

The Mercian Voice

A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL COLLEAGUES WITHIN THE MERCIAN TRUST

Edition 1: October 2017

Launch Event

It could have been a damp squib! The Mercian Trust is still not officially incorporated as we have encountered many frustrating delays along the way, but representative staff and governors from the five Founding Academies who met at the Compass Suite in Aldridge found plenty to discuss and created a real buzz in the room.



Tim Swain, CEO Designate, picked up on that idea at the beginning of his address. A fundamental advantage of the Mercian Trust is the chance to meet each other and to swap not only stories and anecdotes, but also ideas and initiatives and to come away inspired by other people who share the same enthusiasm for education.

The Mercian Trust may have started out as an **answer** to change in the educational landscape, but as the schools have begun to work together over the last year, it has become increasingly clear that we can become an **agent** for positive change. The Sixth Form “MAT Block” is just one example of the Trust can make a difference to students. It has allowed us to maintain our breadth of Post 16 provision for A Level at a time when most schools are having to cut back. There is more work to be done to ensure that 16-19 year-olds across the Borough can access the right courses for them: that’s one of the challenges facing The Mercian Trust this year.

Philip Sturrock, Chairman of the Mercian Board of Trustees spoke about the opportunities that the formation of the MAT gave to shape the educational landscape locally. He underlined that our model is not one size fits all: diversity underpins our Trust, but seamless collaboration is needed to make it work.



Staff Survey Feedback



David Mountney, who is working as a part time consultant to The Mercian after retiring as Headteacher of Aldridge School last summer, launched the first staff survey for The Mercian. He writes:

Many thanks to the 274 staff who completed the survey. The sampling only ran for a week so to have the views of over 50% of our colleagues is very gratifying.

We will review every feedback sheet individually but the survey summary will be used to ensure that the pressing needs and ideas from your feedback can be used to help shape the actions of The Mercian. The summary responses are given below:

Q1: The Mercian Trust wants to provide opportunities, challenges and enjoyment for everyone working within it. Which three of the following would be most helpful to you?

Top Three:

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|-------------------------|---------------|-----|
| • Sharing best practice | 229 responses | 85% |
| • Quality CPD | 191 responses | 71% |
| • Peer to Peer support | 164 responses | 61% |

Q2: The Mercian Trust is a new venture and we want to set up effective means of communicating with all those working with us. Please select the best methods for achieving this.

Top Three:

Fortnightly newsletter	205 responses	76%
Half-termly cross school groups	130 responses	48%
Annual MAT Conference	125 responses	46%

Q3: Much of the work done so far has been in establishing the Mercian Trust. We now need to establish the priorities for the road ahead. What do you consider to be the five most important?

Top Five:

Focus on raising standards	176 responses	65%
Create effective communication channels	173 responses	63%
Ensure a stable financial position	141 responses	52%
Launch an effective MAT CPD programme	115 responses	42%
Expand enrichment opportunities	113 responses	41%

There were some common themes reflected in the written responses (which will be analysed in more detail). These include the need for good and clear communication, balance of time and demands from the school and the MAT, and real enthusiasm to share with others.

And to the colleague who pointed out that “this is a very difficult question to answer! It needs to be more specific!” - thank you. Point taken.

Actions from the survey

- Q1** We hope to use the Twilight Training Session scheduled for Tuesday 28th November to focus sharing best practice and peer to peer support.
Our first CPD programme for aspiring Middle and Senior Leaders will be launched on Monday 6th November.
- Q2** This Newsletter is our first response. We are also looking in to other channels of communication including a MAT Twitter account for up-to date news and information.
- Q3** Sharing best practice is, of course, a way to raise standards but, since 3rd October, the Heads have also met to devise strategies for responding to the challenge of Ofsted.
We shall also be submitting bids for additional funding during the month of November.

Introducing the MAT Board of Trustees

The MAT Trustees are effectively the Governors of the whole Mercian Trust. Their role is to:

- Ensure compliance with charity and company law
- Determine, alongside the Executive Team, the strategic priorities of the MAT
- Determine and review Trust-wide policies
- Ensure financial probity
- Determine the funding model across the Trust and set the budgets for individual Academies
- Review and challenge progress of the trust against its agreed objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Appoint staff at Senior Leadership Level

We thought that you should know who they are and have the chance to put a face to a name!



Philip Sturrock



Will Hodson



Jane Bonner



Melanie Crooks



Kevin Davis



Mark Harland



Rebecca Hearsey



Kevin Hubery

Philip Sturrock was Chair of Governors at QMGS, but has stepped down in order to take on Chairmanship of the Mercian Trust. He is a Council Member of University College London.

Will Hodson is Vice Chair of the MAT and Chair of Aldridge School Local Governing Body (LGB). He is Operations Director of Pertemps Recruitment Co.

Jane Bonner was, until very recently, Head of Service - Education Standards and Improvement For Children's Services, Education. She has experience as an Ofsted Inspector.

Melanie Crooks is Director of Finance for the Church of England Birmingham Diocese. She has experience in setting up and running the Diocesan MAT.

Kevin Davis is CEO of the Vine Trust Group (VTG) and Chair of Walsall Studio School LGB. The VTG founded the Studio School and has secured approval for an Alternative Provision Free School.

Mark Harland is a Director of Form, a company specialising in leadership development and growth consultancy. He has experience working with high growth SMEs as well as international brands

Rebecca Hearsey is Chair of Queen Mary's High School LGB. She is a solicitor who specialises in personal injury cases and works for Irwin Mitchell in Birmingham.

Kevin Hubery is Chair of Shire Oak Academy LGB. He is Head of Strategic Policy and Leadership Support for Birmingham City Council, the largest local authority in Europe.

Mercian Logos

Our designer, Jon Hart, has been working on some logos which express both the individuality of each school and the sense of belonging to the MAT. We hope you like them.





Did you notice the sixth school joining the Five Founding Academies? More about the Ladder School in the next edition of the Mercian Voice.

Stop Press:

Over half term, the DfE sent approved documents (submitted in June!) to the MAT's lawyers ready to be signed. This is a very significant step forward – at long last!

The legal incorporation of The Mercian Trust is just round the corner. Now the real work begins!