful future. Our values and purpose, codify how we work together. They ensure that schools retain the individuality to serve their different communities whilst also demonstrating that they work in trust with the other members of Achievement through Collaboration. Those who lead and govern communicate the Trust's values and purpose through their service to schools and their communities. Their behavioural norms define what it is to belong to Achievement through Collaboration.
Collaborate: sharing good practice, supporting schools, providing opportunities for children, staff and our communities	Collaboration is built upon nurturing, respectful relationships with each other and the environment that puts children first; every child no matter what background, no matter what barriers. Through collaboration we mobilise the best research and evidence to focus relentlessly on knowledge-building so that every staff member in every school is as good as they can be in what they do and how they do it. Effective collaboration draws upon the diversity within the trust to overcome the barriers of bias, stereotype and discrimination, building cohesive communities.

Central Executive Leadership Team

- CEO - Jane Chambers
- DCEO (Edu)- Tracy Harrison
- DCEO (Ops) - Craig Holden
- CFO - Chris Trask
- Director of Education - Victoria Whiting

Operational Excellence in Action

The Central Leadership ensures operational excellence by:

- Working directly with the Board of Trustees to set clear direction and strategic vision for the Trust and all its schools/academies/services
- Delivering the comprehensive services and operational excellence that schools need to achieve the best for their children, staff and communities
- Securing a dynamic culture of continuous improvement throughout the Trust
- Creating a truly collaborative community in which all staff can thrive by nurturing respectful relationships and providing opportunities for staff to work with colleagues across the Trust
- Leading on the importance of effective and efficient use of resources for the benefit of all schools in the Trust and the wider education system
- Enabling and empowering all stakeholders to make a positive contribution to the achievement of the strategic plan
- Embodying the values of Achievement, Belonging and Collaboration in their daily operations and leadership

Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements	Trust-Led Services	School-Agreed Services
Central Executive Leadership Team	✓	
Central Office costs	✓	

Education Strategy Team

- Director of Digital - Zaitoon Bukhari
- Director of BASI - Martin Haskayne
- Director of Research - Charlotte Hindley

Operational Excellence in Action

The Education Strategy Team ensures operational excellence by:

- Supporting schools to achieve good outcomes for all their learners by delivering education that is both high-quality and inclusive
- Supporting schools with the design and implementation of ambitious, broad, well-sequenced and knowledge-rich curriculum
- Implementation of research-led, evidence informed practice
- Implementation of pedagogically-led technology and digital learning
- Application of a Trust wide inclusion strategy
- Delivery of Trust wide quality assurance procedures
- Supporting wider opportunities and enrichment programmes for all learners
- Ongoing collection of insights data and reporting to stakeholders (as required)

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual conversation informed by Trust developed Insights report • Annual Team Around the School meeting • Termly Pupil Progress and Attainment meetings • Termly attendance and suspension and exclusion reviews • Quality assurance of school self-evaluation • Quality assurance of school development plans • Support school with the design and implementation of an ambitious, broad, well-sequenced and knowledge-rich curriculum • Regular external safeguarding, SEND and PP reviews • Educational school based policy reviews • Termly website compliance review | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular Trust led CPD - individual school and trust-wide • Support to achieve Certified Google Reference School • Digital innovation to enhance student learning • Support schools to implement the Trust wide inclusion strategy • Ensure fidelity to the Trust wide quality assurance processes • Ensure wider opportunities and an enrichment programme for all learners • Provision of Specialist Network meetings, eg. Headteacher, SENCO, DSL, Assessment & Moderation, Curriculum • Provision of a directory of expertise |
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Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements

Trust-Led Services		School-Agreed Services	
Education Strategy Team	✓	Arbor MIS	✓
SchoolsBi (contact due to end Aug 2027)	✓	Provision Mapping (SEND)	✓
		CPOMS (safeguarding)	✓
		Fischer Family Trust	✓
		Sisra (KS4)	✓
		PiXL / Pupil Progress (secondary)	✓

		CATS	✓
		Iris Connect Licence	✓

Governance

- Named Governance Professional

Operational Excellence in Action

Governance at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- High quality governor training
- Relevant and focused agenda setting
- Efficient clerking services
- Marketing in pursuit of governor roles and vacancies
- Chair of governors network

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Termly Trustee board meetings • Termly Trustee sub-committees • Termly LGB meetings • AtC Board of Trustees strategy days • Termly Chair of Governors briefings • Termly clerk to Governors briefings • Regular network meetings for Governors with specific responsibilities, e.g. Pupil Premium, Safeguarding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance portal • Governors annual conference • Provision of a Governance Professional for additional meetings as required, e.g. Exclusion, Complaints, Discipline/Dismissal Committees • Access to NGA / National College for training and information • Updating the risk register |
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Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements

Trust-Led Services		School-Agreed Services	
Membership to the National College (Governor Membership)	✓	Governor hub	✓
Clerking of Governor groups, e.g. Chairs, peer networks	✓	LGB clerking	✓
Annual training for governors	✓	LGB external reviews and/or specific LGB training	✓
Support from NGA as required	✓		
Member and Trustee clerking	✓		

HR, People and Culture

- Director of People - Kerry Oram
- HR Assistant - Rosie Kausar

Operational Excellence in Action

HR, People and Culture at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- Leadership of a Trust wide People Strategy
- Horizon scanning national policy to ensure we are always at the forefront of national policy and innovation
- Access to legally sound and Trust wide employment/HR policies that enable schools and school leaders to work effectively
- Access to a managed payroll bureau service (including submission of tax/pension returns)
- Access to an online HR self service platform to reduce workflows and workload
- Efficient management of the Apprenticeship Levy

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and selection • Onboarding / induction • Employment law advice • Casework (disciplinary, grievance, capability, absence management) • Pay and conditions of service • Contracts of employment • Organisational change • Support staff Job Evaluation aligned to the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) • Occupational health services • Employee Assistance Programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure services (DBS checks) • Administer the Single Central Record • HR policy development and updates • Advice on national and local agreements, e.g., STPCD, Burgundy Book, Green Book • Support with trade union relations • Training and development (as required) • External legal service / advice (as required) • Staff rewards and benefits platform • Signposting employees through the Staff Hub or other means (as required) • Advice on payroll-related matters • Annual staff survey (inc feedback) via Edurio |
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Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements

Trust-Led Services		School-Agreed Services	
HR staff team	✓	Payroll Bureau	✓
Legal service retainer (Browne Jacobson)	✓	DBS check charges	✓
LGA subscription (for NJC Staff)	✓	Occupational health management referrals (charged on case by case basis)	✓
Face-ed / SAM Recruit	✓	Occupational health fitness for work checks	✓
SAM People (HR self service system)	✓	Recruitment advertising costs (outside of FaceEd, Indeed, and DfE apply)	✓
EAP Service (Simply Health)	✓	Additional onsite resources (as required)	✓
		(Workforce CPD) Membership to the National College (Employee Membership)	✓
		Membership to the National College (formally School Bus) for Leadership Support	✓

Finance

- Finance Manager - Tauseef Bangliwala
- Finance Assistants - Ziad Adam, Jess Blackburn

Operational Excellence in Action

Finance at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- Delivery of our AY 2026-27 Standard Finance Operating Procedures (Finance)
- Commercially led budgeting and financial planning
- Strategic, dynamic and readily accessible financial management data and advice
- Robust support with the Schools Financial Value Standards through delivery of the Academy Trust Handbook and strong application of the Nolan Principles
- Efficient and low error ratio for schools Payroll Services
- Timely submission of all academy account directives, eg. annual accounts and various academy trust DfE returns
- Maximising Trust treasury and cash flow

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance and support in preparing the school's budget • Advice on financial forecasting • Support with completion of statutory financial returns • Interpretation of financial regulations and guidance • Support with the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) • Processing of salaries and wages • Management of pensions and national insurance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing of invoices and payments • Financial software support • Monthly monitoring reports on the school's financial position • Termly financial information to trustees & Local Governing Bodies • Financial training for school staff and governors • Audit and accountancy fees • Procurement support • Treasury management |
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Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements

Trust-Led Services		School-Agreed Services	
Finance staff team	✓	Iris Financials and Iris Purchasing	✓
Shard Business Services (internal audit)	✓	IMP budget software	✓
DjH Business Advisors / Auditors fees (annual external audit) tender due Autumn 2026	✓	Payment platforms (beyond Arbor MAT+ membership)	✓
Lloyds banking charges	✓	Cashless catering (Secondary - Cunninghams)	✓
Credit card service	✓	Cashless catering (Primary - Arbor pay)	✓
Xero platform for trading company	✓		

Digital Services

- Director for Digital
- Trustwide Senior Technician - outsourced SLA Abtec Technologies
- On-site technical support for primary schools through a Trust funded SLA during term time

Operational Excellence in Action

Digital Services at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- Ensuring our Trust and schools meet DfE digital and technology standards and cyber security standards
- Creating a learning environment where every student can thrive, irrespective of their individual needs
- Providing a common education platform using Google Workspace to enable collaboration
- Supporting staff to improve pedagogical expertise through the use of technology
- Ensuring a secure and safe space for staff and students through cloud-based infrastructure
- Using digital tools for formative assessment to track student progress and provide personalised learning goals
- Reducing costs through shared infrastructure, resources and printing costs
- Building a culture of inclusive and accessible education using technology, pedagogical and inclusive practices

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abtec third line response and critical support SLA • Autumn 2026 IT infrastructure diagnostic and review • Circulation of research into technology • Deliver all year around onsite technical support at all schools • Meetings with school leaders to report on and discuss contract delivery, development and improvement processes, planning and progression of projects • Provide Service Desk 24/7 to school staff to log any issue or incident they encounter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with DfE digital and technology standards and cyber security standards • Licences for all users/devices (Google Workspace) • Ensure all staff have certified Google level 1 training • Provide ongoing training and support • Central print management services and papercut • Central procurement for devices and software • Lead specialist network meetings for digital leaders and digital advocates |
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Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements

Trust Funded		School-Agreed Services	
Abec Technologies contract (account management and disaster recovery support) day to day led by Trust Digital Director	✓	Technical support for secondary schools and any excess primary support (beyond the half-day weekly visit) is school-funded.	✓
On-site technical support for primary schools via Trust funded SLA during term time	✓	Google Workspace Education Plus (user licences)	✓
DPO services through the Key Group	✓	Broadband connectivity including back-up lines	✓
Freshdesk ticketing system	✓	Datto (DfE standard 321 backup)	✓
Cyber Essentials accreditation	✓	Sophos XGS 3300 Network Security/Firewall Appliance - Intrusion Prevention and Filtering (internet filtering and monitoring and mobile device management)	✓
Website hosting URLs	✓	Abbey telephony	✓

Website design	✓	Sharp and Papercut (reprographics)	✓
		Everway adaptive tools including ReadWrite and text to speech	✓
		Additional on-site technician support beyond the Trust funded SLA to be funded directly by schools	✓
		Gemini AI Assistant for leadership staff	✓

Estates

- Estates Manager - Connor Goulding

Operational Excellence in Action

Estates at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- Promoting good estates management through the provision of an internal qualified Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) appropriate person
- Enabling the delivery of high-quality education through fit-for-purpose, safe and inspiring learning environments
- Strengthening community connections by promoting inclusive, multi-use spaces aligned with civic and social value
- Enhancing sustainability through decarbonisation, green technologies and responsible asset management
- Building operational resilience and leadership capacity through succession planning, staff development and robust systems

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools with the systematic tracking, scheduling and reporting of statutory and best practice maintenance tasks • Embed the Every compliance management software system across all schools • Work closely with HTs and Ops Mgrs to ensure compliance within the Fundamentals of Good Estate Management and Health & Safety issues • Support school leaders to work with key estate management personnel across the estate, maintaining continuity of expertise • Offer school leaders support and knowledge aligned with organisational priorities and future estate needs drawing upon the benefits of our in-house Trading Company as appropriate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the Solar PV, Education Nature Park and Decarbonisation Capital Allocation Programme (De-Carbon CAP) into the overarching trust estate management plan • Deliver a programme of targeted capital investment and proactive planned preventive maintenance (PPM), funded through a combination of capital grants (CIF), DfE allocations (SCAF) and where required Trust contributions • Support school leaders and Sustainability Leads with trust-wide climate action plans |
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Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements

Trust-Led Services		School-Agreed Services	
Estates Manager	✓	PPM compliance visits (as required)	✓
Membership of the I AM Compliance software	✓	Inventory sign-in systems (cloud)	✓

Responsible person / health and safety SLA provided by DCEO and Estates Mgr	✓	Door access controls, CCTV and fire panels	✓
Comprehensive Estate Condition, Suitability, and Sufficiency Surveys to include a measured survey / scaled site plan for each site within our current estate (all school Autumn 2026)	✓	Evolve (Educational Visits Coordinator platform)	✓
Emergency repairs safety net (as required)	✓	Capital works beyond SCA	✓
Strategic SCA Management evidence informed through conduction surveys	✓	Building, cleaning and site teams	✓

Catering

- Catering Manager - Jo Darlington 0.6 FTE

Operational Excellence in Action

Catering at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- Providing onsite support in the development of nutritious, balanced meals that meet the School Food Standards and contribute to pupil focus, health and development
- Providing practical guidance and support for the development of seasonal, culturally inclusive menus tailored to each school's community and pupil needs
- Ensuring food safety, hygiene and allergen awareness through robust on-site support, risk management protocols and compliance with statutory and best practice guidelines
- Promoting sustainability and responsible sourcing, including a focus on reducing food waste, using local suppliers where possible and supporting environmentally conscious catering practices
- Building catering leadership and operational resilience through staff training, allergen and hygiene education and succession planning to ensure consistency and high standards across all school kitchens

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all school food provision meets or exceeds the School Food Standards and aligns with DfE guidance Provide practical support in the development, review and implementation of compliant, balanced and inclusive menus Guarantee safe and hygienic catering environments, including training and auditing for allergen management, hygiene and food safety compliance Support the integration of food education and sustainability into wider school life | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration with school leaders Undertake regular reviews with Headteachers and Operations Managers, ensure compliance with School Food Standards and Trust policies Align meal provision with local needs, curriculum opportunities and pupil voice Support school with themed food days and curriculum-linked food education activities Provide support with training for all catering staff, e.g. food hygiene (Level 2 and above), allergen awareness and controls and nutritional standards and portion control |
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Platforms / Programmes covered within the top slicing arrangements

Trust-Led Services		School-Agreed Services	
Catering Manager	✓	Food services	✓
		In-school catering teams	✓

		Cashless catering systems (in addition to Arbor Pay)	✓
		PPMs for kitchen equipment	✓
		National College training	✓
		Catering Manager (cover) unplanned if available	✓

Data & Compliance

- Access to Data Manager - Maria Neary

Operational Excellence in Action

Data at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- Automatic integration of data from all schools and systems (MIS, finance, HR) without manual intervention
- Providing school leaders and trust execs access live data visualisations that highlight trends, risks, and performance gaps instantly (Schools BI).
- Access to annual and termly reporting as required.

Compliance at Achievement through Collaboration delivers operational excellence through:

- Support for schools and institutes with clear and consistent complaint handling procedures that align with trustwide policies and regulatory standards.
- Access to a Complaints Lead Advisor at ATC Trust (DCEO (Ops), ensuring accurate tracking and oversight of all reported concerns.
- Providing support through the Complaints Lead Advisor, who monitors the progress of complaints and ensures adherence to agreed timescales.

Service Level Agreement

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure automatic integration of data from all schools and systems (MIS, finance, HR), reducing manual workload and risk of error. • Provide schools with real-time access to interactive data dashboards (Schools BI) for school leaders and Trust executives, enabling swift identification of trends, risks, and areas for improvement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of timely and accurate annual and termly reports, supporting evidence-based decision making at every level. • Standardised data definitions and reporting structures across the Trust to ensure consistency, clarity, and comparability. • Ongoing support and training for staff in using data systems effectively and securely. |
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Trust-Led Services		School-Agreed Services	
Access to Data Manager	✓	External review and support beyond the universal offer for example complaint investigations	✓
Complaints Dashboard and Insights (I AM)	✓		
Complaints Lead Advisor at ATC Trust (DCEO)	✓		

Appendix 1: Roadmap for Operational Maturity

Building upon the foundations established in our inaugural year, the 2026-27 academic year represents a shift toward greater maturity and precision in our operations. A central pillar of this evolution is the systematic development and finalisation of a comprehensive suite of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Minimum Service Standards (MSSs) across all service areas.

This framework ensures that our delivery remains consistent, transparent, and accountable, empowering school leaders to focus on their core mission. We are adopting a phased approach to implementation, prioritizing 'high-yield' areas that directly impact school efficiency and service reliability.

Implementation Phasing:

- **Autumn Term:** Finalisation of SOPs and MSSs for core Finance and HR processes, including Iris Financial management, budget monitoring, recruitment, and onboarding.
- **Spring/Summer Terms:** Expansion of the programme to encompass Digital Services, Estates management, and Catering, ensuring that operational standards are applied consistently across all Trust functions.

We are committed to collaborative engagement throughout this process, ensuring these standards are practical, effective, and fully aligned with the unique operational realities of our schools and our core values of Achieve, Belong, and Collaborate.