



The
Circular
2024





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Introduction by Ginny Rhodes CEO

The Circle Trust's sixth year of operation

The Circle Trust is now nine schools and very soon will be ten. It serves over 4,250 children and young people and over 550 employees and continues to grow.



We have “expanded our circle of influence” and are delighted to have moved beyond the borders of Wokingham into Oxfordshire with our newest school to join our “family circle” based in Henley.

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

This is our sole purpose.

The multi-academy trust sector is still relatively young and so it is important to remind all stakeholders (as often as I might!) that The Circle Trust is not a “mini-local authority”: the schools together are the Trust, the Trust is the schools.

Our Trust brings tangible benefits in working together for the benefit of children and young people, their families and staff that could not be achieved working alone.



In our sixth year, we continue to grow and, we can now speak with certainty to measurable impact of our work, and we can materially feel economies of scale benefits.

It remains the case that all schools have joined The Circle Trust through independent and positive choice – we have done no promotion or marketing. Professional peers see that, what we say, is what we do! Our Trust, as you will see later in this report, is able to clearly articulate what it is, what it does and as importantly how it does it.

Our essential work is to improve schools, but this is not enough. Education has wider purposes in intellectual, social and cultural development, the formation of character and helping pupils understand they play a role and contribute to society, to support the common good. Schools hold a unique position in society they are anchors of communities and communities in themselves.

Whilst this work is still in the very early days, we are pleased to hold our first ever pan-Trust training event the “Full Circle”. In March 2024 we gather all employees, we have a wonderful programme which I hope will offer everyone much encouragement and inspiration. This would not be possible without the great generosity of Wellington College who have gifted their magnificent facilities.

Finally, all of this work always “circles back” to our core purpose, which is to improve education for the public benefit and especially for the children and young people for who we are responsible. To do this work is nothing short of a privilege.

Ginny Rhodes, CEO



A central ambition of our Trust is to be Talent Seekers, Makers, Attractors and Keepers. An example of this work has been to see this year strong succession plans come to fruition and to build a new group of Trust colleagues called the 360 group – a group of talented staff who seek to serve schools which is made up of colleagues who hold dual roles in schools and those who work in the Trust’s shared offices (we call our shared offices “the oval offices” which is the best circle pun we could manage!)



“The Virtuous Circle” is perhaps, against stiff competition, my favourite circle pun! A virtuous circle is of course an image where actions produce positive results for the benefit of all involved, so a wholly apt name for our Trust staff continuous professional development work.



Our History

The Circle Trust, established in 2018, was created to serve the local area and be geographically committed to Berkshire and the surrounding counties (within reasonable travel of the Trust's central location "The Oval Offices" in Wokingham).

The Circle Trust 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 made available to them.

In the early days we spent hours debating our name! On the one hand a name seems a rather frivolous thing, but on the other we do think names matter. We chose "The Circle Trust" as it symbolically reflects our approach, our way of working, indeed the ethos of how we operate. It is a name that is deliberately neutral and without association of a specific school. In our Trust, we know it is important to treat every school as individual and unique and feel strongly that a name shouldn't be connected to a single institution.

One of our core values is that of being inclusive and so we wanted our name to encapsulate all sorts of schools, whatever their type or phase.

Our logo circles give a pictorial sense of inclusivity which can naturally expand, with the overlapping circles depicting our desire to collaborate.

The Circle Trust was created by a secondary and a primary school through the crucible and strong foundations of two schools, across the full educational phase with top-rate Governing Bodies! We began the work with the view that if we were not utterly convinced that it would improve the educational experience and provision for children and young people for whom we were responsible then we would not continue.

The material advantages of creating and being part of a Trust were clear, thus we began with not the what but critically the how and why.

Governance and Leadership took a very considerable period to diligently curate the fundamental beliefs and values of the Trust before seeking approval and incorporation.



This time was not wasted. Far from it. It meant in the very early years of operation we worked with aplomb and could build quickly from this strong foundation.

The Trust currently comprises nine schools: two Secondary (St Crispin's and The Emmbrook), 2 primary (Nine Mile Ride and Badgemore), 2 Junior (Westende and Emmbrook Junior) and 3 Infants (Wescott, Emmbrook Infants and Shinfield).

During this reporting period one further primary school has concluded due diligence and we await the awarded their academy orders. and will legally join the Trust during this academic year.

What would be school eleven is currently in due diligence with the hopes of joining the Trust in the next year.

Our Vision, Values and Ethos

The Circle Trust is an educational charity, and it exists to do one thing and that is to advance education for the public benefit. **This is our sole purpose.**





Our Trust's vision is

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.

The phrase "**to flourish**" captures our unlimited ambition for children, young people and adults in this Trust.

Our Values

Our values are our cultural north star they drive our behaviour and decision making.



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.



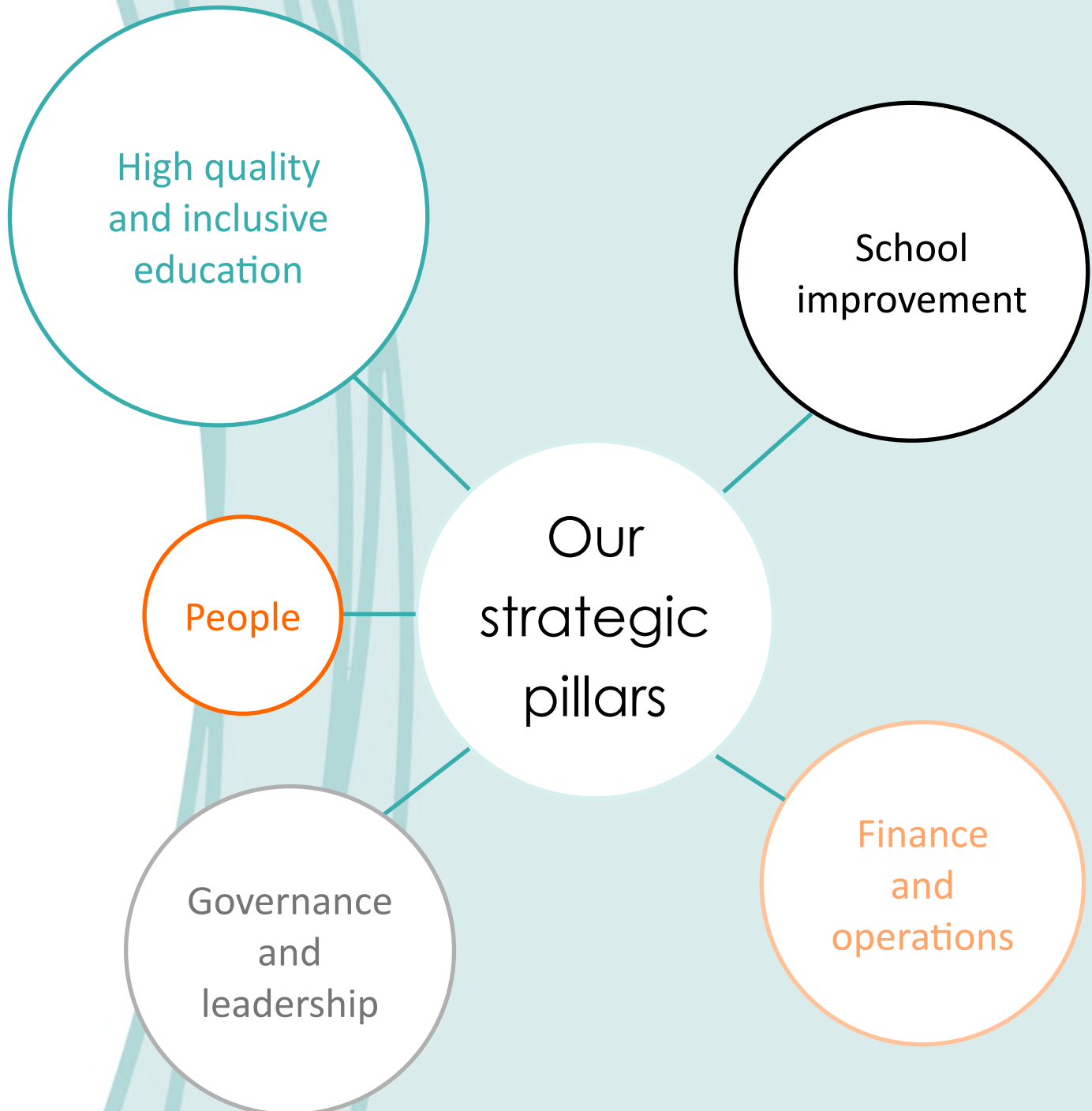
What we say is what we do, we recognise talent, foster expertise, believe well-being for all is fundamental.



Our Trust promotes collaborating with others and being outward looking.

Our Strategic Priorities

Our strategic priorities are curated for a five-year period and set out our direction. Priorities are grouped under the pillar descriptors of high-quality trusts which are:



The Trust Improvement Plan (TIP) is agreed annually to deliver these strategic priorities.



Our Values in Action

Our fundamental view remains that preserving the unique identity and ethos for all schools is essential, but we are far more than a collection of individual schools working nicely together.

We together are The Circle Trust, the Trust is the schools, the schools are the Trust. As a single legal entity, we share the responsibility of all children and young people across the Trust - we have the ability and privilege to improve education for all pupils.

By working together in this way, we become more than the sum of our parts and a great deal more than any one school could achieve alone.

Improving the quality of education is always our wildly important goal. The Circle Trust is a specialist organisation – we exist to do one thing – to run and improve schools to advance education for the public benefit. In our view the foundations of strong schools are: high quality teaching, well regarded pastoral care, a well-designed curriculum, vibrant opportunities to enrich students' experience with consistently strong progress and attainment above the national average - in short, schools where adults want to work and where parents want their child to attend.

Our strategic focus as a Trust therefore rests on these central tenets:

The Circle Trust has a strong theorised model of improvement; we set the conditions to support the quality of education systematically.

As a Trust we can scale improvement, reduce professionals' workload, and improve the quality of provision. We work neither in an utterly autonomous nor in a totally aligned way; instead, our work benefits from both styles bringing efficiency and effectiveness to our endeavours. No two schools are alike (even identical twins have different fingerprints!). Every school differs in context – finding a one size fits all approach to improving schools therefore is folly.

Whilst the improvement of schools is a field of practice there are core essentials, guided by evidence, which set the conditions for improving the quality of education.



Improving the Quality of Education:

We hold a matured conceptual understanding of school improvement. Our work as a Trust crucially includes every aspect and detail of a school's strategic and operational work. As a result, we see school improvement as a complex web of levers which involves every facet, however minor, of running a school.

Headteachers:

The centrality of the Headteacher for school improvement is indisputable. Headteachers are the lead professional, their leadership capacity to inspire, pace set, strengthen standards, drive improvement, endurance and professional competency is critical to securing and sustaining improvement.

Schools thrive when Headteachers with governance set a strong and positive culture, have the agency and accountability of decision making and use the laser sharp knowledge of their school's cohort and community to inform and drive improvement. The core duty of our Trust is consequently to set the conditions so that Headteachers and other school leaders have the knowledge, capacity, resource, encouragement, expertise, and strength to lead.



Staff:

There is no improvement for pupils without improvement in teaching, and no improvement in teaching without the best professional development for staff. Evidence tells us that “the virtuous circle” of professional development is the most impactful tool to improve the quality of teaching and improving learning. No matter how good the design of the curriculum it is wholly reliant on its implementation by teachers supported by all staff.

We curate conditions to improve workload, promote career development opportunities, give professional support and make staff well-being a fundamental priority.

As a Trust we are Talent Seekers, Makers, Attractors and Keepers.



Governance:

The Circle Trust will always hold governance in the highest esteem. As a Trust, we will always act in the best interests of our children and young people. As a single legal entity, our Trust is hardwired for collaboration and shared accountability; all schools are crucially connected, and we learn from each other. Trustees take the ultimate legal responsibility and accountability for our Trust; they act equally for all and depend on the insight and high ambition for their school from Local Advisory Boards.

All governance shares in the drive to improve the quality of education for all children and young people across the Trust.



Moral duty:

Education remains the best tool we must tackle social inequality and discrimination and build towards a truly inclusive society – we can change minds and challenge prejudice. There will always be work to be done to improve diversity within Trust Leadership and governance – it is vital for positive role models from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnicities to help break down stereotypes and prejudice and encourage all to broaden horizons and ambitions. Bringing diversity to the curriculum, staff bodies, governance and practice is a marathon which ought to be done at the pace of a sprint! We will never ignore our duties in respect to the climate, we will not be passive in this work and will always think in a way that goes quite beyond our own tenure in this Trust. Finally, we always act in line with the Nolan Principles of public service which are selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty and leadership.

Civic contributor:

We welcome our civic duty. Our primary focus is to improve the quality of education in our schools, but this is not enough. Education has wider purposes in intellectual, social and cultural development, the formation of character and helping pupils understand they play a role and contribute to society to support the common good. We are committed to creating the conditions for pupils to flourish as adults. Schools hold a unique position in society; they are anchors of communities and communities in themselves. Our Trust has reputational authenticity; in other words, what we say is what we do. We never seek to harm schools to the left or the right of us.

We will communicate well with and listen to stakeholders. Parents and carers have the right to understand the role and benefit of the school their child attends being part of our Trust.



Commercial benefit:

By working together as a single legal entity, we become more than the sum of our parts and a great deal more than any one school could achieve alone. As a result, we can seize economies of scale advantages to save money, securing best value for money decisions. Finances allocated to The Circle Trust are prioritised to realising our vision.

We work with absolute integrity. Our stewardship of public funds and resources will always be open to scrutiny and above reproach.

The Circle Trust is not a passive administrative entity but an active organisation adding value to this family of schools. As a Trust our ambition is clear; to improve the educational outcomes for children and young people.



Our Trust's 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 here 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 [Scheme of Delegation](#) sets out how our Trust is governed :

Governance arrangements



Our Members



Yun Tay
(Chair of Members)



Aileen Feeney
(Chair of Nom Com)



Geoffrey Beedham



Jonathan Davis



Paul Jeffery

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 objects 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.



Our Trustees



Andrew Beckett
(Chair of Trustees)



Anne Haycocks
(SEND link Trustee)



Arnab Mukherjee



Barbara Wojna



David Day



David Walker
(Safeguarding link Trustee)



Katherine Baker



Kevin Addington



Kevin McGee



Stuart Riley



Tariro Madzingira

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

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 as they first join our Trust during this onboarding period they 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 the Trust has with the Department for Education, which can be found [here](#)

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.



Local Advisory Boards

local governance for all schools in the Trust

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

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 min. of 8 of whom two must be elected parents and one must be elected from the staff.

Nomination Committee

A Nomination Committee has been established to support the ongoing selection and appointment by Members of Trustees for our Trust. The committee is chaired by a Member and consists of representatives from the Trustees, Local Advisory Boards, CEO and our Company Secretary. The Committee uses a skills-based analysis to determine the strength and depth of expertise throughout the Trustee board and its committees in order to identify how to strengthen our work in the future.

Review of Governance

Regularly Trustees engage in governance review of our Trust. The most recent external report's executive summary stated:

“The review clearly evidenced that the Trust has significantly invested in the governance structure and support of Trust development. This investment puts it into a strong position to secure its policies and procedures and grow to six schools, which it has successfully achieved. There is a great deal of effective governance practice on which to commend the Trust Board. Specific strengths include the skills and knowledge of Trustees, Company Secretary and the small Executive Team, with positive, trusting relationships that allow transparent communication and an openness to challenge and improvement. The report sets out recommendations for refinement and some streamlining to consolidate this current position and prepare the structure for the next phase of growth, which is part of its current strategy.”

The review identified several strengths, including:

- Leadership and governance are from the top. There is a strong and coherent working relationship between the Chair and CEO, and wider stakeholders have a high level of confidence in their leadership.
- Succession planning is well considered for executive leadership, which for the CEO role and their successor has been seen in action during the review
- There is a clear vision and strong culture of transparency and collaboration across the Trust
- Financial controls and processes are strong
- Governance procedures and processes overall are strong and well managed and delivered across the Trust.
- The governance of Trust policy and statutory information is a strength



Training for governance

Training for governance is a combination of face to face in house training events spanning from “Preparing for OFSTED” through to “Understanding the process of self-review via The Learning Curve.” Alongside these events there is online training offered via the Confederation of School Trusts, NGA Learning Link, The National College and The Key. The Trust belongs to the National Governance Association and the Confederation of School Trusts and is an active member of both.

Governance professional

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. The Trustees have elected to do so. Rebecca Clarke, as company secretary under the Companies Act, is now 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.

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

The Scheme of Delegation

The scheme of delegation here is reviewed by Trustees annually in consultation with Local Advisors and the executive team to ensure the Scheme reflects organisational realities and statutory updates and continues to deliver effective, efficient operation and governance of the Trust.



Governance arrangements in The Circle Trust are crafted to ensure all aspects of performance of the Trust are rigorously held to account.



Our Annual Governance Event

“Squaring the Circle”

With the exception of the enforced hiatus as a result of the pandemic we continue to hold our annual governance event “Squaring the Circle”.

We all benefitted from a truly inspiring keynote talk from Rachel Johnson, CEO of PIXL who vividly reminded all volunteering in governance of the significance of their work and the material difference it makes for children and young people.

My public thanks extend to Wellington College who once again give so generously their facilities (and a very wonderful facilities at that!) for us to hold this annual





The Circle Trust's Growth

Expanding the Circle

Our Schools

Schools	Type	No. Students 1.12.23	No. Staff (FTE)	Notes Data from
St Crispin's	Secondary	1459	222	Conversion date 1 st Feb 2018
Nine Mile Ride	Primary	372	55	Conversion date 1 st Feb 2018
Shinfield	Infant + nursery	308	63	Conversion date 1 st April 2020
Westende	Junior	237	42	Conversion date 1 st July 2020
Wescott	Infant	144	34	Conversion date 1 st July 2020
The Emmbrook	Secondary	1273	147	Conversion date 1 st April 2021
Emmbrook	Infant	182	45	Conversion date 1 st July 2023
Emmbrook	Junior	257	35	Conversion date 1 st July 2023
Badgemore	Primary	141	31	Academy orders approved Dec 2023
9 schools		4373	674	

Admissions

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 and recommendation by Local Advisors.

The Circle Trust has complied in this reporting period with the guidance and adhered to regulations laid out in the

[Schools Admissions Code](#)

Numbers on Role
December 2023

4232

All Schools

Oct 2022 Census		Sept 2023		Dec 2023
PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
3716	4093	3964	4170	4232



St Crispin's School

	Oct 2022 Census		Sept 2023		Dec 2023
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
7	275	259	255	255	253
8	215	235	275	269	272
9	208 + 5	215	245	240	246
10	208 + 5	212	208 + 5	214	215
11	205 + 5	210	208 + 5	212	213
12	30	136	30	125	129
13	30	116	30	131	131
	1162	1383	1261	1446	1459

Yr12+13 Pan refers to external students



Nine Mile Ride Primary School

	Oct 2022 Census		Sept 2023		Dec 2023
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	50	47	54	54	54
1	50	54	54	50	51
2	50	52	54	54	54
3	50	52	54	54	54
4	50	53	54	53	53
5	50	51	54	52	52
6	50	53	54	54	54
	350	362	378	371	372



Wescott Infant School

	Oct 2022 Census		Sept 2023		Dec 2023
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	56	51	56	32	32
1	56	54	57	56	57
2	56	48	56	54	55
	168	153	169	142	144



Westende Junior School

	October 2021 Census		Sep-22		Dec-22
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
3	60	60	60	53	54
4	60	60	60	60	60
5	60	60	60	60	60
6	60	60	64	63	63
	240	240	244	236	237



The Emmbrook School

	October 2021 Census		Sep-22		Dec-22
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
7	240	239	255	251	254
8	245	237	240	236	236
9	210	211	245	243	239
10	210	209	213	209	208
11	180	177	213	212	212
12	20	59	20	70	69
13	20	66	20	55	55
	1090	1198	1206	1276	1273



Shinfield Infant and Nursery School

	October 2021 Census		Sep-22		Dec-22
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
Nursery	30AM 30PM	47	30AM 30PM	0	39
R	90	90	90	88	89
1	90	90	90	89	90
2	90	90	90	89	90
	270	317	270	266	308

Total PAN does not include Nursery



Emmbrook Infant School

	October 2021 Census		Sep-22		Dec-22
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	60	60 +1	60	59	59
1	60	60 + 1	60	60 + 1	60 + 1
2	60	60 + 1	60	58 + 2	60 + 2
	180	183	180	180	182

+ are students in Total Communication Base



Emmbrook Junior School

	October 2021 Census		Sep-22		Dec-22
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
3	64	64	64	61	62 + 1
4	64	64	64	62 + 1	64 + 1
5	64	64 + 1	64	62 + 2	63 + 2
6	64	64	64	65	64
	256	257	256	253	257

+ are students in Total Communication Base

The Circle Trust's Stewardship

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

The Circle Trust's 2022-23 annual accounts were submitted in accordance with all statutory deadlines and published on the [Trust's website](#).

In accordance with our master Funding Agreement, all money is spent to improve educational outcomes and in a fair and consistent approach to all schools. Trustees adhere fully to the yearly updated [Academy Trust Handbook](#). The Chief Operating Officer fulfils the role of consolidating all school and the 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 and so key Trustees' Finance Committee

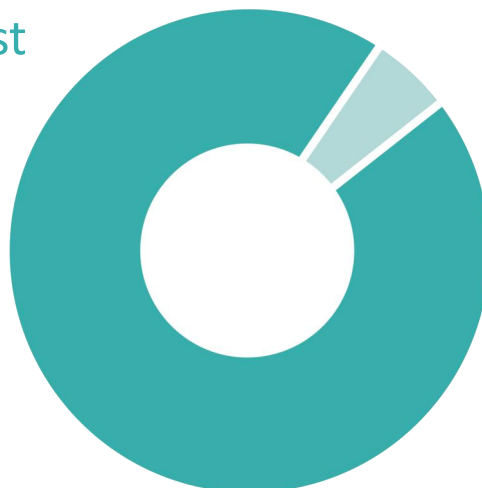
meetings are attended by Local Advisors who Chair their respective schools' Finance Committees. This allows the Trust's financial decision-making to be shared and influenced.

Trustees hold the legal financial responsibility and as such they continue to approve formally every school's budget, which forms part of our Trust's budget. As stated in the Scheme of Delegation, Trustees reserve the right to not delegate some or all financial responsibilities to a LAB but have not taken this action in this reporting period. It is not acceptable to set a Trust deficit budget and the Trust has never done so.

Income across the Trust

94%

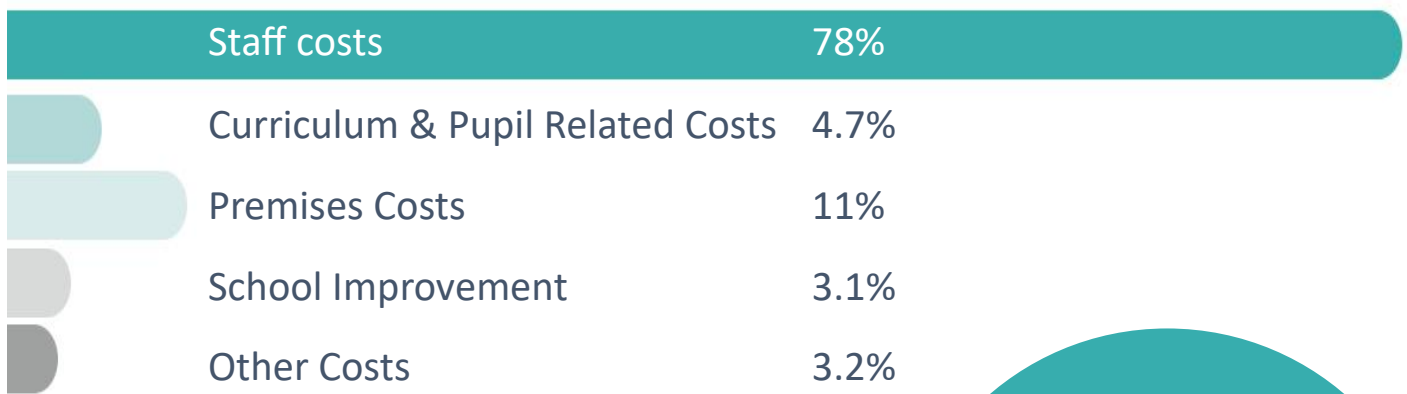
Charitable Activities:
GAG, 6th Form, Pupil
Premium, UIFSM,
PEGrant



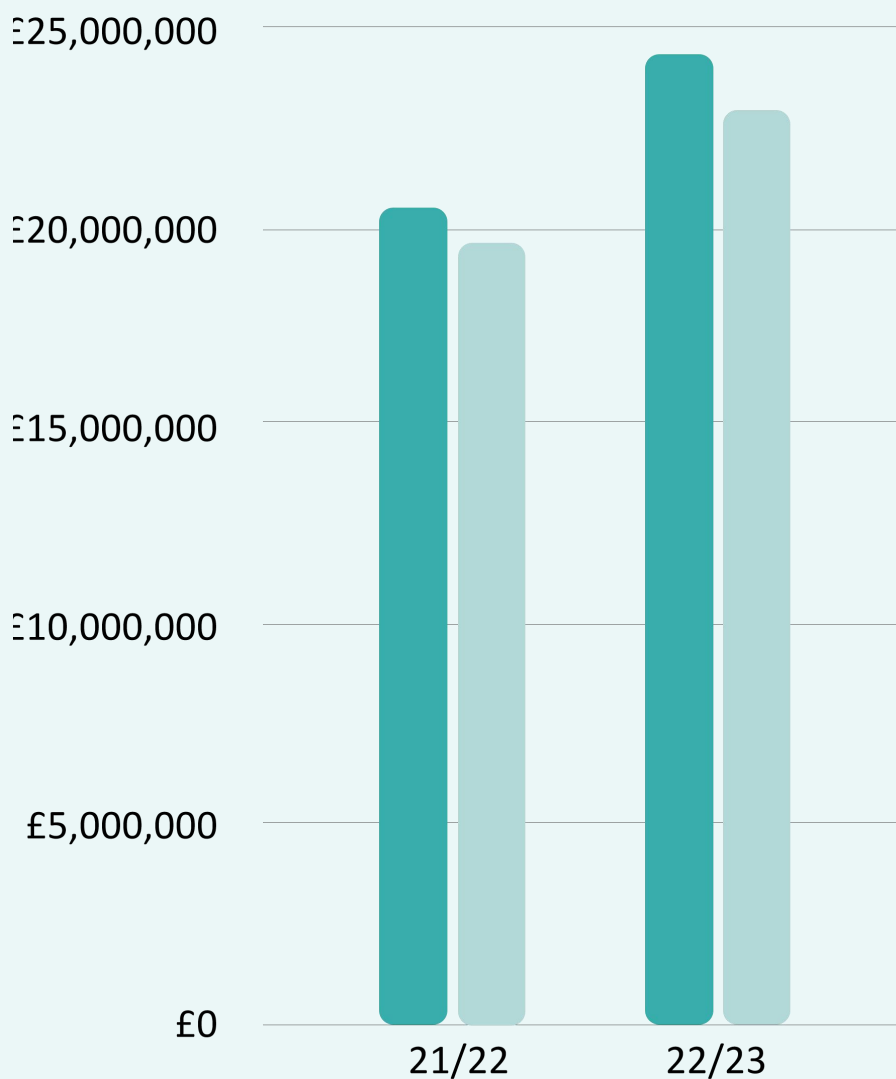
6%

Trading activities,
Other Income
Donations, Grants

Expenditure across the Trust



Year-end Reserves
£3,231,404



● Total income
21/22 £20,419,295
22/23 £24,348,389

● Total Income of which ESFA
21/22 £19,439,307
22/23 £23,257,245

I am pleased to report that this year's audit was again completed without issue and presented to a joint Audit and Risk and Finance Trustees Committee meeting for scrutiny with Members in attendance.

The Central Service Contribution 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 carry out capital improvements. In this reporting period the fee was 4.75% for primary schools and 6% for secondary schools.

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. During this reporting period the Trust operationally used a cloud-based platform for managing risk - Insight4GRC. The platform allows the Audit and Risk Committee to effectively and efficiently oversee the risk register as well as determine a broader risk appetite for the Trust which is set at "Mindful". The Trust also uses GTPRis to manage our duties in respect of data management and control.

Our Trust has adopted a common management of information system named Arbor. This information management system offers our Trust a school improvement vehicle supporting aligned thinking and practice of curricula and assessment processes. This alignment has been organic and co-produced with Headteachers where all have been givers and receivers of school expertise. Alignment at this level has not been without considerable effort. Not everyone enjoys change and no system is perfect, but the outcome has improved Trust wide resilience.

Gifts

During this period no employee, Trustee or Local Advisor reported receiving a gift that required reporting.





Our Core Offer

Core Offer is the services provided for schools within the Trust [here](#). The Core Offer provides a strong level of service and demonstrates good value for money.

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

- Where is the activity most effectively performed i.e. within individual schools or centrally
- What is the educational benefit of a central approach 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



The Circle Trust's approach to improving the quality of education and Our Trust will always have a relentless focus on improving the quality of education.

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

Sir David Carter former National Schools Commissioner says: "True evidence of school improvement is when a 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 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 inspections 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 know that if something that happens 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.

They want to know that the quality of the learning experience will secure a pathway to the next stage of their child's development.

The signals of a good school is one working 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 wholly subscribe to this definition of what constitutes the features of a great school.



Research from Ofsted [here](#) and the University of Nottingham [here](#) provide evidence that Trusts have shown themselves to be robust and resilient structures. Schools in trusts give powerful evidence about the support they receive and how leaders are stronger together in a structure that promotes solidarity and connectedness.

Trusts create the conditions for teachers and leaders to work together in deep and purposeful collaboration to advance education as a public good. Trusts are now knowledge building structures and as such vehicles for significant and meaningful school improvement. The very structure of a 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 matter.

As a Trust, we always act in the best interests of its children and young people. We are a Trust who cares about the other schools in its community, is outward facing.

Deploying financial resources for school improvement which adds more value than any school can achieve on their own. The school improvement priorities centre on sharing professional collective expertise to

build the best curriculum, assessment and pedagogy model underpinned by secure research evidence that works and founded on the most successful practice.

The Circle Trust has built and fosters a Trust-wide learning communities, focusing on the sharing of good practice alongside strong professional expertise of Leaders with the capacity to support and challenge.

There is increasingly 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.

Of course, this year as all others the impact of our Trust's work must result in an upward trajectory of children and young people's educational outcomes. During this reporting period all schools in the Trust remain either Good or Outstanding.



In order to be judged as Good a school must fit these exacting criteria!



1. The curriculum extends beyond the academic, vocational or technical and provides for pupils' broader development.

The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality.
2. The curriculum and the school's effective wider work support pupils to be confident, resilient and independent, and to develop strength of character.
3. The school provides high-quality pastoral support. Pupils know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and of the protected characteristics.

4. The school provides a wide range of opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests. Pupils appreciate these and make good use of them.

5. The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain effectively, developing their understanding of the fundamental British values of **democracy**, **the rule of law**, **individual liberty**, and **mutual respect** and **tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs**.

6. The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity effectively. As a result, pupils understand, appreciate and respect difference in the world and its people, celebrating the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities.

7. Pupils engage with views, beliefs and opinions that are different from their own in considered ways. They show respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law and no forms of discrimination are tolerated.



Our Core Offer

8. The school provides pupils with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society. Pupils know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way.



9. The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. These expectations are commonly understood and applied consistently and fairly.

This is reflected in pupils' positive behaviour and conduct. Low-level disruption is not tolerated and pupils' behaviour does not disrupt lessons or the day-to-day life of the school.

Leaders support all staff well in managing pupils' behaviour. Staff make sure that pupils follow appropriate routines.



10. Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively and are not allowed to spread.
11. There is demonstrable improvement in the behaviour and attendance of pupils who have particular needs.

12. Pupils' attitudes to their education are positive. They are committed to their learning, know how to study effectively and do so, are resilient to setbacks and take pride in their achievements.

13. Pupils have high attendance, within the context of the pandemic. They come to school on time and are punctual to lessons. When this is not the case, the school takes appropriate, swift and effective action.

Suspensions are used appropriately. The school reintegrates suspended pupils on their return and manages their behaviour effectively. Permanent exclusions are used appropriately as a last resort.



14. Relationships among pupils and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture; pupils are safe and they feel safe.

15. The curriculum extends beyond the academic, vocational or technical and provides for pupils' broader development. The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality.

16. The curriculum and the school's effective wider work support pupils to be confident, resilient and independent, and to develop strength of character.

17. The school provides high-quality pastoral support. Pupils know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and of the protected characteristics.



18. The school provides a wide range of opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests. Pupils appreciate these and make good use of them.

19. The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain effectively, developing their understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

20. The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity effectively. As a result, pupils understand, appreciate and respect difference in the world and its people, celebrating the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities.

21. Pupils engage with views, beliefs and opinions that are different from their own in considered ways. They show respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law and no forms of discrimination are tolerated.

22. The school provides pupils with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society. Pupils know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way.



23. Secondary schools prepare pupils for future success in education, employment or training. They use the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#), a framework that defines the best careers provision in schools and colleges, to develop and improve their careers provision and enable a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils in Years 8 to 13. All pupils receive unbiased information about potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance; the school meets the requirements of section 42B of the Education Act 1997. The school provides good quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.



24. Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils. This is realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice.
25. Leaders focus on improving teachers' subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge in order to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment. The practice and subject knowledge of staff, including ECTs, build and improve over time. This includes building teachers' expertise in remote education.



26. Leaders aim to ensure that all pupils successfully complete their programmes of study. They provide the support for staff to make this possible. They create an inclusive culture and do not allow gaming or off-rolling.
27. Leaders engage effectively with pupils and others in their community, including, when relevant, parents, employers and local services. Engagement opportunities are focused and have purpose.



28. Leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload.
29. Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment.

30. Those responsible for governance understand their role and carry this out effectively. Governors/trustees ensure that the school has a clear vision and strategy, that resources are managed well and that leaders are held to account for the quality of education.

31. Those with responsibility for governance ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, for example in relation to the ‘Prevent’ duty and safeguarding.

32. The school has a culture of safeguarding that supports effective arrangements to: identify pupils who may need early help or who are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming or exploitation; help pupils reduce their risk of harm by securing the support they need, or referring them in a timely way to those who have the expertise to help; and manage safe recruitment and allegations about adults who may be a risk to pupils.

School	Date joined the Trust	Legacy Inspection outcome (previous framework) before joining The Circle Trust	OFSTED Inspection since joining The Circle Trust (current framework*)
St Crispin’s Secondary School	Conversion date 1 st Feb 2018	Good March 2017	Good May 2022
Nine Mile Ride Primary School	Conversion date 1 st Feb 2018	Good May 2013	Good June 2022
Shinfield Infant and Nursery School	Conversion date 1 st April 2020	Good Feb 2019	
Wescott Infant School	Conversion date 1 st July 2020	Outstanding Dec 2010	Good November 2023
Westende Junior School	Conversion date 1 st July 2020	Good Jan 2020	
The Emmbrook Secondary School	Conversion date 1 st April 2021	Good March 2017	Good October 2023
Emmbrook Infant School	Conversion date 1 st July 2023	Outstanding Jan. 2019	
Emmbrook Junior School	Conversion date 1 st July 2023	Good April 2022	

*Please note that the Education Inspection Framework has changed significantly since 2019. The National Director of OFSTED says “outstanding schools which have improved since their last inspection may still be downgraded because the bar has been raised. A good grade does not mean a school has declined; in fact, the opposite can be true.”



Wescott So

Safeguarding

Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote 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 them 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.

The annual safeguarding report can be found [here](#)





The Circle Trust is committed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

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: 0 – 25 [here](#). The Children's and Family Act 2014 [here](#) which sets out schools' responsibilities for pupils with SEN and disabilities and 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 them. The Code of Practice has the following definitions which states a child of compulsory school age or a young person has a learning difficulty or disability if they :

- Have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age,
or
- Have a disability, which prevents or hinders them 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. 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.

Our Trust has established an “Encircle” group of SENCOs and governance leads with responsibility for SEND oversight to share good practice. We chose this particular circle pun for this group to give a pictorial sense of “surrounding” children and young

people with our support albeit very often with very limited external provision and help. This has led to our Trust investing in specialist training in speech and language in all schools.

The Trust currently comprises four schools with specialist provisions for children. The Little Acorns at Wescott Infant School and The Acorns at Westende Junior School provides specialist support for children with ASD. These two provisions are subject to phased decommissioning. Both Emmbrook Infants and Emmbrook Juniors provide specialist provision called total communication, which is primarily for children with severe hearing loss.

The Circle Trust as an Employer

Our Trust is a responsible and trustworthy employer who holds in the highest regard the contribution of all.

The Circle Trust abides with 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. The integrity of professional relationships is critical. 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, and coordination and communication between Trust and school leadership are crucial.

Excellent training helps retain talented staff and succession plan for the future - as I set out in the introduction of this report, we call this work “the Virtuous Circle”.



The Circle Trust thrives with the right people (talent) doing the right job (effective) at the right time (efficient).





The Circle Trust's Chair of Trustees concluding remarks

It's hard to believe that The Circle Trust is now 6 years old, and in that time we've grown from two schools to eight, with another school due to join imminently and hopefully another shortly after that.

The Trust's core offer together with the sharing of expertise between schools and governance is clearly making an impact which is wonderful to see. We've had two of our schools (The Emmbrook and Wescott Infants) get strong Good Ofsted ratings this year demonstrating the strength of the schools and the support from the Trust.

Being large enough to get significant capital funding is allowing us to invest in the school estates – something that simply wasn't possible as maintained schools. Working closely with Wokingham Borough Council has allowed us to support the need for additional places in the borough as part of our civic responsibility, enabling much-needed improvements to our two secondary schools in order to provide additional capacity

It's been great having both Emmbrook Infants and Emmbrook Juniors join the Trust in July last year. With the complete Emmbrook family being part of the Trust, it means that we'll now see the journey of children in the Emmbrook community from early years all the way through to sixth form. I'm also excited that Badgemore Primary School in nearby Henley will be joining us shortly as our first school from outside of Wokingham. Badgemore, together with another Wokingham-based primary school in the queue to hopefully receive academy orders, plus others from adjacent local authorities who are currently in due-diligence will only serve to make The Circle Trust even better and even more collaborative.

As part of our annual refinement of the scheme of delegation, we've simplified the

structures in our local advisory boards with the aim of reducing workload and eliminating repetition, allowing our local governance to focus on strategic areas related to their schools and their surrounding communities.

As ever, our staff and volunteers in governance give a huge amount towards the success of The Circle Trust. This year has seen some of our longstanding Trustees step down after many years of service, and I'd like to thank Julian Bushell, Lee Smith and Paul Miller for their generosity in all they did to help build the Trust to what it is today. Largely thanks to the Nominations Committee that we started last year, we have managed to recruit some great new Trustees and the committee has a strong eye on succession planning for the Trust. I'd like to welcome Stuart Riley, Kevin Magee, Barbara Wojna,

Tariro Madzingira and Arnab Mukherjee as new Trustees to the board appointed by members during the last year. It will be sad to say goodbye to Jonathan Davis who has been one of our members since the inception of the Trust – a big thanks from all of us for keeping that vital oversight of the Trust board.

Finally, I'm really looking forward to seeing most of our Trust staff at our first Trust-wide conference, The Full Circle. Here's to a great opportunity to hear some fabulous speakers, and to meet and get to know others from the larger Trust family!





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