

The De Curci Trust

Based in Portsmouth, The De Curci Trust has over 1700 students on roll across three schools. The trust seeks a non-executive director who ideally has change management, organisational growth, legal/compliance or IT experience to aid potential expansion and to drive continual improvements in school performance. Board meetings are generally held in Portsmouth.

About the Trust

Created in April 2017, the De Curci Trust comprises three local schools: two primaries, Solent Infant School and Solent Junior School; and one secondary, Springfield School. All three schools are currently rated 'Good' by Ofsted. Springfield School was rated 'Good' in October 2019, with Inspectors writing, 'Leaders are determined to provide a high-quality education for all pupils, regardless of their ability or circumstances. Pupils are happy and safe at this school. Pupils achieve well at the school'.

Solent Infant school was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in February 2020 with inspectors writing, 'This is a very welcoming and nurturing school. Teachers have worked with staff from other trust schools to design a creative and exciting curriculum in all subjects. Children are engaged in the interesting learning activities that teachers plan for them'.

Solent Junior School was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in March 2020 with inspectors writing, 'Pupils are positive, confident and have excellent manners. Leaders and teachers are united in their ambition for all pupils to fulfil their potential. Teachers provide pupils with a rich variety of learning experiences.'

Academic results have been sound, with KS2 and GCSE attainment generally being in line with or above national averages. The schools have ambitious curriculum approaches with the secondary school having an EBacc entry rate that is higher than similar schools locally and nationally. However, the schools are working to improve progress outcomes at both KS2 and KS4, as these have been variable over recent years, notably for specific pupil groups including middle ability boys and disadvantaged pupils. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant on pupils' learning and welfare, and on school operations. Responding proactively to these challenges over the short and medium term is a Trust priority.

As a successful trust, The De Curci Trust is committed to leading school improvement within its own organisation and across the wider school system. The trust shares a vision of promoting high aspirations and achieving excellent outcomes for all children; its schools are inclusive and exist to serve the children who live in the locality.

The trust recognises that schools are different and have unique identities; its current approach is to allow schools to determine their own routes to excellence within the context of their own community. The trust currently serves the communities of Cosham, Drayton and Farlington, a few miles north of Portsmouth City centre. The majority of pupils are of White British origin, with the number of pupils with EAL being below national averages. The schools are inclusive and cater for pupils of all aptitudes and abilities. While the number of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium is lower than the national average, this has shown a marked increase over recent years as the local demographic has changed. Similarly, the secondary school

now has more children with SEN than the national average.

A belief that learning is a continuum and that cross-phase working can enhance the quality of teaching and learning in all school phases is a central part of The De Curci Trust's culture. Staff employed by the trust have the opportunity to work with infant, junior and secondary age children and to develop practice and schemes of learning with specialists from each phase. In association with the University of Portsmouth, the trust's teachers have come together in a joint conference on leading learning. Increasingly, pupils from the infant and junior schools are becoming involved in activities with older pupils at the secondary school. Projects involving staff professional development have included 'Challenge the Gap' (to develop disadvantaged pupils' learning skills), a year 5 to 8 Maths continuity project and work on assessment systems.

Plans for the Future

The key challenges for the board over the next 12-24 months are:

1. While the trust's financial position is stable, this has been achieved through reducing provision over time, which has inevitably had an impact upon the schools' work. The ongoing and effective management of resources remains a key issue as does securing funding to improve older buildings and improve facilities, including IT infrastructure and security.
2. The recruitment, retention and professional development of staff to maintain high quality teaching and learning is an important factor in the trust's future plans. Teacher recruitment is a challenge locally, notably at secondary level.
3. The trust aims to maintain the high quality of pupils' educational outcomes, improving progress at KS2 and KS4 and 'closing gaps' between learner groups.
4. Ensuring that governance and communication across the trust continues to be highly effective.

Future plans include a full review of the trust's strategic priorities in the context of the current wider educational context and the potential expansion of the trust to develop capacity and support other partners within the locality. The nature of any potential expansion would depend upon the circumstances of the joining school(s), but ideally working towards doubling the size of the trust and including a school from each phase would be ideal and allow the trust's model to develop. Realistically, this would be over a three-year period and require significant due diligence. (Other trusts have approached our organisation to consider merging with them, but Trustees have not considered initial proposals to be viable or in the interests of our pupils.)

The De Curci Trust is a comparatively small trust and is also examining a variety of ways to expand pupil numbers and/or to develop specialist provision within the existing schools. The secondary school has worked successfully with the Council to expand its pupil admission number.

Trust Ethos & Values

The De Curci Trust believes in high aspirations and achieving excellent outcomes for all children. It maintains a school learning environment that delivers a vibrant, creative and relevant education for all pupils. The trust utilises expertise across all phases of education that can be shared within and beyond their schools.

Role Summary

Number of Positions Advertised: 1

Role 1 – Trustee/Non-Executive Director

Trustees – or non-executive directors - are both charity trustees and company directors of the academy trust; the role is to hold to account the executive and senior leadership team. The board of trustees manages the business of the academy trust and may exercise all the powers of the trust. The trustees ensure compliance with the trust's charitable objects and with company and charity law.

The ideal person will work collaboratively with other trustees and staff to maintain a high standard of education for all pupils. This includes oversight of the monitoring and improvement of performance and the achievement of objectives; ensuring compliance with legislation, Company and Charity Law whilst ensuring sound financial and administrative management of the trust.

Person Specification

The competencies required for this role include:

Essential

- Corporate Governance
- Change Management
- Interest in holistic education

Desirable

- Mergers and acquisitions
- Legal experience
- IT expertise
- Compliance experience

The De Curci Trust is eager to appoint a non-executive director with corporate governance experience from either the private, public or third sectors. The trust seeks a team player who can make impartial decisions when working on behalf of all pupils. Applications from individuals with experience leading a growing business or division within a business would be particularly welcomed as would those from a legal, IT or compliance background.

Candidates must have integrity and follow the Nolan Principles of Public Life, fulfilling the role with professionalism and diligence. Ideal candidates will be capable of acting as a 'critical friend', providing support and challenge to the executive and acting fairly and without prejudice.

Time Commitment

2.5 hours per month (minimum).

Location of Board Meetings and Trust Website

The majority of board meetings are held at Springfield School, Central Road, Drayton, Portsmouth, PO6 1QY; some are held virtually.

For more information on the trust, please see their website: <https://thedecurcitrust.co.uk/>

Governance Structure

For more information with regard to the trust's governance structure, please see:

<https://thedecurcitrust.co.uk/index.php/home/structure>

Closing Date: 10th December 2021

Please complete the attached application form and send it to
marion.hallsworth@thedecurcitrust.co.uk