

2022

agm

The
Circle
Trust

A charitable company limited by guarantee registered
in England and Wales, company number 11031096, registered at The Circle Trust,
London Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1SS. Tel: 0118 332 0011
Email: contact@thecircletrust.co.uk ● www.thecircletrust.co.uk

TABLE OF *contents*

1

Introduction
by Executive
Headteacher

2

The Circle
Trust's
Governance

3

The Circle
Trust's
Fourth Year
of Operation

4

The Circle
Trust's
Growth

5

The Circle
Trust's
Stewardship

6

The Circle
Trust's
Approach to
School
Improvement

7

Safeguarding

8

Special
Educational
Needs

9

The Circle
Trust as an
Employer

10

The Circle Trust's Chair of Trustees
concluding remarks

1. OUR EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER



I find myself writing the introduction to this year's AGM report in strange times. Strange because we take the tentative steps into this new epoch of living with Covid-19 whilst reflecting on yet another year where the virus has continued to be the utterly dominating factor. We've rightly grappled with societal shifts of "Black Lives Matters" and "Me Too" and it was not that long ago that Brexit consumed our thinking. We now watch with disbelief at the awful consequences of war in Ukraine. The scenes from war are unbearable. We hold onto the fact that we also see extraordinary acts of kindness, humanity and compassion. As Dracula author Bram Stoker put it: "The world is full of good men – even if there are monsters in it."

So, it seems we live in a generational moment of most extraordinary events. Whilst schools are certainly not immune from the burdens of these present days they remain places of resilience and hope. In this last year our Trust has continued to garner strength in continuing to work in close fellowship with one another and has weathered the present times well. We work together in a system of professional generosity and in doing so becoming a great deal "more than the sum of our parts."



1. OUR EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER continued

So, to the future! England is on the cusp of having its 10,000th academy. Over half of all children in state schools are taught in an academy with most being part of a Trust. The “rubicon has been crossed” and the trajectory of all schools over time converting and joining Trusts set. In the period ahead, I anticipate the Trust to enter its next stage of growth.



Since its inception in 2017 the Trust has tripled in size. Today, The Circle Trust is made up of 3394 children and young people and six schools (census October 2021). We have grown and will continue to grow not for the sake of being bigger but in order to fulfil our fundamental ambition to advance education as a public good. Our Trust creates the conditions for improving the quality of education by focusing on the things that matter most - strong curricula and assessment, high standards of behaviour and secure knowledge of improving schools. These are the things that will always matter to parents and communities.

Finally, a written document cannot hope to articulate the vibrancy, busyness, fun (and noise!) of all our school but I hope the films below, which were completed during this last period, might!

Ginny Rhodes
Executive Headteacher



2. THE CIRCLE TRUST'S GOVERNANCE

OUR VALUES

- The highest educational outcomes for every learner is paramount
- Preserving the unique identity and ethos of all partner schools is essential
- To be anything but utterly inclusive is non-negotiable
- Being self-reflective is essential in encouraging innovation, our Trust is always driven to improve further
- What we say is what we do, we recognise talent, foster expertise, believe well-being for all is fundamental
- Our Trust promotes collaborating with others and being outward looking.

Our vision statement

The Circle Trust believes that all children and young people deserve to have an excellent well-rounded education and to flourish in first-rate schools with the best teaching, the best facilities and the most up to date resources made available to them.



OUR GOVERNANCE

Governance arrangements in The Circle Trust are crafted to ensure all aspects of performance of the Trust are rigorously held to account. Members, Trustees and Local Advisory Boards work within the seven principles of public life (Nolan).

All governance groups comply with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation and the law. They always act in the best interests of children and young people and manage all resources responsibly and with integrity.

Our Trust's Articles of Association [here](#) describe how a Trust is governed.



OUR GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS



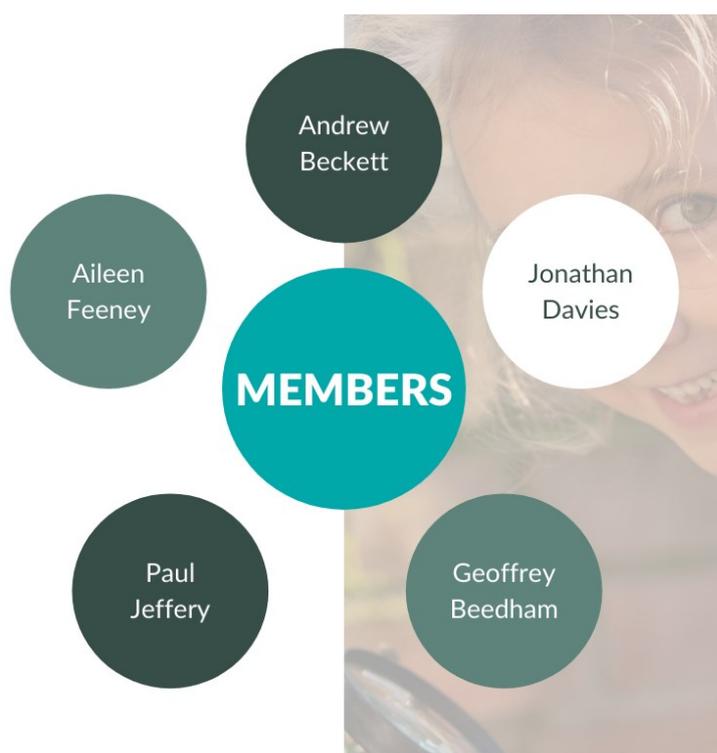
OUR MEMBERS

Members ensure that the vision and values of the Trust are upheld. They are tasked with assessing if the Trustees are performing well by ensuring that the purpose of the Trust is being met, and its charitable objectives are being fulfilled.

That said there are some critical decisions that sit with Members and even more so if a Trust is failing.

A Member may not be an employee of the Trust nor may the majority of Members also be Trustees.

In The Circle Trust the Chair of Trustees is also a Member to support the flow of information between these two key groups.



OUR TRUSTEES

TRUSTEES

Anne Haycocks

Andrew Beckett,
Chair

Julian Bushell

Paul Miller

Peter Collins

Lee Smith

David Day

David Walker

Kevin Addington



ROLE

Trustees are responsible for the strategic leadership of The Circle Trust. The role comes with specific legal responsibilities, which include:

- Ensuring the organisation remains solvent and spends money in accordance with its charitable objectives
- Ensuring the schools in the Trust provide a good standard of education.

LINKED SCHOOL

Trustees are especially aware of their responsibility to act equally on behalf of all schools. To aid this, each Trustee is linked to a school in the Trust and will take a special interest in their link school such as attending Full Advisory Board meetings or other special school events. Trustees are responsible for adhering to the Funding agreement, which can be found [here](#).

EXPERTISE

All Members and Trustees are appointed by the use of a governance skill matrix. This means that both governance groups have the right level of expertise in areas of Finance, Business, Legal, HR and Education.

The Circle Trust uses a governance skills audit tool [here](#). Profiles of all Members and Trustees of The Circle Trust can be found on the Trust's website [here](#).

LOCAL GOVERNANCE FOR ALL SCHOOLS IN THE TRUST

CORE VALUE

An essential core value held by The Circle Trust is the belief that schools should be run by, and their improvement driven by, their staff led by their Leadership Team and Local Advisory Board (LAB).

As a result, the Trustees delegate much of their powers and functions with regard to the leadership and performance of each school in the Trust to the school's LAB.

In fact, a LAB is a sub-committee of the Trustees.



The Trustees have the legal accountability for the operation and performance of all schools in the Trust and for any decisions taken under delegated authority.

The Local Advisory Board (LAB) therefore is responsible for their school and for promoting high standards.

The LAB aims to ensure that children and young people are attending a successful school, which provides them with a good education and supports their well-being.

All Local Advisory Boards must be a minimum of 8 of which two must be elected parents and one must be elected from the staff.

Therefore, all Local Advisors act in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, policies, and procedures of the Trust.



SKILLS BASED ANALYSIS

During this reporting period Nicola Brown has retired from serving as a Trustee. Nicola has been a Trustee since the inception of the Trust and her skills as a health professional set high standards in respect of our Trust's safeguarding culture. Her contribution to this most important of responsibilities has been significant and we are enormously grateful for her service to the Trust.

Trustees have continued to use a skills-based analysis to determine the strength and depth of expertise throughout the Trustee board and sub-committees.

This has been analysed in order to understand any gaps or lack of depth in order to identify how to strengthen the board in the future. Attendance at Trust meetings has been very strong with active engagement from all Trustees.

The use of Microsoft Teams continues to be both effective and efficient in maintaining the momentum of the Trust's work.



READING UNIVERSITY



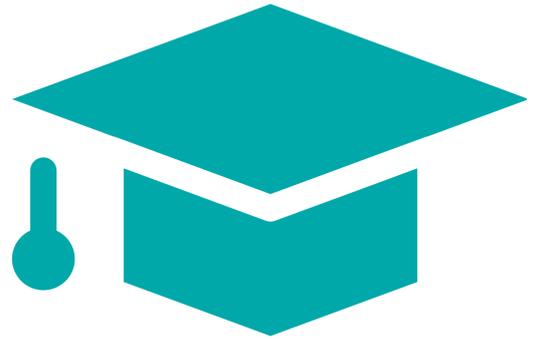
During this reporting period I am delighted to highlight the development of a new professional partnership with **Reading University** and we have been delighted to welcome University colleagues to Local Advisor Boards across the Trust.

Joining Shinfield Infant School Advisory Board is **Dr Catherine Foley** who is the Leader for all Primary Initial Teacher Training at Reading University. She is an Associate Professor of Mathematics Education and has published in this field.

[Click here to read more about Catherine](#)

READING UNIVERSITY continued

- Sarah Marston is the Secondary Initial Teacher Training Lead. She is a Modern Foreign Languages specialist who is currently completing a Doctorate in Women in Secondary Leadership. She has joined St. Crispin's Local Advisory Board.



[Click here to read more about Sarah](#)

- Dr Daisy Powell has joined Nine Mile Ride. Daisy is an Associate Professor and has published research on Phonics. Her particular interest is in trying to understand how we can overcome barriers to literacy development – in particular those linked to the role of social disadvantage which is so perniciously associated with children's language and literacy from the beginning of schooling.

[Click here to read more about Daisy](#)

- Molli Cleaver also works in the University's Knowledge Transfer Centre as part of a drive for community engagement. She has recently graduated and was previously the Reading University Student Union President. Her interests lie in diversity and inclusion issues and she has joined Westende Junior School.

[Click here to read more about Molli](#)

- Dr Simon Cutler pioneered a way of retaining governance talent in the Trust by transferring from being a parent elected Local Advisor at St. Crispin's School to becoming a co-opted Local Advisor at Wescott Infant School. Simon holds a PHD in Biology and is a Business Relationship Manager at the University of Reading.

[Click here to read more about Simon](#)

As a Trust we have committed to opening up our schools for research purposes with the University.

COMPANY SECRETARY

As a private company and charity, The Circle Trust is not required to appoint and retain a company secretary for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006 (section 276). However, last year, the Trustees elected to do so.

Rebecca Clarke, as Company Secretary under the Companies Act, is an officer of the Trust and responsible with the Trustees for complying with the statutory obligations which are imposed on officers of a company by the Companies Act.

These include maintaining the Trust's statutory registers, publishing and distributing the Trust's annual accounts and filing the necessary Companies House returns.

In addition, in some limited instances, the Company Secretary's signature would be valid as an alternative to a Trustee's signature - for example, on the Trust's annual confirmation statement and other Companies House forms and alongside a Trustee's signature on a document to be executed by the Trust as a deed.

The appointment of a governance professional, our Company Secretary has added enormous value to the Trust with strong systems in place for the support of the governance at all levels and clerking.

Right attention has been given to correcting inaccurate roles at Companies House as well as a refreshment to Terms of Reference for all sub-committees.

Registrar of Companies has accepted the rectification applications, which the Company Secretary submitted on behalf of the Trust. As a result, the register is now accurate and compliant [here](#).



OUR SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Scheme of Delegation was reviewed by Trustees in this reporting period to take into account establishing a separate Risk and Audit Committee.

TRAINING

Governance at all levels is supported and e-learning training accessed via the **National Governance Association** as well as the **National College**.

All training is in a Q&A format with a predetermined pass rate (although there is an opportunity to re-take!) with certification.

Advice on how governance at all levels log on and access these courses can be found [here](#)

Given our new way of meeting, the Trust also brokered governance specific training sessions on SharePoint and Microsoft Teams.



The poster features the Microsoft logo and the text 'Microsoft Training for those involved in Governance'. It lists two training events: 'Sharepoint Introduction to Sharepoint and best practice in organising and updating documents' on 13th January 6-7pm, and 'Teams Introduction to Teams and Channels and guidance on setting up and hosting meetings' on 14th January 6-7pm. The background shows people working on laptops.



www.nga.org.uk



<https://thenationalcollege.co.uk/>

MASTER FUNDING AGREEMENT



During this reporting period, the Regional School's Commissioner (RSC) requested that The Circle Trust enters into a new Master Funding Agreement (MFA) prior to The Emmbrook conversion. Our existing MFA is based on the 2014 model. The new MFA was published in December 2020 and the DfE is seeking to ensure that all academies transfer to the latest version overtime. This often takes place on conversions/transfers as a condition but also where academies are seeking to make significant changes. To take this forward, we have entered into a Deed of Termination to terminate our existing MFA and at the same time the deed will allow for a variation to enter into a new MFA. The new MFA reflects here quite a number of legislative changes over the past 6 years. These include:

- **The change from statements to EHC plans under the Children and Families Act 2014**
 - Expansion of special educational provision to include mental health needs
 - Updated Data Protection Act provisions to take into account the GDPR
 - Replacement of the EFA by the ESFA
- **Designated staff lead required for looked after and previously looked after children**
 - Clarification on teaching work requirements for the TPS Regulations
 - The new MFA clauses link in with the new SFA clauses
- More detailed requirements for careers guidance and access to information about technical education qualifications or apprenticeships
- Clarification that GAG funding can be used for governor training as well as staff training and development
- There is also new provision for information sharing about pupils with local authorities.



Squaring the Circle annual event



SQUARING THE CIRCLE

Regretfully the meeting restrictions resulting from the pandemic, for yet another year “Squaring the Circle” did not take place.

The event is an important part of the Trust’s work and brings all stakeholders of the Trust together.

The event is rearranged for 14th July 2022 between 4.30- 6pm and subject to the lifting of Covid restrictions we will gather in 3D at Wellington College.

14th July
2022



Trustees continue to work in the framework of the 3-year Strategic Priorities [here](#). These include:

Strategic Priorities



Growth strategic priority

We seek to grow our Trust to 12-15 schools and/or 5000+ children and young people. The Circle Trust will continue to welcome schools that can demonstrate that they understand and either already share, or can commit to adopting, our essential values and approach to education and our way of working, which will always be transparent, inclusive and collaborative.

School Improvement strategic priority

Every school in The Circle Trust will be judged by stakeholders to be good or better. Progress for all children and young people will be above average and any difference diminished in the performance of different learner groups.

Resource strategic priority

The Circle Trust will work with absolute integrity with strong stewardship of public funds and resources to ensure that the Trust has the capacity to provide a strong and innovative system of school improvement, and to ensure reserves are sufficient to deal with change and support ongoing capital investment.

HR Strategic priority

The Circle Trust will always be a responsible and trustworthy employer which holds in the highest regard the contribution of all and will thrive with the right people (talent) doing the right job (effective) at the right time (efficient).

Governance Strategic priority

The Circle Trust will be highly proactive in learning from other Trusts and other system leaders and will establish a peer review. Governance will have the skills and ability to oversee the next stage of The Circle Trust's growth, ensuring that a culture of equality and diversity will set the highest example of inclusion. Trustees will ensure that the Scheme of Delegation is always accessible and useable, and demonstrates The Circle Trust's commitment to building and developing openness and transparency and being attentive to risk of bias.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES continued

As with other years, we continue the tradition of selecting a quote to create the “story” for the **Trust Improvement Plan**.

As with all years, we selected a strap line to theme our ambitions for the year ahead. For 2021/22,



“Teaching quality is arguably the greatest lever at our disposal for improving the life chances of pupils in our care and especially the most disadvantaged” John Hattie.

This quote was particularly apt as we faced a year not really knowing what the pandemic will mean to our schools. Consequently, the quote offered a truism regardless of whether education was back to normal, back to the new normal, back to remote or (who knows) back to all these three methods at different times and ways! Alongside this, we are now a Trust who is responsible for 450+ employees as such we must rightly focus on the quality of professional development as well as retaining talent. Finally, the group most affected by the pandemic is undeniably the disadvantaged children and young people and so our strapline quote brings right focus on this responsibility.

“ We will never “circle the wagons” and work in isolation ”

“I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it.”

The Multi-Academy Trust sector is still relatively young and so it is important to remind all stakeholders (often!) that The Circle Trust is not a “mini-local authority”.

The schools together are the Trust, indeed “we are The Circle Trust!” A Trust brings tangible benefits in working together for the benefit of children and young people, their families and staff, something which could not be achieved in isolation. Trusts are a system of professional generosity. Our Trust offers a strong central team which is highly effective and which enables leaders and teachers to concentrate on education. Being good stewards of finance and estates enables the work for school improvement to be rapid and responsive.

As a local Trust, we continue to be committed to Wokingham and the surrounding area. Our ambition to serve our own local community is intrinsic to our work. However we will never “circle the wagons” and work in isolation; far from it. We continue to be outward looking and constantly learning from others.

The Circle Trust takes lessons from Trusts that have struggled and as a consequence will always:

- Make our organisational values and beliefs clear
- Keep governance strong and accountable
- Be good at communicating
- Have a school improvement support system that is hands on and bespoke to different school needs
- Be transparent about funding
- Always serve the local community.

4. THE CIRCLE TRUST'S GROWTH

Our Schools:



Schools	Type	No. Students	No. Staff	Notes
St. Crispin's	Secondary	1281	178	Conversion date 1 st Feb 2018
Nine Mile Ride	Primary	364	51	Conversion date 1 st Feb 2018
Shinfield	Infant	268	63	Conversion date 1 st April 2020
Westende	Junior	231	44	Conversion date 1 st July 2020
Wescott	Infant	140	31	Conversion date 1 st July 2020
The Emmbrook	Secondary	1110	110	Conversion date 1 st April 2021
6 schools		3394	2 (at Central Trust level)	

ADMISSIONS

This reporting period saw a consolidation of our recent growth. The Circle Trust remains its own admissions authority, which means it is responsible for all aspects of admissions to all schools in the Trust. The Circle Trust recognises admissions to any school is important to children, young people and their families and therefore will ensure that information for future parents/carers of partner schools regarding admissions is clear, helpful and easily accessed. Each school has its own published admissions arrangements which are determined by Trustees following a statutory consultation period. The Circle Trust has complied in this reporting period with the guidance and adhered to regulations laid out in the **Schools Admissions Code** [here](#).

Numbers on role are a critical part of school improvements.



NUMBER OF STUDENTS ON ROLL

April 1st 2018

St. Crispin's	●	1128
NMR	●	338
Total	●	1466

October 2018

St. Crispin's	●	1171
NMR	●	339
Total	●	1510

October

2019

2020

2021

St. Crispin's	●	1178	●	1228	●	1281
NMR	●	345	●	359	●	364
Shinfield	●		●	270	●	268
Wescott	●		●	138	●	140
Westende	●		●	235	●	231
Emmbrook	●		●	*964	●	1110
Total	●	1523	●	2230	●	3394

*The Emmbrook figures for October 2020 are not included in the 2020 total, as they were not part of The Trust.

NMR Pupils on roll

YEAR	OCT 20		SEPT 21		DEC 21
	PAN	ACTUAL	PAN	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
Reception	50	49	50	49	52
Year 1	50	50	50	50	50
Year 2	50	53	50	54	54
Year 3	50	47	50	53	54
Year 4	50	54	50	50	52
Year 5	50	52	50	54	54
Year 6	50	54	50	53	54
Total	350	359	350	363	370



Shinfield Pupils on roll

YEAR	OCT 20		SEPT 21		DEC 21
	PAN	ACTUAL	PAN	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
Nursery AM	30	44	30	44	44
Nursery PM	30		30		
Reception	90	90	90	89	89
Year 1	90	90	90	90	90
Year 2	90	90	90	89	90
Total <i>(excluding Nursery)</i>	270	270	270	268	269

PAN for Sixth Form refers to external students



STC Pupils on roll



YEAR	OCT 20		SEPT 21		DEC 21
	PAN	ACTUAL	PAN	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
Year 7	200+5	206	200	207	206
Year 8	200+5	208	200+5	209	207
Year 9	200+5	206	200+5	211	212
Year 10	189+5	193	200+5	210	209
Year 11	189	190	189	194	194
Year 12	30	128	30	123	127
Year 13	30	97	30	128	126
Total	1058	1178	1064	1282	1281



Westende Pupils on roll



YEAR	OCT 20		SEPT 21		DEC 21
	PAN	ACTUAL	PAN	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
Year 3	60	55	60	49	52
Year 4	60	60	60	60	59
Year 5	60	60	60	58	60
Year 6	60	60	60	60	61
Total	240	235	240	227	232



Wescott Pupils on roll



YEAR	OCT 20		SEPT 21		DEC 21
	PAN	ACTUAL	PAN	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
Reception	56	34	56	48	47
Year 1	56	55	56	38	39
Year 2	56	49	56	55	56
Total	168	138	168	141	142

PAN for Sixth Form refers to external students



Emmbrook Pupils on roll



YEAR	OCT 20		SEPT 21		DEC 21
	PAN	ACTUAL	PAN	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
Year 7	210	198	210	218	223
Year 8	210	180	210	205	208
Year 9	210	156	210	209	208
Year 10	210	127	210	163	169
Year 11	210	133	210	134	137
Year 12	20	104	20	92	76
Year 13	20	66	20	91	90
Total	1090	964	1090	1112	1111

TOTAL PUPILS ON ROLL

TOTAL PUPILS ON ROLL	OCT 20		SEPT 21		DEC 21
	PAN	ACTUAL	PAN	ACTUAL	ACTUAL
ALL SCHOOLS TOTAL	3176	3194	3182	3393	3405



Our stewardship of public funds and resources remains open to scrutiny and above reproach.

The Circle Trust's 2021/22 annual accounts were submitted in accordance with all statutory deadlines and published on the Trust's website [here](#)



5. THE CIRCLE TRUST'S STEWARDSHIP

In accordance with our Master Funding Agreement, all money is spent to improve educational outcomes and to be fair and consistent in our approach to all schools. Trustees adhere fully to the yearly updated Academies Financial hand book [here](#).

The Chief Operations Officer fulfils the role of consolidating all school and Trust budgets to ensure that planned expenditure is in line with our Funding Agreement, particularly in respect of achieving value for money, regularity and propriety.

Transparency in decision-making and management of funds remain critical to the Trustees' Finance meeting and is attended by Local Advisors who chair their respective schools finance committees. This allows the Trust's financial decision making to be shared with and influenced.

Trustees hold the legal financial responsibility and as such they continue to formally approve every school's budget. These make up our Trust's budget.

As stated in the Scheme of Delegation, Trustees reserve the right not to delegate some or all financial responsibilities to a LAB, but they have not taken this action in this reporting period. It is not acceptable to set a Trust deficit budget and The Trust has not done so.

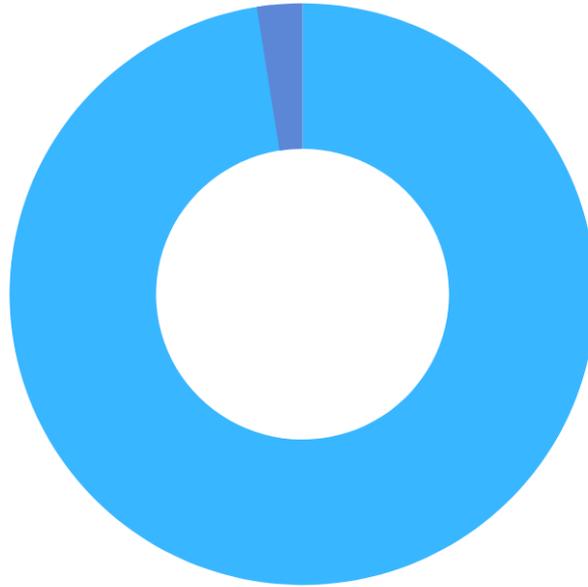


FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Income across the Trust

Trading Activities, Other Income Donations, Grants

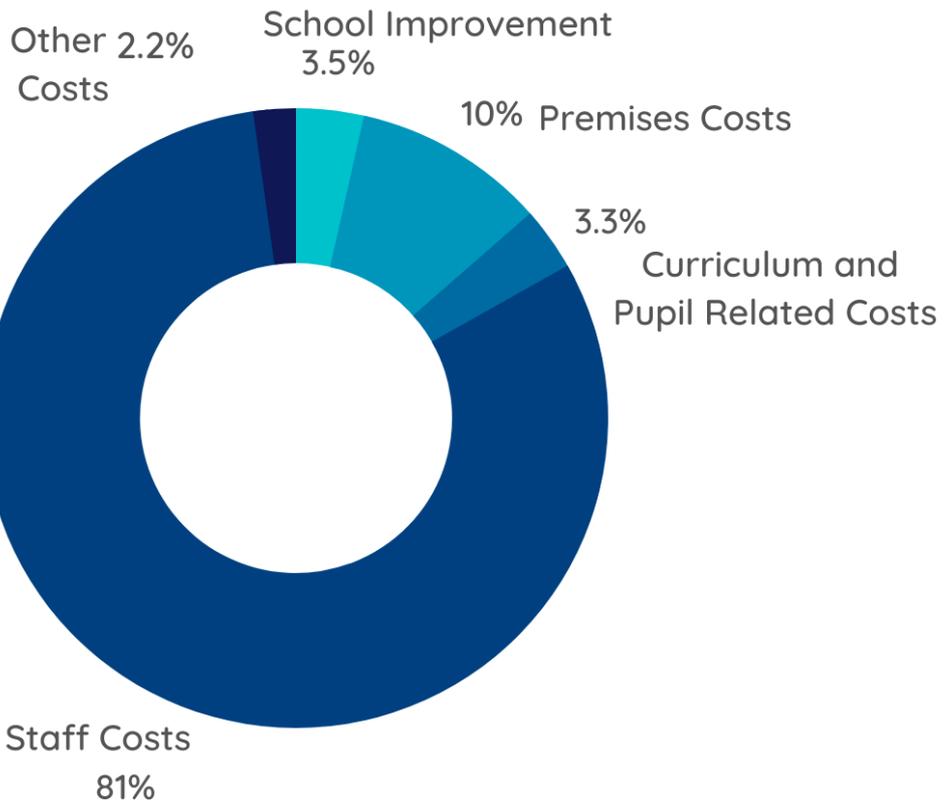
2.5%



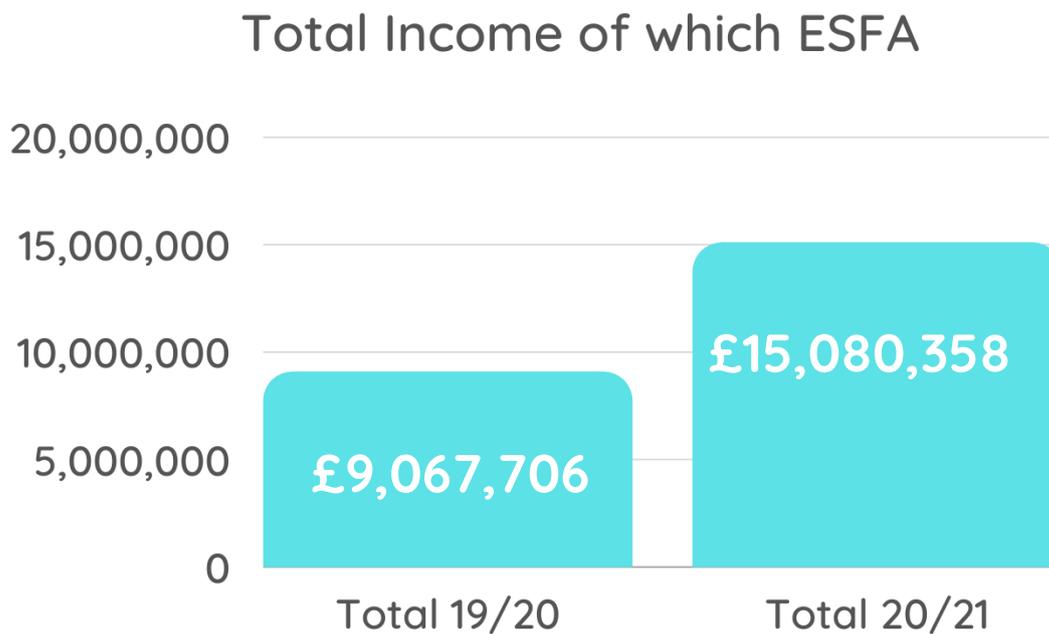
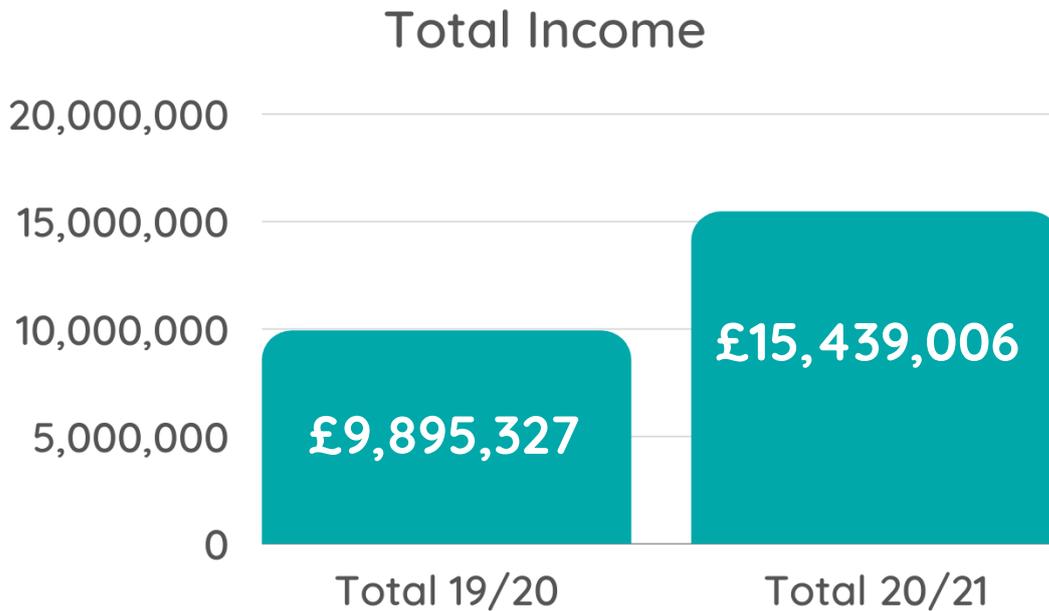
Charitable Activities: GAG, 6th Form, Pupil Premium, UIFSM, PE Grant

97.5%

Expenditure across the Trust



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



Year end reserves £1,792,482

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



I am pleased to report that this year's audit was completed without issue and presented to the joint Audit and Risk and Finance Trustees for scrutiny. As Trustees

know, the Accounts themselves are both long and quite dense to comprehend. Each year the ESFA demand the Accounts to be set out in a very strict format. Notably the audit this year did not require any management actions and much deserved credit goes to Business Managers across the Trust and to Debra Briault as Chief Operations Officer for this achievement.

The Central Service Fee is the money the Trust uses to provide the services set out in the Core Offer. The fee is paid by all schools in the Trust and goes towards building a reserve to improve our range of services, develop our school improvement work and capital improvements. In this reporting period the fee remained at 4%.

In spite of the additional expenses relating to the pandemic, the Trust ended the academies' financial year with a cumulative reserve.

Monies were spent in accordance with budget plans and to ensure Covid secure arrangements were in place so that children, young people, staff and visitors remained safe.

Trustees thank **Mrs Diane Humphrey Evans** for volunteering in the capacity of Internal Auditor.

THANK YOU



In this period, the Trust was successful in a Capital Improvement Bid with **Westende Junior School** who were awarded a sum of £34,713 (of which there is a school contribution of £3,900) for improvement of perimeter fence and gates.

St. Crispin's School was awarded a sum of £580,817 (of which there is a school

contribution of £31,024) for replacement of defective roof coverings – including gym, hall, PE changing rooms, drama, MFL, main office, reception and conference room.

St. Crispin's
Excellence for all



During this reporting period no employees of the Trust have received any gifts and therefore were not required to declare any.

GIFT LIST

The dealings with all things Covid related have continued to put into sharp focus the management of risk in all areas of the Trust.

Our Trust is first and foremost a charity and a public sector organisation, and as such “cannot be risk averse and still be successful”. Risk is inherent in everything we do.



Trustees must under company law:

- Act within their powers
- Promote the success of the Trust
- Exercise independent judgement
- Exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence

During this reporting period the Trust operationally adopted a cloud-based platform for managing risk **Insight4GRC**. The platform allows the newly established Audit and Risk committee to effectively and efficiently oversee the risk register as well as determine a broader risk appetite for the Trust.

Alongside this a new mitigation has been put in place to manage the high-level risk concerning information mismanagement and or data breach and to help better manage the ever-increasing freedom of information requests via another cloud based package **GDPRiS**.

Finally, to support Trustees responsibility of pan-Trust data the Trust has adopted a new management information system, **Arbor**. This information management system offers our Trust a school improvement vehicle supporting aligned thinking and practice of curriculums and assessment processes. This sort of alignment has been organic and co-produced with Headteachers where all have been givers and receivers of school. Alignment at this level therefore is not imposed nor unwelcomed but rather offers Trust wide resilience and improvement. The new system offers easier to digest presentation of information for Trustees and Local Advisors in regard to school improvement metrics.



Arbor

The Circle Trust's Approach to School Improvement

School Improvement will always remain central to all we do. Our Trust will always have a relentless focus on improving the quality of education.

Schools improve when Leaders and Teachers do the right things to improve the quality of the school experience for children, and the adults working in them. Exam outcomes and inspection grades provide evidence of the impact of these actions.

“ *In short, a strong school is one where adults want to work and that parents want their child to attend* **”**

Sir David Carter, National Schools Commissioner, recently said: “True evidence of school improvement is when school serves its community with all the anchors of a strong school which are: great teaching, great enrichment and strong pastoral care. In short, a strong school is one where adults want to work and that parents want their child to attend”.

It is important to think about school improvement in this way because parents think of it like that.

They do definitely care about exam results and inspection grades but mostly they want to know that their child is safe and that they will be taken care of.

They want their child to be happy and enjoy school, and to know that if something happens that upsets their child, an adult in the school will notice and check up on them.

They want to know that the school will seek out the talent that their child has and find a way to nurture it.





DEVELOPMENT

Parents want to know that the quality of the learning experience will secure a pathway to the next stage of their child's development. The sign of a good school is that it works in a consistent way day-in and day-out to deliver a great learning experience in a culture of safety and high expectations.

As a Trust, we always act in the best interests of our children and young people. We are a group of schools who share in the drive to improve the educational outcomes for all children and young people across the Trust.

We are a Trust that cares about the other schools in its community and is outward facing. Deploying financial resources for school improvement adds more value than any school can achieve on its own.

The school improvement priorities centre on sharing professional collective expertise to build the best curriculum, assessment and pedagogy model, underpinned by evidence of what works and are founded on the most successful practice.

Tickets



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The Circle Trust has built and continues to foster a Trust-wide learning community, focusing on sharing of good practice, alongside the strong professional expertise of Leaders who have the capacity to support and challenge.

Increasingly there is a strong sense of collective responsibility with all stakeholders recognising their contribution to improving educational outcomes for all children and young people across the Trust.



CORE OFFER

The Core Offer is the services provided for schools within the Trust shown [here](#).

The Core Offer provides a strong level of service and demonstrates good value for money.

Trust wide systems and our Core Offer are refined as we grow and are based on value for money principles. Decisions regarding what constitutes the Core Offer are determined by:

- Where the activity is most effectively performed i.e. within individual schools or centrally
- What the educational benefit of a central approach is i.e. will it improve the educational outcomes of children and young people?
- Are there strong operational and/or financial benefits for this activity to be part of the Core Offer?



PiXL
partners in excellence

An essential part of the school improvement opportunity provided to all schools is membership of **PiXL**.

PiXL is an acronym for the organisation's full name of "Partners in Excellence". **PiXL** is a national organisation. Through the **PiXL** partnership, schools in The Circle

Trust will have access to pedagogical principles dealing with improving outcomes as well as a comprehensive range of resources. **PiXL** provides Leadership Teams with 5 to 6 high quality national meetings per year giving the highest quality of leadership advice and guidance, and pertinent briefings regarding educational announcements.



<https://www.pixl.org.uk/>

Of course, this year as all others the impact of our Trust’s school improvement strategy must have results in an upward trajectory of children and young people’s educational outcomes. There are for the most obvious reasons no national school performance data for any key stage including GCSE and A-Level.



All schools in the Trust remain either **Good** or **Outstanding**.

School	Ofsted rating	Last Ofsted visit
Nine Mile Ride	Good	December 2013 Section 5
St. Crispin’s	Good	April 2017 Section 8
Shinfield	Good	February 2019 Section 8
Westende	Good	January 2020 Section 8
Wescott	Outstanding	December 2010 Section 5
The Emmbrook	Good	April 2017 Section 8

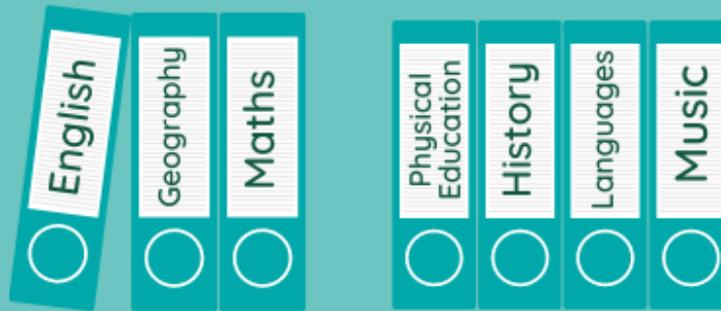
Learning has of course continued to be interrupted and the recovery of this period will be supported by a new catch-up premium grant [here](#). Schools are required to use this funding for specific activities to support their pupils in catching up for lost teaching over the previous months, in line with the curriculum expectations for the academic year. Schools can use their funding in a way that suits their cohort and circumstances. They are expected to use this funding for specific activities which will help pupils catch up on missed education.



CATCH-UP

To support schools to make the best use of this funding, the Trust is using the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), which provides evidence-based approaches to support catch up ([here](#)).

During this academic year this work will be reported on school websites much akin to the present duty to report on spending for pupil premium work. Ofsted will make judgements about the quality of education being provided and how school leaders are using their funding and catch-up funding to ensure the curriculum has a positive impact on all pupils.

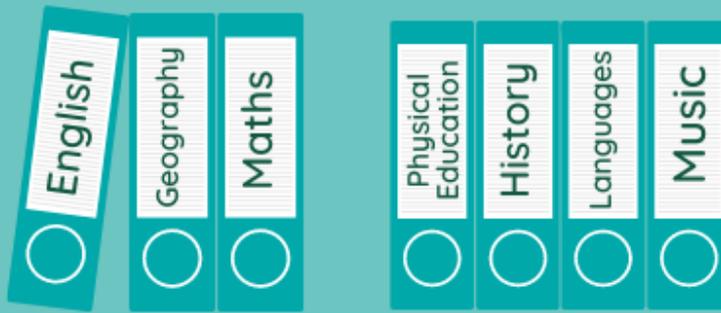


Curriculum Information

During this academic year all schools in the Trust continue to focus on the curriculum. As stakeholders will understand the curriculum taught in schools is of fundamental importance. The curriculum in a school introduces children and young people to the best knowledge we (society) have and helps to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement. High academic ambition is a driver and guarantor of equity, giving every child and young person what they need to be successful in life and taking them beyond their own experience. The curriculum of our schools will always be inclusive, access must never be limited on grounds of perceived ability, ethnicity, class, gender or indeed any other thing!

The curriculum is one of the strongest levers of school improvement and includes:

- Clarity about knowledge content - what it is and why it is there
- Organised by subject domain because this is the best for learning and progress
- Understanding that skill is the practiced and fluent application of knowledge - skills are not acquired naturally they are taught and refined
- Sequencing knowledge is essential to ensure there is sufficient knowledge to the next stage of learning
- Teach inherently interesting things to engage and motivate and personalise
- Pedagogical approach should ensure that new knowledge is imbedded in long term memory allowing knowledge to be integrated and applied in and between subject domains increasing fluency and independence.



Curriculum Information

During this reporting period the Trust held a Curriculum Day with Chris Quigley, a curriculum educationalist and specialist as key speaker. By the end of the session, the group was aligned in its thinking and agreed upon a curriculum framework that is evidence based on cognitive science and the three main principles that underpin it:

- Learning is most effective with spaced repetition
- Spaced repetition helps pupils with long-term retention
- Retrieval of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which increases both storage and retrieval strength.

A non-negotiable of our Trust is recognising the value in each school creating and implementing a curriculum that considers local context in order to preserve their unique identity and ethos. Equally there is the wonderful opportunity to enjoy together co-construction of common curriculum features across all schools.

This cohesive approach is secured through driving **five key competency areas**:

Core, Curriculum, Culture, Character and Community.



7. SAFEGUARDING

The Circle Trust is committed to safeguarding and to promoting the welfare of children and young people.

Effective Child Protection is essential as part of the wider work of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. The Circle Trust ensures that robust and effective safeguarding practice is followed by:

Ensuring safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children and young people

Raising awareness of Safeguarding and Child Protection to all stakeholders

Equipping children and young people with the skills needed to keep themselves safe

Implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases of abuse

Supporting children and young people who have been abused in accordance with their child protection plan

Establishing a safe environment in which children and young people can learn and develop.

Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone who is part of The Circle Trust.

Safeguarding adaptations were made in light of the pandemic and all schools ensured safeguarding procedures were followed whilst pupils were home educated. Audits, including oversight of training records, have taken place during this review period, and are shown to be compliant across the Trust.



DSL/DDSL's Training Records

School	DSL/DDSL's	Date of Training
Shinfield Infant	DSL – Amanda Turner (Headteacher)	10.20
	DDSL – Nicola Lauchlan (Deputy Headteacher)	10.20
	DDSL – Nicola Mott (School Business Manager)	09.20
	Link Advisor—Shaun Holmes	12.20
Wescott Infant	DSL – Steph Holding (Headteacher)	11.20
	DDSL – Rachel Drew (Deputy Headteacher)	09.20
	Link Advisor—Neil Campbell	11.20
Westende	DSL – Andrea Sykes (Headteacher)	09.20
	DDSL – Norah Edgar (Deputy Headteacher)	09.20
	DDSL – Wendy Witkowska (SENCO)	10.20
	Link Advisor—Jane Ainslie	09.20
Nine Mile Ride	DSL – Ali Brown (Headteacher)	09.20
	DDSL – Nicola York (Deputy Headteacher)	02.21
	DDSL – Clare Demblon (SENCO)	12.20
	Link Advisor—Rebecca Margetts	02.20
St. Crispin's	DSL – Railton Blyth (Deputy Headteacher)	09.20
	DDSL – Kiran Sharma (Assistant Headteacher)	09.20
	DDSL – Holden Whitaker (Assistant Headteacher)	09.20
	Link Advisor—Dr Simon Cutler	03.21
Emmbrook	DSL – Taj Bhambra (Deputy Head)	05.19
	DDSL – Susan Woolfenden (Pastoral Welfare Manager)	05.20
	DDSL – Ellie Horne (Head of Year)	07.20
	DDSL – Steph Guinn (HR Lead)	07.20
	Link Advisor—Nicky Hopkins	12.20

Additional Training

Name Position/ School)	Training	Date of Training
Railton Blyth (DSL—St. Crispin's)	• Prevent Training (WRAP). Registered with Home Office	06.15
	• Awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation	07.15
	• KCSIE 2020, part 1 - assessment	09.20
	• Reducing Parental Conflict	10.20
	• Advanced Safer Recruitment in Schools	11.20
	• Prevent duty in Schools	02.21
	• Ofsted's Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools	07.21
	• Chair of WBC CP Leads Network group	Termly
Ali Brown (DSL— Nine Mile Ride)	• Safeguarding and child protection: The Essentials 20/21	09.20
	• Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020, part 1 - assessment	09.20
Rebecca Margetts (Link Advisor—Nine Mile School)	• Overview of Ofsted's Review of Sexual Abuse in Schools	06.21
Taj Bhambra (DSL— Emmbrook)	• Ofsted trained and lead on safeguarding aspect of inspection	04.21/Ongoing
	• Member of WBC CP Leads Network Group	Termly
Steph Holding (DSL—Wescott)	• Prevent	07.19
	• FGM	07.19
	• Safer Recruitment	03.20

Referrals for the Academic Year 2020/21

School	Total on Roll 31/08/21	Wokingham Referrals	Bracknell Referrals	Reading Referrals	Other LA Referrals	Total Referrals	No. CP 31/08/21	No. CIN 31/08/21
Shinfield Infant	268	5 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (5)	2 (0)	2 (1)
Wescott Infant	141	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)	0 (1)	0 (0)
Westende	227	4 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (0)	0 (1)	0 (1)
Nine Mile Ride	363	3 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (5)	0(3)	2 (0)
St. Crispin's	1282	28 (25)	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	30 (26)	2 (2)	7 (7)
Emmbrook	1112	30 (14)	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	32 (14)	10 (5)	5 (5)

Looked After Children for the Academic Year 2020/21

School	No. LAC 31/08/21	No. becoming LAC during year	No. LAC with ECHP	LAC Attendance	No. of LAC FTE days
Shinfield Infant	1 (0)	1 (0)	(0)	98% (0)	(0)
Wescott Infant	1 (0)	1 (0)	(0)	94.5% (0)	(0)
Westende	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	N/A	N/A
Nine Mile Ride	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	N/A	N/A
St. Crispin's	2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	96.25% (96%)	0 (0)
Emmbrook	6 (5)	2 (1)	1 (1)	74.3% (99.5%)	0 (0)

8. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The Circle Trust provides support to ensure that children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities can access an education which is inclusive and responsive to their individual needs.



The Circle Trust follows the DfE's Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice [here](#). The Children's and Family Act 2014 [here](#) which sets out schools' responsibilities for pupils with SEN and disabilities. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 [here](#) which set out schools' responsibilities for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), SEN co-ordinators (SENCOs) and the SEN information report. Finally, this policy also complies with The Circle Trust's Funding Agreement and Articles of Association.

A child or young person has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her. The Code of Practice has the following definitions stating that a child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she:

- **Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or**
- **Has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post 16 institutions.**

The code describes special educational provision as additional to or different from that made generally available for other children or young people of the same age by mainstream schools, maintained nursery schools, and mainstream post 16 institutions or by relevant early years providers.



Although the needs of children and young people may cross more than one 'area of need', the Code of Practice uses four main categories of need:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Sensory and/or physical needs.

All children and young people are provided with an education that is appropriate to their needs, promotes high standards and enables them to fulfil their potential.

A key value held by The Circle Trust is that of inclusion and as such we ensure that all children and young people, but particularly those with SEND, are fully included in the activities available, accepting that sometimes this will mean reasonable arrangements need to be made to allow them to take part in activities.

The Trust currently comprises three schools with specialist provisions for children and young people with ASD, The Little Acorns at Wescott Infant School, The Acorns at Westende Junior School and The Oaks at St. Crispin's .



The Local Authority confirmed in writing their intention to cease the service level agreement [here](#) for The Oaks at St. Crispin's from September 2020. This consequently means that there is a slow tapering down of The Oaks which will close to all students at the end of the academic year 2025/26. The Service Level Agreement with the Local Authority means that the current funding arrangements remain at the present levels until the last child reaches Year 11.

9. EMPLOYMENT

THE CIRCLE TRUST AS AN EMPLOYER

The Circle Trust thrives with the right people (talent) doing the right job (effective) at the right time (efficient). Our Trust is a responsible and trustworthy employer which holds in the highest regard the contribution of all. The Circle Trust abides by the national teacher, local government pay award, and consequently remuneration remains equal, reasonable and fair.

Schools in The Circle Trust distinguish themselves with the “soft” but crucial elements, which make an organisation a great place to be part of and work in. The integrity of professional relationships is crucial. The Circle Trust is an organisation which truly values talent and expertise and which is agile and open to innovation, with a constant drive to improve!

Our Trust has reputational authenticity. In other words, what we say is what we do. We wish our Trust to be an employer where everyone feels a genuine part of a thriving and successful organisation, where employees have the chance to influence, where their talents and expertise are fostered and where staff well-being is a fundamental priority.



The Circle Trust appreciates that continuity in high quality staff is key to high performing school improvement teams. Coordination, and communication between Trust and school leadership is crucial. Excellent training helps retain talented staff and succession plans for the future.

The Circle Trust places very strong emphasis on leadership, training and development, especially in the case of new leaders. Headteachers and leaders at all levels have to have outstanding pedagogical understanding and to be leaders who are able to foster high-level educational thinking and have the capacity for self, peer reflection and challenge.

The Trust employs a central service team which is led by The Executive Headteacher, who is the lead professional and strategic leader for The Circle Trust and who has overall accountability and responsibility for the operation of the Trust as a whole. This includes overseeing the educational performance across all schools as well as being the Accounting Officer with responsibility for adherence to all statutory requirements, including the performance management of all Headteachers in the Trust.



10. THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

We've had a year of consolidation after growing to [six schools](#), which has given us the space to increase collaboration and support between the schools in the Trust. The pandemic had slowed growth opportunities, but with a new Schools White Paper expected soon plus the clear benefits we see from working together within a Trust we are now seeing a lot more interest from schools in Wokingham.

I want to thank again all staff and those in governance for their continued hard work, adaptability and resilience throughout the second year of disruptions to the education of our children and young people. Together, we get great things done!

With the increased focus on risk coming from the DfE, we have introduced a [Risk and Audit Committee](#) to develop and formalise our approach to risk within the Trust. This has led to useful discussions within each of our committees as we analyse our risks and will allow us to better balance risks and opportunities. We'll be continuing to roll this risk management approach out to schools and local advisors in the coming year.

[Communication](#) is increasingly important as we've grown, and so we've introduced a new way for Local Advisory Boards to feed back a short term report to Trustees as well as a summary from me on the work of Trustees for all Local Advisors. In addition, we've been expanding governance training, looking for opportunities to augment virtual training with learning tailored to our Trust.

I am seeing the real benefits of working together, including alignment in systems (such as adopting Arbor to replace SIMS), looking at common approaches to assessment and school improvement, and our encouragement to consider ambitious capital projects as we move from Condition Improvement Fund bids to the School Condition Allocation system.

The significant overhaul of our [Scheme of Delegation](#) and [Terms of References](#) have brought greater clarity to our areas of focus at each tier of governance.

As you're aware, we're in the middle of an external review of governance conducted by the CST, and I'm really looking forward to learning from that! This year I'm also looking at ways of improving our recruitment of Local Advisors, Trustees and Members to help ensure strong and effective governance throughout the Trust.

Finally, I really look forward to being able to see you all in July at [Squaring the Circle!](#)

Andrew Beckett

Chair of Trustees





Contact us
We'll look forward to
hearing from you

Tel: 0118 3320011

Email: contact@thecircletrust.co.uk

Visit: www.thecircletrust.co.uk

 [@thecircletrust](https://twitter.com/thecircletrust)