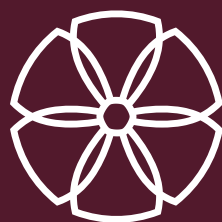




Mercia Learning Trust **Impact Report**



Mercia
Learning Trust

Academic Year 2023 – 24

**ANOTHER
MONUMENTAL
CHAPTER IN THE
DEVELOPMENT
OF OUR TRUST.**





Neil Miley and Chris French



The past year marked another monumental chapter in the development of our trust. We solidified our position as a leading local trust, exemplified by outstanding pupil outcomes across all key stages and the establishment of specialist resource provisions designed to support our most vulnerable pupils. This year also saw our trust



grow by nearly 10% with the addition of Anns Grove Primary School, our seventh school.

Significantly, this year also marked the conclusion of Chris French's distinguished career. After over 40 years in education—five of which



were spent as CEO, guiding the development of Mercia Learning Trust—Chris retired, leaving behind an extraordinary legacy. Early in the year, with Chris's support, our trust board conducted a successful recruitment process to appoint his successor.

The year also brought remarkable academic success. Mercia School achieved national recognition as the second highest-performing secondary school, with disadvantaged pupils outperforming their peers and achieving, on average, two grades higher per subject at GCSE compared to national averages. King Egbert School celebrated its

highest-ever Key Stage 4 (KS4) results, ranking as the third highest-performing secondary school in Sheffield. At Key Stage 5 (Ks5), the school also saw significant progress, with the average grade rising to a B.

Newfield School's performance stabilised, but we said goodbye to the headteacher, Emma Anderson. We are delighted that Emma has gone on to secure a new headship at a larger secondary school in West Yorkshire.



ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION, SHARING INNOVATIONS AND ENHANCING RESOURCES.

Our primary schools continued to excel, remaining highly oversubscribed and delivering strong education to all pupils. This was reflected in outcomes across all phases that showed improvements from the previous academic year. Key Stage 2 (KS2) combined results were 2% above the national average, with two of our four primary schools achieving the noteworthy milestone of disadvantaged pupils outperforming their non-disadvantaged peers. Gains in phonics testing were equally impressive, with 88% of pupils across schools in our trust (compared to the national average of 80%) achieving success.

Operationally, our trust dedicated significant resources to integrating Anns Grove, aligning its systems and processes with those of the wider trust while continuing to provide exceptional support to our existing schools.

Financially, our systems remain robust, as reflected in our audit outcomes. However, reserves have been impacted in recent years due to rising staffing and energy costs. While we remain in a strong position, we are committed to working closely with our teams to rebuild reserves and ensure financial sustainability.



An exciting development this year was the establishment of three new Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs) at Woodlands Primary School, Nether Edge Primary School, and Newfield School. These SRPs will provide tailored support for the most vulnerable SEND pupils, enabling them to

attend their local schools alongside their peers and siblings. These facilities were ready by September 2024, and the impact of these provisions will be monitored across the coming years. Looking ahead, we aspire to make this model sector-leading, supporting other schools locally and nationally to adopt similar approaches.

In the coming year, we will continue refining our operating model of aligned autonomy. By encouraging collaboration, sharing innovations and enhancing resources, we aim to support all staff, regardless of role, to achieve success. This includes advancing our financial and IT systems to build resilience and efficiency across our trust.

Thank you to everyone who supports our trust and its pupils. To our staff, governors, trustees, and families—your dedication is at the heart of everything we achieve.

IMPACT REPORT – DATA

FOR THE END OF 2023/24



100%
GOOD
OR
BETTER

66%
OUTSTANDING



5370
pupils



666
Staff



Pupil
Premium
29%

SEND
17%



Attendance
93.7%
(National Average 92.8%)



Income
£39
Million



Capital Investment
£1 Million

Capital Grant Income



£986k

Staffing Costs



£27.5
Million



Rhona Dodds
Chair of the Trust Board

TOGETHER, WE ARE NOT JUST PREPARING CHILDREN FOR SUCCESS BUT TRANSFORMING LIVES AND FUTURES.

Last year, was another exceptional year for Mercia Learning Trust. It was a year marked by outstanding achievements across our schools, strategic growth, and a clear focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for every child.

As Chair of the Trust Board, I am immensely proud of the work achieved across all areas of our trust. Our schools continue to excel, providing the highest quality education, particularly for our most vulnerable pupils. The introduction of three new Specialist Resource Provisions across our trust is a testament to our commitment to inclusion and to ensuring that all pupils, no matter their needs, can thrive in their local schools.

This year also marked the retirement of Phil Smith, who served as Chair of the Trust Board with distinction for many years. Phil's leadership, wisdom, and deep-rooted belief in our mission were instrumental in shaping the trust we see today. On behalf of the entire board, I want to extend our heartfelt thanks to Phil for his

dedicated service and invaluable contribution.

Our trust also navigated a significant leadership transition at the end of the year. Chris French retired as CEO after a remarkable career in education, including five years leading our trust through a period of unparalleled growth and achievement. Chris leaves a legacy of excellence, and I want to thank him for his vision, dedication, and impact on our schools and communities.

We were fortunate to secure an outstanding successor in Neil Miley, who joined us in June from Dixons Academies to begin a seamless transition. Neil brings a wealth of experience and a shared commitment to our ethos of excellence. I am confident he will continue to build on the strong foundations laid by Chris and guide our trust into an exciting new chapter.

Academically, we saw extraordinary achievements. Mercia School's performance being

a particular highlight at secondary. Our primary schools continue to deliver excellence, with phonics outcomes and KS2 results exceeding national averages.

The onboarding of Anns Grove Primary School, our seventh school, was another significant milestone. This growth, coupled with the alignment of systems and processes across our schools, reinforces our position as a leading trust in the region.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on strengthening our operating model of aligned autonomy, ensuring every member of staff feels supported and equipped to succeed. This includes our governors and trustees, who have ably supported our schools over the past year.

Finally, I want to thank all the staff, pupils, parents, and community members for their unwavering dedication to our trust's vision. Together, we are not just preparing children for success but transforming lives and futures.





ANNS GROVE

ANNS GROVE IS A TRULY
REMARKABLE SCHOOL THAT
IS POISED TO BECOME A
BEACON OF EXCELLENCE
WITHIN OUR TRUST.

In October, Anns Grove Primary School became the seventh school and fourth primary to join our trust. Located in Heeley, Anns Grove is a high-performing and highly oversubscribed school, known for its strong academic results and commitment to excellence. The decision to join our trust reflects the school's ambition to further enhance its performance and accelerate its development.

With close to 400 pupils, 36% of whom are eligible for pupil premium funding, Anns Grove is experiencing significant growth as it transitions from a 1.5-form entry to a 2-form entry school. Over the past year, we have worked closely with Anns Grove to support this expansion, including funding a development project that added two new classrooms to their site.



We are excited to see Anns Grove thrive as part of our trust. With its strong focus on pupil outcomes, dedicated staff and exceptional community support, Anns Grove is a truly remarkable school that is poised to become a beacon of excellence within our trust.



DEDICATED STAFF

AND EXCEPTIONAL

COMMUNITY SUPPORT.



MERCIA

EDCON 2024

**A POWERFUL EVENT, WHICH SERVED TO REMIND
US OF OUR CORE VALUES AND TO REINVIGORATE
OUR TEAMWORK AND INDIVIDUAL
TEACHING PRACTICE.**

DELEGATE

Our 2024 education conference was held in February at The Octagon Centre, University of Sheffield, in February 2024. This annual event is significant for us as we gather all staff together to share trust priorities and collaborate with other colleagues from the seven schools in our trust. Around 500 people attended the event.

Last year's conference had oracy as the key focus and we were delighted to partner with Sheffield's Poet Laureate, Danae Wellington, who worked in our schools for 6 months developing pupils' oracy and performance skills through assemblies and workshops. The outcome of this work was a powerful performance of poetry at the conference, all written and performed by our pupils.



During the day, our primary and secondary colleagues took part in interactive keynote sessions delivered by Voice 21 and educational psychologist, Julie Hurst delivered our keynote. The day finished with the launch of our Mercia Star Awards.



AN ENGAGING DAY FULL OF WARMTH AND APPRECIATION



PRIMARY SCHOOLS

RESULTS THIS YEAR WERE POSITIVE
AND SHOW A RISING TREND.

Last year, we were delighted to welcome Anns Grove Primary School into our trust. Throughout the year, we continued to strengthen our commitment to aligned autonomy through ongoing collaboration and partnership.



Our primary improvement team have continued to drive the development of teaching and learning in schools, supporting leaders to evaluate and improve the quality of education, providing professional development opportunities, and contributing to the wider development of our trust by fostering and facilitating partnerships between schools.

Quality Assurance (QA) has been very positive throughout the year and has contributed to schools' ongoing improvement and action planning through clear feedback and actionable steps. Trust-led QA complemented schools' own internal QA and monitoring processes throughout the year, further validated through external school improvement partner visits.

Partnership working groups were formed to improve core aspects

of school improvement plans. These were agreed centrally with headteachers and senior leaders, with individuals from each school allocated to groups to lead on individual projects.

- Subject leader networks (supported by secondary subject leads)
- Our trust primary English team continued their focus on moderation alongside a sharp focus on early writing and its component parts and writing fluency, working towards progression documents from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Our Teaching and Learning Group used research evidence to inform strategies on how to support both novice and expert teachers to consider how and when best to adapt the curriculum they teach. This will lead to a trust wide set of best practice strategies for adapting the curriculum within the classroom.
- Our Early Years group are working together to support the implementation of high-quality provision within the different areas of learning in Early Years. This will lead to a trust-wide progression model for routines and expectations within each area of the EYFS framework.

Furthermore, our school improvement team were commissioned by Barnsley Local Authority to support the Corpus



Christi federation of primary schools to secure improvement. This six-week programme of support led to developments in the school's reading curriculum with positive feedback about the impact of our work.

Results this year were positive and show a rising trend in our primary schools. Most of our schools exceeded national data for phonics this year with Totley primary school achieving an outstanding 95%.

Additionally, in combined Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) at the end of KS2, two of our schools' disadvantaged cohorts outperformed others. This is an exceptional achievement.

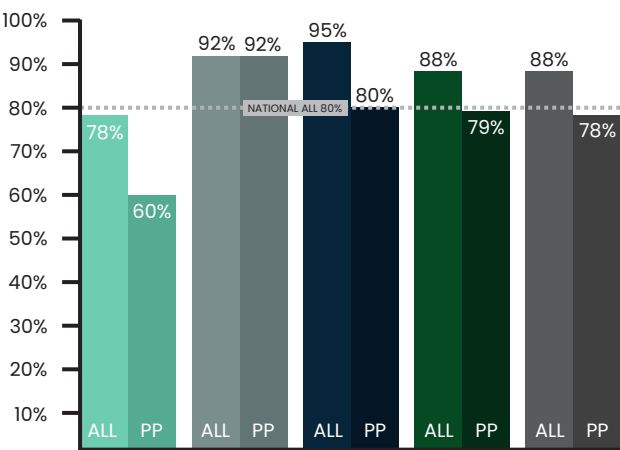


PRIMARY DATA

KEY  **Anns Grove**  **Nether Edge**  **Totley**  **Woodlands**  **Trust Average**

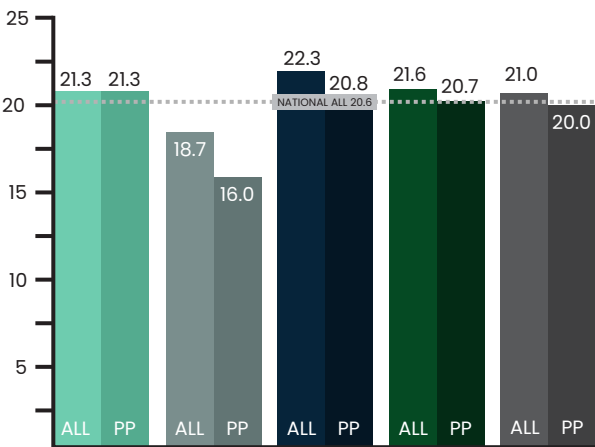
PHONICS

NATIONAL ALL 80%



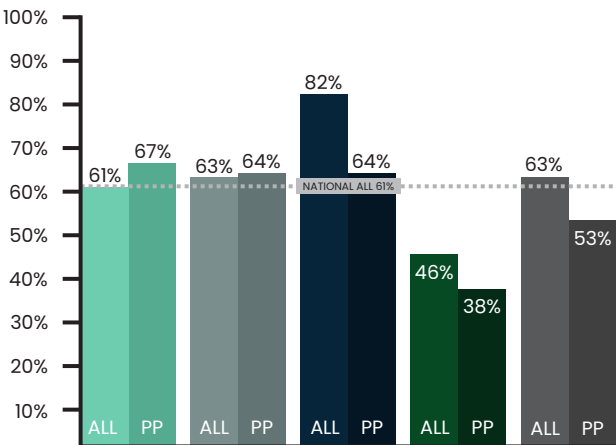
Y4 MULTIPLICATION TABLES CHECK

NATIONAL ALL 20.6



KS2 READING, WRITING & MATHS COMBINED (EXS+)

NATIONAL ALL 61%

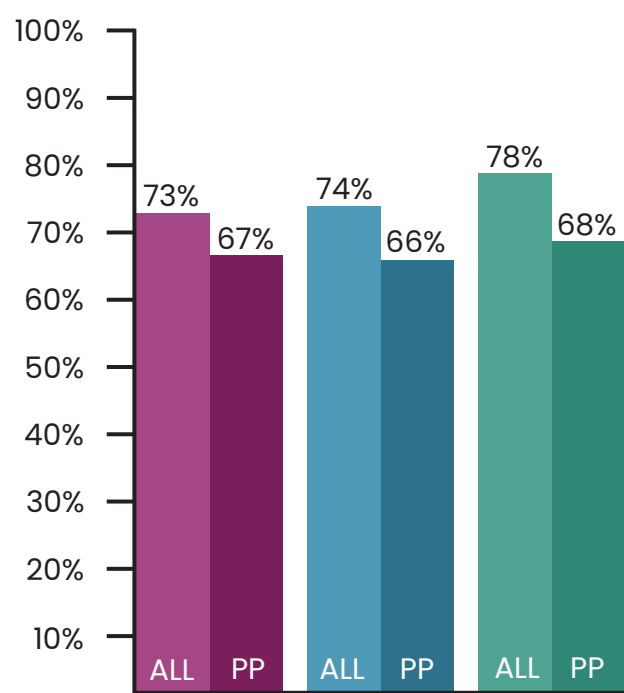


KS2 READING, WRITING & MATHS (EXS+)

KEY Reading Writing Maths Trust Average

	KS2 READING, WRITING AND MATHS	Anns Grove	Nether Edge	Totley	Woodlands	All	National All
READING	All	80%	68%	90%	56%	73%	74%
	Pupil Premium	89%	68%	82%	50%	67%	
WRITING	All	70%	73%	95%	58%	74%	72%
	Pupil Premium	72%	77%	82%	53%	66%	
MATHS	All	80%	83%	92%	58%	78%	73%
	Pupil Premium	83%	86%	73%	50%	68%	
TRUST AVERAGE	All	61%	63%	82%	46%	63%	61%
	Pupil Premium	67%	64%	64%	38%	53%	

KS2 TRUST READING,
WRITING & MATHS





SECONDARY SCHOOLS

PERFORMANCE OF OUR SECONDARY
SCHOOLS REMAINS STRONG.

The performance of our secondary schools remains strong overall, with clear opportunities for further improvement.

Mercia School achieved exceptional GCSE results, securing a national ranking of second for pupil progress. Disadvantaged pupils at the school were also ranked second nationally for their academic performance. The school continues to attract national attention and is widely regarded as one of the top-performing schools in the country.



King Egbert School demonstrated strong GCSE progress, with results well above the national average. The performance of disadvantaged pupils has shown improvement over previous years, though further development in this area remains a priority. A-Level results were in line with the national average, surpassing the city average, with the average pupil grade being a B.

Newfield School delivered outcomes that were broadly in line with national averages and is the first year since COVID where

results have stabilised and not decreased.

Attendance across our secondary schools showed some variation. Mercia School ranked among the top few nationally, correlating strongly with its excellent GCSE performance. King Egbert School showed a positive trend towards returning to pre-COVID attendance levels. Newfield School finished the year more strongly than it began, and further work is planned for 2024/25 to embed robust learning behaviours across the school.

Our trust has initiated a series of best practice-sharing events, with Mercia School leading the way in sharing its successful approach to attendance management. This has had a positive impact on attendance at King Egbert, Newfield and our primary schools. This led to leadership teams across our schools collaborating regularly to stay abreast of DfE updates and explore innovative strategies to enhance performance.

Furthermore, department leads engaged in cross-school collaboration to share curriculum plans and identify areas of alignment, including completing an analysis of exam boards to ensure a shared understanding of curriculum specifications and opportunities for cross-school support.

School visits to Mercia School from leaders at all levels took place

across the year, supporting others to gain insight into the school's ethos. These visits have contributed to the development of strategy and the sharing of best practices.

Headteachers met regularly to ensure alignment with our trust values, developing a purposeful collaborative approach. Each headteacher is fully aware of the unique context of every school within our trust and the role each school plays in advancing our shared mission.

In the summer term, key strategic appointments were made. Dean Webster was appointed as Executive Director of Secondary Standards, with a primary responsibility for line managing and coaching secondary headteachers. Joshua Fisher and Ruth Hollingsworth were appointed as co-headteachers of Mercia School, both of whom have played integral roles in the school's growth and success.

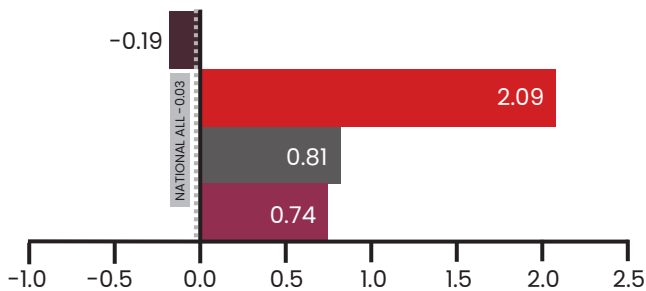


SECONDARY DATA

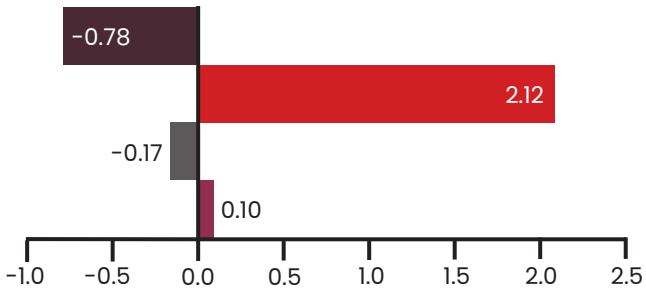
KEY  **Newfield**  **Mercia**  **King Egbert**  **Trust Average**

PROGRESS 8 (ALL)

NATIONAL ALL -0.03

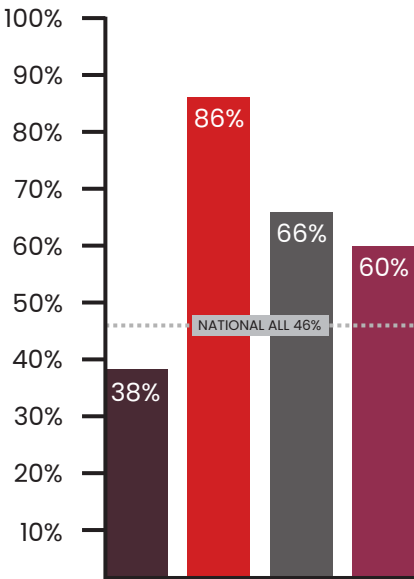


PROGRESS 8 (PP)

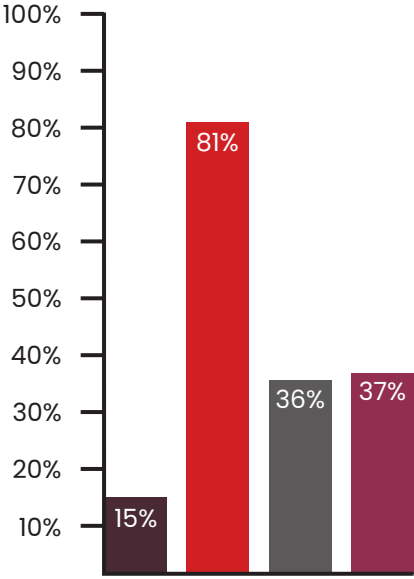


BASICS 5+ (ALL)

NATIONAL ALL 46%



BASICS 5+ (PP)

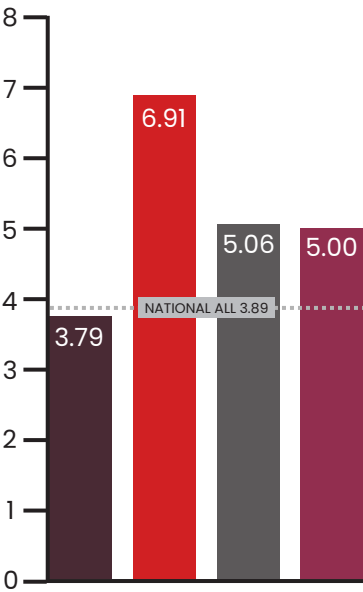


SECONDARY DATA

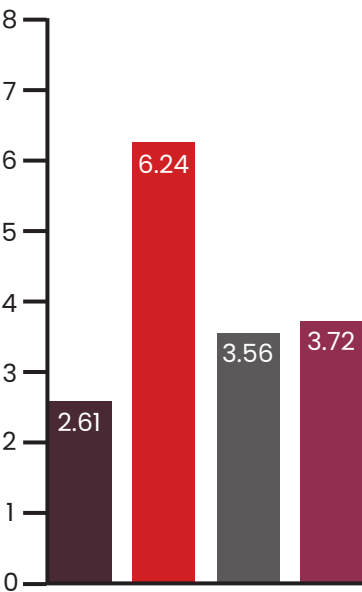
KEY  **Newfield**  **Mercia**  **King Egbert**  **Trust Average**

EBACC AVERAGE POINT SCORE (ALL)

NATIONAL ALL 3.89



EBACC AVERAGE POINT SCORE (PP)



KS5

ATTAINMENT
KING ECBERT SCHOOL

A*-B	62%
D*-D	71%

STRATEGY

STRATEGY ISN'T A ONE-TIME

EVENT; IT'S A DYNAMIC PROCESS.



2-5 YEAR MASTER PLAN

1

DEVELOP A ROBUST ALIGNED AUTONOMY MODEL THAT CODIFIES THE STAGES OF CREATING AN EXEMPLARY SCHOOL FOR ALL.

2

BUILD A CENTRAL TRUST TEAM TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CULTURE, SYSTEMS AND ROUTINES AT ALL SCHOOLS.

3

MAKE MERCIA LEARNING TRUST THE GO-TO-PLACE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF STAFF, SCHOOLS AND TRUSTS IN SHEFFIELD AND SURROUNDING REGIONS.

4

PROVIDE EDUCATION TO OVER 8,000 PUPILS.

We believe that strategy isn't a one-time event; it's a dynamic process. As time goes on, various elements will emerge or vanish, necessitating flexible, adaptable plans.

Traditionally, planning is an annual exercise, often crafted during the summer for the following year. At Mercia Learning Trust, we challenge this notion by adopting a forward-thinking approach. Our approach revolves around using a 2-to 5-year Master Plan paired with agile, ongoing planning. We believe that strategy and planning must be continuously reviewed and actively led to drive meaningful, large-scale organisational change. Thus, strategic planning is ingrained in our daily leadership practices.

We ensure our strategic plans drive lasting change by adhering to a clear process, based on the work by Kotter's on Leading Change and McChesney, Covey and Huling's principles from 'The Four Disciplines of Execution'.

Our Master Plan charts the ambitious path for where our trust aims to be in 5 years. This plan is bold, daring and transformative, propelling us beyond our current state and embedding lasting, impactful changes in our culture and community. It identifies the big steps we want to take over the next 2-to 5-years. Then each of these bigger steps are broken down into smaller individual plans. Consequently, our plans are focused, limited in number and designed to solve specific problems or enhance systems.

Over the coming year we are focusing on the following areas to start moving towards meeting step 1 in our 2-to 5-year Master Plan.

Firstly, we are creating a model of aligned autonomy, ensuring our operating model is clearly defined and provides clarity to all our staff. This includes educational and operational standards to ensure our staff can be liberated to focus on what really matters.

Secondly, we are renewing the mission and values of our trust making this clear and tangible to all stakeholders. Our new mission and values will be created with input from all our stakeholders and will create a larger sense of belonging to our trust.

Thirdly, we are removing the old appraisal process and introducing coaching for all staff, ensuring everyone in our trust is supported to develop and grow. Coaching is already used to great effect in some of our schools and we will create a model to benefit all staff, in all roles.

Finally, we are identifying our best practice at secondary and closing gaps between the outcomes across our schools. This approach will draw together and codify the elements that make each of our schools successful. Leading to more robust and rigorous implementation of systems that promote pupils' success.

OUR SCHOOLS



LOCATION



THE THREE TIERS OF GOVERNANCE

MEMBERS

These are the most senior tier of governance. They are the guardians of our constitution, have the power to appoint and remove directors, and meet annually to receive the audit/trust annual report.

TRUST BOARD

Trustees/Directors are the tier of governance that holds the most responsibility. They oversee trust strategy, performance, policy, finance, risk and audit, and all aspects of business management. There is a board and committee structure that meets four times a year.

LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES (LGB)

Each school has an LGB that meets four to six times a year. They are responsible for supporting and challenging the school senior leaders regarding standards (teaching, pupil progress/attainment, behaviour, attendance, and support for vulnerable students). Each LGB has a chair and vice chair, and up to 10 governors (some of whom will be staff and parents/carers).





FINANCIAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	Note	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Restricted fixed asset funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Income from:						
Donations and capital grants:	3					
Local authority school conversion		266,659	(434,000)	4,815,437	4,648,096	-
Other donations and capital grants		8,536	434,894	985,458	1,428,888	1,045,765
Other trading activities	5	1,023,989	7,598	-	1,031,587	867,966
Investments	6	126,355	-	-	126,355	104,546
Charitable activities	4	1,218,161	34,105,952	-	35,324,113	29,812,483
Total income		2,643,700	34,114,444	5,800,895	42,559,039	31,830,760
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds		325,852	499,722	-	825,574	641,647
Charitable activities	8	2,356,970	34,390,570	2,000,183	38,747,723	33,506,966
Total expenditure		2,682,822	34,890,292	2,000,183	39,573,297	34,148,613
Net (expenditure)/income		(39,122)	(775,848)	3,800,712	2,985,742	(2,317,853)
Transfers between funds	17	(380,205)	343,181	37,024	-	-
Net movement in funds before other recognised gains/(losses)		(419,327)	(432,667)	3,837,736	2,985,742	(2,317,853)
Other recognised gains/(losses):						
Actuarial gains on defined benefit pension schemes	23	-	451,000	-	451,000	1,755,000
Net movement in funds		(419,327)	18,333	3,837,736	3,436,742	(562,853)
Reconciliation of funds:						
Total funds brought forward		1,209,650	(2,364,246)	64,013,478	62,858,882	63,421,735
Net movement in funds		(419,327)	18,333	3,837,736	3,436,742	(562,853)
Total funds carried forward		790,323	(2,345,913)	67,851,214	66,295,624	62,858,882

The Statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 AUGUST 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets	14	67,544,606	63,721,153
		<u>67,544,606</u>	<u>63,721,153</u>
Current assets			
Debtors	15	913,677	809,669
Cash at bank and in hand		2,360,398	3,367,992
		<u>3,274,075</u>	<u>4,177,661</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	16	(2,074,057)	(2,334,932)
Net current assets		<u>1,200,018</u>	<u>1,842,729</u>
Net assets excluding pension liability		<u>68,744,624</u>	<u>65,563,882</u>
Defined benefit pension scheme liability	23	(2,449,000)	(2,705,000)
Total net assets		<u><u>66,295,624</u></u>	<u><u>62,858,882</u></u>
Funds of the Multi Academy Trust			
Restricted funds:			
Fixed asset funds	17	67,851,214	64,013,478
Restricted income funds	17	103,087	340,754
		<u>67,954,301</u>	<u>64,354,232</u>
Restricted funds excluding pension liability	17	67,954,301	64,354,232
Pension reserve	17	(2,449,000)	(2,705,000)
Total restricted funds	17	<u>65,505,301</u>	<u>61,649,232</u>
Unrestricted income funds	17	<u>790,323</u>	<u>1,209,650</u>
Total funds		<u><u>66,295,624</u></u>	<u><u>62,858,882</u></u>

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024

	Note	2024 £	2023 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash used in operating activities	19	(1,670,246)	(994,222)
Cash flows from investing activities	20	662,652	458,754
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year		(1,007,594)	(535,468)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year		3,367,992	3,903,460
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	21, 22	2,360,398	3,367,992



Mercia
Learning Trust

MERCIA LEARNING TRUST

Glen Road, Sheffield S7 1RB / 01143 494 230 / enquiries@merciatrust.co.uk