

9 January 2023

Dear parents and carers,

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and some time to recharge and spend some time with friends and loved ones.

2023 promises to be a really positive year for us all and I'm very pleased to share the news that we have now formally separated from our sponsor, the National Autistic Society. As you know from my letter last month, this followed a root and branch review of governance which reflected how the role of being an academy trust sponsor has changed over the years, and now requires greater independence.

An important part of our new independence is a new name: **Liberty Academy Trust**. Our new identity marks this exciting new chapter for us as a family of schools that is focused on educational excellence for autistic children and young people.

We involved the children in the process to pick our new name, and had some brilliant suggestions, but ultimately, we chose Liberty Academy Trust as this truly encapsulates what we want for all of our students: to be free to be the individuals they are. And everything we do, supports them in that goal.

As I mentioned in my letter to you in December, as part of our new independence, we have already been able to release additional funds to support our three schools, amounting to £1.2m, funding a whole range of specialist support, including a new Autism Lead Practitioner in every school, bespoke speech and language support across all schools, trauma informed training and approaches rolled out across all schools from the start of 2023; and improvements to training and CPD for staff at all levels so that they can do their very best work.

As well as additional funding to support each school, we also now have a full-time team working at Liberty Academy Trust, rather than some of the team being split across both NAS and the trust. I'm proud to be part of such an expert and specialist team that will really drive forward our ambition of educational excellence for autistic children and young people.

I am enclosing some additional information about the members of the team so you can see the experience we all bring to our whole family of schools.

**Dr Nic Crossley – Chief Executive Officer** – As the Chief Executive, I bring over 25 years' experience in education which spans primary, secondary, mainstream and specialist provision. I am also an academic research graduate from the University of Exeter where my research interests are in the factors that contribute to educational underachievement.



I am a Council member for ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders) as the national SEND representative, but also a member of the Ethics, Inclusion and Equalities Committee and Chair of the Women Leaders' Network.

In September 2021, I was made an Honorary Teaching Fellow at the University of Warwick, in recognition of my commitment and contribution to Teacher Education and Research within the Centre for Teacher Education. I am the co-author of *Inclusion: A Principled Guide for School Leaders*, published by Routledge.



**Harriet Mughal – Head of Executive Services** - Harriet has over 20 years' experience in the administrative profession, the majority being within the legal sector and has supported executives in both the UK and Internationally. She has proven experience supporting a Board of Directors within the education and children's care sector and has also previously managed a team of PAs.

Harriet's degree in Applied Social Science also provides her with relevant background knowledge to bring to her role at LAT.

**David Haydock - Interim Chief Finance Officer** - David is an experienced finance professional with 25+ years of experience working in roles in a number of areas in both the education and commercial sectors. David has been a foster carer for a number of years, and, with his wife Jacqui, has looked after many children with a variety of challenging needs. David is a Trustee (and chair of the Finance Committee) of another Multi Academy Trust, has a law degree from Warwick University, and is a Chartered Accountant having qualified with Ernst & Young.





**Martin Briggs - Chief Operating Officer** - Martin has over 20 years' experience working across the commercial, charity and education sectors. Within education his experience spans primary, secondary, post-16, SEND, alternative provision and university environments.

**Chris Rossiter - Director of Governance and Compliance** - Chris is an experienced leader and organisational psychologist and has worked across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. He is a leading consultant in organisation transformation, change, and leadership. He is a committed volunteer both within education, as a Trustee of a large MAT and primary school Governor, former army reservist and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.



**Jo Galloway - Director of Education** - Jo has worked in the field of autism for 20 years and in SEND education for over 25 years. Her roles have included Principal, Executive Principal and the Head of Educational Standards, and she has worked with many partner schools supporting them through outreach, training and consultancy. Jo has a Master's degree in Special Educational Needs and has completed the National Professional Qualification for Headship.

**Nic Law - Director of Children's Services and Safeguarding** - Nic is the Safeguarding Lead for the Trust and an Intermediate Team Teach trainer, as well as a PREVENT trainer. Her experience spans primary, secondary and specialist provision. Her specialist interest areas are safeguarding and child protection. She has previous experience as an Specialist Leader of Education for Safeguarding and Attendance, as well as experience in working with young carers; particularly supporting those where substance abuse and mental health are of a concern.





**Lisa Thompson - Head of Data Systems and Analytics -**

Lisa has over 20 years' experience working with data and [uk](#) systems across the commercial, policing and education industries and is well known across the sector. Her experience spans secondary, primary and specialist provision with roles both in schools as a data manager and working for two large Multi Academy Trusts.

**Georgia Harrison - Executive Assistant to the Directors -** Georgia is Executive Assistant to Martin Briggs, Jo Galloway and Nic Law. She has several years' of administrative experience within educational and healthcare settings. She holds lived experience of neurodiverse conditions and applies this knowledge to her current role when liaising with the Trust's schools.



The future looks very bright for Liberty Academy Trust, and we look forward to working with each of our schools to build on their strengths and establish each as a beacon of best practice and hope for autistic children and young people.

I hope this has provided you with a useful update on the exciting developments at Liberty Academy Trust. If you have any questions at all, please do get in touch via [nicola.crossley@libertytrust.org.uk](mailto:nicola.crossley@libertytrust.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Nic Crossley**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Liberty Academy Trust**