







Table of Contents

Introduction by the CEO	4
Our History	6
Our Vision, Values and Ethos	8
Our Strategic Priorities	11
Our Values in Action	14
Our Trust's Governance	20
The Circle Trust's Growth – Expanding the Circle	26
The Circle Trust's Stewardship	32
Our Core Offer	35
The Circle Trust's approach to improving the quality of education	36
Safeguarding	48
Special Educational Needs	50
The Circle Trust as an Employer	52
The Circle Trust's Chair of Trustees concluding remarks	54



Introduction by Ginny Rhodes

CEO

The Circle Trust is now ten schools and very soon will be twelve. It serves over 4,500 children and young people and over 550 employees and continues to grow.

We have “expanded our circle of influence” and are delighted to now work with four Local Authorities, Wokingham, Oxfordshire, Bracknell Forest and Hampshire. The latest school to join our “family circle” is about to be built in Hartland Village, a new community between Fleet and Farnborough.

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 seventh year, we continue to grow and, we can now speak with certainty to the measurable impact of our work, and 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.



360

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 group of Trust colleagues called the 360 group – talented staff who seek to serve 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, albeit with a sage level of regret given the current state-side occupant!)



“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.



In this reporting cycle we were delighted to hold our first ever pan-Trust training event the “Full Circle”. We gathered all employees to meet and listen to some quite brilliant speakers who reminded us all of the privilege of education. The day was very warmly received, with colleagues saying how they felt encouraged and even inspired. This would not have been possible without the great generosity of Wellington College in gifting their magnificent facilities.

As an educational charity we welcome our civic duty to give back to the system. We embark on the year ahead taking inspiration from both inside and outside of our family circle to innovate the way we do governance in the Trust. I have every confidence that the timing is perfect to “pull up our roots” and think about doing things in new ways. What will never change, however, is my conviction that the work of governance truly makes a difference, and I could not be more grateful as CEO for the wisdom, challenge and encouragement of those who give many hundreds of dedicated volunteer hours.

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 whom we are responsible.

To do this work is nothing short of a privilege.

Our History

The Circle Trust, established in 2018, was created to serve the local area and be geographically committed to our central location in Wokingham and the surrounding counties.

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

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 should not 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 ten schools: two secondary (St Crispin's and The Emmbrook), three primary (Nine Mile Ride, Badgemore and Hawthorns), two junior (Westende and Emmbrook Junior) and three infants (Wescott, Emmbrook Infants and Shinfield).

During this reporting period one further primary school in Bracknell Forest has concluded due diligence and were awarded their academy orders. They will therefore legally join the Trust during this academic year.

Hampshire County Council and the Department of Education awarded The Circle Trust the presumption to open and run a brand-new school, "Hartland Village Primary School", the planning permission for this school has been awarded and the build begins soon.

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 and 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: high quality and inclusive education; school improvement; people; finance and operations and governance and leadership. The Trust Improvement Plan (TIP) is agreed annually to deliver these strategic priorities.

The strategic priorities for the period 2024 – 2029:

High Quality and Inclusive Education

We will be The Circle Trust in everything we do. We will continue to work with absolute authenticity (what we say is what we do) as a distinct and compelling organisation so that those inside and outside the organisation can recognise who we are, what we aspire to and how and why we do it.

We will seek greater equity through education for all pupils by promoting a stronger education system that creates social mobility, justice and prioritises those presently disadvantaged.

We will embrace diversity and inclusion, not just because it is the correct thing to do; we pursue it and chase it down because it is inherently better.





School Improvement

Everything we do is aimed at supporting pupils to flourish, enhancing their life chances. We will bring cohesion to what we want pupils to know, do and experience because as a trust we have capacity at scale and can gather the best expertise to codify what works across many schools.



People

We will be an employer where everyone feels a genuine part of a thriving and successful organisation, where employees have their talents and expertise fostered and where staff well-being is a fundamental priority.

We will seek to innovate and reimagine working in schools by transforming our practices, using artificial intelligence's rapidly evolving opportunities alongside our human wisdom to improve learning and achievement and reduce workload meaningfully for all.



Finance and Operations

We will ensure every penny is spent on education, using income and utilising reserves to make the greatest possible impact so that every pupil can achieve their potential.

We will maintain, improve and invest in the trust estate so that it is a safe, sustainable and an inspiring learning environment.

We will never ignore our duties in respect to the climate; we will not be passive in this work and will always think and act in a way that goes quite beyond our own tenure in this Trust.



Governance and Leadership

We will be outward looking and engage with other civic actors for the wider good. Our civic contribution will be to support the conditions for system leaders to address complex issues affecting children and young people that require different actors to work together.

We will attract, keep, and train high quality governance to avoid exposing schools and the Trust to undue risk. We will simplify and reduce the workload of governance at all layers and succession plan for key roles.





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.

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.

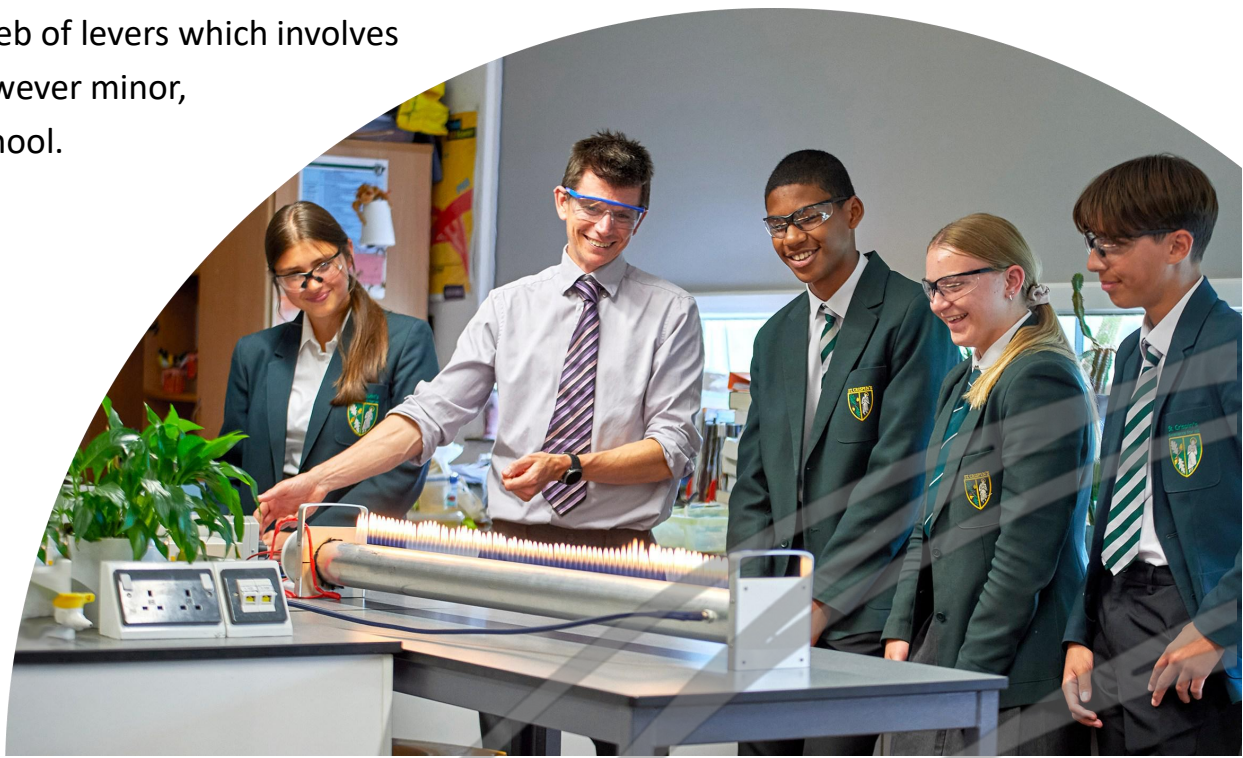
No two schools are alike (even identical twins have different fingerprints!). Every school differs in context – finding a one size fits all approach to improving schools therefore is folly. Whilst the improvement of schools is a field of practice there are core essentials, guided by evidence, which set the conditions for improving the quality of education.

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

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 from the wider governance circles.

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 to 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 indeed all governance circles work within the seven principles of public life (Nolan).

All those involved in governance 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 [Scheme of Delegation](#) sets out how our Trust is governed.

Our Members



Geoffrey Beedham



Aileen Feeney



Paul Jeffery



Yun Tay



Robin Scurlock

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)



Kevin Addington



Sara Attra



Katherine Baker



David Day



Stuart Riley



Tariro Madzingira



Kevin Magee



Arnab Mukherjee



David Walker



Barbara Wojna



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.

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.

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, other governance Circles, CEO and our Director of Governance. The Committee uses a skills-based analysis to determine the strength and depth of expertise throughout the Trust board and its committees in order to identify how to strengthen our work in the future.

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 and The National College. 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 our Director of Governance in 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 Director of Governance and the wider governance team, add enormous value to the Trust with strong systems in place for the support of governance circles and clerking.

The Scheme of Delegation

The [Scheme of Delegation](#) 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.



Our Annual Governance Event

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 Chris Lubbe. Chris was previously bodyguard to Nelson Mandela and vividly reminded the wickedness of the apartheid system and reminded us all of the wisdom of Mandela to forgive and restore.





The Circle Trust's Growth

Expanding the Circle

Our Schools	Type	No. Students 1.12.24	No. Staff (FTE)	Notes
St Crispin's	Secondary	1495	123.75	Conversion date 1st Feb 2018
Nine Mile Ride	Primary	374	34.49	Conversion date 1st Feb 2018
Shinfield	Infant + nursery	309	30.95	Conversion date 1st April 2020
Wescott	Infant	236	17.01	Conversion date 1st July 2020
Westende	Junior	122	28.64	Conversion date 1st July 2020
Emmbrook	Secondary	1305	109.20	Conversion date 1st April 2021
Emmbrook	Infant	182	26.24	Conversion date 1st June 2023
Emmbrook	Junior	256	23.45	Conversion date 1st June 2023
Badgemore	Primary	127	16.72	Conversion date 1st May 2024
Hawthorns	Primary	427	34.57	Conversion date 1st Feb 2025
<i>Owlsmoor</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>537</i>		<i>Academy order approved December 2024</i>
Hartland	Primary			To open September 2027 tbc
12 schools		4833*		*figure excludes Owlsmoor

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 Roll
December 2024

4833



All Schools

Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
4570	4789	4641	4792	4833



St Crispin's School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
7	255	254	255	251	247
8	275	272	255	251	254
9	215	240	275	272	270
10	208 + 5	214	245	250	249
11	208 + 5	211	208 + 5	213	213
12	30	129	30	137	139
13	30	131	30	124	123
	1231	1451	1273	1498	1495

Yr12+13 PAN refers to external students



Nine Mile Ride Primary School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	54	54	54	53	53
1	54	51	54	53	54
2	54	54	54	52	54
3	54	54	54	51	53
4	54	53	54	54	54
5	54	52	54	52	52
6	54	54	54	53	54
	378	372	378	368	374



Shinfield Infant and Nursery School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
Nursery	30AM / 30PM	40	30AM / 30PM	23	39
R	90	90	90	90	90
1	90	88	90	97	90
2	90	89	90	85	90
	270	307	270	295	309

Total PAN does not include Nursery



Wescott Infant School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	56	32	90	28	29
1	57	57		34	35
2	56	54	56	57	58
	169	144	146	119	122



Westende Junior School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
3	60	53	60	54	54
4	60	60	60	57	60
5	60	59	60	59	60
6	64	62	64	60	62
	240	234	244	230	236



The Emmbrook School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
7	255	255	255	211	215
8	240	237	255	248	253
9	245	242	240	239	237
10	210	210	245	241	242
11	210	213	213	212	212
12	20	69	20	79	81
13	20	55	20	65	65
	1200	1280	1248	1295	1305

Yr12+13 Pan refers to external students



Emmbrook Infant School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	60	59	60	60 + 1	60 + 1
1	60	60 + 1	60	59 + 1	59 + 1
2	60	60 + 2	60	59 + 1	60 + 1
	180	182	180	181	182

+ are students in Total Communication Base



Emmbrook Junior School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
3	64	63	64	60 + 1	61 + 1
4	64	64 + 1	64	63 + 1	64 + 1
5	64	64 + 2	64	64 + 1	62 + 1
6	64	64	64	64 + 2	64 + 2
	256	258	256	256	256

+ are students in Total Communication Base



Badgemore Primary School

	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
Year	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	30	20	30	16	18
1	30	23	30	21	20
2	30	24	30	22	22
3	30	14	30	25	25
4	30	19	30	14	13
5	30	11	30	17	17
6	30	16	30	13	12
	210	127	210	128	127

Hawthorns Primary School

Year	Oct 2023 Census		Sept 2024		Dec 2024
	PAN	Actual	PAN	Actual	Actual
R	60	59	60	52	53
1	60	60	60	60	60
2	60	59	60	59	60
3	64	64	64	64	64
4	64	64	64	61	64
5	64	63	64	63	64
6	64	64	64	63	62
	436	433	436	422	427





The Circle Trust's Stewardship

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

The Circle Trust's 2023-24 annual accounts were submitted in accordance with all statutory deadlines and are 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](#).

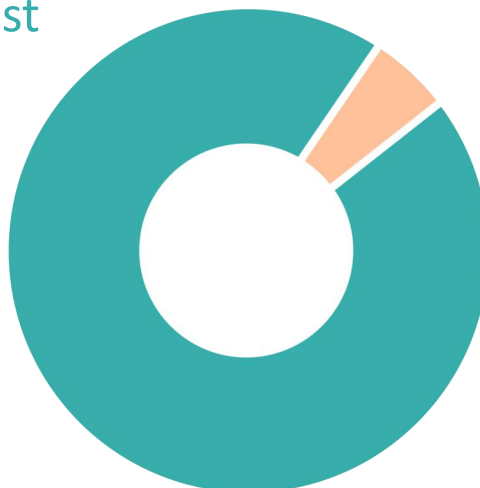
The Chief Operating Officer fulfils the role of consolidating all school and the Trust budgets to ensure that planned expenditure is in line with our Funding Agreement, particularly in respect of achieving value for money, regularity and propriety.

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. It is not acceptable to set a Trust deficit budget and the Trust has never done so.

Income across the Trust

95%

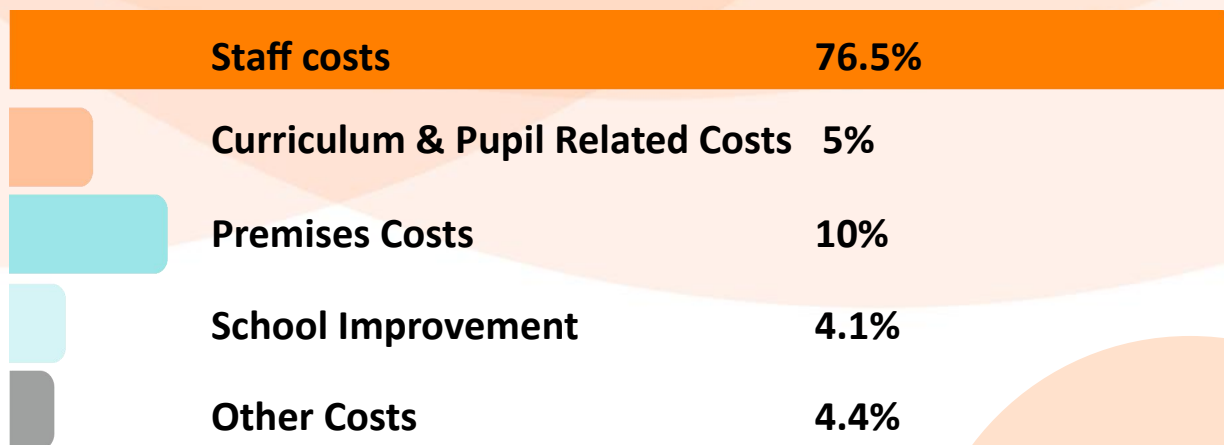
Charitable Activities:
GAG, 6th Form, Pupil
Premium, UIFSM,
PE Grant



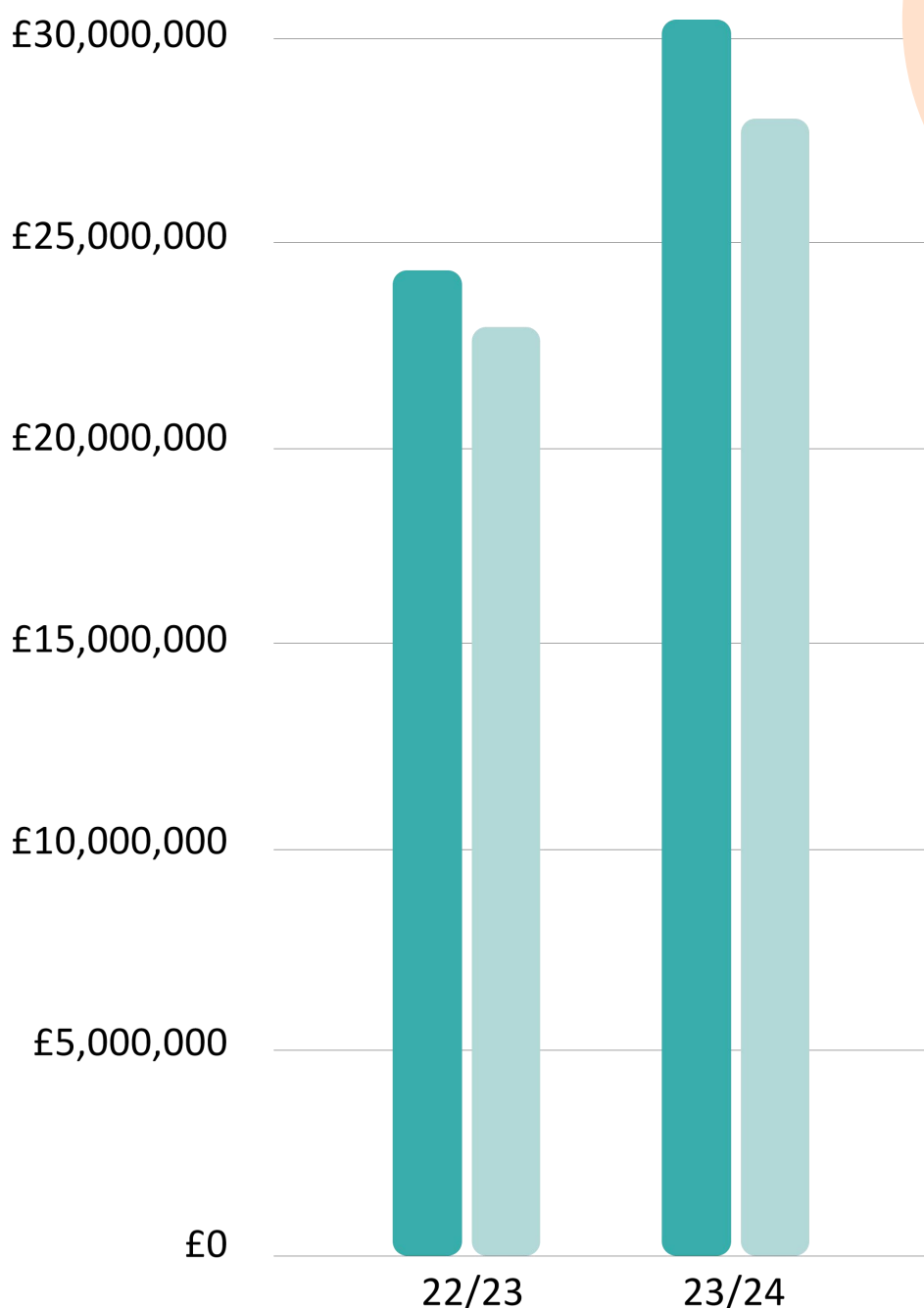
5%

Trading activities,
Other Income
Donations, Grants

Expenditure across the Trust



Year-end Reserves
£3,224,507



● Total income
 22/23 £24,348,389
 23/24 £30,082,648

● Total Income of which ESFA
 22/23 £23,257,245
 23/24 £25,715,689

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 GDPRis 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.

Gifts

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





Our Core Offer

The Core Offer is the services provided for schools within the Trust. 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 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

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](#) and the [University of Nottingham](#) 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 connection.

Trusts create the conditions for teachers and leaders to work together in deep and purposeful collaboration to advance education for the 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 our children and young people. We are a Trust who cares about the other schools in its community, and are 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 is founded on the most successful practice.

The Circle Trust has built and fosters 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.



The Circle Trust's approach to improving the quality of education

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. 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.

10. 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.



11. 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.

12. There is demonstrable improvement in the behaviour and attendance of pupils who have particular needs.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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

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

17. 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.

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



19. 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.
20. 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.
21. 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.
22. 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.

23. 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.



24. 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.



25. 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.





26. 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.
27. 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.
28. 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.
29. 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.
30. 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.
31. Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment.
32. 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.
33. 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.

34. 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 Feb 2018	Good March 2017	Good May 2022
Nine Mile Ride Primary School	Conversion date Feb 2018	Good May 2013	Good June 2022
Shinfield Infant and Nursery School	Conversion date April 2020	Good Feb 2019	Good Feb 2025
Wescott Infant School	Conversion date July 2020	Outstanding Dec 2010	Good with Outstanding November 2023
Westende Junior School	Conversion date July 2020	Good Jan 2020	Awaiting inspection
The Emmbrook Secondary School	Conversion date April 2021	Good March 2017	Good October 2023
Emmbrook Infant School	Conversion date June 2023	Outstanding Jan 2019	Outstanding January 2025
Emmbrook Junior School	Conversion date June 2023	Good April 2022	Awaiting inspection
Badgemore Primary School	Conversion date May 2024	Good June 2019	Awaiting inspection
Hawthorns Primary School	Conversion date Feb 2025	Good June 2022	Awaiting inspection

*Please note that the His Majesty’s Chief Inspector during this reporting period confirmed that no overall grade would be awarded for a school. In the coming months an entirely new inspection framework and reporting methodology will be launched. Consequently this table simplifies the performance of schools in terms of inspection and will look very different in the future!



Safeguarding

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

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.





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](#). The [Children's and Family Act 2014](#) which sets out schools' responsibilities for pupils with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and disabilities and The [Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014](#) 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 those in governance 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 has schools with specialist provisions for children. The Little Acorns at Wescott Infant School and The Acorns at Westende Junior School provide 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

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 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's Chair of Trustees

concluding remarks

During the last year, The Circle Trust has grown from 8 schools to 10 with both Badgemore Primary School in Henley and The Hawthorns Primary School in Wokingham joining us throughout the year.

With Owlsmoor Primary School in Sandhurst expecting to join during the current academic year, and our first brand new school in Hartland Village on the horizon, this continues to be an exciting period of growth for the Trust. Having seen how staff interacted with each other at our first Full Circle training conference, it really makes me proud of the collaborative and outward looking organisation that we have created!

We have had a focus on reimagining governance this year with our “Big Listen” initiative. This allowed us to hear from our Local Advisors, Headteachers, Senior Leadership and Trustees on the effectiveness of our local governance.

The Confederation of School Trusts published an interesting discussion paper “Next-gen Governance” in November which advocates for a shift in trust governance from a compliance-focused approach to a more strategic, people-centred, and forward-looking model, emphasizing stewardship, psychological safety, and a relational approach.

As a Trust which always keeps a keen eye on the challenges facing the sector, we were happy to use this thoughtful document as a guiding principle as we took on board the valuable feedback from the



Big Listen. This will allow us to come up with an innovative approach to local governance whilst ensuring that we maximize our stakeholder voice.

This year we are saying goodbye to one of our founding Trustees, Anne Haycocks. Anne has given her time and energy generously over the years, particularly in her link role for SEND and inclusion as well as supporting two of the Local Advisory Boards in the Trust. You'll be missed!

We also welcome Sara Attra as our newest Trustee who brings a wealth of experience in education. Robin Scurlock joins us as a new Member with the vital role to ensure that we as Trustees fulfil our charitable objectives.

Finally, without our fantastic teaching staff, teaching assistants, support staff and shared team our Trust would not be the success it has become.



You're all a vital part of ensuring that we can deliver the best outcomes for all the children and young people that we serve - I thank you all on behalf of Trustees!





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