

Registration number: 10428979

# Exeter Learning Academy Trust

(A company limited by guarantee)

Annual Report and Financial Statements

for the Year Ended 31 August 2021

Thompson Jenner LLP  
Statutory Auditor  
1 Colleton Crescent  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX2 4DG

# Exeter Learning Academy Trust

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## **Exeter Learning Academy Trust**

### **Reference and Administrative Details**

<b>Members</b>	Mr A Burrows Mr R Edwardson Mrs A Boyce
<b>Trustees (Directors)</b>	Mrs D Buckingham Mr B Cole (appointed 4 January 2021) Mr B Cook Ms S Curtis, (Chair of Trustees) Mr I Robinson (appointed 4 January 2021 and resigned 19 April 2021) Ms R Shaw, (Accounting Officer and Chief Executive Officer) Mr S Thornhill (resigned 5 July 2021) Mr P Walker Mr D Wells (appointed 4 January 2021) Ms A Whittaker
<b>Senior Management Team</b>	Ms R Shaw, Chief Executive Officer Mrs D Buckingham, Director of Teaching & Learning Ms P Woodbridge, Chief Financial Officer
<b>Principal and Registered Office</b>	St Thomas Primary School Union Street Exeter Devon EX2 9BB
<b>Company Registration Number</b>	10428979
<b>Auditors</b>	Thompson Jenner LLP Statutory Auditor 1 Colleton Crescent Exeter Devon EX2 4DG
<b>Solicitors</b>	Tozers Broadwalk House Southernhay West Exeter Devon EX1 1UA

## **Exeter Learning Academy Trust**

### **Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021**

The trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements and auditor's report of the charitable company for the period September 2020 to 31st August 2021. The annual report serves the purposes of both a trustees' report, and a directors' report under company law.

The trust operates four primary academies in the South West England. Its academies have a combined pupil capacity of 1295 and had a roll of 1209 in the school census on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

#### **Structure, Governance and Management**

##### **Constitution**

The Academy Trust is a company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. The charitable company's memorandum and articles of association are the primary governing documents of the Academy Trust. The trustees of Exeter Learning Academy Trust Limited are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law. The charitable company is known as Exeter Learning Academy Trust.

Details of the trustees who served during the year are included in the Reference and Administrative Details on page 1.

##### **Members' Liability**

Each member of the charitable company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the charitable company in the event of it being wound up while they are a member, or within one year after they cease to be a member, such amount as may be required, not exceeding £10, for the debts and liabilities contracted before they ceased to be a member.

##### **Trustees' Indemnities**

Trustees benefit from indemnity insurance purchased by the Academy Trust, from the Risk Protection Arrangement, to cover the liability of the Trustees which by virtue of any rule of law would otherwise attach to them in respect of any negligence, default or breach of trust or breach of duty of which they may be guilty in relation to the Academy Trust, provided that any such insurance shall not extend to any claim arising from any act or omission which the Trustees knew to be a breach of trust or breach of duty or which was committed by the Trustees in reckless disregard to whether it was a breach of trust or breach of duty or not and provided also that any such insurance shall not extend to the costs of any unsuccessful defence to a criminal prosecution brought against the Trustees in their capacity as Directors of the Academy Trust. The limit of this indemnity is £10,000,000.

##### **Method of Recruitment and Appointment or Election of Trustees**

On incorporation, the first Trustees of the newly formed Academy were appointed for a term of four years from the date of incorporation.

The Academy Trust shall have the following Trustees as set out in its Articles of Association and funding agreement:

- up to 12 Trustees, appointed under Article 50; and
- a minimum of 2 Parent Trustees elected or appointed under Articles 53-[56]/[56B] in the event that no Local Governing Bodies are established under Article 100a or if no provision is made for at least 2 Parent Local Governors on each established Local Governing Body pursuant to Article 101A.

The Academy Trust may also have any Co-opted Trustee appointed under Article 58.

Trustees are appointed for a four year period, except that this time limit does not apply to the Chief Executive Officer. Subject to remaining eligible to be a particular type of Trustee, any Trustee can be re-appointed or re-elected.

When appointing new Trustees, the Board will give consideration to the skills and experience mix of existing Trustees in order to ensure that the Board has the necessary skills to contribute fully to the Trust's development.

## **Exeter Learning Academy Trust**

### **Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021 (continued)**

#### **Policies and Procedures Adopted for the Induction and Training of Trustees**

The training and induction provided for new Trustees will depend upon their existing experience but would always include a tour of the Academies and a chance to meet staff and pupils. All Trustees are provided with copies of those policies, procedures, minutes, accounts, budgets, plans and other documents that they will need to undertake their role as Trustees.

Induction is tailored to the needs of individual Trustees. We also buy in to Babcock LDP Governors' Support Services.

#### **Organisational Structure**

Exeter Learning Academy Trust follows the organisational structure laid down in the Articles of Association that were registered with Companies House on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The Academy governance structure consists of three levels: Members, Trustees and Local Governing Boards, alongside an operational level of Executive/Senior Leaders. The Members have ultimate control over the Academy Trust, with the ability to appoint Trustees and the right to amend the Academy Trust's Articles of Association. The Members meet annually to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The Trustees establish an overall framework for the Academy Trust and are responsible for setting the direction, holding Trust leaders to account and ensuring financial probity. As Trustees of a charitable company, they also ensure that the Academy Trust complies with charity and company law requirements. The Trustees meet at least four times a year.

The Trust Board has established an overall framework for the governance of the Academy through the Resources and Finance Committee, the Audit and Risk Committee and the Education, Inclusion and Safeguarding Committee. The Board has established the terms of reference of each of these committees and monitors their performance by receipt of their minutes and regular written reports for ratification where necessary under the Trust's Scheme of Delegation. The Board may from time to time establish Working Groups to perform specific tasks over a limited timescale.

In addition, committees are formed on an ad hoc basis where required to cover other matters such as Exclusions.

The following decisions are reserved to the Board of Trustees: to consider any proposals for changes to the status or constitution of the Trust and its committee structure, to appoint or remove the Chairman and/or Vice Chairman, and to appoint the Chief Executive Officer.

The Trustees are responsible for setting general policy, approving the Trust Improvement Plan and budget, approving the statutory accounts, monitoring the Trust using budgets and other data, and making major decisions about the direction of the Trust, capital expenditure and senior staff appointments.

Local Governing Boards are a core layer in providing effective governance at a local level, working directly with the schools and reporting back to the Trustees through the Chairs' Forum. They promote high standards, inclusion and educational achievement and they have devolved responsibilities outlined in the Trust's scheme of delegation.

The Members and Board of Trustees have devolved responsibility for day to day management of the Trust to the Chief Executive Officer and the Chief Finance Officer, who, with each school's Headteacher, make up the Senior Leadership team (SLT) of the Trust.

The SLT controls the Trust at an executive operational level, implementing the policies laid down by the Trustees and reporting back to them. Headteachers are responsible for the appointment of all staff except Headteachers who are appointed by the Trust Board.

The Multi Academy Trust comprises four primary schools:

- Alphington Primary School
- Bowhill Primary School
- Ide Primary School
- St Thomas Primary School

The Chief Executive Officer is the Accounting Officer.

## Exeter Learning Academy Trust

### Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021 (continued)

#### Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel

The Pay Policy sets out the remuneration of the key staff. A Remuneration Committee is part of the Finance and Resources Committee and each school also has its own Remuneration Committee. Teachers' Pay and Conditions standards are used as well as job evaluation and performance appraisal outcomes against targets.

#### Trade union facility time

Under the provisions of the Trade Union (Faculty Time Publication Requirements) Regulations 2017, Exeter Learning Academy Trust can confirm the following in respect to Schedule 2 of the Regulations

##### Relevant union officials

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period	Full-time equivalent employee number
	1.0

##### Percentage of time spent on facility time

Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	1.0
1% to 50%	Nil
51% to 99%	Nil
100%	Nil

##### Percentage of pay bill spend on facility time

Total cost of facility time	Nil
Total pay bill	Nil
Percentage of the total pay bill spend on facility time	Nil

##### Paid trade union activities

Time spent on paid trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours	Nil
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#### Related Parties and other Connected Charities and Organisations

The Trust is not aware of any ongoing related parties or other connected charities or organisations.

#### Engagement with employees (including disabled persons)

The Trust engages with their employees using a range of methods, including:

- Consulting with employees via staff surveys
- Providing updates to all staff members, via school bulletins, CEO newsletters
- Regular meetings between the Chairs of the Local Governing Boards and the Trust Board
- Consulting with employees on matters such as: risk assessments, workload
- Using Microsoft teams as a platform to share resources and communicate across schools

## Exeter Learning Academy Trust

### Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021 (continued)

#### **Engagement with suppliers, customers and others.**

Whilst we have the security of knowing that our school funding from the ESFA remained secure across the year, other school income was affected by the pandemic. Our nursery provision, wrap around care and lettings were all affected but was still small in comparison to the issues being felt by those in the private and commercial sector.

As a public sector institution, with budgets already accounted for across the year, we continued to support our suppliers and other commercial partners, following the government advice and guidance. We ensured we paid suppliers in a timely manner and continued to honour commitments even if they couldn't be fully delivered as it was important to help sustain the companies that would be needed once the country reopened.

Our schools supported their communities by remaining open during school holidays for key worker and vulnerable children. Free school meal vouchers continued to be provided with additional food parcels during the Christmas and Easter breaks. Two of our schools also hosted the "Holiday and Food" initiative which provided activities and a hot meal for children.

During this period the Trust also worked closely with Exeter City Football Club, Exeter City Community Trust, Exeter City Future and Devon County Council to secure additional funding to provide food for some of the most vulnerable families in the city. Exeter Learning Academy Trust liaised with 30 schools across the City to identify need and then helped to organise and deliver 40,000 items of food and household items to 500 families. This was a huge undertaking which was kindly supported by Greendale Business Park, Tesco, Exeter School and members of our staff who donated their free time to package the food for delivery.

#### **Objectives and Activities**

The principal object and activity of the Trust is to advance, for the public benefit, education in the United Kingdom. At Exeter Learning Academy Trust, we do this by aiming to get the best for and from each child. We offer a broad curriculum for children and have a strong emphasis on inclusion to ensure children reach their full academic, creative and physical potential. We have a strong set of social and moral values that help our children to appreciate their roles as citizens in society.

**Our vision:** Creating our Future Together

**Our Values:** Loyalty Equality Aspiration Resilience Nurture

**Our Rationale:** To build on and strengthen existing relationships between schools by making a commitment to school-to-school support and ensuring a more effective self-improvement structure in order to meet our aims.

**Our Aims:** Working together to ensure aspirational outcomes for all learners in the Trust by:

- Maximising achievement
- Collaborating to share best practice
- Challenging and supporting each other
- Being forward thinking and outward looking
- Creating opportunities to improve the quality of provision
- Equipping learners to reason and think creatively

We are keen to continue to grow the Trust and work in partnership with other schools. We will promote our school ethos and support mechanisms to other schools, Trusts and organisations across the city.

## **Exeter Learning Academy Trust**

### **Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021 (continued)**

The Trust Board is accountable, through its executive officers, for the capacity, standards, outcomes (especially vulnerable children) and safeguarding in each member school. The Trust firmly believes a model for school effectiveness is one that builds capacity and creates self-improving schools.

Our Trust strategy aims to promote these features by:

- Good and outstanding schools supporting others and growing capacity for school improvement.
- Schools supporting each other in collaborative partnerships – using strengths across schools.
- Building internal school improvement capacity and resilience.
- Demanding high standards of teaching to ensure all pupils make good progress and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve age related expectations.
- Taking swift, decisive action where school performance and provision needs to be improved.

#### **Objectives, Strategies and Activities**

The Trust's main strategy is to create and promote a happy and enriching learning environment by working in partnership with parents and the community that will inspire children to achieve high standards. The Trust hopes that by celebrating the children's achievements, helping them fulfil their potential, respecting their differences and encouraging kindness, consideration and respect for each other and their environment, we will foster self-esteem and provide a sound foundation for their future life. The Trust will offer a broad and balanced curriculum and a large range of extra-curricular activities.

Our strategic objectives for the next 3 years flow from our ethos of creating a future together and are detailed below:

#### **1. Success through Learning**

We want our children to have the best possible opportunities available to them as they enter the adult world. The EYFS and primary curriculum create a foundation for learning that enables children to become literate, numerate and develop a broad knowledge and understanding of the world around them. For this to happen, we need to have strong teaching that enables children, whatever their background, to achieve and we will focus on the following:

- Engaging and Aspirational Curriculum
- Outstanding outcomes for our children
- Staff who are experts in their field
- Healthy and Happy People

#### **2. Excellent Leadership at all Levels**

We believe that every member of staff within ELAT needs to develop leadership skills to enable them to fulfil their roles. Leadership skills enable staff to think creatively, challenge and support each other and communicate effectively with others. We want to ensure that staff who wish to develop their careers further into middle and senior leadership roles are given the opportunity to do so. We will achieve this by creating:

- Outstanding School Leadership
- A Leadership Development Programme
- Strong and effective governance

## **Exeter Learning Academy Trust**

### **Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021 (continued)**

#### **3. Building Capacity**

We recognise that we need a strong organisation in order to best support our aims. Research has shown that an important factor in education is ensuring that the right people with the right skills are able to fulfil their roles. Headteachers are experts in teaching and learning, the area that will have the biggest impact on children's outcomes, yet all too often find themselves engaged in tasks that have little to do with developing their staff's expertise. We want to be able to ensure our Headteachers are free to concentrate on school improvement and the quality of education by providing support services that run efficiently. We will achieve this by ensuring we have:

- Excellent Central Services
- Value for Money
- An Outward looking organisation

#### **Public Benefit**

The Trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in Section 17(5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit in exercising their powers or duties. They have referred to this guidance when reviewing the Academy's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities.

The Academy aims to advance, for the public benefit, education in Exeter and the surrounding areas. In particular, but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, by estimating, maintaining, managing and developing schools, offering a broad curriculum for all.

#### **Strategic Report**

##### **Achievements and Performance**

All schools were delighted to welcome the children back to school in September following a very unsettled period of lockdown and school closures. Children returned to the 'bubble' system where classes and year groups had to work separately from each other and there was an ever-present threat of closure if a positive Covid19 case was identified. Despite this, the schools were happy and productive learning environments and, during the Autumn Term, children made strong progress with their learning and schools were confident that they would help their pupils get back on track following the disruption of the previous year. Teachers and support staff were diligent and focused their efforts fully on their pupils, despite their own personal lives continuing to be impacted by the pandemic.

School leaders were continuing to move their schools forward by working on their priorities for development and a Trust wide strategy to improve reading was proving impactful with more children reading at age related expectations.

We were therefore very frustrated, like the rest of the country, when schools were forced to close their doors once again at the beginning of January due to rising Covid19 cases. Our staff and families quickly moved back to online learning and teachers recorded daily inputs to lessons and story sessions whilst also teaching the children who, under government regulations, were permitted to be back in school. Many classes had close to 50% of children in school with the remainder accessing learning from home and the schools became more creative at using online platforms to deliver interventions and support home learning. When children returned after this period of closure the differences in their experiences was more apparent, as was the impact on their wellbeing.

The schools provided strong nurture support as well as supporting the children to adapt back into the routine of school life. The Trust experienced a few bubble closures over the Summer Term, but overall, attendance remained strong and schools focussed their efforts on ensuring they covered gaps in learning.

## Exeter Learning Academy Trust

### Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021 (continued)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, pupils across the country did not have statutory assessment in EYFS, Phonics, KS1 and KS2 for the second year and therefore there is no statutory performance data that can be reported for 2021. However, teacher assessments at the end of the year in reading, writing and maths showed that we had slightly higher % of pupils achieving age related expectations than the previous 2 years. This is encouraging considering the many interruptions to learning that children experienced.

We have made the following achievements against our strategic priorities this year:

#### 1. Success through learning

- a. **Engaging and Aspirational Curriculum** – The schools have had to reconsider their curriculum offer due to the impact of the pandemic. All schools have developed a curriculum that best meets the needs and priorities of their children. There has been investment in schemes of work and resources for reading, writing and maths that support teachers with the delivery of these subjects.
- b. **Excellent outcomes for our children** – A priority this year has been to increase the number of pupils reading at age related expectations with a strong focus on children who have a noticeable gap in their reading age and chronological age. We have seen good progress this year, despite the challenges of school closure and the strategies schools have adopted are having positive impact.
- c. **Staff who are experts in their field** – Staff need to have exposure to regular and high-quality professional development. The priority this year has been to introduce coaching across all the schools as a means of improving the quality of teaching and learning. We have also developed a teaching and learning strategy that will be used across all schools to support coaching conversations.
- d. **Healthy and Happy People** – We recognise how challenging the last 2 years have been on both our children and staff. We have surveyed staff over the year about workload and wellbeing and have already taken some actions around assessment and appraisal to reduce this burden. The impact of Covid19 on our pupils has yet to be fully realised but schools have ensured that they have strong PSHE curriculums in place, along with support staff who are skilled in providing additional nurture support. This will continue to be a priority for the Trust next year.

#### 2. Excellent Leadership at all levels

- e. **Outstanding school leadership** – School Leaders have faced unprecedented challenges over the last 12 months, often feeling as though they were holding the health of their communities within their hands. Our school leaders have demonstrated exceptional leadership in their decision making and providing care and support to their staff, pupils and families. The school leaders within ELAT have continued to meet at least weekly over the year, sharing good practice, working together on Trust priorities and constructing a school improvement strategy that will take us into the next academic year.
- f. **Strong and effective governance** – A new governance structure was implemented this year which ensured there were clear lines of responsibility and accountability. All our Local Governors and Trustees continued with their schedule of meetings and found new ways of working effectively through online meetings. The Trust also ensured that a member of the executive team attended most meetings providing a strong link between the board and LGBs.

#### 3. Building Capacity

- a. **Excellent central services** – A significant piece of work this year was creating a central services team. Historically, each school within the Trust had their own business manager who was responsible for finance, HR, health and safety and premises. We were keen to: develop greater consistency in these areas; streamline processes and ensure we had staff with expertise to advise school leaders. The Trust now has the following roles: HR Manager, Estates and Compliance Manager, Trust Clerk, 3 Finance Officers and an external Data Protection Officer. The team have started to put Trust wide systems in place that will develop further into the next academic year.
- b. **Outward looking** – The Trust has worked with other schools and organisations throughout the year to provide support for our most vulnerable families. Schools have also engaged with the teaching school and learning hubs. The CEO has been the chair of Devon School Leadership Services, chaired regular meetings with Exeter primary school leaders and is a Trustee for another Devon MAT. All these relationships enable schools to share their expertise more widely, benefitting more children across Devon.

## Exeter Learning Academy Trust

### Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2021 (continued)

- c. **Growth** – The Trustees have discussed growth during a planning day in the Summer Term and have also had informal discussions with schools over the year to help inform their overall growth strategy.

#### Key Performance Indicators

The impact of our improvement strategy has been measured by the following KPIs:

- There is evidence that improvement work has had an impact for young people educated within the MAT and attainment and progress was showing a rising trend.
- There is a clear accountability framework for the performance of the Trust that all staff understand, including what happens when key staff under-perform (annual staff surveys are in place to confirm understanding)
- There is a quality assurance system in place to improve consistency and performance.
- Trust-wide school improvement strategies recognise the different interventions needed at each stage of their improvement journey.
- There is school-to-school support, focused on the needs of individual academies.
- There is evidence of skilled management of Trust Risk indicators.
- Our academies can accurately self-evaluate and have a culture of continuous improvement and high aspirations
- High-quality CPD of staff means our academies attract and retain the very best. Cluster groups have been set up to share information across the academies and to develop skills and expertise and recommend staff across schools.
- All academies are financially solvent, have reserves and submit five-year financial plans.

#### Going Concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the board of Trustees has a reasonable expectation that the multi-academy trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the Statement of Accounting Policies.

#### Financial Review

Most of the Trust's income is obtained from the DfE via the ESFA in the form of recurrent grants, the use of which is restricted to particular purposes. The grants received from the DfE during the year ended 31 August 2021 and the associated expenditure are shown as Restricted Funds in the Statement of Financial Activities.

The Trust also receives grants for fixed assets from the DfE which are shown in the Statement of Financial Activities as restricted income in the Fixed Asset Fund. The Restricted Fixed Asset Fund balance is reduced by annual depreciation charges over the useful life of the assets concerned, as defined in the Academy's Financial Procedures.

During the year ended 31st August 2021, total expenditure (excluding restricted fixed assets funds and pensions reserves) of £6,126,017 was covered by recurrent grant funding from the DfE, together with other incoming resources of £6,206,136. The excess of income over expenditure for the year excluding restricted fixed asset funds and pensions reserves was £80,119.

The Trust has taken on the deficit in the Local Government Pension Scheme in respect of its non teaching staff transferred on conversion. The deficit is incorporated within the Statement of Financial Activity with details in Note 24 to the financial statements.