

INFORMATION PACK FOR RECRUITMENT OF TRUSTEES

**WORKING
TOGETHER
TO ACHIEVE
EXCELLENCE IN
EDUCATION**

Thank you for your interest in the River Learning Trust (RLT). It's a really exciting time to join us - we have a strong reputation for excellent educational standards, school improvement, and staff development and wellbeing. We have welcomed schools into RLT in every year since we started. We now hold six secondary schools, sixteen primary schools, and a SCITT (school-centred initial teacher training) provider within Oxfordshire and Swindon. Three more secondary schools and two primary schools are planning to join us in the coming year.

This leaflet sets out for you:

- Our vision
- The role of our Trustees
- How we support school improvement
- Our schools and the SCITT
- School performance
- Our central team

Please [visit our website for further details](#) about RLT. In particular, please read our Constitution which provides details about [our governance structures and the roles of Members and Trustees](#). Please visit this page of our website for a [brief history of the trust](#). Our [December 2019 report to stakeholders](#) can be found on our website.



OUR VISION

Our vision is that being part of RLT means that schools will improve at pace as we support them to 'be better faster together'.

We do this through collaboration and empowering colleagues to be high performing.



We aim for the following in all of our schools:

- All-round education, academic success, lifelong learning and strength of character;
- Sustainable continuous improvement with no school standing still;
- All schools being good or outstanding, or improving rapidly;
- Collaboration that is raising standards and reducing workload.

Within this context:

Each school has its own unique character and ethos;

The relationships within the Trust ensure genuine and impactful joint accountability.

The outcomes for all of the pupils in all of our schools matter to everyone.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO US

The principles of the River Learning Trust are:

- Commitment to Excellence - striving for the best educational experience through continuous improvement
- Everyone Learning - creating and taking opportunities that enhance lives through evidenced based practice supporting adult and pupil learning
- Respectful Relationships - acting with care, integrity, and fairness in all we do.

We recognise that education has the power to change lives, communities and society for the better and that we can achieve more for our pupils, trainees, staff and communities by

working together rather than alone; we are determined that the Trust will be successful in its vision.



OUR TRUSTEES

Our Trustees are responsible for the strategic oversight, administration and management of the Trust to develop and achieve the Trust's vision, and to ensure compliance with government and ESFA requirements, company law and charity law. They set the vision and policies for the Trust, ensuring strong and effective governance, and have legal obligations for the proper conduct of the business of the Trust.

The Trust Board meets five times a year and each Trustee is also a member of a committee

meeting once a term. Trustees attend a school local governing body meeting once or twice a year, and we have an annual Strategy Away-day for the Board to reflect on its work and to develop an area of strategy.

We need to have members with a range of skills and experience, and we are currently looking for someone with experience of organisational strategy. We are seeking to increase the diversity of our Trustees and applications from members of the BAME community are particularly welcome.

The specific duties of Trustees are set out in the [Constitution on the website](#), but in summary are to:

- Establish and regularly review the vision of the Trust in consultation with all constituent schools and entities
- Ensure the quality of education provision and oversee standards and outcomes across the Trust
- Manage the Trust's finance and property
- Establish pay, appraisal and HR policies for the staff employed by the Trust
- Exercise reasonable skill and care in carrying out their duties
- Ensure that the Trust complies with charity

- and company law
- Operate each academy in accordance with the Funding Agreement that has been signed with the Secretary of State.



HOW WE SUPPORT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

There are eight areas where we increase capacity for school improvement in our schools and support the movement of schools through phases of development:

1 Directors of Education

The Trust has two full-time Directors of Education, one for the Primary Phase and one for Secondary.

2 Support and Challenge Partners (SCP)

These are experienced colleagues, all former Headteachers with a proven track-record working with a number of our schools. Each SCP works with a geographic hub of schools. Details of the [SCPs and Directors of Education can be found on our website](#).

3 Peer Reviews

Each school in the Trust has two peer reviews each year where a number of senior colleagues from other schools in the Trust, as well as at least one colleague from outside of the Trust, review specific areas for school improvement.



4 Data Sharing and Benchmarking

Key information is collected across the Trust and incorporated into our Trust Dashboard. This is shared with Heads and Chairs of Governing Bodies, as well as the Trust Board, to both highlight strong practice and where improvement is needed. Benchmarking also takes place to support staffing and financial planning.

5 Collaborative Professionalism - Peer to Peer Collaboration

Where strong practice and strong practitioners are identified within the Trust, this knowledge is used to support school improvement priorities as needed as colleagues share knowledge and expertise between schools.

6 Network and Subject Coordinators - Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Subject Specific Support

We currently have network coordinators/ leads in place in a range of academic subjects and for safeguarding and staff wellbeing.

7 External Support

We recognise that the Trust does not hold all the answers and our SCPs will broker any additional support for our schools through local Teaching School Alliances such as OTSA as well as from strong practitioners in other schools.

8 Core Principles of Practice

RLT schools aim for excellence and to secure high standards in all areas of our work.

We recognise and value that schools will take different approaches to suit their own specific needs and contexts but we have also agreed that there are core standards of practice we should expect in all our schools based on evidence of 'what works'.

9 Governance

The Trust has Local Governing Bodies in



place for its schools and the effectiveness of their work is supported and challenged by our Head of Governance and Compliance.

A Governance Quality Assurance Framework provides the Trust Board with assurance regarding the quality and performance of LGBs, as well as identifying strengths and areas for development for each LGB. The Trust also provides Governor training and training materials for use by LGBs, as well as storing all LGB documentation on a centralised system.



COMMITMENT TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND INVESTMENT IN OUR STAFF

Schools are all about people, relationships and culture which support a great learning environment, and we are committed to the ongoing professional learning of our staff. Our schools all run professional development programmes and the connections between our schools provide further learning and development with opportunities for teachers and support staff to work closely with others across the Trust. We also run leadership and other training sessions led by members of the Central Team.

We have a commitment to the wellbeing of staff, supporting them in their roles and in

their development, seeking opportunities for colleagues to take the next steps in their careers within RLT schools. Read our Staff Charter to find out more. Each of our schools also has a wellbeing champion supported by network coordinators.

The Trust also has a lead school and a number of strategic partners within the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance (OTSA) providing close access to professional development programmes and school improvement services, as well as opportunities for colleagues to engage in school improvement work.

OUR SCHOOLS

More details can be found [on our website](#).

Secondary		Primary
The Cherwell School	Cotteslowe	Witney Community
Wheatley Park	Wolvercote	Middle Barton
Chipping Norton	Tower Hill	Beckley CofE
Kingsdown	New Marston	Rose Hill
Marlborough CofE	Edith Moorhouse	Sandhills
The Swan School	Garsington CofE	Seven Fields
The Oxford Academy (1/11/20)	Horspath CofE	Charlbury
	Madley Brook	Larkrise

SCITT - OXFORDSHIRE TEACHER TRAINING

Our School Centred Initial Teacher Training Provider (SCITT), Oxfordshire Teacher Training, supports the training of teachers across Oxfordshire, and schools within RLT are able to engage closely with its work. This

supports teacher training and recruitment, and professional learning and career development opportunities for colleagues who are working with trainees.

PERFORMANCE WITHIN RLT SCHOOLS

RLT has very strong secondary school performance and improvement trends with Progress 8 in 2019 showing four schools performed above the national average and one close to the national average. Across all schools, our MAT average was 0.2, which is higher than MATs nationally who achieved -0.05. Even better Progress 8 scores had been predicted for 2020 but will not materialise due to the Covid pandemic. Two schools (Kingsdown and Wheatley Park) were among the top 50 most improved schools in 2019.

There is also very strong improvement of our sponsored primary school performance (those schools which have joined us because they had

been judged as requiring special measures by Ofsted so were required to join an Academy Trust). The four Sponsored Schools that have been in RLT for 1 year or more have improved from c45% to c65% (in line with National Average) reaching the expected standard in Key Stage 2 Reading Writing and Maths as at 2019.

We have above national improvement in 'Good' converter primary schools: 8 converter Schools in RLT for 1 year or more have improved from c62% to c68% reaching the expected standard in Key Stage 2 Reading Writing and Maths as at 2019 (6% increase compared to national 4%).

Across all of our schools, our MAT Key Stage 2 Reading Writing and Maths average in 2019 was 66.9%, which is higher than MATs nationally who achieved 64% and the National Average of 65.4%. Three of our Primaries received letters of congratulation from the Minister for Schools with top subject performances in 2019.

We also have strong Ofsted outcomes, all sponsored schools have been Good at first inspection and during 2019-20 we had six Ofsted inspections, all of which were Good



(three of these remained Good schools, three were sponsored schools which had joined the Trust and improved).

In terms of financial performance, RLT is in

OUR CENTRAL TEAM

The Central Team provides a number of support services to all our schools. These services are funded by a central budget contribution made by each school. These services include support with:

Finance: Financial management and compliance; Budget modelling, preparation, and monitoring; Finance advice, procurement and efficiency; Payroll

a sound financial position with over £4m revenue reserves and 'Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning' embedded in every school to support effective budgeting.

Human Resources: HR Services; Support for staff recruitment; Succession planning

Operations: Communications and marketing; Insurance; Risk management and compliance

Estates: Premises and Asset management

Health and Safety

The schools also benefit from annual capital investment through the Trust's RLT School Condition Allocation Grant.

