



More than a school
Discover your future



Prospectus 2024/2025



Malala Yousafzai
At the age of 14 Malala became the youngest person to be named Time magazine's person of the year. She was the first person to be named Time magazine's person of the year for her campaigning for girls' education. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work.

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Our 2022 Ofsted inspection report states that:

- High ambitions are seen in all aspects of school life.
- The pupils are deservedly very proud of their work.
- High-quality teaching helps all pupils learn well.
- Pupils access a wide and rich set of experiences.
- Leaders have established strong routines for behaviour.
- A school that is on a journey to Outstanding.

Judged 'Good'
February 2022



Welcome

Welcome from Emma Edwards-Morgan, Principal

As a former learner, it has been an absolute privilege and honour to return to my former school to help to shape the future of our amazing young people! At The Link Academy, we have a highly skilled, dedicated and specialist staff team. Over the past few years, we have worked hard to ensure that we deliver a varied, engaging, and inspiring curriculum. Whilst also ensuring that pastoral care and learner wellbeing is at the heart of our approach.

The Link Academy has seen improving progress year on year for the last six years and we are now above the national average. The percentage of learners achieving a Grade 5 in English and mathematics has also improved significantly. We are rightly proud of these improvements, but we intend to continue to ensure that when our learners leave The Link, they can access the very best post-16 opportunities including college, apprenticeships and more. As per our school values, we 'Dream big' and absolutely believe that the children in our community have the ability to be successful in their chosen next steps. In the last two years, we've seen two successful applicants to Oxford University, which provides an example of the strong educational foundation that we are providing for our children!

In 2022, The Link Academy was graded 'good' by Ofsted in all areas. Since then, we have made significant progress and have been recognised for our gold standard careers provision, highly effective child centred approaches and ongoing excellent behaviour standards. 'Rewarding effort' is at the heart of all that we do. We instil the mantra 'hard work beats talent' so that learners develop a strong work ethic which develops their skills, knowledge, and ability. Our overall aim is that our learners reach their full potential, whatever their background or starting points.

In recent years, we have invested significantly in the learning environment at The Link. Most recently, there has been a state-of-the-art refurbishment of science labs, our food technology room and the installation of new computers and software including 3D printers and laser cutters. All of this provides the best opportunity for your child to explore new subjects, find new ambitions and to achieve to their full potential.

Team Link work together to make a positive impact on our young people so that we can give them the very best life chances. We are proud to be a school at the heart of Netherton and our surrounding area. We would like to extend an invitation to you to come and see this for yourselves.



Welcome to Dudley Academies Trust



Dudley Academies Trust is now a well-established, successful Trust providing comprehensive support for all our schools so that they can flourish. We are committed to ensuring that all our young people have a high-quality education that will give them the foundations they need for a fulfilling life and a rewarding future career.

Following four successive years in which our academies improved their GCSE results, they are all at or above the national benchmark for the Progress 8 measure. Indeed, all four are the most improved schools in this borough when compared to 2019 outcomes. It is, therefore, no surprise that The Link Academy was judged to be a 'good' school in its most recent Ofsted inspection in February 2022. I would urge parents and carers to read the inspection report as it really does capture the high quality provision at this school.



Our learners are a fantastic group of young people who tell us they feel happy, safe and well cared for in our schools.



We are launching our next strategic plan in Autumn 2024, and this sets out exciting plans for the next phase of our journey. A continued focus on collaboration and building partnerships is a feature of our new strategic plan. At the forefront is a pioneering master collaboration with Dudley College of Technology and The Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology which cements a progressive group arrangement to extensively support an innovative and comprehensive educational provision for all learners ensuring that they move on to positive destinations. We are also committed to further strengthening our partnership with parents and carers, employers and further and higher education institutions.

An Innovation Exchange Centre, established by the Trust in partnership with Millennium Point, Dudley College of Technology and the The Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology will be integral to the Trust's commitment to pioneering innovation in all aspects of its provision. This new centre will provide learners of all ages with the opportunity to experience new and exciting learning experiences in the heart of Birmingham. The centre will provide a hub for collaborative projects with partners from other schools and trusts, higher education and industry and offer teachers from both the primary and secondary phases the very best professional development programmes.

The Trust is proud of our large and experienced Central Team that supports each academy with its leadership, teaching, building programmes, sports and activities, financial management, staff training, IT and – most importantly – the progress and wellbeing of your children.

We have recruited numerous, excellent staff to our academies and made some outstanding appointments to their leadership teams. We have introduced a proven system of rewards and behaviour management that has changed the culture of our classrooms, accompanied by a raft of new approaches to teaching. An inspiring curriculum offers a rich variety of subjects with strong emphasis on English and Mathematics and the digital technologies that are now so important. Many £millions have already been invested in improving the buildings, facilities and computing equipment of our academies, and much more is being spent this year.

I am confident that The Link Academy will continue to make great strides forward over the coming years and that your child will find every opportunity to thrive there and to develop as a rounded and confident young person. We want your child to 'Dream big' and to know that many positive life choices are within their reach.

Our learners are fantastic young people who tell us they feel happy, safe and well cared for in our schools. We are delighted that you have taken the time to read this prospectus and we encourage you to visit one of our open events and meet some of our learners, or book a personal tour of the academy, so you can see for yourselves what we have to offer.

Jo Higgins
Chief Executive Officer



About our sponsor

The Trust's sponsor, Dudley College of Technology, is one of the most successful further education Colleges in the UK and a major contributor to the development of the economy in The Black Country and beyond. The transformational leadership that has propelled the development of the College is a driving force behind Dudley Academies Trust.

The College provides education and training programmes across the West Midlands, enrolling some 12,000 learners each year on approximately 4,000 academic and vocational programmes, including A Levels, T Levels, skills-based courses and apprenticeships.

Ofsted rated as 'good' in its most recent inspection, the College has success rates for learners across all programmes that are on or significantly above national benchmarks. A very high proportion of Trust learners go on to benefit from the College's high-quality education, inspiring facilities and access to world-leading technology.

On the College's technical and vocational programmes, over 95 per cent of 16-18 year-old full-time learners move on to higher/further education or employment. Of those who study A levels at Dudley Sixth, 80 per cent choose to continue to university, with many more moving on to the College's own higher education courses.

Specialist centres at the College are equipped to provide a technical education unsurpassed in the region; they include Dudley Advance I, a state-of-the-art Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering & Technology, and Dudley Advance II, a Centre for Advanced Building Technologies.

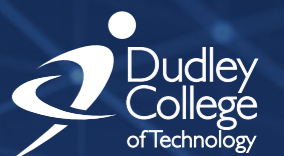
Every year, the College supports thousands of apprentices, a very high percentage of whom progress to higher apprenticeships and degree level programmes.

Dudley College is the lead Further Education institution in the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology (IoT), a major new development based at the heart of the Black Country. The IoT offers a wide range of high-quality technical education programmes with clear pathways to skilled jobs in Advanced Engineering & Manufacturing, Modern Methods of Construction and Medical Engineering & Healthcare.

In February 2020, the college was awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in recognition of its contribution to the economy of the West Midlands through large-scale advanced vocational and technical education. Its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Assured (STEM) ® status is also recognition that they are delivering high-quality education and training in all of these areas.



The College sponsored the creation of Dudley Academies Trust and actively assists it with a variety of support services, sporting activities, careers events, facilities, and governance.



Why The Link Academy?

As part of Dudley Academies Trust, we benefit from:

- Support from a team of subject directors and subject coaches – teachers who are experts in their subjects and who work with our teachers and your children.
- Help with recruiting exceptional teaching and support staff.
- Shared best practice in the classroom.
- Highly effective learner support, in and out of the classroom, with an emphasis on mental health and wellbeing.
- A focus on personal development as well as results, with an excellent Careers programme and a wide range of activities designed to develop learners' talents and to build self-belief.
- Large-scale investment in our buildings, IT and facilities.
- The latest available learning technologies.
- A tried and tested model of how to ensure positive behaviour and motivate learners through Values Driven Expectations.
- The resources and expertise of Dudley College of Technology.

In addition, The Link Academy offers:

- A successful leadership team who have a clear plan for moving forward and a passionate commitment to the school.
- A significant improvement in our GCSE results.
- Very strong roots in the local community and a welcome for the many learners who come from outside.
- A medium-sized school with plenty of resources and facilities, but retaining a friendly atmosphere.
- Collaborative Learning in the classrooms, so that every learner joins in, gains confidence and learns from the learners around them, as well as the teacher.
- Dance studios and performance spaces, dry-play pitches and indoor sports facilities (a whole leisure centre!) and a large and modern school hall and dining hall.
- A broad range of extra-curricular clubs, teams, activities and trips.
- A school that is absolutely determined to win back the 'excellent' grading that it previously boasted.



Settling in and getting set up for life

Transition

We ensure that the transition from primary to secondary school is as smooth as possible and an exciting and happy experience for your child.

During May and June, we will contact your child's primary school to learn all about their academic progress so far. Our staff then go out to all of our main feeder schools to say 'hello' to the learners, talk to their teachers and learn all about them and their abilities and needs. Any extra support that is needed will be noted so that it can be in place when your child comes to us. SEND staff will also make contact where appropriate.

Then, in July, all new learners will come to taster days, when they will attend lessons, make new friends, get to know their teachers, get used to the behaviour and rewards system, and begin to feel at home in the academy. There will also be a meeting for all new parents and carers which you are strongly encouraged to attend.

Pastoral support is one of our strengths. Every learner who joins us will clearly know who to talk to if they have things on their mind. That support is with them throughout their school career.

We place a lot of emphasis on Collaborative Learning. Learners will usually be seated in groups rather than rows, and ideas, thoughts and opinions will be discussed in a structured way followed across all lessons. This ensures that learning is active and thought-provoking. It also ensures that all learners are engaged in the learning process and not just a few who might be asked questions by the teacher.

The impact of collaborative approaches on learning is consistently positive. Learners sit in mixed-ability groups of four and work together to solve problems and work out answers. Effective Collaborative Learning requires much more than just sitting pupils together and asking them to work in a group; the lesson is carefully structured by the teacher, with well-designed tasks that lead to the greatest learning gains. Approaches which promote talk and interaction between learners are particularly important. Learners gain hugely from the other children who work with them, as well as from the teacher, who is constantly involved.

Collaborative Learning is just one of the factors that contributes to our emphasis on communication skills. In the classrooms, the learners have to constantly communicate with each other and the teacher; we ensure that there are many other communication challenges to develop their abilities, from poetry recitals to student leadership and mentoring roles at every level of the academy.



The Link Academy offers leadership who have a clear plan for moving forward and a passionate commitment to the school.



Helping your child to succeed

In Year 10, learners progress to study GCSE courses. They study the core subjects, English, Mathematics, Science and PE, plus others that they choose themselves. Our learners are supported by our highly-committed teachers who are themselves supported by subject directors and coaches from the Trust Central Team.

We aim to accelerate the progress of every single learner by:

- Building on areas of strength to improve outcomes for all learners.
- Quickly identifying and dealing with any areas of weakness.
- Accelerating learner attainment.
- Increasing the levels of outstanding teaching in the academy.
- Raising learner confidence, developing their future career aspirations and increasing their knowledge of career options.
- Ensuring that all learners, irrespective of their differing abilities, achieve their maximum potential.

We have a strong emphasis on English and Mathematics skills as the foundation for academic success and we have introduced exciting new ways of teaching these critical subjects. These teaching methods are focused on encouraging communication, getting every learner in a classroom to join in with the lesson and helping the learners to solve problems in teams and to learn from each other. The key to success is making learners want to

learn, giving them goals that motivate them 'Dreaming big' and approaches to teaching that keep them engaged, focused and making progress in every subject 'Learning that inspires'.

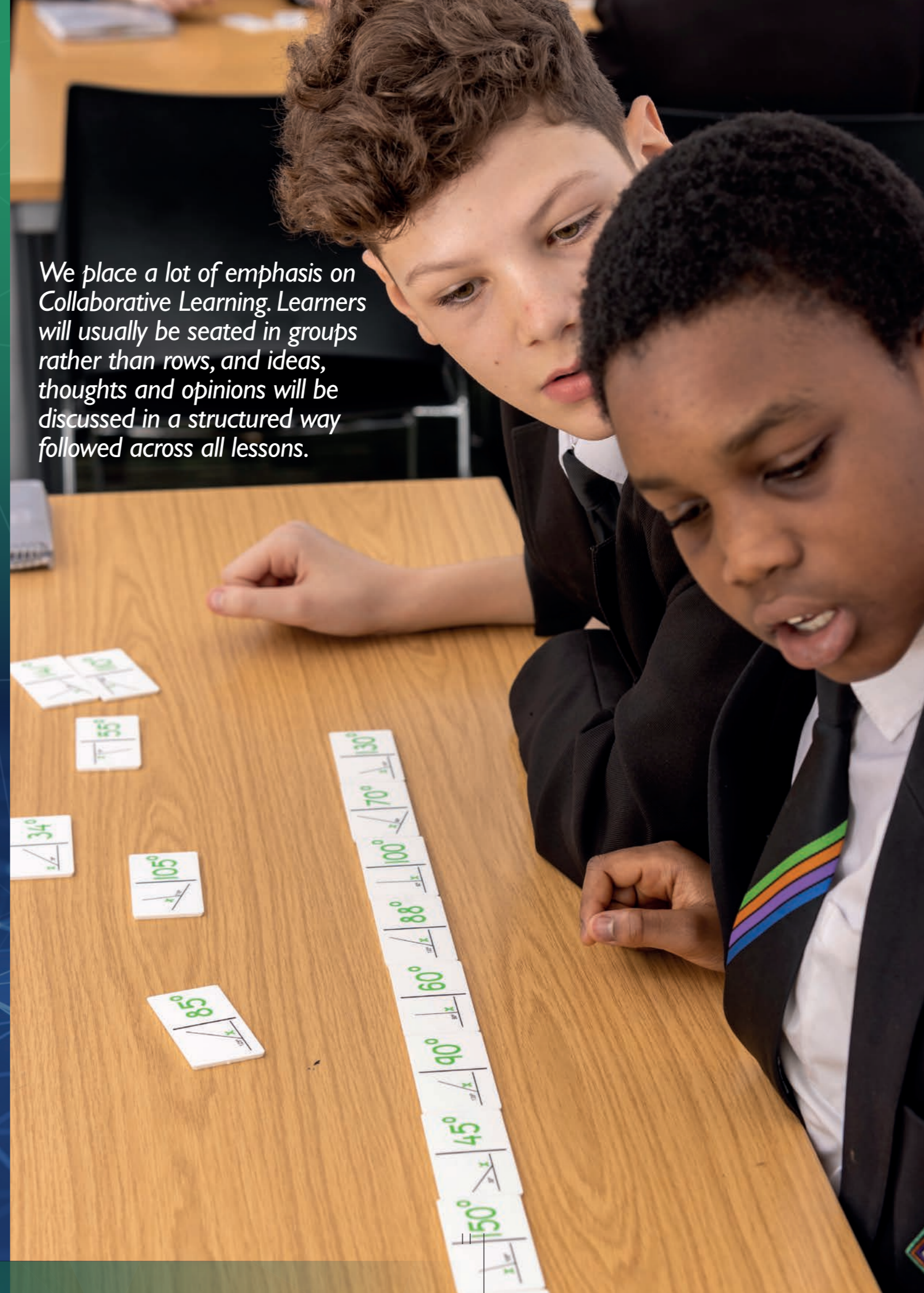
One area where the Trust has invested is in state-of-the art learning technologies which we use for Mathematics, English and a range of other subjects. These software programmes can be used at school or in the home.

Parents and Carers often think that the performance of their children is only reviewed once a term when Parents' Evenings are held. At all of the secondary academies within Dudley Academies Trust, the performance of each learner is recorded and actively monitored on a week-by-week basis. We know almost immediately which learners might need more support and which ones can be pushed on to a higher level of achievement. This is regularly reviewed and discussed by the Senior Leadership Team; every child is known, understood and helped to be the best that they can be.

Upgrade is an initiative that supports our Year 11 learners and prepares them for their GCSE exams. An extended school day gives learners the best chance of performing to the best of their ability. There are practice papers throughout the year, extra revision lessons, study skills kits and a wide range of rewards to ensure that everyone stays focused on their goals. All learners are encouraged to 'Dream big' and aim for the highest grades.



We place a lot of emphasis on Collaborative Learning. Learners will usually be seated in groups rather than rows, and ideas, thoughts and opinions will be discussed in a structured way followed across all lessons.



Confident and Caring Citizens

We want our learners to leave us after five years with great qualifications and a good idea of what careers they might progress to. We also want to give them the confidence to succeed in the world and the attitudes and behaviours to make positive contributions to our society.

In order to achieve this, we run a wide range of programmes focusing on careers, leadership, volunteering, personal and social responsibility, confidence building and personal development. The following pages tell you about these in greater detail. All of them are underpinned by our system of behaviours and rewards.

Values Driven Expectations

Every school has a behaviour model, but ours is different. It focuses on opportunities for learners to be rewarded of course, there are sanctions for learners who break the rules. Values Driven Expectations cuts out the behaviour that stops learners from learning, that wastes time in the classroom and distracts attention from the subject being studied. In and out of the classroom, learners and teachers tell us that our behaviour model is a massive plus point for our academies.

Our emphasis is on rewarding good behaviour, attendance and punctuality, thoughtfulness and kindness, effort, achievement, participation in academy life and setting a good example.

All adults in school actively seek opportunities to praise and to hand out merit stamps and commendations. Learners who earn a certain number of merits and commendations are rewarded at special celebration events throughout the academic year.

Our values

Our five core values are at the heart of all that we do. Our values were shaped by the student leaders from each of the academies and reflect the kind of ethos and culture they want to be a part of.

Our values are shared among all of the Trust's members and give us a shared understanding of how we should all behave so that we can all be happy and successful. At all times we should treat each other with respect.

Commitments

Commitments is a fantastic programme that brings our values to life. It challenges learners to display our values in their behaviour, to think about their futures, to participate in student leadership and to get involved in all sorts of extracurricular activities. There are rewards for learners who achieve the commitments that they make, but the real reward is that our young people grow in their attitudes, abilities and responsibilities.

The Link Academy Awards

The Link Academy Awards reflect the four key areas of Community Cohesion (Mind to be Kind), Extra-curricular (Commitments), Leadership (Student Leadership) and Curriculum and Careers (Personal Development) within our school.

The Year 7 awards program is crafted not only to foster academically talented learners but also to cultivate individuals

who contribute to society, develop leadership qualities, and engage actively within the school and the broader local community.

The Link Academy Awards supports our five core values and reinforces our commitment to rewarding effort.



Dreaming big
Rewarding effort
Leading together
Respecting each other and our world
Learning that inspires



Respecting each other and our world

Student Leadership and Learner Voice

All learners in every year group have the opportunity to participate in student leadership activities, at the heart of which is our Student Leadership team. This highly impressive group of young people supports key school events across the Trust and works with the entire student body to ensure that our core values are put into practice. Members of this team regularly report to our Principals' Board, the Local Advisory Committees and our Trust Board.

Our young leaders genuinely play a central role in shaping the direction of the Trust and putting learner voice at the heart of our decision-making processes.

In the academies, young leaders help to organise school events, guide people on tours, speak in assemblies, work on 'staying safe' initiatives, discuss issues and suggestions with the Principal, organise sports teams, run charity events and contribute to the recruitment of staff.



Supporting our young people and their families

Our Trust is more than a Trust and we are more than a school. This means that we go the extra mile in supporting our young people and their families.

Any new Year 7 learner that joins our school is gifted with a free blazer and tie. We also provide a free tie for our Year 11 learners and a free tie for our Student Leaders.

We are proud to be part of Dudley Academies Trust, a Multi Academies Trust (MAT) in the heart of Dudley which is made up of two primary schools and four secondary schools. All academies within our Trust provide free uniform items for children who join our family of schools.

Further details in relation to our school uniform can be found on our website under Parents & Carers > Uniform & Suppliers.

More than a school

We are committed to our mission: working together we will develop inspirational schools which instil ambition and desire in young learners, open their minds, widen their horizons and equip them to succeed in a challenging world.

Learning that inspires

As part of Dudley Academies Trust, we can offer a very wide range of sporting and extra-curricular activities.

Sports include cricket, rounders, netball, football, basketball, tag rugby, rugby football, athletics, gymnastics and many more. Dudley College of Technology has hosted and supported tournaments and sports coaching, while the Trust is putting a plan for sports development in place for the future.

Recently, our learners have participated in public speaking and poetry recitation competitions, full-scale dramas, musicals, dance, STEM competitions, entrepreneurship competitions, business networking, public debates, foreign trips, field trips, charity events, community activities and many other interesting and worthwhile additions to their studies.

Poetry by Heart

Poetry by Heart, an initiative supported by the Department for Education, is another confidence-building challenge based around speaking skills. Learners get used to memorising and reciting poems in front of a range of different audiences

and compete with each other to enter a national poetry reciting competition. Learners from our schools have reached regional and national finals, with the national finalists having performed in front of famous poets at the Globe Theatre.

A Mind to be Kind

The 'Mind to be Kind' programme develops a culture where kindness, without an expectation of reward, becomes a way of life. Rather than focusing on performing acts of kindness for a reward, we focus on how it feels when we are kind. The aim is that giving and receiving kindness becomes natural and normal. This programme is central to ensuring that our academies are safe, happy and calm places where everyone is respected.

The 'Mind to be Kind' programme is delivered to all learners as a series of short 'Stop and Think' sessions where kindness is explored through three main themes:

- Acts of Kindness
- Living without Harming Others
- Respect.



Sports include cricket, rounders, netball, football, basketball, tag rugby, rugby football, athletics, gymnastics and many more. Dudley College of Technology has hosted and supported tournaments and sports coaching, while the Trust is putting a plan for sports development in place for the future.



Dreaming big: a careers programme that fits your child's ambitions

We all know that if learners are 'Dreaming big' about what they want to do in life, they will work harder, achieve more and be happier.

This is why Dudley Academies Trust has launched CareerFit, a best-in-class careers programme across our four secondary academies.

Starting in Year 7, every learner will have inspiring careers advice and experiences that motivate them to plan for their future. Learners will have a careers passport in which they will record all of the careers advice and experience that they gain during their time with us. That will include:

- At least one activity in every term of every year.
- High-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance.

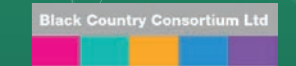
- Workplace visits, work shadowing and work experience with leading businesses such as Thomas Dudley.
- Taking part in business events and entering entrepreneurial competitions.
- Outside speakers from business and industry.
- Interview practice with experienced interviewers.
- Taster courses at Dudley College of Technology in their industry-standard studios, salons, IT suites and advanced engineering and building technology facilities.
- Visits to top universities.

By the end of Year 11, our learners will be equipped to understand and take advantage of the opportunities ahead of them. Whether they choose A Levels or college courses and apprenticeships, learners will leave us with a map of where they want to go in life and a passport of knowledge and experience that will help them to get there.

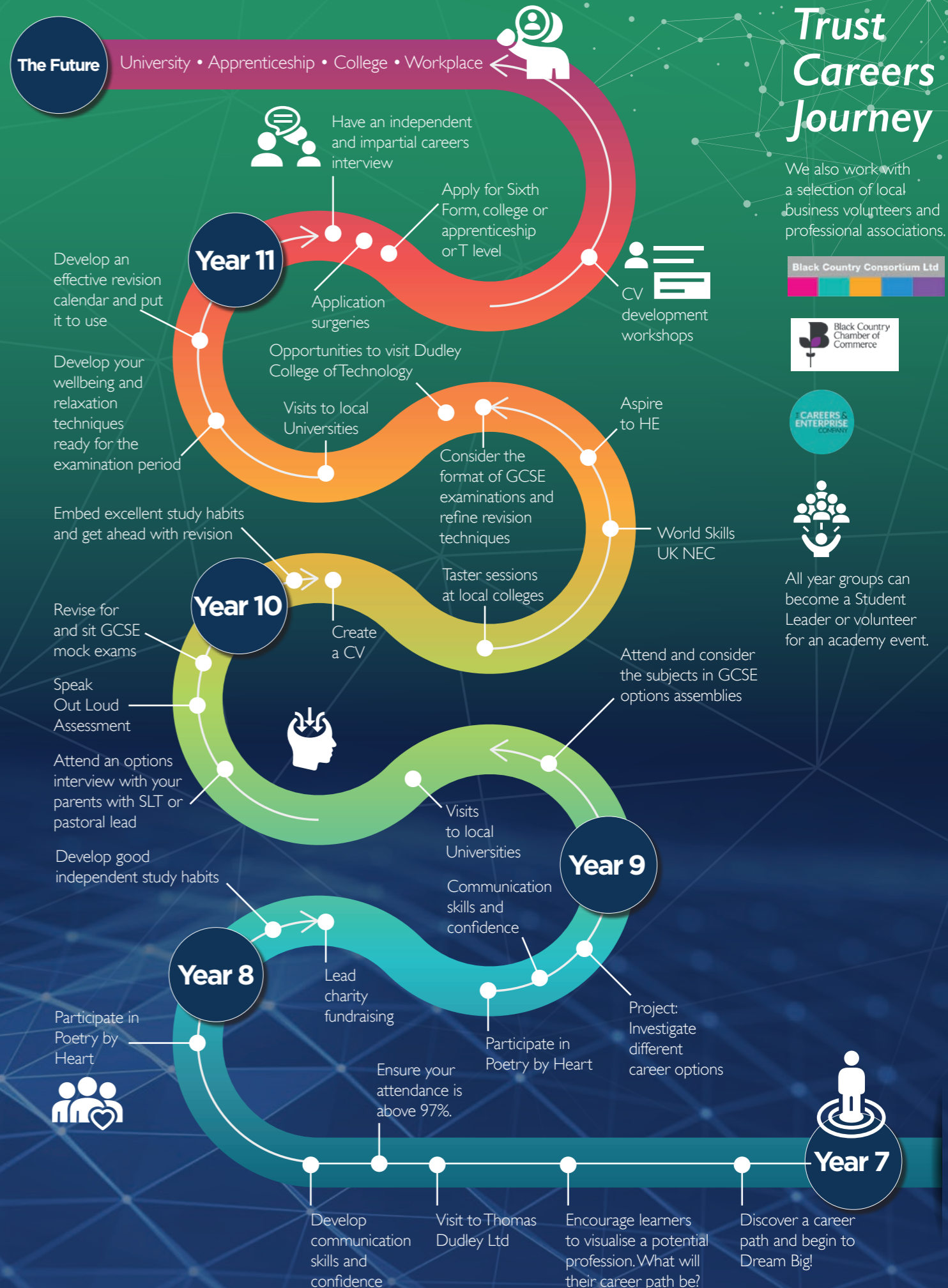


Trust Careers Journey

We also work with a selection of local business volunteers and professional associations.



All year groups can become a Student Leader or volunteer for an academy event.





**Judged 'Good'
February 2022**



Key Contacts

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Proud to be part of Dudley Academies Trust www.dudleyacademiestrust.org.uk

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**Admissions information is available via Dudley Council
www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/school-information/school-admissions/secondary-year-7-intake/**



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