



# Associate Membership Link Academy Trust



# About the Link Academy Trust

The Link Academy Trust, from inauguration, has focused on building a strong, collegiate organisation of small rural primary schools in the Southwest that are mutually beneficial to each other. Collaboration enables all our academies to achieve consistent, high-quality provision creating a strong and successful reputation. All our schools are unique, every one of them has significant strengths and all serve their context and community effectively.

Working together we can deliver specialist approaches and opportunities which most small primary schools would struggle to deliver as a single school. Our Central Business Team provide services that ensure the Academy Head and staff can focus on providing the best education for all our pupils. Inclusivity is of paramount importance.

However, we always look to new joining schools to bring further inspiration, a new perspective and strength to our Trust; in our experience every school joining us has done just this.

We firmly believe in our Trust vision...

- Unforgettable experiences, setting the foundations for life,
- No ceiling, the highest possible achievement for all,
- Individuality valued, collaboration not competition,
- People matter, every interaction, every moment.

We truly believe in delivering equity and excellence as standard in every school and continue to focus on ambitious plans to do things collaboratively and differently, encouraging our staff to be strong innovative teachers to deliver quality first teaching for all pupils and ensure they thrive now and in the future.



# Why Associate Membership?

*Associate membership allows a school to join a trust in a more flexible arrangement, accessing shared resources and leadership, but it does not legally transfer into the trust. ... In both instances, the school retains the right to leave the academy trust if the arrangement is unsatisfactory.*

The evidence suggests that in a well-structure and considered Multi Academy Trust there are educational benefits to all pupils that are much harder to achieve in stand-alone schools. Trusts can pool resources, retain talent and buy in skills and services that are too often out of reach for individual schools.

We understand that whilst many schools want to retain autonomy, often they would also welcome the levels of professional support and collaboration that a successful Trust can offer but are concerned about ‘making the leap’.

**The Link Academy has developed an Associate Membership Package that means that your organisation can benefit from working collaboratively with us in a ‘try before you buy’ scenario.**

As a Link Associate Member, your school can take advantage of a range of our services that hopefully will demonstrate the benefits of working as part of a larger family of strong schools. We will tailor a bespoke package with you which covers the period you feel you need to fully experience what being part of the Trust is like. However, at the end of your associate membership term, your school may choose to apply to join the Trust if it wishes to but there will be no contractual obligation to do so.

Throughout the period we set up a Joint Committee, with a balance of personnel from both organisations to meet regularly to consider what is working well and what may need to be considered going forward. It is a period of time when we both look at the Due Diligence as a process to be sure there is a clear ‘fit’.

We invite anyone from your school/s that is interested to visit our academies as we see them as ‘the proof of the pudding’, we feel talking to children, parents and staff will give real insight into whether joining the Trust will benefit your organisation.





# Associate Membership - what the Link Academy offers



These are some of the things we provide for our schools and can offer to an Associate Member:

- Support from the Link's Executive Improvement Team to raise standards and performance in your school
- Weekly Academy Head forum and participating in specific scrutiny days, including sessions that support local governance,
- Access to all the Link's education collaboration one-day events with specific foci, i.e. developing the Curriculum, providing for Disadvantaged pupils, Strategic Improvement Planning etc,
- Access to monthly focussed Safeguarding Presentations used to maintain ongoing deep understanding,
- Assistance with Head teacher or staff appraisal,
- Participation in Academy Curriculum Leadership Groups with ongoing networking,
- Access to all CPD events including unlimited and free participation in training activities at every level- Governance, Support staff, etc,
- School finance health checks which will expertly review and analyse your school's current financial health and three-year projections,
- Finance development reports which will make recommendations to improve your financial position and help your school to plan for and achieve in-year balances,
- Consideration of a Marketing plan focused on attracting more pupils to your school,
- Health and safety audit and report with recommendations,
- GDPR compliance check,
- Website compliance checks and support to update,
- HR support with a wide range of personnel requirements, including legal advice, absence management, job descriptions etc
- Bespoke support packages to address staff needs, issues or their development,
- Church School support- we are a VA Trust Governance Model and welcome faith schools
- Access to Trust documentation, i.e., policies, risk assessments, etc

This list is not exhaustive and if you are aware of an area of need, we are very happy to support you with it

# Sir David Carter spoke about Associate Membership on 22nd February 2022



Sir David Carter said that he would be making the point more widely in future, as a response to hurdles some schools face in joining academy trusts, at a training event held by the Church of England in February 2022.

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*“The arrangement could last for something like two years, on the basis that once the time is up school and trust leaders will know if it is the right thing for them and are likely to sign up,”* he said.

He believes the change is a positive way forward for small schools which otherwise might struggle to be taken into trusts, or which fear they might be closed after formally signing over all their powers. It also helps church schools wishing to work with a local non-religious academy trust in a way that enables their original ethos to stay intact while still drawing on resources for school improvement.

*“A partnership gets around some of the ideology problems, but it helps people improve,”* he added.  
*“It is also a way of encouraging governors to allow headteachers to work with a local academy trust without having to give up their powers.”*

Steve Taylor, the executive head at Robin Hood Academy Trust, which has used the scheme, said one-year deals provided stability while schools sounded out a formal partnership with a trust.

*“It provides a transparent way of working that allows the impact of what has been done to be measured before a commitment is made,”* he said.



# Are Church Schools able to join the Link in Associate partnership arrangement?

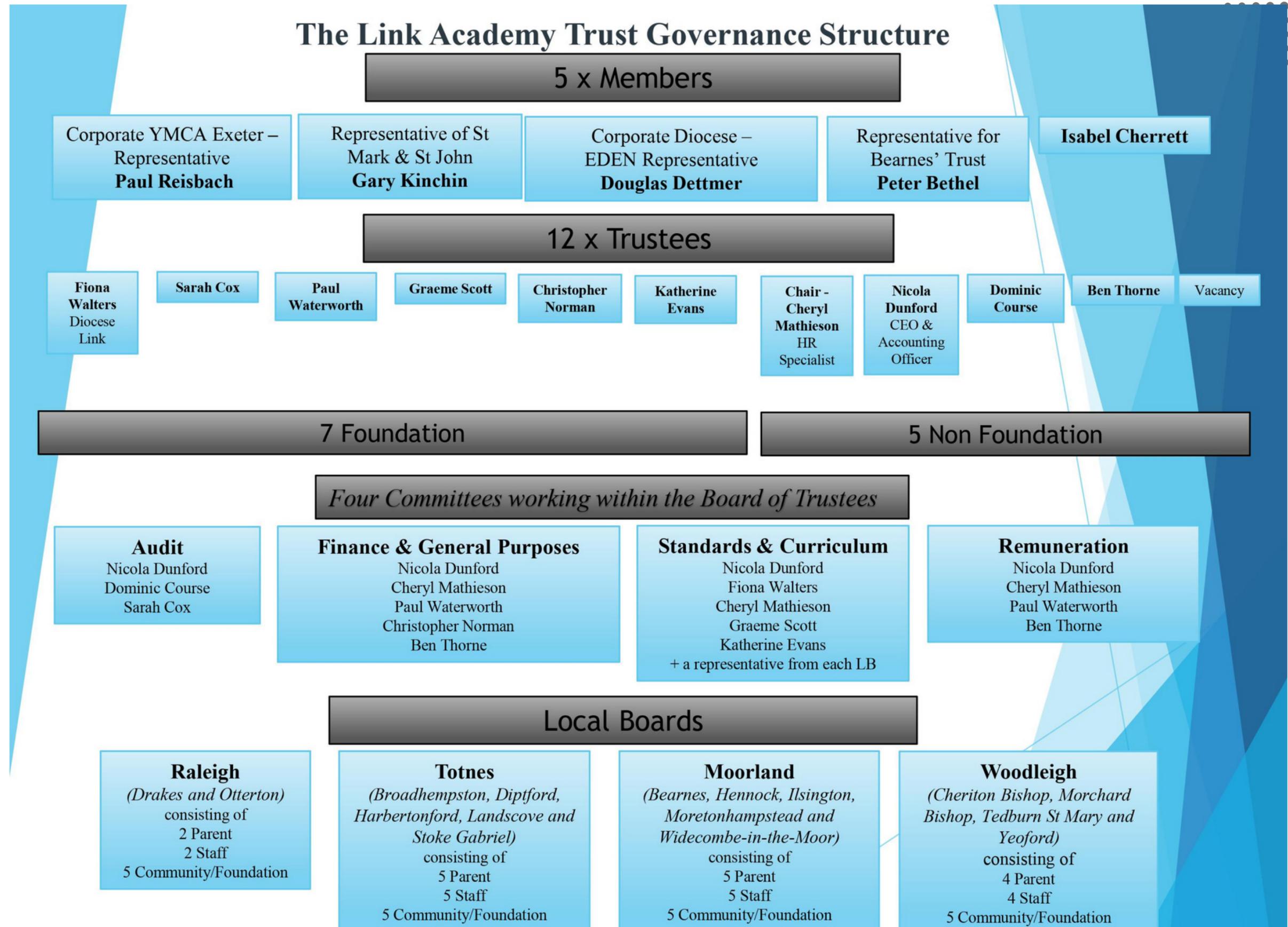
The Link Academy Trust has a Voluntary Aided structure of Governance. Approved by the Diocese the make-up of Governance of the Link is such that Church Schools may join the Trust whether they are VC or VA schools. We work closely with the Diocese of Exeter, and they support us with much of our training and development opportunities.

We have a dedicated member of staff who supports all schools with the delivery of quality RE teaching and learning, as well providing more specific support for Church schools focussing on the Christian Distinctiveness of each setting in line with their community. SIAMS support is provided, and a planned approach is agreed to ensure we are always working towards our school's delivering excellence and this being recognised in any inspection.

The wider community is very important to every academy, we have well-developed relationships with our local church and extend our interactions to include charities and global organisations wherever possible. We share this expertise with any school that considers working in partnership with us as well as learning from our colleagues in other settings.



# Link Academy Trust Governance Structure



# Associate Membership- What is the cost to your organisation?

We feel we have a moral duty to work with our colleagues and offer all we can to schools that are considering joining a Multi Academy Trust, as well as realising that it is a rich opportunity for the trust.

We want to demonstrate how we can support small schools without imposing a corporate approach or a large fee.

We will therefore do everything we can to be cost neutral in our offer, but clearly if there is a significant request for time and resources, to be fair to our Trust Academies, we will need to make a charge. We will always keep this to a minimum and when we know what your bespoke package needs to include, we will give you a minimal cost of the package you need.

If you do decide to join the Link Academy Trust, there will be no charge as it will be considered part of the Due Diligence and Induction process as it benefits all.

For more details contact:

Nicky Dunford CEO

[nicola.dunford@thelink.academy](mailto:nicola.dunford@thelink.academy)

or

Matt Matthew DCEO

[mmatthew@thelink.academy](mailto:mmatthew@thelink.academy)

Main Office: 01803 762113

