

The De Curci Trust

Based in Portsmouth, The De Curci Trust has over 1700 students on roll across three schools. The trust seeks a non-executive director to who has experience of education and/or change management and organisational growth to aid expansion and to drive continual improvements in academic performance. Board meetings are held in Portsmouth.

About the Trust

The De Curci Trust was created in April 2017 and comprises three local schools: two primaries, Solent Infant School and Solent Junior School; and one secondary, Springfield School. All three schools are currently rated 'Good' by Ofsted. Springfield School was rated 'Good' in October 2019, with Inspectors writing, 'Leaders are determined to provide a high-quality education for all pupils, regardless of their ability or circumstances. Pupils are happy and safe at this school. Pupils achieve well at the school'. It is anticipated that Ofsted will be inspecting the infant and junior schools during the next twelve months.

Academic results have been sound, with KS2 and GCSE attainment generally being in line with or above national averages. The schools have ambitious curriculum approaches with the secondary school having an EBacc entry rate that is higher than similar schools locally and nationally. However, the schools are working to improve progress outcomes at both KS2 and KS4 as these have been variable over recent years, notably for specific pupil groups including middle ability boys and disadvantaged pupils.

As a successful trust, The De Curci Trust is committed to leading school improvement within its own organisation and across the wider school system. The trust shares a vision of promoting high aspirations and achieving excellent outcomes for all children; its schools are inclusive and exist to serve the children who live in the locality.

The trust recognises that schools are different and have unique identities; its approach is to allow schools to determine their own routes to excellence within the context of their own community. The trust currently serves the communities of Cosham, Drayton and Farlington, a few miles north of Portsmouth City centre. The majority of pupils are of White British origin, with the number of pupils with EAL being below national averages. The schools are inclusive and cater for pupils of all aptitudes and abilities. While the number of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium is lower than the national average, this has shown a marked increase over recent years as the local demographic has changed. Similarly, the secondary school now has more children with SEN than the national average.

A belief that learning is a continuum and that cross-phase working can enhance the quality of teaching and learning in all school phases is a central part of The De Curci Trust's culture. Staff employed by the Trust have the opportunity to work with infant, junior and secondary age children and to develop practice and schemes of learning with specialists from each phase. In association with the University of Portsmouth, the trust's teachers come together for an annual conference on leading learning. Increasingly, pupils from the infant and junior schools are becoming involved in activities with older pupils at the secondary school. Projects involving staff professional development have included 'Challenge the Gap' (to develop disadvantaged pupils' learning skills), a year 5 to 8 maths continuity project and work on assessment systems.

Plans for the Future

The key challenges for the board over the next 12-24 months are:

1. While the trust's financial position is stable, this has been achieved through reducing provision over time, which has inevitably impacted upon the schools' work. The ongoing and effective management of resources remains a key issue as does securing funding to improve older buildings.
2. The recruitment and retention of staff to maintain high quality teaching and learning is an important factor in the trust's future plans. Teacher recruitment is a challenge locally, notably at secondary

level.

3. The trust aims to maintain the high quality of pupil's educational outcomes, improving progress at KS2 and KS4.

Future plans include the potential expansion of the trust to develop capacity and support other partners within the locality. The nature of the expansion would depend upon the circumstances of the joining school(s), but ideally working towards doubling the size of the trust and including a school from each phase would be ideal and allow the trust's model to develop. Realistically, this would be over a three year period. (Other trusts have approached our organisation to consider merging with them, but Trustees have not considered initial proposals to be viable of in the interests of our pupils.)

The De Curci Trust is a comparatively small trust and is also examining a variety of ways to expand pupil numbers within the existing schools. The secondary school has worked with the Council on a feasibility study for expanding its PAN, and is currently awaiting feedback on proposals.

Trust Ethos & Values

The De Curci Trust believes in high aspirations and achieving excellent outcomes for all children. It maintains a school learning environment that delivers a vibrant, creative and relevant education for all pupils. The trust utilises expertise across all phases of education that can be shared within and beyond their schools.

Role Summary

Number of Positions Advertised:

1

Role 1 – Trustee/Non-Executive Director

Trustees – or non-executive directors - are both charity trustees and company directors of the academy trust; the role is to hold to account the executive and senior leadership team. The board of trustees manages the business of the academy trust and may exercise all the powers of the trust. The trustees ensure compliance with the trust's charitable objects and with company and charity law.

The ideal person will work collaboratively with other trustees and staff to maintain a high standard of education for all pupils. This includes oversight of the monitoring and improvement of performance and the achievement of objectives; ensuring compliance with legislation, Company and Charity Law whilst ensuring sound financial and administrative management of the trust.

Person Specification

The competencies required for this role include:

Essential

- Corporate Governance
- Change Management
- Interest in holistic education

Desirable

- Mergers and acquisitions
- Post-merger integration
- Experience of school inspection/education leadership

The De Curci Trust is eager to appoint a non-executive director with corporate governance experience from either the private, public or third sectors. The trust seeks a team player who can make impartial decisions when working on behalf of all pupils. Applications from individuals with experience leading a growing business or division within a business would be particularly welcomed as would those from a school inspection or leadership background.

Candidates must have integrity and follow the Nolan Principles of Public Life, fulfilling the role with professionalism and diligence. Ideal candidates will be capable of acting as a 'critical friend', providing support and challenge to the executive and acting fairly and without prejudice.

Time Commitment

2.5 hours per month (minimum).

Location of Board Meetings and Trust Website

The majority of board meetings are held at Springfield School Central Road, Drayton, Portsmouth, PO6 1QY. For more information on the trust, please see their website: <https://thedecurcitrust.co.uk/>

Governance Structure

For more information with regard to the trust's governance structure, please see: <https://thedecurcitrust.co.uk/index.php/home/structure>

Background on Academy Trusts

Academy schools, which are charities run independently of local authority control, now account for 73% of secondary schools and 29% of primaries – and their number is growing all the time.

Many of these schools are grouped together as multi-academy trusts (MATs). There are currently 760 multi-academy trusts of 3+ schools. If the schools are to fulfil their potential, the trusts need non-executives (known in charity law as trustees) to bring a wide range of skills and experience to help guide strategy, ensure their ambitions can be soundly financed and keep their schools up to the mark delivering for their pupils.

“Academy boards must be ambitious for all children and young people and infused with a passion for education and a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes. Governance must be grounded in reality as defined by both high-quality objective data and a full understanding of the views and needs of pupils/students, staff, parents, carers and local communities. It should be driven by inquisitive, independent minds and through conversations focused on the key strategic issues which are conducted with humility, good judgement, resilience and determination.”

Source: Governance Handbook, Department for Education (2017)

Trusteeship is a voluntary, unpaid role for people who have the energy and skills to make a real contribution to shaping the future of our schools. You do not need to have any specialist knowledge of education.

Applications

Please complete the attached application form and send it to

marion.hallsworth@thedecurcitrust.co.uk

Closing date: 28 February 2020