



INTRODUCTION

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

ABOUT THE LITTLE ACORN TRUST

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

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

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

THE TRUST’S APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP

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

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

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

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

THE TRUST'S APPROACH TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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

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



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

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

MODEL FOR IMPROVING TEACHING, LEARNING AND OUTCOMES

The model employed by the Little Acorn Trust incorporates:

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

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP



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

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

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

The Board of Directors

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

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

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

The Chief Executive Officer

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

Local Governance

Each sponsored school/academy has a Local Governing Body. Its role is to combine support and challenge of the Head Teacher/Principal. The Local Governing Body reports to and is accountable to the CEO and Board of Directors and where needed, will be provided with support and training to

enable them to maximize their effectiveness and ensure that there is clarity in the roles and responsibilities of each member.

Senior Leadership Team

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

Business Manager

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

MODEL FOR BUSINESS SUPPORT IN THE TRUST

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

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



PROFILE OF CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, CONSULTANTS AND BUSINESS MANAGER

The current board of Directors comprises the following people:

Pat Triggs (Chair and Member)

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

Jerry Woods (Vice-Chair and Member)

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

business consultancy as well as a director of the Little Acorn Multi-Academy Trust.

Adam Lane (Finance Director and Member)

Adam has many years' experience within the private sector as Managing Director of a multi-location business working with FTSE and Corporate enterprises. He has a strong background in all business aspects including Financial Management, Human Resources, Change Management, Sales and Marketing and Operations. Adam's work is characterized by trust and professionalism, providing the right level of support to nurture and encourage development, ensuring a high level of customer satisfaction.

Robert Lane (CEO)

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

Debra Bryant (Safeguarding Director)

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

Carys Taylor-Evans

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

Associated Consultants

The Board is also strengthened by the support of a number of individuals who offer their expertise as associate consultants. These associated attend Board meetings as relevant and are members of working groups of different kinds, including monitoring and evaluation.

Shuna Histed – Legal Consultant

Shuna has worked in Bristol in a wide number of legal fields including family law, public liability, personal injury and education law and has a strong interest in new legislation to overhaul the special needs system and legal entitlement to that system. She practiced for several years as a solicitor at the local Gatehouse Centre in BS13 and in the multicultural districts of Bristol in BS5 so has in-depth knowledge of the needs and issues in both types of area. Recently she completed a Diploma in Support Work in schools with a strong emphasis on new special needs legislation and safeguarding and has found it tremendously beneficial in working to bridge the gap between her professional legal experience and education.

Heather Williams – Community Consultant

Heather was brought up as part of a large family in the local area before going to University to gain a degree in Computer Science. She worked for a national Insurance Company whilst developing and running a successful single parents network Single Handed. In 2010, she was appointed to the Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership as Community Engagement Officer, achieving some of the highest outcomes in the city before taking on the management of the Dundry View

Community Partnership which is the Hartcliffe, Withywood and Whitchurch Park wards partnership. She also runs a number of local initiatives including a thriving local multi-racial support group.

Rachel Barfoot - Business Manager

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

CONTACT

For further information please contact

Robert Lane
Chief Executive Officer of the Little Acorn Trust and Executive Head Teacher of Four Acres Academy and Children's Centres
Little Acorn Trust
c/o Four Acres Academy
Four Acres
Withywood
Bristol, BS13 8RB
Tel. 0117 903 0474
Email: head.four.acres.p@bristol-schools.uk

Company No.9207180 and registered Charity