



Marches Academy Trust

**ANNUAL  
REVIEW  
2021/22**

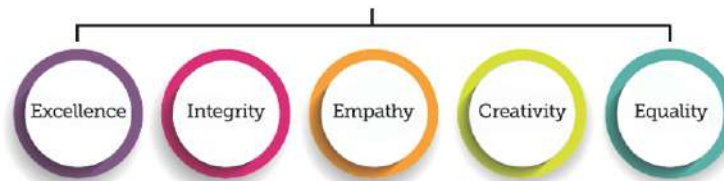
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# Trust Strategic Priorities 2022-2025

## Achievement Through Caring



### Our Values



Empower everyone in our Trust and our communities to live and breathe Achievement Through Caring and reach their full potential.

### Our Strategic Priorities 2022 - 2025



- The talent pathway will empower staff and utilise their expertise.
- A great place to work that embodies inclusivity.



- 'Anytime, anywhere' learning.
- Building a community of lifelong learners.

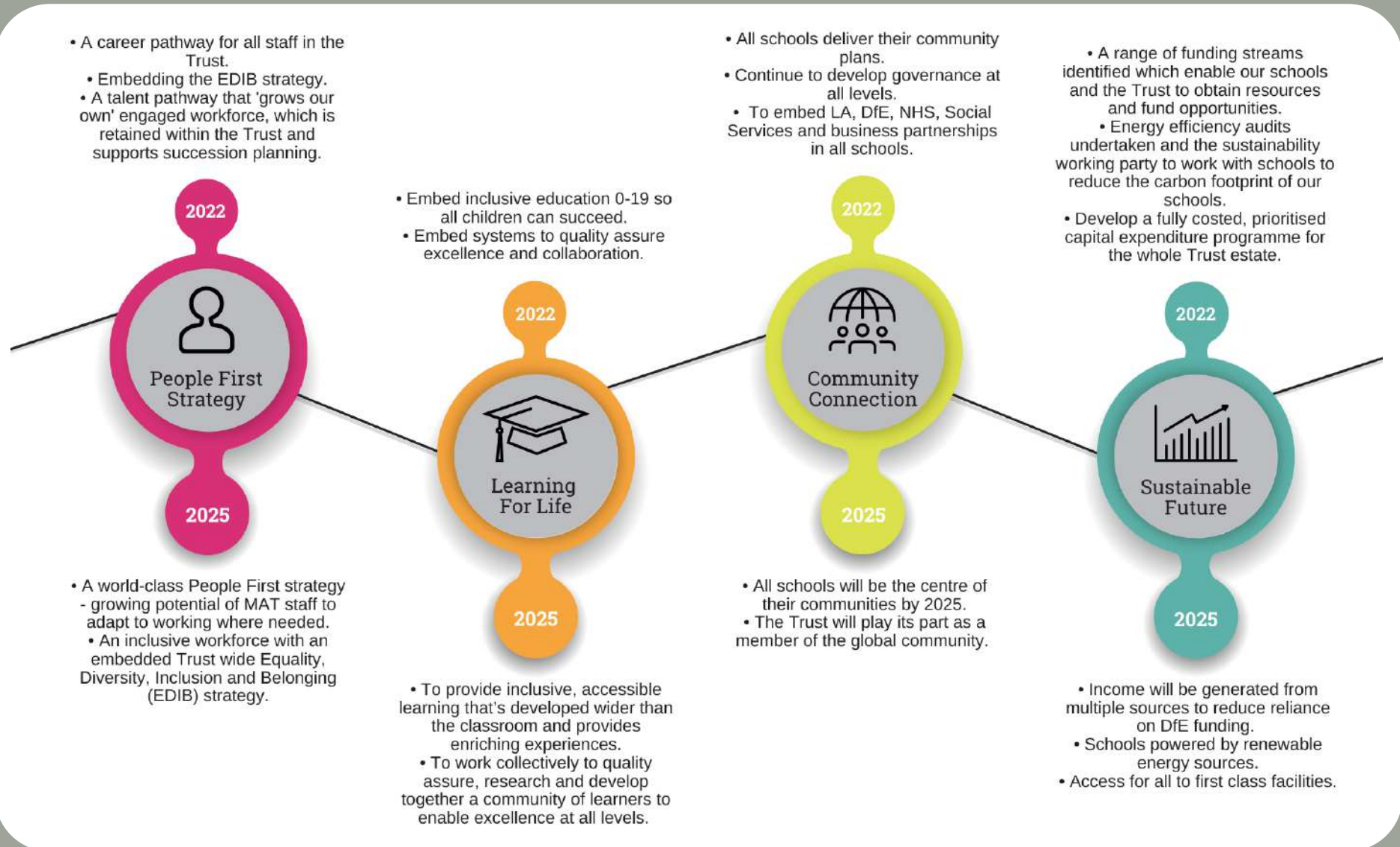


- MAT plays a central role in communities.
- Collaboration locally, nationally and internationally.



- Diversified income streams to ensure the longevity of the Trust.
- Positively contributing to the environment.

# Strategic Priorities Development Plan



# Reflections - A summary of the year

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Our family of schools approached September with great optimism, looking forward to building on the gains made during COVID-19 and continuing to realise our strategic growth plan. The year took twists and turns as the events of the last two years continued to have a big impact on the ability of school leaders to maintain a consistent offer for our children and young people. Our Headteachers and Trust teams worked extremely hard to keep things on track so that children, young people and their families didn't feel the turbulence that Headteachers were dealing with. I am pleased to say our team across the Trust did this remarkably well, so much so that Headteachers have made impressive gains in dealing with the educational needs that we identified in the summer of 2021.

It is important to recognise that the teaching profession is still in recovery whilst continuing to experience significant demands from the aftermath of COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, refugees, resourcing and energy crisis. The dilemma is how we grapple with these imperatives whilst ensuring we keep a consistent experience for children and young people.

All schools in the Trust are now in strong positions to continue building their school communities. We are incredibly proud of the way our Trust works as a family of schools. This way of working has led to the development of new initiatives and partnerships such as Sports Awards, the Rainbow Flag Award and the great work we have done with Shrewsbury School and Shrewsbury Town in the Community.

Since the summer of 2019 we have been working with the DfE to get a building that is fit for purpose at Shrewsbury Academy. I am so thrilled to reveal that we now have firm plans from Tilbury Douglas, the DfE preferred builders, that we have been able to share with the community.



*Sarah Finch*

**CEO, The Marches  
Academy Trust**





# Attendance

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The pandemic continued to impact on school attendance during the autumn term, although not at the levels previously seen and there were early signs that school attendance was returning to a more stable pattern. Unfortunately, the third wave prompted by the circulation of the Delta variant impacted very hard on all schools in the Trust, with absence reaching levels not seen throughout the pandemic.

As in previous waves, the attendance of children and young people in the disadvantaged cohorts was severely impacted and this remains the main area of focus as we move into the endemic phase of the pandemic.

In May 2022, the DfE published 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' which applies from September 2022. This guidance will become statutory when parliamentary time allows, but not sooner than September 2023. The guidance states that securing excellent attendance cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff or organisation and that it must be a concerted effort across ALL teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the Trust, governing body, local authority, and other local partners.

Ongoing work to develop the 'Learning for Life' strategy has ensured that the Trust is ahead of the game in terms of incorporating this guidance into its policies, and work has therefore continued to ensure that schools have the IT and training infrastructure in place to fully launch the strategy in September 2022.

As well as publishing the new guidance for improving attendance in May, the Government also advised schools that all rules related to the recording over absence for COVID related illness had been withdrawn. This included the 'exceptional circumstances' clause which allowed for children to be absent, but for that absence to not 'count' towards attendance figures. This led to some confusion for families who had become used to self-certifying illness and not being challenged when their child was off school for multiple periods of illness. Schools have therefore used the summer term to 'reset' attendance expectations with parents and children to ensure that from September 2022 our schools are in a strong position to return to the historically higher levels of attendance that we are used too.





# Improvements to Infrastructure & Processes

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The Trust has invested significantly in refining and developing quality assurance processes to reduce bureaucracy to allow Headteachers to get on with the day to day work of improving standards in their schools. The introduction of Trust Executive reviews has given clarity to autonomy within strategy and ensured that the Executive team and Headteachers have a shared understanding of where the school is and its needs moving forwards.

The Wave System has also been developed so that each school has a clear view of where children and young people need support. This ensures that all schools in the Trust are acting at the right point and seeking help from other agencies, before moving them to the next stage of the Wave System. The Trust now has clarity of how students and their families are supported and challenged to make progress. This system, as well as trauma training and a number of professional learning courses has led to a significant reduction in permanent exclusions and internal exclusions across the Trust.



# Trustee & Governance

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The Board of Trustees continues to have five Members - Anna Burgess, Robert Forrester, David Griffiths, Arthur Walpole and a CECET representative. The Board also consists of eight Trustees with Alex Fry remaining as Chair of Trustees and Catherine Bennett as Vice Chair.

In April the Board completed a skills audit which showed Trustees have the necessary skills and strong expertise to help support and challenge the Trust's leadership team and help the Trust thrive. In June the Board participated in a 360 review of the Chair to help the Trust continuously improve and assure Governance best practice and External Governance Reviews continue to take place across the Trust with an external school inspection consultant. The Grove, Tilstock, Shrewsbury Academy and Lower Heath have already undertaken this process and have greatly benefitted from this valuable exercise.

The Trust's Link Governor roles have been reviewed and these roles have been clearly defined with duties in that area. School Link Trustees have been implemented to provide a stronger link between the school, its Governing Body and the Trust Board thus enhancing effective sharing of information across the Trust's levels of governance and providing a further informal channel of communication and support between the school and the Trust Board. Additionally, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees have held monthly meetings with all LGB Chairs to further enhance knowledge, provide support and share best practice.

The Trust has run informative Bitesize Governance workshops delivering quality learning to help Governors develop their role and increase their confidence when raising challenge at their schools and these have been well received. The sessions included the Governor's role with the Single Central Record, Understanding Strategic v Operational and Understanding the School Overview File. Browne Jacobson also delivered a comprehensive workshop on complaints best practice and the Trust has since improved the protocol to ensure our complaints are handled as quickly and effectively as possible.

Our schools continue to be supported in their Ofsted preparations by offering Local Governing Bodies mock Ofsted interviews to instil confidence in Governors and address any gaps in their knowledge. The Trust's Governance Officer continues to provide Clerks with support and guidance in their own preparations.

There have been various changes in Clerking personnel and all new Clerks have received a thorough induction. The Trust has employed a casual Clerk to help cover any Clerk absence in the future.







# People First Strategy

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## Professional Learning

We remain focussed on our belief that our staff team should be successful, creative, lifelong learners. We have driven a rigorous, flexible Professional Learning programme bespoke to our MAT, working with our schools to ensure school improvement. We have also had a programme of training up new facilitators across our Trust and developing coaching skills.

We continue to offer our National Professional Qualifications to our MAT leaders. This year we have 26 on the programme from the Executive Leader programme to specialist programmes.

The Alliance of Leading Learning have supported 334 participants who graduated with an NPQ this year and have 306 participants on the newly designed NPQs across the West Midlands and beyond.

## Talent Spotting and investing in our Staff

Through identifying talent across our schools and enabling working parties, we continue to drive change. This year we have trained 30 talented individuals to lead workshops at our MAT conference and 11 Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Ambassadors.

Our new directory of expertise of Improvement Consultants will be launched in September. They will focus on developing expertise to improve the capacity and capability of schools. Our Improvement Consultants will be deployed within our Trust schools to be part of ongoing work to address school and Trust priorities.



## Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB)

Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging is essential for both our workforce and our children and young people. Our vision of Achievement through Caring means we want to make sure all our staff and learners can thrive and reach their full potential.

We have begun a robust programme to embed a culture of EDIB. Our schools have reviewed practice in a consultative-led assessment which will result in a 3-year strategic plan.

Our EDIB Ambassadors will provide essential support and influence as we monitor the school's / Trust's progress in embedding the strategy. The group attended a train the trainer programme in June which proved to be:

**An inspirational, thought provoking two days showing achievement through caring on all levels. Cross Trust, cross roles from SLT to the classroom role – the full spectrum of the Trust.**







## Shropshire and Telford Educational Partnership (STEP)

As a key partner in our local teaching school hub, we have been instrumental in achieving our targets set by the DfE.

In our first year we have worked with 152 local schools and trained 103 new teachers, 160 leaders on our National Professional Qualifications and supported 179 Early Career Teachers (ECT).



## MAT Conferences

Our unique Marches Academy Trust Conference had over 400 of our Trust teaching staff attend – giving us the chance to network, embrace expertise and engage with our vision of the school of the future.

We have continued to run our Headteacher 2-day conferences ensuring our Heads have the time invested in them to drive their own professional learning and share expertise.



# Learning for Life

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- Through our Executive review process Headteachers have demonstrated that they know their schools and have a clear vision for driving up standards in all areas.
- The process of review and support has led to Trust resources being deployed effectively across the Trust in areas of inclusion, systems, learning and teaching and leadership.
- Each school has run through a SWOT process (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and through this reflection established their principles for developing schools over the coming years.
- External scrutiny using well respected peers and professionals has taken place. This has enabled us to validate all areas of school life from safeguarding reviews to deep dives into specific subject areas.



- Our Headteachers have undergone peer review in the form of a three-part Headteacher swap. This enables each Headteacher to experience different settings and cohorts and to receive constructive feedback from a trusted peer. First they have had a learning conversation around documentation, second they have jointly visited an alternative setting, and in the third element they have taken the lead in each other's setting for a week. Each Headteacher has shared and benefitted from a range of potential areas for improvement and validation.



- Schools across the Trust have re-examined their curriculum and have been producing improved content and resources. The outcome of this has been better communication of expectations and broad and balanced experiences for our children.
- Schools have continued to collaborate on subject knowledge and the deep dive process has been refined to ensure all subjects are fully developed. As we move into the new year, further collaboration across phases will ensure a progressive journey across the age range.
- Our inclusion work has continued to ensure all children receive the very best education and that exclusion is very much a last resort. As a Trust we are determined to ensure that equality of access to education is achieved.
- Work is continuing on developing pathways for all children to ensure the correct CIAG (Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance) is given. From early years to post-16 children and young adults are supported with choices and encouraged to explore the breadth of opportunity available.







# Connecting with our Communities

All schools in the Trust take pride in working closely with their communities and each school in the Trust has a community plan which demonstrates the wealth of links our schools develop, so that their schools truly reflect the communities they serve.

This academic year we have been working closely with Market Drayton Council to support the work of The Zone in providing resources for the community such as adult courses, careers advice and citizens advice. We are keen to continue to work with our communities to support access to much needed courses and advice.

A range of community events have taken place in our schools this year such as the Whitchurch 10k race at Sir John Talbot's School, Jubilee events at many schools including a spectacular helicopter landing at Grange Primary School. Longlands Primary School have opened their social farm to the community over the weekend, The Marches School have participated in acts of kindness weeks and Oakmeadow CE Primary School are investigating ways to find spaces for the community to use.





# Sustainable Future

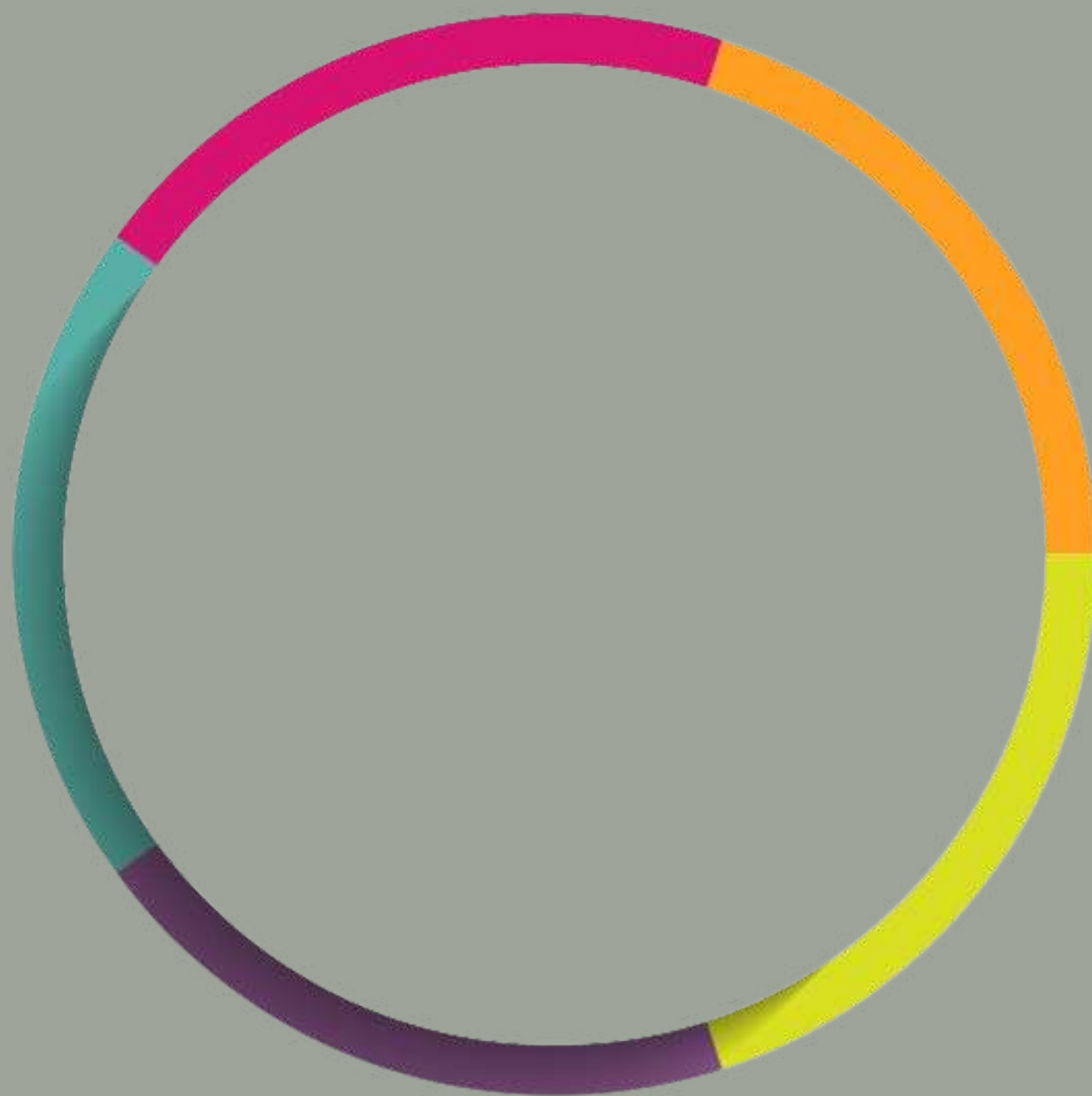
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During the year the Trust have invested significant capital sums to provide facilities for our schools, to deal with condition issues and maximise the learning spaces available. This investment has led to additional classroom capacity being created at Tilstock CE Primary School and a new reception and dance studio being created at The Marches School. In addition, new windows are being installed at The Grove School this summer together with new LED lighting to improve energy efficiency. LED lighting has also been installed at Grange Primary School. The majority of Trust schools are now benefitting from energy efficient lighting. Reducing energy consumption will be a key focus for 2022/23.

At Shrewsbury Academy, the Trust has worked in conjunction with the Department for Education to produce a sustainable single site solution for the school. Planning permission will be sought this summer for the amalgamation of Sundorne Infants site into the existing secondary site, together with a large extension to the school. This will finally enable the school to accommodate full capacity. It is currently envisaged that building will commence in November 2023 and complete by December 2024.

The Trust has grown and developed new income streams during the year. This has included the provision of SEN support services and IT support services via the Outreach programme from Woodlands School and via bids to sporting and charitable organisations to provide additional resources and opportunities for children in our communities.







# Marches Academy Trust

#togetherwegrow

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