

Joining Orchard Community Trust

Orchard Community Trust is a forward thinking and diverse Trust which is currently seeking to expand and we would openly welcome contact from individual schools and groups of schools considering conversion to academy status.

Bringing in additional schools will enable us to become more financially sustainable and provide access to a wider range of skills, expertise and perspectives. These will further enhance the existing creative and innovative practice in our schools so that we can raise standards even further and provide a greater range of opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.

Established in 2019, we currently have 7 schools: 5 primary schools (including one CoE school) and 2 special schools. Each school has retained its own unique identity and autonomy but we all share the same vision. **See appendix 1-OCT Final Vision Statement -September 2022.** Our emphasis is on collaborative working and shared responsibility across the Trust with each school being equal. With such a variety of schools in our family, we have developed a unique understanding of how best to support and improve each school's journey to improvement and excellence. Our schools are very much at the heart of our communities and we actively encourage and celebrate community involvement. We know our communities well and this gives us a real, in depth understanding of our area, its issues and its people.

We are a well led trust with a focus on the quality of education. As a result of our growing reputation, we carry out reviews (eg SEND, PP, EYFS and headteacher's performance management) and provide governor services (including professional clerking, CPD and governance reviews) for other schools and trusts.

A clear school improvement strategy and core offer to all of our schools (see appendix 2-Orchard Community Trust SI Core Offer September 2022) and our focus on raising standards are major advantages of being part of Orchard Community Trust. We work in partnership with all schools to provide additional support and challenge as appropriate to ensure schools are accountable and achieving the best outcomes. This comes at a time when support that schools have previously received from local authorities has been greatly diminished due to financial pressures.

Benefits of joining our Trust

Improving Pupil Outcomes:

- We offer a broad and balanced curriculum that has developing expert knowledge and meeting individual pupil needs at its core.
- A bespoke school improvement offer led by our School Improvement Lead (a qualified Ofsted Inspector) with access to external support as appropriate.
- Thorough knowledge of SEND and strong expertise through our Special Schools, SEND Lead and effective SENCO network group.
- Enriched curriculum opportunities for all our children.
- Expertise in safeguarding and wellbeing.
- Experience and expertise in managing high pupil mobility and EAL.
- Access to our own bespoke counselling service for pupils and parents via Blossoms.
- Staff supervision programme for SENCOs and Safeguarding Leads.
- Assessment & moderation: a shared data tracking and assessment system.
- Support for subject leaders via our peer-to-peer review programme.

Economies of Scale:

- Greater consistency and financial savings across the Trust through procurement of shared services including HR, Health and Safety and IT.

Governance and Leadership:

- Strong leadership through our Senior Executive Leader (an ex-Headteacher, school improvement partner, education adviser, assistant director of education with a local authority, an Ofsted inspector, a local leader of education and a member of key local educational groups.
- Support and challenge in terms of school improvement, SEND, Finance, Governance and Compliance via our highly qualified and experienced Central Team.
- Strong Governance via a skilled group of Trustees and Members.
- Retention of local Governing Boards in each of our schools.
- High levels of devolved responsibilities and accountability to local Governing Boards.
- A comprehensive training programme for Governors delivered by our Governance & Compliance Officer (a National Leader of Governance).
- Access to MAT wide policies that can be tailored to meet the needs of individual schools.
- Strong relationships with the DFE, RSC, Teaching schools and Universities.

Collaboration and Opportunities for Staff:

- Effective recruitment and retention opportunities with clear career pathways.
- A bespoke CPD programme for all teaching and support staff within the Trust.
- Recognition of talent and a focus on growing our own leaders at all levels.
- Sharing of best practice and resources via our range of networks eg Senior Leaders, Subject Leaders, ECTs, School Business Managers and Site Supervisors.

We are also part of the Confederation of School Trusts who have published some useful and impartial advice for schools considering joining a multi-academy trust. Please follow the following link:

<https://cstuk.org.uk/joining-a-trust>

Some testimonials from our Trust are included in appendix 3.

If you would like to explore further the possibility of joining Orchard Community Trust, please email our Senior Executive Leader at: info@orchardct.org.uk

Our Trust and our Vision Statement

Our Trust

Orchard Community is a Stoke on Trent based Multi-Academy Trust. The name for the Trust was devised by a Year 6 Pupil at Forest Park Primary School who won the competition for naming the Trust. His idea for the name is based on the fact that schools resemble orchards. He says that “Children are like trees and plants, requiring some attention in order to grow better. Teachers are like gardeners and with their support, the trees will blossom and bear fruit. The word Orchard also reminds us that trees are all different in colours and have different usefulness, similar to children’s futures, which are shaped in schools, which I call orchards”.

We currently have 5 Primary schools and two Special schools in our MAT.

Leadership

Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees, the board that oversees the running of the Trust, meets twice each term and is supported in its work by the Clerk to the Board. The Board consists of the Senior Executive Leader and 11 other Trustees. Headteachers are also invited to all Trustee Board meetings and committee meetings. The Trust’s Chief Finance Officer also attends all Trust Board meetings and relevant committee meetings. Each of our MAT schools has a Headteacher or Executive Headteacher and a Local Governing Board. Responsibilities are delegated to each of these via the Trust’s agreed scheme of delegation. All members, Trustees, Headteachers/Executive Headteachers and Governors share the vision, mission and moral purpose of the Trust.

Moral Purpose

Orchard Community Trust is fully committed to improving the life chances of all children, wherever they may be. This moral obligation, our mission, does not end at the school gates, within our own Local Authorities, or even within our own country. Where we have the capacity to make a difference, we are morally bound to do so.

Staff at our academies have the opportunity to participate in our full range of training programmes and to work with each other via networks and groups across the MAT. These are effectively led by both Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers and Assistant Headteachers from our schools. Opportunities will be given to all staff to engage in a range of high quality CPD and career development programmes. We also fully recognise the talents and skills of staff and volunteers in our schools and are fully committed to the development of all staff in the MAT. Our range of staff expertise will be shared across our schools via collaborative working to ensure best practice is celebrated and made available to all. The philosophy of school to school support, challenge and collaboration is at the heart of the way the Orchard Community Trust will operate and succeed.

Working in partnership with Orchard Community Trust has a number of key benefits for children, staff, Governors and school communities. We would be happy to discuss the benefits with you should you be interested in joining us.

Orchard Community Trust MAT believes that education is a preparation for life and in the spirit of inclusion, respect and safeguarding we seek to prepare each child to face life beyond the school with confidence, skill and ability to be resilient, to cope and thus to succeed:

Within our Trust Primary and Special Schools:

- We aim to set high standards for personal behaviour and self-regulation, and to promote courtesy, cooperation, consideration and respect for other people of all ages, gender, races, cultures, abilities and backgrounds.
- We aspire to deliver exciting and quality learning experiences in safe, secure and happy environments.
- We endeavour to achieve the very highest standards in every aspect of school life, by making the most efficient use of all the resources available.

Our moral purpose and our focus and determination are centered on the following:

TRUST	RESPECT	INTEGRITY
LEARNING	OPENNESS	EXCITEMENT
DIVERSITY	COOPERATION	FUN
RELIABILITY	REPUTATION	ACHIEVEMENT

Our Vision

Our vision and mission is to have fully inclusive schools working in our Trust, that fully embrace all stakeholders and which celebrate individuality and success by offering a high-quality education and range of opportunities, where everyone makes excellent progress.

We will work in partnership as schools to ensure that all of the learning needs of the diverse range of children and young people we serve are effectively met via high quality provision, great leadership and outward facing developments.

At the centre of our vision for children and young people in the MAT is the word 'crafts'. This was developed by the MAT Headteachers and is a reference to and reminder of the history of the City of Stoke on Trent and the wide range of crafts and skills that have been seen in the City throughout history. It also relates to the craft of teaching, which is integral to all we do to improve outcomes for children and young people.

In order for us to achieve our vision, the following will be integral to our success with children, young people, staff, Governors, Parents and our Members and Trustees:

- C** Curiosity, creativity, courage, character, confidence, challenge
- R** Resilience, rigor, reflection, respect, rehearsal, relationships
- A** Adventure, aspiration, achievement, ambition, accountable
- F** Families, freedom, fearlessness, fairness, fame for our quality, future proofing
- T** Togetherness, tirelessness, teamwork, trust, the next best thing (research)
- S** Success, sharing, sensational learning, support, shining examples, safety

We expect all members of Orchard Community Trust to respect and model all of the above vision and values at all times.

These values form the basis of initial discussions with all prospective Orchard Trust Schools and with potential employees of Orchard Community Trust.

All staff, Members, Trustees, Governors, volunteers, parents and carers have a duty and responsibility to be encouraging and supportive of each other. All of our schools have a “can do” culture and fully collaborative ethos.

Everyone associated with the Trust and its schools is expected to aim for excellence in their individual professional roles.

In the best traditions of the profession all staff are prepared to go the extra mile to provide the best possible education for their pupils. The interests, opinions and voices of the children are paramount and guide all that we seek to do and achieve.

We have a responsibility to ensure that every moment a child is in an Orchard Community Trust school that they enjoy learning and strive hard to achieve well and fulfil their maximum potential.

Appendix 2

Orchard Community Trust

Summary of the OCT School Improvement offer from September 2022

(See separate document and OCT School Improvement Strategy for more detail)

The annual core offer will comprise of the following:

6 support visits from either Rob Johnstone and/or Michelle Johnstone

These will focus on:

- Keeping in touch visits-agenda agreed in advance
- In school developmental review from Rob Johnstone, Senior Executive Leader and Michelle Johnstone, Lead for School Improvement
- A review of the year

6 improvement visits from Michelle Johnstone

These will focus on aspects such as:

- SEF support and development
- Subject leader support and quality of education development
- Subject/aspect/SEF review
- SIP/SDP formulation/development
- Review of impact of pupil premium. Sports premium, education recovery funding and future plans
- Data analysis and Target Setting (Primaries)
- EHCP progress-Specials

Schools will be able to access additional challenge and support time for Rob Johnstone and/or Michelle Johnstone to focus on school specific areas for development and this can include reviews, CPD, leadership discussions and OfSTED preparation.

The agreed OCT peer review process will continue to be implemented so that each school has a peer review each year and subject peer reviews and development will continue to be rolled out across schools.

Schools will receive SEND support, including SEND reviews from the OCT Strategic Lead for SEND-support to be agreed with each school

Each school will also have an external 2-day review of the quality of education at a time agreed with the school. These will be carried out as follows:

- **Primary Schools -Ian Beardmore-NLE and OfSTED inspector**
- **Special Schools-Jean Tarry-OfSTED inspector or Humber Education Trust-CEO and/or Lead for School Improvement-both OfSTED inspectors-TBC**

Each school will also receive regular **website and SCR** checks from Karl Lawton, the Governance and Compliance Officer, an **annual safeguarding review**, a **review of safeguarding caseloads** and Rob Johnstone will support the LGB with the **review of Headteacher performance**.

Schools will also have access to the following:

- A range of leadership development programmes
- The Deputy and Assistant Headteachers network
- The SENCO network
- The safeguarding leads network
- Subject/aspect leader networks
- Business Manager meetings

- EYFS/KS1/KS2 moderation sessions
- The OCT data group

Termly budget meetings between the OCT Chief Finance officer, the Headteacher and the School Business Manager will also discuss the need to link budget setting and monitoring of school improvement activities and outcomes.

As part of the OCT school improvement strategy each school must have in place the following:

- An accurate and up to date evidence-based self-evaluation
- A clear and focused school improvement/development plan which is costed, agreed by the LGB and shared with the SEL and lead for School Improvement
- A detailed and effective monitoring and evaluation cycle
- A clear CPD plan to support all staff in school

Appendix 3 - Testimonials from our Schools

“As a small one form entry Primary School, Orchard Community Trust has been nothing but supportive since the school joined.

The scheme of delegation allows local governing boards a large degree of autonomy so that governors can concentrate on the key aim of the school – the education of the children so they achieve their potential.

The Trust’s School Improvement Team has provided tremendous support to our new leadership team which has been very beneficial.

Abbey Hulton’s premises and buildings are relatively old, putting a strain on our already over-stretched budget. With support from the Trust, plans have been put in place to update our facilities and, with funding from the Trust’s central capital budget, works have taken place which hugely benefit both pupils and staff.

As Link Governor for Curriculum, I’m seeing the benefits of Trust networking groups in sharing best practice across the Trust.

Having been a Governor at Abbey Hulton since before conversion to an Academy, I can honestly say that joining the Trust has been the right move for the future of the School.”

Nick Carter, Vice Chair of Governors at Abbey Hulton Primary School

“Working within the OCT provides a network of effective classroom practitioners and leaders. A group of passionate, knowledgeable and forward-thinking individuals who have the interests of the pupils of all schools at the heart of everything that they do.

Whilst maintaining our own identity and developing practices and a curriculum to suit the needs of our pupils, collaboration across the MAT has further developed the practices and provision in our school, directly impacting upon teaching and learning.

An advantage of working within the OCT is that advice, support or a friendly chat with professionals in other schools is only a phone call or email away!”

Katie Hawthorne, Assistant Headteacher at Oakhill Primary School

“Being a founding member of Orchard Community Trust gave me the opportunity be a part of the formation and creation of a very unique MAT. My school and I have benefitted greatly, particularly through the School Improvement support offer and, at all levels, the network groups.

A strong ethos and values, which are shared by every stakeholder, ensure that the children are at the centre of everything we do and together we all work towards a common goal.

As a Headteacher I feel very well supported and I have had opportunities to develop my own leadership. The trustees and central team have ensured that Headteachers have autonomy and are involved in decision making and shaping the Trust.”

Joanna Leach, Headteacher at Oakhill Primary School

“The support and expertise we get from every member of our Trust of like-minded people all with the same ethos is invaluable.”

Hilary Gregory, Chair of Governors at Kemball School

Being an established member of the Senior Leadership team, I was excited by the decision to join Orchard Community Trust and the opportunities it would offer to the school. The unanimous decision to retain autonomy and individual identity reassured me that our school would not lose its uniqueness. As a Deputy Headteacher, I felt supported and encouraged by the Trust, with the development of the Deputy and Assistant Heads group offering support to each other. In my additional role as SENCO we developed a proactive SENCO working group where guidance and advice is always readily available.

More recently my role has changed, and I have had the wonderful opportunity to become the OCT Strategic Lead for SEND. It is a true professional privilege to be able to visit and work in our schools, alongside SENCOs, SLTs, staff, pupils, Governors and parents to develop a fully inclusive ethos for the whole Trust and any new schools who may join us. I have the chance to view SEND from a strategic position, drawing on the expertise of our skilled colleagues. I have had professional development opportunities, career progression and unlimited support, advice and encouragement.

I am delighted to be working with such likeminded professionals towards a shared aim to improve outcomes for all children and am excited to be a part of the future of Orchard Community Trust.

Hayley Sutton, OCT Strategic Lead for SEND/Inclusion Lead at Forest Park School

St Mark's CE Primary School officially joined Orchard Community Trust in June 2020. As a newly appointed Headteacher within the Trust, it has been fantastic to have the support and guidance of the OCT family, especially during exceptional times. The Trustees, SEL, Central Team and other Headteachers are always available to work collaboratively with, and, when needed, to offer advice, wisdom or sometimes just a listening ear. Its supportive network, nurturing culture and strong commitment to pupils' learning and wellbeing, makes the challenges we face in school so much more manageable.

As a Church of England Aided Primary School, the Trust is relentless in ensuring that St Mark's places the highest priority on developing its Christian Distinctiveness vision and shares this readily with the other schools within the Trust. The SMSC and Christian Distinctiveness group meets regularly to focus on this and offers both support and challenge to school on how it seeks to develop the highest levels of academic achievement and personal well-being within a loving Christian context. It recognises and cherishes its role within the wider community and seeks to build strong links between home, school and the local Church.

There is a range of specialist support available across both the Primary and Special school settings, which is invaluable to each school in supporting the teaching and learning of all pupils, especially those with vulnerabilities such as SEN, English as an additional language or disadvantaged. It is a pleasure and privilege to work in a Trust of like-minded individuals, whose core principle is to put children at the heart of all it does and to ensure that all stakeholders thrive and flourish.

Lee Nicholls, Headteacher at St Mark's CoE(A) Primary School