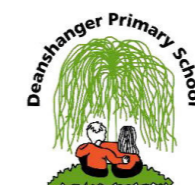


# Annual Report 2022–2023



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### 3. Sustainability

Increase the capacity of the trust to grow central leadership and shared resources to deliver even greater value to the communities we serve.

### Ethos

The Grand Union Partnership exists to enable each school in the trust to thrive.

Each of our schools is focused on creating a community and culture of learning that extends to much more than any simple checklist of activities. Every school community in the trust has to consider fundamental questions regarding the shape and purpose of the curriculum and the ways in which this is accessed and experienced by our children. We reflect on the welfare and development of each child, seeking to understand and address potential barriers to learning and promote progress.

At the Grand Union Partnership we recognise and celebrate a diverse range of effective approaches to supporting the development and progress of our children. We are focused on reviewing, understanding and maximising the positive impact of the approaches used in each of our schools. The quality assurance and improvement frameworks, staff development and shared curriculum principles that we have developed support this. **Together we make the difference.**

As a trust we don't prescribe a range of specific curriculum schemes or impose a narrow set of strategies linked to teaching, learning and assessment. Headteachers and their teams, work in partnership with their peers across the trust and engage in professional dialogue that enables both support and challenge, maintaining a sharp focus on ensuring that children always come first.

## Our vision

To grow our community of primary schools across Milton Keynes and the surrounding area, working together to enable more children to access engaging, broad-based learning experiences that lay a strong foundation for their wellbeing and future success.

To help us to realise this vision trustees have identified the following three strategic objectives that provide a focus.

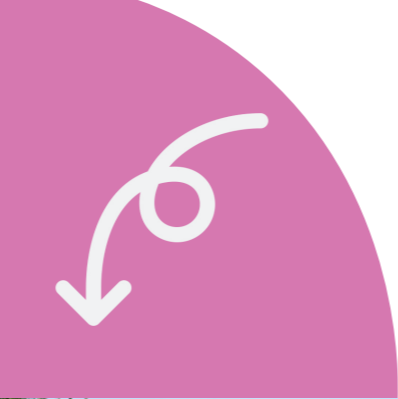
## 1. Quality of Education

Enhance curriculum design and implementation to ensure that children in all our schools consistently make good progress in the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills across a rich and varied curriculum, with all of our schools taking the steps to be rated at least 'Good with Outstanding Features' within two years of joining the trust.

## 2. Growth

Extending the work of the trust to deliver education in the local area to circa 2,500 children by 2026.





**Phil Webster CEO**  
Grand Union Partnership

# Foreword



I would like to thank staff across the Grand Union Partnership for their continued dedication and commitment that has provided the foundation for success in 2022-23.

Over the course of the last year there have been numerous opportunities for children and staff from our different schools to come together, learn from each other and apply this learning in the context of their school. I am really encouraged when I see examples of staff from individual schools drawing upon the work that their peers in other schools across the trust have been doing. Each example reinforces one of the key benefits that being part of the Grand Union Partnership delivers. We are committed to creating more opportunities for children and staff to benefit from learning experiences of this type in the coming year.

We should all be proud of the positive impact that we are delivering across the communities we serve. There is lots of evidence of this through both the monitoring activities that take place across our schools and the feedback

from surveys completed by children, staff and parents. The outcomes of the parent survey can be compared with national data that Ofsted collates and it is really pleasing to see that at trust level the vast majority of statements bettered the equivalent national rate.

It's important to acknowledge that we have had to face significant challenges over the past twelve months. In this context it's great to know that our schools remain places that our children enjoy. Analysis of our most recent surveys from both parents and pupils shows **92%** of children stating that they enjoy school and **96%** of parents stating that they would recommend the school their child attends to another parent (**8% above the national average**). I'm very proud of what has been achieved across the schools in the trust this year.



Reflecting on the outcomes linked to national assessments this summer the question for me now is how do we support more children to have the key skills they need to move onto secondary school?

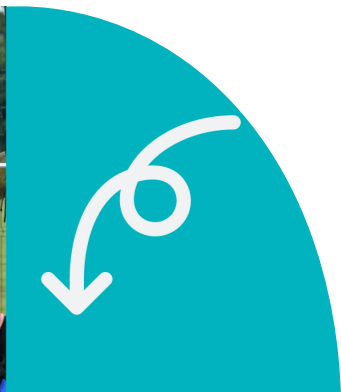
In many respects much of this work has already begun across the trust. This is evident in the regular meetings of our Headteachers, SEND co-ordinators, ICT co-ordinators and Designated Safeguarding Leads. It has been experienced by children through trust wide events, including the Invention Convention, rounders, and the Music and Performing Arts event at Stantonbury. Many of our school leaders have also accessed a trust wide leadership programme that has promoted reflection and provided a number of new ideas and practical tools for them to add to their locker. As the Headteacher at New Bradwell I know that the team there benefitted from looking at how Jubilee Wood deliver phonics, prior to making changes to their approach this year.

In the pages that follow you'll find lots more examples of the great work that takes place across our schools. I'm looking forward to seeing how we continue to learn from each other across the trust and make the most of more opportunities to work together to continue to drive improvements in what we deliver for our children.

We are committed to continuing to review what we provide as a trust, for next year a big part of this will be about how we continue to work together, getting more staff involved in projects that will take forward a number of key themes focused on driving further improvement. As I move into my new role as full time CEO of the trust, I am committed to driving its continued growth and development. I am looking forward to being able to spend more time in each school and I'm committed to working with teams across the trust to foster the values of Ambition, Audacity, Integrity and Perseverance that will help us all to thrive whatever challenges may come our way.

As well as this annual report we have also created a booklet to show how we want to promote further career development opportunities at the trust. I look forward to hearing about themes that our staff feel are important for us to consider and develop in 2023-24 and beyond.

I am excited to see what we will achieve together over the next year.



# 97%

of staff are proud to work at their school

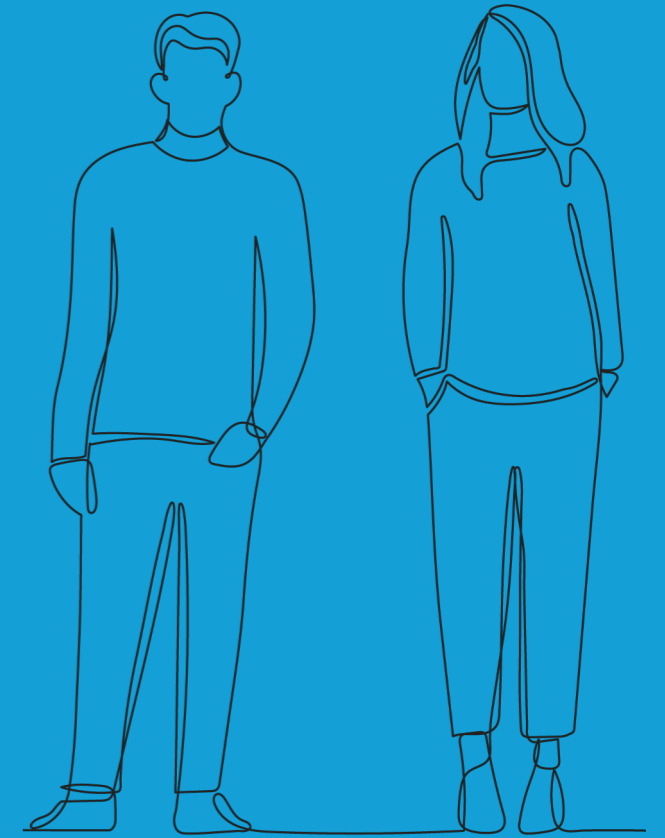
**Grand Union Partnership achieved Academy Sponsor status in January 2023**

“

**It always seems impossible until it is done.**

– Nelson Mandela

”



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# 1,617

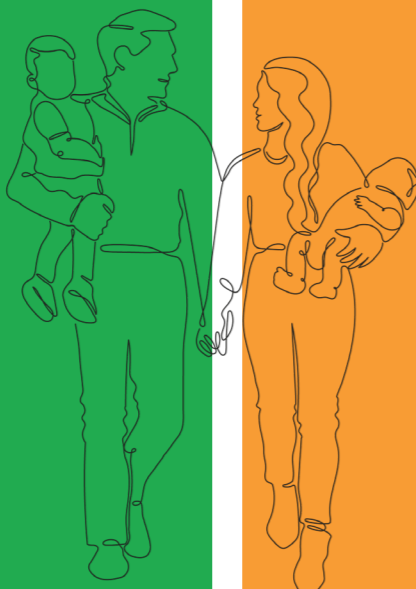
Children educated across our schools in 2022/23

# 220

Staff across our member schools

# 95%

of parents would recommend Grand Union Partnership Schools



# 96%

of children enjoy learning in our schools

# 96%

of staff would recommend working with Grand Union Partnership

# 94%

of children feel safe in our schools

**Old Stratford School judged Good by Ofsted in March 2023**



# Introduction

The trust was founded in 2017 when New Bradwell School and Jubilee Wood Primary School came together to form the Grand Union Partnership.

In 2018 Old Stratford Primary School joined us and then in the autumn of 2022, Deanshanger Primary School joined. In 2022/23 the trust educated over 1,600 children, employing over 220 staff across the four member schools. Schools across the Grand Union Partnership work in very different communities (from those in the heart of Milton Keynes to those in villages in South Northamptonshire) and are different sizes (from 1 form to three form entry). The data table below provides a more detailed picture of the diversity that exists across the schools in the trust:

	Nursery Numbers	Reception to Year 6 Numbers	PP	FSM	LAC	SEN	EHCP	EAL	Year 5/6 Mobile	Deprivation Quintile
Deanshanger		333	25	37	3	62	6	26	0	Quintile 1
			8%	11%	1%	19%	2%	8%	0%	Least deprived
Jubilee Wood	36	514	126	186	3	97	5	351	36	Quintile 4
			25%	36%	1%	19%	1%	64%	7%	More deprived
Old Stratford		188	21	20	0	20	6	12	3	Quintile 1
			11%	11%	0%	11%	3%	6%	2%	Least deprived
New Bradwell	44	582	141	173	10	82	33	176	11	Quintile 4
			24%	30%	2%	14%	6%	30%	2%	More deprived
Totals	80	1,617	313	416	16	261	50	565	50	
			19%	26%	1%	16%	3%	35%	3%	
National Averages			27%	24%	0.3%	13%	2%	22%		

This diversity is something we value; it provides rich opportunities for both children and staff across the trust to broaden their experiences of school life and learn from each other. This is reflected in both the expanding range of opportunities that our children have to participate in trust wide events and the range of networking and professional development activities that our staff can take part in.

# Quality of Education

The core focus of the Grand Union Partnership is to provide our children with a great learning experience, enabling them to make strong progress and preparing them to move onto secondary school with confidence. This section of the report details the actions we have taken forward across the trust to continue to develop the curriculum offered in each school and summarises both the outcomes that our children have achieved in 2022–23 and feedback from children and their parents regarding key aspects of their experience.

Whilst we recognise and value the autonomy that each school has when it comes to making decisions about the curriculum it offers, school leaders continue to use the trust curriculum principles to inform peer review activities when they visit each school for monitoring purposes. These principles, help us to reflect on the degree to which each school is delivering our aspiration as a trust to provide a broad based, progressive, curriculum that is both accessible for all and successfully equipping our children to be ‘secondary ready’.

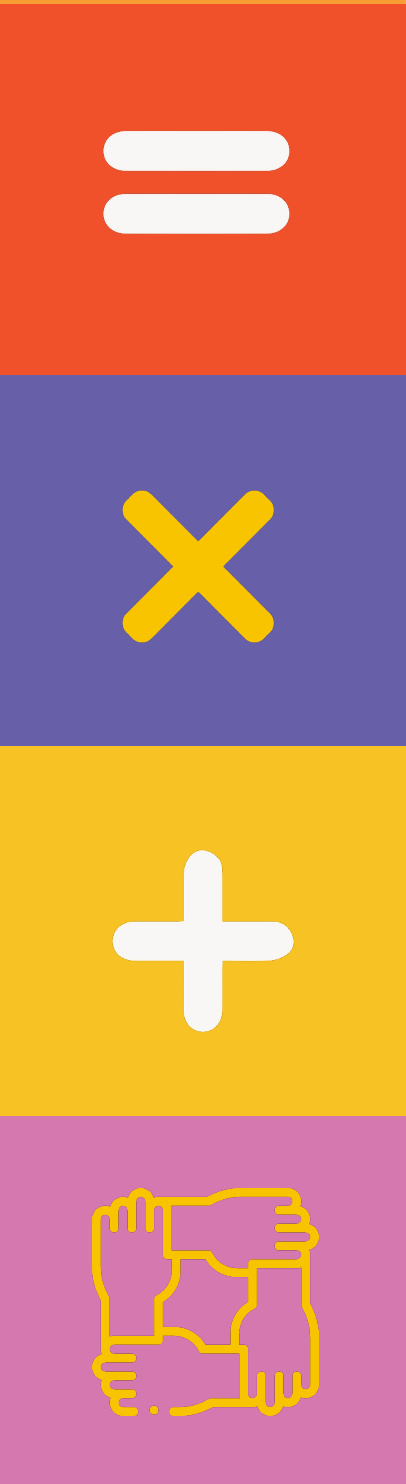
School teams across the trust continue to enhance the curriculum they offer. The summary below provides some of the key curriculum initiatives that have been taken forward at each school.

The curriculum at **Old Stratford** has continued to develop over the past year. Specialist teachers for Music and French (who also teach at New Bradwell) have been introduced, significantly enhancing the curriculum offered and the quality of teaching for these subjects.

Early Years provision has been revised, with leaders working closely with colleagues at Jubilee Wood to introduce a new curriculum. Staff at Old Stratford have continued to refine the curriculum for maths and writing in ways that build on the positive aspects of the schemes being used for these subjects whilst giving staff greater flexibility to adapt them. These adaptations have been focused on extending the level of challenge for the most able in maths and ensuring that children have more opportunities to develop their independent writing skills. In the summer term the school successfully piloted the use of a new curriculum scheme for Geography and this work will be followed up next year with the introduction of similar schemes for a number of other foundation subjects. These developments provide a great example of how schools in the trust benefit from opportunities to draw upon expertise from across the trust whilst having the flexibility to also draw on outside sources to inform curriculum development.



# Quality of Education



The team at **New Bradwell** have successfully implemented the revised curriculum plans that were developed in the previous year to enhance the knowledge progression documents that are in place for each subject. Positive findings linked to monitoring activities demonstrate that the school curriculum continues to promote the progress of children across the school. The team of staff who deliver Phonics have accessed Ruth Miskin Training and ongoing consultancy to develop their practice further. The training has been well received and the impact of this work is reflected in very positive phonics screening outcomes achieved by children at New Bradwell.


**Jubilee Wood's** adoption of a mastery approach to maths has been further embedded this year, with the two subject leads for maths working closely with the Regional Enigma Maths Hub to refine practice. A daily maths fluency session has further boosted children's maths attainment. Meanwhile, the school's use of coaching has been further developed across the wider curriculum with a range of teaching staff benefiting from support to enhance their subject knowledge and related pedagogy.

The curriculum at **Deanshanger** has been further developed with a focus on how teachers systematically reinforce core subject knowledge and help children to retain this as they progress through school. Working in partnership with colleagues at the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), the school has developed a number of strategies that promote 'sticky' knowledge. The Little Wandle Phonics scheme, introduced in January 2022, is now embedded at the school and is delivered with strength and consistency. A music teacher working across three schools in the trust has introduced a revised offer at the school, this has been well received by children in respect to both the music curriculum delivered in class and the wider enrichment opportunities made available outside of class time. The member of staff delivering French (a native French speaker) has worked with a French teacher who teaches at two other schools in the trust to establish a new French curriculum at the school. Subject champions have worked closely with staff in order to reflect on and develop all curriculum areas. Children have shared their experiences of the curriculum through

subject elevation groups and monitoring activities at school and trust level continue to inform development providing governors at the school with first-hand evidence of the progress being made.

When Ofsted visited Old Stratford in March 2023, they judged the quality of education to be good at the school, endorsing the effective implementation of a new curriculum there. Given that the team at the school faced significant challenges during 2021–22 this was a great outcome and a testimony to their commitment and expertise.

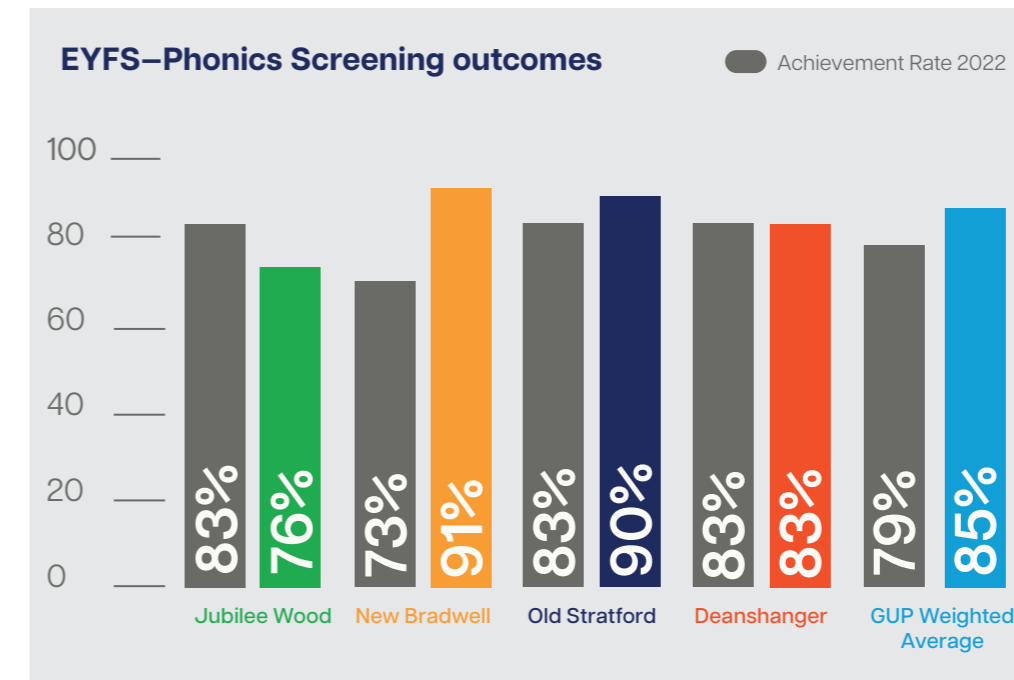
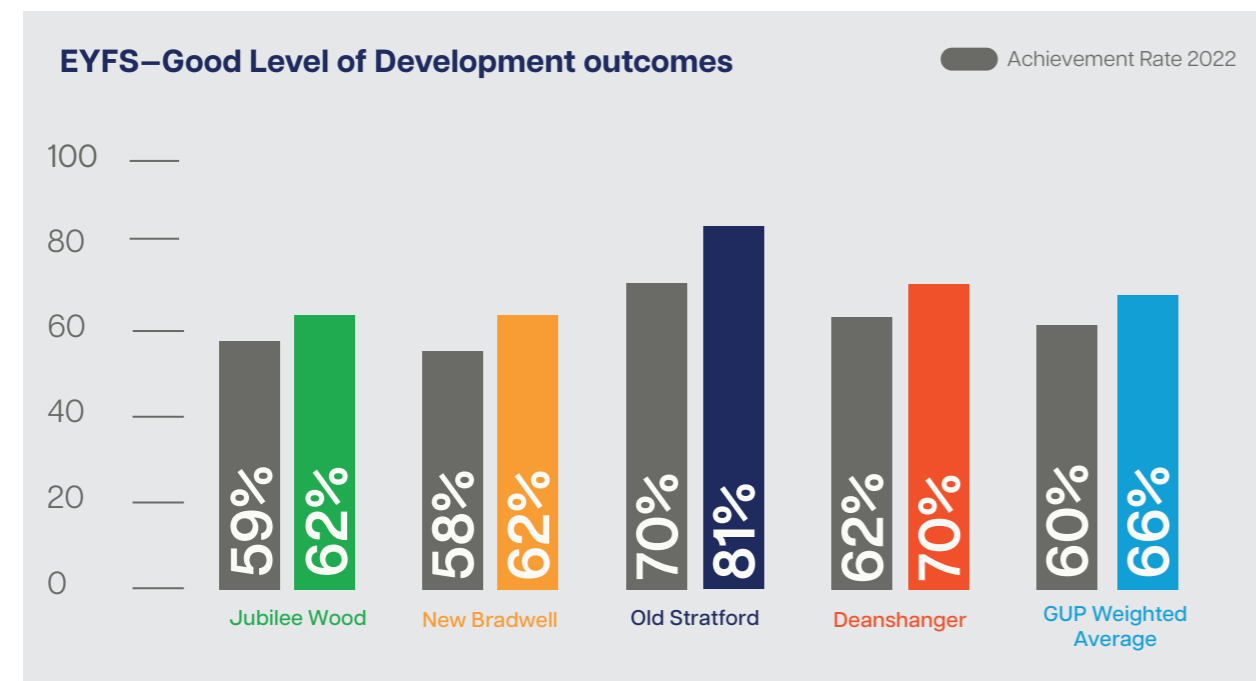
The charts on the following pages provide an overview of what children across the trust have achieved in the statutory assessments that were taken in 2022–23, where equivalent national rates have been released, the data is based on the summer 2023 data.



# Early Years Foundation Stage

The charts on these pages provide an overview of what children across the trust have achieved in the statutory assessments that were taken in 2022–23. Where possible the National Data to that released in summer 2023. Where 2023 data has not yet been released, the data is taken from summer 2022.

Across the trust **199** children accessed the EYFS curriculum (**55** at Jubilee Wood, **81** at New Bradwell, **26** at Old Stratford and **37** at Deanshanger). The trust average for children achieving good levels of development was **66%** for 2022–23, a **6%** improvement compared to the previous year and 1% above the national rate for 2021–22. The chart below details the outcomes of each school, all schools delivered improved outcomes compared to the previous year.



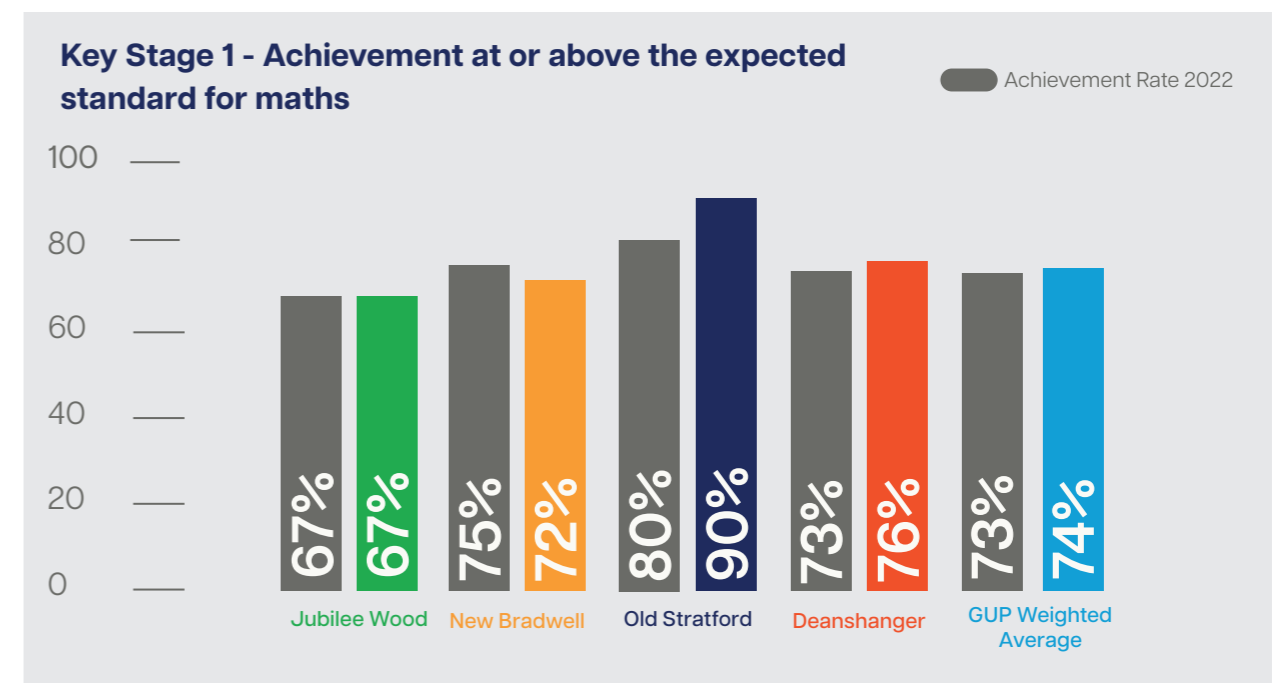
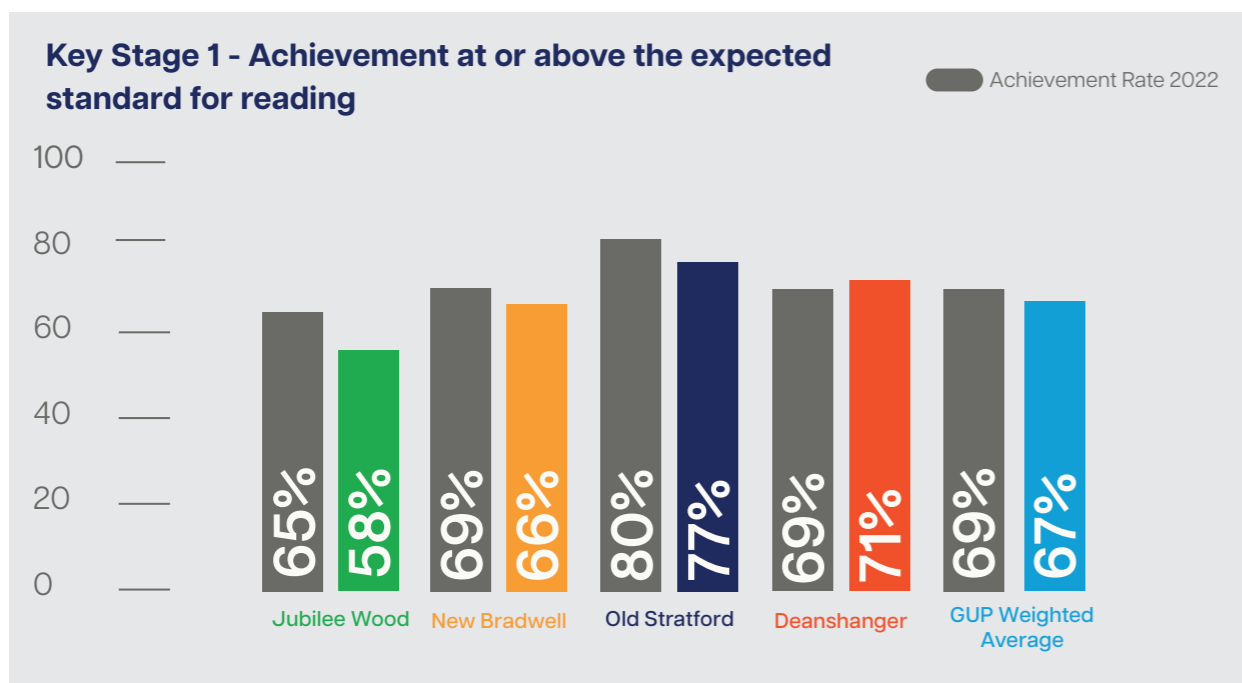
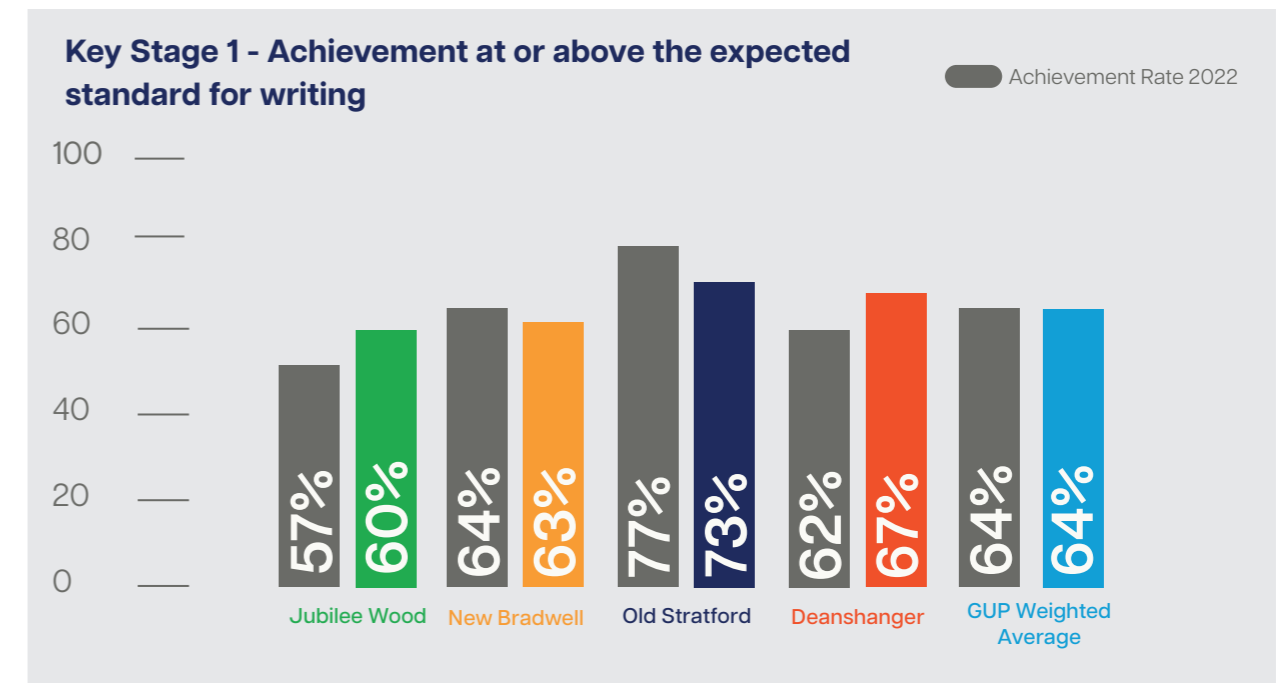
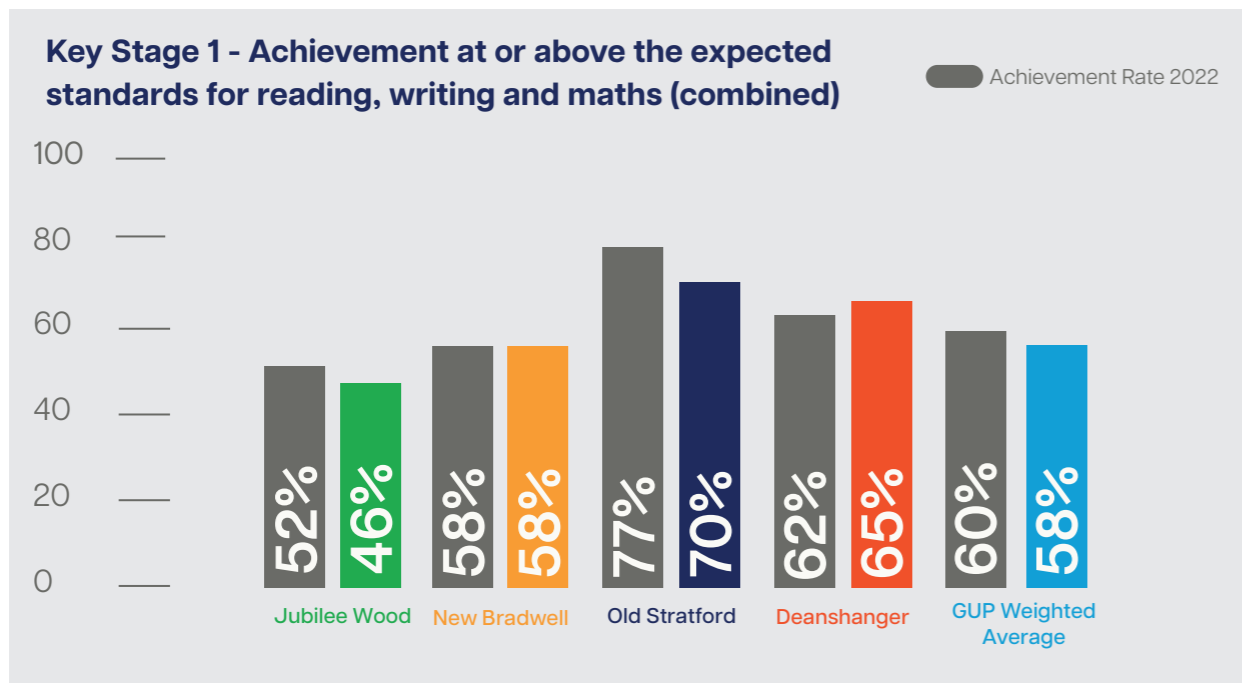
Across the trust **183** children completed the phonics screening assessment (**46** at Jubilee Wood, **77** at New Bradwell, **20** at Old Stratford and **40** at Deanshanger). The trust average for children passing phonics screening was **85%** for 2022–23, a **6%** improvement compared to the previous year and **4%** above the national equivalent published by the FFT. The chart above details the outcomes of each school, compared to those achieved in the previous year.





# Key Stage One

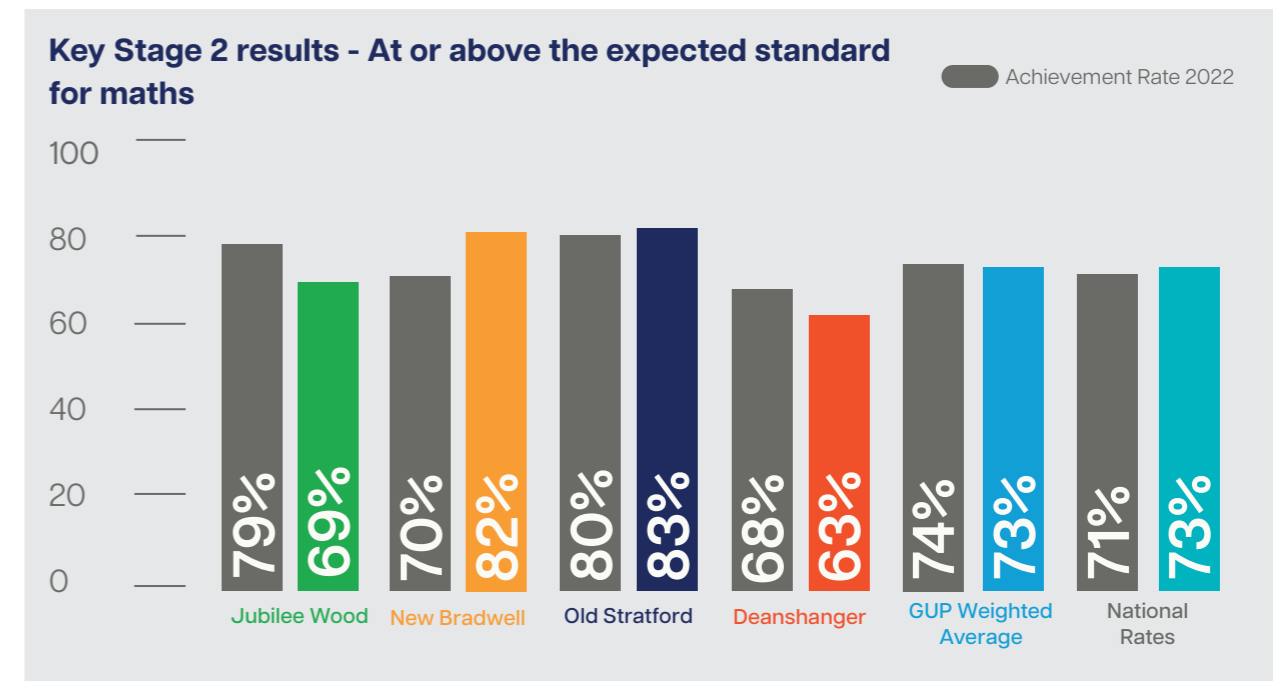
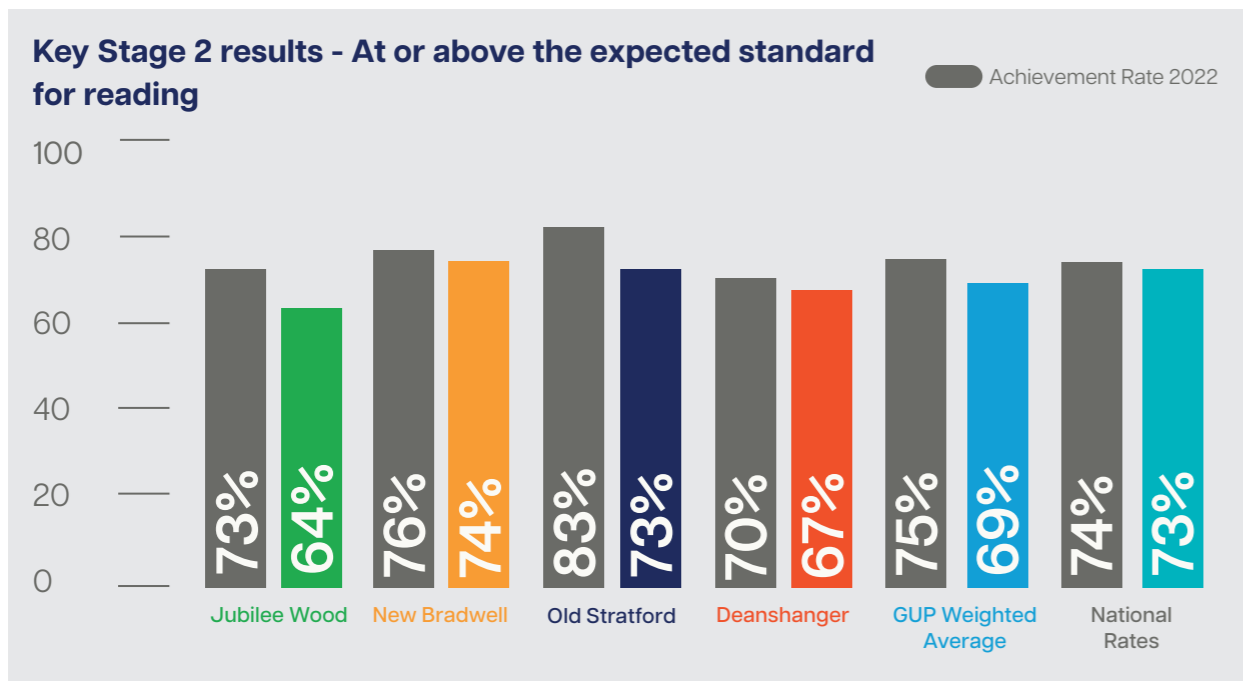
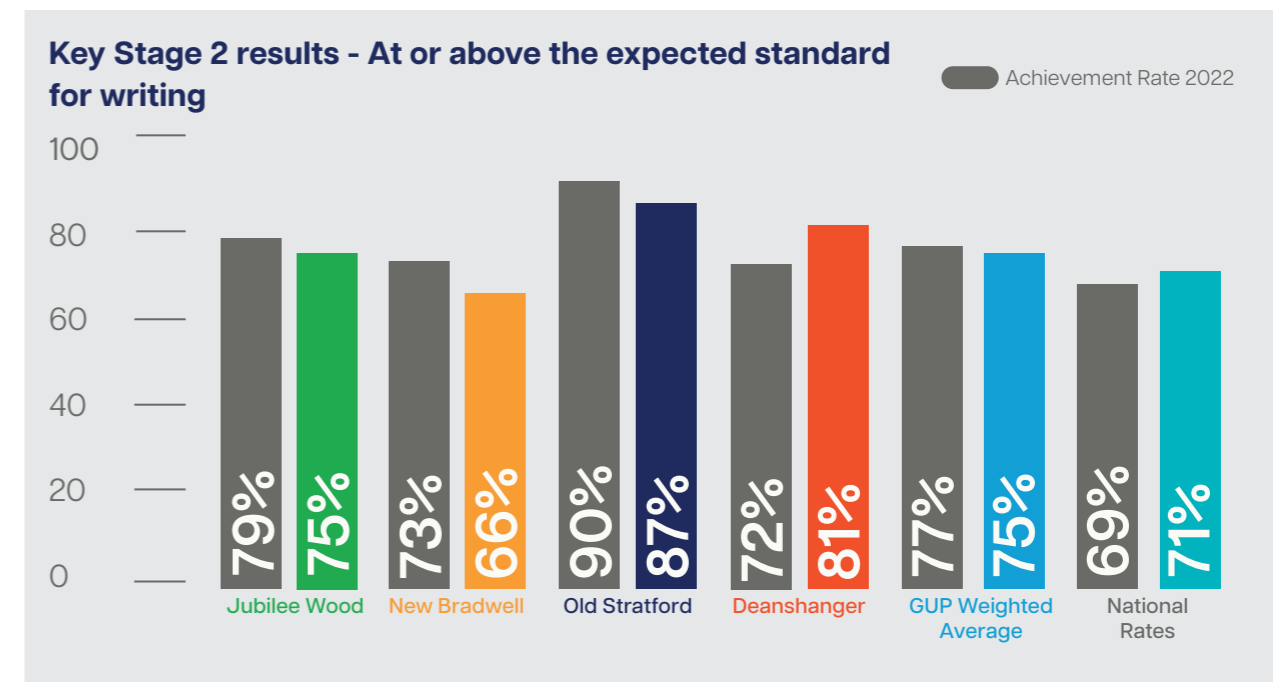
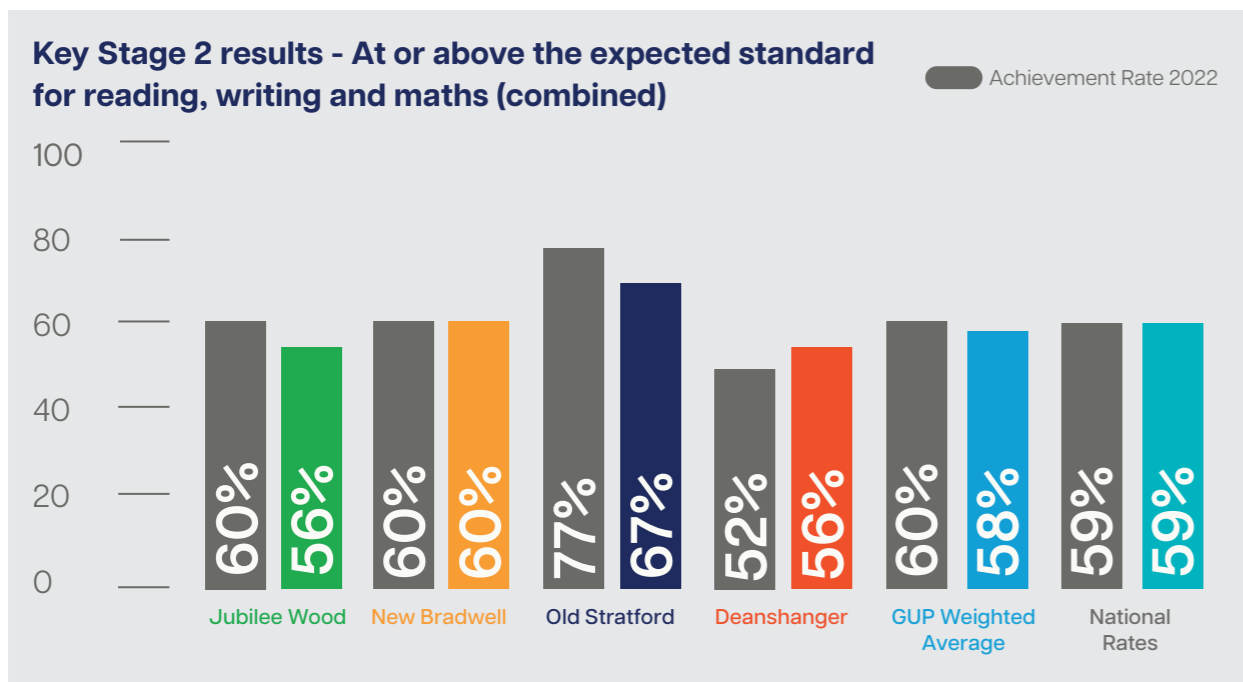
Across the trust 224 children in year 2 completed their Key Stage 1 SATs (57 at Jubilee Wood, 88 at New Bradwell, 30 at Old Stratford and 49 at Deanshanger). The trust average for children achieving the expected standard across reading, writing and maths was 58%, 2% above the equivalent FFT rate for 2022–23, a 2% decline compared to the previous year. The charts that follow detail both the combined outcomes and individual subject results at each school, compared to those achieved in the previous year.





# Key Stage Two

Across the trust 252 children in year 6 completed their Key Stage 2 SATs (87 at Jubilee Wood, 72 at New Bradwell, 30 at Old Stratford and 63 at Deanshanger). The trust average for children achieving the expected standard across reading, writing and maths was 58%, 1% below the equivalent national rate for 2022–23, a 2% decline compared to the previous year. The charts that follow detail both the combined outcomes and individual subject results at each school, compared to those achieved in the previous year and national rates.

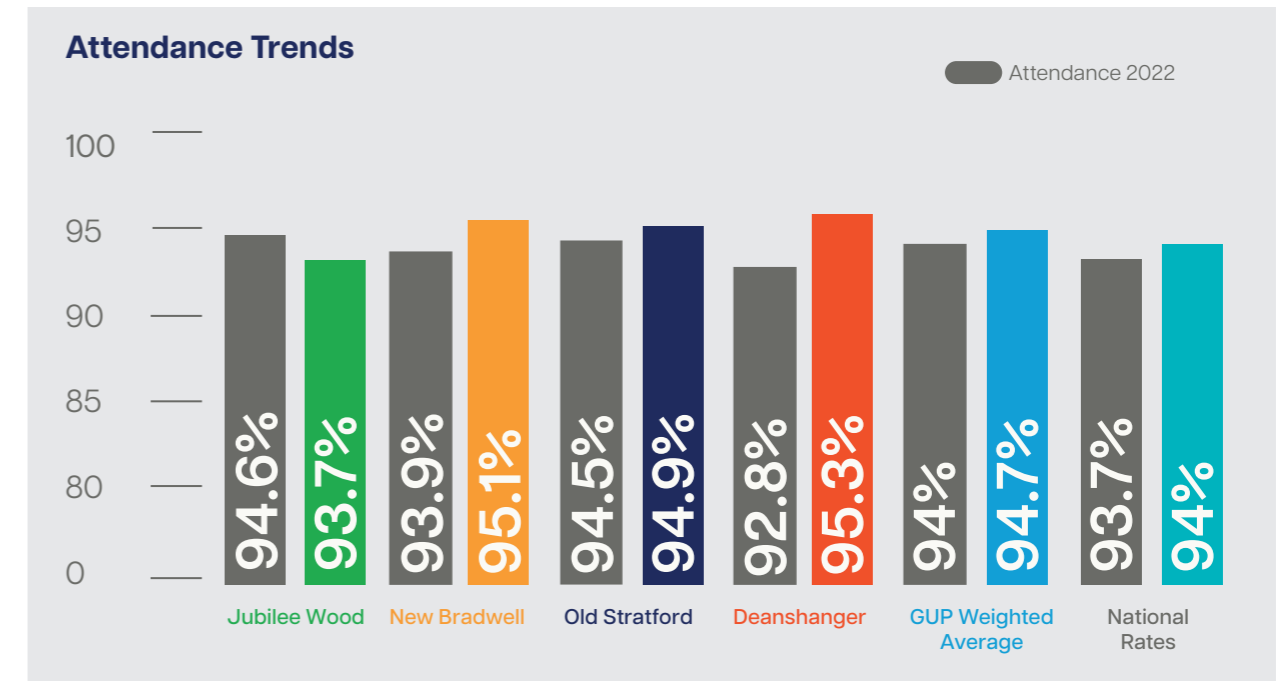




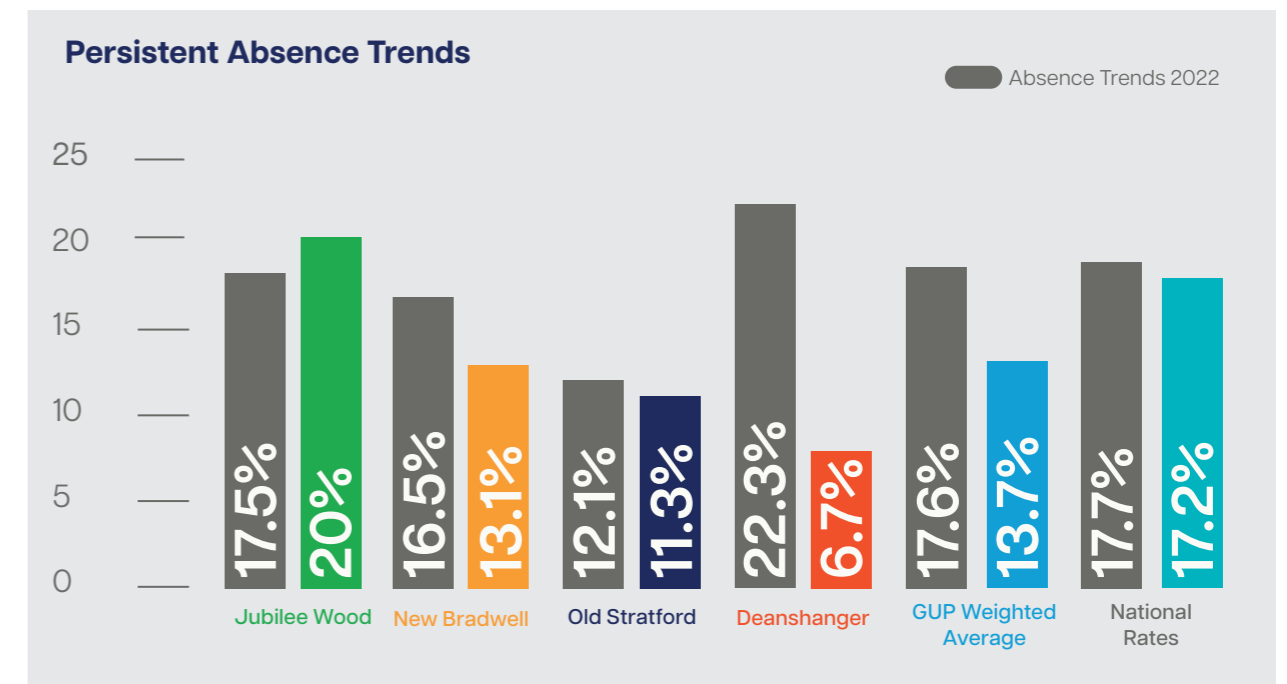
# Pupil Attendance

## Key Stage Two

Attendance rates across the trust for 2022–23 were consistently above the equivalent national rate for primary schools published by the DfE. Three of the four schools saw an improvement in attendance.

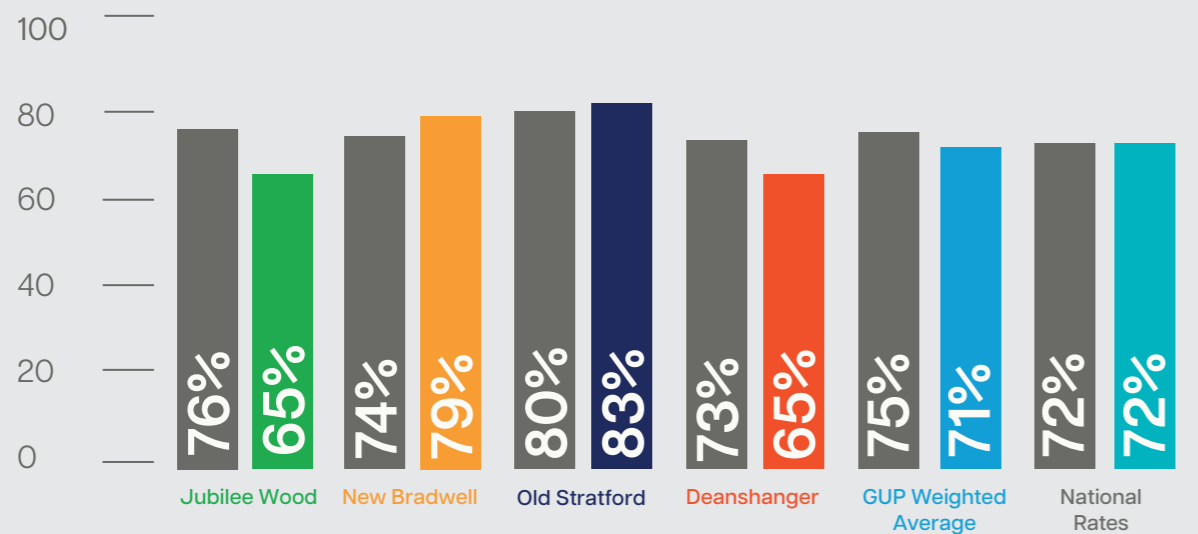


Persistent absence was, on average, lower across the trust than the national rate. Three of the four schools saw a reduction in the level of persistent absence over the course of the year.

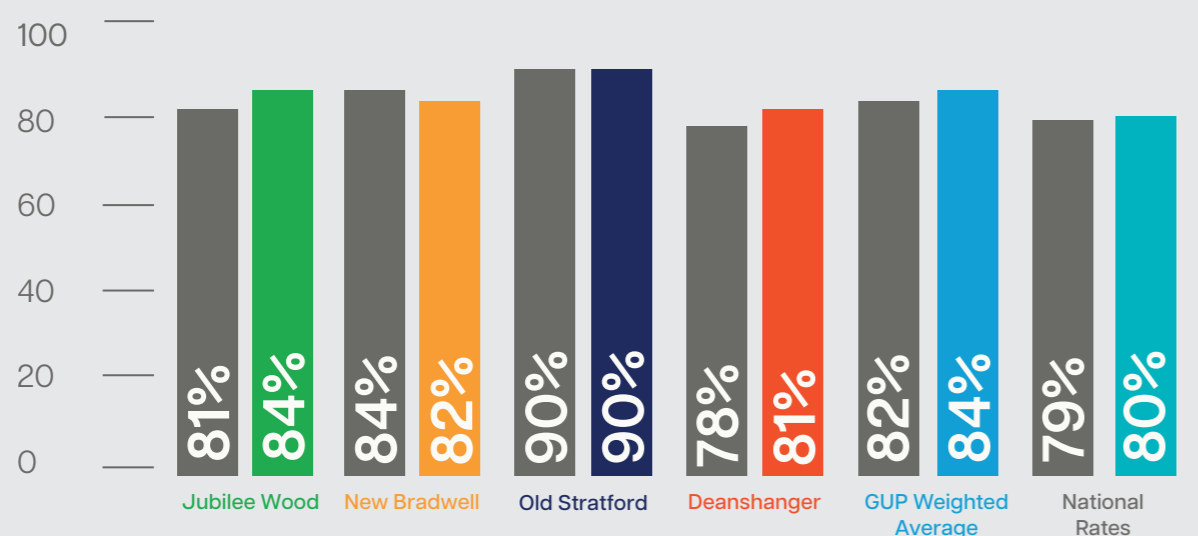


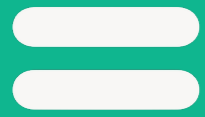
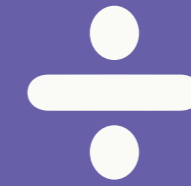
Whilst there is no complacency regarding the need to continue to closely monitor and manage persistent absence, teams across the trust have worked together to share their approaches and overall this has delivered a positive impact.

### Key Stage 2 results - At or above the expected standard for grammar, punctuation and spelling



### Key Stage 2 results - At or above the expected standard for science





# Stakeholder surveys

Stakeholder surveys have been completed by pupils (in the autumn term), by staff (in the spring term) and by parents (in the summer term), across all schools in the trust. This has been the first year that Deanshanger have completed the pupil and staff surveys. Each survey incorporates standard statements that Ofsted use in their surveys. Some additional statements have been included (particularly in relation to the staff survey) to explore staff perceptions of the trust, as well as providing them with an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the school that they are based at. Positive trends are evident for the majority of statements included in these surveys. Each survey provides a helpful route into wider discussion of the themes covered and prompts conversations that have contributed to improvements at both school and trust level. These survey outcomes clearly demonstrate that

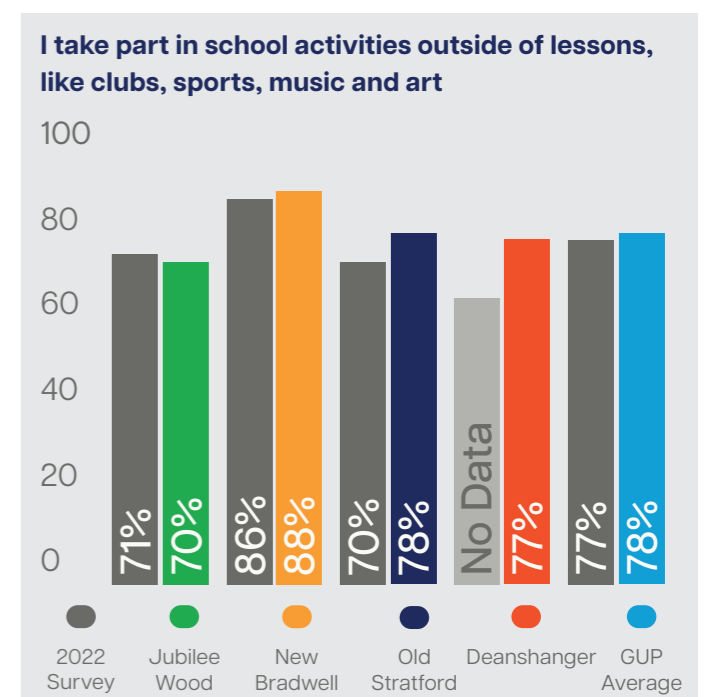
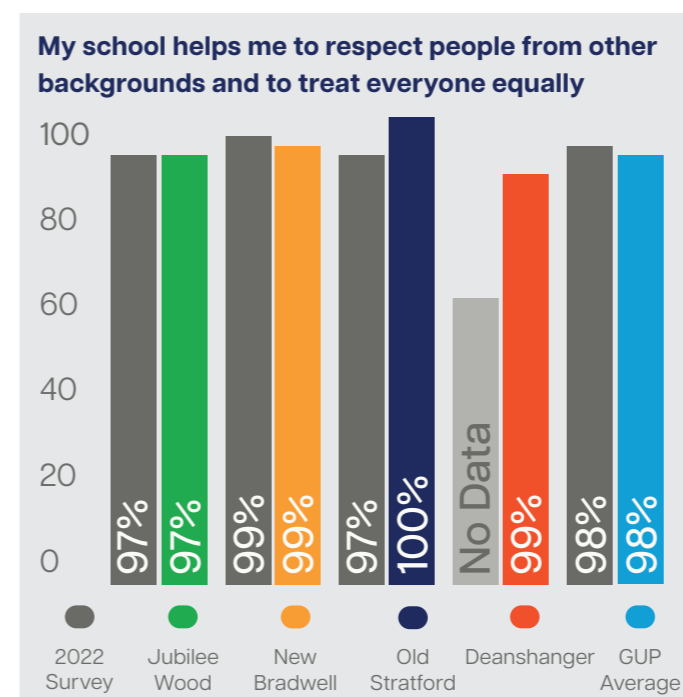
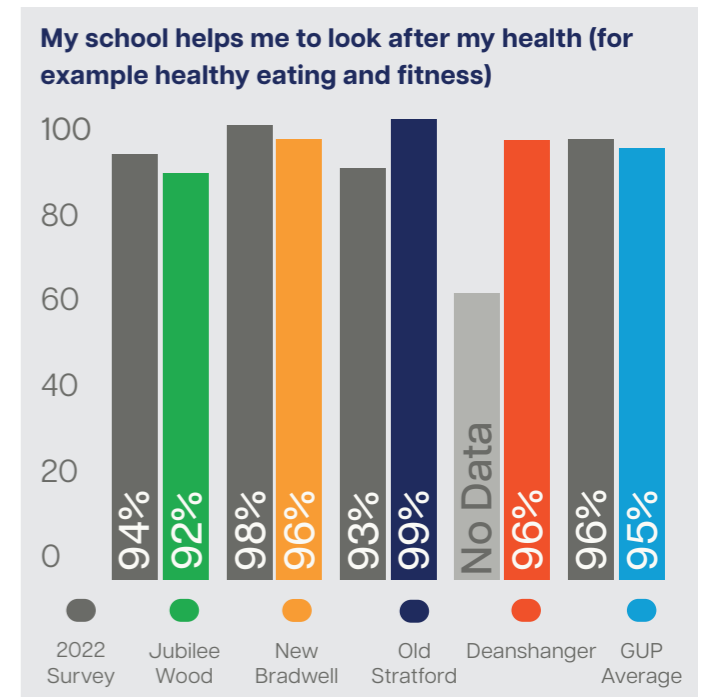
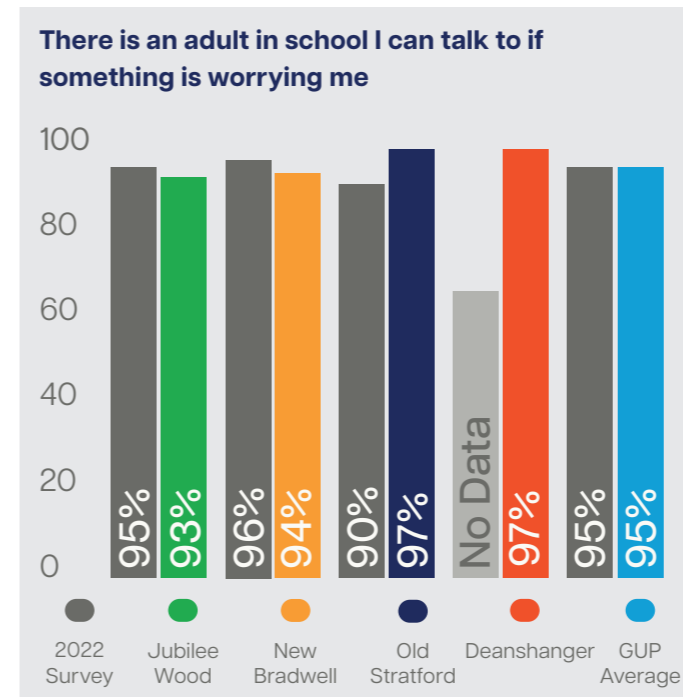
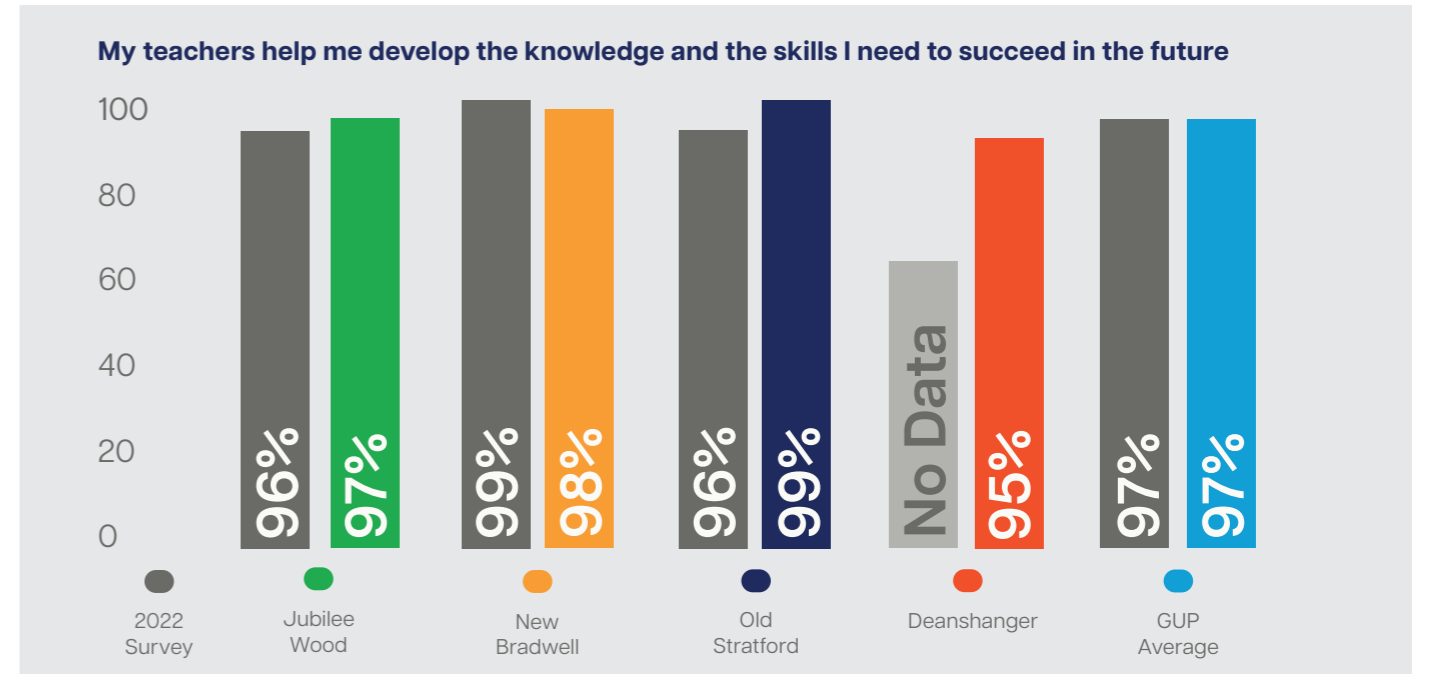
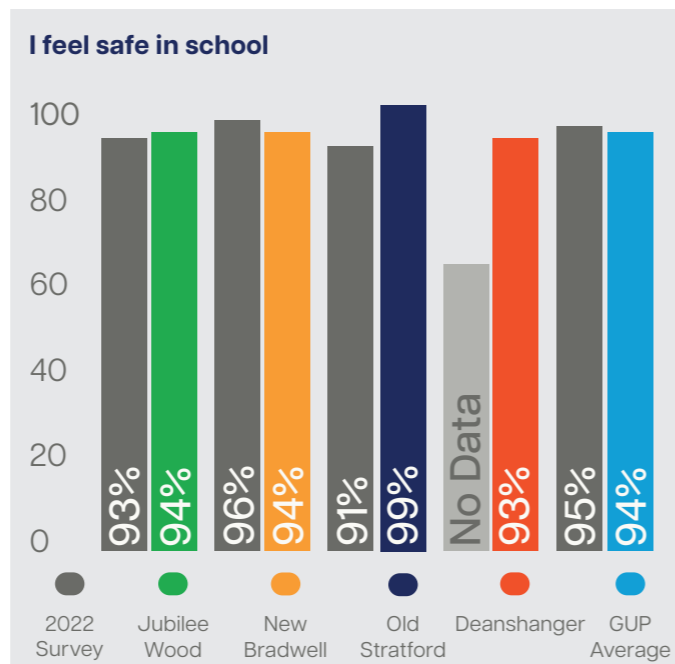
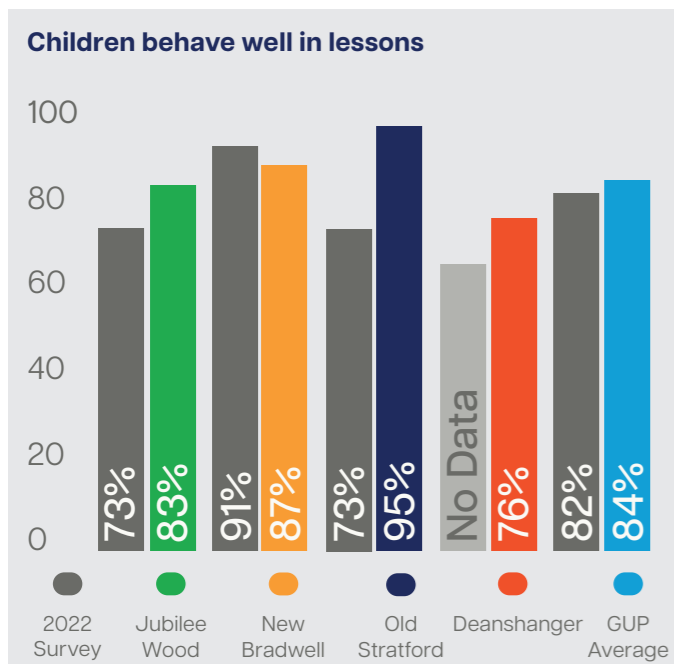
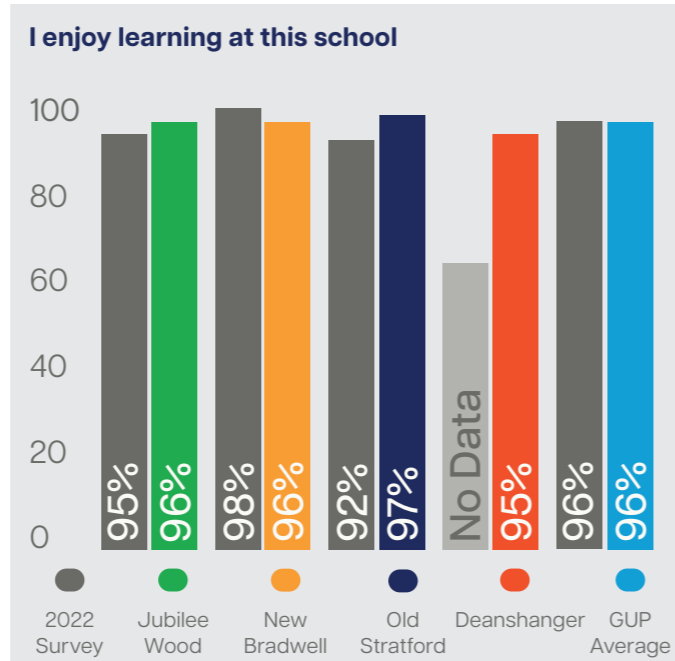
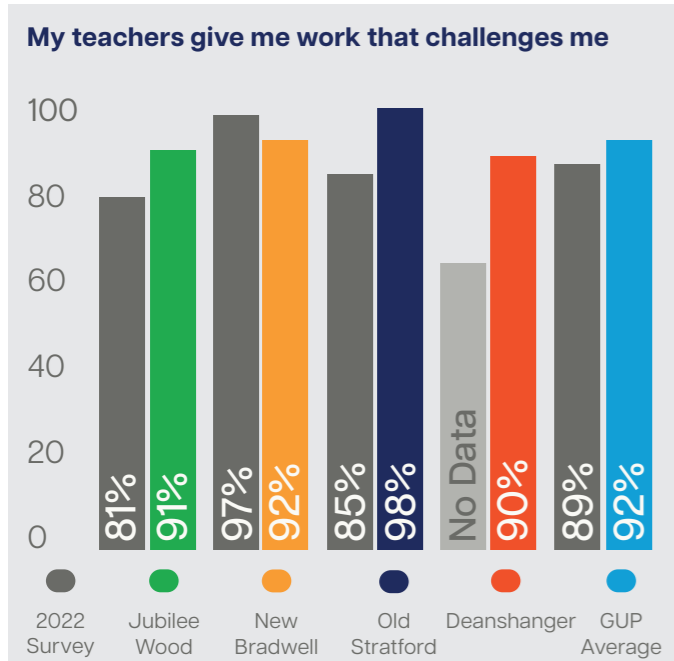
children across the trust are enjoying their learning and experiencing a culture of high expectations that supports their learning. These findings are consistent with the extensive monitoring activities that take place at many different levels across the trust. Subject leaders, school leaders and external reviewers provide consistent feedback that recognises that children are enjoying their learning and are being challenged to meet the high expectations that trust and school leaders champion.

The series of charts included in this section focus in on survey statements that are strongly linked to the key judgements that Ofsted make regarding the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management.



# Pupil survey

1,458 children completed the pupil survey in the autumn term (502 from New Bradwell, 485 from Jubilee Wood, 171 from Old Stratford and 300 from Deanshanger).





# Parent survey

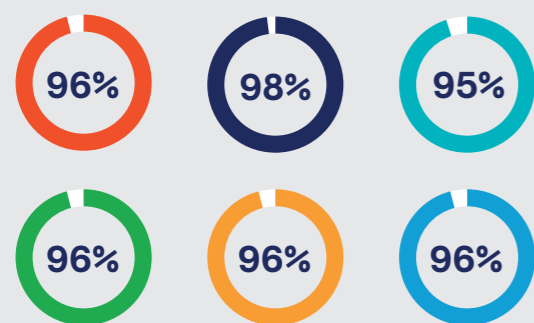
787 parents completed a survey in the summer term (275 from New Bradwell, 299 from Jubilee Wood, 108 from Old Stratford and 105 from Deanshanger).

## Parent Perceptions

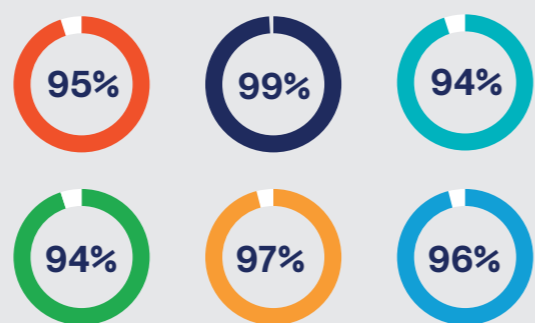
Levels of Agreement with Parent Survey Statements



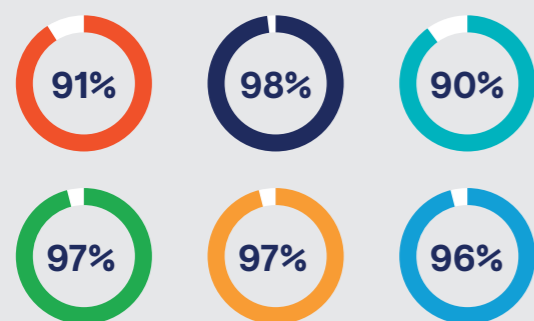
### My child is happy at this school



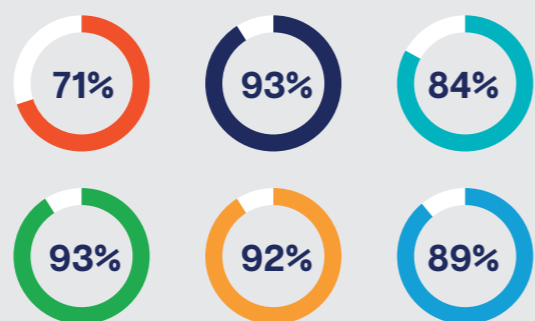
### My child feels safe at this school



### My child does well at this school



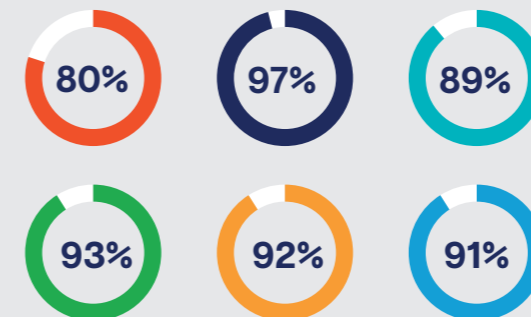
### The school has high expectations for my child



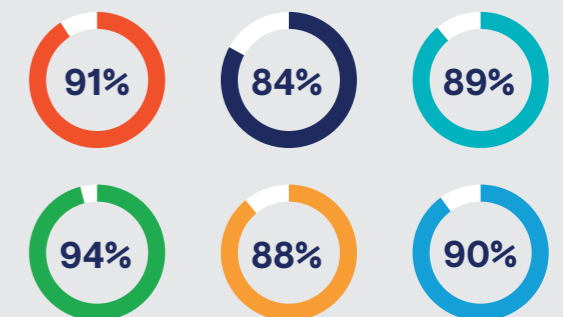
### I would recommend this school to another parent



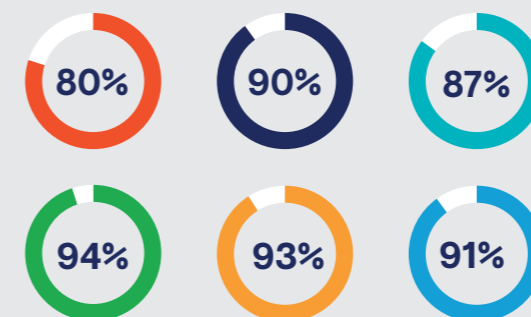
### The school makes sure its pupils are well behaved



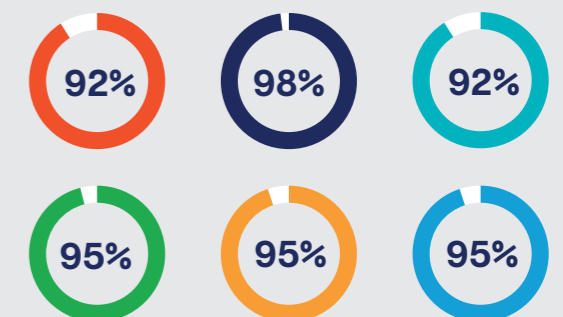
### The school makes me aware of what my child will learn during the year



### The school lets me know how my child is doing



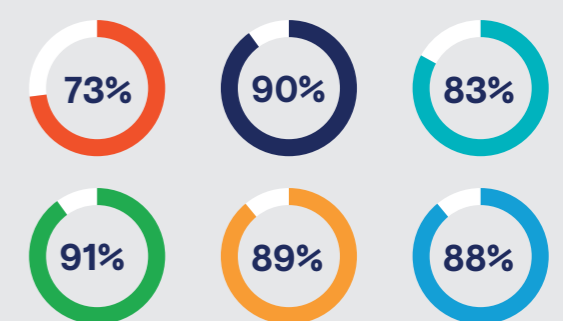
### There is a good range of subjects available to my child at this school

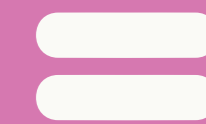
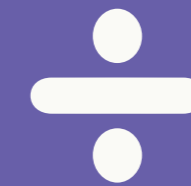


### My child can take part in clubs and activities at this school



### The school supports my child's wide personal development





## 2. School Improvement

In January 2023 the Grand Union Partnership became an approved Academy Sponsor.

This decision was a recognition of the capacity that the trust has demonstrated to support school improvement. Over the last 18–24 months the progress made by Jubilee Wood and Deanshanger provides tangible evidence of this. The much-improved Key Stage 2 outcomes achieved last year at Jubilee Wood, coupled with Ofsted judging the school to be good (February 2022), reflect the hard work of both the staff team and the effectiveness of the support provided by the trust. Similarly, the key stage 1 outcomes and the Key Stage 2 progress last summer at Deanshanger represented a continued trend of improvement, alongside the positive feedback linked to Ofsted monitoring visits in 2021–22, again reflecting both the hard work of the team at the school and a positive contribution from the trust.

Section one of this report provided examples of how each school has continued to develop aspects of the curriculum they deliver.

Many of these examples demonstrate how schools across the trust work together and learn from each other. This supports school improvement in ways that empower each school to own their improvement journey by blending ideas from inside and outside of the trust. Whilst all schools share the same cycle for school improvement and the same expectations for the monitoring of school development they have the autonomy to plan their next steps in a way that is most suited to their journey. Similarly, schools across the trust share the Grand Union Partnership curriculum principles and teaching standards to promote a common language for learning and shared aspirations for the curriculum, yet they are free to select how these will be secured within the context of the community they serve.

# 2. School Improvement

As well as regular monitoring by its own school leaders, the trust acknowledges the value of external reviews in ensuring a wider perspective on matters that will inform the successful development of its schools and the effectiveness of its internal monitoring activities both at trust level and school level. These have included reviews by a practising Ofsted inspector and the Headteacher at a local Special School. The former provided advice that has enabled school leaders across the trust to remain up to date with their understanding of Ofsted's approach and ensure that it remains consistent with current expectations, and the latter looked at provision at the Department linked to New Bradwell. This feedback from the Headteacher endorsed many aspects of current good practice as well as giving us a helpful steer with respect to next steps that we can take to develop the provision further. There were also external reviews of Phonics and Early Reading, Maths, and the French curriculum at New Bradwell and the way that senior leaders have developed monitoring arrangements in recent years.

On the monitoring arrangements and French at New Bradwell the findings of the review were very positive, and the fact that Old Stratford has been able to adopt the same French curriculum in 2022-23 is a good example of how strong practice can be transferred across the trust. The reviews of phonics teaching and early reading at Deanshanger and Old Stratford identified much good practice, and phonics outcomes for both schools were consistent with these. The review of maths provision at Jubilee Wood highlighted very strong teaching and the effectiveness of the maths subject leaders, both

of whom will be contributing to the leadership of projects in local schools linked to the Regional Enigma Maths Hub in the coming year.

Becoming an Academy Sponsor opens the door for the trust to pursue more avenues for growth in relation to both new school applications (two have been submitted in the last few months) and working with schools that need support to either improve their current provision or their finances.

The positive progress made at each school in the trust demonstrates our capacity to support school improvement, and the focus in the next year will be to seek opportunities to help more schools to access this. With this goal in sight Phil Webster moves to the Chief Executive Officer role full time from September 2023 and a new Headteacher at New Bradwell School has been recruited. We look forward to working with Sebastian Gray as he starts his role as Headteacher at New Bradwell.

These changes lay a strong foundation for the trust to grow from. We continue to be involved in discussions with a number of local schools that are exploring their options as they consider joining a trust.

We're also exploring opportunities to expand the work of the Department linked to New Bradwell. Matt O'Brien, Headteacher at Jubilee Wood will be working with a local school as Executive Headteacher two days a week for up to two terms next year. Matt will be able to draw upon support from the team at Jubilee Wood and more widely across the trust during this period.

We are committed to making sure that growth does not come at the expense of quality. There is a continued commitment to be a local, primary focused trust and our current targets involve relatively modest growth **(to work with 2,500 children across the schools in the trust)**. We believe that this will help us to continue to act as an enabler for school improvement, and our next steps will seek to enhance the capacity of the central trust team and schools which ensure that **together we make a difference**.

A number of shared systems also lay the foundations for school improvement across the schools in the trust. For example through:

- The use of Arbor for student information, whether linked to monitoring attendance and persistent absence or reviewing attainment and progress data linked to the three shared assessment milestones adopted by schools in the trust.
- The use of EduKey to support the

effective management of SEND.

- The use of SAGE at each school to manage and monitor finances also promotes consistent conversations about how resources are used to best affect to promote school improvement.

- From September all schools in the trust will use MyConcern to record and monitor safeguarding concerns. Current management of safeguarding used by Designated Safeguarding Leads and Link Governors across the trust involves the ongoing maintenance of a safeguarding tracker based on the NSPCC self-assessment tool. The introduction of MyConcern alongside our existing tracker will enhance the trust's oversight of safeguarding and, because the team at Jubilee Wood have used MyConcern for a number of years now, their experience will inform the roll out of this new way of working for the other three schools in the trust.





# 3. Workforce Resilience and Wellbeing



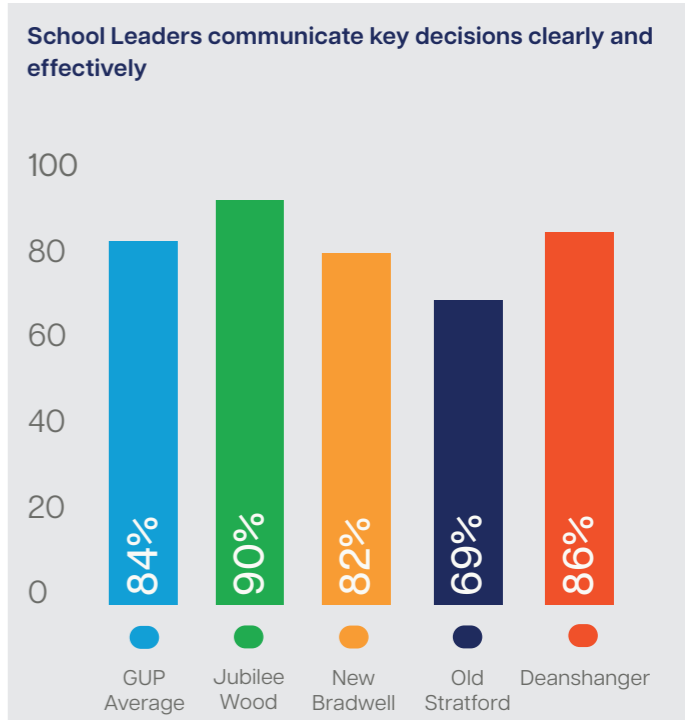
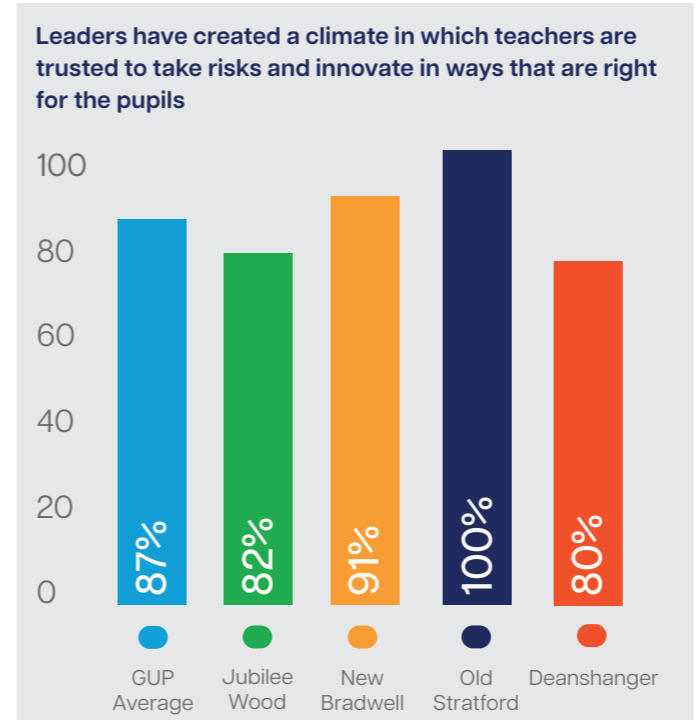
As part of the trust Health and Wellbeing Strategy all staff have access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Staff at Deanshanger, New Bradwell and Jubilee Wood have been able to access the 'My Healthy Advantage app' (MHA), this provides a number of tools that promote health and wellbeing as well as the more traditional aspects of an EAP such as wider guidance, advice and support across a range of themes. Staff at Old Stratford will be able to access the MHA app in 2023–24.

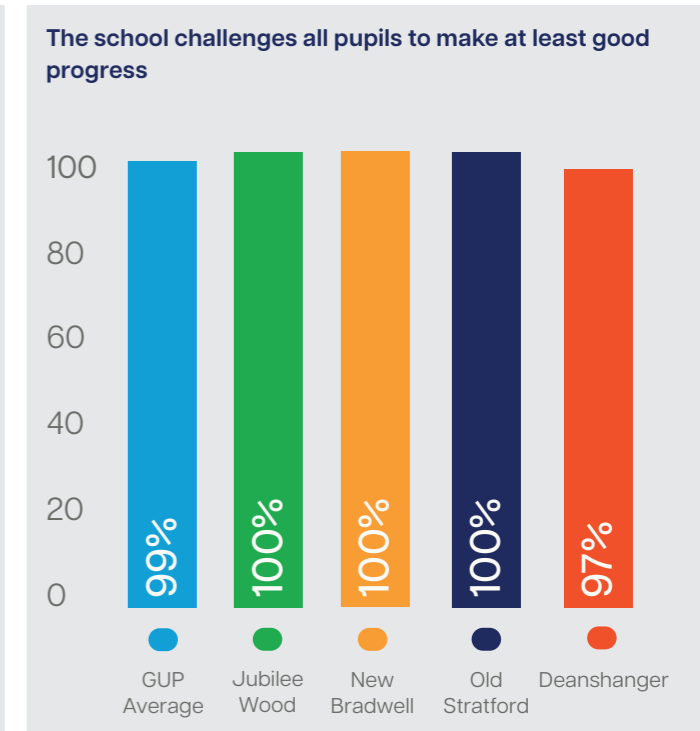
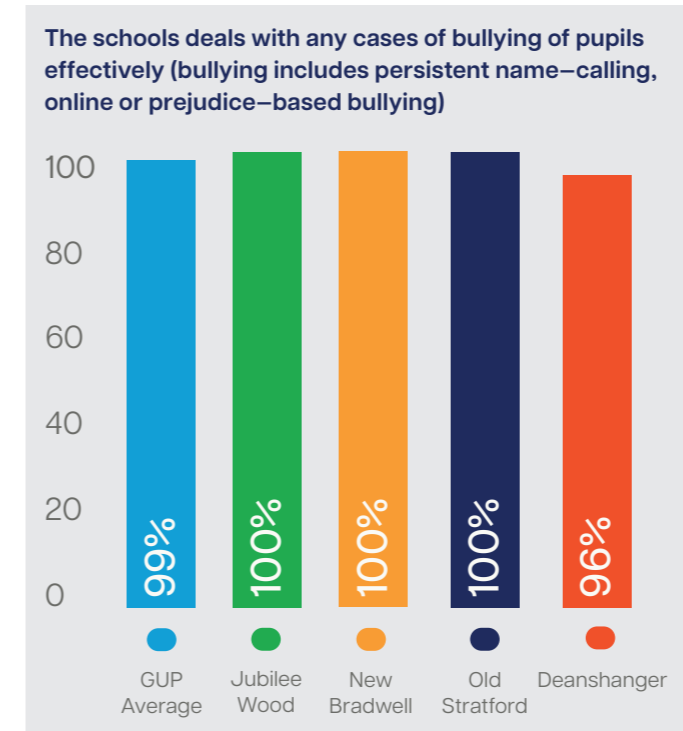
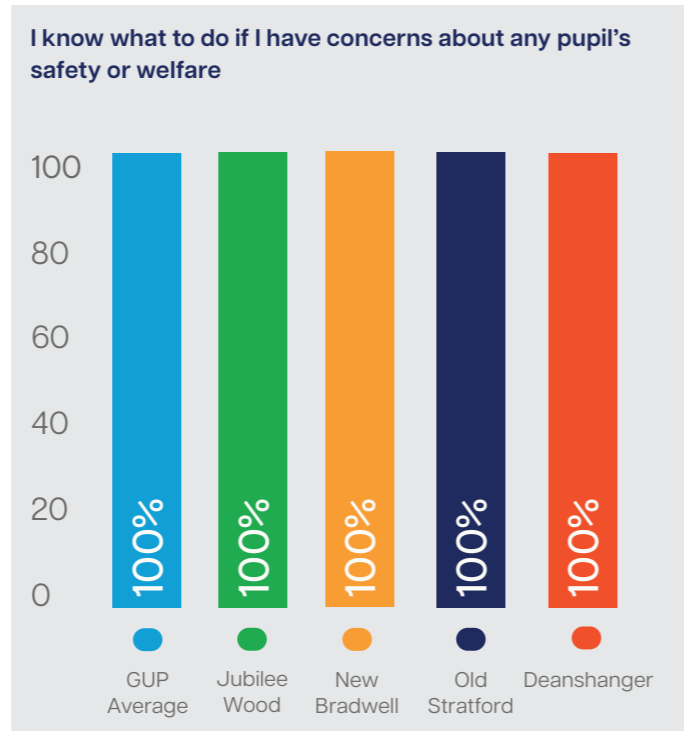
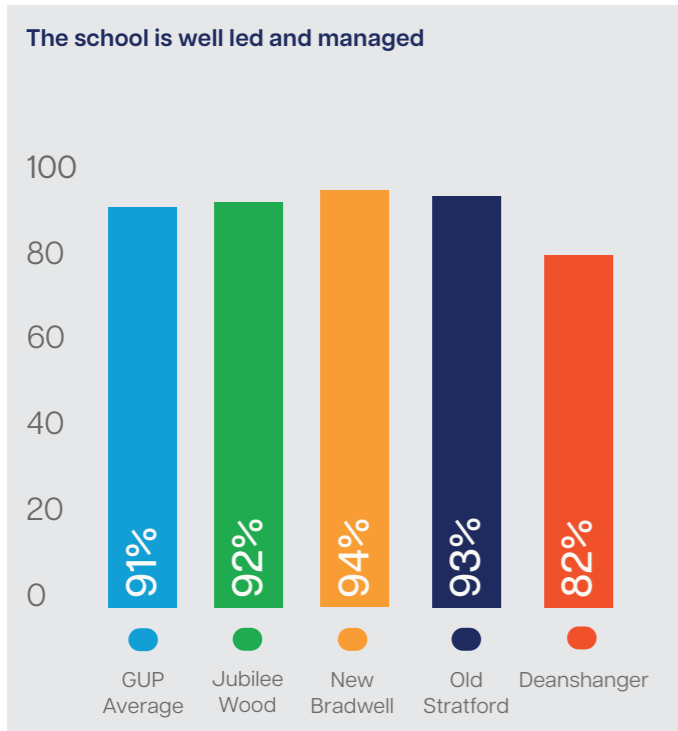
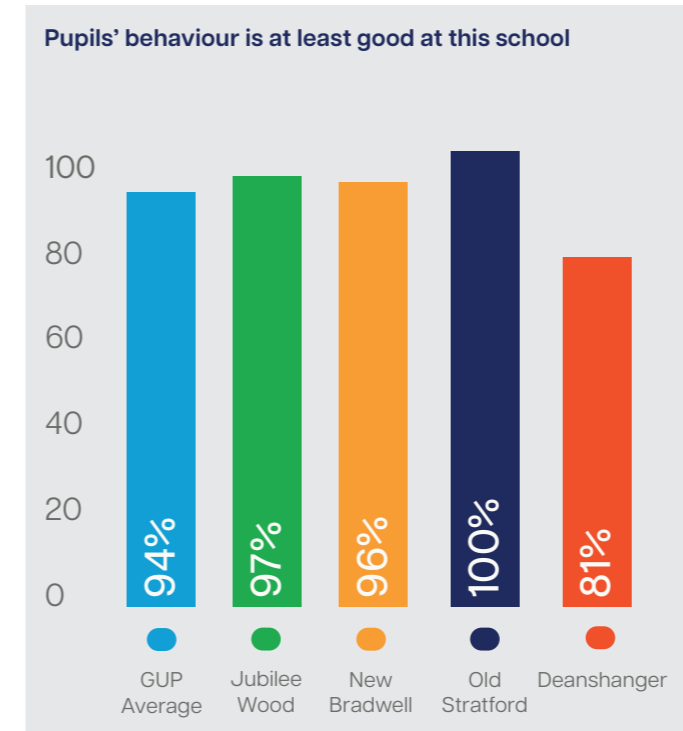
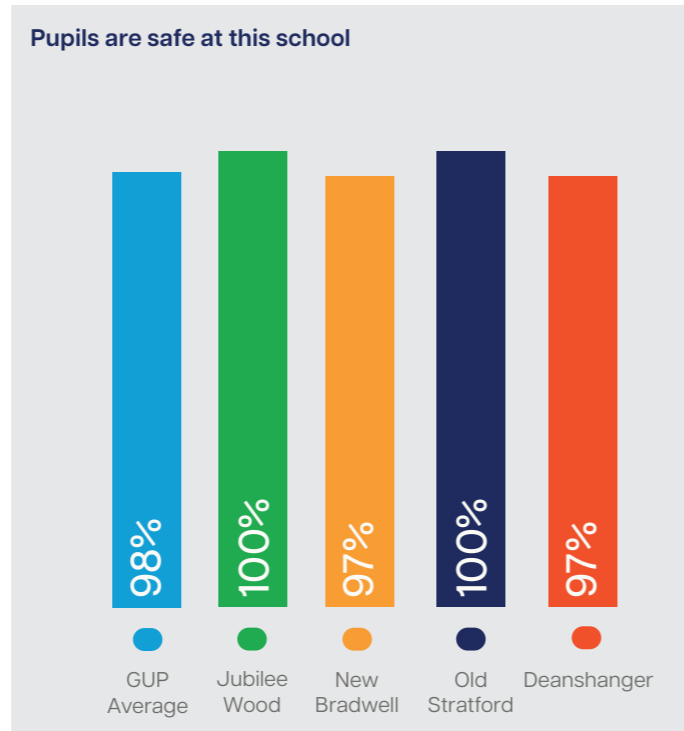
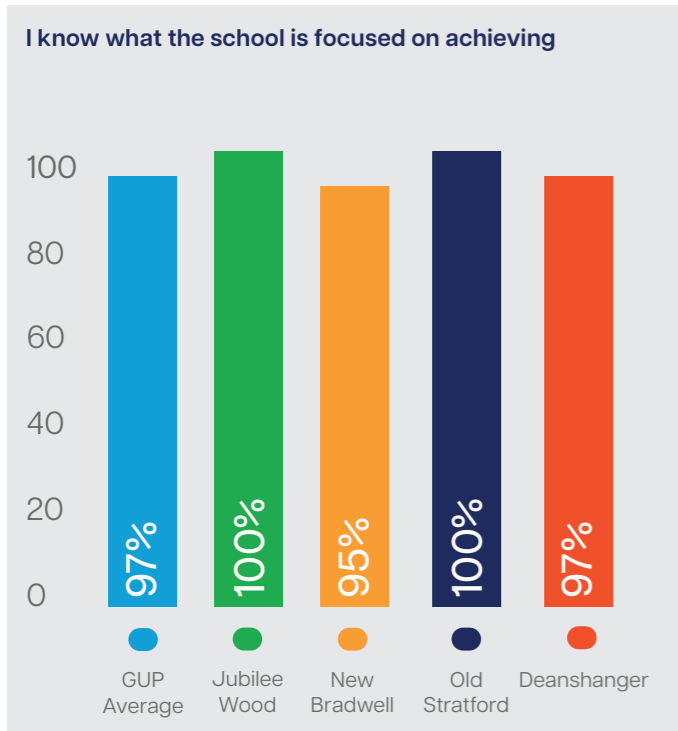
A total of 166 staff (68% of staff across the trust) completed a survey in January exploring a range of themes. The statements included were consistent with what was covered in the previous year. The charts in this section show the results for each school and the trust and provide an indication of the trend over the last two years.

There were some significant improvements in relation to staff perceptions of the trust in relation to how staff are kept informed of trust developments, their understanding of its wider

vision and how each school benefits from being a part of the Grand Union Partnership. Whilst this is moving in the right direction for most schools, there is a recognition that more can be done to further develop this. The cross-trust projects that staff will have the opportunity to engage with and more regular visits to staff meetings from central trust team should continue to build on the positive momentum achieved in 2022–23.

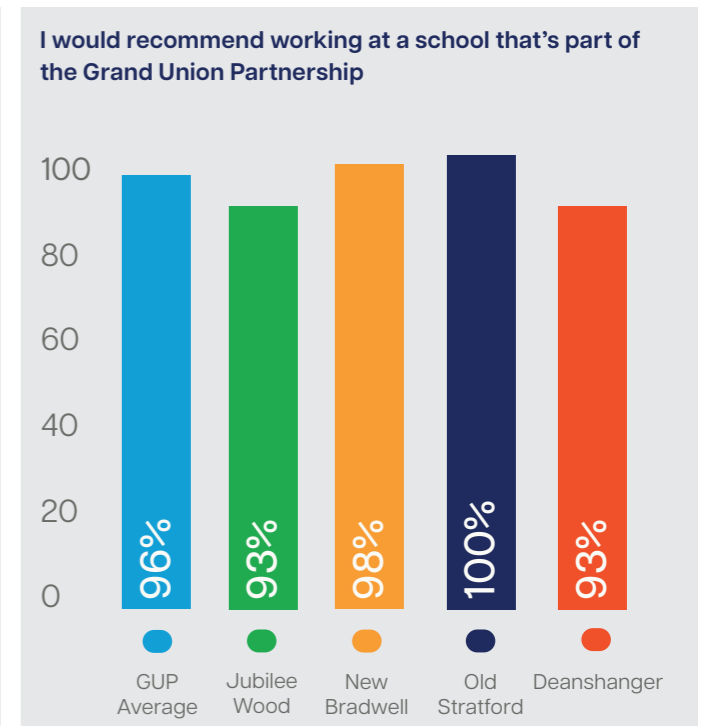
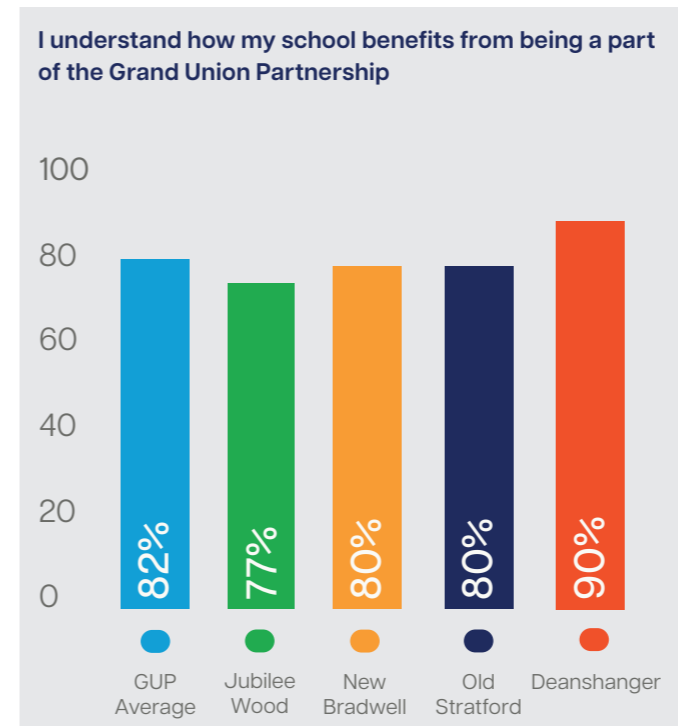
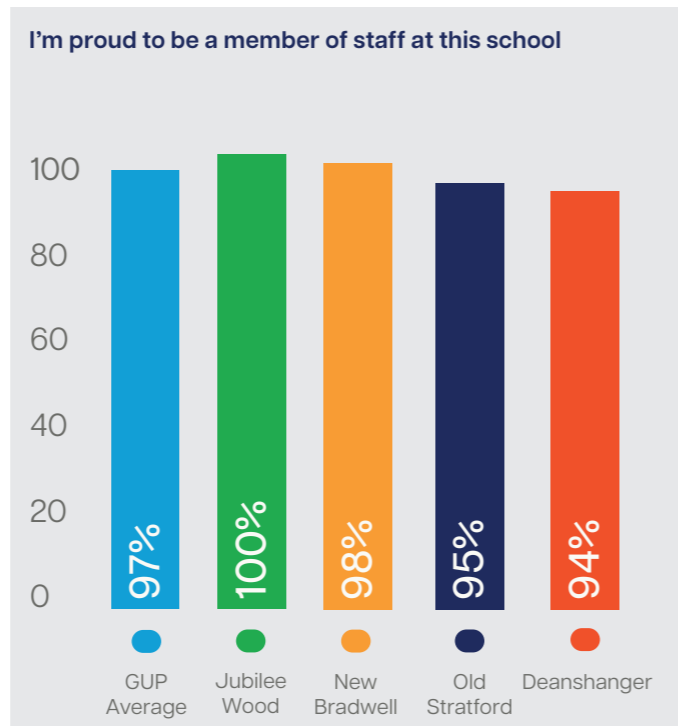
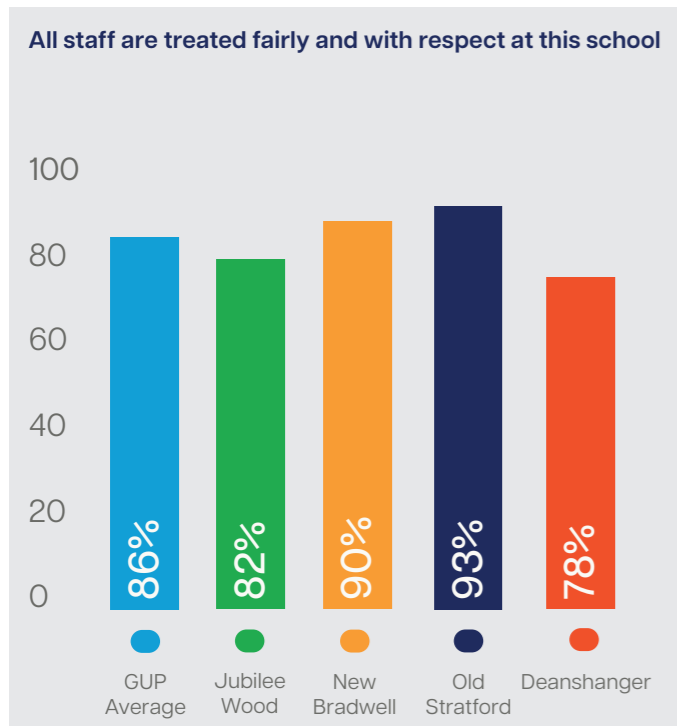
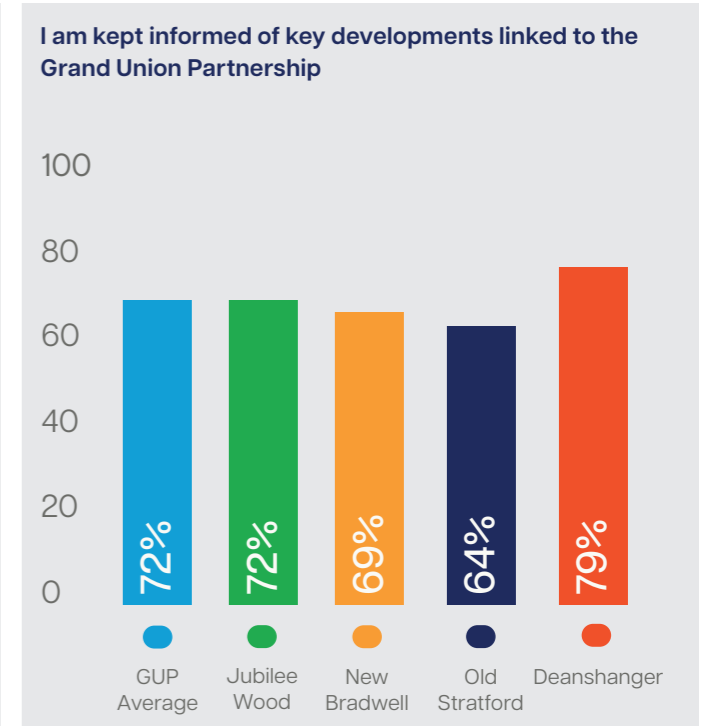
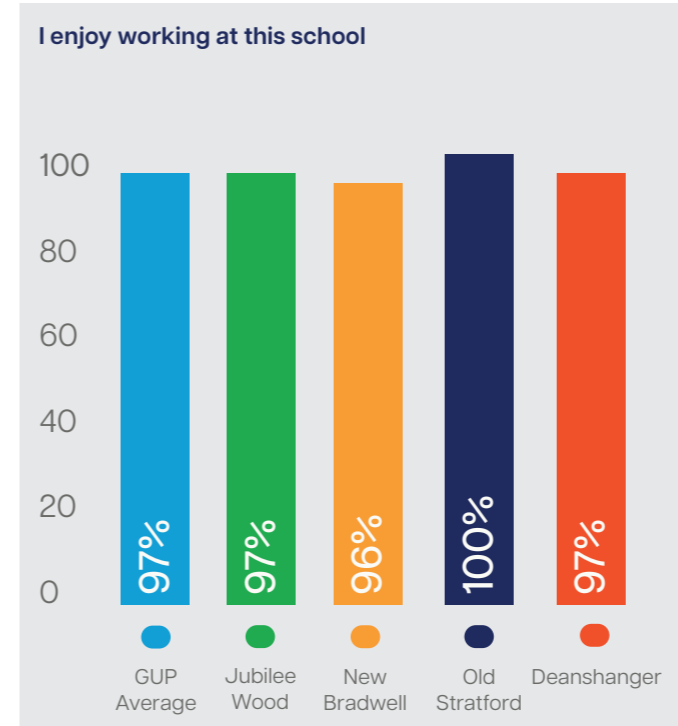
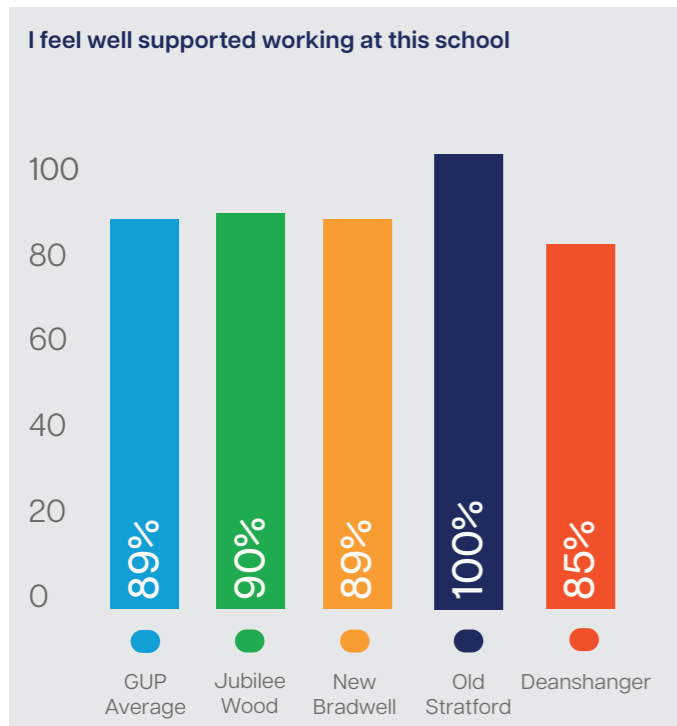
The most significant dip in survey outcomes was linked to staff perception of the management of behaviour. When this was explored with staff the concerns raised were not linked to general standards of behaviour, rather they were linked to specific children who were judged to be having a negative impact on the culture of their class. This feedback was helpful as it prompted discussions about each instance and led to a review of strategies that were in place that served to improve the situation.







# 3. Workforce Resilience and Wellbeing





## 3. Workforce Resilience and Wellbeing

Whilst there are not comparable national figures for all of the statements included in the trust survey; the Times Educational Supplement do run a staff wellbeing survey each year that includes three statements that are similar to those included in the trust survey. The following statements and levels of agreement relate to the outcomes of this survey that included **5,858** responses:

- **18%** of respondents agreed that my workload is manageable (compared to **78%** for the equivalent statement in the trust survey)
- **27%** of respondents agreed that I feel supported at work (compared to 89% for the equivalent statement in the trust survey)
- **47%** of respondents agreed that I'm proud to work at my school (compared to **97%** for the equivalent statement in the trust survey)

This suggests that teacher morale across the trust is very positive compared to the view that we have of the current national picture.

Over the course of 2022–23 the trust, working with The Red Thread Partnership (RTP) and Marie-Claire Parsons (an experienced Executive Head teacher), has developed and delivered a 6 module leadership programme for two groups of leaders. Thirteen established leaders made up one group and eight aspiring leaders made up the second. The 6 module programme combined opportunities to reflect upon leadership styles with chances to learn and apply a range of frameworks that provide practical tools for busy leaders to use to enhance their effectiveness. The feedback from participants at the end of the programme was positive and expressed a clear appetite to build on the programme in the coming year.

## 4. Finance and Operations

The central team continue to work with Headteachers at each school to review structures to promote efficient operations. There is a gradual movement towards centralisation that makes the most of naturally occurring changes to staffing structures. This approach supports efficiency gains, enabling new schools to integrate smoothly and effectively into the trust. The introduction of a Recruitment role and the use of MyNewTerm to support staff recruitment across the trust is a good example of this.

The central finance function undertakes a number of tasks that would traditionally have been picked up by individual school Business Managers, examples include completing VAT returns, coordinating end of year pension certificates, budget preparation and the production of management accounts.

The central team are on hand to provide direct support as and when schools need this, including the provision of essential cover to Headteachers.

Central team appointments are only considered when sufficient funding is

secured through the **5%** top slice of central funding that each school commits to (compared to the current national average of **6%**). Schools access a range of services in return for this top slice, including:

- Regular support with school improvement from the CEO and Head of Development that supports each school with both quality assurance and improvement measures. This can involve monitoring activities that explore cross trust themes as well as day-to-day support for Headteachers and their teams. These activities support benchmarking across the trust and provide opportunities for good practice linked to individual schools to be shared and transferred across the trust
- A suite of core IT systems that each school in the trust uses such as Arbor, EduKey and SAGE. These cover a diverse range of functions relating to student records and performance, the effective administration of SEND arrangements and the management of school finances



# 4. Finance and Operations

- A range of professional services that school leaders and local governors benefit from such as access to a Policy Management system that supports policy development and administration, internal and external audit activities, the provision of Clerking services for each school, access to GovernorHub and training for governors through access to National Governors Association modules and bespoke training from our trust Governance Professional and central trust team members.
- Central coordination of Condition Improvement Funding bids that enable each school to apply for significant funding towards capital projects. Over the course of 2022–23 and 2023–24 **the trust has secured £1.9 million for improvement projects** that have included:
  - The introduction of new perimeter fencing and double glazing at New Bradwell (2022–23)
  - Replacement boilers and fire safety and electrical improvements at Deanshanger (2023–24)

- Schools benefit from working together to secure better value for money when negotiating goods and services. For example, site managers with the Central Facilities Manager negotiate preferential rates with service contractors.

One of the chief reasons for the Board targeting growth over the next 3–5 years is the desire to continue to improve the breadth of services offered by the central team whilst seeking to keep the top slice as low as possible.

Our Chief Financial Officer works with Business Managers to support budgeting and audit activities. The charts that follow demonstrate where each school in the trust is currently positioned in relation to a number of key ratios. The trust recognises that each school operates in a different context but is committed to supporting school leaders across the trust to learn from each other and take a proactive approach to securing school improvement in a way that demonstrates value for money.

Staffing costs per pupil - Teachers



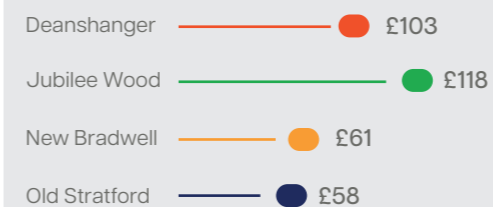
Staffing costs per pupil - Teaching Assistants



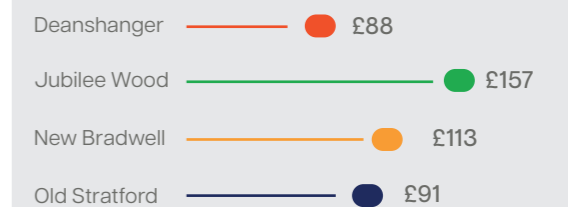
Staffing costs per pupil - Administrators



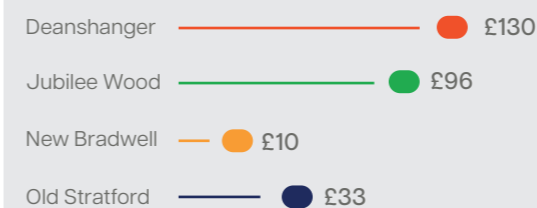
Staffing costs per pupil - Caretakers



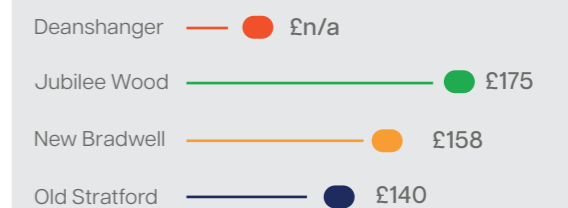
Staffing costs per pupil - Cleaners



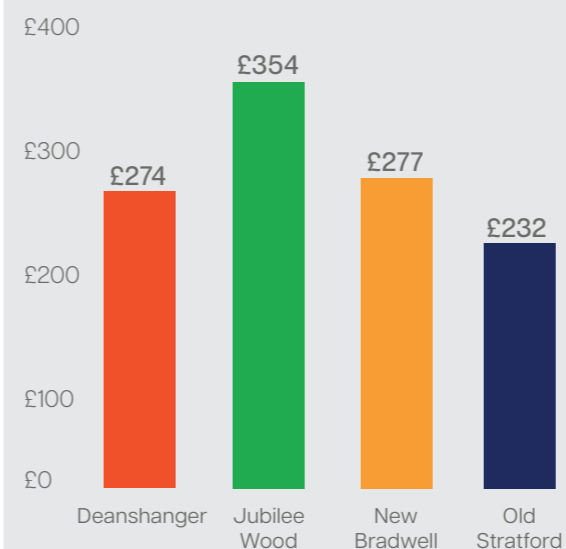
Staffing costs per pupil - Midday Supervisors



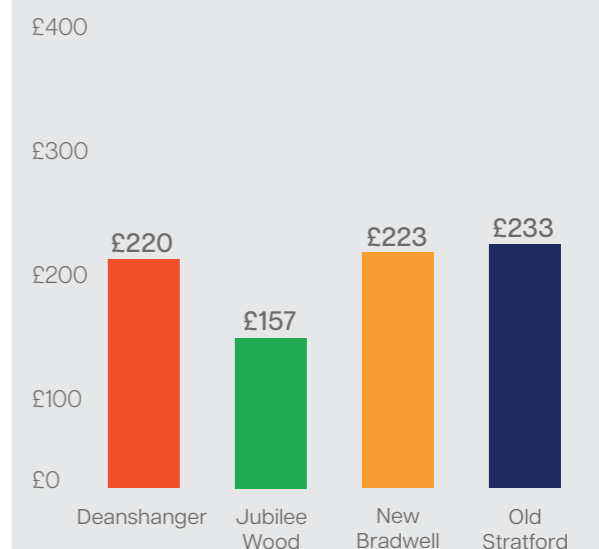
Staffing costs per pupil - Catering



Premises costs per pupil



Learning Resources costs per pupil





## 5. Expert Governance

The trustees continue to work with trust leaders to review and inform that shape of strategic priorities. This work includes a focus on how central roles and responsibilities need to continue to evolve to deliver a sustainable structure. Phil Webster's move to performing the CEO role full time from September 2023 is a good example of this. The intention is to ensure that the central capacity required to lead the growth of the trust, whilst continuing to promote school improvement, is taken forward effectively.

Over the course of the year local governors at Deanshanger have successfully transitioned from their previous arrangements to adopting the trust business cycle for governance. Three new governors have been introduced to the team there and are contributing to the ongoing blend of support and challenge for the senior leaders at the school needed continue the school's journey. The new Local Academy Committee at Jubilee Wood has been in place since September 2022 and over course of the year has successfully recruited a team with a strong skills set. Both New Bradwell and Old Stratford have recruited a number of new governors who are actively engaging with school monitoring and developing in their role.

The trust Governance Professional has provided induction and training for new governors and trustees that has been well received.

Local governors are continuing to develop their understanding of the curriculum offered in their schools and are actively engaging with monitoring activities that have a focus on the progress made by schools with their improvement priorities.

trustee and Local Governor arrangements for the monitoring of safeguarding across the trust have continued to evolve and have provide a model that will be followed for Special Educational Needs and Pupil Premium in 2023–24, following the pilot of a new tracker for this important theme.

Local Governors are keen to develop stronger links with trustees. Whilst these do exist in some areas (safeguarding, for example) an event in the autumn of 2023 will take place to promote these links and give governors the opportunity to develop their understanding of the future direction of the trust.

trustees have approved an external review of governance to take place in 2023–24. This will provide helpful feedback and aid the continued development of the trust, informing how governance arrangements might evolve as more schools join the trust.

## Our values



### Ambition

Our ambition focuses on enabling every child in our schools to make great progress. It is this ambition that fires our enthusiasm, stimulates ideas and gives us the momentum to deliver continuous improvement across the trust. This also drives our engagement with teacher and wider staff training and development. We hold uncompromisingly high expectations for how our staff bring out the best in the children they teach and in each other.



### Audacity

Being a great learner and leading great learning involves the ability to step out of our comfort zone, take a risk, and recognise and embrace the need to be prepared to fail before we succeed. This encompasses a willingness to take the plunge, to speculate, to inquire, to imagine, to doubt and to explore. We believe that the ability to take risks, when done in a way that is consistent with our other values, better equips us to achieve our mission.



### Integrity

Our reputation flows as much from how we work together and value each other as it does from the outcomes that we achieve. Working together with trust, transparency, honesty and respect enables us to create a safe space for leaders, staff teams and children to be audacious, try new things, learn from their mistakes and go again. Operating with integrity is fundamental. By recognising the richness that it brings to the culture of each school, integrity ensures that we are inclusive and that we value and celebrate diversity.

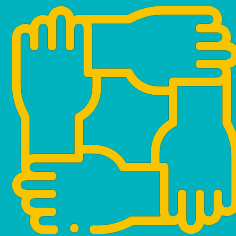


### Perseverance

The will to succeed - the courage to carry on in the face of challenges because the goal that we aspire to is so worthwhile - is also critical. Grit, determination and resilience enable us to keep going beyond initial efforts that may not have succeeded. As leaders and teachers model this and school curriculums work to promote it, children across the trust will be able to demonstrate how they are developing this key trait.



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