

LITTLE ACORN TRUST – MULTI ACADEMY TRUST



INTRODUCTION

Little Acorn Trust was established in Bristol in September 2014 as a Multi Academy Trust with a focus on primary education in Bristol and the south-west region. We believe that for children to thrive most, it is important to have a focus on early years and primary education, so therefore we are developing a MAT of primary schools. Currently the Trust has oversight of Four Acres Academy who manages Four Acres and Bishopsworth Children’s Centres, but we are looking to expand in a way that is steady and carefully managed through partnering other schools and academies.

ABOUT THE LITTLE ACORN TRUST

We are currently a small Trust with six Directors. The Trust’s declared purpose is to improve and enhance the educational opportunities, experience and outcomes for children in the early years and primary phase of education.

- We believe that every child can achieve and can develop the resilience, resourcefulness and independence that will support future learning and improve life chances.
- We believe in the concept of lifelong learning and in working with families, the local community and other support agencies for the development of the whole child.

The Trust has extensive experience in a context of social and economic deprivation but sees clear value in close working with schools from varied locations. We are committed to diversity, equal opportunity and social justice.

THE TRUST’S APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP

The Little Acorn Trust is inviting schools to join the Multi Academy Trust as partners where there is mutual support and learning. We have a clear vision and model of teaching and learning for school improvement and enhanced outcomes but are keen to work with other schools to learn and share ideas to find the best solution for each individual setting.

In partnering a school/academy we believe it is important to

- acknowledge and be responsive to the identity, character and context of that organization,
- recognise strengths and base development on sound analysis of what is needed to bring about improvement.
- collect, analyse and use quantitative and qualitative data intelligently as a central activity in this process.

Having been through the academy conversion process with Four Acres Primary School and operating as an academy since February 2015, we are able to advise on what needs to be done for the conversion process.

THE TRUST'S APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

We know that the processes of school improvement are complex. Effective and sustained progress is the result of a systematic approach where there is skilled leadership in:

- identification of aspects to be addressed;
- planning and monitoring appropriate action for development;
- strategic deployment of expertise for support;
- empowering staff to grow in skill, confidence and expertise;
- working collaboratively within a school and between schools, in the Trust and beyond;
- a combination of unequivocal standard and target setting with responsiveness to changing contexts and circumstances so momentum is maintained.



Tracking, monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions and initiatives is key to effective development.

We believe that sustained school improvement must be supported by: clear governance structures and accountability; effective administration and financial expertise.

MODEL FOR IMPROVING TEACHING, LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

The model employed by the Little Acorn Trust incorporates:

- A culture of high expectations and challenging targets.
- Regular and consistent monitoring of children's progress and performance within and across years.
- A standard core data set which teachers contribute to and use for formative and summative assessment and which is analysed for presentation to a range of audiences.
- Specific attention to performance and progress of groups including pupil premium, gender, SEND and EAL.
- Data collection and regular reporting of other aspects: attendance, safeguarding, behaviour.
- Teachers as learners. Professional development through: engaging in classroom-based enquiry; collaboration and team work within school; contact and collaboration with teachers outside school via e.g. Teaching Alliance partners; access to training and other development activity. Identification, discussion and dissemination of what is effective and successful.
- Distributed leadership. Empowering senior and middle leaders to engage with and lead specific aspects of enquiry, change or improvement.
- Non-negotiables where they are required to start the improvement process; but not to induce a compliance culture.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP



The Trust aims to achieve effective governance through a balance between local school autonomy and collective responsibility.

Schools within the Trust will be encouraged to develop as distinctive communities with their own local governing body but also to operate within the overall shared vision of the Multi Academy Trust. It is important that the character of each school is protected to enable it to be most effective in its local community.

Clarity of roles and responsibilities together with effective communication between all aspects of governance are essential. The Trust will work with schools to set up governance structures with clear Terms of Reference and lines of communication so that the governance meets the requirements of the Department of Education, Charity Commission and Companies House.

The Board of Directors

The role of the Board of Directors of the Trust is:

- To ensure the quality of the strategic, legal, financial operation of the Trust.
- To ensure the quality of provision in each school/academy
- Understand and oversee the strategic development of each school/academy within the Trust.
- Challenge and monitor performance/impact/effectiveness of each school/academy within the Trust and of the Trust itself.

There are currently three members and six directors in the governance structure and we have the ability to restructure and add directors with particular skills needed in the MAT as schools join the MAT. The ideal board will primarily comprise Directors with particular skills supported by consultants to the Board who bring specific skills also and a representative from each of the Schools in the MAT. When the Board gets beyond 9 members, it will need to be restructured to become a skills based board. We are currently actively recruiting directors or consultants to the Board with skills in HR, Accountancy and PR.

The Chief Executive Officer

The Commissioner for Academies has made it clear that Multi Academy Trust groupings must have a Chief Executive Officer as a single point of contact between the Trust and the Department of Education. Initially this role will be part time and will focus on developing the Multi Academy Trust, supporting Head Teachers and sourcing and developing resources and capacity. They will ensure that the core principles of enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes remain the key priority. Development targets and improvement priorities are agreed through a combination of leadership and co-construction with the Head Teachers and Senior Leaders in partnering schools. The CEO maintains oversight, provides support and engages with Senior Leaders in monitoring and evaluation.

Local Governance

Each sponsored school/academy has a Local Governing Body. Its role is to combine support and challenge of the Head Teacher/Principal. The Local Governing Body reports to and is accountable to the CEO and Board of Directors and where needed, will be provided with support and training to enable them to maximize their effectiveness and ensure that there is clarity in the roles and responsibilities of each member.

Senior Leadership Team

The Head Teachers and Senior Leaders will benefit through being part of a mutual support group.

Business Manager

The Business Manager for the Trust is responsible for ensuring oversight of business support across the organization, providing strategic advice to the CEO and Board for the development and operation. The Business Manager will also provide appropriate support to each setting and ensures that there is a coordinated approach and the right level of expertise to deliver each of the Finance, Income Generation, HR, Property and Administrative functions to achieve value for money and maximise savings through economy of scale.

MODEL FOR BUSINESS SUPPORT IN THE TRUST

Investment in the MAT will be kept to a minimum through the pro-bono contribution of the skills and knowledge of the Directors and Consultants to the Board of Directors who offer their services as unpaid volunteers.

As schools join the MAT, they will contribute around 3-5% of their GAG. It is intended that the financial contribution will fund the CEO and a developing package of centralised services including Finance, Income Generation, HR and Payroll Support, Property Services, Legal Services, Operational Services and Safeguarding and Welfare.



PROFILE OF CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MEMBERS AND MAT BUSINESS MANAGER

The current Board of Directors comprises the following six people:

Pat Triggs (Chair and Member)

Pat has a long career in education as a teacher, teacher trainer and researcher. She has worked in secondary and primary schools, undertaken consultancy and led innovative professional development activities. As a Research Fellow in the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol she worked on a range of projects. These included longitudinal studies of teaching and learning in primary and secondary contexts, evaluations of the use of information technology, comparative studies of education and attainment in Europe, and school improvement in China. Much of this research activity has involved both close co-operation/collaboration with teachers and gaining the perspective of children and young people on their experiences of learning. Pat has been involved in school governance since 2010.

David Gascoigne (Vice-Chair)

David is the Managing Director of Trigon Pensions in Bristol, a firm which he established back in 1998 to provide advice and professional services to pension schemes across the country. David spends

most of his professional life sitting on and advising Trustee Boards on funding, finance and investment matters, dealing with complex pension legislation issues and assisting in various aspects of strategic planning. David is keen to bring his wide experience in finance and business to the Trust and to help build a better future for our Academies.

Robert Lane (CEO)

Robert is Executive Head of Four Acres Academy and Children's Centres, responsible for the outcomes of 390 pupils aged 2-11 across three settings. He is trained as an Ofsted Inspector and is Chair of the local Head Teachers' Group. He has worked in education since 1992 in schools of differing size and community backgrounds. Before a career in education Robert worked in retail as an area manager and ran his own business.

Kajetan Wandowicz

Kajetan is a management consultant currently working on several projects for a large national education charity. He has experience of design, implementation and management of programmes and projects in, amongst others, primary education, distance learning, prisoner rehabilitation and professional conferences. He has an interest in decision making procedures and has given thinking skills workshops and training focused on using thought processes derived from strategy games like chess in making professional and life decisions. He has also worked in teams responsible for several professional sporting events. Additionally, he runs a small chess coaching business and has trained several players on English national junior teams. Before his current career, Kajetan published academic research in ancient Greek philosophy and taught English overseas. He has a strong interest in law.

Debra Bryant (Safeguarding Director)

Debra was appointed as the Parent Director. She lives locally and, as a child, attended Four Acres School, as did generations of her extended family and her two children. Debra has strong local networks and works professionally as a nurse in the local Hospital Trust. She has been involved in school governance for six years.

Carys Evans

Carys was an elected staff Governor on the Local Governing Body before joining the Board. She was promoted to the Deputy Head role in September 2017 at Four Acres Academy. Carys is a Senior Leader in Education and carries out school improvement work for the Bristol Primary Teaching Alliance and Pickwick Teaching and Learning Alliance. She is also a writing moderator for Key Stage 2 for Bristol Local Authority.

There are three Members as follows:

Pat Triggs (Also Chair of Directors)

Jerry Woods

Jerry is an experienced operations manager having worked in frontline policing, security management, business risk and, latterly in facilities management. Jerry brings a wealth of staff management experience, including expertise in change management, operationalising strategic plans, staff investigations and disciplinary and general HR matters. In addition, Jerry has experience of budget management and risk planning. He has been a governor in primary schools for almost a decade and a board director of a national membership organisation and has been the director of a business consultancy as well as a director of the Little Acorn Multi-Academy Trust.

Dianne Evans

An ambitious Senior professional, Fellow CIPD, who is a self-motivated, accomplished and conscientious individual with a versatile and determined approach to all aspects of work. Excellent communication, managerial and technical perspective to provide an understanding and professional approach to people at all levels. I thrive in a busy environment and enjoy organising work to provide a high quality service to all levels of staff. Strong commitment to integrity, honesty and openness, treating people consistently, fairly and with respect. Currently focusing on helping individuals with new business start-ups, from assistance with business plans; financial statements; funding advice and general mentoring and leadership. Alongside renovating large manor house which will become an events venue based in Cheltenham. Outside of work concentrate on contributing to charity work, interior design work, diverse investments and enjoying my family.

Rachel Barfoot – MAT Business Manager

Rachel was appointed as MAT Business Manager in November 2014. She worked as a General Practice Chartered Surveyor specialising in insolvency and property management before moving into the Charity sector. During the past fifteen years she has been lead manager for £5.4m multi agency regeneration scheme in Withywood, and Chief Executive during the £4.8m restoration and social enterprise development of the award winning Arnos Vale Cemetery and Chief Executive of an area wide Community Anchor and infrastructure organisation in South Gloucestershire. She has experience in property management, developing and managing social enterprises, project management, fundraising and income generation, marketing and developing charity organisations.

CONTACT

For further information please contact

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