



**WANDLE
LEARNING
TRUST**

**A GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS WISHING
TO JOIN THE TRUST**

WHO WE ARE

The Wandle Learning Trust (WLT) is a Multi-Academy Trust based in and around South West London. It was founded by two schools: Chesterton Primary School and Chestnut Grove Academy. Both academies have the highest expectations of all their pupils and students, regardless of their backgrounds or starting points.

We believe:

- That every child has the right to be successful
- That schools should have the autonomy to respond to local needs as they know their children and communities best
- That creativity is fundamental to developing an engaging and stimulating curriculum
- That everyone involved in the community of schools within the trust has a valuable contribution
- That all staff and students have the right to be safe and protected whilst at school and in their wider lives
- In identifying and taking the best practice across the trust and sharing it so that as many children and staff as possible benefit
- In strength in diversity: the schools within the MAT will be diverse and their individual character will be protected and celebrated
- In leading by example through trusted and transparent leadership

We are committed to:

- Developing a learning culture where bold and innovative teachers can make a difference
- Sustaining excellence across our community of academies
- Personal and professional development for all members of staff
- Accountability based on transparent leadership and strong governance

Within 3 years we aim to:

- Be the trusted, go-to MAT in the local area and beyond
- Pursue and maintain high standards of achievement
- Be in the top 10% of MATs nationally for student performance
- Have stability in leadership across the MAT which will in turn create sustainable improvement
- Model collaboration at its best
- Be financially self-sufficient with the ability to invest and grow

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF JOINING THE WANDLE LEARNING TRUST?

By joining Wandle Learning Trust schools will have access to a wide range of support and advice. For instance:

Every student will benefit from:

- A high quality learning environment
- Bespoke educational provision
- Outstanding teaching from teachers and support staff that are valued and nurtured as professionals
- Collaborative and supportive partnerships that will broaden students' experiences and opportunities

Every school will benefit from:

- Support in the areas of greatest need to ensure rapid and sustained improvement
- Effective transition between all key stages
- Leadership support and mentoring
- New staff being well-supported and receiving an excellent introduction to the profession
- Shared resources and economies of scale

Every teacher will benefit from:

- Professional development which will empower staff to make a sustainable difference within the context of a rapidly changing educational arena
- Leadership opportunities across the MAT which will enable staff to grow personally and professionally
- Leadership within the trust which will enable them to focus on teaching and learning and embed sustainable change
- Collaborative approaches to curriculum development, assessment and planning
- Best practice which is shared by all staff who are able to exhibit the highest levels of professionalism; and
- Access to the wide range of professional development opportunities provided by Wandle Teaching School Alliance

If you want further information please contact one of our joint Executive Headteachers:

Mark Siswick – Tel: 020 7622 1619; or
Christian Kingsley – Tel: 020 8673 8737

Overview of Roles and Responsibilities

The Wandle Learning Trust is a Multi-Academy (MAT) constituted under the Department for Education's Academies Act 2010. Multi-Academy Trusts are charitable companies limited by guarantee. They are established in order to operate independent, state funded schools and as such are free from Local Authority control. While subject to charity law, they are exempt charities whose Principal Regulator is the Secretary of State for Education. S/he provides oversight and regulation through a range of statutory frameworks and provisions.

MATs are required to adopt a set of Articles of Association specifically tailored to the operation of academies and to sign a Funding Agreement, setting out the conditions under which a Trust must operate its schools. For each academy in a MAT a "supplemental" Funding Agreement is signed which relates to its specific nature - phase, size, etc.

In addition to this, the DfE and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) provide a range of statutory guidance to Trusts and their academies that they must comply with, such as the Academies Financial Handbook. Academies also remain subject to a range of statutory education regulations including SEND, Admissions and Exclusions etc.

Each academy within the Trust is also subject to inspection by Ofsted in line with its current policies and procedures.

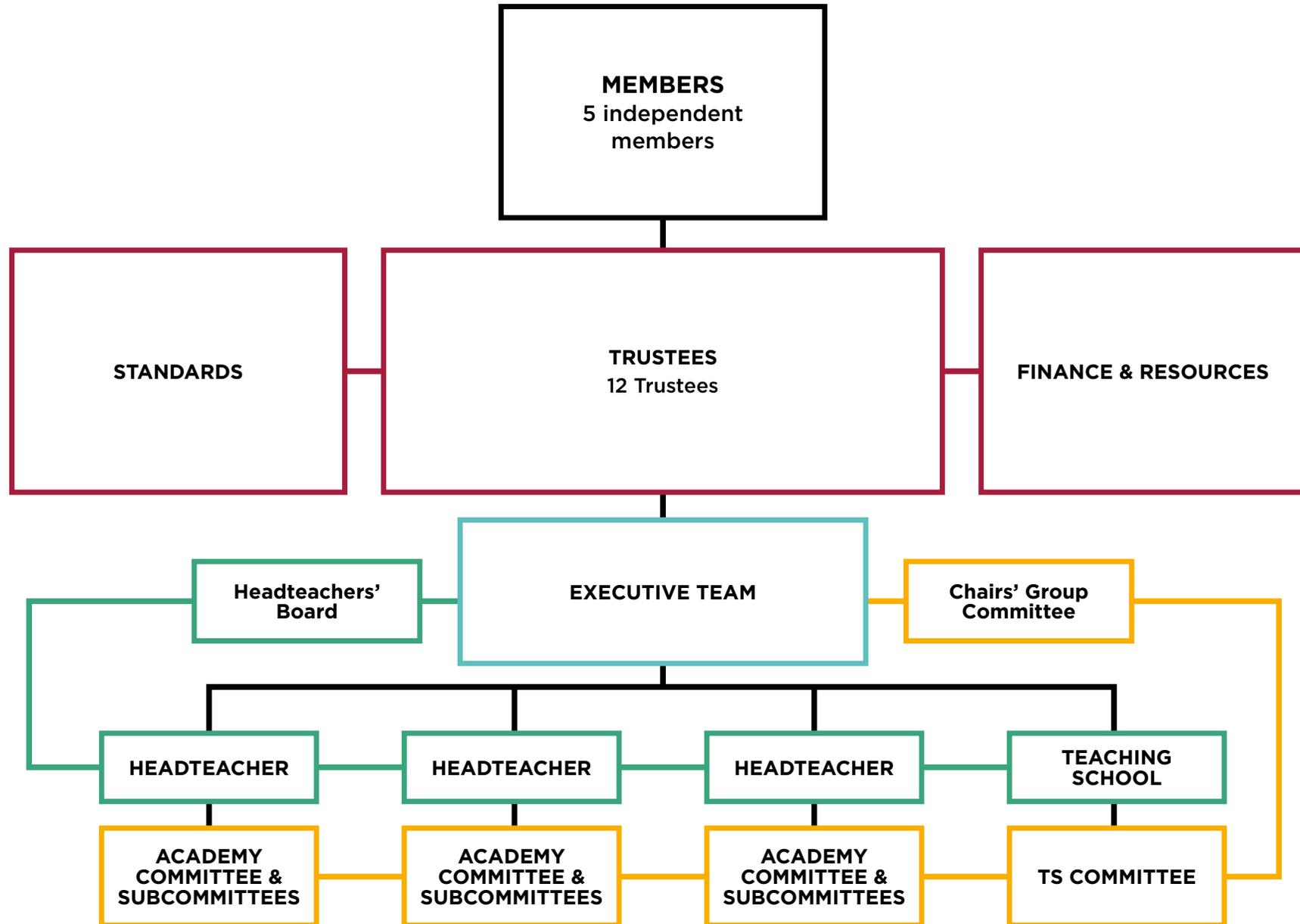
Governance Structure

Wandle Learning Trust (inline with other MATs) is governed by:

- **Members** - they are the "guardians" of WLT. They establish and oversee the effectiveness of the Trust Board. As such DfE describes their role as "eyes on, hand off" and are akin to shareholders within a Company limited by Guarantee.
- **Trustees** - they are appointed by Members to oversee the business of WLT, agreeing the overarching strategic direction and ensuring robust governance.
- **Executive Team** - they manage the day-to-day business of the Trust in line with policies approved by Trustees.
- **Local Academy Committees** - they provide challenge and support to Academy Leadership Teams as the Academy implements policies and improvement plan priorities.
- **Academy Leadership Team** - they manage the day-to-day business of an individual academy under the oversight of the Executive Team with challenge and support from the Strategic Governing Body.

The following diagram outlines the structure of the Academy Trust.

WLT Leadership & Governance structure:



The Trust Board of Wandle Learning Trust

The Trustees of Wandle Learning Trust provide effective oversight of each academy in the Trust. They have three strategic responsibilities:

- a. Setting the vision, ethos and direction (i.e. the strategy) of the Trust;
- b. Holding the Executive Team to account as they deliver the strategy; and
- c. Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

The Trust Board can have up to twelve Trustees, two of whom are the joint Executive Headteachers while the remainder are appointed by the Members and the Trustees.

In order to discharge their roles and responsibilities effectively the Trustees have established two Trust-wide committees (a Standards Committee and a Finance and Resources Committee). In addition, a Local Academy Committee (LAC) oversees the day-to-day governance of each academy in the Trust. These have delegated authority to discharge the majority of academy-specific governance functions.

A detailed Scheme of Delegation outlines which responsibilities the Members and Trustees retain and which are delegated to the Trust-wide committees, the Executive Team and/or the LACs respectively.

The structure, membership and terms of reference of each of the Trust-wide committees and LACs, along with the Scheme of Delegation, is reviewed annually to ensure they remain fit for purpose and reflect the priorities of the Trust and its academies.

The make-up of Local Academy Committees

When a maintained school joins the Trust its Governing Body is dissolved and a LAC is established in its place. In practice most if not all of the governors who wish to continue to serve on the LAC may do so, however, this will be subject to Trust agreement and will depend on:

- The effectiveness of the exiting governing body; and
- The need to ensure the LAC is compliant with the provisions of the Trust's governing documents (Articles of Association etc).

The Trust's preferred composition of a LAC is between nine and twelve members, as follows:

- a. Two parents of pupils at the relevant academy elected by the parents of registered pupils of the relevant academy;
- b. The Headteacher or Head of School of the academy;
- c. Up to nine Academy Committee members appointed by WLT Trustees according to good practice guidelines and taking into account an assessment of skills and competencies needed on each Academy Committee.

Where there are more than 12 governors when a school joins the Trust will, over time, work with the LAC to bring it in-line with its preferred model.

The Trust Board approves the appointment of the chair of each LAC.

Ultimately, as the responsibility for the academy falls to the Trustees, they have a vital role in establishing an effective LAC and ensuring they have the correct spread of skills and knowledge relevant to their responsibilities.

Responsibilities of LACs

In general terms, where an academy within the Trust that is performing well its LAC will have delegated responsibilities in relation to the following areas:

- Standards
- Safeguarding and Pupil Welfare
- Admissions
- Financial monitoring and compliance with Trust procedures
- Special Educational Needs
- Premises
- Health and Safety
- Community Engagement

LACs play a key role in providing scrutiny, oversight and challenge and the scope of the responsibilities delegated to them is set out in detail in the Trust's Scheme of Delegation. For example:

- LACs are responsible for developing and proposing an annual budget to reflect the specific circumstances and preferences. Trustees will, however, need to ensure the budget is set in financially and educationally sustainable ways, providing advice and support where necessary.
- LACs and their senior leadership teams will have responsibilities for appointing staff to their respective academies (save for the appointment of a Headteacher/Head of School) but the academy must comply with the Trust's HR policies relating to recruitment and management. The LAC must also follow any HR/legal advice provided by the Trust.
- LACs will monitor and oversee safeguarding and other pupil related provision. They will be required to operate inline with Trust policies and report on performance to the Trust Board and/or its sub-committees.

Service Offer

Being part of WLT means each academy has access to a range of professional and back office services including:

- Support for Standards, Teaching and Learning, Curriculum and Outcomes
- Strategic Leadership support
- Governance Support
- HR and Staffing Support
- Financial Services Support
- Legal Advice
- Asset Management Support
- Health and Safety
- GDPR Compliance

A detailed specification for each service has been drawn up showing what the academy receives as a core service and what additional services can be purchased above beyond the core service.

Funding arrangements

The services outlined above are paid for from funds retained from each academy's General Annual Grant (GAG).

Academies in the Trust retain 100% of their Pupil Premium and PE and Sports Premium funding as well as any individually assigned resources/top-up funding for pupils with high needs and funding for nursery provision or Children Centres.

Becoming an Academy – a step by step guide

It is likely that your governing body will have spent a substantial amount of time discussing the pros and cons of becoming an academy. It may well have spoken to a range of MATs and considered all of the options available. This is time well spent and should mean that once a decision is made there is consensus and support amongst your governors. You may also have undertaken some consultation with your staff and/or parents. While this is not necessary at the point you decide to apply to become an academy, gauging the views of your key stakeholders is always a sensible strategy. A formal consultation will take place as part of the conversion process.

A school wishing to become an academy must undertake a number of steps. WLT has the experience, knowledge and capacity to support you in this process. Once you have agreed to join WLT a Heads of Terms document will be agreed prior to the submission of the Academy Order to ensure there is clarity over expectations, roles and responsibilities. The steps to conversion are outlined below.

Step 1

Register your intention with the DfE online to become an Academy.

Step 2

Apply for an “Academy Order”. An application form needs to be completed and submitted to your Regional Schools Commissioner to formally apply to convert to academy status. Once this is approved an Academy Order is made allowing your school to become an academy. Once an order is made the DfE will inform your Local Authority that you plan to become an academy (though we would advise you to have discussed your intentions with the LA prior to this point).

Step 3

Undertake legal requirements of the conversion process. This will include:

- Running a statutory consultation
- Agreeing legal documentation (Funding Agreements)
- Running the transfer of employment process (TUPE)
- Agreeing land (125 year lease) and commercial transfers

Step 4

Prepare for joining the Trust. This will involve:

- WLT undertaking a due diligence process on your school to identify key issues and risks that it will need to be aware of as you join. This will cover areas such as educational performance, financial health and systems, staffing matters and operations.
- Preparing for the transfer of the the schools current financial management system to WLT’s system (PfS) – the actual transfer point will be the date of conversion.
- Agreeing the timetable for the transfer of other contracts and services to WLT provided services

Step 5

Dissolving the Governing Body and establishing the Local Academy Committee. The Governing Body will need to meet just prior to the conversion date to take a formal resolution to finalise with conversion. In practice, governors will have been kept up to date on the conversion as it progresses.

Step 6

Become and Academy within WLT

What makes us unique?

The Wandle Learning Trust (WLT) is a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) formed by two outstanding schools: Chestnut Grove Academy in Balham and Chesterton Primary School in Battersea. Both schools had been working in close partnership for many years, which makes the creation of the Wandle Learning Trust the next logical step in their collaboration. The Headteachers of the founding schools, Christian Kingsley and Mark Siswick, jointly lead the Trust as Executive Heads. This model of leadership - rare within Academy Trusts - represents the values of partnership, autonomy and collegiality, which underpin the work of the Wandle Learning Trust.

The Wandle Learning Trust is much more than simply the sum of the two founding schools: through our leadership of the Wandle Teaching School Alliance, the South West London Maths Hub and an Early Years Hub, we currently provide over 40 schools with the access to outstanding leadership, training and support programmes. By joining the WLT, your school would benefit by having the opportunity to contribute to the leadership of these organisations, including giving your staff the access to numerous Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and consultancy roles, as well as unlocking the endless potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning through collaboration with other schools. No other MAT in the country operates these provisions within a single Trust, which makes joining the WLT a unique opportunity to become part of a MAT that blends the principles of all-through education with exceptional professional development opportunities for all staff across the full age-range of the educational sector.

Offering a wealth of professional development opportunities has enabled us to attract the highest calibre staff and offer in-house training to support and develop a broad range of career paths. Thus, recruiting and retaining exceptional staff is a hallmark of our MAT and another advantage which new members of the WLT will benefit from.

We understand that joining a Trust is a significant undertaking and one that you and your governors will not take lightly. The following provides some information about what it means to join the WLT.

Does the governing Body still continue to exist once we join WLT?

Each school in the MAT has its own local governance arrangements, a Local Academy Committee (LAC). Legally the Trust is responsible for establishing each LAC and for appointing the majority of its members. In practice it will not seek to disrupt arrangements that are working well and will most likely confirm the appointments of those governors who choose to serve as LAC members.

Over time the LAC, with the support and advice of the Trust, will have greater flexibility than it did as a governing body of a maintained school to shape its composition and size to best reflect its functions and duties.

If a LAC is not performing well the Trust has a responsibility to improve its effectiveness. It can do this in a number of ways: by appointing independent members to the LAC; by removing existing members of the LAC; by providing support, advice and coaching to the existing LAC; or, ultimately, removing the LAC entirely and replacing it with an Academy Executive Board (AEB) to support the school over a period of time before it reestablishes a LAC.

What about our autonomy - will we lose it?

Governing Bodies of maintained school enjoy high levels of autonomy. They will understandably want to know how this will be affected when they join a Trust. Different Trusts take different approaches, giving greater or lesser degrees of autonomy to their local governance structures. Wandle Learning Trust's approach is to enable LACs to have high levels of control within a clear Trust-wide framework of accountability. For instance, the Trust Board retains responsibility for those duties, policies and processes that have the potential to expose the Trust to significant risk. LACs then retain leadership and management over more local decisions about the education and operation of their schools, for example how their agreed budget is spent, staff structures and the curriculum.

In line with its values of partnership, the Trust is committed to consultation when policies and procedures are being updated or amended and it would expect the members of LACs and senior staff within each academy to actively contribute to the work of the Trust as a whole.

The Trust's Scheme of Delegation sets out in detail which duties the Board retains and which are delegated to each LAC.

The following table provides an overview to give schools a good understanding of what being a WLT school will mean for it and its governance.

The Trust will require all academies to:	The Trust will not require an academy to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use and operate its finance system; • Comply with its employment financial and business related policies (Pay, Employment Relations, Accounting, Banking, Financial Management, Procurement, etc.); • Provide regular information and data to the Trust; • Comply with the Trust's internal and external audit arrangements; • Establish a Local Academy Committee; • Adopt and comply with a range of key Trust-wide policies (Safeguarding, Educational Visits and Trips, Complaints, etc.); • Be part of and co-operate with the Trust's monitoring and evaluation arrangements including receiving advice and support from a Trust appointed Academy Challenge Partner; • Co-operate with any interventions as determined by the Trust in the event of the school not performing in line with expectation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement or follow a specific curriculum or schemes of work; • Rebrand itself, alter its name or change its uniform (although it will need to acknowledge its legal status as a WLT academy on its publicity materials and external communications); • Follow specific local policies so long as they do not conflict with or undermine the key Trust-wide policies; • Follow specific timings of the day or timetable; • Pool funds generated from the school's ability to raise money (lettings, etc); • Follow a specific composition of its LAC or its committees.

The Trust will:	Academies will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain a proportion of each academy's General Annual Grant to support central services; • Provide a range of statutory services and functions; • Assign each school a Challenge Partner which will provide advice and support to the leadership of the school; • When required, lead the process, in partnership with the LAC, to appoint a Head of School/Headteacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive a budget share and set a budget; • Monitor their budget and have scope to vary it in line with the Trust's financial delegation policy; • Appoint staff (other than the Head of School/Head teacher); • Determine its own staffing structure; • Retain all monies received for Pupil Premium and pupil-specific (SEND) funding; • Receive Ofsted inspections.

Wandle Learning Trust

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