



Academies Trust

**Trustees' Report**  
to the Co-op Academies Trust Annual Governor  
Conference

*30 January 2021*

# Welcome

## from the Chair of the Trust



**It is customary to end the Chair's introduction with thank yous. This year, there is no other way to start this report but with the most enormous admiration for the work of Chris Tomlinson, our Trust colleagues, academy leaders, teachers and support staff - their dedication and focus throughout the most challenging of times has been truly inspirational. On behalf of us all, thank you.**

2020 promised so much for our Trust – and while it is true to say the pandemic has brought extra challenges, in many ways the circumstances have vindicated the key aspects of our underlying strategy. The drive to improve the performance of our academies, through increased school improvement capacity, the development of our colleagues and greater understanding of our data, will be even more crucial in our ambition to enhance the life chances of our students, post-Covid. Our ambition to create a strong and resilient trust which operates with the highest standards and has the necessary expertise and financial resources will underpin our approach for years to come and brings to life the advantages of being part of a multi-academy trust. And our co-operative values together with the outstanding support we receive from the Co-op and our absolute commitment to diversity and inclusion will help ensure we continue to make a real difference in the communities we serve.

At our conference, you will hear from members of the Trust Board about our work, covering learning outcomes, financial matters, growth and development and a range of matters relating to the governance of our Trust. This will supplement the information which follows in this report. Thanks are due for the thoughtful and diligent way the Trust Board has undertaken its role. In a similar vein, members of our Local Governing Bodies have provided invaluable support to our academies – your work is really appreciated.

Perhaps the final word, however, should be for our pupils and students – however strong the efforts have been to minimise the impact of the pandemic, 2020 will leave a lasting impression on them – all the more reason why we should re-double our efforts to make the Co-operative Academies Trust the best it can be.

**Russell Gill**  
Chair of Trust Board





# Welcome

from the Chief Executive Officer

**Welcome to our 2021 Governor conference on the theme of the curriculum. Currently, apart from the Covid pandemic, the curriculum quite rightly is receiving more attention from our academy leaders, in terms of development, than any other educational area. It really is vital to so many aspects of education, but by far the most important is the experience our students receive on a daily basis in their academies and lessons through the curriculum.**

As you know, attached within the programme and sent out last term (on the website with links to academies' websites), the new Trust Curriculum Principles statement gives the expectation and direction for any academy to start to develop and build their curriculum improving the experience further for our brilliant students. For me, in one word, the most important aspect of the curriculum is challenge. Out of our 17,000 students, approximately 7,000 are disadvantaged, about 40%, but it doesn't mean that we shouldn't have the highest ambition for them, and the curriculum needs to give the opportunity for all our students to succeed.

The highlight of the conference will be the presentation by Mick Waters - who was described by many media outlets as a curriculum guru when he was the director

of the curriculum at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. A big thank you to Mick for agreeing to present at the virtual conference. I also would like to thank Ruth Agnew and her team Collette Allen, Sarah Lay, Sophie Johnson and Tammy Pyszky for organising the conference. It is very much appreciated.

Finally, I would also like to thank you, our governors, after the most difficult year ever in education, for your expertise, commitment and dedication to your academies and their communities. Thank you so much.

Enjoy your conference.

**Dr Chris Tomlinson**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Our Trust Board



**Simon Bourne**  
*Resigned 14 Dec 2020*



**Mags Bradbury**



**Neil Braithwaite**



**Claire Camara**



**Geoff Clarke**



**Jane Cowell**



**Gill Gardner**



**Russell Gill**  
Chair of Trust Board



**Mike Greenacre**  
Vice-Chair



**Patsy Kane**



**Nick Lowry**  
*Resigned 20 Mar 2020*



**Shaheen Myers**

## The Trust Board

There are four committees to the Trust Board:

- Outcomes Committee
- Growth and Development
- Audit and Risk
- Finance

Details of committee membership and terms of reference are available at:

[coopacademies.co.uk/about-us/governance/](https://coopacademies.co.uk/about-us/governance/)

## The Members

The Members oversee the work of the Trust Board and appoint Trustees.

Caroline Sellers

Gill Gardner

Andrew Lang

Pippa Wicks *Resigned 31 July 2020*

Russell Gill

Rebecca Birkbeck *Appointed 10 August 2020*

# We're growing

26

Academies at the end of 2020  
and two free schools in the  
process of opening.

⬆ Up from 24 in 2018

£135<sub>m</sub>

Income

⬇ Down from £153m in 2019  
(see full breakdown on next page)

17,289

Students

⬆ Up from 15,848 in 2019

2,548

Colleagues

Up from 2,317 in 2019

81

Co-op Governors

⬆ Up from 71 in 2019

£294<sub>m</sub>

Assets

⬆ Up from £284m in 2019





<b>Financial Summary</b>	<b>Total 2020</b>	<b>Total 2019</b>
	£000	£000
Operating Income	122,589	88,636
Transfers / Conversions	12,231	64,927
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>134,820</b>	<b>153,563</b>
Operating Costs	(127,673)	(93,515)
Revaluation of Pension Liabilities	(9,558)	(16,701)
<b>NET MOVEMENT OF RESERVES</b>	<b>(2,411)</b>	<b>43,347</b>
<b>CUMULATIVE RESERVES</b>	<b>187,546</b>	<b>189,957</b>

<b>Balance Sheet</b>	<b>Total 2020</b>	<b>Total 2019</b>
	£000	£000
Tangible Assets	293,648	283,970
Net Current Assets	7,977	4,197
	301,625	288,167
Liabilities > 1 year	(114,079)	(98,210)
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>187,546</b>	<b>189,957</b>
<b>TRUST RESERVES</b>	<b>187,546</b>	<b>189,957</b>

The summary financial statement takes into account the technical reporting requirements of both Accounting Standards and the Regulator (through the Academies Financial Handbook). We are required to show movement in the annual liability through our Statement of Financial Activities (SOFA). From an operating perspective, the Trust made a surplus of £7.1m during the year, which included the two academies joining the Trust and £1.1m of capital receipts which will fund capital projects during the current academic year.

# The Work of the Trust Board Committees

## Growth and Development Committee

The Growth and Development Committee has met six times in the last 12 months, twice for special meetings to deal with urgent operational decisions. Covid has impacted on contacting and working with potential new entrants to the Trust, however significant progress has been made in increasing our capacity to manage growth, and in moving to a more strategic approach to growth. Key highlights are:

- appointing a Growth Manager and Project Manager
- agreeing a clear growth strategy for each hub
- producing a prospectus to support discussions with new schools
- the successful conversions of Co-op Academies Smithies Moor and Princeville in 2019-20 and Co-op Academy Clarice Cliff in December 2020
- two successful free school bids, a special free school in Leeds, planned to open in September 2023, and a new secondary academy, Co-op Academy Belle Vue, planned to open in September 2021, initially in new accommodation on the Connell Co-op College site. This accommodation will, in the longer term, provide the additional space required by the College to achieve the growth needed for sustainability

In addition, the Committee has continued to monitor the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA's) funded business plan for Connell Coop College, and progress against its sustainability plans has been very positive.

## Audit and Risk Committee

This committee supports the Trust Board by advising on the effectiveness of strategic processes for risk management, internal control, governance and information assurance. It takes the lead on liaison with the internal and external audit teams in agreeing their plans and following up on the results of their work, and oversees the production of the Trust's annual report and accounts. During this academic year we were again able to confirm a strong internal control framework, the further development and roll-out of the Trust wide risk management system 4Risk, and were pleased by the very smooth external audit process this year, underpinned by the Civica financial system.

## Finance Committee

For the first time this year the Finance Committee has been separated out from the work of the Audit and Risk Committee, and this has operated as a separate committee, in line with best practice for Trusts of our size. This committee supports the Trust Board, primarily, by considering the detail of the Trust's financial plans, forecasts and ongoing financial performance, the Trust's

Financial Regulations, Asset Management Strategy and Reserves Policy. We were pleased to note the continuing strong financial performance of the Trust overall, and the maintenance of reserves in line with the Trust's policy.

## Outcomes Committee

A key focus for the Outcomes Committee has been overseeing and monitoring systems and practices that have been drawn from improved collaboration across the Trust. These have included:

- Building on the expertise within the academies and sharing this across the Trust, including through the specialist leaders of education programme
- Standardised data, and sharing this data with all headteachers and principals
- Developing new leaders
- Standardised approaches for school to school improvement
- Improving safeguarding - with a new strategic lead taking up post in 2019

Another focus of the Committee's work is in overseeing the raising of expectations including consideration of:

- Data around high attainers
- Social mobility
- The Covid challenge
- Monitoring progress for children with special educational needs and disabilities
- The development of the Trust's curriculum principles statement

A further focus is the consideration of staff well being, including by considering:

- Attendance figures
- Well-being data
- Staff turnover





# Succeeding Together

Our relationship with our sponsor, the Co-op Group, continues to be of immense importance. This year the support we have received in the face of the pandemic has been fantastic. This has included:

£20 per week for all pupils and students eligible for free school meals from March to August 2020 - agreed before any offer from the Government and at £5 per week more than the national offer - a total investment of over £2.5m.

As academies returned in September Co-op continued to support families by providing vouchers for students having to self isolate, and continued this support over the holidays during the October half term.

Supporting the provision of devices to students to enable remote learning, including:

- Providing 300 refurbished laptops
- Donating £228k received from DfE in 2020 as reimbursement for Free School Meal vouchers, to fund digital devices
- Providing a further £80k to address the shortfall in devices for our students
- Supporting the procurement of devices to leverage buying power and ensure devices are procured on the best possible terms.

Working closely with the Trust Director of Careers to develop a Co-op careers offer, to complement the offers from the academies. This has included piloting virtual work experience, which had a fantastic uptake, and is being developed further for the future.

