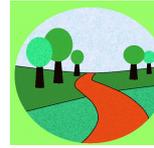




Doubletrees School
St Blazey Gate
St Blazey
Par, PL24 2DS



Pencalenick School
St Clement
Truro
TR1 1TE



Nancealverne
School
Madron Road
Penzance
TR20 8TP



Curnow School
Drump Road
Redruth
TR15 1LU

‘Special Partnership Trust’

A special partnership Multi Academy Trust incorporating:
Curnow School, Doubletrees School, Nancealverne School and Pencalenick School.

www.specialpartnership.org

September 2016

Background

The Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers, Business Managers and a number of governors of the four special schools in Cornwall (Curnow, Doubletrees, Nancealverne and Pencalenick Schools) held a joint meeting on 19th November 2015 to explore the options of working more closely together. Options explored included more effective informal collaboration; cooperative trust status, federation and multi academy trust status.

It was unanimously agreed by those who attended that the schools should formally explore the opportunity of creating a multi academy trust (MAT). It was felt that this option, more than any other, gave us both the opportunity and the collective responsibility to ensure the delivery of consistently good and proactive SEN provision in our schools and across the whole of Cornwall.

A joint working group, initially made up of the Headteachers and Chairs of Governors of the four schools, has been established to explore the practical implications in more detail. This document has been produced to help to clarify the vision, purpose and structure of the MAT, to identify perceived advantages and address common questions and concerns.

The schools involved

Cornwall have four special schools involved in the partnership: Curnow School, Nancealverne School and Pencalenick School, have already converted to academies and formed the Special Partnership Trust. Doubletrees School is in the process of converting and aims to join the Trust as a full partner on 1st October 2016.

Curnow School is a community special school catering for learners aged 3-19 years with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. It currently has 91 learners on roll (commissioned places = 93). It was judged to be ‘Outstanding’ at its last inspection by Ofsted on 24 January 2013. The school is based in Redruth and admits learners from Mid, West and North Cornwall.

Doubletrees School is a community special school catering for learners between the ages of 2-19 years with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. It currently has 95 learners on roll. It was judged to be

'Good' at the last inspection by Ofsted on 17 September 2013. The school is situated in St Blazey Gate near St Austell and takes in learners from the North and East of Cornwall, ranging from Truro across to the Plymouth/Devon border, including the North coast of Cornwall.

Nancealverne School is a cooperative trust school, which is part of the Penwith Education Trust. It caters for 79 learners with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties between the ages of 2-19 years. It was judged to be 'Good' at the last inspection by Ofsted on 1 October 2014. The school is situated in Penzance and takes in learners from the south west of Cornwall.

Pencalenick School is a single academy trust school, catering for up to 120 learners with complex learning difficulties aged between 9 and 16 years. It also offers a 25 place weekly residential provision for its learners. The school was judged to be 'Good' at the last inspection by Ofsted on 1 July 2015. The school is situated near Truro and takes in learners from across the whole of Cornwall.

Rationale

The four special schools have a successful legacy of working together informally for many years. In a climate of decreasing local authority capacity and an increased emphasis on school-to-school support, it makes sense that we look at ways of embedding this for the future.

Each of the schools has strong and effective leadership and governance; all have been judged 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in their latest Ofsted inspection. The Local Authority is also conducting their review into SEN provision across the county. Through our agreed joint vision, our partnership will have the opportunity to be able to contribute effectively and help steer the direction and delivery of SEN across the county by working with the LA to ensure outcomes for our learners are the best that they can be. We also know that the government is keen to drive through their academy agenda and substantial funding is currently available to help fund the legal processes if we decide that this is the way forward for our schools.

Advantages of the 'Special Partnership Trust'

Cornwall-wide approach

- A commitment to provide a consistently high quality standard of special education across the region.

Commitment

- A collective responsibility to ensure that every school within the MAT thrives.

One voice

- An ability to shape the direction and delivery of special education with a strengthened collective voice.

Strength

- Less isolated and more flexible and adaptable in a constantly changing landscape.

Growth

- In the best possible position to help to deliver an enhancement to the SEN provision in the region, with a focus on Free School development and integration of ARB provision in mainstream through collaborative partnerships.

Sharing

- Expand and develop the sharing and building of best practice and support networks for those working with learners in special schools to improve the quality of special education.

Economies of scale

- Exploit the power of combined resources to develop more effective ways of working, including staff capacity, governance, finance, research and pedagogy.

A joint vision

Special Partnership ensures effective collaboration, developing and sustaining inspirational learning centres of outstanding provision. The partnership secures exceptional learning and outcomes for all, irrespective of the challenges they face. It is accountable for ensuring rigour to maintain high standards and achievement, through a challenging and relevant curriculum supported by outstanding teaching and specialist support. It is an equal partnership where dignity and respect are actively promoted to enable each and every person to develop as an active member of British society.

Key Objectives:

Special Partnership will collaborate to secure:

- **Exceptional Outcomes:** all learning is outcome led promoting achievement, resilience, wellbeing, aspiration and meaningful future destinations.
- **Strategic Leadership and Governance:** securing outstanding provision.
- **Highest Standards:** driven by aspirational targets leading to school improvement across the partnership.
- **Enriching Relationships:** all stakeholders collaborating to enable every learner to achieve their potential.
- **Strategic Use of Resources:** pedagogic, research, systems, financial and capital.
- **An Inclusive Community:** achieved through effective networking, school-to-school partnership and outreach.
- **Equality:** in that all partners are equal and accountable to the shared values of the partnership.

What is a multi academy trust (MAT)?

A multi academy trust (MAT) is a charitable company limited by guarantee which is set up to establish, maintain and develop two or more academy schools.

As a legal entity in its own right, the MAT is able to enter into contracts, to hold land, employ staff and to be a member or director of other companies. Because the MAT is both a company and a charity, it must comply with obligations under company and charity law. It is also accountable to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West (RSC), who each has delegated powers from the Secretary of State for Education to oversee academies. In practice the MAT operates as a Trust and exists solely for educational benefits, not for profit.

What is an academy school?

An academy is a school that is established and run by an academy trust. The academy trust enters into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State, which sets out the academy trust's legal duties for the running of the school in return for the Secretary of State promising to provide the academy trust with funding to run the school.

An academy school is different to a maintained school in the following ways:

- They are independent schools and are no longer maintained by the Local Authority.
- Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum.
- Academies can set their own term times.
- Academies do not have to follow the same rules on national pay and conditions.

An academy school is similar to a maintained school in the following ways:

- They remain publicly funded and cannot charge fees for admission.
- Learners would still be admitted to the schools via a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan.
- They still have to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions.
- They are still inspected by Ofsted in the same way.
- Staff of the schools would be employed by the MAT and not by the Local Authority.
- The land and buildings of the newly converted schools is leased by Cornwall Council on a 125 years lease.

How does governance work in a MAT?

Like any company, a MAT has 'Articles of Association' (sometimes just referred to as the 'Articles'). The Articles is the constitution for the company and contains the rules which govern how the company should be run.

A MAT generally has three layers of governance:

The Members

These are like shareholders in a company limited by shares. They are the 'guarantors' of the company, promising to pay £10 towards any debts of the MAT in the event that the company is wound up. They operate at a high strategic level and usually meet only once a year. The functions of the Members include:

- Overseeing the achievement of the objectives of the MAT.
- Taking part in Annual and Extraordinary General Meetings.
- Appointing and removing some of the Trustees (see below).
- Signing off the company's financial accounts and annual report.
- Power to amend the Articles of Association.

The Board of Trustees

The Board is collectively responsible for the day-to-day operation (management and administration) of the MAT on behalf of the Members. Those who sit on the Board technically have three titles:

- They are the 'Governors' for the purposes of education law.
- They are the 'Directors' for the purposes of company law; and
- They are the 'Trustees' for the purposes of charity law.

These titles can be used interchangeably. For the purposes of this document, we have referred to them as 'Trustees'.

The key responsibilities of the Board are to:

- Ensure the quality of educational provision.
- Challenge and monitor the performance of the academy schools run by the MAT.
- Manage the MAT's finances and property.
- Manage the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/Accounting Officer.
- Exercise reasonable skill and care in carrying out their duties.
- Ensure that the MAT complies with charity and company law.
- Operate the MAT in accordance with the Funding Agreement that has been signed with the Secretary of State.

Local Governing Bodies

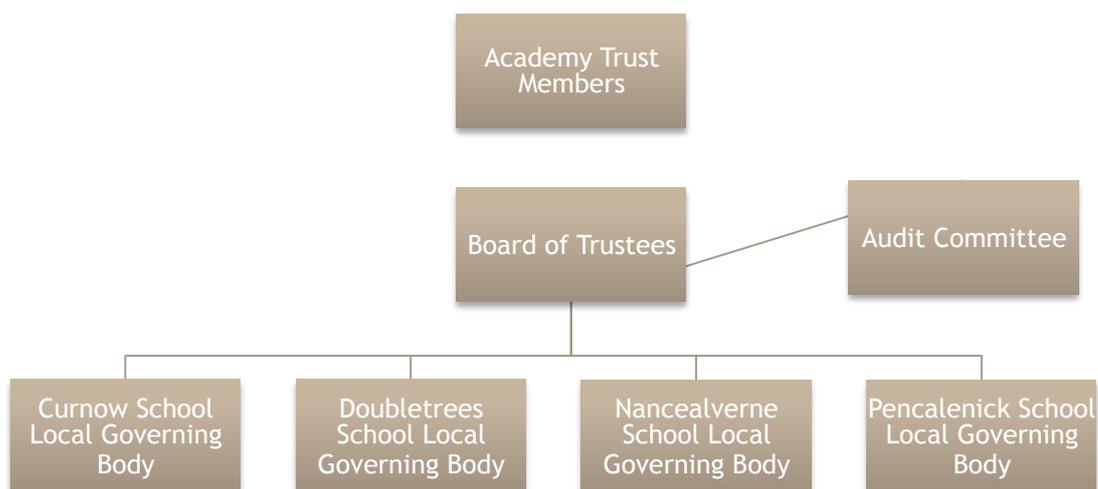
The Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) are sub-committees of the Board and have delegated authority and powers from the Board to oversee some aspects of governance in each of the academy schools. The powers and duties of the LGBs are usually set out in a scheme of delegation or terms of reference.

How does governance look in the Special Partnership?

At the moment, each of the four special schools has its own separate governing body/board. These are each responsible for the following core functions in their schools:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its learners, and the performance management of staff.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.

The governance structure of the Special Partnership is set out below. It will be set out in more detail in the Articles of Association:



The Members

It is proposed that Members of the MAT be constituted as follows:

Role	Number
Chair of Board of Trustees	1
Members nominated by each school	4
Total	5

Board of Trustees

It is proposed that the Trustees of the MAT are constituted as follows:

Role	Number
Chair (appointed by Board)	1 (non-executive only)
Appointed by Members	6 (non-executive only)
Chairs of School Local Governing Body	4
CEO (appointed by Board of Trustees)	1
Total	12

Not more than one third of the Board should be employees of the Trust (including the CEO).

Audit Committee (sub-committee of Board of Trustees)

The role of the Audit Committee will be to review the MAT's internal and external financial statements and systems, liaise with and consider all relevant reports by the appointed external auditor and to advise the Board on annual and long term audit programmes. The Audit Committee will meet at least three times each year. It is intended that the committee will be made up of four Trustees appointed by the Board (non-executive only) and the Chair (appointed by Board).

Local Governing Body

As set out above, each school will continue to have its own LGB. The proposed scheme of delegation for the LGBs will be drafted as part of the conversion process and the governing bodies of each school will be consulted on the proposed terms. The initial model is for each LGB will be constituted as follows:

Role	Number
Chair (appointed by Board)	1
Headteacher	1
Parent governors	2

Staff governors	2
Community governors	2
Total	8

Who might the Members, Trustees and/or Local Governors be?

The Members are at least five individuals with no other connection to the schools, who have the skills and experience to provide effective scrutiny of the work of the Board. The Department for Education is keen to ensure that the Board is made up of individuals with a good cross-section of skills to run and manage a charitable trust company. Where any skill gaps are identified, the joint working group will make enquiries outside of the schools to try and fill these.

What might leadership look like in the future?

At the moment, each of the four special schools has its own Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team. All academy trusts must have an Accounting Officer who is directly responsible to the EFA and RSC. The Accounting Officer is also known in some academy trusts as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or the Executive Principal.

The CEO/Accounting Officer for this MAT is Mr Andy Barnett who has been appointed by the Trustees and seconded on a part time basis (0.6 fte) for an interim period, after which time the Trustees will appoint a substantive post holder. A Head of School is appointed to cover key school duties and the MAT funds the post during the period of the secondment. Each of the four schools will retain their existing Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team.

What are the advantages for our stakeholders?

Benefits for learners;

Through formal collaboration we will:

- Use the joint expertise from across all four special schools to support the learning challenges that are faced by our learners to ensure there is an equality of opportunity regardless of school setting.
- Determine the potential opportunities for learning across the schools, both physically and through technology.
- Access to shared resources e.g. curriculum materials which secure high quality teaching/learning.
- Enable direct access to and support from a wider set of staff expertise to maximise impact on teaching/learning.

Benefits for parents/carers

- More consistent approach to special education across the county.
- Access via all four special schools to resources, services and support functions that have been reduced through the Local Authority's shrinking capacity.

Benefits for staff

- Secure the sharing of best practice (distributed leadership).
- Ability to achieve and sustain more ambitious outcomes for all our learners.
- Greater opportunities for staff professional development.
- Access to a wider range of learning resources.
- Opportunities to work in others schools and gain experience.
- Potential to re-deploy staff within the MAT should an individual school's circumstances change.

Benefits for governors

- Reduced duplication e.g. policy review.
- Issues common to all schools are dealt with centrally by the Board.
- Ability for local governors to focus on core aspects of governance and effective engagement with their school's stakeholders based upon each school's self-evaluation.

Contacts and further information

For more information, visit www.specialpartnership.org or contact:

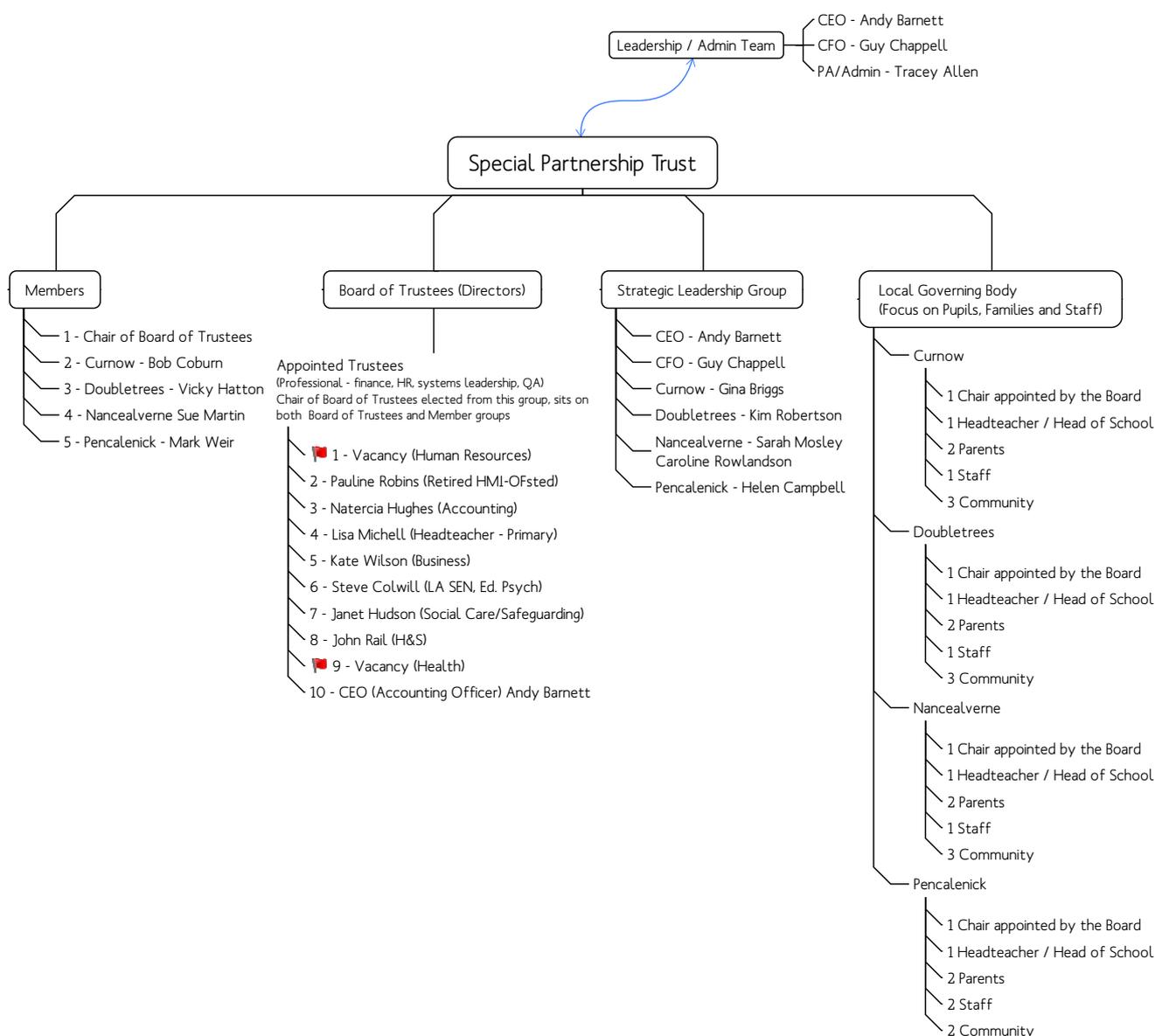
Special Partnership Trust key contacts:

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 Tracey Allen PA/Secretary/Clerk tallen@specialpartnership.org

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All key documentation and policies will be published on this website over the next few weeks, as will future minutes of Trustee, Member and LGB meetings.



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