Minerva
Learning Trust

People Strategy
Minerva Learning Trust

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Welcome to our People Strategy

The Trust People Strategy has been carefully developed, taking into account the latest workforce research and HR metrics whilst considering the response we need to take in relation to the feedback received from our employees through our annual staff survey. Such valuable feedback has helped to shape our strategies in respect of workforce planning, recruitment and retention, well-being and continuous professional development.

Through active engagement and listening to the feedback of our employees, we have formulated a strategy that is not only responsive to their needs but also aligns with our organisation's broader goals. This dynamic and evolving plan is designed to adapt and respond to shifts in employment legislation, the workforce climate, challenges, and best practices, ensuring the Trust can fully capitalise on opportunities and unlock the potential of our workforce.

Furthermore, our People Strategy highlights our priorities and initiatives aimed at attracting, developing, retaining, and inspiring our workforce, all of which are integral to our Trust Strategic Plan. It serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to our mission, vision, and values, fostering a culture characterised by inclusion, independence, respect, and success.

Our People Strategy is aligned with the Trust strategic aims of 'Stronger Together' through delivery of three key priorities to become the Schools of Choice, Employer of Choice, and Trust of Choice.

Purpose

Minerva Learning Trust recognises that workplaces are changing rapidly through the impact of technology, economic and environmental climate challenges, multi-generational workforces, and a change in employee expectations including flexibility, wellbeing, benefits, and a strong focus on ethical leadership.

The Trust is operating in an increasingly competitive environment where we know there are challenges in attracting, retaining, and rewarding high-performing employees with the right skills and talent. Workplaces are becoming more agile and flexible with increased use of technology and a focus on employee well-being. As an employer, we need to find ways to balance the needs of our students and our desire to ensure we provide them with an outstanding education with our ability to provide a working environment which is attractive and retaining the very best people.

To achieve this, it is important for our organisation to take a strategic and planned approach to the management and development of its people and this document sets out that approach.

Leaders and managers across the Trust will play a key role in delivering the outcomes from our strategy alongside our Central Human Resources team, supporting and driving our key priorities and actions to achieve the intended outcomes.

Our Central HR team will provide professional and pro-active services which add value and are focussed on the needs of the organisation, enabling leaders to make informed decisions thereby increasing their confidence to be great people leaders.

Our Current Context

Our Trust HR data shows the following Trust workforce metrics:

A current workforce of 714 employees. 46.22% teachers and 53.78% support staff.

72.41% of the workforce is female, 26.89% male and 0.7 identify as other.

18.21% of the workforce is over 55, 52.38% are aged between 25 and 44.

66.8% of the workforce is white British, 18% are from other ethnic characteristics, and 15.2% have either refused to provide the information or it has not been obtained.

3.5% of the workforce have confirmed they are disabled.

Staff turnover during 2022/23 was 14.49% The UK average is approximately 15%. *

*This included colleagues moving from one school to another and casual workers, such as exam invigilators, deciding not to continue to be available.

Our Trust annual employee survey told us that:

53% of the workforce have considered resigning from their post in the previous three months. Teaching assistants were most likely to report this.

Safety had the highest proportion of positive responses at 91%.

Career opportunities was also a positive response at 54% and 3% above the national benchmark.

Staff support and relationships was the area with most mixed reports and although 80% positive, it was 1% below the national benchmark.

Workloads was the topic with the lowest proportion of positive responses at 26% closely followed by professional support at 30%.

Staff identified the need for more information about employee benefits and options for flexibility at work and improved work life balance.

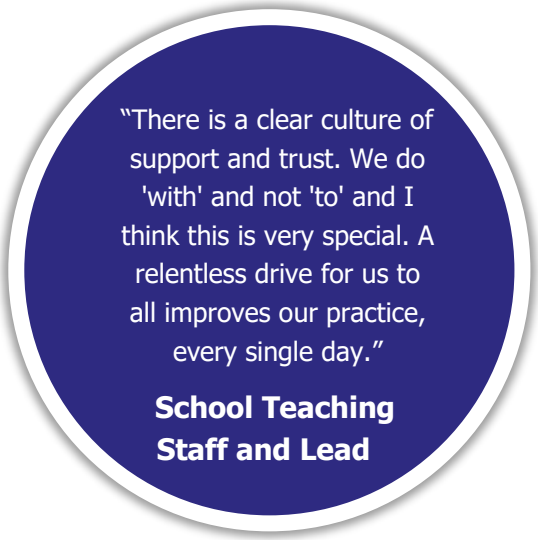
* Both areas have been identified as key issues in recruitment and retention of employees in a range of research reports.

The National Context

Teachers

In December 2023, a Commons Library Research briefing identified that postgraduate teacher recruitment was below target in 2023/24 by 38%, mainly driven by low recruitment for secondary trainee teachers (50% below target compared to 4% below for primary). The postgraduate teacher recruitment target has only been achieved once since 2015/16 and this was in 2020/21 when it was 11% above target. There are issues in some secondary subjects where it is consistently lower than the average, in particular within physics, design and technology, modern foreign languages, and computing. In addition to these subject areas, vacancy rates across the country were highest in humanities, maths, music, ICT, and general science.

In January 2019, the Department for Education (DfE) published a Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy. The strategy's central reform was the introduction of the Early Career Framework which underpinned an entitlement to a fully funded 2-year package of structured support for all early career teachers including 5% funded off-timetable in the second year of teaching. The framework has been in place since April 2022.



In November 2022, there were 468,000 full time equivalent teachers in state-funded schools in England, this was an increase of 6% since the information collation started in 2010. Despite this, the increase has not kept pace with the increase in pupil numbers and the pupil to teacher ratio in 2022 was 18.0 which was a reduction from 18.2 recorded in November 2019.

On 20 March 2023, the Education Committee launched an inquiry into teacher recruitment, training, and retention. Its scope included the effectiveness of the DfE strategy, and the report is due in early 2024. The Trust People Strategy will be reviewed to reflect any key issues which may arise from this inquiry.

Alongside the recruitment of new teachers, the retention of existing teachers is a key component in maintaining teacher numbers, it is also a major focus of the DfE's strategy. The leavers rate in November 2022 was 9.7% which was an increase on the previous two years and includes those retiring. In the previous two years the leaver rate had been lower than average and reflected the position with turnover during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the 12-month period up to November 2022, 4000 more teachers entered the profession than left it. 13% of newly qualified entrants were not working in the sector one year after qualifying and 20% two years post qualification. The five-year rate was 31% which was comparable to previous years.

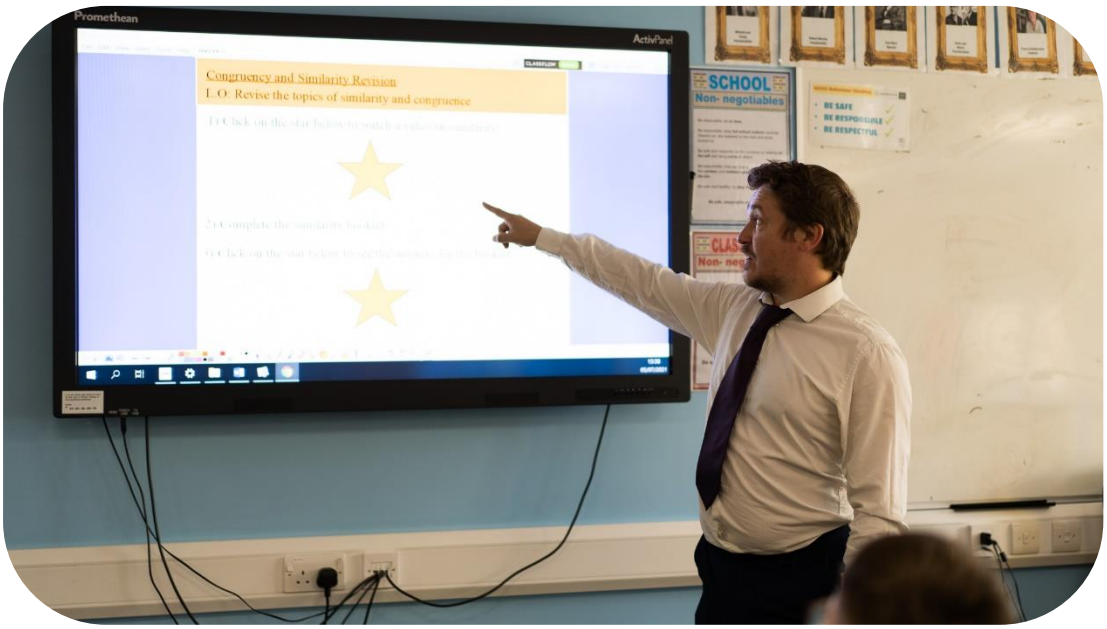
In 2023, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) produced three reports exploring flexible working, workload and leadership and culture as part of their 2023 research theme focusing on teacher recruitment and retention.

The first EEF report claimed that flexible working approaches could play an important role in improving teacher retention, but there is little research looking at their broader impact. The review also found that some schools are already offering personal days, part-time positions, and opportunity to complete lesson planning and assessment offsite.

The second EEF report focussed on how different approaches to managing workload can support recruitment and retention. High workload is the top reason given by teachers leaving the profession so reducing workload is a priority for improving retention and making teaching more attractive.

The third EEF report explored the evidence base on school leadership for teacher retention. The review confirmed that school leadership plays a crucial role in influencing teacher retention. Prioritising teacher development, building an equitable support system, promoting collegiality, and maintaining a positive school climate are effective leadership approaches and strategies to motivate and retain teachers in schools.

Teachers' pay in 2023/24 saw an increase of at least 6.5% following a series of teacher strikes and union calls for better pay and working conditions. The pay award also saw the Government achieve its manifesto commitment and the starting salary for teachers was lifted to £30,000. The School Teachers Review Body (STRB) remit for 2024/25, issued by the Secretary of State, asked the STRB to provide an assessment of the adjustments which should be made to teachers pay whilst considering the cost pressures that schools are facing, equalities impacts, evidence regarding recruitment and retention, the wider labour market in England, forecast changes in pupil numbers and the level of demand for teachers and the government commitment to increased autonomy for heads and governing bodies to develop pay arrangements to suit the individual circumstances of their schools. The timescale for the report is May 2024.



Support Staff

In September 2023, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published a number of reports about the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on schools. One of these reports outlined the research and impact on staff in schools.

The NFER report confirmed that support staff recruitment and retention challenges had been exacerbated by recent cost-of-living pressures as schools have been unable to offer salary levels which are competitive in comparison to other sectors such as hospitality and retail. Schools are reporting difficulties in recruiting and retaining support staff in roles such as teaching assistants, business and admin staff and cleaning staff. SEND is a problematic area, along with student support, due to a shortage of suitable applicants to work with the most vulnerable and challenging students. Whilst salary is a factor, other barriers identified include lack of professional development to deliver the roles required, flexibility to achieve work life balance and term time working which can restrict time off particularly to meet family demands.

The Trust operates a pay structure which was inherited from Sheffield City Council and is based on a job evaluation scheme to ensure each role is objectively assessed against criteria to ensure equal pay. The values within the grading structure are based on National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) agreed points. In the last two years, the pay awards have been backdated following lengthy negotiations at national level. This has resulted in the Trust paying additional supplements to stay in line with the real living wage. The Trust minimum rate is currently £11.59 per hour and is due for an increase in April 2024, however it falls short of the £12 per hour real living wage from May 2024.

It is expected that the April 2024 pay award will result in a higher hourly rate however it remains a challenge to ensure there are differentials within the pay structure.

The pay award for the last two years has been a fixed lump sum of £1,925 per annum or a percentage increase depending on the existing earnings level. This has led to an erosion of differentials. The structure limits the Trust ability to recognise contribution and the competing demands of the employment market.

The terms and conditions for support staff are based on national and local agreements, through the NJC or Sheffield City Council, and some aspects could be reviewed to ensure the Trust remains competitive with other schools, trusts or organisations e.g. annual leave entitlement.

Our Strategic Aims

Our People Strategy is aligned with our Trust Strategic Plan and our mission, vision, and values as we aim to be ***stronger together*** through employee engagement and development.

It is our key strategic aim:

"To further develop our offer to support and develop our staff and create an environment within which they feel valued and cared for."

Our future work environment needs to be inclusive, agile, and efficient. Achieving high levels of performance will depend on strong ethical leadership and highly engaged employees.

Our People Strategy is therefore focused on four strategic priorities:

Our Aims in Detail

Priority 1 – Attract, reward, and retain the best talent.

We aim to attract and retain the best talent in the market by offering competitive compensation and benefits, providing clear career paths and opportunities for learning and development, and fostering a positive employer brand and reputation.

To achieve this aim, we will:

- Expand the use of the Every HR system to automate the Trust recruitment process and update recruitment materials to ensure we are promoting the benefits of working for Minerva Learning Trust.
- Ensure our induction and CPD programmes enable colleagues to start and perform their roles effectively and support engagement within the organisation.
- Review and develop our package of pay and benefits to attract the best talent, ensure fairness and equality across the organisation and provide opportunities to reward all contributions.
- Develop a Trust talent management process and career development pathway to support the development and retention of key skills and expertise in the Trust.
- Explore the use of Artificial Intelligence to improve recruitment and attract more candidates.

Priority 2 – Deliver effective employee engagement.

We aim to reduce turnover and increase retention by enhancing employee engagement, recognition, and feedback. We will strive to produce a safe, healthy, and supportive work environment that enables our workforce to balance their work and personal lives as well as raising awareness and providing support for wellbeing and health issues.

To achieve this aim, we will:

- Develop the Trust approach to staff recognition and collaboration including communication of the opportunities available.
- Implement the Edurio survey to engage employees as part of the Stakeholder Strategy, analyse and respond to feedback and establish focus groups to support implementation of an action plan.
- Further develop a safe working environment where our employees continue to feel comfortable and can speak openly about their well-being and experience at work.
- Review and relaunch the Trust staff wellbeing and workload charters including development of the staff wellbeing committees to support Trust wide actions.
- Build relationships with trade unions through our collective bargaining process.

"MLT is an extremely supportive trust whose values underpin everything our school stands for."

School Support Staff Member

Priority 3 – Deliver effective leadership and management.

We aim to develop and empower our leaders to effectively manage and support their teams, and to role model our values and behaviours. We want to ensure that our leaders have the skills, knowledge, and tools to handle people management issues such as performance, conduct, absence, and conflict. We also aim to promote a culture of accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement among our leaders and employees through a culture of ethical leadership.

To achieve this aim, we will:

- Develop effective HR policies to support the management of employees across the organisation.
- Deliver training and support for leaders and employees at all levels.
- Identify, nurture, and develop future leaders and engage as part of the Trust approach to talent management.
- Support the implementation of the Trust Ethical Leadership Framework and integration into people processes including recruitment and professional development.
- Ensure statutory compliance across the organisation in respect of people management including safeguarding.

Priority 4 – Develop the Trust's strategic approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

We aim to create a diverse and inclusive workplace that respects and values the differences and contributions of all our employees. We want to ensure that our policies, practices, and processes are fair, consistent, and free from discrimination, harassment, and bias. We also aim to foster a culture of belonging, where everyone feels welcome, respected, and valued.

To achieve this aim, we will:

- Develop an equality, diversity and inclusion policy, charter, and action plan.
- Design and deliver a programme of professional development to support employee understanding of EDI.
- Establish effective systems to collate, monitor and record EDI data.
- Establish a range of stakeholder groups to support our approach to diversity and inclusion as well as staff wellbeing.
- Carry out gender and equality pay gap reporting and monitoring to identify issues and take appropriate action to address these.
- Commit to the Disability Confident Scheme and achievement of Level 1 in the first instance.

Action Plan

Details of the actions to support the delivery of our four strategic priorities are summarised below. More details can be found in our Trust Development Plan and Business Operations Activity Plan.

Priority 1 - Attract, reward, and retain the best talent			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Pay and Reward Framework	• Develop an employee benefits scheme in collboration with staff – 'Minerva Benefits'. • Embed the 'Minerva Benefits' in our recrtuiment materials to attract the best staff. • Establish a common induction programme to enable colleagues to start their roles effectively and create alignment to our Trust. • Review and launch our package of pay and benefits.	• Launch the employee benefits scheme to all staff and develop ways to effectively promote it to staff. • Launch recruitment materials which sell the 'Minerva Benefits' making best use of staff testimonials. • Develop principles for establishing and assessing teacher leadership and management roles and remuneration across the Trust.	• Review the impact and take up of the employee benefits scheme.
Recruitment and Retention	• Explore the recruitment module in Every HR to automate recruitment process and production of letters to increase efficiencies and ensure scalability. • Explore ways in which technology can be used to decrease workload and increase efficiencies.	• Launch new recruitment procedures and processes to ensure that our staff and volunteer workforce is more representative of our local community.	• Review recruitment processes to ensure they are fit for purpose. • Become a beacon of best practice and share best practice across the sector.
Professional Development	• Launch our Minerva Open Door Days and evaluate its impact. • Develop our Ed Tech strategy, to include a strand on technology to support staff efficiency and effectiveness. • Review our MCLA ROUTES CPD programme and Minerva Leaders in Education to ensure its ongoing impact.	• Launch Minerva Researchers in Education to all staff. • Launch our Ed Tech strategy to include professional development to support staff to make best use of technologies in their work.	• Create opportunities for job swaps, job shadowing and experiences to share best practice between teams and individuals. • Explore additional ways to nurture a culture of research and innovation across the organisation.
Talent Management & Succession Planning	• Develop a talent management strategy and career development pathway for all teaching and support staff roles within the organisation. • Utilise the career development pathway to inform MCLA programmes.	• Launch the staff development pathway to all staff and stakeholders. • Further refine our approach to use of the Apprenticeship Levy to aid succession planning and talent management. • Develop metrics to monitor the impact of strategy and recruitment and retention.	• Link the career pathway and talent management strategy into the Trust Performance Development Review process.

	Priority 2 - Deliver effective employee engagement		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Staff Voice	• Implement the Edurio staff survey and analyse the results. • Develop action plans across the Trust to act on findings and share outcomes.	• Roll out 'Edurio Pulse' surveys to dive deeper into singular areas of improvement identified by staff. • Develop a formal framework for successful staff working groups to drive organisational change.	• Utilise findings from Edurio to identify and predict trends over time.
Staff Recognition	• Develop the Trust approach to staff recognition, rewards and celebration alongside staff. • Scope out the 'Minerva Oscars' staff awards.	• Launch the Trust's approach to staff recognition and rewards. • Monitor and evaluate its impact; including feedback from staff.	• Further develop our approach to staff recognition and rewards.
Staff Wellbeing	• Review policy and materials to support approaches to flexible working which contribute to employee wellbeing and closing of the gender pay gap. • Develop systems to quality assure the delivery and impact of our Trust Wellbeing and Workload Charters. • Embed the impact of staff wellbeing groups in all schools and teams.	• Establish systems to monitor and quality assure impact of the workload and wellbeing policies charters. • Create systems to better communicate with staff and to celebrate success of the Trust, schools and individuals. • Promote the work and impact of school/team staff wellbeing groups.	• Further develop staff working groups to focus on key areas of support for staff e.g. Disability in Work.

Priority 3 - Deliver effective leadership and management			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
HR Policies and Frameworks	• Develop and launch a HR handbook for Managers and Employees Deliver training in people issues for senior leaders. • Deliver training in people issues for senior leaders. • Review HR systems and processes to ensure scalability as the Trust grows. • Maintain effective relationships with Trade Unions.	• Implement changes to systems and processes. • Horizon scan the sector to identify best practice and inform ongoing iteration. • Continue to deliver training and support for staff at all levels. • Continue to investigate ways technology can be used to increase effectiveness of HR processes and procedures.	• Review and improve training and development for staff at all levels in HR matters. • Continuously review HR processes and procedures to ensure they are efficient and effective.
Developing Future Leaders	• Develop ways to identify current and future leadership talent as part of our Talent Management strategy. • Review our Leadership ROUTES CPD programme in response to staff feedback. • Create a common induction programme for new senior leader onboarding.	• Develop an approach to leadership secondments in response to business need and PDR ambitions.	• Create a skills map of leaders across our organisation to better inform school to school support deployment.
Trust Ethical Leadership Framework	• Launch the ethical leadership framework to all staff and stakeholders. • Integrate framework into people processes including recruitment and professional development.	• Support the implementation of the Trust Ethical Leadership Framework. • Deliver ongoing training for staff in the implementation and use of the framework.	• Review and quality assure the ethical leadership programme to evaluate its impact.

	Priority 4 - Develop the Trust's strategic approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion		
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Strategic Planning	• Establish effective data systems to collate and monitor data. • Commit to the disability confident scheme at Level 1. • Develop an EDI policy, Charter and Action Plan. • Carry out gender pay gap reporting and monitoring to help identify EDU issues.	• Launch the EDI Policy and Charter to all staff and stakeholders. • Quality assures its delivery and impact to ensure consistency across the organisation.	• Monitor, evaluate and review the impact and delivery of the EDI policy, charter and action plan. • Celebrate success and impact with all stakeholders. • Refine plans for future years.
Professional Development	• Undertake staff and leader consultation to identify areas for development in understanding EDI issues.	• Develop a programme of training for managers and employees to raise awareness and understanding.	• Launch the programme of training and development for managers and employees.
Stakeholder Engagement	• Undertake employee consultation to identify areas for stakeholder group development e.g. disability at work.	• Establish stakeholder groups across the organisation.	• Evaluate impact of stakeholder groups.

Monitoring & Evaluation

We will monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of our People Strategy using various indicators and measures such as our employee survey, retention/turnover rates, performance, diversity, and well-being.

We will benchmark our results against other organisations, within and outside of the education sector to identify best practice and ensure we are making good progress against our intended aims and objectives.

We will engage with the Trust Board and recognised trade unions to review actions and measures to identify areas of success and areas for improvement on a termly basis.

Indicators of Success

Monitoring the impact of our People Strategy is important to us as a Trust. The following success criteria will be used to monitor this on a termly and annual basis:

- increase in positive responses to staff survey particularly in key areas for improvement,
- reduction in staff turnover, absence and casework,
- increased applications and positive responses to recruitment campaigns,
- positive engagement with and experience of CPD offer,
- successful implementation of digital solutions and improved use of ICT/AI to support the HR function,
- positive employee relations and trade union engagement,
- successful growth of the organisation and delivery of major projects,
- creation of a diverse and inclusive workplace including achievement of the Disability Confident Scheme Level 1.

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