

Registration number: 10428979

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

(A company limited by guarantee)

Annual Report and Financial Statements

for the Year Ended 31 August 2023

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

Members	Mrs A Boyce Mr A Burrows Mr R Edwardson Mr S Marshall (appointed 11 September 2023)
Trustees (Directors)	Mrs D Buckingham Mr B Cole (resigned 11 May 2023) Mr B Cook (resigned 31 July 2023) Ms S Curtis, (Chair of Trustees) Ms R Shaw, (Accounting Officer and Chief Executive Officer) (accounting officer) Mr J Thompson (appointed 1 September 2023) Mr P Walker Ms A Whittaker
Senior Management Team	Ms R Shaw, Chief Executive Officer Ms P Woodbridge, Chief Financial Officer
Principal and Registered Office	St Thomas Primary School Union Street Exeter Devon EX2 9BB
Company Registration Number	10428979
Auditors	Thompson Jenner LLP Statutory Auditor 1 Colleton Crescent Exeter Devon EX2 4DG
Solicitors	Tozers Broadwalk House Southernhay West Exeter Devon EX1 1UA

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023

The trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements and auditor's report of the charitable company for the period September 2022 to 31st August 2023. 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 Southwest England. Its academies have a combined pupil capacity of 1295 and had a roll of 1227 in the school census on 1st October 2022.

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.

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

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.

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 schools 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. To support training and ensure Governors are kept up to date with the latest education developments we subscribe to the following training platforms: Devon Education Services – Governor Support, The National College, Schools' Choice and the National Governor Association.

Organisational Structure

Exeter Learning Academy Trust follows the organisational structure laid down in the Articles of Association that were registered with Companies House on 14th 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 Finance and Resources 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 Strategic 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.

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

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.

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.

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

Engagement with employees (including disabled persons)

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

- Consulting with employees via staff surveys
- Ensuring the executive meet weekly with school leaders.
- Providing updates to all staff members, via school bulletins, CEO staff 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.
- Whole staff training events
- Ensuring recruitment processes are not discriminatory.

Engagement with suppliers, customers and others.

Suppliers

The Trust actively encourages engagement with local businesses and suppliers and seeks quotes from local as well as national organisations when achieving best value for services and supplies. The trust encourages school leaders to play an active part in the communities they serve.

Pupils and parents

Our schools survey pupils and parents across the year through the use of questionnaires and interviews. All schools use regular newsletters and online platforms to keep parents informed of developments and activities at their schools.

Wider Community

Each school within the Trust has a PTA which organises a range of fundraising events across the school year. These are well supported by parents and the wider community. The Trust also made a commitment this year to

Objectives and Aims

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.

The Trust's vision is:

Working together, we will provide an excellent education that enables all children to succeed and transform their lives.

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

We achieve this by adhering to the following values:

- We have the **highest expectations** for every child and believe it is our job to ensure they have the opportunity to achieve their dreams and be the best they can be.
- Building **strong relationships** are at the heart of what we do, and our children will know they are loved and have a role to play as future citizens in creating a fair and kind world.
- Our staff team will be **successful and valued** in the workplace. They will strive to continuously get better and do their utmost to ensure all children reach their potential.
- Our schools will be **inclusive**, ensuring that all children can access a stimulating and broad curriculum that gives them the skills, knowledge and experiences they need to achieve well and become resilient learners.
- Our schools will be **beacons in their communities** and reach out beyond the school gates to create positive relationships that will support our children's futures.

The main objectives of the Trust during the year ended 31st August 2023 are summarised below:

- Implement the Professional Growth Policy (a replacement to previous appraisal processes) to ensure that staff are given the opportunity to continue to improve and further develop their professional practice.
- Embed a coaching culture across the Trust to ensure professional discussions are developmental and encourage staff to reflect on their own practice.
- Provide further training to staff on diversity, equality and inclusion to ensure the needs of our pupils and community are fully reflected in our curriculum, relationships and practice.
- Improve the quality of provision and access to the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities through developing Trust wide policies, procedures and practices.
- Sustain and grow the core business offer for schools through the recruitment of skilled employees to the shared services team.
- Develop access to a Trust based alternative provision for pupils who are struggling to engage with learning or having difficulties managing their emotions and behaviours.
- Broaden our school improvement offer through the development of staff within the Trust and by working with more external partners.
- Ensure we fulfil our civic duty to advance education by working closely with school leaders across Devon and the Local Authority.

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.
- Working with external partners, MATs and other organisations to strengthen our offer
- 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.

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

Objectives, Strategies and Activities

Following consultation with stakeholders across the Trust, including staff, governors, pupils, and taking into account the outcome of parent surveys, the Trustees agreed a strategic plan for 2022-2024.

Our strategic objectives are detailed below:

1. Inclusive and successful Learning

We want our children to have the best possible choices and opportunities available to them as they grow and prepare to enter the adult world. Our curriculum will be inclusive, stimulating and ensure all children are literate and numerate before taking their next steps into secondary education.

Building strong and meaningful relationships with children is critical for their success and an expectation of all staff within the Trust.

We will:

- Create a stimulating and inspiring curriculum, accessible to all learners.
- Have high expectations for every child.
- Develop staff who are experts in their field.
- Healthy and Happy People

2. People focussed organisation

We believe that forming strong and positive relationships is the bedrock of our organisation. Our staff and pupils need to feel valued, respected and have a sense of belonging.

By putting people first, we will ensure we have a strong and healthy workforce who are prepared to meet the challenge of education and supporting our pupils as they grow and develop. Teaching is both a challenging and rewarding profession that requires dedication and hard work. We must therefore ensure we reduce workload, support staff wellbeing and give staff opportunities to progress their career. Our pupils have lived through an extraordinary time in the history of our country, and we will need to ensure we are ready to support them as the impact of the pandemic becomes clearer.

We will:

- Help our people to be healthy and happy.
- Recruit and retain the best staff.
- Have a reputation as an excellent employer.

3. Excellent Leadership and Governance

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:

- Support our school leaders to become outstanding.
- Create opportunities to develop future leaders.
- Have strong and effective governance.

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

4. Community, growth and infrastructure

We recognise that we need a strong organisation with capacity in order to achieve the best outcomes for our pupils. It is important to us that we have the right people with the right skills fulfilling their roles. Headteachers are experts in teaching and learning, the area that will have the greatest impact on pupil's outcomes, yet all too often find themselves engaged in tasks that have little to do with developing their staff's expertise. The Trust will aim to create capacity for leaders to focus on the quality of education and to use their expertise to benefit pupils and communities beyond their own schools.

We will:

- Build capacity by developing expertise and managing workload.
- Ensure we achieve value for money.
- Reach beyond our Trust and into our communities.

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 Trust 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.

The Trust has provided education services to all children within their schools and communities and further into Devon. In July 2022, Trustees made the decision to support the CEO in a part time secondment to Devon County Council as an interim Head of Education for 12 months. Trustees recognised this as an opportunity to support the Local Authority in helping to advance educational provision for vulnerable pupils across Devon and provide further opportunities for leadership development with the Trust.

Strategic Report

Achievements and Performance

As mentioned, in 2022-2023 the Trust supported a 0.6 secondment of the CEO to work as an Interim Head of Education for Devon County Council. The Trustees are committed to ensuring that, as well as developing our own schools, we look beyond our Trust and recognise the role we have to play in the wider education system. This provided the opportunity for further leadership development within the Trust and enabled one of the Headteachers to take on a part time executive role as the School Improvement Officer whilst completing their NQPEL (National Professional Qualification in Executive Leadership). The Trust also worked with school improvement staff from two other Devon Multi Academy Trusts to ensure we had external views of our school effectiveness and provision for pupils with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities).

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

All schools remained focused on delivering the improvements they had outlined in their school development plan and benefited from greater stability in the education system following the pandemic. Across the Trust, schools were focussed on ensuring that their curriculum provided children with the opportunity to thrive and achieve and much work was done to make it accessible to children with SEND. Schools were still impacted by high levels of staff absence due to coronavirus and staff teams worked effectively together during these periods to minimise the disruption to education for the children. We had another year of good results with the Trust performing higher than national and local averages in all measures.

↑↓ shows comparison to 2023 national results.

	Alphington	Bowhill	Ide	St Thomas	ELAT	National
EYFS	82	66	92	68	74↑	67
Phonics	80	81	86	82	82↑	80
Key Stage 1						
Reading	78	68	74	67	72↑	68
Writing	71	60	73	63	66↑	60
Maths	84	72	63	67	75↑	70
Key Stage 2						
Reading	71	76	89	73	75↑	73
Writing	81	73	83	73	77↑	71
Grammar	69	79	78	73	74↑	72
Maths	71	76	89	80	76↑	73
Combined (R/W/M)	60	65	83	70	66↑	59

We continue to see the impact that the pandemic has had on learning for our more vulnerable groups of pupils, particularly the younger children who may have missed early socialising and language opportunities whilst nurseries and pre-schools were closed. Ensuring that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, or those with SEND achieve well will continue to be a strong priority for the Trust.

Across our schools we were very mindful of the different experience pupils had educationally during the pandemic and the potential learning and psychological consequences on our children. Schools have adapted their curriculum to take this into account and all Trust schools used the grants provided by the National Tutoring Programme (NTP). The implementation of the NTP varied according to the need of the children being supported but strategies such as academic mentors, additional tutoring from school staff and online tutoring during school holidays were all employed. Closing the gap for our disadvantaged learners is core to our educational ethos as a Trust and continue to focus our efforts on raising outcomes for these children.

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Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

↑↓ shows comparison to 2023 national results.

	ELAT	National	ELAT	National	ELAT	National
	SEN		Disadvantaged		English as additional language	
Phonics	41↓	42	65↓	67	81↑	78
Key Stage 1						
Reading	21↓	28	39↓	54	56↓	65
Writing	18↓	19	35↓	44	53↓	58
Maths	39↑	32	48↓	56	66↓	69
Key Stage 2						
Reading	41↑	39	49↓	60	72↑	67
Writing	44↑	29	53↓	58	76↑	71
Maths	41↑	36	54↓	59	88↑	72
Combined (R/W/M)	26↑	20	42↓	44	68↑	60

We were also pleased to welcome Ofsted back to St Thomas Primary School in February where the school secured a good grade in all areas. This judgement reflected the hard work that had taken place to improve the quality of the curriculum since the school's previous inspection in November 2019 and has led to strong outcomes for the school for the last two years.

As a Trust, we have made the following achievements against our strategic priorities this year:

1. Inclusive and successful learning

- a. **Stimulating curriculum, accessible to all learners** – The schools have continued to develop their curriculum and regularly evaluate its effectiveness to ensure it is meeting the needs of all learners. The Trust began the academic year with Trust wide training on equality, diversity and inclusion. Aisha Thomas from Representation Matters gave an inspiring talk to staff as our keynote speaker about race and belonging, helping staff to understand the lived experience for some of our children and their families. Ide Primary School became the first primary school in Devon to secure their Rainbow Flag Award which focuses on positive LGBT+ inclusion and visibility and Bowhill Primary have started their own journey towards this.
- b. **Early Years** – The Early Years team worked closely together on identifying key assessment priorities for the core areas of learning. They visited provision across the Trust and worked collaboratively together to ensure continuous provision supported the gaps in children's learning.
- c. **Curriculum Delivery** – We continued our work with subject leaders across the Trust with a focus on the curriculum content. Subject leaders were challenged to ensure that there was deliberate intent in each aspect of their subject and that content had been carefully curated to support children's learning over time. This piece of work will be ongoing and change as the demands of the curriculum and the children we teach also change.

2. People focussed organisation

- a. **Staff wellbeing** – We implemented a new approach to appraisal which was focused on the professional growth of individual staff. Staff are encouraged to identify an area of their practise that they want to develop or deepen further and then are supported by a professional growth partner to achieve this. Coaching is used across the Trust to support personal development. The Trust also

Exeter Learning Academy Trust

Trustees' Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2023 (continued)

supported our teaching staff when many of them made the difficult decision to strike, recognising that this was a complex issue that challenged our staff both personally, professionally and financially.

- b. **An excellent employer** – We have improved our HR service that is delivered by the Shared Services team. Our policies and procedures for recruitment and pay are consistent across the Trust and we adhere to Teachers' Pay and Condition and the NJC. We try to ensure that wherever possible we support staff with requests for flexible working arrangements and time off to attend family events that happen outside of the normal school holidays.

3. Excellent Leadership and Governance

- a. **Developing Future Leaders** – We had 3 senior leaders across the Trust move into substantive Headteacher positions within Devon reflecting the support they were given to develop their leadership skills. We have a number of staff across the Trust who provide support to the wider education system. They support Devon County Council with statutory moderation, support initial teacher training and provide CPD for early career teachers. The CEO also worked with Ambition Institute in a consultancy role to inform the development of their risk and accountability modules within their NPQ framework which provides leadership training.
- b. **Strong and effective governance** – We welcomed a number of new governors to the Trust and our local boards have continued to provide effective challenge and support to our schools. Our local governors have visited and monitored provision within our schools and have met half termly to scrutinise school performance with leaders. Chairs of the Local Governing Boards meet termly with the CEO and Chair of the Trust Board to share best practice and ensure that communication between the different tiers of governance remains strong.

4. Community, growth and infrastructure

- a. **Building capacity** – The secondment of the CEO to the interim Head of Education for the Local Authority has provided the opportunity for one of the school leaders to work across the Trust in an executive school improvement role. We were pleased to be one of the few MATs in Devon that secured CIF (condition improvement funds) to put in place better fire safety systems across 3 of our schools. The Trust invested in a site management system that ensures all our health and safety and estates compliance is carefully monitored and addressed. We also installed a new phone system across all schools providing better communication within and off sites and enabling schools to set up lock down systems. Finally, moved all schools to the same broadband provider that we felt provided a higher level of security and flexibility within our system, enabling us to improve our monitoring and filtering systems to keep our children safe online. The management and installation of these systems was largely managed by the shared services team, enabling leaders to focus on the quality of education within their school.
- b. **Reaching into our communities** – Our schools have strong and positive relationships with their communities, and we see this as a core quality of our Trust. Each school has a parent/teacher association who worked hard across the year running events that were not only beneficial for our children and families, but also raised funds to support their school. Schools returned fully to normal this year and regularly took the children out of school for visits, residentials and community events.