



The Connect Welcome Brochure

How your school works as part of Connect Education Trust

Hello to all of our families of pupils in our schools and to those who may be thinking about sending your child to one of our schools. We want to make sure that you know what it means to have your child in a Connect Education Trust School, what makes us different, and what we believe is possible for children. We want to be able to work closely with our staff, children, and families to spark something great in our schools, together.

Your school is part of Connect. We are an educational charity with the core vision of empowering children to lead remarkable futures. Our mission is to connect with our pupils and offer them an exceptional education. Recruiting inspirational and committed teachers, school leaders and people to empower each and every one of the children in our care. We do this through the support we provide to our schools, the innovative collaborative practices we have developed, and a curriculum that develops leadership and life-skills that enables all children to flourish.



Connect is overseen by a Board of Trustees and is run by our Chief Executive Officer, Androulla Nicou, who is supported by a central team across a variety of service areas. We are funded directly by the government and are directly accountable to Parliament, the Department of Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency and Ofsted.

Your school is run by your Headteacher with the strategic support of Local Governing Body (LGB). The Headteacher works with the LGB to set the strategic direction of the school and to create a new school development plan that identifies key priorities and shows how the school will address these areas for development. Governors provide strategic support and challenge senior leaders throughout the year. All of the day-to-day decisions are made by the Headteacher.

Connect works with your school in three different capacities:

1. To support the school to collaborate and develop as part of a larger group of schools, learning from the best practice
2. To act as a safety net to help with checks and balances
3. To support schools with HR, Finance, Health and Safety and premises care.

We want to take as many distractions as possible away from the leaders in your child's school so that they can focus on the most important aspect of the school - teaching and learning for your child.



Our Mission

To connect with our pupils and offer them an exceptional education. Recruiting inspirational and committed teachers, school leaders and people to empower each and everyone of the children in our care.

Creating Remarkable Futures

A remarkable future. It's what our children deserve, but what does it actually mean?

- Offering a well-rounded education that gives pupils every chance of success
- Helping pupils to fulfill their potential and to be the best that they can be
- A place where all pupils are included and enabled to flourish
- Giving pupils the confidence to believe in themselves and to dream big
- Supporting pupil's wellbeing to develop well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to society

Our Core Values

We Care. It's our calling to protect and grow our pupils and our people. We work in a world where empathy, thoughtfulness and personal responsibility are absolutely essential.

We Empower. Pupils and our people are equipped and encouraged to be the best that they can be. We give pupils and our people the skills and the belief they need to succeed.

We Create. We get things done, through hard work, resilience and high energy. We dream big and imagine bold new ways to shape the future of learning.

We believe in preparing children for a future we cannot even imagine yet - through the life skills in our curriculum: critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication. This is how they will be able to adapt in an ever changing world.

We work together across our Trust in the spirit of Connect.

Technology for Teaching and Learning

Connect Education Trust has been pioneering digital learning techniques for many years and prides itself on being tech-savvy.

Effective technology integration enhances teaching and learning experiences. It promotes pupils' engagement, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

The Trust took the decision to invest over £1million to purchase Chromebooks and mobile devices so that every child across our schools can access our program of digital learning.

All schools within the Trust use Google workspace for Education which provides tools to aid teaching and learning such as Google classroom, Google Docs, Google Meet, Google Forms and Google chat.

NAO robots are used to provide personalised and adaptive learning experiences for pupils such as English as a second language, learning a foreign language (Spanish), reading and SEN. This has improved social skills and self-esteem.

The Moki's have helped to develop health habits and have provided teachers with data to monitor children's activity levels incorporating movement breaks in the day.

Virtual reality has provided more immersive learning experiences in class. It has allowed our pupils to explore new environments and scenarios. The impact is pupil engagement and retention of information has significantly improved.



Collaboration

Collaboration is very important to us in Connect schools. By learning from others, schools are able to innovate in ways that really improve teaching and learning.

Staff Development

We have an extensive professional training programme available for all staff in our schools. We have brilliant staff across the schools who run these sessions and help to spread good practice and share ideas. We do this for everyone from Teaching Assistants to Headteachers.

Teacher Exchanges

We offer short-term teacher exchanges which give our teachers the opportunity to 'team teach' with other Teachers in Connect. This gives all of the Teachers the chance to learn from their colleagues in other settings and see what it's like outside their own classroom.

Network Meetings

Our staff participate in regular network meetings with their counterparts in the other schools and share best practice. This includes Teachers, support staff, office staff, premises staff and more. This has also led to staff working together to find ways to be more efficient and save money for the schools with cheaper contracts etc.

Shared Staff

Every now and then a school may end up temporarily short-staffed or something unexpected may happen that leaves a school needing extra support. On a number of occasions, the schools have pulled together to support each other and not leave anybody struggling on their own.

Leadership Team

The Headteachers in our schools and the Trust Executive team form the Connect Strategic Board. So if there is a new Trust-wide policy on education or a new approach that the schools will be trialing in the schools, these are developed by the Headteachers themselves.



How we Support Our Schools

We have grown over the past few years in order to enable us to provide more support for each school. It has been through this growth that we have been able to build capacity to target specialist support for your child's school.

Educational Offer

Connect works closely with the school in the following areas:

Evaluating Quality: Checking on the quality of provision and education in schools. Working with leaders to reflect and improve practice to ensure every child gets the best education we can offer.

Improvement: The needs of each school will depend on their individual educational offer. This can range from offering support centrally; utilising the skills of other staff from across the Trust; modelling learning; asking challenging but supportive questions or offering assessment and curriculum support. All Connect Headteachers work together to share best practice and drive change within our schools. Sharing best practice is what helps the continuous journey of improvement.

Professional Development: This means we expect our schools to use research and educational evidence to inform decision making. Linked into this is a range of professional development opportunities for all staff that the Trust is able to offer free of charge. We aim to be a Trust with a self-sustaining improvement structure - ensuring we do all we can to create the best Teachers and best leaders of the future to give our children the best learning possible.



Operational Offer

Connect oversees the operations and support services of the trust to ensure the delivery of, human resources, estate management and health and safety and risk management whilst ensuring department managers are held accountable for their areas and that systems are robust.

Connect is committed to achieving best value for all its schools and to save schools time, money and effort Trust-wide contracts are renegotiated regularly to get the best outcome for schools in terms of value for money, quality, and effectiveness.

Trust-wide policies and procedures are in place to streamline systems and support school compliance. These are updated in line with legislation and best practice and to share best practice across Connect schools.

Excellent governance is essential for Connect to fulfill its purpose of providing the very best educational outcomes. The Board of Trustees and Local Governing Bodies are central to the effective accountability of our schools and ensuring pupils achieve as well as they can.

FAQs

Who runs our schools?

Your Headteacher runs your child's school just like they did before they joined Connect. They are responsible for teaching and learning and the experience that your child gets every day.

Who decides on things like uniforms, homework etc?

These are local decisions and are made by the Headteacher with the support of the Local Governing Body. They will make the decisions that they feel are in the best interests for their school. The schools in our Trust are not all the same and we wouldn't want them to be. They each retain their own identity and their own vision for what is possible for their school community, within the parameters of high expectations that Connect has for what school can be.

Are Multi Academy Trusts just businesses that are out to make profits?

This is a common myth about academies. Multi Academy Trusts are charitable educational trusts. Schools are allocated money from the government just like they did before they joined a Trust. What we do in the central team is look at ways to best spend the ever-decreasing amounts of money that schools get. We do this by sharing staffing, centralising some back-office tasks, and negotiating contracts across the Trust. There are no profits or dividends. Any money saved is put right back into supporting our schools to thrive.

Who is accountable for the school?

Overall, our Board of Trustees is responsible for every school and that is why we have built up a central team to monitor what is happening, provide as much support as possible, and to ensure that there are safety checks in place. However, we strongly believe that each school should very much be a part of its local community and that our Headteachers are best placed to make sure the needs of each community are being met.

What do I do if I am not happy about something?

All schools have a complaints policy available on their website or from the school office. There is a set process to be followed which is essentially the same as it was when the schools were with the Local authority prior to joining Connect.

How are children with SEND (special educational needs) supported in Connect schools?

In Connect we are passionate about supporting children with SEND as best we can. One of our schools is a dedicated specialist school for all ages. We are proud to say that SEND is an area of real strength for us. We have specialists across the Trust who help to support each other in making sure that our SEND provision is exceptional. Our SEND team is already planning new ways to make it even stronger, including in areas such as mental health.

Who decides what my children are taught?

Your Headteacher develops your school's curriculum with the support of their Local Governing Body and school staff. Although academies technically do not have to follow the National Curriculum, they are still expected to teach a broad and balanced curriculum and this is an area that Ofsted looks at when they inspect a school.





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