



**Confederation  
of School Trusts**

# **Starting with Why – Why Join a Trust?**

**Leora Cruddas CBE**

**@LeoraCruddas @CSTVoice**





# PART ONE

## What is a School Trust?

## What is a multi-academy trust (School Trust)?

A multi-academy trust is a **group of schools working in deep and purposeful collaboration** as one entity to improve and maintain high educational standards across the trust.

A multi-academy trust has a single legal and moral purpose at the heart of the Articles of Association: **to advance education for public benefit.**

## What a multi-academy trust is not!

- Academy trusts are not businesses – nor are they run by ‘private’ people and they cannot make a ‘profit’
- Land is not passed into ‘private’ ownership and trusts need permission to sell land – just like maintained schools
- Academy trusts are not ‘unaccountable’
- Academy trusts do not have different legal responsibilities for example for pupils with SEND

[Myth busting – what are School Trusts?](#)

# PART TWO

## Why join a trust?

# Starting with Why – why join a trust and why a trust-based system?

We believe that the best bet for a school system that keeps getting better is groups of schools working in deep and purposeful collaboration in a single governance structure.





## The wrong question:

- “Should my school become an academy?”

## The better question:

- “How can my school best **collaborate** with others in a **strong and resilient structure** to ensure that **each child is a powerful learner** and that **adults have the opportunities to learn and develop as teachers and leaders?**”



# Deep and purposeful collaboration

“I believe that this comes primarily from the power of purpose – the capacity to link people through a shared belief about the identify, meaning and mission of an organisation. In the strongest trusts, there is a deep sense of collective purpose.”





# A strong and resilient structure

- **Structural resilience** through groups of schools working together in a single legal entity with strong, strategic and focused governance.
- **Educational resilience** through the deeper collaboration and stronger conditions for building a culture of improvement.
- **Financial resilience** through greater economies of scale – ability to withstand further perturbations, with reduced competing demands from other essential services.
- **Workforce resilience** through stronger, shared cultures of career development, with pathways across schools, bolstering the recruitment, development, and retention of teachers, leaders and support staff.

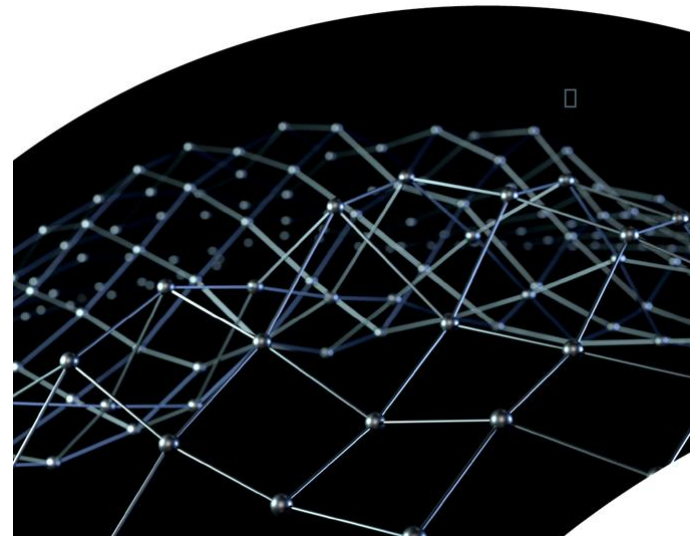
*It is the single governance structure that binds schools together in an enduring partnership with an obligation to work through challenges together, rather than to separate at times of difficulty*

# Knowledge Building: School Improvement at Scale

1. The goal is for every teacher in every classroom to be as good as they can be in what they teach (the curriculum) and how they teach (pedagogy);
2. For this to happen, we need to mobilise for every teacher the best evidence from research;
3. There is no sustainable improvement for pupils without improvement in teaching, and no improvement in teaching without the best professional development for teachers;
4. Strong structures (in groups of schools) can facilitate better professional development through creating and culture and conditions and thus better teaching and improvement for pupils.

## Knowledge-building - School improvement at scale

Part of the CST 'A Bridge to the Future' series



Bauckham, I. and Cruddas, L., 2021, [Knowledge Building – School Improvement at Scale](#)

# Every child a powerful learner

“Our philosophy of education needs to go beyond a utilitarian focus... Education is a good in itself. We need to think hard about how we create school environments where all children flourish, ensuring both the optimal continuing development of their intellectual potential and their ability to live well as a rounded human being. This is particularly urgent for children with special educational needs and disabilities and those from the most disadvantaged communities.”

## **A good life: towards greater dignity for people with learning disability**

Ben Newmark and Tom Rees



Newmark, B. and Rees, T. 2022 [A good life: towards greater dignity for people with learning disability](#)

# Professional growth and development

“Our contention is that School Trusts can work to overcome some of the challenges associated with the design and implementation of high-quality professional development through leveraging their **capacity** (scale and expertise) alongside their ability to systematically control the **conditions** and **culture** in which all staff work, and professional development takes place.”



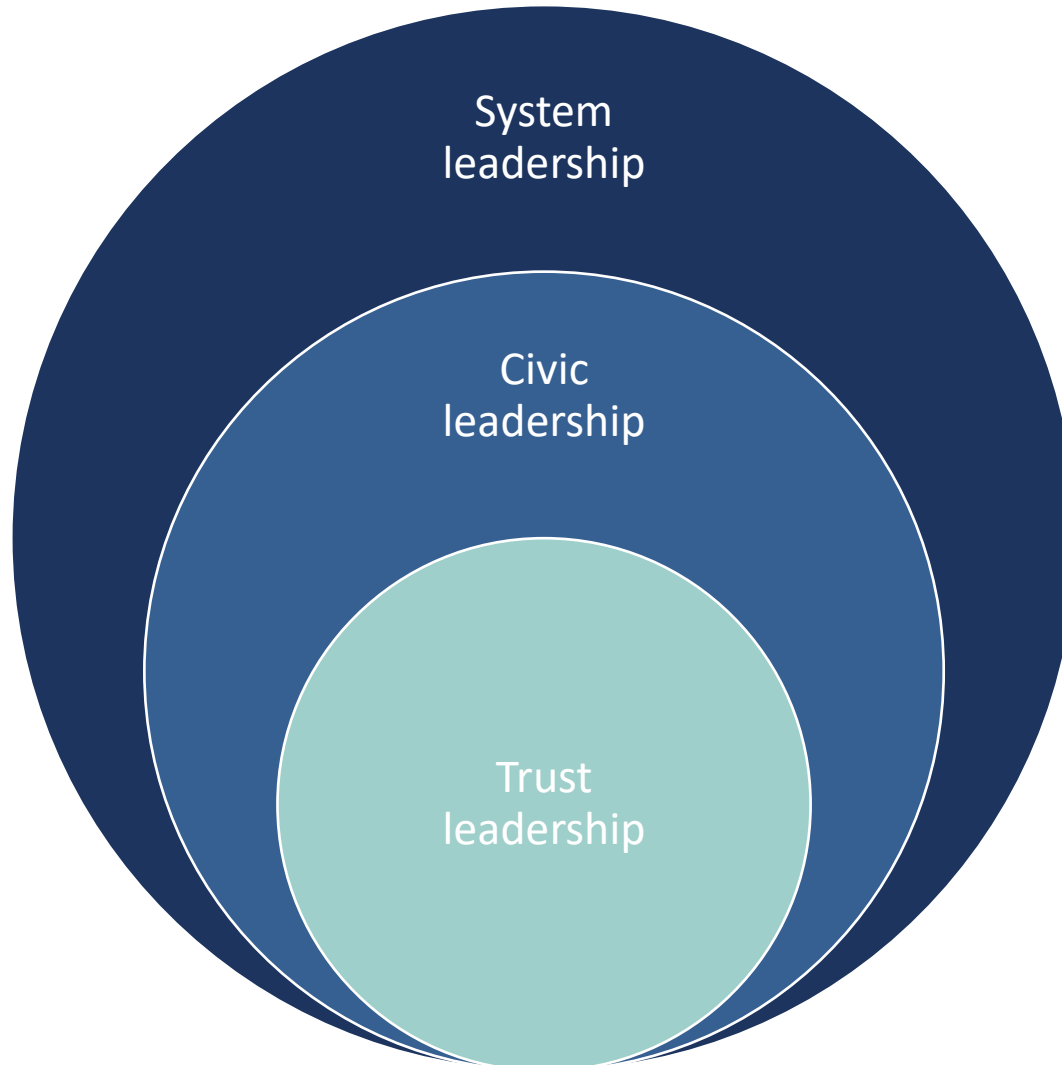
Barker and Patten, 2022 [Professional Development in School Trusts: Capacity, Conditions and Culture](#)

# Civic duty, public benefit and anchoring

“School trusts can and should be ‘anchor institutions’ in their localities, anchoring schools in place and community. Anchor institutions, alongside their main purpose, play a significant role in a locality by making a strategic contribution to the greater social good and prioritise support for those experiencing disadvantage.”



# New Domains of Educational Leadership



# “Extraordinary interdependence”

School trusts do not operate in isolation, however, and there are a host of systemic challenges beyond the reach of individual organisations. So we require unprecedented collaboration not just between schools but among School Trusts. We need trust leaders to foster collective leadership in order to build local systems, particularly in areas where the quality of education has been poor for years and decades.

As Peter Senge points out , the deep changes necessary to accelerate progress require leaders who catalyse collective leadership.

**It requires leaders who act collectively and strategically *on* – not just in – the system.**

# PART THREE

## Considering your options



# Strategic Options

- Think strategically about the medium- and long-term plan for your context, and draw up some options to take to your governing body.
- Do some research and find out if there are strong Trusts in your local area that might be looking to grow.
- If not, find out where the strong Trusts are that you think could be a good fit for your school.
- You may have a clear preference if, for example, you are already collaborating with a Trust, but do keep an open mind and consider alternatives.

# Reach Out

- Speak to your Regional Director (formerly Regional Schools Commissioner) and the Local Authority. They will be able to provide additional context about existing Trusts and should know if they have capacity for growth.
- Think about speaking to the Trust to get a sense of how they operate and their own growth plans. Any conversation at this stage would be informal and free of commitment, but may provide clarity and an opportunity to learn more. You might also benefit from speaking to the leaders of a school within the Trust, who can share their experiences of joining.

# Due Diligence

- Later in the process, you will undertake due diligence (as will the Trust you are joining) and carry out a consultation. At this stage, look at publicly available documents such as audited accounts, performance tables and Ofsted reports to get a sense of the Trust, and explore culture by looking online by looking at, for example, values and mission statements

# Present your options

- Take your research and a shortlist to your governing board for a decision which will allow you to begin the process. If you are a faith school, make sure you are aware of which body needs to make the decision and their policy on joining a Trust

“There is no trust more sacred than the one  
the world holds with children. ”

Kofi Annan, *The State of the World's Children*, 2000



# Further reading

- Cruddas, L. and Simons, J., 2020, [School Trusts as New Civic Structures – A Framework Document](#), CST and Public First
- Bauckham, I. and Cruddas, L., 2021, [Knowledge Building – School Improvement at Scale](#) CST
- Barker and Patten, 2022 [Professional Development in School Trusts: Capacity, Conditions and Culture](#)
- Cruddas, L. 2022 [Public Benefit and Civic Duty – guidance](#)
- Newmark, B. and Rees, T. 2022 [A good life: towards greater dignity for people with learning disability](#)
- Townsend, Vainker and Cruddas, 2023 [Community Anchoring – School Trusts as Anchor Institutions](#)
- Cruddas, L. 2023 [Starting with Why – why join a trust and why a trust-based system?](#)
- Cruddas, L. 2023 [Building Strong Trusts](#)
- CST [Joining a Trust](#)



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# Thank you

Contact us:

[membership@cstuk.org.uk](mailto:membership@cstuk.org.uk)

[www.cstuk.org.uk](http://www.cstuk.org.uk)

@CSTvoice