

A close-up photograph of a young child with dark hair and eyes, smiling broadly. The child is wearing a green dinosaur costume with a hood that has a white, jagged edge resembling a dinosaur's mouth. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom or play area with colorful toys and books. The image is framed by a dark blue header at the top and a blue footer at the bottom, with green geometric shapes overlaid on the right side.

Vantage Growth and Ambition Plan

Introduction

Message from the CEO



I am delighted to write the foreword for Vantage Academy Trust's **Growth and Ambition Plan**. On behalf of the trust and our governing board, I would like to invite you to explore our trust vision for the future, and emphasize that each element has been designed to most effectively disseminate the **Vantage Promise**, which we make to all our staff members, our local communities and most particularly, to the children across all of our academies.

At Vantage we do not plan to 'grow for growth's sake', we plan to develop our location hubs on the proviso that we are able to:

- Ensure the right balance between schools needing & providing support
- Form partnerships with enough schools to make our local hubs viable
- Balance our regional presence with our local community impact
- Take on new schools that share our vision, mission and values

As a leadership team, we are incredibly proud of the work done by staff in our academies across the North West region, each of which have a **special purpose and unique identity**, but all of whom are committed to striving for our overall mission and vision, by embodying our core values in the work they do. It is because of their efforts that Vantage is such a fantastic place to learn and work, and it is from this that our Trust's growth finds its energy and momentum.

We see a **future full of opportunity and hope** for both our current families and the new communities where we anticipate that the Vantage Promise will impact the lives of so many more families who share our vision of a better future for themselves and their children.

Simon Bramwell, OBE, NLE
CEO, Vantage Academy Trust

**The
Vantage
Promise**

To our local communities, a Vantage school is an engine for regeneration, a learning resource to meet local needs and aspirations and the hub of a community where everyone is aware of how they contribute to our mission to create better opportunities for local children. A Vantage school provides parents with increased opportunities to feel connected to their community, have access to greater resources to foster a love of learning within their household and a local centre of advice in which staff help to build their confidence to take part in their children's education. For our children, a Vantage school is a place of safety and encouragement, where children grow both emotionally and academically and where the support of outstanding staff enables them to build their confidence and realise their potential.



Vision and Values

At Vantage Academy Trust, we are very proud of our values-led ethos; we are a principled employer who lives by our core values, which you can see embodied by the staff across each of our schools. We welcome enquiries about joining our Trust, from those who are like-minded regarding our values and aspirations.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to support and encourage the work of academies in our Trust through the excellent education of children and young people.

We are passionate about ensuring that every child gets the opportunities they deserve to thrive as learners, and ultimately, as global citizens.

Our commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, in the curriculum, across our learning environments and in the quality of staff we employ is all key to providing children with the very best start in, and preparation for, life.



Maintaining a strong culture of professional development amongst our teaching staff as the quality of education in our academies can never exceed the quality of its teachers.



Fostering, maintaining and celebrating individual distinctiveness in our schools.



Developing our academies to be centres of excellence with a focus on the social and spiritual nurture and achievement of all their members.



Ensuring our academies have a particular vocation to the least advantaged, to enable them, through education, to change their lives.



Allowing every person to be an active and valued member of our community and developed in their own spiritual journey.



Encouraging pupils to be curious about the world around us and see their personal learning and growth as a continuous journey.



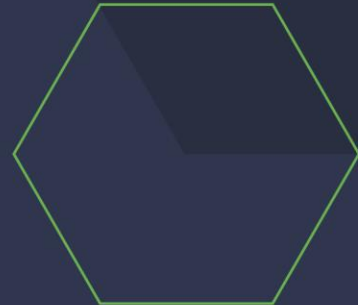
Developing future and aspirational thinking based on our educational heritage and to make use of the latest research in pedagogy and child development, ensuring that our wider learning environment reflects the high aspirations and expectations we have for ourselves and one another.



Not setting a limit on what is possible for ourselves, for one another, and for our community of schools



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Our Trust Ethos

Who are Vantage Academy Trust?

Vantage is a mixed CE Multi-Academy Trust, which recognises and supports the individual ethos of non-faith schools; we are currently made up of six Church of England primary schools, three community primary schools and a secondary school. We aim to ensure the **rapid improvement of schools** that need immediate support and nurture them into organisations that can maintain good and outstanding status. We also welcome currently good and outstanding providers to join our mission and find that, as we do, working with partner schools has a lasting impact within each school across the trust.

The Trust operates across a diverse geographical area in the North West of England, across three hubs in Knowsley, Bolton and Manchester. These local hubs bring the added benefit of specialist teachers and communal headship, as well as further support and accessible advice.

Our role is to enable the **sharing of best practice** and for economies of scale to be achieved across the group. Our mission is to support and encourage the work of academies in our Trust, through the excellent education of children and young people.

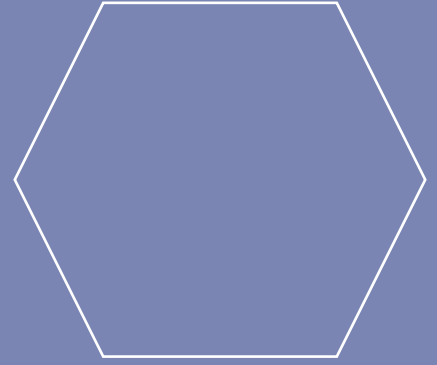
We are passionate about ensuring that every child gets the **opportunities they deserve to thrive** as learners and, ultimately, as global citizens. Our commitment to excellence in teaching and learning, in the curriculum, across our learning environments, and in the quality of staff we employ is all key to providing children with the very best start in, and preparation for, life.

As the educational landscape is changing at an unprecedented pace, the Trust provides an **accommodating and encouraging environment** to all schools that share our vision and mission.

Our staff are the lifeblood of the trust, providing outstanding service to their local communities and championing best practice to foster excellent outcomes for our children. The trust is committed to providing the best possible working environment, care and benefits for all staff, which includes giving everyone regular opportunity to provide feedback. From this, Best Companies named us the **7th best education and training provider in the UK** in 2021, and our deep-dive into wellbeing with **Mind in 2022 awarded us with a Silver Medal – Achieving Impact**.

Confident and happy children with a love of learning, is what we are well known for. **Our committed and talented staff care deeply about our children** and ensuring that every ounce of their potential is nurtured and developed. Our high standards and excellent behaviour are the foundation of our success, which is further embedded through developing **successful relationships** with our parents and local community. For schools in need of immediate intervention, we utilise a tried and tested strategy for rapid improvement based on a shared curriculum and approach to teaching and learning, where, for primaries, the International Primary Curriculum and its eight personal learning goals provide both rigour and internationally recognised standards:

- 🧠 **Co-operation**
- 🗣️ **Communication**
- 🤔 **Thoughtfulness**
- ❓ **Enquiry**
- 🔄 **Adaptability**
- 🙏 **Respect**
- 💪 **Resilience**
- 🏆 **Morality**



Our Growth Vision

Better Together

In 2013, when Vantage first became an Academy Trust, leaders created a set of initial targets to be achieved by 2020. Following the trust's success in striving for these aims, and slightly delayed by the pandemic, we revisited these goals at the start of the academic year in 2021 with staff, leaders and trustees to renew and update our five year vision. Subsequently, since the launch of the White Paper in spring 2022, the trust has adapted these targets to reassess our vision for development timescale to reach up to 2030.

Since the Trust began, leaders have invested time in building capacity to grow, and our current intention is to expand the reach of the trust to involve **seven core location hubs**, thereby strengthening our offering and helping a wider variety of schools to develop. However, we design our strategy and future plans around growth without a specific number of schools and see ourselves continuing on our journey to become a larger trust supporting sites across the region. This will maintain the trust's flexibility to consider, for example, opportunities such as merging with smaller academy trusts or strong schools choosing to join, offering **sustainability and resilience to our existing hubs, whilst increasing their footprint.**

Further exciting growth plans for Vantage Academy Trust include opportunities to extend our age range, after careful due diligence, into secondary education and taking on 2-year-olds in our nurseries, thereby providing an inclusive all-through education to enhance children's start in life and follow their learning journey right through to higher education.

The trust also plans to enhance capacity to meet the increasing needs of children and their localities, through **developing in-house skilled professionals** across a broader base, particularly in the SEND arena, utilising CPD via apprenticeships and other routes.

By **valuing our existing strengths and successes**, continuing with plans to grow sustainably, consolidating our existing hubs and extending our age range, the trust may continue to deepen its existing strengths of core values, curriculum, community engagement and professional development, to provide the foundations for further development.



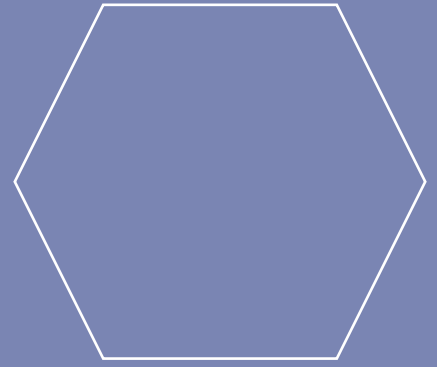
Vantage Academy Trust's strong, corporate business plan underpins the strategy to guide and support our academies, and those to join the Trust in future, to continuously improve. We pride ourselves on maintaining a strong and stable financial position. Our business model delivers **efficiency, effectiveness and economies of scale** in order to free up resources for the front line; taking on the new schools, therefore, will enable even further efficiencies to be made as the school grows to capacity.

We currently operate across a broad geographical base within the North West, bound together by our commitment to ensuring that every one of our schools has a clear focus on improving leadership and governance, teaching and learning and raising standards. Our vision also involves a **commitment to environmental sustainability**, whereby we commit to invest in modern, energy efficient and high-quality educational infrastructure wherever possible, to ensure longevity for our schools and their liveable and low-carbon communities well into the future. Due to this, we are currently undertaking reviews of all our schools in order to establish a Carbon Neutral Plan across the estate.

Part of the trust's expansion will involve **scaling up our regional footprint** to develop current hubs in East Manchester, Bolton and Merseyside, and link these locations across primary and secondary hubs in Salford East and West and Trafford. These new hubs will all develop from single school locations already within Vantage and ideally see our current schools encompassed by strong families of primary and secondary schools, complemented by specialist provisions via PRU and Special Schools.

Through these new partnerships, we will have created an all-through education experience from our 2 year olds who will most especially benefit in those areas of highest need, through to university applicants at our 6th Form provision. We are already seeing significant growth through our current schools, with SSSJ moving to three form entry, Knowsley Lane to 2 form, an additional AP unit at Gorton whilst it grows up to 2 form through to Y6 in 2025 and development to pupil capacity at those schools recently improving their Ofsted judgements under the trust. The below table shows details of pupil numbers against capacity of our current Vantage schools, with subsequent pages showing the same details for potential partner schools across these hubs:

Vantage Schools 2022						
Schools	Current Size	Growth	New Size	Forms of Entry	Nursery	Notes
Vantage Academy Trust	3,595	613	3,886	20		
Flixton Girl's High School	936	Capacity		6	N	Secondary
St James	455	Capacity		2	Y	ASD Unit – +4
St Paul's	235	Capacity		1	Y	
St Barnabas	226	Capacity		1	Y	
St Hilda's	261	25	236	1	Y	
St Augustine's	196	30	226	1	N	
SS Simon and Jude	620	52	672	3	Y	16x 2YO
Willow Tree	164	81	245	1	N	ASD Unit – 10
Knowsley Lane	318	138	456	2	Y	ASD Unit – 10
Gorton	184	313	497	2	Y	ASD Unit - 16



Better Together

Partners in Vision and Mission

Vantage Academy Trust **celebrates each school's unique qualities** and takes a personal approach to expanding our family of schools. We are always mindful, as a dynamic Trust, of the importance of sustainable growth.

The capacity and infrastructure provided by our robust Central Team ensures that the right expertise is in place to deliver the strongest educational impact. We prioritise getting value for public money by consistently reviewing our methods, making sure that our organisational structures are **efficient, effective and equitable**.

Being part of the Vantage family provides logistical and financial security, whilst also gaining new freedoms and autonomy. Our schools are at the heart of their local communities and are part of a **self-improving school system**, where each offers their strengths up to the group, creating a cycle of reciprocal benefits. We are proud to place people at the heart of our mission.

Vantage is a values-led organisation, always happy to talk to other like-minded schools, with the same strong moral compass. We provide a thorough consultative process and due diligence to ensure a smooth on-boarding of all new academies, who, from the outset, are given a **role in shaping our collective vision**.

Due to our capacity and infrastructure, our Central Team support schools with a full complement of services:

- Financial procedures and improved access to resources, due to economies of scale.
- Educational leadership providing direction and challenge, disseminating best practise and the latest research.

- Estates and project management expertise.
- HR team dedicated to supporting employee journeys.
- Communications and marketing to develop community footprints.
- A consistent supply of top-quality School Direct graduates.
- Tailored development and training through our Trust CPD package and career pathways.





80% of staff feel that Vantage has built their knowledge of how to promote wellbeing at work.

Work-life balance is 17% stronger than the national average at Vantage Academy Trust.

89% of Vantage staff feel confident supporting other staff with their wellbeing.

- Mind Survey 2022

Our School Improvement Offer

Working in Partnership with Schools

As a Trust, we believe that school improvement is at its strongest **when all schools work together**. As part of our onboarding process, the Trust performs thorough due diligence, working alongside the school to create a joint plan as to how to maintain and improve the school. For any school looking to join the Trust, we work with them through this process to establish a baseline for the school and tailor the relevant help and support to be brokered by the Trust. We find that every school who joins Vantage has something to offer and we have found each time that the Trust has something to offer them.

The work of the School Improvement Team is to establish the position of each school within the improvement matrix and thus the level of support needed to move forward and continue to **enhance their provision**. The days allocated for school improvement support are a minimum offer per academic year, as the nature of the support is **bespoke to each school**.



Across the trust, there are a number of Specialist Leaders of Education offering a varied skill set to enhance school improvement, including coaching, data analysis, Early Years, Curriculum, ECT Mentoring, Play Therapy, Bereavement Counselling and much more. More information on the expertise of our colleagues can be found in our document: 'School Improvement: The How and the Why'.

The MAT Capacity Framework is revisited annually as part of the work of the SIO team to ensure key priorities for the coming year are addressed and strengths are built upon. For Vantage, this clarifies the systems that leaders need to have to be successful school leaders in their own school and across the trust as an organisation.

As a Trust, we **continually self-reflect** and review not only individual schools, but the whole organisation and we use a variety of tools to inform our strategy; leaders use the School Improvement Capacity Framework to strengthen capacity to support more schools.

Each Vantage school is matched with a School Improvement Partner, one of our Education Directors, who visits the school six times a year, providing both challenge and support, and provides the Local Advisory Board and the trust with the flow of information they require to **assess progress and allocate further resources, as required**. Each of our schools will usually be involved in an annual Quality Assurance Review, which are carried out as a peer review process of both internal and external professionals. Every two years, schools participate in a curriculum review, led by experienced curriculum accreditors.



Sustainable Growth to 2030

Using Growth Models to Evaluate Capacity for Success

It is essential that Vantage Academy Trust readies itself for future growth, which may reach further and faster than anticipated prior to the release of the 2022 DfE White Paper. Vantage recognises that **growth cannot take place without careful preparation and close attention throughout individual acquisition processes**. Looking to fit for growth models, the trust recognises how leaders have already invested in embedding preparedness for growth and resilience to change over recent years. Indeed, the business cycle of analysis, planning, delivery and evaluation is integral to the work of each of the trust's central departments, from School Improvement to Estates.

With regard to growth via the planned expansion of existing strong hubs in Bolton, Manchester and Knowsley, Vantage foresees that East and West Salford, and Trafford will further cement the links between these areas and that each will adopt a system of stronger and upcoming schools to provide a balance of support and expertise, with plenty of opportunity for CPD and enhanced development. It is essential for the trust, in aspiring towards significant growth in the coming years and partnering with schools that share its clear mission and vocation, ensures that this is sustainable for the good of the staff and families we support.

Looking to a merged approach between a variety of corporate fit for growth models, the below demonstrates steps in Vantage's readiness to support a wider variety of local schools:

- 1. Establish current performance and capabilities** – the trust regularly conducts self-evaluation and external reviews through trusted peers across the sector, departmental reviews, accountability meetings with governance, public staff surveys and a robust business plan to record qualitative and quantitative KPIs as well as details on finance & operations, culminating in clear targets. These various measures give the trust an understanding of its current position, areas to enhance and strengths to drive forward.
- 2. Assess and measure against market leaders** – the most recent Vantage business plan includes a full market share analysis and business comparison to measure the trust's position against comparative organisations in the sector. Vantage leaders are committed to development and collaboration both with our local network and national innovators and organisations beyond the education sector, where there are lessons we can apply to develop our provision for children and staff.
- 3. Clarify strategic SWOT and priorities to most accurately assess avenues for growth** – the trust has a clear pathway to growth via strategic partnerships over the coming years, as a strong local trust with a regional footprint and CE presence. Vantage prioritises staff feedback and, in addition to whole staff surveys and staff group hubs, our recent leadership visioning session was integral to deciding on our direction of travel over the coming years, from which our SWOT and PESTEL analyses then factored into our Business Plan.
- 4. Gain consensus from leadership around these strategic priorities to ensure they cascade down** – the work done regarding leadership visioning is closely connected with current strategies and our business plan, utilising staff expertise to develop these ideas and use their choices to guide future decisions i.e. to provide all-through education 2-18, branch into secondary and special schools and look to provide international schooling opportunities in the long term to benefit more families and staff CPD.
- 5. Measure business growth over time and evaluate performance** - Vantage feels that its robust strategic aims, documentation and business plans with clear targets support resilience and sustainable growth; we welcome external and expert points of view and utilise child, parent and staff voice feedback to ensure that these outcomes remain true to our vision and values by ensuring that they are reviewed by core stakeholders and consider how we can positively impact these groups at all times.



Delivering on our Growth Vision

Building Capacity for Change

As a larger local trust, our direction of travel regarding growth is formulated around developing current and local hubs. Where possible, the trust will grow groups and clusters at the same time to ensure a clear focus for leadership and instil a positive culture and identity within the group. It is essential, within this strategy that we value our staff and ensure that they are fully on board with these changes before they are implemented, so that they are able to proactively drive these processes with their own departments. Indeed, we will undertake detailed plans for C-suite departments to map their development and growth in order to facilitate this plan in a sustainable way. We have used the CMC change model below to illustrate our analysis and plan for gaining leadership buy-in:

- 🔑 **Leadership's capacity to drive the change** – Vantage leaders have the competency and authority to lead the change – our departmental directors, particularly our Director of Education, works closely with SLTs to ensure that any skill gaps are addressed, most recently implementing coaching training for all school Principals. As this is a judgement employees make at the outset, it is of primary importance that reciprocal feedback continues via performance management to ensure that confidence in school and trust leadership is maintained and restored as necessary.
- 🔑 **Middle management's capacity for change** – as one of the primary conduits for information, feedback, and addressing resistance, the trust highly values feedback and ideas offered by middle leadership. Most recently, the SIO team have implemented the Vantage Leaders of Learning scheme to foster skill and development within middle leaders across our schools. We recognise that the level of support, enthusiasm, and energy these first point of contact people managers put into helping achieve change directly impacts the level of success within projects. These managers are encouraged to work closely with SLT to ensure communications are most effectively distributed and concerns are raised in a timely manner.
- 🔑 **The organisation's history with change** - the degree to which the trust's past efforts have achieved their benefits and goals can be assessed via public record in relation to school results and inspections, which show the positive impact of trust involvement in school life, in addition to the feedback from children and staff regarding the opportunities this has provided. The commitment of leaders to honest conversations around the effective implementation of initiatives means that any negative impact has been addressed before project completion and lessons learned are communicated within the trust community. Vantage is committed to seeking stakeholder feedback at all stages and acting in the best interests of the community.
- 🔑 **Capacity for change** - the Trust underwent a period of consolidation after taking on StP Primary in early 2020 to ensure that departments had the chance to evaluate their own needs and efficiency, building on the work of our self evaluation in 2019, in which new staffing needs were actioned. Departments are regularly consulted regarding capacity and are encouraged to submit individual plans and projections to bolster expected growth to avoid fatigue or overwhelm when processing current workload alongside new changes.
- 🔑 **Impact and purpose of change** – Trust communications work prioritises the need to help staff understand any upcoming change and how it may impact their role to avoid misunderstanding/rumour negatively impacting morale. Staff are encouraged through these communications, meeting, conferences and contact with trust leaders to see the purpose behind the change as it relates to our vision and mission and to their own role, to encourage buy-in and long term sustainability to any new programme.
- 🔑 **Impact and purpose of change** - Research has shown that people go to great lengths to adopt change if they feel it fills a purpose they buy into - their WIIFM (what's in it for me), as well as a greater purpose they are supporting by working for the organisation. At Vantage, we help staff to see this purpose by living out our mission and vision each day, and being guided by our core principles in all decisions, underpinned by strong, reciprocal communication channels.



“It feels very rewarding to be part of the Vantage Community. I am very happy at work and feel part of a team”

- Trust Staff Survey 2020

Future Projects

Prospective Areas for Trust Growth

Vantage Academy Trust is predicated on an ongoing process of growth and development; as we move forward, there is an expectation within trust leadership that this will not only continue but will also **take exciting new directions**. Clarity of strategic direction will be critical to inform the pathways the Trust will pursue.

Our leaders recognise key future opportunities to be:

- 🌱 Consolidation and expansion of our existing hubs, **increasing their sustainability and resilience** by taking on additional local schools within these locations and those surrounding, particularly expanding the reach of Manchester locations.

- 🌱 Extending our age range to provide care for children **throughout their school journey**, from age two up to higher education, particularly looking at the secondary phase, as well as Early Years and possibly up to sixth form as a final step in this process.

- 🌱 Developing the trust's specialist services to offer provision and consultancy externally, as well as between trust schools, looking at core areas such as sports, MFL and even play therapy or speech and language specialists.

- 🌱 Vantage International Projects.

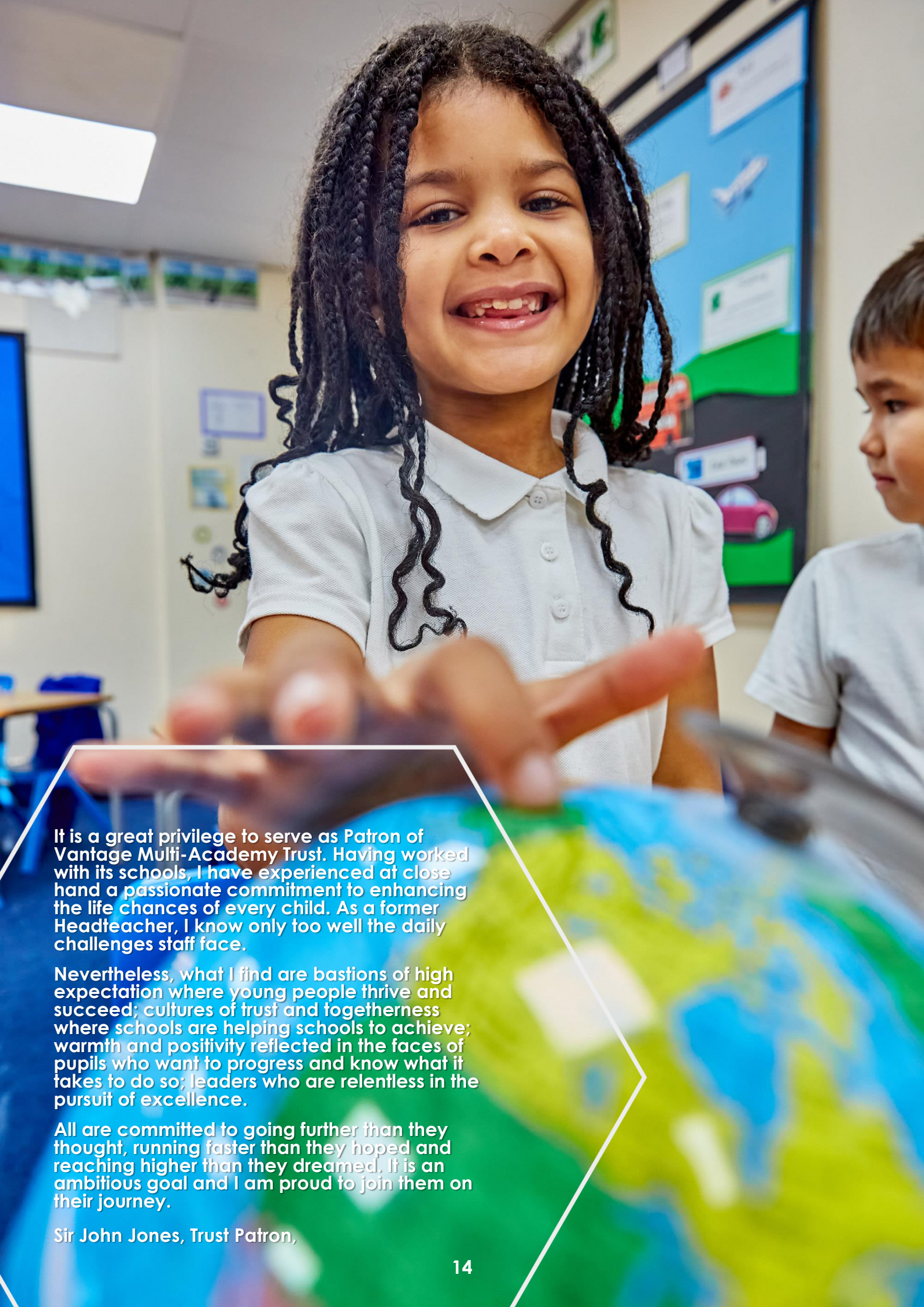
The Trust will mitigate potential risks emerging from these aims by utilising the Board of Trustees to ensure that leaders are **working tightly towards our core mission, vision and values**, thereby avoiding the potential for 'mission drift' and will closely monitor plans for further development to ensure that growth is sustainable.

Therefore, avoiding becoming too big too quickly. A core focus of integration work for new schools joining the trust will be cultural assimilation. Similarly, capacity will be ensured within the Central Team by addressing succession planning challenges at senior level promptly and effectively.

The final anticipated step that Vantage will take to continue to strive for a broader impact will be Vantage International – **curating our global footprint**.

This may involve deepening partnerships with those schools we visit currently via the IPC i.e. in Singapore and Vietnam, sponsorship of schools, teaching projects in developing countries – particularly working with female education providers or with the Diocese to review their international partnership model, assist and adopt best practice, as well as hosting international teacher development opportunities.





It is a great privilege to serve as Patron of Vantage Multi-Academy Trust. Having worked with its schools, I have experienced at close hand a passionate commitment to enhancing the life chances of every child. As a former Headteacher, I know only too well the daily challenges staff face.

Nevertheless, what I find are bastions of high expectation where young people thrive and succeed; cultures of trust and togetherness where schools are helping schools to achieve; warmth and positivity reflected in the faces of pupils who want to progress and know what it takes to do so; leaders who are relentless in the pursuit of excellence.

All are committed to going further than they thought, running faster than they hoped and reaching higher than they dreamed. It is an ambitious goal and I am proud to join them on their journey.

Sir John Jones, Trust Patron,



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