



## **Benefits for schools**

If there is one thing that the coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated, it is the value of working together, learning from each other and sharing burdens and opportunities across schools. Whether it is school leaders writing their first CV19 whole school risk assessment collaboratively, to teachers sharing their learning using Google Classroom, or support staff supporting one another in keeping SCR records up to date and compliant - there is a genuine and appreciable strength together.

Our collective resilience in lockdowns, partial and full attendance at school; developing remote education from almost a zero point in March 2020; through mass testing; managing pupil and parental expectations and concerns if they arise; has been very significant.

We have been able to collectively focus on education and preparing pupils and students for their next steps – whether it is transition to secondary school, or to college or sixth form, or to employment or university. We all recognise that supporting other each other to do a great job, is better than trying to cope and manage all of the competing requirements as single unconnected schools.

Unlike many multi-academy trusts, Abingdon Learning Trust is clear that schools are run by their Heads and Local Academy Board (governing body), with support and challenge provided by the trust board through the CEO and executive team.

A strong governance training network is in place, with training both tailored to our schools, as well as Oxfordshire and national training courses and the opportunity to 'meet' other governors as part of the network.

Alongside, continued training for improved effectiveness in the current role, readiness for the next stage of school employees' careers is important, and working across Trust schools provides opportunities for teaching, support and leadership staff that are not possible in a single school. Our Professional Pathways programme each year demonstrates our commitment to our staff and the advantages of working together for professional improvement and growth.

Additionally, the greater 'buying power' and opportunities to work together, mean that operational savings can often be achieved, allowing these savings to go back into a better school experience for children and young people.

All schools that are members of the Trust receive a range of services and support which we call Tier 1 Services, paid through an annual levy.

Tier 1 Services include:

- Annual audit
- Premises and other insurances
- Governance support, including training, document management, and clerking at Academy Board level
- Central Office support – Finance Team and HR and Payroll Team, and CEO support
- School Improvement support and challenge
- Headteacher performance review
- Annual school evaluation
- Support with School census, UIFSM, and premises improvement bids to DfE
- Liaison with ESFA
- Preparation for and support with Ofsted inspection and other external evaluations

As we develop, we are offering Level 2 services, which include premises oversight, strategic ICT and catering. These services are on a Service Level Agreement basis.

We have a number of cross-Trust networks including the Safeguarding Group of DSLs, nominated safeguarding governors from each school, CEO and chaired by the Safeguarding Trustee.

With two secondary schools, we are increasingly leveraging great practice from each school, for maximum impact to systematically benefit all pupils.

In the primary phase, we have developed good relationships with another primary MAT, sharing practice, providing peer review, challenge and support on different priorities across the schools.

Appointing additional staff to work across more than one school – combining the small 'spare' finances available in individual schools together to benefit pupils and students, has also been possible – bringing greater benefit for pupils.

If you are interested in an informal discussion to see how we work, or can help in any way, please do contact one of us.

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We would be very pleased to hear from you.