

The Power of Localism in a School Trust

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Confederation
of School Trusts

Who is CST? Confederation of School Trusts

The **national sector body** for school trusts

We **advocate**
and stand up for
school trusts

DfE
Political parties
Unions



Our **support** is
specific to school
trusts

Member briefings
Training & consultancy
Thought leadership

We **connect** you
to colleagues and
thinkers

Conferences
Professional Communities

Those involved in school governance are:

- **Passionate** about children receiving the best possible education
- Give their time **voluntarily** and receive no payment
- Bring a wide-ranging set of **skills, knowledge and experience**
- Provide strategic **support and challenge** to school leaders
- **380,000** strong
- The **largest volunteer force** in the country

Unsung heroes of the education system

The benefits of a good education are plentiful:

 Employment & standard of living

 Health and longevity

 Innovation

 Economic growth

 Better citizens

 Social cohesion

**That every child is empowered to reach
their full potential in life**



Resilience science tells us that to reach their full potential, children need:

- Positive school experiences
- Love and a sense of belonging
- Decent standard of living
- Good parenting
- Sense of safety
- Close community

But the single most important factor is:

- At least one stable and committed relationship with an adult



**Resilient children
are
better learners.**

Charitable object: “To advance education for the public benefit”

- Work with others to advance education as a **wider common good**.
- Ensure children are **safe** and their welfare is protected
- Ensure children can **contribute** to wider civic, creative & cultural life.
- Be a responsible **employer** in the area
- **Partner** with local organisations to provide support and services and to ensure that children and families can access **coherent public services**
- Be part of a **strong, vibrant and flourishing community**

Alignment

All stakeholders share a vision of the purpose of education and are aligned in collective endeavour.

Subsidiarity

Decisions are devolved to the level as close to delivery as is consistent with effectiveness.

Capacity building

Staff PD is a priority - accurate self-evaluation, honest feedback, sharing of evidence-informed practice.

Positive ethos built on moral purpose

A positive ethos is deliberately cultivated by all stakeholders. Power imbalances are minimised.

Whole system focus

Coordination of resources and solutions for efficiency, equality of access, cost-effectiveness, economies of scale. Alignment of incentives.

Alignment

- Trusts collaborating not competing with each other
- Trust collaborating with LAs, DfE & others

Subsidiarity

- Fully centralised decision-making is not effective
- Trusts **MUST** be anchored in the needs of their communities and harness the power of localism

Capacity building

- Trusts must grow and retain their own
- Trusts best placed to develop best practice, incl. gov

Positive ethos built on moral purpose

- Strong mission-driven culture and vision are key drivers of improvement

Whole system focus

- Benefits of geographic and regional coherence
- Trusts must help act on the system to improve it

Why trusts?



Deep and purposeful collaboration

A group of schools working as **one entity** to improve and maintain high educational standards across the trust.



Strong and resilient structure

Structural, educational, financial and workforce **resilience**



Every child a powerful learner

Knowledge-building organisations that develop powerful cultures and codified practices that lead to powerful learners.



Professional growth & development

Leveraging their **capacity and conditions & culture**, trusts provide high quality professional development to staff



Solidarity & interconnectness

Shared **sense of purpose** and execution of a **shared mission** – to mobilise education as a force for social justice and wider common good



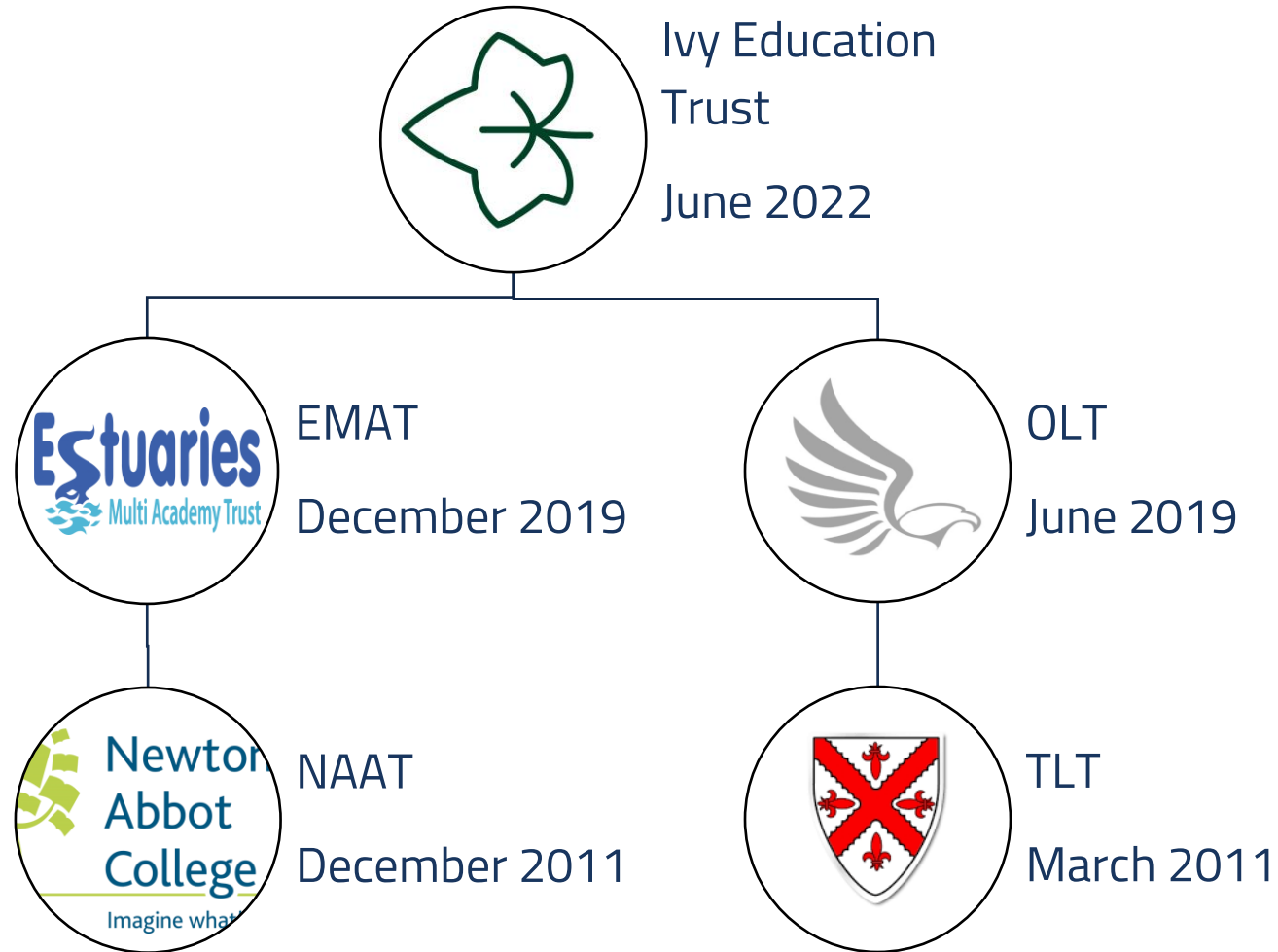
Civic duty & public benefit

Institutions anchored in **place and community** playing a significant role in a locality

Should my school
become a trust?

How can my school best collaborate with others in a strong and resilient structure to ensure that each child is a powerful learner and that adults have the opportunities to learn and develop as teachers and leaders?

Why trusts?



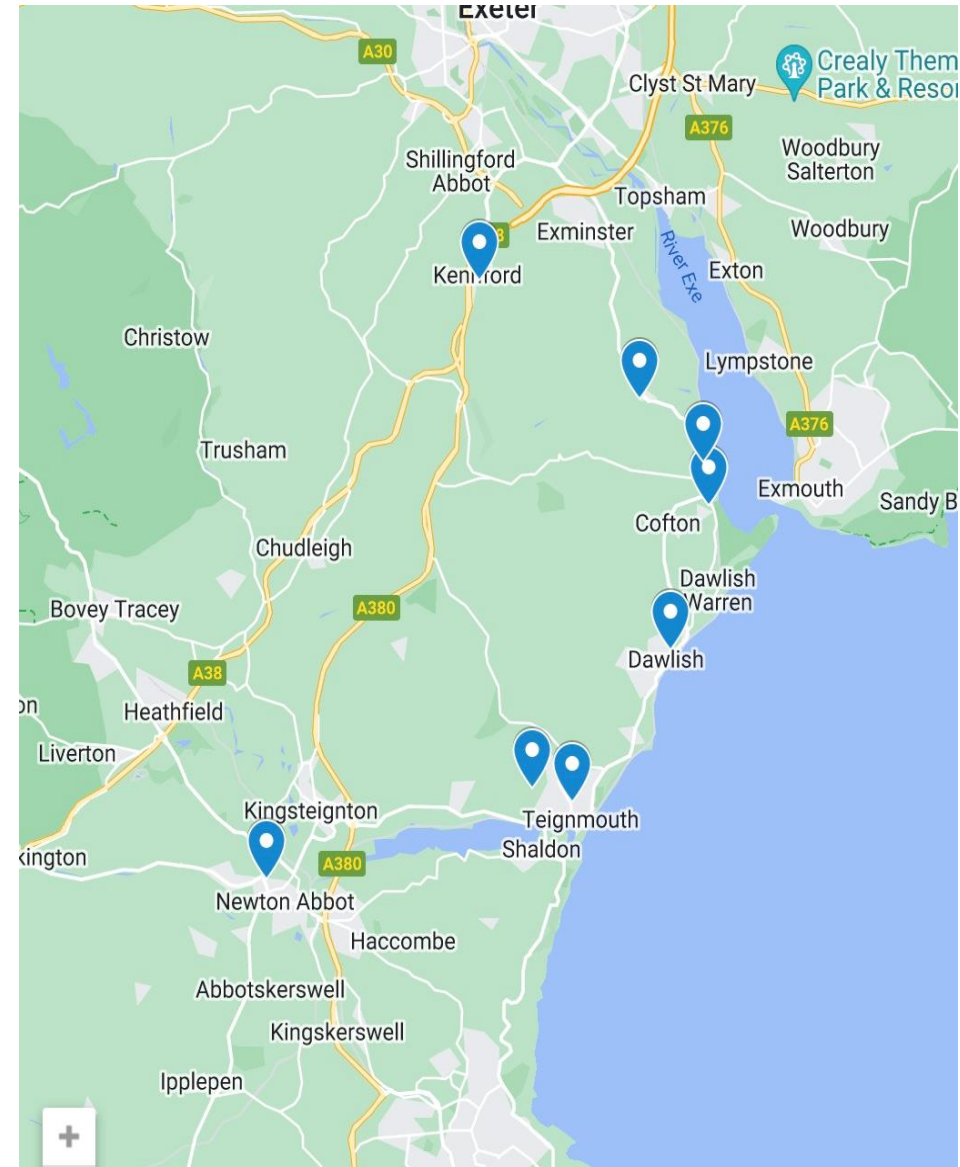
Why trusts?

Secondary:

- Dawlish College – 700 pupils
- Newton Abbot College – 1350 pupils
- Teignmouth Community School – 950 pupils

Primary:

- Cockwood Primary School - 86 pupils
- Kenn CofE Primary School – 98 pupils
- Kenton Primary School – 75 pupils
- Starcross Primary School – 220 pupils
- Teignmouth Primary School – 260 pupils



Benefits after the first year:

- Increased capacity for school improvement
- We are stronger together
- Wider leadership opportunities across the Trust
- Shared governance
- Creative staffing solutions
- Stronger recruitment
- Greater support for schools from central team

Other trusts have mentioned further benefits:

- Financial viability for smaller primaries
- Continuity of experience for children

CST's working definition from the Canadian Institute on Governance:

- Who has power
- Who makes decisions
- How stakeholders make their voices heard
- How account is rendered

Those responsible must be:

- Effective
- Accountable
- Ethical



Strategic leadership



- Defining the trust **vision** for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable object(s).
- Establishing and fostering **culture**
- **Delegating** functions to the executive & local tier



Accountability and assurance



- Effective **oversight** of operations and performance
- Includes education, pupil welfare, appropriate use of funds, financial performance and estates



Engagement



- Strategic oversight of **relationships with stakeholders**
- Involving parents, schools & communities to ensure decision making supported by meaningful engagement

“Governance and Leadership”

Culture

Anchors strategy in needs of schools, communities and wider educational system – charitable objects; ethical leadership – 7 Principles of Public Life

Governance of the trust

Necessary expertise to fulfil functions effectively

Strategy

Clear strategy aligning with objects; aspirations for growth, implement an effective operating model; review progress rigorously

Executive leadership

Appoint and manage high quality exec leadership; separation between exec & non-exec to allow scrutiny; effective relationship; succession planning

“Governance and Leadership”

Accountability

Hold exec accountable for strategy & operations & integrity of financial info; robust risk processes; solid compliance; progress measured through metrics

Non-exec leadership

High performing governance structure; internal and external audits; solid induction; succession planning

Engagement

Strategic relationships with external stakeholders; involve parents, schools, communities (and diocese and other religious authorities) so that decision making is supported by meaningful engagement

Effective governance - Trust quality descriptors



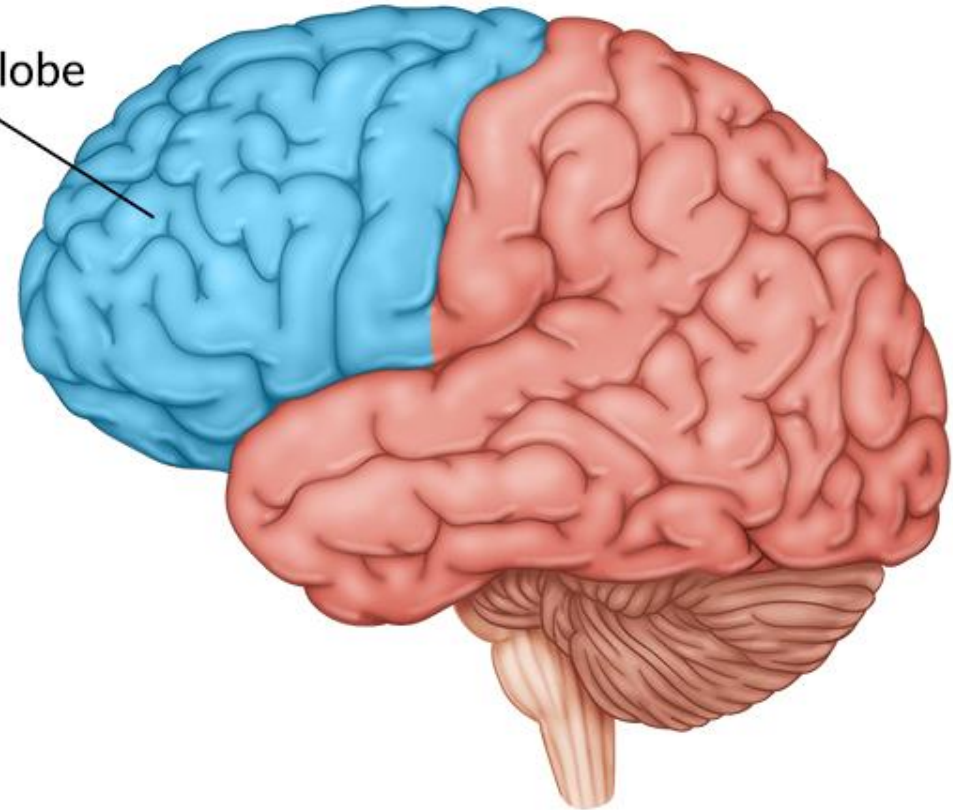
Strategic governance	1. Strategy and culture 2. Accountability
Expert ethical leadership	3. Expertise 4. Ethics
High quality, inclusive education	5. Conception of quality 6. Inclusion
School improvement at scale	7. Culture of improvement 8. Knowledge building
Workforce resilience and wellbeing	9. Working culture 10. Workload and wellbeing
Finance and operations	11. Financial strategy and probity 12. Effective and efficient use of resources
Public benefit and civic duty	13. Collaboration and accountability 14. Civic purpose and wider common good

Sources: CST's [Building strong trusts - assurance framework](#) and [Trust Quality Descriptions](#)

Governance is crucial to success

- Decision making & judgement
- Planning ahead
 - predicting the future & being agile
- Monitoring
 - evaluating performance & tweaking
- Sustained attention
 - staying focused, with eyes on the target
- Goal-directed behaviour
 - actions that will help reach our goals
- Problem solving
- Relationships

Frontal lobe



This is governance!

Governance also 'makes the space' for:

- Thinking about options
- Taking an expansive view
- Self-awareness
- Self-reflecting and correcting as necessary
- Empathy
- Relationships



**Emotional
intelligence**

"IQ and technical skills are important, but emotional intelligence is the *sine qua non* of leadership."

– Daniel Goleman.



Seven Principles of Public Life

Principle 1: Selflessness

Principle 2: Integrity

Principle 3: Objectivity

Principle 4: Accountability

Principle 5: Openness

Principle 6: Honesty

Principle 7: Leadership

99% Trust leaders diligently collect input from stakeholders

37% Parents feel their feedback has an impact

37% Pupils feel their opinion is valued in school

34% Staff feel their feedback has an impact

Academy Trust Governance Code

created 'by the sector, for the sector'
based on Charity Governance Code

Fundamental principle

Principle 1: Delivering the academy trust charitable objects

Principle 2: Leadership

Principle 3: Integrity

Principle 4: Decision making, risk and control

Principle 5: Board effectiveness

Principle 6: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Principle 7: Openness and accountability

At its best:

- **Strategy** is co-created with all stakeholders, not top down, and aligns with your shared vision, mission and values
- **Culture** is led and modelled from the top and embedded at every level
- **Delegations**, roles and responsibilities are well-defined
- Clear **lines of accountability** and no duplication
- Strong relationships and **two-way communication** between layers of governance
- **Diversity of thought and perspective** amongst decision-makers
- **Risks** are actively managed and **opportunities** are capitalised-upon
- Trusts that are **anchored** in their communities
- **Meaningful engagement** with stakeholders

Source: [Governing a School Trust \(September 2023\)](#) and [Scheme of delegation checklists](#)

Some of our biggest challenges REQUIRE input from our stakeholders:

- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Anxiety and mental health
- Youth violence
- Breakdown in the relationship between parents and schools
- A huge rise in complaints (school level, Ofsted, ESFA)
- Impact of social media
- Vaping
- Transgender issues

Effective governance

- 94%** Current or growing challenge with engagement at the local level
- 80%** Difficulties recruiting at the local level
- 89%** Challenges filling local chair roles
- 77%** CEOs reporting open vacancies for local tier of governance
- 80%** CEOs rating local recruitment as 'quite difficult' or 'very difficult'



Trusts as **anchor institutions** in the community:



Strong ties to the **geographic area** in which it is based;



Tend to be a **large employer** and have **purchasing power**;



Are public sector, **not-for-profit** charitable organisations;



Tend to receive (or are significant stewards of) **public resources**;



Have an **important presence in a place**.

Local governance in a trust harnesses the power of **localism**:

- Provides local **accountability**
- Acts as the trust's **eyes and ears** on the ground, esp. in relation to safeguarding and SEND
- Maximises the benefits of **local knowledge and engagement**
- Facilitates relationships with **local partners** (LA, charities, services)
- Acts as a **champion** for the school within the trust
- Acts as an **ambassador** for the trust within the school community

Provides the **contextual understanding** that allows the trust to **adjust** its strategy delivery and approach to meet the needs of that specific school community.

Strategy is secondary, if not tertiary, to culture. Culture is the most scalable thing, done right, in a company. And it's the hardest thing, because it's everything and nothing. It is every positive action that's happening in a company. It's every negative action in the company. Every person that's joining, every person that's leaving, it's impacting culture. In its essence, I believe culture is about rewarding the positive behaviours we want to see in a company and obviously dissuading the negative.

-Daniel Ek (founder of Spotify, on *Diary of a CEO* podcast)



Strategic leadership

- Defining the trust **vision** for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable object(s).
- **Establishing and fostering culture**
- **Delegating** functions to the executive & local tier

Criteria for a healthy organisation:

- Minimal politics
- Balance of support and challenge
- High morale / high trust
- Minimal confusion
- A focus on what matters most



'Critical friend'
'Loyal dissent'

“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they grow up in peace.”

-Kofi Annan

Thank you



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