

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 07746561 (England and Wales)

**Report of the Trustees and
Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st August 2025
for
City Learning Trust**



Hardings
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor
6 Marsh Parade
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1DU

City Learning Trust

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City Learning Trust

**Reference and Administrative Details
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Members	Current - 1.9.24 - 31.8.25	
	Name	Date Appointed
	Mr Peter Coates	16.11.18
	Mr Gurmeet Singh-Kallar	24.9.18
	Mr David Johnson	1.3.21
	Mrs Joan Walley	1.9.20
	Miss Jade Rowe	1.9.25
Trustees	Current - 1.9.24 - 31.8.25	
	Name	Date Appointed
	Mr Neil Dawson	14.4.23
	Miss Erin Hill	30.1.23 (resigned Oct 2025)
	Mr Ian Hookway	25.4.22
	Dr Carl Ward	1.2.13
	Mr David Johnson	1.9.25
Company Secretary	Resigned during 24/25	
	Name	Date Resigned
	Mr David Thorley	31.8.25
	Current - 1.9.24 - 31.8.25	
	Name	Date Appointed
	Mr Neil Dawson	14.4.23
	Miss Erin Hill	30.1.23 (resigned Oct 2025)
Senior Management Team	Mr Ian Hookway	25.4.22
	Dr Carl Ward	1.2.13
	Mr David Johnson	1.9.25
	Mr David Thorley	1.9.25
	Mrs Wendy Dean	1.9.25
	Mr Adrian Roberts	1.9.25
	Resigned during 24/25	
Company Secretary	Name	Date Resigned
	Mrs Melanie Sproston	31.8.25
	Mr D Gooda	31.8.25
	Current - 1.9.24 - 31.8.25	
	Mrs Sandra White	
	Dr C S Ward	
	Chief Executive Officer	
Senior Management Team	Miss S Hughes	
	Deputy Chief Executive Officer	
	Mrs S Bates	
	Executive Director	
	Ms A Mills	
	Principal	
	Mrs T Steele	
Senior Management Team	Principal	
	Mr M Whittingham	
	Headteacher	

City Learning Trust

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

Company Name	City Learning Trust
Registered Office	c/o Haywood Academy High Lane Stoke on Trent ST6 7AB
Company Registration number	07746561 (England and Wales)
Independent Auditor	Hardings Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor 6 Marsh Parade Newcastle-under-Lyme Staffordshire ST5 1DU
Bankers	Cooperative Bank PLC 1 Balloon Street Manchester M60 4EP Lloyds Bank Fountain Square Hanley Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1LE
Solicitors	Browne Jacobson Mowbray House Castle Meadow Road Nottingham NG2 1BJ

City Learning Trust (Registered number: 07746561)

Report of the Trustees for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

The trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements and auditor's report of the charitable company for the year 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025. The Annual report serves the purposes of both a Trustees' report and a Directors' report under company law.

The City Learning Trust (CLT) is a four academy MAT comprising of two secondary academies (as at the October 2024 census) Haywood Academy and Sixth Form - City College (1104 pupils on roll), Trentham Academy (784 pupils on roll) and two primary academies, Smallthorne Academy (214 pupils on roll) and Mill Hill Academy (461 pupils on roll) which serve pupils aged from 3-18 across the City of Stoke on Trent.

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 document of the academy trust. The Trustees of City Learning Trust are also the directors of the charitable company for the purpose of company law. The charitable company operates as City Learning Trust.

Details of the Trustees who served during the year, and to the date these accounts are approved 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

The Trust has purchased insurance to protect trustees, governors and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors or omissions whilst on Trust business. The insurance provides cover up to £5,000,000 aggregated across the year. The cost of this insurance is included in the total insurance reported by the Company.

Method of Recruitment and Appointment or Election of Trustees

The Trust Board consists of six members as at 31 August 2025.

The number of Trustees of the company shall not be less than 3 but (unless determined by ordinary resolution) shall not be subject to any maximum. The Articles of Association set out the categories of Trustees and this includes the following:

- Up to 6 Trustees may be appointed by the Members of the Trust by ordinary resolution.
- The Trustees ensure that there are 2 Parent Governors appointed to LGCs and so Parent Governors are not appointed as Trustees.
- The Trustees may appoint Co-opted Trustees as necessary.
- 3 Academy Trustees may be appointed by or elected in accordance with any policy decided by the Trustees for that purpose or from a Local Governing Committee.
- Trustees are appointed based on their skill sets and each appointment considered by the Trustees and appointed by unanimous resolution of the Members.

The term of office for Trustees is 4 years, save this time limit does not apply to the Chief Executive Officer who is an ex-officio member of the Board and who has been in post since the Trust's inception. Subject to remaining eligible to be a particular type of Trustee, any Trustee may be reappointed or re-elected. Recruitment and appointment of Trustees is ratified by Members. Annually, the skills audit is reviewed to identify areas where additional capacity would be favourable. Following this, expressions of interest are reviewed and the most suitable candidates are invited to apply for a position within the Board. The process is robust and has a number of points of review to ensure best fit. The induction itself is a prolonged period of time with mentoring and review points to ensure clarity and understanding, equipping all Trustees with the knowledge, understanding and experience to effectively hold the CEO to account.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Policies and Procedures Adopted for the Induction and Training of Trustees

Training and induction of new Trustees is given on an individual basis as appropriate and includes one to one meetings with key management personnel alongside other Trustees and is supported by a governance welcome pack. In addition, the City Learning Trust register all Trustees with membership of key organisations to support professional learning and enable appropriate and informed challenge. Trustees are also invited to the annual Governance Conference (along with key management personnel, Members and Governors) as well as bespoke and tailored 'in-house' training at constituent academies – including Prevent, Safeguarding, etc.

Organisational structure

The Trustees are responsible for exercising oversight of the governance and management of the Trust. In exercising their responsibilities, Trustees consider the advice given by the CEO, other executive officers and the Chairs of the Local Governing Committees (LGC) as appropriate. Annually the Trust Board agrees a scheme of delegation to ensure clarity and consistency in the running of the Trust.

As a Multi Academy Trust, the management structure within the Trust operates as follows:

- Members
- Board of Trustees
- CLT Executive Leadership Group
- Local Governing Committee(s) whose powers are devolved by the Trustees
- Cooperative Forum
- CLT Senior Leadership Group

The Trustees are responsible for setting general policy and establishing the strategic direction for the Trust. The Board delegates, to the CEO, the authority to implement its vision and the day-to-day leadership and management of the Trust. The Trust adopts an annual plan and budget, monitoring across the Trust by the use of results and budgets and makes major decisions about the direction of the Trust, capital expenditure and senior staff appointments.

The Accounting Officer is the CEO of the Trust. The Scheme of Delegation gives full details of all delegated responsibilities across the Trust, including those delegated to LGCs and Academy Leads.

Previously, the Trust was subject to a full ESFA finance and governance audit as part of the typical round of visits. This highlighted no areas of concern and praised the effective governance of the Trust in instilling governance arrangements successfully and to an exceptionally high standard. In addition to this, a full programme of internal scrutiny is scheduled throughout the year which maintains a clear focus on policy into practice. All reviews have concluded financial infrastructure is secure and copes well with the changing and growing needs of the Trust and that governance is strong.

Governance at the City Learning Trust is under constant review. We have previously commissioned a review of governance by the National Governance Association. The review concluded that 'Governance at City Learning Trust is highly effective. Trustees have a strong sense of their strategic role and rigorously hold leaders to account. Financial oversight is well developed. The board is well led by the chair and very effectively supported by the trust Governance Officer. The structure of governance is fit for purpose and effective. Meetings are well planned and carefully timetabled. The scheme of delegation is clear and the board ensures that discussions and decisions are not duplicated at different levels.'

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Since the 2022/23 academic year, the Trust has operated a separate sub-committee overseeing attainment and outcomes of students – the Education Standards committee. Having had in place for several years prior, a multi layered RAP process which facilitated a round table and solution focused approach to challenge underperformance where it existed. Trustees have added a further layer into this to separate the challenge to Academy Leads from the challenge to the CEO. As well as the well-established and effective RAP process, the Education Standards Committee holds the CEO to account on the delivery mechanism and performance outcomes of all academies individually, seeking additional assurance as appropriate and necessary. This committee ratify and approve annual performance targets for the Trust. The key responsibility of the local governing committees is to determine, in cooperation with the Trust, the strategic vision and ethos of their academy, to hold their Headteacher / Principal to account by challenging and monitoring performance particularly regarding the achievement of students and safety of both staff and students. At an operational level LGCs regularly monitor the performance of their respective Headteacher / Principal.

Arrangements for setting pay and remuneration of key management personnel

The Trust has adopted the STPCD as the benchmark and guide for all senior academy-based posts. For central Trust posts, we use STPCD guidance and external salary benchmarking as a guide for setting pay.

Pay reviews are conducted according to the Trust Pay Policy and Performance Management schedule. A pay award is dependent on the outcomes of a successful appraisal process. For all leadership posts in our academies up to Vice Principal, pay recommendations are from Headteachers / Principals and are moderated and approved by the local governing committee and separately quality assured by the Trust Staff Development team. For Headteachers / Principals, pay recommendations are made by the CEO in conjunction with the local governing committee before being quality assured by the Trust Remuneration committee (a nominated group of Trustees) and then ratified by the full Board. This is the same for all central Trust leadership posts. All central management personnel roles have a job description and salaries are benchmarked against similar roles nationally.

The Trust uses a performance management tool for all of its employees, including senior managers and key personnel. All performance related information is stored here and available for analysis across the Trust. Targets for each senior leader are set on an annual basis, taking into consideration; the job description of the role, the Trust priorities, pupil progress across the Trust and the Trust self-evaluation and development plan. A midyear performance review is held to validate progress against targets set. At the end of the year, if targets have been met and overall performance has been good then the appropriate pay awards are made.

The CEO's performance and pay is managed by the Chair of the Board, alongside other Trustees who have been supported by an external independent consultant with experience of assessing educational improvement and achievement. Targets for the CEO are set on an annual basis, taking into consideration the Trust priorities, student outcomes across the Trust and the achievement of Trust KPIs.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Paid trade union activities

Trade union facility time

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the time period	Full-time equivalent employee number
2	302

Relevant union officials

Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	0
1%-50%	2
51%-99%	0
100%	0

Percentage of pay bill spent on facility time

Provide the total cost of facility time	£12,697
Provide the total pay bill	£16,089,382
Provide the percentage of the total pay bill spent on facility time, calculated as: (total cost of facility time / total pay) x 100	0.07

Percentage of Time spent on paid trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours calculated as: (total hour spent on paid trade union activities by relevant union officials during the relevant period + total paid facility time hours) x 100	0.355
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**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Related Parties and other Connected Charities and Organisations

Although there are a number of professional links to other schools, multi-academy trusts and third-party organisations, the Trust is an independent body with no affiliation to outside bodies. There have been no related party transactions within the 2024/2025 academic year.

The Trust works closely with a wide variety of charitable organisations in the field of education, but is not 'connected' in terms of paragraph 28(1) of schedule 3 of the Charities Act.

The City Learning Trust is a licensed DfE sponsor and has experience in offering support to schools outside of the Trust in leadership, teaching, school improvement, finance, governance and HR.

Engagement with employees (including disabled persons)

The City Learning Trust operates an open line of communication with all of its staff members. At a local level, staff are engaged with via a number of functions: regular staff training meetings; briefings; INSET days; Academy Improvement Plans and Self-Evaluation documentation. The aims and objectives of each academy are also shared via performance management conversations and professional development opportunities.

At a Trust level, staff are involved in annual engagement practices that are intended to source feedback on their experience working at the Trust. This is an anonymous system that takes feedback on all elements of their professional and personal experiences. Management of this is undertaken centrally to ensure that patterns can be factored in to whole Trust development planning. This information is then filtered back to Academies so that actions can be taken at a local level to address any areas where performance is identified as being below expectation.

Further to this, the Trust operates a professional growth package that pulls together all teachers, education support staff and leaders from all academies to ensure that staff have the opportunity to learn from one another as well as national and global best practice and hold Trust leaders to account on the package of development available. Through this practice, we have also created a Building Talent culture to further bolster the professional development opportunities for all colleagues across the Trust. This whole programme is continually evaluated and further developed to ensure that it provides the best quality opportunities for our colleagues and is responsive to need.

As a matter of practice, all Academy Leaders undertake employee relations meetings with local trade union representatives and staff representatives to discuss the impact of Academy and staff performance, policy implementation and change management. At a MAT level, this is replicated with the operation of a Joint Negotiating Council, operating with a term of reference that involves Trust Executive Leaders alongside both regional and national Trade Union representation. Discussion points at this level are over Trust-wide policies, improvements and change management.

The City Learning Trust operates an Equality and Diversity Policy and undertakes an appropriate equality impact assessment for every piece of change management initiated. The findings from these are discussed with the relevant staff and Trade Union representative and inform the next steps actions for the Trust.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Objectives and Activities

Objects and Aims

The mission of the City Learning Trust is to create a world class education system for the communities we serve.

The vision is to be one of the United Kingdom's leading multi academy trusts, providing the best opportunities for children and young people to develop their knowledge, skills and character so that they get the best start in life.

The Trust is guided by the following values:

Ambition:

Our academies aim to unlock the potential for all learners to achieve their dreams, hopes and aspirations.

Cooperation:

We value working together in teams, supporting each other, and sharing expertise and accountability to improve standards.

Commitment:

Our academies are a family of schools with a common bond, dedicated to the communities that they serve.

Creativity:

We encourage innovation and the use of imagination and original ideas in all our schools.

Leadership:

We believe in listening to, inspiring and empowering our learning communities so that they can achieve their true potential.

Respect:

We value all people and organisation's abilities', qualities and achievements, and operate using the principles of equality, equity and solidarity.

The Trust's purpose is to support schools to deliver world class opportunities, experiences and outcomes for all of our children and young people. Where a school is underperforming, we ensure rapid improvement. Through cooperation and collaboration, we have developed and continue to source sustainable partnerships that provide a legacy for tomorrow's generation. This enables our member academies to become greater than the sum total of their parts with a fully federated approach to school leadership and operation. The City Learning Trust is a family of schools with a unique relationship across all stakeholders.

The Trust is a registered academy sponsor and will act as the lead sponsor for any school which is directed to become a sponsored academy in the Trust by the Department for Education.

The Trust is committed to ensuring that all children in our academies receive excellent teaching and make progress. High quality professional development for teachers and school leaders is a key component of our approach and the Trust has developed a bespoke CPD offer to ensure that all of our staff have the time and resource available to them to be the best they can be for the children we serve.

To support this, the City Learning Trust has six main aims:

1. The skills and qualifications of our students will enable them to flourish in whatever vocational or academic setting they can succeed in;
2. We will ensure our children are literate and numerate as well as developing key skills of resilience, resourcefulness, enterprise, technological literacy and adaptability;
3. We will take care of our most vulnerable students and the CLT will have an exceptional programme of support for those students who need it;
4. We will develop partnerships with great schools locally, nationally and internationally to develop educational practice that connects learners world-wide;
5. Enrichment through partnership will be an intrinsic facet to the world class education that we offer to ensure that all of our young people are able to compete in the global economy that awaits them; contributing positively, economically, socially and ethically;
6. We will develop great leaders and team workers who understand the value of cooperation and play a proactive role in public life.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

City Learning Trust successfully launched the innovative and unique Character and Arts Foundation during the 2022/23 academic year and has continued to develop this effectively over the past few years. The Trust recognises that to truly deliver outstanding experiences for our children and young people, we must move beyond the curriculum. Post-pandemic, we remain committed to developing the whole child and enabling confidence to participate, compete, and contribute to an ever-changing world.

Funded solely through generous donations, the Character and Arts Foundation has evolved to offer a growing range of experiences that transform the outlook and aspirations of children and young people. Built on five key strands and guided by the principle of “learning from our past to shape our future”, the Foundation celebrates Stoke-on-Trent’s proud history and culture, while supporting young people to overcome the social and economic challenges in their communities.

Over the last three years, the Foundation has grown considerably. The Musical Pathways Programme has tripled in reach since Year 1 and continues to engage more schools beyond the City Learning Trust, while the Enterprise Curriculum has been strengthened, embedding key skills and learning from KS2 through to KS4.

The introduction of the Character and Arts Impact Award has become a defining feature of the Foundation’s work, placing young people’s voices at the heart of our mission. This initiative empowers pupils to lead projects they are passionate about, connecting with their communities and shaping the futures they want to see.

The Character and Arts Foundation continues to make a profound impact on children and young people across our academies, providing transformative experiences that develop confidence, creativity, and ambition. As we move into 2025/26, the Foundation is deepening its work within our academies while broadening the opportunities available to schools across Stoke-on-Trent, ensuring every young person we reach can take pride in their roots and confidence in their future.

Further to this, City Learning Trust built upon their strategic partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council to form a part of the solution to the rising permanent exclusion statistics. Within the year, City Learning Trust delivered a curriculum model to work to reengage KS3 students who have been permanently excluded from other secondary schools within the city.

With a fully inclusive approach that joins up assessment, engagement, nurture and inclusion practice, Crossway at Haywood opened in Easter 2024 with a small group of at-risk individuals. Commissioned to accommodate 24 young people on a 12-week pro-active placement and 6-week transition phase, Crossway delivers a bespoke provision, working with families and schools to prevent reduce the risk of repeated permanent exclusions by working on strategies around resilience and de-escalation. Crossway understands fully the needs of the individual and is key to successful reintegration strategies. Stoke on Trent has consistently disproportionately high statistics for repeat suspensions and permanent exclusions. City Learning Trust is fully committed to supporting in the delivery of the solution for this as part of our civic responsibility for improving the outcomes for young people in our care and in the wider community.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Leadership and Governance

Strategic Leadership:

The Trust delivers system leadership through providing and developing strong and capable leaders who will work beyond their own school to support other schools. All of our staff are provided with the opportunity to develop their roles within the organisation to enable them to excel, provide outstanding education and deliver impressive outcomes for our children and young people. The Trust seeks to build trust and respect across all stakeholders involved in our academies.

The principles by which we will manage our operations:

Embed an effective, clear and supportive governance framework

Provide a simple and efficient central organisation to provide maximum support directly to schools enabling our academy leaders to focus on teaching and learning, curriculum and outcomes

Deliver transparent systems to build trust, accountability and drive improvement

Ensure efficient, low-cost control of our resources to achieve economies, efficiencies and effectiveness across our operations

Earned Autonomy

The Trust Board ethos is that best results will be achieved when each school's Local Governing Committee receives a level of responsibility and autonomy appropriate to its specific circumstances.

When a school is graded as "Good" or "Outstanding", the level of support through day-to-day supervision by the Trust will be limited to those areas of agreed need and improvement. It would be expected that the LGC will operate with maximum autonomy applied through the Trust's scheme of delegation.

If we had any, it would be a requirement that schools graded in an Ofsted category would be subject to closer supervision of all aspects of governance, leadership and curriculum delivery through the Trust's Central support team. The LGC will have restricted delegated powers. It would be normal practice for members to be appointed by the Trust Board but this would be judged on its individual merits.

Objectives, Strategies and Activities

The Trust's objective is to advance, for the public benefit, education across the communities it serves. The Trust achieves this by establishing, maintaining, managing and developing schools which offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their pupils and now through the Character and Arts Foundation with further opportunities for our communities.

The Trust continues to work towards delivering a world-class education for the young people it serves. The City Learning Trust has clear strategic objectives derived from our mission and values. Our long-term strategic plan sets out the following strategic objectives to ensure that, as a Trust, all stakeholder groups understand and have belief in our approach.

The objectives we have followed during the last year (and will inform future progress) are:

1. World class education for the children and young people we serve

Thorough application and review of the education and improvement strategy will inform the appropriate engagement with both internal and external support bodies.

Character & arts education is dovetailed into the curriculum offer for all learners in line with the further development of the professional growth package to ensure all staff have the knowledge and pedagogical skill to deliver effectively.

2. Staff development opportunities that mean we develop great staff and we attract great staff

The Trust will continue to refine and develop its programme of professional development for all our colleagues. This will ensure that we have the right skills and expertise to further raise standards, deliver consistently good leadership, teaching and learning in high quality and innovative facilities, developed through best value principles. Further to this, the Trust is committed to the well-being of all its employees with the development and delivery of a benefits package that prioritises the needs of the individuals and the things they care about the most.

3. Development of strategic partnerships to enrich the offer for our community

The Trust will be proactive in initiating and securing a range of productive and effective strategic partnerships to ensure that both immediate CLT community and the City benefit from the resource that we attract. The Character and Arts Foundation has significantly boosted the breadth of partners now engaged with the City Learning Trust and our communities.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

4. Development of leadership at all levels to secure succession planning

Through the Building Talent element of the Professional Growth package, innovative and dynamic learning will be delivered, across all levels and all stakeholders. This package will be fully inclusive and representative of our academy communities. Our senior leaders are supporting colleagues within and outside of the Trust to ensure that all children and young people in Stoke experience the benefits of exceptional school leadership.

5. Outstanding resource management to advance objectives of the Trust

Resources management will increase in breadth with increase in reserve position to ensure the best return on the funding available. In addition to growing reserves, contingencies and capital allocations, successful funding applications, investments and donations will support the realisation of the estate management strategy.

The Trust has provided school improvement support; CPD opportunities for all staff across all schools; an effective senior leadership team to drive CLT strategy and performance and facilitated a central team to support member academies. The Trust is a mature organisation with a strong foundation for success and confidently looks forward to further success.

Public Benefit

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the revised guidance on public benefit issued by the Charity Commission in exercising their powers and duties.

In particular, Trustees have been provided with the Public Benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission and public benefit is properly taken into account in exercising their powers and duties.

In setting our objectives and planning our activities, the Trustees have carefully considered the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

Strategic Report

Achievement and Performance

City Learning Trust is an award winning multi academy trust recognized for its leadership, the opportunities it provides for young people inside and outside of its care and the staff development on offer, City Learning Trust has been recognised as an Outstanding Multi Academy Trust and the Trust performance continues to be exceptional.

Progress has been made in all areas and against the KPIs set demonstrating impressive and high-quality delivery – built on successive years of school improvement. City Learning Trust is seen locally as a MAT that has consistently high standards for the young people it serves with a restlessness to achieve more and an inherent resilience across the leadership team to achieve on behalf of the City's young people.

All City Learning Trust academies are judged as Good or Outstanding; all performance outcomes are either improving as a result of the school improvement strategy or are already at national average or better; attendance rates are at or above local and national rates and young people report being happy in school surrounded by staff who care for them. Likewise, staff report that they have all of the resources they need, that the colleagues that they are surrounded by are ambitious for one another and for the young people they serve and further, that they have leaders around them who care for their development.

Citywide contextual information

Stoke-on-Trent is one of the most deprived local authority areas in England and has long been a Priority Education Investment Area. There are high levels of child poverty, fuel poverty, poor housing conditions, poor health outcomes & low mortality rates as well as low levels of educational attainment for its population. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 rank Stoke-on-Trent as the 13th most deprived local authority (out of 317) in England, in 2023, it was ranked the 4th – this pattern is only being compounded over time. Over half of areas in Stoke-on-Trent (51%) are classified among the most deprived 20% in England, and approximately one-third of areas (32%) fall in the most deprived 10%, with one-third of the population in the city living in areas classified amongst the 10% most deprived in England (2019 data). The majority of our academies serve the Tunstall and Burslem wards of Stoke, ranked 2nd and 3rd most deprived respectively – by definition, some of the most deprived wards in England.

Typical barriers that our children and young people face include an increasing % of vulnerable children displaying social, emotional and behavioural needs, in very many cases linked to complex family circumstances. Economic deprivation has seen an increase in the number of families needing additional welfare support to help to access support services such as local food banks. Social mobility has seen a growing number of in year transfers in our academies.

Academy information

Mill Hill Primary Academy

Mill Hill Primary Academy is a large, two-form entry school serving 438 pupils from a diverse catchment area. The community includes a wide range of socio-economic and multicultural backgrounds, and the school is a feeder to Haywood Academy. Mill Hill serves one of the most deprived communities in England, with 55% of pupils eligible for pupil premium—significantly above the national average. This figure has continued to rise throughout the 2024/25 academic year due to the increasing cost of living.

The school has seen a growing number of families requiring additional support. Low literacy levels among parents, with an average reading age of 8 years, have limited pupils' early learning experiences, resulting in children entering school significantly below national expectations. Despite these challenges, Mill Hill has demonstrated consistent and significant improvements in progress and attainment across all subjects and key stages.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, 70% of children achieved a Good Level of Development—above the national average. This is particularly impressive given the low starting points of children entering nursery and reflects the strong foundation provided to the youngest learners. Phonics results continue to improve. In Year 1, 78% of pupils met the expected standard, aligned with national average and the Year 2 retake results are outstanding, with 82% of pupils passing—well above the local authority average of 49% and the national average of 51%. Overall, 96% of Year 2 pupils met the expected standard in 2025, maintaining performance from 2024.

Key Stage 2 outcomes reflect the continued success of the school's improvement strategy. In Reading, 73% of pupils met the expected standard, in line with the national average of 75%. In Writing, 80% met the expected standard—8% above the national average. In Maths, 88% met the expected standard, a significant increase from 78% in 2024 and well above the national average of 74%.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

In December 2023, Mill Hill Primary Academy was judged Outstanding by Ofsted for the first time in its history. This milestone continues to shape the academy's journey in 2025, as it builds on the strengths highlighted during the inspection. The Ofsted team praised Mill Hill's thoughtful, ambitious, and inclusive approach to learning. Pupils were described as "rightly proud of their school and all the wonderful things they learn and experience." Parents and carers also commended the dedication of staff, noting that "all staff put their heart and soul into providing the best education and care for all pupils."

Smallthorne Primary Academy

Smallthorne Primary Academy is a small, one-form entry school serving 233 pupils aged 2–11, situated in Stoke-on-Trent. As the only school in the city to successfully bid to provide a school-based nursery for two-year-olds, we have increased our overall capacity to 251 pupils. The school draws from a diverse catchment area with a broad socio-economic and multi-cultural mix and continues to serve as a feeder to Haywood Academy.

The local neighbourhood is ranked among the most deprived areas in England, underlining the significant challenges faced by many of our pupils and their families.

Despite these contextual challenges, Smallthorne continues to demonstrate strong and improving academic outcomes across all key stages. Pupil premium numbers have now stabilised at 45%, following earlier increases linked to the cost-of-living crisis and the pandemic.

In Early Years, outcomes have continued to rise. 76% of pupils achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) in 2024/25 — well above the national average. Pupils achieved an average of 15.6 Early Learning Goals, also significantly higher than the national average, demonstrating clear improvement in early attainment and school readiness. In Phonics, outcomes remain strong. By the end of Year 2, 85% of pupils met the expected standard in line with national performance, ensuring secure reading foundations by the end of Key Stage 1.

At Key Stage 2, the school continues to demonstrate a clear upward trajectory. 63% of pupils achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing and Maths (RWM) combined, above the national average. The proportion reaching the higher standard increased to 17%, placing the school in the top 11% nationally (89th percentile). Performance in individual subjects was also strong, particularly in Writing where 30% achieved Greater Depth compared to 13% nationally.

These results reflect sustained improvement over the past three years, demonstrating that Smallthorne pupils achieve highly across the curriculum, with progress now consistently at or above national benchmarks.

In November 2023, Ofsted visited Smallthorne Primary Academy and judged the provision as Good across the board. Ofsted recognised the ambition inherent within the Academy, noting that staff have 'high expectations' of all pupils, that 'pupils are great advocates for their school' and that it is a 'very happy place to be.' Parents too 'deeply appreciate the opportunities provided for their children. They recognise the school's caring atmosphere and positive attitude.'

Haywood Academy

Haywood is a larger than average 11-18 Secondary School with 1084 pupils on roll from years 7 - 13. We also have an Enhanced Curriculum Provision, "Crossways at Haywood Academy".

Haywood Academy is a popular school, significantly over PAN with bulge years due to popularity. Deprivation indicators show that the context of the Academy is well above the National average for Pupil Premium/Free School meals, SEND, EHCP and EAL. We have 42 separate languages spoken across the Academy. The school population comprises 62% White British Heritage, 16% Asian heritage along with a further 12 different recognised ethnic groups.

**Report of the Trustees
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The academy community has significant and rising challenges: socio economic deprivation, overcrowded and temporary housing, high levels of poverty and unemployment, high crime rates and health problems, and serves several of the most deprived communities in England.

In April 2023, Ofsted inspected the school and reported that significant improvements could be seen across the school. They remarked that the school is a 'caring community that supports [young people] to do as well as they can' and that 'Leaders and teachers are dedicated to improving the outcomes of all pupils and students' with a curriculum described as 'ambitious' and 'carefully sequenced'. The school's overall effectiveness was judged as Good.

Haywood saw an improvement in attainment and progress in 2024 with figures in the main holding in 2024/2025. Of particular note were results in English, Btec subjects, Art, History, Dance, Photography, Textiles, Statistics, Product Design and Citizenship. Across the Academy, daily attendance figures are improving year on year with a sharp decline in the numbers who are reported to be persistently absent.

There has been a significant shift in culture and ethos at the Academy since Ofsted visited with the academy leadership team ambitious to achieve more for the young people they serve. Staff have high expectations for the students and positively award their behaviour and attitudes. Inclusion practice remains a priority for the Academy given the context. As a result, WISH (Welfare, Inclusion and SEND Hub) was established in April 2024 and is now an integral part of the Academy support system for students' social and emotional needs. Delivered by highly trained staff with bespoke provision, the needs of every child are prioritised. Suspension rates have fallen dramatically, positive behaviour points are at a high and the learning environments are calm, orderly and productive.

Further developments within the curriculum have been co-created by a specialist team who have a proven track record of curriculum redesign for a fully inclusive and adaptive approach. The curriculum is further enriched by a plethora of extra-curricular activities and the full extent of the Character and Arts Foundation programme, broadening the experiences of our young people beyond the classroom.

Haywood has a significantly vulnerable community, and with the support of the Trust, the school has remained on track, improving its educational offer and the outcomes for students, demonstrably adding value. This is particularly true of the curriculum developments within both KS3 with the development of Crossway Enhanced Provision and the ongoing delivery of the ELS programme at KS5 under City College.

City College and Crossway Enhanced Provision within Haywood Academy

Our Employability and Life Skills (ELS) programme continues to deliver a high-quality, bespoke curriculum for our vulnerable post-16 cohort. Many of our ELS students have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) due to significant complexities and challenges. Without the provision offered at City College, these young people would likely become NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), as there are very few suitable alternatives across the city. No other establishment in Stoke-on-Trent provides a recognised and accredited course specifically designed to meet this level of vulnerability.

Every young person who progresses through this curriculum moves on to employment or further training, supported by a comprehensive transition module that ensures their next steps are meaningful and aligned with their aspirations.

In line with the City Learning Trust's commitment to inclusive education, we have also developed a Key Stage 3 offer for Stoke-on-Trent's hardest-to-reach young people and their families. We operate commissioned places for students who have been permanently excluded or are at risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream education. Our priority is to re-engage these learners through a rich and diverse curriculum, empowering them to return to mainstream provision after their time at Crossway.

Our success rate is significant: the majority of students successfully reintegrate into mainstream education, while a small proportion transition to specialist settings tailored to their EHCP requirements. Further commissioning opportunities are emerging across all key stages as we strengthen partnerships with the City Council and local schools.

Crossway provides a holistic, student-centred approach to education. Through small class sizes, strong relationships, and carefully designed curriculum pathways, we give every learner another chance to succeed. Our goal is simple: to engage, empower, and support each student to reach their full potential.

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Trentham Academy

Trentham Academy is a highly successful non-selective secondary school in the City of Stoke on Trent. With 794 students on roll at the start of the 2024/25 academic year. 1st preference applications for a place in Year 7 are higher than they've ever been, with demand far outstripping capacity. The Academy is the school of choice for parents in the local area and all year groups are oversubscribed with extensive waiting lists. Trentham has a PP cohort of on average 20%, SEND profile of approximately 20% and EAL of 7%.

The school converted to academy status and joined the Trust in July 2017. Ofsted inspected the Academy in October 2021 (first time since its conversion) and gave 'Outstanding' judgements for Leadership & Management and Personal Development with 'Good' for every other category and for the overall quality of education delivered. Trentham was on the DFE's 'stuck' schools list before it joined the Trust, having had three 'Inadequate' Ofsted judgements in its previous twenty years and having never been Good for longer than 18 months in the previous 25 years. Ofsted noted the 'exemplary promotion of pupil's personal development – with many pupils involved in extracurricular activities and holding leadership roles in school.

The Trust have established a highly successful school, with a well-respected and highly motivated workforce – who go the extra mile so that pupils can flourish. This has resulted in significant improvements in the quality of education. As a result, the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, are being met. The Academy has seen increases across all outcomes consistently since 2017 with Progress 8 and Attainment 8 regularly above national average.

Outcomes for 2025 leavers from Trentham Academy were generally strong. 68% of our students achieved 9-4 in both English and Maths compared to the draft national collaboration data of 64.5%. 43.5% achieved 9-5 in both English and Maths compared to national data of 46%. Of these, 63% achieved a grade 5 in English compared to 60% national average and 50% achieved grade 5 in Maths, compared to 51% national average. Attainment 8 in 2025 was 46.5 and the national average was 45.9. We expect the results from several subjects to be in the top 20% of schools nationally, as they were last year.

Attendance is currently above 95% which puts the academy in the top 20% of schools nationally and PA is in the lowest 20% of schools nationally. Suspensions are low and lower than previous years, compared to local and national suspension rates. The academy continues to improve year on year

School Improvement impact:

Evidence of the success and impact of the Trust's approach was ratified by the October 2021 Ofsted visit to Trentham Academy. When Trentham joined the City Learning Trust, it had long been a school that was failing. With falling roll numbers, historically poor academic performance and sustained weaker judgements by Ofsted for the previous 25 years, the new leadership team had significant work to do to bring it up to the consistently high standard worthy of what the community deserved.

In that time, Trentham has consistently performed above national average in headline measures, has become a popular and now consistently oversubscribed school, above PAN in all year groups with a resoundingly positive Ofsted grading confirming that both Leadership & Management and Personal Development are Outstanding. It is the highest performing non-selective secondary academy across the local authority with standout results in pass rates.

Haywood Academy and City College have maintained their performance at both the end of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. In comparison to local data, the curriculum offer remains broad and balanced and appeals to the needs and interests of all students. With the demographic Haywood and City College serves, it was necessary to prioritise the well-being and attendance of all young people over academy outcomes. Celebrated in the April 2023's Ofsted inspection, Haywood and City College are an example of the adaptability of the Trust's approach to school improvement.

The challenges and demands facing the community that Haywood and City College have changed dramatically and the academy's approach had to pivot in an instant to ensure that it consistently met needs and ensured that every child in its care remained central to the focus of leaders. Within this year, Haywood and City College have continued to develop their provision. Indeed, this year we have invested capacity into further inclusive practice to ensure that City Learning Trust is very much a part of the wider inclusion solution for the City's outlying and over-representative data with high numbers of permanent exclusions preventing young people accessing the education they need and the support that would help them make better choices.

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Our primary academies published data improves year on year. Both sets of results demonstrate a sustained improvement and evidence an improving and upward trajectory in performance and progress. Both academies have ambitious curricula and extra curricula offers, a large and well received outreach programme to support parents and carers with the needs of their children and both have exceptional personal development programmes. Attendance at both academies is above national average with persistent absenteeism low and declining.

Smallthorne was visited by Ofsted in November 2023 and judged as Good across the board with the inspection team recognizing that 'parents have seen many improvements in the school over the past few years. They deeply appreciate the opportunities provided for their children' and that 'pupils are great advocates for their school' because 'Smallthorne Primary Academy is a warm, welcoming and vibrant school.'

Mill Hill Primary Academy was visited in December 2023 and was judged as 'Outstanding' across all measures with the Inspection team moved to tears during the feedback for the opportunities that young people within the academy had available to them. They recognised too the longstanding commitment to the school improvement strategy that moved the Academy from RI to Outstanding. Mill Hill is an exceptional academy delivering a thoroughly engaging and adaptive curriculum to all of its young people in a fully inclusive environment. Pupils are proud of their school and are keen to tell everybody about it.

Attendance at all academies throughout the academic year was in line with or above local averages, suspension rates on the whole were lower than local average data available and young people applying to attend any of our academies has been higher than previous year on year comparisons demonstrating that within our local context, we are popular and well thought of as schools at the heart of our communities.

All academies have stable leadership and staffing structures with succession plans in place and application of the building talent framework ensuring that academies are moving forward, at pace, following a period of consolidation and stabilization in recent years. This is an exciting time for City Learning Trust.

The collaborative work of the Trust, with regard to governance and finance, has been previously acknowledged through the ESFA 3-year review that highlighted the review team felt 'lifted' by the practice evident in the Trust and that the Trust 'felt like a true family of schools with a culture of friendliness, respect and highly professional behaviours.' They said that they had 'never seen a Trust working together in the way that the CLT has developed' and commended its rapid progress. Further to this, we commissioned a follow up NGA review that reported that 'the ethos and values of the trust underpin trust priorities. The focus on developing world class education and great staff is relentless. Trustees understand that these values also drive improvement at academy level.'

The Trust has a strong track record of school improvement over time and of improving outcomes and has worked hard to secure a very strong governance and finance foundation. More recently, the Trust commissioned a review to be undertaken by Jan Renou (former Regional Schools Commissioner) who concluded that 'CLT addresses this (context) with pragmatism, intelligence, and sensitivity - but does not accept as inevitable the impact of these social and economic factors. It is particularly noticeable that CLT schools are achieving outcomes now in line with national averages – and see this not as an end point but the base line for further growth and improvement.' And that, 'a culture of collaboration permeates the Trust. There is a shared understanding of the importance of meeting the needs of the individual child along with an increased focus on SEND.'

The innovative nature of the Character and Arts Foundation is intended to go further to improve the life chances of children and young people in Stoke. The Foundation itself is entirely unique in its aspiration to open up the world of opportunities to children both inside and outside of the City Learning Trust. This emphasizes and confirms the Trust's ambition to deliver its moral and ethical obligations in truly serving the children and young people of the city, and not just the ones in its care.

The City Learning Trust's determination to provide life-affirming and life-changing experiences for the children of Stoke, led to the creation of the Character and Arts Foundation. Funded exclusively by donation, the Character and Arts Foundation provides an opportunity to learn from, and be proud of, our collective past through our Heritage and History strands while shaping futures through Performing and Expressive Arts, Sustainability and Enterprise.

**Report of the Trustees
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Since its launch, the Foundation has provided children of Stoke on Trent with unique opportunities. Children have already had the opportunity to access fully-funded trips across the world, including speaking at the UN Assembly in New York in May 2023, a visit to Iceland to understand the practice of sustainable living, Lidice to understand the complex and long-lasting impact of war and will be going to Ghana this year to build opportunities in a village. Our partners, the Halle orchestra perform exclusively for 1500 children each year and will work side by side with them through a comprehensive and innovative programme to inspire.

In the first year, the Character and Arts Foundation touched the lives of 5000+ young people from across Stoke. In its second, that doubled and in the third, it has become an embedded part of the wider enrichment offer for many young people outside of the City Learning Trust, gathering momentum and understanding about the true aims of the project. From schools outside of the City Learning Trust: 'If it was not for opportunities such as this, our children would never have the chance to see such amazing talent', 'thank you for opening up the Halle orchestra to our children', 'the children got so much out of it', 'thank you for an amazing concert, such an amazing opportunity for our pupils', 'thank you so so much for the wonderful work you are doing, enabling students to access these fabulous events.'

2024/25 Key Performance Indicators:

The key performance indicators for the Trust during the year were to:

1. ensure that pupil/student outcomes in its academies remained strong
2. ensure that it provided quality support to its member schools
3. continue to refine and evaluate systems and procedures in maturity
4. continue to successfully employ integrated curriculum financial planning across the CLT
5. continue to build strong and effective partnerships with a range of external stakeholders and other multi academy trusts
6. create a strong financial outturn that provides sustainable financial health

The above KPIs have been successfully met. The CLT has created a strong and sustainable governance and financial base that has withstood the additional pressures brought about by unfunded additional uplifts support staff and partial pay rises for teachers and leaders.

The benefits of the CLT's significant investment into a 100-hour, bespoke staff development programme has been realised further during this last academic year, as previously reported by The Times Education Commission in an article entitled, 'Singapore on Trent'. The Professional Growth programme was born from the outcomes of a DfE funded research visit to the best performing educational jurisdiction in the world and has been modelled on Singapore's practice. This package is completely personalised to each colleague, and is aligned with professional standards, appraisal and priorities. As well as professional learning, the PG package includes access to extensive benefits to reinforce holistic growth of the individual, including support for mental health and emotional well-being.

As a result, our retention rate remains high and bucks the national trend of staff leaving the profession. This model of professional learning and personal support ensures our team members can always be the best version of themselves for our young people.

The next phase of our development:

Our curriculum strategy remains ambitious and is designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged and SEND pupils the cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Our curriculum, that is progressive and sequenced, remains central to Trust planning. Our curriculum offer is focused on ensuring that students are enabled to know and remember more and are equipped with the knowledge and skills for future learning and employment. Our curriculum is designed to enable all children to reach their full potential by developing a love of learning and a desire to succeed.

The quality of education within our Trust, across all phases, will always remain a priority. We further enrich our curriculum offer further by teaming up with partner agencies to deliver an entirely bespoke and unique opportunity for all our young people through the Character and Arts Foundation. This will also expand into the realms of alternative provision as we work to align the range of opportunities for all young people with a fully inclusive mode of delivery and engagement. Staff development will be the mechanism by which we deliver these intentions.

**Report of the Trustees
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Going Concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Board of Trustees has a reasonable expectation that the CLT 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

For the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025, the in-year surplus figure is: £70,365.
The reserve position as at 31st August 2025: £725,011

This financial year has solidified further the continued good practice across the Trust. Financial performance is strong and our management of resource is effective. Identified by the ESFA (now DfE) audit team as robust, our practice continues to prove successful. The Trust has a fully federated approach to its delivery and systems and practice and culture has further matured during the last year. The NGA review conducted highlighted that, 'documentation shows that trustees substantially meet all expectations of the Academy Trust Handbook. Trustees are very confident in the strength of their oversight and the compliance of the trust with DfE expectations. They are also confident that the trust directs funds effectively to support the needs of the academies. Financial reports are considered in great detail; by both the finance, audit and risk committee and full board in their meetings. This ensures that all trustees have a good understanding of the financial position of the trust.'

The principal sources of funding during the year have been provided by GAG, Pupil Premium and SEND based funding grants. Other income has come from services provided by key executive personnel with external companies. All of our expenditure has been used to support the key objectives of the Trust as described in this report and the Trust's corporate business plan.

The CFO reviews all financial policies and alongside externally appointed scrutineers to review financial practice, cross checks all policies and procedures to ensure effectiveness and compliance of controls in place, delivered by the Finance Team. All practice receives significant assurance of effectiveness.

The Trust, in addition to the CFO, has in post a Finance and Operations Director to support in the further development of our federated approach and to oversee the technical delivery of financial procedures. Due to the success of the centralisation of our financial function some years ago, delegated authorities have been reviewed in this last year and all Academy Leaders now manage their budget function fully, aided by a finance professional, justifying their expenditure against the Academy Development Plans.

The successful management of finances and the value for money achieved through the efficient and robust procurement methods means that the Trust has been able to invest year on year in the capital improvements across all Academy sites – improving technical infrastructure and resource as well as the learning environments. All academies have received monies back into their budgets as windfall payments for them to facilitate this work and the central team have overseen its implementation. This is in addition to specific and additional school improvement monies that is apportioned according to individual priorities. Academy Leads engage with Executive Leaders and agree additional funding streams as and when required – all of which is accounted for in Academy Development plans.

All financial practice is well established with monthly budget meetings hosted with the accounting officer, Academy Leads and other sub committees as appropriate. The Finance, Audit and Risk committee oversee this practice on a termly basis, as delegated by the Trust board. As part of the annual agenda, the Finance, Audit and Risk committee has full oversight and sets the strategic direction of the programme of scrutiny.

**Report of the Trustees
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Reserves Policy

Individual academies build a contingency into their budget. Academy budgets include a 3% reserve. This reserve is held by the Trust. Programmes of work are agreed by the Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Leadership Group and the Senior Leadership Group (Academy Principals), using these reserve monies to support outcomes for young people. The Trust has ended the year with a growing cash reserve which will be committed in support of the strategic aims of the Trust in the 2025/2026 academic year.

Investment Policy

Cash reserves are currently held in standard current accounts and are committed to contingency funds and school improvement work for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The Trust approved plans to invest only in low-risk bank deposit accounts, which offers the flexibility to invest across a range of account terms in order to balance liquidity and return. The Trust only invests surplus cash to earn an acceptable rate of return without undue risk.

Principal Risks and Uncertainties

The Trust's detailed Risk Register, which is aligned with the DFE (2023) Effectiveness Framework is kept under review and monitored by the Compliance Director with area leads, undergoing a full review and scrutiny at least bi-annually through Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

Scrutiny to ensure the trust's estate is safe, well maintained and complies with relevant regulations has enabled Trustees and Executive Leaders to identify a principal risk and associated uncertainty facing the Trust relating to the current service and the contract hand back programmes provided by the PFI contractor. This is highlighted within the Trust Risk Register and is a standing agenda item for Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and committee reports to the full board. Executive Leadership capacity is deployed to oversee this end of contract period, and strategically lead on oversight of the handover process, alongside ensuring that the PFI Contractors fulfil current responsibilities of the contract to the quality standard expected from this contract.

Linked to the complexities of the Stoke PFI contract combined with the extent of concerns as the Trust approaches the end of contract period in October 2025, additional, external specialist support has been deemed essential. Inscyte, specialists in PFI contracts, have been commissioned to work directly with the Executive Team. Internal Scrutiny related to Estates, Risk Management and Compliance continues to be further enhanced by external expertise from TIAA, a specialist business assurance provider offering services including internal auditing.

TIAA recognise the Trust's awareness of and key focus on the concerns regarding the current PFI contract and associated services and the priority the Trust is affording to scrutiny of this alongside the handover process, the end of PFI contract in October 2025 and the future proofing of Estates systems and structures. The Trust identified the priority need relating to post-PFI systems and structures, alongside scrutiny and oversight of the hand back programmes and current PFI contract services. In the latest scrutiny, May 2025, TIAA concurred with the Trustees and Executive on identified priorities.

The Trust's Estate Management Strategy, in conjunction with evaluation and analysis against the Good Estates Management for Schools, (GEMS) self-assessment and the work undertaken with Inscyte as PFI specialist advisors, have enabled Executive Leaders to focus rigorously on holding council administration, Transform Stoke Schools Limited and Equans – the PFI Contractor, to account. This process is ongoing and remains a key priority.

In response to any perceived safety risks across the Estate, and concerns regarding the PFI contract, sole reliance on information provided by PFI contractors is not simply accepted by Executive Leaders or the Trustees. Compliance certification, warranties and reports are required from the PFI Contractors at the earliest opportunity on completion of works. Independent specialist surveys and investigations and/or specialist external inspections are commissioned as/if required and used to either verify information provided, or to critically challenge PFI contract administration where necessary, escalate concerns appropriately and formally request key evidence, information and documentation. This has also extended, where required, to direct engagement with the Department for Education Technical Advisory Team, Private Finance, Capital Directorate Operations Group.

**Report of the Trustees
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Targeted strategic oversight from Executive leaders, informed and evidence-based analysis of the hand back programmes of work, the Risk Register and internal scrutiny supported and enhanced by expert input, investigations and inspections have all combined to ensure that detailed and focused information has been provided to the Audit and Risk Committee. This in turn informs a risk-based programme of estates development, including future planning for post PFI contract. The priorities are clearly focused on those risks impacting on trustees' responsibilities to ensure the trust's estate is safe, well maintained and complies with relevant regulations, through ensuring that the PFI Contractor is held to account regarding current responsibilities and full completion of all hand back lifecycle works across the estate.

Simultaneously, the Trust has prioritised potential post-PFI contract options, with appropriate specialist expertise as required, to inform procurement of appropriate services to ensure high quality hard facilities management currently served by the PFI contract. This has included the establishment and soon to be embedding of specific systems for H&S, compliance and asset management in readiness for the end of the Stoke PFI contract in October 2025.

Fundraising

The City Learning Trust does not use any external fundraisers. All fundraising undertaken, nothing more than standard PTFA and charity fundraising activities, during the year, was monitored by local governing committees.

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting

As the Trust has not consumed more than 40,000kWh of energy in this reporting period, it qualifies as a low energy user under these regulations and is not required to report on its emissions, energy consumption or energy efficiency activities.

Plans for Future Periods

The City Learning Trust is working to achieve the aims and objectives of the World Class Education Framework. As such, the aim of the Trust is to provide a world class education to all of the young people that it serves by developing or recruiting great staff whilst exercising financial probity and offering value for money for the public benefit.

Funds Held as Custodian Trustee on Behalf of Others

The Trust holds no funds on behalf of others.

Auditors

The auditors, Hardings, will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

Report of the trustees, incorporating a strategic report, approved by order of the board of trustees, as the company directors, on 2nd December 2025 and signed on the board's behalf by:



Mrs W Dean- Trustee

City Learning Trust

Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

Scope of Responsibility

As Trustees we acknowledge we have overall responsibility for ensuring that City Learning Trust has an effective and appropriate system of control, financial and otherwise. However, such a system is designed to manage rather than eliminate the risk of failure to achieve business objectives, and can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.

As Trustees, we have reviewed and taken account of the guidance in the DfE's Governance Guide.

The Board of Trustees has delegated the day-to-day responsibility to the Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer, for ensuring financial controls conform with the requirements of both propriety and good financial management and in accordance with the requirements and responsibilities assigned to it in the funding agreement between City Learning Trust and the Secretary of State for Education. They are also responsible for reporting to the Board of Trustees any material weaknesses or breakdowns in internal control.

Governance

The information on governance included here supplements that described in the Trustees' Report and in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities. The Board of Trustees have formally met 7 times during the year. Attendance during the year at meetings of the Trustees was as follows:

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
Mrs M Sproston (Chair) - appointed 4.9.17 re-appt. 1.9.21)	6	6
Mr N Dawson (re-appointed 15.4.19 re-appt 14.4.23)	6	6
Mr D Gooda (appointed 10.2.20)	4	6
Dr C Ward (Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer)	6	6
Mr I Hookway (appointed 25.04.22)	6	6
Miss E Hill (appointed 30.1.23)	3	6

An effective Trust Board is key to the success of the Trust. Clear governance arrangements are necessary to enable the Board to ensure that appropriate systems and policies are in place, regularly reviewed and provide both legal accountability and the ability to deliver the organisation's objectives. The Board meets regularly to maintain a strategic overview of the Trust's work, specifically they:

- Set the Trust's vision, values and standards of conduct and ensure that obligations to stakeholders are understood, communicated and met.
- Ensure that the Trust complies with its constitution, mandatory requirements and statutory duties
- Oversee the financial performance of the Trust
- Provide effective and proactive leadership of the Trust within a framework of processes, procedures and controls which enable risk not be assessed and managed.

Conflicts of interests are managed by the Governance Officer who keeps an up-to-date Pecuniary Interests as well as a standing agenda item that highlights declarations of interest on each agenda.

During the year 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 the CLT sub-committee boards also met.

They consist of the:
Remuneration Committee

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
I Hookway	1	1
D Gooda	1	1
E Hill	1	1

Key roles are:

- Review recommendations from LGC and executive officers on matters of remunerations for all Trust employees

City Learning Trust

Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

- Provide assurance to the Trust of appropriate remuneration to all Trust employees
- Provide recommendations to the Trust Board on appropriate levels of remuneration for all Trust employees

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
N Dawson	3	3
D Gooda	3	3
I Hookway	2	3

Key roles are:

- Advise the Board of Trustees on matters relating to the Trust's Finance, Audit & Risk arrangements, systems of internal control and risk management
- Advise and aid the Board of Trustees to ensure sound management of the Trust's finances and resources, including proper planning, monitoring and probity.
- Receive information/reports on a termly basis on relevant matters
- Identify any matters where it considers that action or improvement is needed, make recommendations as to the steps to be taken and report its work, conclusions and any recommendations to the Trust.

Education Standards Committee

Trustee	Meetings attended	Out of a possible
I Hookway	2	3
M Sproston	2	3
E Hill	3	3

Key roles are to:

- Set and agree constituent academy outcome targets annually;
- Review progress against KPIs and;
- Challenge underperformance
- Hold the Chief Executive Officer to account

Other committees of the board who act are the cooperative forum who consider engagement with stakeholders from across the Trust and review and management of communication with key stakeholders. Membership of these groups differs according to need but stakeholders across the Trust's community are involved at every level.

Moving forward, Trustees have reviewed and re-considered how they will re-organise their committee structure to meet the changing needs of the organisation going forward. The Board will continue to operate a six full board meeting structure where they will review the progress against the KPIs and hold executive leaders to account for the performance of the Trust – both academically and financially. The Finance, Audit and Risk committee will continue to meet termly and will be supported by the external audit process. The twice annual Remuneration committee will meet in line with the scheme of delegation, staff performance policy and pay policy. The Trustee Education Standards Committee will meet 3 times in line with data entry and review points.

All associated academies within the Trust have a Local Governing Committee in place which is in effect a further sub-committee of the Board with delegated responsibilities which support the aims and objectives of the Trust (see Scheme of Delegation).

The key changes to the composition of the Board of Trustees during this period are as follows:

- No changes during period

An audit of governance was undertaken in September 2019 by the ESFA and concluded that governance of the Trust was strong. The ESFA recognised the work of the Trustees in moving the Trust and its performance forward successfully, undertaking their role effectively. Further governance audits and development work were undertaken more recently through NGA. NGA concluded that, 'Governance at City Learning Trust at trust board level is highly effective. Trustees have a strong sense of their strategic role and rigorously hold leaders to account. Financial oversight is well developed. The board is well led by the chair and very effectively supported by the trust governance officer'. Internal scrutiny has continued in line with the stipulations set out in the Academy Trust Handbook for this period and

City Learning Trust

Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

the Trust now outsources independent scrutiny to TIAA. The scrutiny yields areas of significant assurance consistently.

Review of Value for Money

As accounting officer, the Chief Executive Officer has responsibility for ensuring that the academy trust delivers good value in the use of public resources. The accounting officer understands that value for money refers to the educational and wider societal outcomes as well as estates safety and management, achieved in return for the taxpayer resources received.

The accounting officer considers how the trust's use of its resources has provided good value for money during each academic year, and reports to the board of trustees where value for money can be improved, including the use of benchmarking data where appropriate. The accounting officer for the academy trust has delivered improved value for money during the year by:

- Monitoring closely with the executive team, expenditure across all academy staffing structures and ensured integrated curriculum financial planning is established effectively to balance the needs of the Trust
- Efficient deployment of central staff roles to reduce repetition of duties across constituent academies and to maximize output by devolving authorities appropriately
- Deployment of expert leads to facilitate shared growth across all academies through sharing of good practice
- Continued focus on procurement to ensure that identified goods, supplies and services suitable collective purchasing across the Trust to maximise savings through building economies of scale.
- Delivery of the Trust's Estates Management Strategy to ensure that the estate remains safe, well-maintained and complies with regulations. This involves, but is not limited to, additional capital spend planned throughout the year.
- Undertaken commitment to the planning and creation of the Trust Effectiveness Framework.

The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Academy Trust's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control has been in place in the City Learning Trust for the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements.

Capacity to Handle Risk

The Board of Trustees has reviewed the key risks to which the academy trust is exposed together with the operating, financial and compliance controls that have been implemented to mitigate those risks. The Board of Trustees is of the view that there is a formal on-going process for identifying, evaluating, managing and mitigating the CLT's significant risks. This has been in place for the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 and runs up to the date of approval of the annual report and financial statements. This process is regularly reviewed by the Board of Trustees and is led on by one of the CLT Executive Leadership Team. The management of risks is undertaken regularly to mitigate against the likelihood of those risks being realised and the subsequent impact should they be realised.

City Learning Trust

Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

The Risk and Control Framework

The Trust's system of internal control is based on a framework of regular management information and administrative procedures including the segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular, it includes:

- Comprehensive budgeting and monitoring systems with an annual budget and periodic financial reports which are reviewed and approved by the Trustees.
- Regular reviews by the Finance, Audit and Risk committee of reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts and of major purchase plans, capital works and expenditure programmes.
- Setting targets to measure financial and other performance.
- Delegation of authority and segregation of duties
- Clearly defined purchasing (asset purchase or capital investment) guidelines
- Identification and management of risks.

The Board of Trustees decided to buy-in an internal audit service from TIAA. This option has been chosen to ratify previous judgements. For several years, in line with the stipulations within the Academy Trust handbook, City Learning Trust appointed a Trustee for the purpose of conducting internal checks. This is beneficial in that a change of internal scrutiny also adds further depth and rigour to the processes and Trustees chose to continue with this service within the 3 year scope.

The internal audit role includes giving advice on financial and other matters and performing a range of checks within the Academy and Central sites on financial and other systems. In particular, the checks carried out in the current period included tests on:

- Procurement
- Attendance
- Performance Management

On a rolling basis, the audit provider will cover a full range of audit checks and controls. In 2022/23, the internal scrutiny covered Health & Safety, Strategic Control in Governance, Payments and Payroll as well as looking at regular financial checks and controls as an additional health check. In 2023/24, reviews were conducted in Safeguarding, estates management, budgetary control and cyber security.

In addition, on a termly basis, Finance and Operations Director presents a report to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on the operation of systems of control and on the discharge of the Board of Trustees' financial responsibilities. On an annual basis, TIAA prepare a summary report to the committee outlining areas reviewed, key findings, recommendations and conclusions to help the committee consider actions and assess year on year progress. In the 2024/25 year, there were no issues highlighted as a concern and all areas scrutinised returned a high level of confidence.

Review of Effectiveness

As Accounting Officer, the CEO has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control. During the year in question the review has been informed by:

- the work of TIAA
- the financial management and governance self-assessment process and the school resource management self-assessment tool
- the work of executive leaders within the academy trust who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework
- the work of the external auditor
- correspondence from the ESFA

City Learning Trust

**Governance Statement
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

The Accounting Officer has been advised of the implications of the result of their review of the system of internal control by the Finance, Audit and Risk committee and a plan to ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

Conclusion

Based on the advice of the audit and risk committee and the accounting officer, the board of trustees is of the opinion that the academy trust has an adequate and effective framework for governance, risk management and control.

Approved by order of the members of the board of trustees on 2nd December 2025 and signed on its behalf by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Dean', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mrs W Dean - Trustee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C S Ward', with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Mr C S Ward - Accounting Officer

City Learning Trust

Statement on Regularity, Propriety and Compliance for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

As accounting officer of City Learning Trust, I confirm that I have had due regard to the framework of authorities governing regularity, propriety and compliance, including the trust's funding agreement with DfE, and the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook, including responsibilities for estates safety and management. I have also considered my responsibility to notify the academy trust board of trustees and DfE of material irregularity, impropriety and non-compliance with terms and conditions of all funding, including for estates safety and management.

I confirm that I and the board of trustees are able to identify any material irregular or improper use of funds by the academy trust, or material non-compliance with the framework of authorities.

I confirm that no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or non-compliance have been discovered to date. If any instances are identified after the date of this statement, these will be notified to the board of trustees and DfE.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C S Ward', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr C S Ward - Accounting Officer

2nd December 2025

City Learning Trust

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

The trustees (who act as governors of City Learning Trust and are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction published by the Department for Education, United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP 2019 and the Academies Accounts Direction 2024 to 2025;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charitable company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The trustees are responsible for ensuring that in its conduct and operation the charitable company applies financial and other controls, which conform with the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. They are also responsible for ensuring grants received from the EFSF/DfE have been applied for the purposes intended.

The trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 2nd December 2025 and signed on its behalf by:



Mrs W Dean - Trustee

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of City Learning Trust

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of City Learning Trust (the 'academy trust') for the year ended 31st August 2025 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law, United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) and the Accounts Direction 2024 to 2025 issued by the Department for Education (DfE).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the academy trust's affairs as at 31st August 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP 2019 and Academies Accounts Direction 2024 to 2025.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the academy trust in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, other than the financial statements and our Report of the Independent Auditors thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Report of the Trustees for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Report of the Trustees has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of City Learning Trust

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the academy trust and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Report of the Trustees.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the academy trust or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a Report of the Independent Auditors that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

- The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, our procedures included the following:

- enquiring of management including obtaining and reviewing policies and procedures relating to:
 - identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether there were any instances of non-compliance;
 - detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have any knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud;
 - reviewing the internal controls established to mitigate risks related to fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations.
- discussions among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

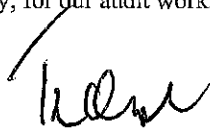
obtaining an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework in which the Trust operates, focusing on those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the financial statements or that had a fundamental effect on the operations of the Trust.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Report of the Independent Auditors.

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of City Learning Trust

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the academy trust's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the academy trust's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the academy trust and the academy trust's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.



Timothy McNeal FCA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Hardings
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditor
6 Marsh Parade
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1DU

2nd December 2025

Independent Reporting Accountant's Assurance Report on Regularity to City Learning Trust and the Secretary of State for Education

In accordance with the terms of our engagement and further to the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE), as included in the extant Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountants of Academy Trusts, we have carried out an engagement to obtain limited assurance about whether anything has come to our attention that would suggest, in all material respects, the expenditure disbursed and income received by City Learning Trust during the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 have not been applied to the purposes intended by Parliament and that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

This report is made solely to City Learning Trust and the Secretary of State for Education in accordance with the terms of our engagement letter. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to City Learning Trust and the Secretary of State for Education those matters we are required to state in a report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than City Learning Trust and the Secretary of State for Education, for our work, for this report, or for the conclusion we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the accounting officer of City Learning Trust and the reporting accountant

The accounting officer is responsible, under the requirements of City Learning Trust's funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education and the Academy Trust Handbook for ensuring that expenditure disbursed and income received is applied for the purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions conform to the authorities which govern them.

Our responsibilities for this engagement are established in the United Kingdom by our profession's ethical guidance and are to obtain limited assurance and report in accordance with our engagement letter and the requirements of the extant Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountants of Academy Trusts. We report to you whether anything has come to our attention in carrying out our work which suggests that in all material respects, expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 have not been applied for the purposes intended by Parliament or that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.

Approach

We conducted our engagement in accordance with the Framework and Guide for External Auditors and Reporting Accountants of Academy Trusts issued by DfE, which requires a a limited assurance engagement as set out in our engagement letter.

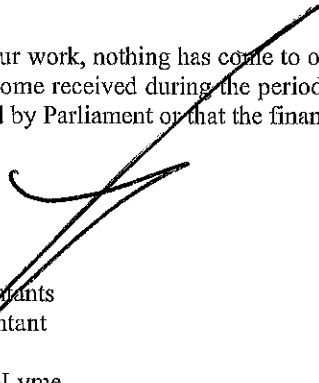
The objective of a limited assurance engagement is to perform such procedures as to obtain information and explanations in order to provide us with sufficient appropriate evidence to express a negative conclusion on regularity.

A limited assurance engagement is more limited in scope than a reasonable assurance engagement and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in a reasonable assurance engagement. Accordingly, we do not express a positive opinion.

Our engagement includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the regularity and propriety of the academy trust's income and expenditure.

Conclusion

In the course of our work, nothing has come to our attention which suggests that in all material respects the expenditure disbursed and income received during the period 1st September 2024 to 31st August 2025 has not been applied for the purposes intended by Parliament or that the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities which govern them.



Hardings
Chartered Accountants
Reporting Accountant
6 Marsh Parade
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire
ST5 1DU

2nd December 2025

City Learning Trust

**Statement of Financial Activities
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

					31/8/25	31/8/24
		Unrestricted	Restricted	Restricted	Total	Total
	Notes	fund	fixed	fund	funds	funds
		£	asset	£	£	£
			fund			
			£			
Income and endowments from						
Donations and capital grants	2	11,213	176,193	267,616	455,022	1,258,516
Charitable activities						
Funding for the academy's educational operations	3	-	-	20,792,513	20,792,513	19,622,653
Other trading activities	4	57,555	-	512,292	569,847	239,703
Investment income	5	11,183	-	-	11,183	7,719
Total		<u>79,951</u>	<u>176,193</u>	<u>21,572,421</u>	<u>21,828,565</u>	<u>21,128,591</u>
Expenditure on						
Charitable activities						
Academy's educational operations	7	-	1,164,972	21,947,877	23,112,849	21,800,696
Total		<u>-</u>	<u>1,164,972</u>	<u>21,947,877</u>	<u>23,112,849</u>	<u>21,800,696</u>
NET						
INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		79,951	(988,779)	(375,456)	(1,284,284)	(672,105)
Transfers between funds	17	-	171,130	(171,130)	-	-
Other recognised gains/(losses)						
Actuarial gains on defined benefit schemes		-	-	537,000	537,000	441,000
Net movement in funds		79,951	(817,649)	(9,586)	(747,284)	(231,105)
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward		377,703	37,649,201	276,943	38,303,847	38,534,952
Total funds carried forward		<u>457,654</u>	<u>36,831,552</u>	<u>267,357</u>	<u>37,556,563</u>	<u>38,303,847</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

City Learning Trust (Registered number: 07746561)

**Balance Sheet
31st August 2025**

				31/8/25	31/8/24
		Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fixed asset fund £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	13	-	36,831,552	-	36,831,552
Current assets					
Debtors	14	-	-	537,086	537,086
Cash at bank and in hand		457,654	-	2,382,649	2,840,303
		457,654	-	2,919,735	3,377,389
Creditors					
Amounts falling due within one year	15	-	-	(2,652,378)	(2,652,378)
Net current assets		457,654	-	267,357	725,011
Total assets less current liabilities		457,654	36,831,552	267,357	37,556,563
NET ASSETS		457,654	36,831,552	267,357	37,556,563
Funds	17				
Restricted income funds				37,098,909	37,926,144
Unrestricted income fund				457,654	377,703
Total funds				37,556,563	38,303,847

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 2nd December 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:



Mrs W Dean - Trustee

City Learning Trust

**Cash Flow Statement
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

	Notes	31/8/25 £	31/8/24 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	22	<u>1,968,021</u>	<u>(27,297)</u>
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities		<u>1,968,021</u>	<u>(27,297)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(347,323)	(875,070)
Capital grants from DfE/EFA		176,193	253,057
Interest received		<u>11,183</u>	<u>7,719</u>
Net cash used in investing activities		<u>(159,947)</u>	<u>(614,294)</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		<u>1,808,074</u>	<u>(641,591)</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		<u>1,032,229</u>	<u>1,673,820</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		<u><u>2,840,303</u></u>	<u><u>1,032,229</u></u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

**Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

1. Accounting policies

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the academy trust, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland', the Academies Accounts Direction 2024 to 2025 issued by the DfE, the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

City Learning Trust meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102.

Going concern

The trustees assess whether the use of going concern is appropriate i.e. whether there are any material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the company to continue as a going concern. The trustees make this assessment in respect of a period of at least one year from the date of authorisation for issue of the financial statements and have concluded that the academy trust has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future and there are no material uncertainties about the academy trust's ability to continue as a going concern, thus they continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the academy trust has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Grants

Grants are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the balance sheet. Where income is received in advance of meeting any performance-related conditions there is not unconditional entitlement to the income and its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income until the performance-related conditions are met. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

General Annual Grant is recognised in full in the Statement of Financial Activities in the year for which it is receivable and any abatement in respect of the period is deducted from income and recognised as a liability.

Capital grants are recognised in full when there is an unconditional entitlement to the grant. Unspent amounts of capital grants are reflected in the balance sheet in the restricted fixed asset fund. Capital grants are recognised when there is entitlement and are not deferred over the life of the asset on which they are expended.

Sponsorship income

Sponsorship income provided to the academy trust which amounts to a donation is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities in the period in which it is receivable (where there are no performance-related conditions), where it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Donations

Donations are recognised on a receivable basis (where there are no performance related conditions), where it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Other income

Other income including the hire of facilities, is recognised in the period it is receivable and to the extent the academy trust has provided the goods or services.

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

1. Accounting policies - continued

Donated goods, facilities and services

Goods donated for resale are included at fair value, being the expected proceeds from sale less the expected costs of sale. If it is practical to assess the fair value at receipt, it is recognised in stock and 'Income from other trading activities'. Upon sale, the value of the stock is charged against 'Income from other trading activities' and the proceeds are recognised as 'Income from other trading activities'. Where it is impractical to fair value the items due to the volume of low value items they are not recognised in the financial statements until they are sold. This income is recognised within 'Income from other trading activities'.

Donated fixed assets

Where the donated good is a fixed asset it is measured at fair value, unless it is impractical to measure this reliably, in which case the cost of the item to the donor should be used. The gain is recognised as income from donations and a corresponding amount is included in the appropriate fixed asset category and depreciated over the useful economic life in accordance with the academy trust's accounting policies.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the academy trust to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Charitable activities

Costs of charitable activities are incurred on the academy trust's educational operations, including support costs and costs relating to the governance of the academy trust apportioned to charitable activities.

Tangible fixed assets

Assets costing £1,000 or more are capitalised as tangible fixed assets and are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment.

Where tangible fixed assets have been acquired with the aid of specific grants, either from the government or from the private sector, they are included in the Balance sheet at cost and depreciated over their expected useful economic life. Where there are specific conditions attached to the funding requiring the continued use of the asset, the related grants are credited to a restricted fund asset fund in the Statement of financial activities and carried forward in the Balance sheet. Depreciation on the relevant assets is charged directly to the restricted fixed asset fund in the Statement of Financial Activities. Where the tangible fixed assets have been acquired with un restricted funds, depreciation on such assets is charged to the unrestricted fund.

A review for impairment of a fixed asset is carried out if events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying value of any fixed asset may not be recoverable. Shortfalls between the carrying value of fixed assets and their recoverable amounts are recognised as impairments. Impairment losses are recognised in the Statement of financial activities.

Tangible fixed assets are carried at cost, net of depreciation and any provision for impairment. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over the expected useful lives on the following basis:

Freehold buildings	- over 50 years straight line
L/term leasehold buildings	- over 50 years straight line
Freehold land	- no depreciation
Property improvements	- over 10 years straight line**
Assets under construction	- no depreciation
Fixtures and fittings	- over 4 years straight line
Computer equipment	- over 3 years straight line
Motor vehicles	- over 4 years straight line

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

1. Accounting policies - continued

Tangible fixed assets

****Note** that improvements to property have not been depreciated where the project has not been completed at the balance sheet date.

Financial instruments

The academy trust only holds basic financial instruments as defined in FRS 102. The financial assets and financial liabilities of the academy trust and their measurement basis are as follows:

Financial assets - trade and other debtors are basic financial instruments and are debt instruments measured at amortised cost as detailed in note 14. Prepayments are not financial instruments.

Cash at bank - is classified as a basic financial instrument and is measured at face value.

Financial liabilities - trade creditors, accruals and other creditors are financial instruments, and are measured at amortised cost as detailed in notes 15. Taxation and social security are not included in the financial instruments disclosure definition. Deferred income is not deemed to be a financial liability, as the cash settlement has already taken place and there is an obligation to deliver services rather than cash or another financial instrument.

Taxation

The academy trust is considered to pass the tests set out in Paragraph 1 Schedule 6 of the Finance Act 2010 and therefore it meets the definition of a charitable company for UK corporation tax purposes.

Accordingly, the academy trust is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income or capital gains received within categories covered by Part 11, Chapter 3 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 or Section 256 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992, to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted income funds represent those resources which may be used towards meeting any of the charitable objects of the academy trust at the discretion of the trustees.

Restricted fixed asset funds are resources which are to be applied to specific capital purposes imposed by funders where the asset acquired or created is held for a specific purpose.

Restricted general funds comprise all other restricted funds received with restrictions imposed by the funder/donor and include grants from the Education Funding Agency/Department for Education.

Critical accounting estimates and areas of judgement

Estimates and judgements are continually evaluated and are based on historical experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

Critical accounting estimates and assumptions

The academy trust makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates and assumptions will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities within the next financial year are discussed below.

The present value of the Local Government Pension Scheme defined benefit liability depends on a number of factors that are determined on an actuarial basis using a variety of assumptions. The assumptions used in determining the net cost (income) for pensions include the discount rate. Any changes in these assumptions, which are disclosed in note 18, will impact the carrying amount of the pension liability. Furthermore a roll forward approach which projects results from the latest full actuarial valuation performed at 31 March 2022 has been used by the actuary in valuing the pensions liability at 31st August 2025. Any differences between the figures derived from the roll forward approach and a full actuarial valuation would impact on the carrying amount of the pension liability.

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

1. Accounting policies - continued

Pensions benefits

Retirement benefits to employees of the academy trust are provided by the Teachers' Pension Scheme ('TPS') and the Local Government Pension Scheme ('LGPS'). These are defined benefit schemes.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme and contributions are calculated to spread the cost of pensions over employees' working lives with the academy trust in such a way that the pension cost is a substantially level percentage of current and future pensionable payroll. The contributions are determined by the Government Actuary based on quadrennial valuations using a prospective unit credit method. TPS is an unfunded multi-employer scheme with no underlying assets to assign between employers. Consequently, the TPS is treated as a defined contribution scheme for accounting purposes and the contributions recognised in the period to which they relate.

The LGPS is a funded multi-employer scheme, and the assets are held separately from those of the academy trust in separate trustee administered funds. Pension scheme assets are measured at fair value and liabilities are measured on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method and discounted at a rate equivalent to the current rate of return on a high-quality corporate bond of equivalent term and currency to the liabilities. The actuarial valuations are obtained at least triennially and are updated at each balance sheet date. The amounts charged to net income/(expenditure) are the current service costs and the costs of scheme introductions, benefit changes, settlements and curtailments. They are included as part of staff costs as incurred. Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/asset is also recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities and comprises the interest cost on the defined benefit obligation and interest income on the scheme assets, calculated by multiplying the fair value of the scheme assets at the beginning of the period by the rate used to discount the benefit obligations. The difference between the interest income on the scheme assets and the actual return on the scheme assets is recognised in other recognised gains and losses.

Actuarial gains and losses are recognised immediately in other recognised gains and losses.

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Rentals under operating leases are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities on a straight line basis over the lease term.

Agency Arrangements

The academy trust acts as an agent in distributing 16-19 bursary funds from the ESFA. Payments received from the ESFA and subsequent disbursements to students are excluded from the statement of financial activities as the trust does not have control over the charitable application of the funds. The trust can use up to 5% of the allocation towards its own administration costs and this is recognised in the statement of financial activities. The funds received and paid and any balances held are disclosed in note 21.

Service Concession Arrangements

The Academy Trust's buildings are subject to Service Concession Agreement (SCA) contract entered into by Stoke-on-Trent City Council and transferred to the Academy Trust on conversion.

In accordance with FRS102 the buildings to which the contract relates have been capitalised on the Academy Trust's balance sheet. As donated assets, the initial carrying amount was the fair value on the date of receipt in accordance with the Academies Accounts Direction. As a specialized property, depreciated replacement cost was used as the measure of fair value in accordance with applicable accounting standards.

On an ongoing basis, the payments made Stoke-on-Trent City Council are reported through the Statement of Financial Activities and accounted for in the period to which they relate.

City Learning Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

2. Donations and capital grants

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31/8/25 Total funds £	31/8/24 Total funds £
Donations	11,213	267,616	278,829	509,691
Grants	-	176,193	176,193	748,825
	<u>11,213</u>	<u>443,809</u>	<u>455,022</u>	<u>1,258,516</u>

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	31/8/25 £	31/8/24 £
ESFA/LA Capital Grants	176,193	253,057
Other Government Grants	-	495,768
	<u>176,193</u>	<u>748,825</u>

3. Funding for the academy trust's educational operations

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31/8/25 Total funds £	31/8/24 Total funds £
DfE/ESFA grants				
General Annual Grant(GAG)	-	16,233,184	16,233,184	15,330,802
Other DfE/ESFA Grants	-	2,833,219	2,833,219	2,963,289
	<u>-</u>	<u>19,066,403</u>	<u>19,066,403</u>	<u>18,294,091</u>
Other Government grants				
Local Government Grants	-	686,332	686,332	718,571
Other Government Grants	-	294,675	294,675	29,757
	<u>-</u>	<u>981,007</u>	<u>981,007</u>	<u>748,328</u>
Other income from the academy trust's educational operations				
	<u>-</u>	<u>745,103</u>	<u>745,103</u>	<u>580,234</u>
	<u>-</u>	<u>20,792,513</u>	<u>20,792,513</u>	<u>19,622,653</u>

Included within Other DfE/ESFA grants above are the following:

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	31/08/25 Total Funds £	31/08/24 Total Funds £
Pupil Premium	-	1,147,210	1,147,210	1,129,785
Rates Relief	-	45,582	45,582	75,461
Universal Infant Free School Meals	-	64,375	64,375	52,237
Teachers Pay Grant	-	179,741	179,741	426,143
Teachers Pension Grant	-	360,724	360,724	10,737
16-19 Funding	-	327,538	327,538	355,474
Supplementary grant	-	-	-	325,675

City Learning Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

3. Funding for the academy trust's educational operations - continued

PE and Sports grant	-	37,040	37,040	37,330
Mainstream Schools Additional Grant	-	-	-	546,572
ITT Bursaries Grant	-	47,541	47,541	-
Core Schools Budget Grant	-	621,293	621,293	-
Other	-	2,175	2,175	3,875
	-	<u>2,833,219</u>	<u>2,833,219</u>	<u>2,963,289</u>

4. Other trading activities

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31/8/25 Total funds £	31/8/24 Total funds £
Hire of facilities	57,555	-	57,555	41,625
Other activities for generating funds	-	512,292	512,292	198,078
	<u>57,555</u>	<u>512,292</u>	<u>569,847</u>	<u>239,703</u>

5. Investment income

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31/8/25 Total funds £	31/8/24 Total funds £
Deposit account interest	<u>11,183</u>	-	<u>11,183</u>	<u>7,719</u>

6. Expenditure

	Staff costs £	Non-pay expenditure		31/8/25 Total £	31/8/24 Total £
		Premises £	Other costs £		
Charitable activities					
Academy's educational operations					
Direct costs	13,412,432	716,100	2,198,501	16,327,033	15,261,218
Allocated support costs	<u>2,770,305</u>	<u>2,472,995</u>	<u>1,542,516</u>	<u>6,785,816</u>	<u>6,539,478</u>
	<u>16,182,737</u>	<u>3,189,095</u>	<u>3,741,017</u>	<u>23,112,849</u>	<u>21,800,696</u>

Net resources are stated after charging:

	31/08/25 £	31/08/24 £
Auditor's remuneration - audit	9,000	9,000
Auditor's remuneration - other services	10,600	10,600
Depreciation - owned assets	956,132	921,475
Depreciation - leasehold assets	<u>208,840</u>	<u>208,840</u>

City Learning Trust

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

7. Charitable activities - academy's educational operations

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31/8/25 Total funds £	31/8/24 Total funds £
Direct costs	-	16,327,033	16,327,033	15,261,218
Support costs	-	6,785,816	6,785,816	6,539,478
	-	23,112,849	23,112,849	21,800,696

	31/8/25 Total £	31/8/24 Total £
Analysis of support costs		
Support staff costs	2,770,307	2,765,832
Technology costs	200,395	188,558
Premises costs	2,259,758	2,112,909
Other support costs	813,119	759,389
Governance costs	742,237	712,790
Total support costs	6,785,816	6,539,478

Included in governance costs is £529,000 (2024: £441,000) charge in respect of the LGPS.

8. Staff costs

	31/8/25 £	31/8/24 £
Wages and salaries	11,756,431	11,319,396
Social security costs	1,304,205	1,099,626
Operating costs of defined benefit pension schemes	2,964,810	2,722,955
	16,025,446	15,141,977
Supply teacher costs	112,291	142,469
Compensation payments	45,000	-
	16,182,737	15,284,446

Included in the above staff costs are staff restructuring costs of £53,974 (2024: £38,293) made up of redundancy payments of £15,474 (2024: £nil) and severance payments of £38,500 (2024: £38,293).

The academy trust paid 7 severance payment in the year, disclosed in the following bands:

0-£25,000 7

The average number of persons (including senior management team) employed by the academy trust during the year was as follows:

	31/8/25	31/8/24
Teachers	137	134
Administration and support	168	166
Management	31	27
	336	327

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

8. Staff costs - continued

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs and employer national insurance contributions) exceeded £60,000 was:

	31/8/25	31/8/24
£60,001 - £70,000	14	8
£70,001 - £80,000	10	6
£80,001 - £90,000	3	3
£90,001 - £100,000	-	2
£100,001 - £110,000	1	1
£110,001 - £120,000	2	-
£120,001 - £130,000	-	1
£130,001 - £140,000	-	1
£140,001 - £150,000	1	-
£220,001 - £230,000	-	-
£240,001 - £250,000	-	1
£250,001 - £260,000	1	-
	<u>32</u>	<u>23</u>

The key management personnel of the academy trust comprises of the trustees and the senior management team as listed on page 1. The total amount of key management personnel benefits (including employer pension contributions and employer national insurance contributions) received by key management personnel for their services to the academy trust was £1,404,057 (2024 : £1,197,974).

9. Related party transactions - trustees' remuneration and expenses

One or more of the Trustees has been paid remuneration or has received other benefits from an employment with the academy trust. The Principal and other staff Trustees only receive remuneration in respect of services they provide undertaking the roles of principal and staff members under their contracts of employment.

The value of Trustees' remuneration and other benefits was as follows:

		2025 £	2024 £
Mr C S Ward	Remuneration	255,000-260,000	240,000-245,000
	Pension contributions paid	70,000-75,000	60,000-65,000

As with previous years, the CEO's salary has attracted substantial funding to offset.

As with the detail offered in note 9, there has been no significant change in the trustees' remuneration and expenses other than that necessitated by the STPCD.

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

10. Trustees' and officers' insurance

In accordance with normal commercial practice, the Academy Trust has purchased insurance to protect trustees and officers from claims arising from negligent acts, errors and omissions occurring whilst on Academy Trust business. The insurance cover provides up to £5,000,000 on any one claim.

11. Comparatives for the statement of financial activities

	Unrestricted fund £	Restricted fixed asset fund £	Restricted fund £	Total funds £
Income and endowments from				
Donations and capital grants	49,011	748,825	460,680	1,258,516
Charitable activities				
Funding for the academy's educational operations	-	-	19,622,653	19,622,653
Other trading activities	41,625	-	198,078	239,703
Investment income	<u>7,719</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>7,719</u>
Total	<u>98,355</u>	<u>748,825</u>	<u>20,281,411</u>	<u>21,128,591</u>
Expenditure on				
Charitable activities				
Academy's educational operations	-	1,130,315	20,670,381	21,800,696
Total	<u>-</u>	<u>1,130,315</u>	<u>20,670,381</u>	<u>21,800,696</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	98,355	(381,490)	(388,970)	(672,105)
Transfers between funds	-	126,245	(126,245)	-
Other recognised gains/(losses)				
Actuarial gains on defined benefit schemes	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>441,000</u>	<u>441,000</u>
Net movement in funds	98,355	(255,245)	(74,215)	(231,105)
Reconciliation of funds				
Total funds brought forward	279,348	37,904,446	351,158	38,534,952
Total funds carried forward	<u>377,703</u>	<u>37,649,201</u>	<u>276,943</u>	<u>38,303,847</u>

City Learning Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

12. Central services

The City Learning Trust provides an extensive range of services in its fully federated approach to collaborative working. Services provided are fully inclusive of Finance, HR, Governance, Health & Safety, Premises, GDPR, Legal and ICT but further to this school improvement services are also provided in the form of a team of master teachers who provide comprehensive staff development opportunities via their expert subject knowledge and pedagogy.

The City Learning Trust has operated a fully pooled GAG arrangement for several years and all academies benefit from this provision.

13. Tangible fixed assets

	Freehold land & buildings £	Long leasehold land & buildings £	Improvements to property £
Cost			
At 1st September 2024	30,245,000	11,452,000	2,361,684
Additions	-	-	206,562
At 31st August 2025	30,245,000	11,452,000	2,568,246
Depreciation			
At 1st September 2024	4,540,850	1,491,280	872,268
Charge for year	507,260	208,840	237,007
At 31st August 2025	5,048,110	1,700,120	1,109,275
Net book value			
At 31st August 2025	25,196,890	9,751,880	1,458,971
At 31st August 2024	25,704,150	9,960,720	1,489,416

	Fixtures and fittings £	Motor vehicles £	Computer equipment £	Totals £
Cost				
At 1st September 2024	1,010,760	23,000	1,252,997	46,345,441
Additions	45,382	1,000	94,379	347,323
At 31st August 2025	1,056,142	24,000	1,347,376	46,692,764
Depreciation				
At 1st September 2024	760,237	13,338	1,018,267	8,696,240
Charge for year	101,759	2,767	107,339	1,164,972
At 31st August 2025	861,996	16,105	1,125,606	9,861,212
Net book value				
At 31st August 2025	194,146	7,895	221,770	36,831,552
At 31st August 2024	250,523	9,662	234,730	37,649,201

City Learning Trust

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

14. Debtors: amounts falling due within one year

	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Trade debtors	81,771	19,219
VAT	38,063	47,047
Prepayments and accrued income	<u>417,252</u>	<u>549,130</u>
	<u>537,086</u>	<u>615,396</u>

15. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Trade creditors	791,840	210,614
Social security and other taxes	335,738	263,890
Other creditors	21,003	9,811
Accruals and deferred income	<u>1,503,797</u>	<u>508,664</u>
	<u>2,652,378</u>	<u>992,979</u>

Deferred Income

	£	£
Deferred income as at 1st September 2024	224,194	410,654
Resources deferred in the year	618,961	224,194
Amounts released from previous years	<u>(224,194)</u>	<u>(410,654)</u>
Deferred income as at 31st August 2025	<u>618,961</u>	<u>224,194</u>

Creditors includes £618,961 (2024: £224,194) of income which has been deferred into the following year due to the timing of the academy's entitlement to the income and predominantly relates to Universal Infant Free School Meals along with Rates Relief, School led tutor funding, school improvement funding and trip income for 2025/26. There are no unfulfilled conditions attached to this income at the balance sheet date.

16. Members' liability

Each member of the academy trust 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.

City Learning Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

17. Movement in funds

	At 1.9.24 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 31.8.25 £
Restricted general funds				
General Annual Grant	276,943	161,544	(171,130)	267,357
Restricted fixed asset fund	<u>37,649,201</u>	<u>(988,779)</u>	<u>171,130</u>	<u>36,831,552</u>
	<u>37,926,144</u>	<u>(827,235)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>37,098,909</u>
Unrestricted fund				
General fund	<u>377,703</u>	<u>79,951</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>457,654</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>38,303,847</u>	<u>(747,284)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>37,556,563</u>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Gains and losses £	Movement in funds £
Restricted general funds				
General Annual Grant	16,233,185	(16,071,641)	-	161,544
Other DfE/ESFA	2,833,219	(2,833,219)	-	-
Local Authority Grants	686,332	(686,332)	-	-
Other	1,819,685	(2,356,685)	537,000	-
Restricted fixed asset fund	<u>176,193</u>	<u>(1,164,972)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(988,779)</u>
	<u>21,748,614</u>	<u>(23,112,849)</u>	<u>537,000</u>	<u>(827,235)</u>
Unrestricted fund				
General fund	<u>79,951</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>79,951</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>21,828,565</u>	<u>(23,112,849)</u>	<u>537,000</u>	<u>(747,284)</u>

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1.9.23 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 31.8.24 £
Restricted general funds				
General Annual Grant	351,158	52,030	(126,245)	276,943
Restricted fixed asset fund	<u>37,904,446</u>	<u>(381,490)</u>	<u>126,245</u>	<u>37,649,201</u>
	<u>38,255,604</u>	<u>(329,460)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>37,926,144</u>
Unrestricted fund				
General fund	<u>279,348</u>	<u>98,355</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>377,703</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>38,534,952</u>	<u>(231,105)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>38,303,847</u>

City Learning Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

17. Movement in funds - continued

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Gains and losses £	Movement in funds £
Restricted general funds				
General Annual Grant	15,330,802	(15,278,772)	-	52,030
Other DfE/ESFA	2,963,289	(2,963,289)	-	-
Local Authority Grants	718,571	(718,571)	-	-
Other	1,268,749	(1,268,749)	-	-
LGPS Pension	-	(441,000)	441,000	-
Restricted fixed asset fund	748,825	(1,130,315)	-	(381,490)
	<u>21,030,236</u>	<u>(21,800,696)</u>	<u>441,000</u>	<u>(329,460)</u>
Unrestricted fund				
General fund	98,355	-	-	98,355
	<u>98,355</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>98,355</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>21,128,591</u>	<u>(21,800,696)</u>	<u>441,000</u>	<u>(231,105)</u>

The specific purposes for which the funds are to be applied for are as follows:

The General Annual Grant (GAG) fund is for the charitable purposes of the trust and applied under the ESFA guidance.

Other DfE/ESFA grants are from the DfE and ESFA which are not the GAG but are used for the charitable purpose of the trust.

The SEN funding relates solely to the income and expenditure relating to pupils with special educational needs.

Other income relates to miscellaneous income received.

The pension reserve relates to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

Restricted fixed asset fund relates to assets purchased or inherited less depreciation.

Transfers between the restricted funds and restricted fixed asset funds relates to revenue contributions to capital expenditure.

Under the funding agreement with the Secretary of State, the academy trust was not subject to a limit on the amount of GAG that it could carry forward at 31st August 2025.

Analysis of academies by fund balance

Fund balances at 31st August 2025 were allocated as follows:

	31/08/25 £	31/08/24 £
Haywood Academy	-	-
Smallthorne Primary Academy	-	-
Mill Hill Primary Academy	-	-
Trentham Academy	-	-
Central	<u>725,011</u>	<u>654,646</u>
Total before fixed assets and pension reserve	725,011	654,646

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

17. Movement in funds - continued

Restricted fixed assets funds	36,831,552	37,649,201
Pension reserve	-	-
Total	37,556,563	38,303,847

Analysis of academies by cost

Expenditure incurred by each academy during the period was as follows:

	Teaching and educational support staff costs £	Other support staff costs £	Educational supplies £	Other costs (excluding depreciation) £	Total £
Haywood Academy	6,235,131	729,098	676,744	1,359,836	9,000,809
Smallthorne Primary Academy	883,254	177,318	58,838	235,575	1,354,985
Mill Hill Primary Academy	1,740,295	407,306	96,870	519,187	2,763,658
Trentham Academy	3,453,506	623,022	444,912	944,985	5,466,425
Central Services	1,100,245	833,562	472,265	426,925	2,832,997
	<u>13,412,431</u>	<u>2,770,306</u>	<u>1,349,629</u>	<u>3,486,508</u>	<u>21,418,874</u>

18. Pension and similar obligations

The academy trust's employees belong to two principal pension schemes: the Teachers' Pension Scheme England and Wales (TPS) for academic and related staff; and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for non-teaching staff, which is managed by Staffordshire Pension Fund. Both are multi-employer defined benefit schemes.

The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS related to the period ended 31 March 2020 and of the LGPS to the period ended 31 March 2022.

There were no outstanding or prepaid contributions at either the beginning or end of the financial year.

Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) is a statutory, contributory, defined benefit scheme, governed by the Teachers' Pension Scheme Regulations 2014. Membership is automatic for teachers in academies. All teachers have the option to opt-out of the TPS following enrolment.

The TPS is an unfunded scheme to which both the member and employer makes contributions, as a percentage of salary - these contributions are credited to the Exchequer. Retirement and other pension benefits are paid by public funds provided by Parliament.

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025**

18. Pension and similar obligations - continued

Valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary, using normal actuarial principles, conducts a formal actuarial review of the TPS in accordance with the Public Service Pensions (Valuation and Employer Cost Cap) Directions 2014 published by HM Treasury every 4 years. The aim of the review is to specify the level of future contributions. Actuarial scheme valuations are dependent on assumptions about the value of future costs, design of benefits and many other factors. The latest actuarial valuation of the TPS was carried out as at 31 March 2020. The valuation report was published by the Department for Education on 27 October 2023, with the SCAPE rate, set by HMT, applying a notional investment return based on 1.7% above the rate of CPI. The key elements of the valuation outcome are:

- Employer contribution rates set at 28.68% of pensionable pay (including a 0.08% administration levy). This is an increase of 5% in employer contributions and the cost control result is such that no change in member benefits is needed.
- Total scheme liabilities (pensions currently in payment and the estimated cost of future benefits) for service to the effective date of £262,000 million and notional assets (estimated future contributions together with the notional investments held at the valuation date) of £222,200 million, giving a notional past service deficit of £39,800 million.

The result of this valuation was implemented on 1 April 2024. The next valuation result is due to be implemented from 1 April 2028.

The employer's pension costs paid to TPS in the period amounted to £2,121,811 (2024 - £1,584,955).

A copy of the valuation report and supporting documentation is on the Teachers' Pensions website.

Under the definitions set out in FRS 102, the TPS is an unfunded multi-employer pension scheme. The academy trust is unable to identify its share of the underlying assets and liabilities of the plan. Accordingly, the academy trust has taken advantage of the exemption in FRS102 and has accounted for its contributions to the scheme as if it were a defined contribution scheme. The academy trust has set out above the information available on the scheme.

Local Government Pension Scheme

The LGPS is a funded defined benefit pension scheme, with the assets held in separate trustee-administered funds. The total contribution made for the year ended 31st August 2025 was £1,048,000 (2024 - £1,396,000), of which employer's contributions totalled £843,000 (2024 - £1,138,000). and employees' contributions totalled £205,000 (2024 - £258,000). The agreed contribution rates for future years are 25.20 per cent for employers and 12.50 per cent for employees.

Parliament has agreed, at the request of the Secretary of State for Education, to a guarantee that, in the event of an academy trust closure, outstanding Local Government Pension Scheme liabilities would be met by the Department for Education. The guarantee came into force on 18 July 2013.

On 21 July 2022, the Department for Education reaffirmed its commitment to the guarantee, with a parliamentary minute published on GOV.UK.

The actuary originally indicated a surplus of £4,890,000 on the LGPS pension scheme (2024: £1,451,000). However, following their issue of an "asset ceiling paper", and taking the assumption that no minimum funding requirement exists in the LGPS for contributions relating to future service or past service, the surplus was discounted down to nil.

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

18. Pension and similar obligations - continued

The amounts recognised in the Balance Sheet are as follows:

	Defined benefit pension plans	
	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Present value of funded obligations	(10,513,000)	(12,174,000)
Fair value of plan assets	<u>10,513,000</u>	<u>12,174,000</u>
	-	-
Present value of unfunded obligations	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Deficit	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net liability	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

The amounts recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities are as follows:

	Defined benefit pension plans	
	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Current service cost	537,000	716,000
Net interest from net defined benefit asset/liability	622,000	585,000
Past service cost	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>1,159,000</u>	<u>1,301,000</u>
	-	-
Actual return on plan assets	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Changes in the present value of the defined benefit obligation are as follows:

	Defined benefit pension plans	
	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Opening defined benefit obligation	12,174,000	10,941,000
Current service cost	537,000	716,000
Contributions by scheme participants	205,000	258,000
Interest cost	622,000	585,000
Benefits paid	(202,000)	(354,000)
Remeasurements:		
Actuarial (gains)/losses from changes in demographic assumptions	45,000	(24,000)
Actuarial (gains)/losses from changes in financial assumptions	(2,767,000)	(302,000)
Other experience	<u>(101,000)</u>	<u>354,000</u>
	<u>10,513,000</u>	<u>12,174,000</u>

City Learning Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

18. Pension and similar obligations - continued

Changes in the fair value of scheme assets are as follows:

	Defined benefit pension plans	
	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Opening fair value of scheme assets	12,174,000	10,941,000
Contributions by employer	843,000	1,138,000
Contributions by scheme participants	205,000	258,000
Interest income on plan assets	702,000	604,000
Benefits paid	(202,000)	(354,000)
Remeasurements:		
Return on plan assets (excluding interest income)	230,000	883,000
Asset ceiling adjustment	(3,439,000)	(1,296,000)
	<u>10,513,000</u>	<u>12,174,000</u>

The amounts recognised in other recognised gains and losses are as follows:

	Defined benefit pension plans	
	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Actuarial (gains)/losses from changes in demographic assumptions	(45,000)	24,000
Actuarial (gains)/losses from changes in financial assumptions	2,767,000	302,000
Other experience	101,000	(354,000)
Return on plan assets (excluding interest income)	230,000	883,000
Asset ceiling adjustment	(3,439,000)	(1,296,000)
	<u>(386,000)</u>	<u>(441,000)</u>

The major categories of scheme assets as amounts of total scheme assets are as follows:

	Defined benefit pension plans	
	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Equities	6,412,930	7,791,360
Bonds	3,048,770	3,286,980
Property	841,040	852,180
Cash	210,260	243,480
	<u>10,513,000</u>	<u>12,174,000</u>

Principal actuarial assumptions at the Balance Sheet date (expressed as weighted averages):

	31/8/25	31/8/24
Discount rate	6.10%	5.00%
Future salary increases	3.20%	3.15%
Future pension increases	2.70%	2.65%

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

18. Pension and similar obligations - continued

The current mortality assumptions include sufficient allowance for future improvements in mortality rates. The assumed life expectations on retirement age 65 are:

	31/8/25	31/8/24
Retiring today		
Males	18.6	18.3
Females	22.9	22.8
Retiring in 20 years		
Males	20.5	20.3
Females	24.5	24.5

Sensitivity analysis

	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Discount rate +0.1%	(240,000)	(297,000)
Discount rate -0.1%	240,000	297,000
Mortality assumption - 1 year increase	421,000	487,000
Mortality assumption - 1 year decrease	(421,000)	(487,000)
CPI rate +0.1%	235,000	288,000
CPI rate -0.1%	(235,000)	(288,000)

19. Long-term commitments, including operating leases

Minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases fall due as follows:

	31/8/25	31/8/24
	£	£
Within one year	305,670	88,498
Between one and five years	<u>203,792</u>	<u>145,873</u>
	<u>509,462</u>	<u>234,371</u>

20. Related party disclosures

Owing to the nature of the academy trust and the composition of the board of trustees being drawn from local public and private sector organisations, transactions may take place with organisations in which the trustees have an interest. The following related party transactions took place in the financial period.

No related party transactions took place in the period of account, other than certain trustee's remuneration already disclosed in note 9.

All transactions involving such organisations are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook, including notifying ESFA of all transactions made on or after 1 April 2019 and obtaining their approval where required, and with the academy trust's financial regulations and normal procurement procedures relating to connected and related party transactions.

City Learning Trust

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued for the Year Ended 31st August 2025

21. Agency arrangements

The academy trust distributes 16-19 bursary funds to students as an agent for the ESFA. In the year end 31st August 2025 the trust received £nil (2024: £10,027) and disbursed £nil (2024: £10,027) from the fund. At the year end there were no amounts of undistributed funds repayable to the ESFA.

22. Reconciliation of net expenditure to net cash flow from operating activities

	31/8/25 £	31/8/24 £
Net expenditure for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	(1,284,284)	(672,105)
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	1,164,972	1,130,315
Capital grants from DfE/ESFA	(176,193)	(253,057)
Interest received	(11,183)	(7,719)
Decrease/(increase) in debtors	78,310	(32,372)
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	1,659,399	(633,359)
Difference between pension charge and cash contributions	<u>537,000</u>	<u>441,000</u>
Net cash provided by/(used in) operations	<u><u>1,968,021</u></u>	<u><u>(27,297)</u></u>

23. Analysis of changes in net funds

	At 1.9.24 £	Cash flow £	At 31.8.25 £
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>1,032,229</u>	<u>1,808,074</u>	<u>2,840,303</u>
	<u>1,032,229</u>	<u>1,808,074</u>	<u>2,840,303</u>
Total	<u><u>1,032,229</u></u>	<u><u>1,808,074</u></u>	<u><u>2,840,303</u></u>