



Welcome to our Family Circle  
New employees



# Dear New Colleague, Welcome to our Family Circle!

Congratulations on your new appointment and a warm welcome to The Circle Trust.

This is a short overview about what it means to be part of the family of schools in [The Circle Trust](#).

We are a community of schools that have shared values and an essential common ethos and vision for education and learning. At the centre of our work together is improving the educational outcomes for our pupils. We deliberately use the term “educational outcomes” to highlight that we value education in the widest sense whilst balancing our ambition for the highest academic performance.

Our collaboration of schools work together to give our pupils the best educational journey and outcomes possible. By pooling resources, we capitalise on economies of scale and maximise funds to support the work of schools providing the best teachers, best learning experience and social emotional wellbeing possible.

The schools in the trust range from nursery to sixth form, and actively collaborate to create a unique network of cross phase learning and support. We share talent, resources, best educational research, training and practices. Together we celebrate our unique individuality, share the same values and support each other to achieve our goals.



## What is The Circle Trust?

The Circle Trust is an educational charity, it exists to do one thing and that is to promote education for the public benefit.

The Circle Trust is not a separate entity (like a mini-Local Authority) running schools but rather a group of schools that constitute the Trust, **we together, are The Circle Trust!** This is not a top down nor franchise model – we think it is important that schools are run by their Headteachers with the support of local governance as a result our Trust supports schools to be the best they can be.

As a Trust we will always act in the best interests of its children and young people. Perhaps the most important part of The

Circle Trust is understanding that 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.



## Why are we called The Circle Trust?

**Our vision was borne out of a desire that all children and young people have an excellent, well-rounded education and flourish in first-rate schools where the best teaching, the best facilities and the most up-to-date resources are available to them.**

Established in 2018, The Circle Trust was created to serve the local area.

We chose the name “The Circle Trust” as it symbolises our ethos.

We believe it is important to treat every school as unique. Our name is therefore deliberately neutral, without association to any single institution.

Our logo of overlapping circles, reflects our commitment to inclusivity encapsulating all sorts of schools, whatever their type or phase and illustrates our desire to collaborate both within our schools and the wider community.

## Our Values

Our essential common ethos and vision for education and learning, are encapsulated in our values which drive our behaviour, decision making and ambitions:



The highest educational outcomes for every learner is paramount.



Preserving the unique identity and ethos of all our 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 and believe well-being for all is fundamental.



Our Trust promotes collaborating with others and being outward looking.

# Our Schools

To date our growing family circle includes:



## Badgemore Primary School

Primary school based in Henley-on-Thames



## Emmbrook Infant School

Infant School based in Emmbrook



## Emmbrook Junior School

Junior School based in Emmbrook



## Nine Mile Ride Primary School

Primary School based in Finchampstead



## Shinfield Infant and Nursery School

Infant and Nursery School based in Shinfield



## St. Crispin's School

Secondary School and Sixth Form in Wokingham



## The Emmbrook School

Secondary School and Sixth Form in Emmbrook



## Wescott Infant School

Infant School based in Wokingham



## Westende Junior School

Junior School based in Wokingham



## The Hawthorns School

Primary School in Woosehill



## Owlsmoor School

Primary School in Sandhurst



## Hartland School

Primary school opening September 2027

Welcome to our Family Circle

## How is a Trust led?

The Trust is led by Ginny Rhodes, our CEO and is governed by Members and Trustees.

An easy way to think about this role is setting the conditions for schools to thrive. Ginny is an experienced leader in education, she has been teaching for 30 years and a Headteacher for 10 of those.

In addition, Ginny is currently a Lead Ofsted Inspector and serves on the AQA Examination Board of Trustees. Alongside this work, Ginny is a governor at Wellington College where she plays a pivotal role in developing the state and independent school partnerships.



The Circle Trust is a single legal entity. It was created by Members and is overseen by Trustees. Everyone in these roles commits to act within the Nolan seven principles of public life which are:

**1. Selflessness:**

Acting solely in terms of the public interest.

**2. Integrity:**

Avoiding obligations to outside individuals or organizations that might seek to influence them.

**3. Objectivity:**

Making decisions based on evidence and without bias.

**4. Accountability:**

Being accountable for decisions and actions.

**5. Openness:**

Being transparent and providing information.

**6. Honesty:**

Being truthful and straightforward.

**7. Leadership:**

Setting an example and promoting these principles



## Members

Members are the most senior tier of governance in the Trust. The Circle Trust like all trusts is a charitable company limited by guarantee. In effect, it was the Members who signed to create the company named The Circle Trust and were the first signatories for and agreed the Trust's Articles of Association. The Circle Trust's Articles of Association can be found here Articles of Association describe how a Trust is governed; for example, it sets out how many Members and Trustees there will be. A Member may not be an employee of the Trust. Members are the "guardians of governance" in the Trust. They have a distinct role and as such, they do not duplicate the functions of the Trustees. Members' responsibilities include:

- signing the Memorandum of Association and agreeing the Articles of Association
- determining the name of a Trust
- appointing Members and Trustees
- appointing and removing

Auditors. Independent Auditors certify whether the accounts present a true and fair view of the Trust's financial position and performance. The contract between the Trust and Auditors must be set out in writing and includes the right for Members to remove the Auditor at any time. The decision to remove an Auditor requires a majority vote from the Members who will

also need to give their reason for the removal and present these to the Trustees. Members are entitled to receive a copy of the signed Annual Accounts and Report. Whilst Members receive these Accounts, the Trustees sign-off the accounts.

- meeting once a year which is usually at the AGM
  - dissolving the Trust, if appropriate
- Crucially, Members do not tell Trustees how to run the Trust, they do not set the Trustees' priorities, attend Trustee meetings or have a voting right at a Trustee meeting neither do they appoint, or performance manage the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Instead, Members monitor the work of the Trustees by hearing directly from the Trustees at the AGM, receiving the annual accounts and report, which includes review of the work and plans going forward. Arguably, one of the most important responsibilities of Members is the appointment of Trustees. If the Trust is not achieving its purpose, the Members might consider this to be because the Trustees are failing to carry out their duties. If this is, the case Members may remove Trustees. So, in essence, Members have an "eyes on but hands off" role and 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 objects are being fulfilled.

## Trustees

Trustees on the other hand have a very significant “hands-on” legal responsibility for the Trust. Trustees are the Trust’s key decision makers. The role of Trustee 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

Trustees are responsible for adhering to the Funding Agreement which can be found on our website. The Articles of Association sets out the constitution of the Trust as agreed by Members; the Trustees are accountable for The Circle Trust’s Scheme of Delegation. The Scheme of Delegation details where Trustees delegate their authority to others, including the Chief Executive Officer and Headteachers to whom the Trustees delegate much of their powers and functions with regard to the leadership and performance of each school in the Trust. However, notwithstanding this delegation, the Trustees retain the legal accountability for the operation and performance of all schools in the Trust and for any decisions taken under delegated authority. Trustees are mainly appointed via interview and by reference to a skills matrix with a view to ensuring they have the right level of expertise in key areas such education, finance, business, legal and HR.

Trustees have established our Resolution Circle, which as the name suggests is to hear and determine panels and processes when

they are needed under certain Trust policies, as for example to consider a permanent exclusion or complaint. The Resolution Circle is made up of people who are part of the schools’ community and have had considerable experience in governance. Alongside this the Trust is establishing a range of stakeholder groups, specifically: Staff Circle, Pupil Circle and Community Circle. These groups meet during the year and are a space for the Trust to share its work, to listen to stakeholders’ views and to build strong positive relationships. Following a consultation and review of governance Trustees have determined that the board will have in the future two elected parent Trustees and these elections will take place during the academic year 2025 to 2026.

[The profiles of all Members and Trustees of The Circle Trust are published on the Trust’s website.](#)

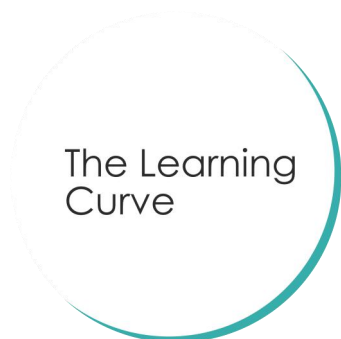


# What difference does it make that I am now employed by The Circle Trust?

It means lots and little all at the same time! Firstly, a core value of our Trust is that we know all schools are unique and their essential ethos and values must remain unique in perpetuity. We think it is important that schools are led by the Headteacher of the school with the support of local governance.

**In other words, The Circle Trust is not a franchise model where all schools start to begin to look and sound the same. So, in many ways the Trust will be quite invisible to you.**

Equally there are opportunities and benefits afforded to you by being part of The Circle Trust.



## School Improvement

At least once a year, schools will have the opportunity to validate their own self review judgements via a "Learning Curve" visit.

This includes: learning walks, looking at curriculum plans and other documents, speaking with pupils and critically speaking with colleagues.



## Professional development

Professional development is important. It doesn't matter how good a school's curriculum is. It is wholly dependent on the expertise and skill of colleagues. We call the CPD programme "The Virtuous Circle".

Virtuous Circle opportunities might be based in your own school or provide the opportunity to meet with others across the family circle of schools.



Some roles, like SENCOs, also meet regularly together in our "Encircle" group and there are subject specific training conferences called "Getting ahead of the Curve".



## How do I know about how well the Trust is performing?

Each year the Trust provides an annual report.

[Click here to view The Circular](#)

## Are there opportunities for me to be involved in Trust-wide work?

The first thing to say is that in our Trust, no member of staff would ever be compelled nor directed to work in another school.

We know you applied to work **in** and **with** the team in your own school.

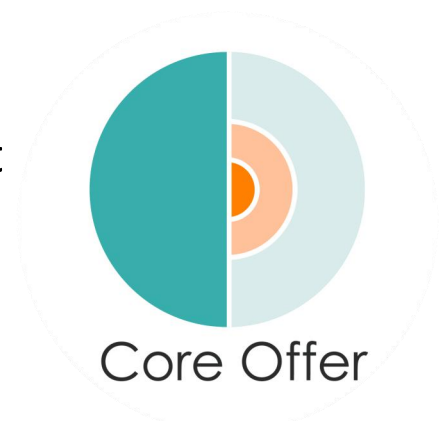


However as a Trust, we are **keen to attract and keep talent** and so there are opportunities to work within the Trust on either a short term or long term basis. This group of colleagues are called the “360 Group.”

## What else does The Circle Trust do?

Some examples of the work we do to support schools can be found in the Core Offer.

[Click here to view The Core Offer](#)



## The Circle Trust as your employer

As you will be aware, The Circle Trust is your new employer. As a Trust we have always been committed to keeping and sustaining the highest standards of your employment terms and conditions; we would have it no other way! As an employer the Trust has common policies which can be found on [The Trust's website](#) as well as individual school's own websites.

I do encourage you to take the time to have a read. For colleagues specifically these include policies relating to employment and [Staff Code of Conduct](#) as well as a myriad of other statutory policies such as [Whistleblowing](#) and [Safeguarding](#).



## A message from Ginny

I hope this has provided an insightful introduction to the Trust and signposted you to links where more information is available if required.

I am very conscious as CEO that I will not necessarily have the pleasure of meeting every colleague across the Trust! This is probably inevitable and no doubt my loss. That said, I am very happy to be contacted by colleagues across schools should you have any questions about The Circle Trust. My email address is [ginny@thecircletrust.co.uk](mailto:ginny@thecircletrust.co.uk)

**We end where we began with the warmest of welcomes to our family circle!**





The Circle Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (number 11031096) whose registered office is The Oval Offices, C/O St Crispin's School, London Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 1SS. Tel: 0118 3381961