

The Symphony Brochure 2026/2027



Symphony Learning
TRUST



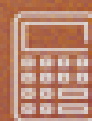
20

Schools



6,011

Pupils



£34M

Total budget



873

Staff

About us

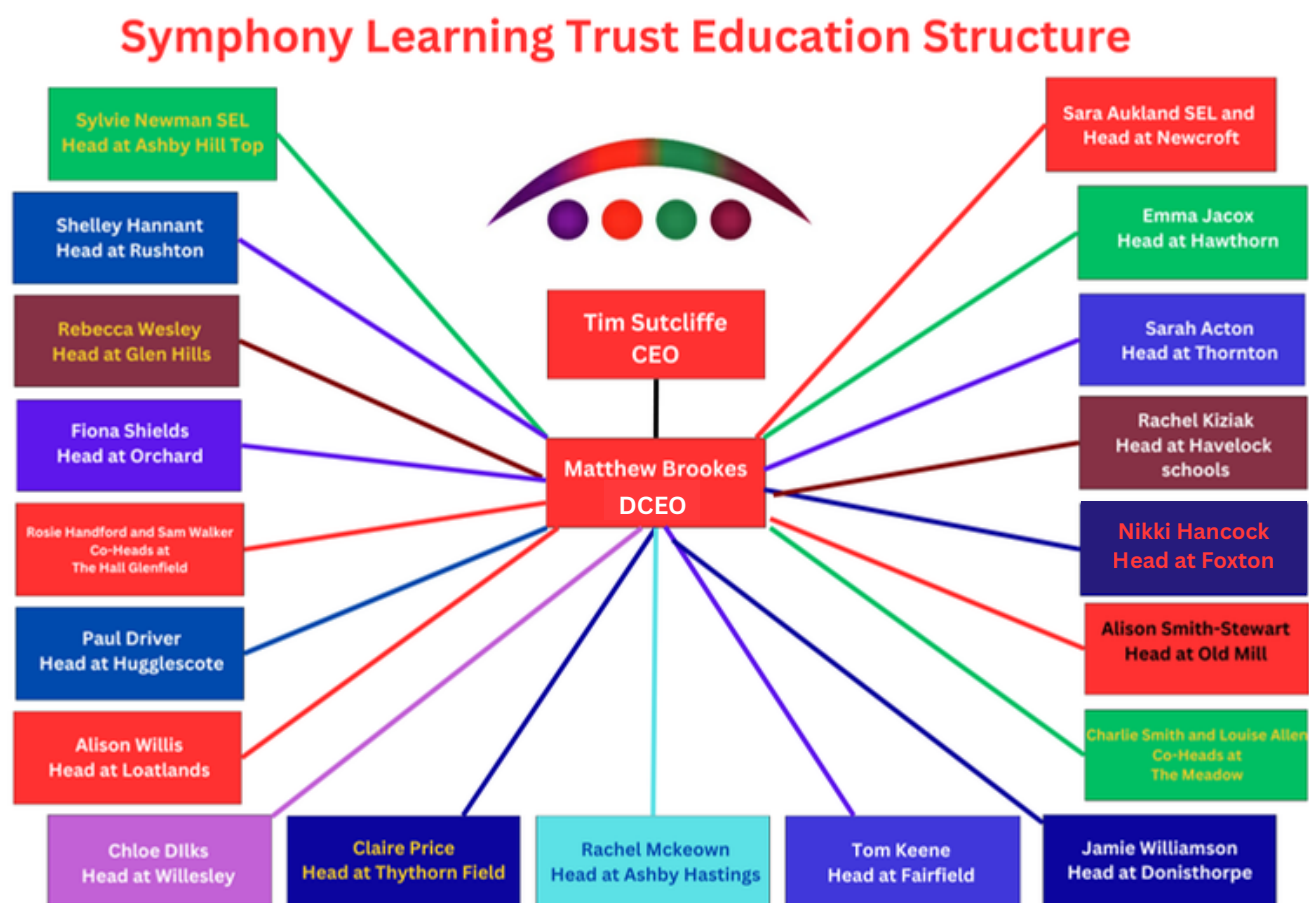
The Symphony Learning Trust is a Multi-Academy Trust that places all pupils and their success at the heart of all its activities. All Partner Schools are committed to continuing to raise standards and to inspire young minds.

In an ever-changing world, SLT are committed to provide balanced, inspirational and exciting learning experiences for our pupils, with our values of aspiration, effort, tolerance and integrity underpinning this drive.

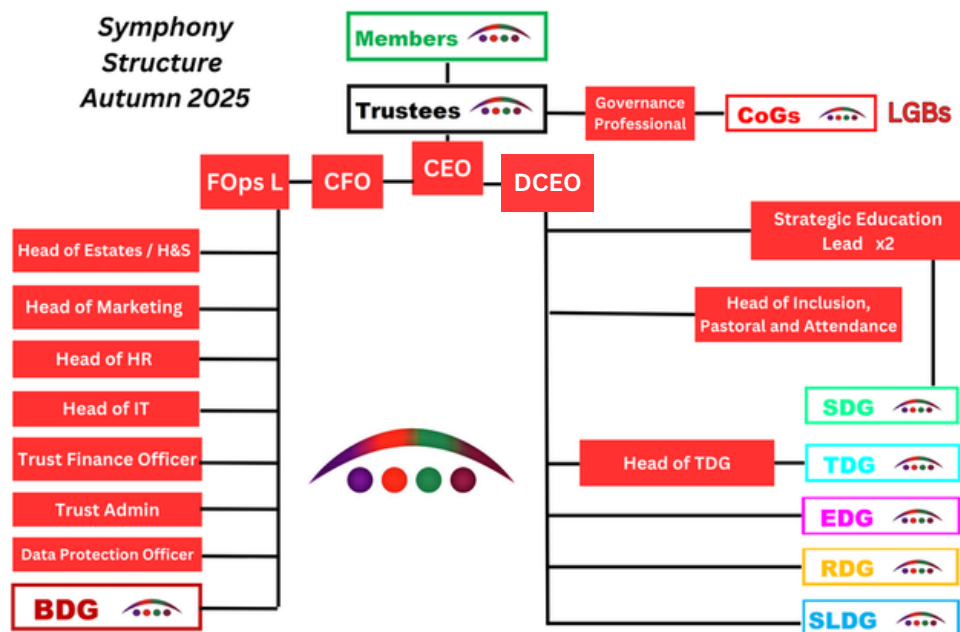
The Symphony Learning Trust schools have a proven track record of devising and leading national initiatives and highly effective school-to-school support. We are proud of the impact we have upon outcomes for children across schools and proud that we are a very high performing Multi-Academy Trust.

The day-to-day school structure

The following is our structure for educational development and school leadership :



The Trust overview structure



Overview of key elements of the leadership and governance of Symphony Learning Trust

Members

Symphony Learning Trust has “Members” who are best viewed as guardians of the constitution, changing the Articles if necessary and ensuring the charitable object is fulfilled. The Members appoint some of the Trustees and can exercise reserve powers to appoint and remove Trustees but it is anticipated that this power will be rarely exercised. The Academy Trust will ordinarily have at least five Members.

Trust Board - Trustees

The corporate management and trustee responsibility for the actions of the company is vested in the “Trustees” of the Academy Trust (together, referred to as “the Trust Board”), who are company directors registered with Companies House. The Trustees are personally responsible for the actions of the Academy Trust and the Academies and are accountable to the Members, to the Secretary of State for Education and to the wider community for the quality of the education received by all pupils of the Academies and for the expenditure of public money.

The Trustees are required, as trustees and pursuant to the Funding Agreements, to have systems in place through which they can assure themselves of the quality, safety and good practice of the affairs of the Academy Trust.

The role of the Trustees is reflected in the ‘21 questions that every Multi-academy Trust should ask itself’ identified by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Education Governance and Leadership (January 2015) and set out in Appendix 1 of this Charter:

- Setting the vision, ethos and strategy for the Academy Trust and its academies over the next three to five years;
- Establishing the governance structures for the Academy Trust, from Members to Academy level, in keeping with the Articles of Association;

- Providing clarity, through the published Terms of Reference and the Roles and Functions Matrix, of the level at which the following governance functions are exercised:
 - Determining each individual Academy's vision, ethos and strategic direction
 - Recruiting each Academy's Head teacher or Executive Head teacher
 - Performance management of each Academy's Head teacher
 - Determining Human Resources policy and practice
 - Oversight of each Academy's budget
 - Assessment of the risks for each Academy.
 - Setting the level at which the Regional Boards and LGBs will have authority and accountability through the scheme of delegation;
 - Engaging with the Academies' communities, parents, pupils and staff;
 - Contributing to developing collaborative relationships beyond the Academy Trust;
 - Ensuring that there is a strong and effective executive leadership structure and personnel in place across the Trust;
 - Overview and scrutiny of Academies' education performance data;
 - Overview and scrutiny of the Academy Trust's financial capability and management systems to ensure compliance with the Academies Financial Handbook, and deliver best value for money;
 - Ensuring senior leaders within Academies are challenged to improve the education of pupils;
 - Developing the Trust Board to ensure that it has the capacity, skills and succession plans to have a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.
- The Trust Board sets Trust-wide policies.
 - The Chief Executive Officer is a Trustee

Trust Board Sub-Committees

Trust Board Sub-Committees provide the overview and high-level scrutiny of the prioritised risks. The Trust Board Sub-Committees are: Finance (including Risk, Audit and HR), Pay and Appeals.

Educational Development Group (EDG) - all Trust Headteachers



The Symphony Learning Trust "Educational Development Group" is the management arm of the Academy Trust, focusing on operations and the educational performance of the Academies. They operate under the leadership and direction of the CEO, accountable to the board of Trustees. The EDG work directly with the staff in each Academy and the Local Governing Bodies to ensure that the required outcomes are achieved in accordance with the direction and vision of the Trust Board. The EDG focuses on 'Educational Standards and Performance'. The EDG devise the strategy for intervention and school to school support as well as monitoring standards in all schools.

Business Development Group (BDG) - all Headteachers and Business Managers



The Symphony Learning Trust 'Business Development Group' is the team which manages the strategic aspects of finance and personnel across the Trust. They report to the Executive Team and to the Trust Finance Committee. The CFO is a member of this group.

Research Development Group (RDG) - specific staff from each SLT school



The Symphony Learning Trust “Research Development Group” is the team which meets to plan for improvements and innovation to Teaching and Learning across the Trust. It comprises of a fluid group of professionals with expertise in whichever particular area is a focus for the Trust

Subject Development Groups (SDGs) - subject leaders from all SLT schools



The Subject Development Groups are designed to share expertise and distribute knowledge of the most up to date local and national priorities. This group reports to the School Improvement Team. Each group comprises subject/area leaders from each school in all curriculum areas.

Teaching Development Group (TDGs) - Specialist Leaders:



The strongest leaders in each school able to provide support to other schools designated to the Teaching Development Group

Teaching Development Group (TDGs) - Specialist Leaders



The SLDG provide mutual support and CPD for Deputies and Assistant Heads in our schools



Local Governing Bodies (LGBs)

The role of a Local Governor within a Multi-Academy Trust is an important one. In developing our governance arrangements, the Trust Board has sought to ensure that the responsibility to govern is vested in those closest to the impact of decision making and that such responsibility matches the capacity of those assuming responsibility. The Trust Board establishes Local Governing Bodies for each of the Academies, for the most part made up of individuals drawn from the Academy's community, both as elected and appointed members. The Local Governors are accountable to the Trust Board (who, in turn, are accountable to the Department for Education) as well as to the communities they serve.

The broad duties of the Local Governing Body are summarised as:

- To contribute to and fulfil the vision and ethos of Symphony Learning Trust in so far as it relates to the Academy, ensuring that the Academy achieves the aims and ambitions it has for its pupils, having regard in particular to the benefits of being part of a family of schools which stresses the importance of collaboration and mutual support;
- To implement and review from time to time the strategic plan for the Academy, focussing on the Academy's performance and achieving sustained school improvement and having regard to any locally agreed priorities identified by the Trust Board and to the MAT Strategic Business Plan;
- To act as a critical friend to the Academy's senior leadership team, being ready to challenge and hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the Academy's performance;
- To oversee the management of the finances of the Academy, assessing the annual budget prepared by the Academy's Head teacher or Executive Head teacher (with the support of the Academy's senior leadership team) and submitting such for approval by the Regional Board and the Trust Board, ensuring that the Academy works within its budget and the Academy's senior leadership team adopts and implements appropriate risk and financial management policies and practices;
- To support the Trust Board in ensuring that insurance or equivalent risk protection is put in place and maintained for all risk areas including damage to property, employer liability, public and third party liability and director liability in accordance with any policy issued by the Trust Board from time to time;
- To support the Academy's Head teacher or Executive Head teacher in the development and review (from time to time) of an appropriate staffing structure for the Academy, ensuring there is robust and accountable monitoring of the performance of staff and implementing all and any policies relating to staff adopted by the Trust Board;
- To support the Trust Board in its monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of any central services and functions provided or procured by the Academy Trust for the Academies, reporting any issues or concerns to the Executive Team (which includes the CEO) or the Chair of the Trust Board;
- To promote within the organisation and externally the benefits of collaboration with the other Academies and to actively seek opportunities to work together either with the aim of improving economic efficiencies within the Academies or identifying and implementing best practice;
- To develop effective links within the Academy's community, communicating openly and frequently as appropriate and ensuring that the Academy meets its responsibilities to the community and serves the community's needs in relation to the safeguarding and education of its pupils; and
- To engage fully and openly with any inspection of the Academy, whether by the Trust Board, the Education or Business Team, Ofsted or any other appropriate public body to whom the Academy is accountable

Pupil, parent and staff voice

Accessing and responding to pupils' collective concerns is an important part of the operations and governance of Symphony Learning Trust academies. All schools have active Student Councils with representatives from each year group.

Each LGB is expected to give due regard to issues that are raised through the Student Council and the management actions taken in response to the issues.

Parental voice is formally built into the governance structure with the election by parents of at least two parent Governors to each LGB.

Staff voice is similarly built into the governance structure with the election to each LGB of at least one employee of the Academy by employees of the Academy as well as the Head teacher /Executive Head teacher. As a Trust we will consider what further mechanisms for pupil, parent and staff representation at other governance levels may be appropriate.

Who's who in the Trust

Tim Sutcliffe - Chief Executive Officer / Accounting Officer



Tim was a primary head teacher for thirteen years. From 2006 onwards, he was the head teacher of Glen Hills Primary School, a large primary school south of the City boundary. In January 2015, Tim became an Executive Head Teacher when he also took charge of Fairfield Community Primary School in Wigston. In his time at Glen Hills, Tim led the school to an 'Outstanding' Ofsted grading in 2008 and the school has continued to develop. The alteration of leadership at Fairfield saw the school emerge from a period of change and standards are now at an increasingly high level. Fairfield was graded as 'Good' in July 2016.

In September 2017, Tim also undertook an Advisory Head role at Old Mill Primary School in Leicestershire and helped to establish the school as a key partner of the Symphony Learning Trust.

At Glen Hills, Tim led the school through the first primary school academy conversion in Leicestershire in 2012 and subsequently led a phase change which involved the year 6 cohort being retained by Glen Hills. Through his work for Leicestershire Local Authority, Tim has also supported and led a number of initiatives of school development at a range of other primary schools. He has also worked for the National College through mentoring colleagues who are undertaking the National Professional Qualification of Headship and also mentoring new MAT CEOs.

For the past nine years, Tim has been part of a core leadership of Symphony who have offered mutual support and challenge. The projects undertaken by Symphony have led to their work being used on a national scale. Tim holds the National Professional Qualification of Headship and has particular experience with assessment, curriculum development and establishing high-quality leadership teams.

Tim's proudest quote from Ofsted is, 'One has only to set foot inside this outstanding school to see, and almost feel, the exciting and stimulating education that it is providing. The key to this is the dynamic and passionate leadership of the head teacher, extremely ably supported by the strategic leadership team and all the staff'.

In September 2019, Tim successfully started his current role as CEO of Symphony Learning Trust.



Matthew Brookes - Deputy CEO

Matthew has successfully led four primary schools as Headteacher since 2007 and thrived on creating individual and memorable learning experiences for the pupils in his care. He has achieved many things which have included moving a school to be Outstanding in all areas and also being recognised in the Parliamentary Review for being a vision of 'Best Practice' in 2017.

He currently enjoys being part of the leadership team within the trust, being able to help shape the future for over 6,000 pupils and leads on Trust development in his role as DCEO.

Talvinder Tundall - Chief Financial Officer

Talvinder has been the Chief Financial Officer at Symphony Learning Trust since 2016, having previously worked as a School Business Manager at a number of schools across Leicester City and Leicestershire County Council. Prior to which, Talvinder worked within the Financial Services and has over 20 years' experience within that industry. Talvinder works closely with the CEO, Executive Heads and Senior Leadership Team. She leads the Business Development Group, which includes School Business Managers and provides school to school support. She is accountable and leads the DFE's financial governance programme across all schools within the Trust and other non-teaching aspects such as HR, Recruitment, Estates, Procurement, IT, Catering, implementing projects and services.



Lisa Watson - Finance and Operations Lead

Lisa was the School Business Manager at Ashby Willesley Primary School since 2010, and became the Senior School Business Manager for the Trust in September 2018. The Finance and Operational Lead role, which Lisa was promoted to in 2022, involves close liaison with the CFO, the CEO and the Business Development Group. She provides support and advice to the team of Business Managers and Finance staff throughout the Trust. Lisa has obtained the Certificate of School Business Management and Leading from the Middle qualifications. Her work experience includes 10 years as a Business Manager in a secondary school and several financial roles in local government.



Chair of Trustees

Nigel Harrison



Since leaving university in 1998, Nigel has been working within the Hospitality sector with a strong focus on Learning and Development & Technology. At the start, this was purely for new employees but Nigel's enthusiasm for personal development led to him becoming the Training Manager with learning responsibility for over 1600 employees at a local Leicestershire Brewery.

Nigel moved company 16 years ago and has been working since for the UK's leading Epos supplier. During his time in the company, he has held several roles, including Business Development Manager, and his current role as Project Delivery

Manager. Throughout his career, Nigel has been passionate with regards to continuous personal improvement being key to achieving an individual's full potential; this has been for both himself and those he has been privileged to provide leadership for. Nigel's experience has led to strengths within recruitment and personnel management, technical and data analysis, leadership and strategic development and project management.

Nigel is a strong believer in local community and opportunities for all. His current roles include Secretary for Ashby Mini, Junior & Girls' Rugby Club, Adult touch & Children's under 10 Rugby Coach.

Nigel is enthusiastic to bring his passion and experience to the Symphony Learning Trust and to ensure the ethos and aspirations ascertained at the foundation continue into the future.

Chair of Members

Bill Gilmour

Bill trained as an airline pilot. Extensive background of management positions at all levels up to full board member within the UK airline industry; mainly responsible for aircraft flight operation and flight safety. Considerable experience of working with the Civil Aviation Authority to ensure compliance of safety regulations and with Trade Unions to achieve staff harmony. Bill is a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society and a Freeman of the City of London. He is also a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Air Pilots, a City of London Livery Company. Bill has been a Governor or Trustee since 2010, mainly as a Chair. Whilst Chair of Newcroft Primary School (now Academy), the Ofsted rating moved to Outstanding. Community involvement extends to an elected member of the local Town Council and Chair of a local Probus Club. Bill has excellent people skills, management experience and leadership qualifications to ensure high standards are achieved by the Trust.





Sarah Aukland
SEL and Head at
Newcroft



Sylvie Newman
SEL and Head at
Ashby Hill Top



Claire Price
Head at Thythorn
Field



Paul Driver
TDG Lead and
Head at Hugglescote



Sarah Acton
Head at Thornton



Tom Keene
Head at Fairfield



Rebecca Wesley
Head at Glen Hills /
Ad Head at Fairfield



Sam Walker
Co-Head at The Hall



Rosie Handford
Co-Head at The Hall



Charlie Smith
Co-Head Teacher
at The Meadow



Louise Allen
Co-Head Teacher
at The Meadow



Emma Jacox
Head at Hawthorn



Chloe Dilks
Head at Ashby
Willesley and SLDG



Jamie Williamson
Head at
Donisthorpe



Rachel Kiziak
Head at Havelock Infants
and Havelock Juniors



Fiona Shields
Head at Orchard



Alison Willis
Head at Loatlands



Alison Smith-Stewart
Head at Old Mill and Advisory
Head at Donisthorpe



Shelley Hannant
Head at Rushton



Rachel McKeown
Head at Ashby Hastings



Nikki Hancock
Head at Foxton



Business Development Group



Vicki Hockey
Trust Admin Officer



Fiona Oakes
Head of Estates, Health
and Safety and Sustainability



Sarah Wheeler
Head of Marketing
and Media



Sara Dunn
Governance Professional



Zoe Causon
Trust Finance Officer and SBM at
Fairfield and Foxton



Jake Tilson
Head of IT



Daniel Wagg
SBM at The Meadow and IT
Support



Karen Yates
SBM at Thornton



Alfie Costello
SBM at Glen Hills



Lucy Savory
SBM at Donisthorpe and Hill Top



Rachel Daft
SBM at Orchard



Darren Clemo
SBM at The Hall



Jo Marshall
SBM at Hawthorn



Donna Hughes
SBM at Old Mill



Sharon Bindley
SBM at The Havelock Schools



Fatemah Rajabali
SBM at Hugglescote



Emma Dean
Office Manager at Thythorn Field



Sara Riley-Lowndes
SBM at Willesley



Gillian Seakens
SBM at Loatlands



Amy Bingham
SBM at Newcroft



Deborah Snow
SBM at Ashby Hastings



Nicola Sherwood
SBM at Rushton

The Members (plus Bill Gilmour)



Chris Wood



Sue Clifton



Professor David Park



Sally Cox

The Trustees (plus Bill Gilmour and Nigel Harrison)



Tina Hayton-Banks



Lauren Charlton



Andrew Warneken



Mark Tuckwell

The Symphony schools

