



Watererton
Academy Trust

Annual Report

for Stakeholders 2025



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Foreword

from the Chair of Trustees

Dear Stakeholders,

As Chair of the Board of Trustees, I am pleased to present the Waterton Academy Trust Annual Report for the academic year 2025. This report not only outlines our business activity and financial performance, but also celebrates the collective progress and resilience demonstrated across the Trust over the past year.

Throughout the academic year, Waterton Academy Trust has continued to strengthen outcomes for pupils and surpass the strategic targets we set for ourselves. These achievements are a testament to the dedication of our staff, the ambition of our pupils, and the support of our wider school communities. In an educational landscape that remains dynamic and, at times, challenging, we have remained focused on delivering exceptional learning experiences and nurturing every child's development.

We have maintained a strong and stable financial position, and through careful stewardship and effective collaboration between our central team and school leaders, we have continued to invest meaningfully in the quality of education, our school estates, and pupil well-being.

Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome new schools into the Waterton Trust family in the coming academic year. As the Trust continues to grow, we remain committed to deepening the quality of our educational offer, broadening our partnerships, and ensuring that the success we achieve is shared across all of our communities.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank all those who have contributed to our journey so far. From staff and pupils to governors, parents and partners, your dedication and shared belief in our vision have enabled us to lay strong foundations for the future. We approach the coming year with a sense of ambition, unity and purpose, confident in our ability to make an even greater difference in the lives of the children we serve.

With sincere thanks and optimism for the year ahead.



Steve Johnson

Chair of the Board of Trustees
Waterton Academy Trust

Introduction

from the CEO

As Chief Executive Officer of Waterton Academy Trust, it is with immense pride and sincere gratitude that I present our Annual Stakeholders Report for the academic year 2024 to 2025. This report offers a comprehensive account of our progress, performance and impact, and I hope it serves as a valuable insight into the achievements of our Trust community over the past year.

Since the Department for Education set out its five key pillars of high-performing trusts in 2022, we have applied these principles as a framework to guide our strategy and measure our success. This report reflects not only the overall development of the Trust but provides a clear picture of our work through the lens of those five pillars.

High quality education remains at the heart of everything we do. Across all of our schools, we continue to foster a culture that promotes ambition, curiosity and achievement. We are committed to ensuring that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to an inclusive and ambitious curriculum, strong pastoral care, consistently high expectations for behaviour and attendance, and opportunities that extend beyond the classroom.

Our approach to school improvement is rooted in professional self-reflection, high standards and shared responsibility. Leaders across the Trust work together strategically, learning from each other and drawing on expertise from external partners to drive continual improvement and raise standards collectively.

We also know that our people are our greatest strength. That is why our workforce strategy places staff wellbeing, manageable workload and career development at its core. We invest significantly in professional development and teacher training to ensure we build and retain a confident, skilled,

and motivated workforce, capable of delivering the very best for our pupils.

Strong financial and operational leadership underpins all of our ambitions. Our long-term financial planning is designed to be sustainable and responsive. Through careful budgeting, effective risk management and a prudent reserves policy, we continue to invest confidently in school environments, infrastructure and educational resources, ensuring that our pupils learn in safe, well-maintained and inspiring settings.

Finally, governance and leadership are central to the Trust's effectiveness. Our Trustees bring a wealth of knowledge and experience and provide ethical and strategic leadership based on the seven principles of public life. Their support and oversight help ensure that our charitable purpose remains our constant focus and that the Trust continues to act in the best interests of all its communities.

As we look ahead, we do so with real optimism. The Trust continues to grow, and we are preparing to welcome new schools into the Waterton family during the coming academic year. Our vision remains the same: to ensure every pupil thrives, every colleague is valued, and every community benefits from our shared endeavour.

Thank you for your continued support, and for being part of our journey as we work to build a stronger, more ambitious future for the children we serve.



Dave Dickinson
OBE

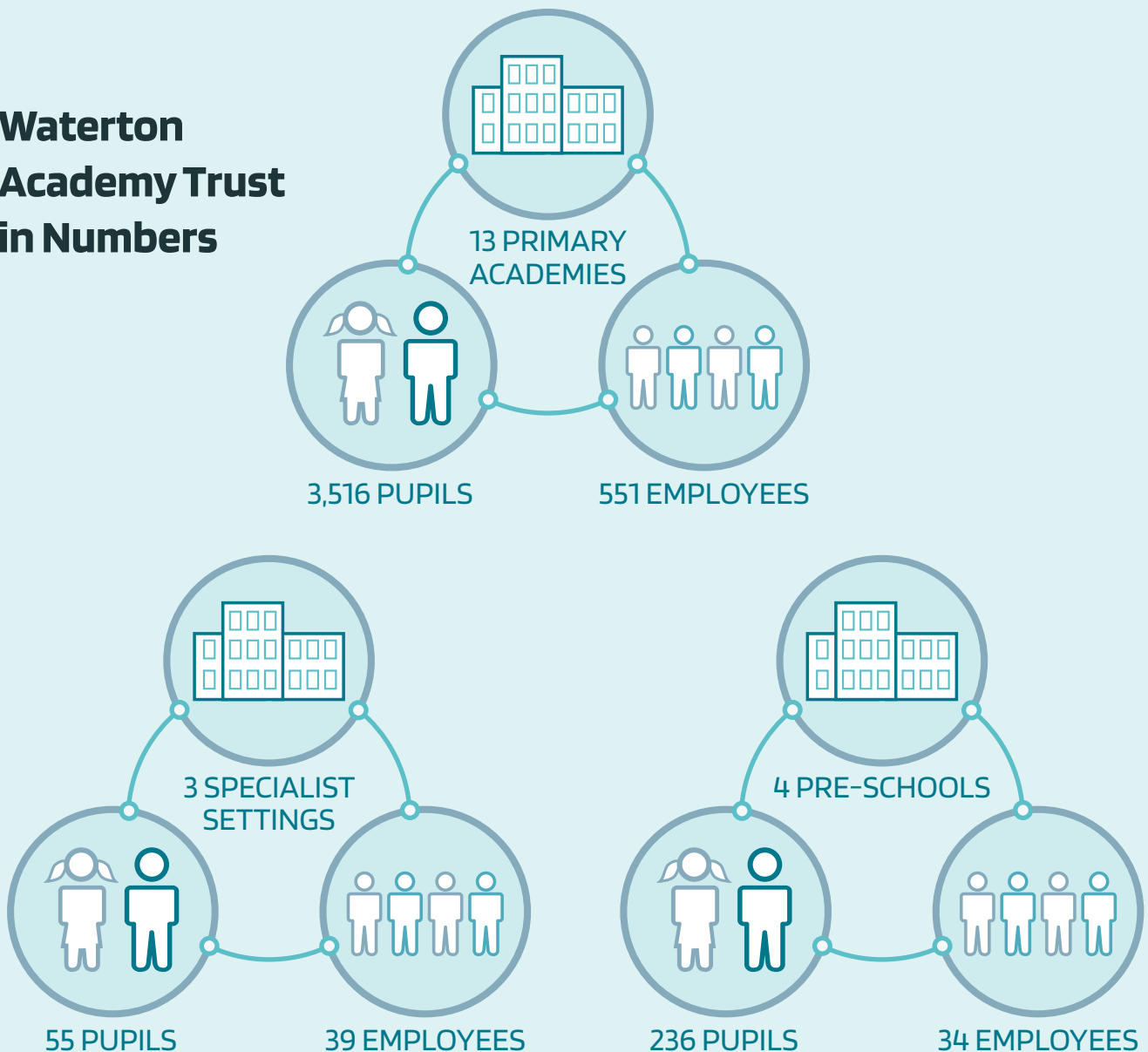
Chief Executive Officer,
Waterton Academy
Trust

Who we are and what we do

Since its establishment in July 2014, with Walton Primary Academy serving as the founding school, Waterton Academy Trust has undergone a remarkable transformation. Over the past ten years, we have evolved with intentional, strategic growth – expanding not just in size but in the diversity and depth of our educational provision.

Today, the Trust spans two key partnership areas, Barnsley and Wakefield, and we are proud to have earned a reputation as a resilient and dependable organisation, improving the educational provision in every school that has joined us.

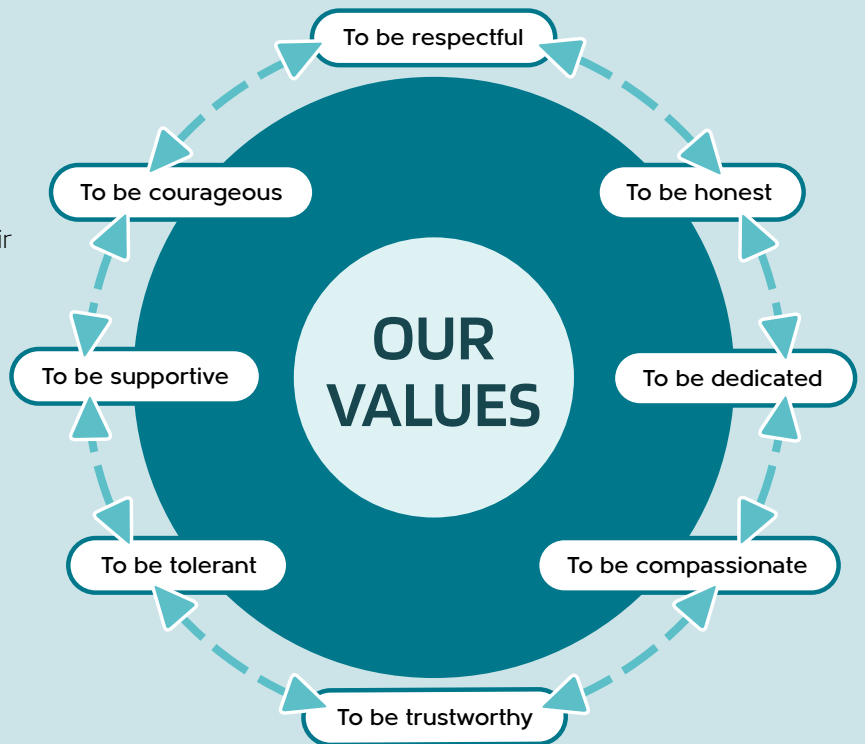
Waterton Academy Trust in Numbers



Our Vision, Values and KPIs

The Trust takes great pride in its unified vision and values, firmly believing that these principles are deeply ingrained in all our schools. This shared ethos forms the cornerstone of our identity and guides our actions and decisions. We are committed to not just espousing these values but actively living them in our daily operations and interactions.

Our overarching goal is to cultivate an environment where **success is a shared experience**, encompassing every pupil, in every one of our schools, as well as every member of our staff. We envision a community where triumphs are not isolated events, but a shared journey, with each accomplishment being a testament to our collaborative efforts. This vision extends to ensuring that every pupil, regardless of their background or abilities, experiences personal and academic growth. For every school, success means not just academic excellence, but also fostering a nurturing and inclusive environment where pupils and staff thrive. For our employees, it's about recognising and valuing their contributions, seeing their wellbeing, professional development and achievements as integral to the overall success of our educational mission.



Trust Offer

Waterton Academy Trust has statutory and ethical obligations in relation to supporting our academies, and we look to meet these through the delivery of our Trust Offer. The Trust has invested significantly in creating a substantial central team, and it is through this team and key external partners that the Trust offer is delivered.

To support its aims and meet its obligations, the Trust provides each of its academies with access to the same Trust offer. The offer is categorised into two main areas, the **operations offer** and the **educational offer**. Access to the Trust offer is guaranteed regardless of current Ofsted rating, financial position, size, or type of provision. The level of support provided is tailored according to current need, however the entire offer remains accessible to all academies at all times.

At the heart of our offer is our commitment to ensuring that our academies can concentrate on their primary role of delivering outstanding teaching and learning through evidence-based practice. Our offer is designed to drive school improvement



through professional development, challenge and support, while simultaneously removing the business-based burdens that prevent headteachers and senior leaders from being in the classroom or involved in school improvement work.



Our Academies

Waterton specialises in high-quality early years, primary, and specialist education. As we have grown, we have been intentional in fostering strong collaboration between schools—ensuring that all academies benefit from shared expertise, collective problem-solving, and a deep commitment to mutual support. Schools work closely with one another, enabling staff to collaborate meaningfully, access targeted professional development, and draw on each other’s strengths.

The map illustrates the locations of our academies across our partnership regions, including Kings Oak Primary, which will officially join Waterton Academy Trust on 1st September 2025, as well as Hammer Lane Academy – our newest specialist academy in Wakefield, which will also open on 1st September 2025.

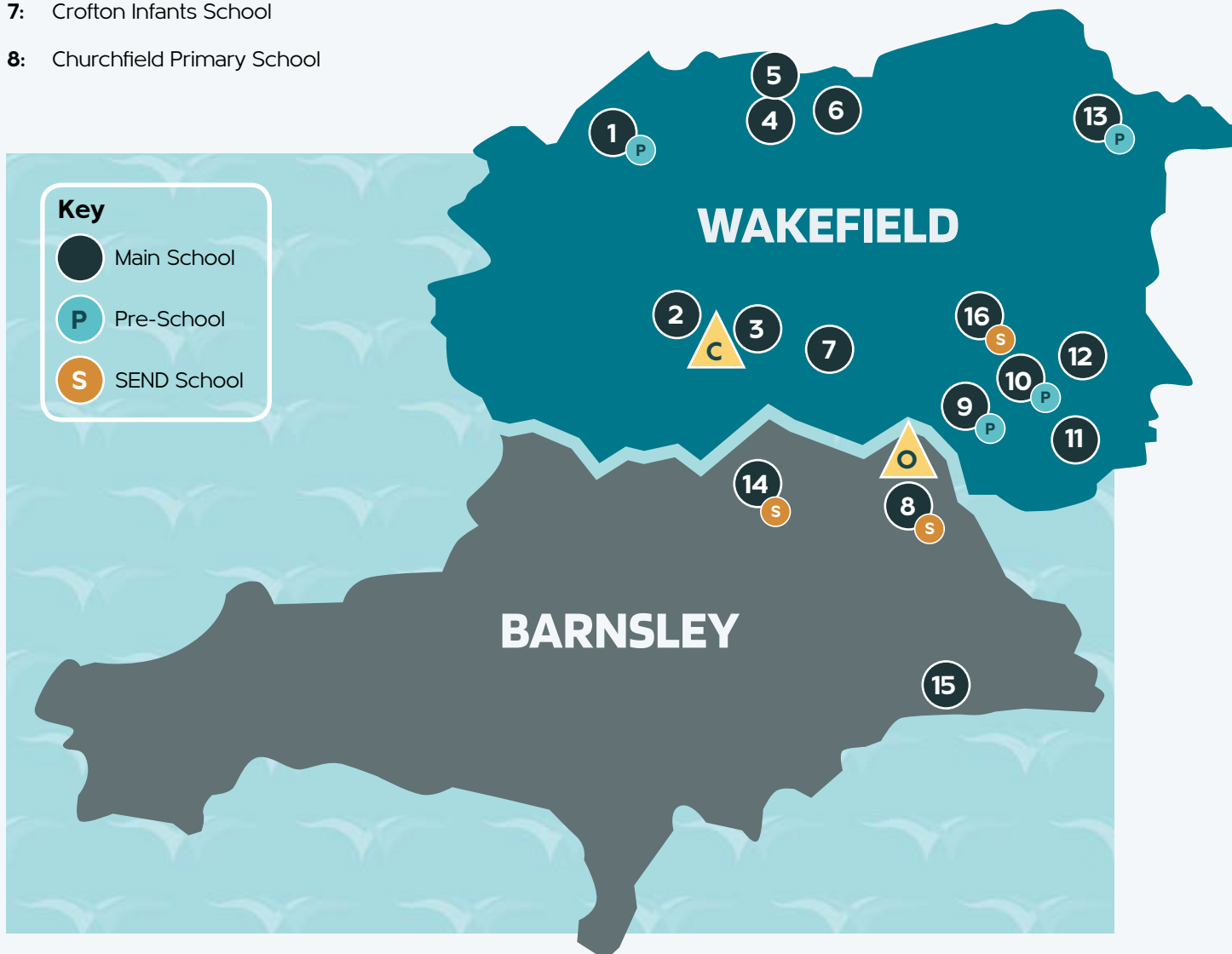
Our central offices—marked with yellow triangles—include the Centre for Excellence in Walton and our Operations Office in Cudworth, ensuring effective oversight and support for all schools within the Trust.

Academy Name	Joined	Type	PAN	LA	Hub
Walton Primary Academy	Sept 2014	Primary	315	Wakefield	West
Normanton Common Primary Academy	March 2015	Primary	315	Wakefield	West
Normanton Junior Academy	Aug 2015	Junior	360	Wakefield	West
Lee Brigg Infant & Nursery School	Oct 2015	Infant	135	Wakefield	West
Crofton Infant School	Dec 2015	Infant	180	Wakefield	West
Sharlston Community School	July 2016	Primary	315	Wakefield	West
Wrenthorpe Academy	April 2017	Primary	315	Wakefield	West
Cherry Tree Academy	April 2017	Primary	315	Wakefield	East
South Kirkby Academy	Sept 2016	Junior	240	Wakefield	East
Ackworth Mill Dam School	July 2017	Primary	210	Wakefield	East
King’s Meadow Academy	July 2018	Primary	315	Wakefield	East
West End Academy	July 2018	Primary	210	Wakefield	East
Churchfield Primary School	Dec 2019	Primary	420	Barnsley	East
Newstead Hunningley Academy	Sept 2023	Special	45	Barnsley	East
Kings Oak Primary	Sept 2025	Primary	420	Barnsley	East
Hammer Lane Academy	Sept 2025	Special	30	Wakefield	East

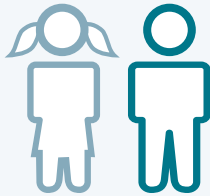
Our Partnership Areas

The yellow triangles on the map represent the central offices of our Trust. These include our Centre for Excellence, located in Walton, Wakefield, and our Operations Offices situated in Cudworth, Barnsley. These strategic locations ensure efficient management and oversight of our Trust's operations and educational offer.

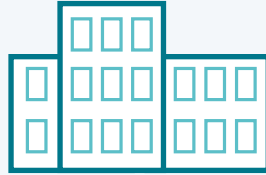
- | | |
|---|--|
| C: Centre for Excellence | 9: King's Meadow Academy & Pre-School |
| O: Operations Office | 10: West End Academy & Pre-School |
| 1: Wrenthorpe Academy & Pre-School | 11: South Kirkby Academy |
| 2: Sharlston Community School | 12: Ackworth Mill Dam School |
| 3: Walton Primary Academy | 13: Cherry Tree Academy & Pre-School |
| 4: Normanton Junior Academy | 14: Newstead Academy |
| 5: Lee Brigg Infant and Nursery School | 15: Kings Oak Primary |
| 6: Normanton Common Primary Academy | 16: Hammer Lane Academy |
| 7: Crofton Infants School | |
| 8: Churchfield Primary School | |



Our Pre-Schools



236 CHILDREN



EDUCATED AND
CARED FOR ACROSS
4 PRE-SCHOOL
SETTINGS



SUPPORTED BY
34 EMPLOYEES

Waterton Pre-Schools works in partnership with the Trust, the Local Authority and individual academies to offer high-quality early years education and childcare provision within the communities it serves. We continue to play a vital role in our commitment to giving every child the best possible start in life.

Operating within four of our Trust academies, our dedicated team of early years professionals serve over 230 families—providing high-quality early education and childcare that is inclusive, nurturing, and ambitious.

This year, we welcomed five new early years apprentices who are undertaking their Level 3 qualifications with Waterton. This investment in workforce development reflects our belief that strong early years provision depends on skilled, caring practitioners who understand child development and bring professional curiosity, joy, and love into their daily practice.

Waterton Pre-Schools align with the government's early years strategy, recognising the importance of high-quality childcare in improving outcomes and supporting working families. We're addressing

Academy Name	Host Academy	Date opened	Ofsted Rating	Capacity
Wrenthorpe Pre-School	Wrenthorpe Academy	Joined the Trust December 2018	Good	48
Cherry Blossom Pre-School	Cherry Tree Academy	September 2022	Good	46
The Meadow Pre-School	King's Meadow Academy	September 2023	Good	60
The Woodland Pre-School	West End Academy	September 2023	Good	36



local shortages and supporting school readiness—particularly for disadvantaged children—through a curriculum rooted in the EYFS framework and enhanced by evidence-informed practice. Our settings prioritise awe, wonder, and strong relationships, with a clear moral purpose: to reduce inequality, champion children’s rights, and foster confident, curious learners.

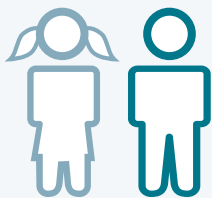
Looking ahead, our early years strategy will continue to evolve in line with both national reforms and the needs of our communities.



We remain committed to expanding access, nurturing talent, and ensuring that every child in a Waterton Pre-School has the foundation they need to thrive in school and beyond.



Our Specialist Provision



55 CHILDREN



EDUCATED AND
CARED FOR ACROSS
3 SETTINGS



SUPPORTED BY
39 EMPLOYEES

We are incredibly proud of our expanding specialist provision, designed to support children with specific learning needs. Operating across three sites, our provision caters to pupils with Communication and Interaction difficulties, as well as Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

Churchfield Primary School - Waterton Assessment Centre

Our specialist provision at Churchfield Primary School offers dedicated support for FS2 and Key Stage 1 pupils with Communication and Interaction difficulties. Many of the children within this provision are non-verbal when they begin their placement. During their time within the setting, they develop communication systems, for some children this includes verbal communication so that by the time they leave Churchfield they are talking. While the provision is attached to the main school, pupils benefit exclusively from specialist teaching and interventions designed to support their specific learning challenges, ensuring they receive the individualised care and attention they need to thrive.

Newstead Academy

Newstead Academy, our first independent special academy, has seen remarkable growth and success since its inception. Newstead caters for

pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 with Communication and Interaction difficulties and operates across two sites: the main Newstead site and Hunningley satellite.

Pupils are welcomed into a nurturing and inclusive environment, with staff and teachers who are expertly trained to support their individual needs. There are three distinct classes at Newstead each of which follow a personalised pathway. There is a diverse range of needs, and the key to positive outcomes is to ensure that the curriculum for each child is tailored to their unique profile.

Hunningley Site

In response to growing demand, in September 2024 we expanded our provision into Hunningley, which supports pupils with both SEMH and Communication and Interaction difficulties. This expansion has allowed us to offer specialist care and tailored learning experiences for a broader range of needs, further extending our impact on the lives of vulnerable children across the region. The curriculum at Hunningley sits alongside that offered at Newstead but incorporates children working closer to age-related expectations as well as children at an emergent stage. Due to pupils' previous experiences a critical part of the Hunningley offer is the embedding of genuine relationships between staff and pupils. All staff across all our provisions and academies know



the importance of relationships but at Hunningley this is a key driver. The provision at Hunningley benefits from the same high-quality leadership and expert teaching teams that have made Newstead a success.

Hammer Lane Academy

In September 2025, Waterton Academy Trust will proudly open the doors to Hammer Lane Academy - a new specialist school designed to meet the growing demand for high-quality primary specialist education in the Wakefield area. Recruitment for the founding team has focused on securing exceptional staff who share our values and are excited by the opportunity to establish a positive school culture from the outset.

Leadership and Expertise

Our specialist provision is overseen by the Trust's Head of SEND and Inclusion, supported by a dedicated team of highly experienced teachers and teaching assistants. This team works closely with the Head of Provision and the Deputy Head of Provision to ensure that pupils receive the best possible care and education, tailored to their individual needs.

Positive Outcomes

With strong leadership, expert staff, and a clear commitment to inclusion, our specialist provision across Churchfield, Newstead, and Hunningley continues to provide a transformative education for some of our most vulnerable pupils. We look forward to continuing this journey of progress, inclusion, and excellence as we expand our reach and deepen our impact in the years to come.

Highlights

One of the true highlights of the year for our Specialist settings was Waterton's Got Stars - our Trust-wide celebration, where pupils from across our schools came together to share their creativity, skills and passion on stage. Among the most moving moments were the performances from pupils in our specialist provision, who took to the stage with pride, confidence, and joy.

This powerful performance was a celebration of inclusion and the transformative power of education. For many families, seeing their children perform publicly was deeply emotional. Parents spoke with pride and gratitude, describing how their children have flourished in our settings - often in ways they had never imagined possible. It was a moment of genuine celebration and a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when we believe in every child.



Our Impact

Our commitment to excellence is reflected in a wide range of outcomes, from Ofsted inspections to pupil performance data. These metrics are important indicators of the high standards we uphold, showcasing the progress our schools have made, and the improvements seen across the Trust. Yet the true impact of our work extends far beyond what data alone can show.

We are dedicated to developing the whole child, focusing not just on academic success, but also on the personal, social, and emotional growth of each pupil. Through our rich and varied curriculum, alongside targeted support for those with

additional needs, we ensure that all children are prepared for the next stage of their education and equipped with the confidence and skills to thrive.

Ofsted Achievements

In 2024-25, we have undergone four Ofsted inspections. The table below demonstrates how each school has improved since they joined the Trust and their current inspection outcomes. This demonstrates our effectiveness in supporting school improvement.

Hub	School	Date of Conversion	Ofsted at Conversion	Rating at Conversion	Date of most recent inspection	Quality of education	Behaviour and attitudes	Personal Development	Leadership and Management	Early Years Foundation Stage
West	SCS	01/07/2016	Good	Good	03/12/2024	The school continues to be a good school.				
East	WEA	01/07/2018	Good	Good	26/11/2024	The school remains good, but the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded inspection were carried out now.				
East	KMA	01/07/2018	N/A	Inadequate	11/02/2025	Requires Improvement	Good	Good	Good	Good
West	WRA	01/04/2017	Good	Good	07/01/2025	The school continues to be a good school.				
West	CIS	01/12/2015	Good	Requires Improvement	01/05/2024	The school remains good, but the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded inspection were carried out now.				
East	CTA	01/04/2017	Inadequate	Inadequate	30/01/2024	Requires Improvement	Good	Good	Good	Good
East	LBIS	01/10/2015	Outstanding	Outstanding	18/11/2021	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding	Outstanding
East	AMD	01/07/2017	Good	Requires Improvement	20/01/2022	The school continues to be a good school.				
West	WPA	01/09/2014	Good	Good	11/05/2022	The school continues to be a good school.				
East	NHA	01/09/2023	N/A	N/A	03/07/2024	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good	N/A
East	SKA	01/09/2016	Good	Requires Improvement	26/04/2023	Good	Good	Good	Good	N/A
West	NIA	01/09/2015	Inadequate	Inadequate	03/07/2023	The school continues to be a good school.				
East	CPS	01/12/2019	Good	Good	24/06/2024	Good	Good	Outstanding	Good	Good
West	NCPA	01/03/2015	Good	Good	12/07/2024	The school continues to be a good school.				

Key Headlines

- **Improvement Across the Trust:** Every academy that has joined Waterton Academy Trust has shown measurable improvement, reflecting our commitment to raising standards.
- **West End Academy Outstanding Potential:** West End Academy was recognised as rapidly improving and is on course to be judged “Outstanding” in all areas during its next inspection.
- **Progress at King’s Meadow Academy:** King’s Meadow Academy, inspected in February made significant strides toward a “Good” rating and achieved “Good” in all areas except for Quality of Education, where further progress is being made.
- **Sharlston Community School and Wrenthorpe Academy** both achieved extremely positive Ofsted reports, recognising that they have maintained the high standards observed at their last inspection.

Ofsted comments from 2024/25

- Pupils attending West End Academy receive an exceptional education. They are safe in school. The school has extremely high ambitions for its pupils. (West End Academy Ofsted Report Nov 2025)
- The school’s work to increase attendance is exemplary. This work is well supported by the Trust. Parents and carers are clear on the expectations of the school. Staff build excellent, trusting relationships with the families they serve. They provide support for families who need it. (West End Academy Ofsted Report Nov 2025)
- Pupils’ personal development is at the heart of everything the school does. There is an almost palpable determination to equip pupils with the skills to cope in life. (Wrenthorpe Academy Ofsted Report Jan 2025)
- The Trust and governors have secure and purposeful oversight of the school. (Wrenthorpe Academy Ofsted Report Jan 2025)
- Staff speak highly of leaders’ support for their professional development, workload and welfare. (Wrenthorpe Academy Ofsted Report Jan 2025)
- King’s Meadow Academy is a rapidly improving school. Staff know pupils and their families very well. Parents and carers appreciate the care and support their children receive. It is a school that welcomes visitors and the wider community warmly. Since the previous inspection, leaders have made many positive changes. These have been timely and wide-ranging. (King’s Meadow Academy Ofsted Report Jan 2025)
- Trustees and local governors have an accurate view of the school’s strengths and priorities. They fulfil their responsibilities well. There is a strong sense of teamwork and demonstrable commitment from all leaders to the school’s continued improvement. (King’s Meadow Academy Ofsted Report Jan 2025)
- There is a real sense of community at this school. Pupils feel safe and know that if they have any worries or concerns, adults will help them. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to enrich their wider personal development. They speak enthusiastically about leadership roles they have such as becoming a member of the children’s parliament or the eco-group. (Sharlston Community School Ofsted Report Dec 2025)
- Staff feel valued. Morale is high, and they work well as a cohesive team. (Sharlston Community School Ofsted Report Dec 2025)

Outcomes in 2025

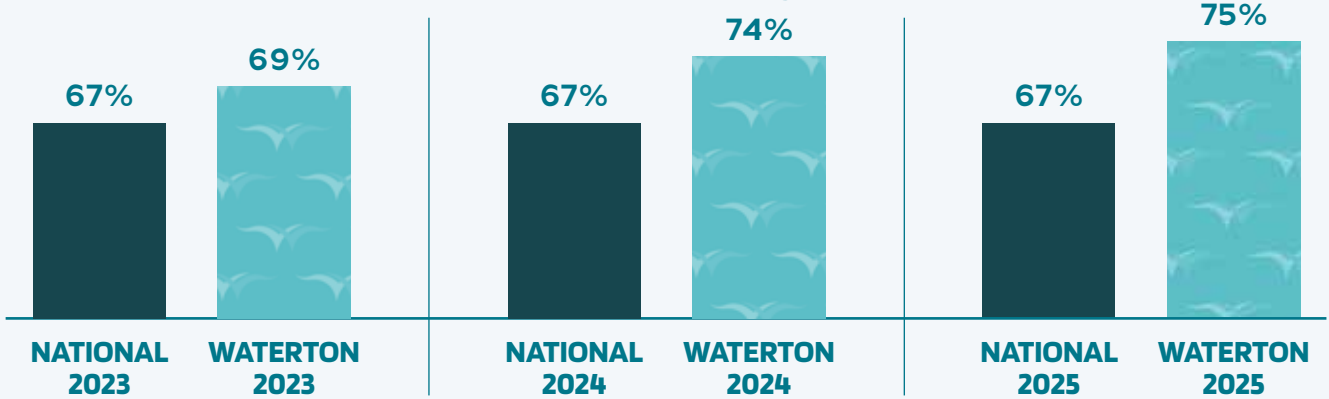
Good Level of Development (GLD)

GLD is a measure used at the end of Reception (the final year of the Early Years Foundation Stage) to assess whether children are ready for Year 1. A child is considered to have achieved a GLD if they reach expected levels in key areas. These areas include:

- Communication and Language
- Physical Development

- Personal, Social, and Emotional Development
- Literacy - Developing early reading and writing skills
- Mathematics - Understanding basic numbers, shapes, space, and measures

% of Pupils Achieving GLD

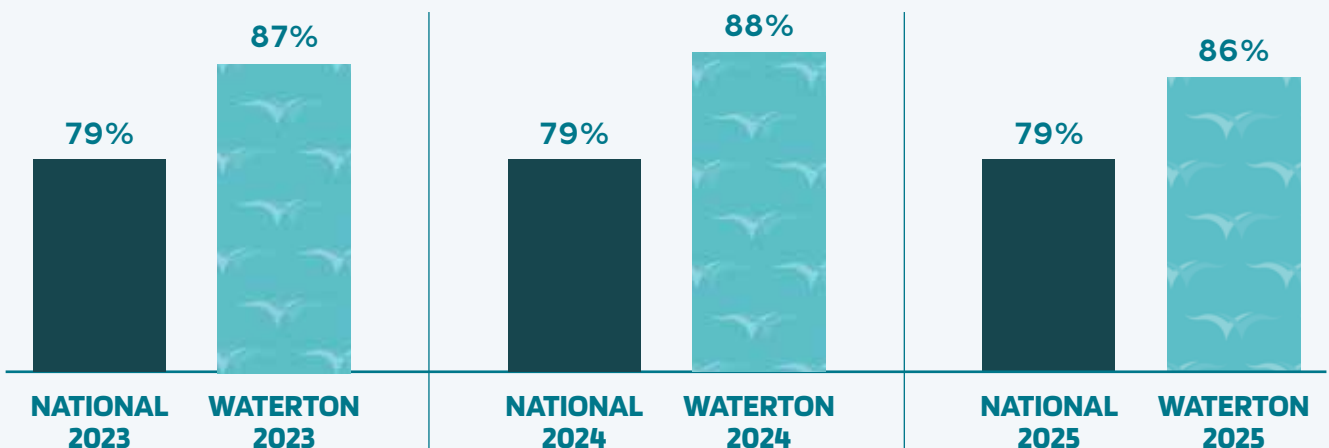


Phonics Screening Check

The Phonics Screening Check is a short, simple assessment that takes place at the end of Year 1 to see how well children are learning to read using phonics. Phonics is a method of teaching reading by helping children understand the sounds that letters and groups of letters make.

A child who meets the expected standard in the phonics screening check shows they have a solid foundation in reading and are well equipped to continue building fluency in Year 2 and beyond.

% of Pupils Passing the Phonics Screening Check

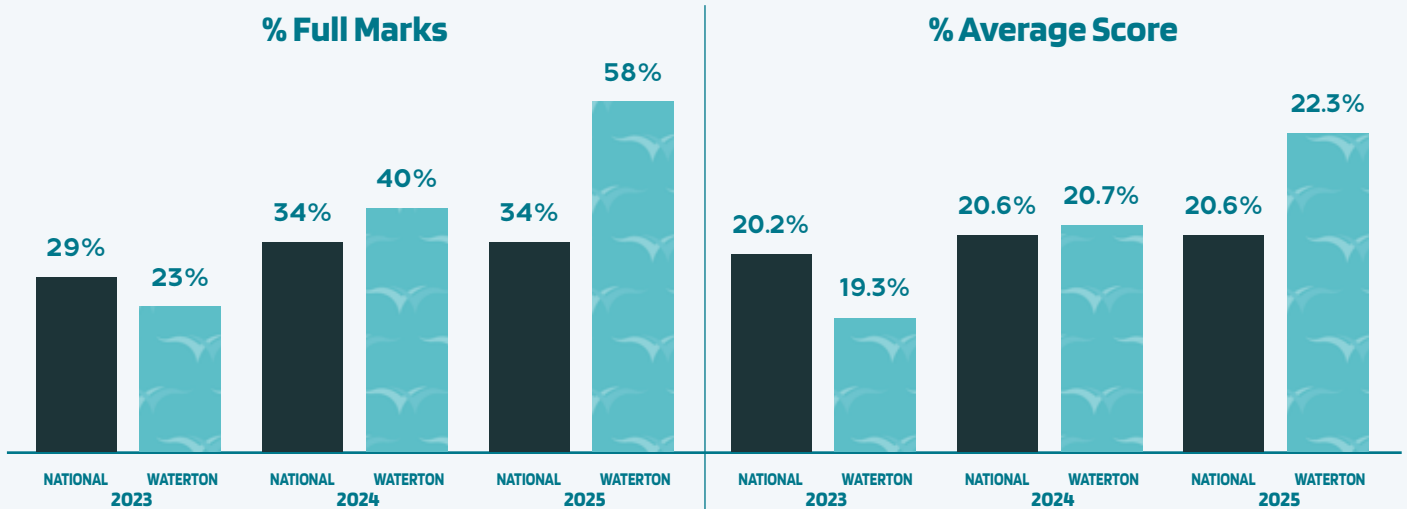


Outcomes in 2025

Multiplication Tables Check (MTC)

The MTC is a national assessment taken by children at the end of Year 4 to see how well they know their times tables. There is no pass or fail, but a strong performance in the multiplication tables check shows that a child has developed a

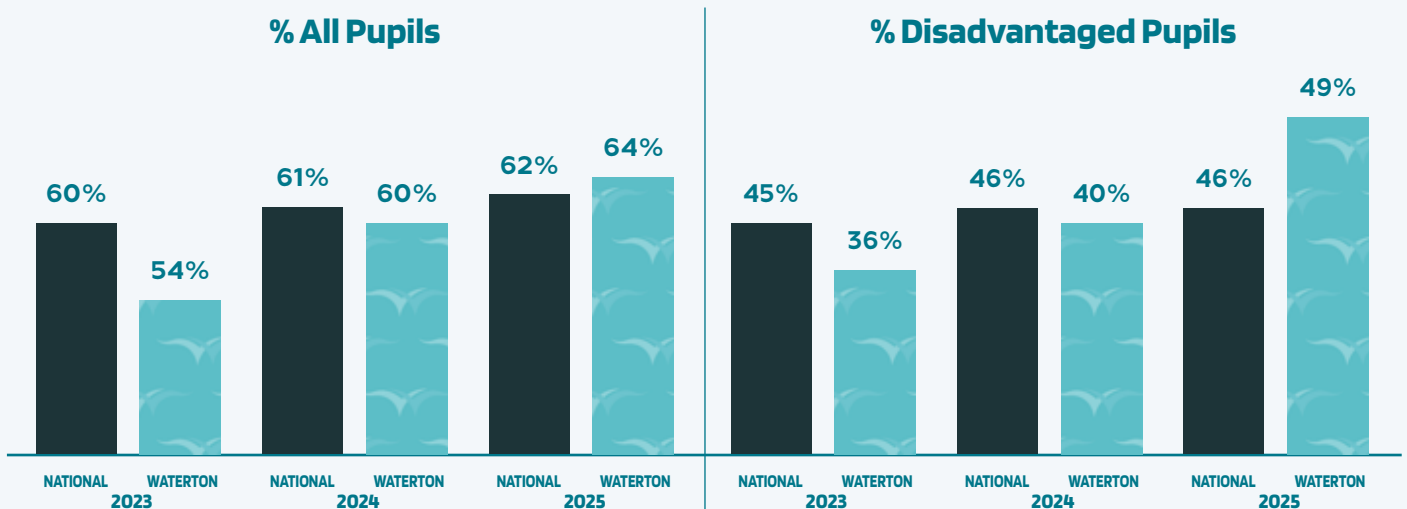
good foundation in maths, which will support their learning in Key Stage 2 and beyond. The data shows the percentage of pupils who scored full marks, and the average attainment.



End of Key Stage 2 Statutory Assessments

At the end of Primary school, tests assess how well children have learned in key subjects during their time in primary school, in Reading, Mathematics, and Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling. Writing is also assessed by teachers

and moderated by the local authority. Meeting the expected standard in these tests shows that a child is ready to move on to more advanced learning in secondary school.



Outcomes in 2025

Summary

We continue to make significant strides in pupil outcomes over the last three years consistently surpassing national averages in key areas:

- Waterton's GLD improved from 69% in 2023 to 75% in 2025, outperforming the national average and showing significant progress over three years. The DfE have set an ambition that by 2028, 75% for pupils in England will achieve a good level of development - an ambition that is already being realised in Waterton Academy Trust, with the vast majority of our schools exceeding that target.
- Waterton's phonics results have remained extremely strong with 86% of pupils passing the check in 2025. We continue to consistently deliver outcomes that are above the national average, with the vast majority of schools achieving above average outcomes.
- There has been a rapid improvement in the proportion of pupils in Waterton achieving full marks in the MTC - this has increased from 40% in 2024 to 58% in 2025. The average score has also increased significantly since 2023. All our schools are above the national average.
- Key Stage 2 Combined Outcomes:
Waterton's combined score in 2024 was in line with the National, and in 2025 we improved by 4% to move 2% above the national average. This is a 10% increase from 2023 to 2025.
- Combined outcomes for disadvantaged pupils show a marked improvement across the board. Notably, reading outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have increased significantly - from 43% in 2023 to 63% in 2025. This progress reflects the impact of our targeted strategies and continued commitment to equity, and excellence.
- Outcomes in each individual subject increased in both 2024 and 2025.
- At Key Stage 2:
 - 9/11 schools (82%) improved in Reading from 2023 to 2025
 - 6/11 schools (55%) improved in Writing from 2023 to 2025, whilst 1 remained the same
 - 6/11 schools (55%) improved in Maths from 2023 to 2025, whilst 1 maintained its performance
 - 8/11 schools (73%) improved their combined outcomes from 2023 to 2025, whilst 1 remained the same.



Behaviour

Across Waterton Academy Trust, maintaining high standards of behaviour is a priority, ensuring a positive and safe learning environment for all pupils. Behaviour in our schools has been consistently praised in recent Ofsted inspections, with several reports highlighting the effective management of pupil behaviour and the positive relationships between staff and pupils.

Reducing Suspensions

We're proud to report a significant reduction in suspensions across Waterton Academy Trust in 2024-25. Our overall suspension rate fell to 1.0%, marking a fall from 1.7% in the previous two academic years and well below the most recent national average of 2.3% (2023-24, DfE). This marks a clear step forward in our ambition to create calmer, more inclusive schools.

This improvement is directly linked to our Trust-wide focus on relational practice, a preventative approach to behaviour rooted in connection, empathy and restorative conversations.

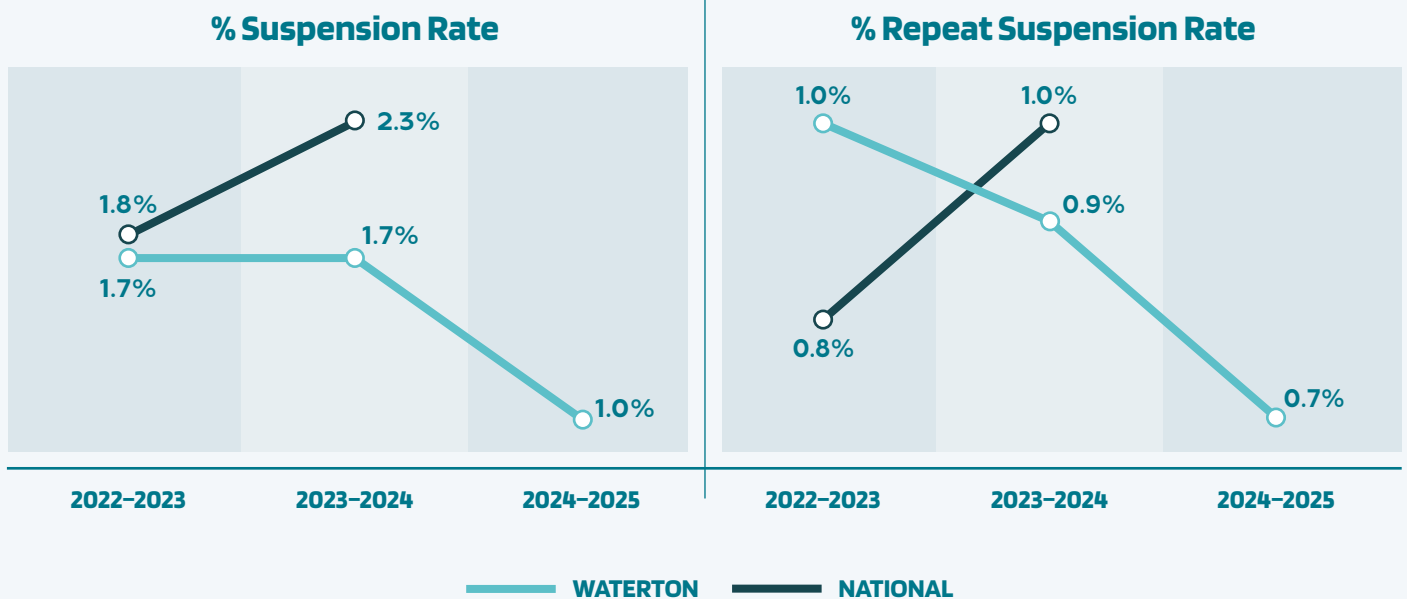
Fewer Repeat Suspensions

Our repeat suspension rate also saw a positive drop—from 0.9% in 2023-24 to 0.7% in 2024-25, better than the national average of 1.0%. This reflects the strength of our early intervention systems, which help schools to identify patterns, understand individual pupil needs, and provide meaningful support before behaviour becomes entrenched.

Zero Permanent Exclusions

Permanent exclusion is always a last resort, and this year we're proud to say that no pupils were permanently excluded from any school in the Trust.

These achievements are not accidental. They are the result of a clear, values-driven strategy to ensure every child is supported to thrive in school. We know there is still more to do, particularly for pupils with the most complex needs - but this year's data gives strong cause for celebration and renewed confidence in our inclusive approach.



Attendance

Improving pupil attendance has been a key priority across the Trust this year, and we are now seeing the positive impact of that collective effort.

Throughout 2024-25, headteachers have taken clear ownership of the attendance agenda within their schools. By embedding attendance as a core part of leadership routines and school improvement planning, we've seen a notable shift in both visibility and accountability.

A major factor in this improvement has been the more strategic use of data. Schools have been supported to use Bromcom more effectively, enabling earlier identification of concerns, improved tracking of trends, and more timely intervention.

In many schools, this has been underpinned by a stronger relationship with families, with pastoral teams working closely with parents to identify and address barriers to attendance. Proactive home visits, regular attendance clinics, and early help referrals have all played a role in strengthening the culture of attendance and reducing persistent absence.

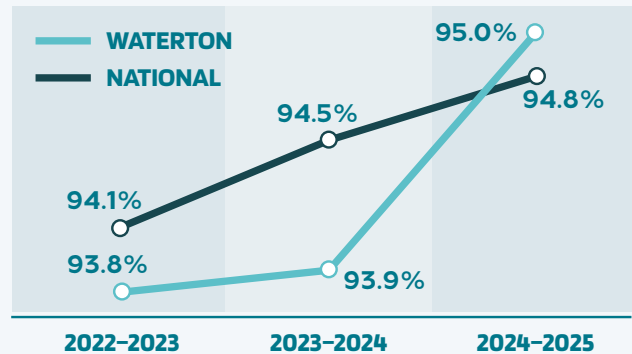
Across the Trust, we are now seeing the benefits of this joined-up approach. While national attendance remains a challenge across the sector, our schools have made clear and measurable progress - and in several settings, attendance has returned to, or even exceeded, pre-pandemic levels.

The challenge now is to sustain this improvement. With strong leadership, better systems, and a shared belief in the importance of being in school every day, we are well placed to continue that progress into 2025-26.

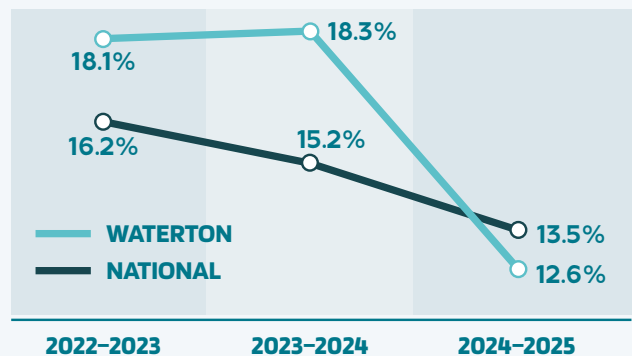
Key Headlines

- Waterton's attendance improved significantly from 93.9% in 2023-24 to 95.0% in 2024-25, and is now above the National average.
- All schools within the Trust made improvements in attendance this academic year, with the exception of one school whose attendance remained the same significantly above the national average at 96.0%.
- There has been a significant reduction in persistent absence, dropping from 18.3% in 2023-24, to 12.6% in 2024-25.
- 11 out of 13 schools saw a significant reduction in persistent absence compared with the previous year.
- Waterton specialist settings saw persistent absence falling dramatically from 50% in 2023-24, to 20.9% in 2024-25, outperforming both local (40.3%) and national (35.6%) averages.
- Improvements in attendance and reductions in persistent absence have been both significant and consistent across all pupil groups.

% Attendance over time



% Persistent absence over time



At Waterton Academy Trust, we believe that education is about far more than academic outcomes. It's about nurturing confident, curious, and compassionate young people through rich, inclusive experiences that inspire a lifelong love of learning. This year, enrichment across our schools has flourished—bringing joy, building belonging, and elevating pupil voice at every level.

Parent Feedback

Parent survey feedback shows strong outcomes across the trust, with 92% of parents saying their child is happy at school, 94% reporting their child feels safe, and 91% saying they would strongly recommend the school. These figures

are above national benchmarks and reflect the trust's commitment to pupil wellbeing, safety, and positive relationships with families. This feedback is an important measure of trust-wide culture and community confidence.

Number of responses	My child is happy at school	My child feels safe at school	I would strongly recommend this school
853	92%	94%	91%
7 - 105	85% - 100%	85% - 100%	74% - 100%
National	89%	90%	84%

Enrichment and Pupil Voice

Children's Parliament

Our Waterton Children's Parliament continues to be a shining example of how seriously we take the voices of our young people. Representatives from every school come together termly to discuss issues that matter to them, fundraise for chosen causes, and advise the CEO directly.

This year our pupils have:

- Raised funds for the Children's Parliament Charity of the year SNAPS Yorkshire, a charity that supports children with additional needs and their families through physiotherapy and leisure services to provide opportunities for children and families to meet, learn, play, and build relationships.
- Participated as judges in the Key Stage 2 'Waterton Young Chef of the Year' a cooking event that celebrates culinary creativity, encourages a healthy lifestyle and fosters a lifelong passion for food for both KS1 & KS2 pupils. Parliament also produced media reports to share the success of the event.

- They also helped present awards at the annual Sports Award evening, alongside the Chair of the Trust board. Their passion and clarity have shaped real change - and shown us all what thoughtful leadership looks like at any age.
- Parliament Leaders attended a working lunch with the Trust CEO to discuss the success of the 24-25 academic years activities and recorded a Children's Parliament Message to Governors to raise the profile of Children's Parliament and champion their activities throughout the year.



Prime Minister: Ruby (right)
Deputy: Scarlett, Cherry Tree Academy (left)
Parliament Speaker: Olivia, Cherry Tree Academy (centre)



Enrichment

At Waterton, we believe that education extends far beyond the classroom—and that celebration, creativity, and connection are essential to a thriving school community. Our pupils have also taken part in the follow-Trust wide events and initiatives.

Waterton Year 5/6 Girls' Football Festival

The **Waterton Year 5/6 Girls' Football Festival** returned for its fourth year in June 2025, once again aiming to be the largest event of its kind in the region. It brought together teams from across the Trust and beyond for a day of sport, celebration, and inclusion. With a format designed to support all abilities, the festival empowered girls to compete with confidence and pride. More than just a tournament, it reflected Waterton's commitment to equality, participation, and the joy of sport—leaving lasting memories for pupils, staff, and families alike.





MATlympics event

The annual **MATlympics** brought together pupils from across all Waterton schools in a spectacular celebration of sport, teamwork, and healthy competition. Held at Dorothy Hyman Stadium, this event saw hundreds of children compete in a range of athletic challenges, representing their schools with pride and energy. It was a day of colour, community spirit and personal achievement—with pupils not only showcasing their sporting ability but building resilience, camaraderie, and a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves.





Enrichment

Waterton's Got Stars

Equally inspiring was our annual performing arts celebration, Waterton's Got Stars. This event offers every school the opportunity to shine, showcasing the creative talents of our pupils in music, dance, drama, and spoken word. The standard of performance this year was exceptional, with children from every background stepping onto the stage with confidence and joy. It was particularly heartening to see pupils from our specialist settings perform alongside their peers, embraced by an audience of families, staff, and governors who cheered each child with pride. For many parents and carers, it was a moment of real celebration—to see their children's talents nurtured and recognised in such a powerful and inclusive way.





Walk to School challenge

Waterton pupils are actively contributing to the fight against climate change through initiatives like the WOW **Walk to School challenge**, which has led to a 19 percentage point increase in active travel across participating schools. Empowered by their roles as Climate Ambassadors and WOW Pupil Ambassadors, children are not only reducing emissions but also building lifelong habits that support healthier communities and a greener planet.

Waterton Young Chef competition

The much-anticipated **Waterton Young Chef competition** returned this year, inviting budding chefs from across the Trust to showcase their culinary skills in a high-energy final judged by professional chefs. It was a true celebration of creativity, resilience, and healthy living—with pupils demonstrating incredible flair, teamwork and pride in their creations.



The Annual Waterton Sports Awards Evening

Sport continues to thrive across the Trust, with an expansive sports offer that includes inter-school leagues and our sports festival. The year culminated in our annual **Waterton Sports Awards Evening**, compered by the Chair of the Trust, celebrating both individual excellence and team achievement. It was a joyful event that honoured not only athletic success but also determination, fair play, and growth.

At the heart of all this is a shared commitment in every school to create a culture of belonging - where all children feel seen, celebrated, and part of the Trust community. Schools have prioritised pupil voice through school councils, leadership roles, wellbeing champions, and inclusive events that reflect the unique identity of each community. Whether through performance, sport, leadership or activism, our pupils

are finding meaningful ways to express themselves—and it's a privilege to support and champion them every step of the way.



Our Approach to School Improvement

In 2024/2025, our school improvement offer was significantly enhanced by expanding the Education Team, increasing the capacity to deliver high-quality, targeted support benefitting all schools. This enhanced structure has enabled more focused and specialist work in key areas such as teaching and learning, attendance, inclusion, early years, and data-driven improvement. As a result, schools have benefited from more bespoke support, sharper insight, and greater consistency in implementing Trust-wide priorities.

We launched half-termly Headteacher Development Days to bring school leaders together and strengthen leadership across the Trust. These days focused on two key strands. The first was operational effectiveness, with a strong emphasis on achieving consistency in the implementation of strategic approaches, such as greater precision in monitoring and evaluation, and more intelligent, timely use of data, particularly in relation to attendance and attainment. This work has been underpinned by our rapidly advancing use of Power BI (a data analysis platform), enabling leaders to make more informed, evidence-led decisions.

The second strand focused on personal leadership development, with sessions exploring attributes and behaviours essential to effective leadership, for example developing self-awareness, reflective practice, and confident decision-making. These sessions provided headteachers with

protected time to step back from daily operational pressures, reflect critically on their leadership, and strengthen their capacity as strategic leaders. Crucially, these days fostered collaboration and shared learning across schools, bringing Waterton's vision, success is a shared experience, to life in practice. This collaborative culture is already leading to more consistent school-level responses to common challenges and has strengthened peer support across the Trust, particularly in areas such as attendance strategy and approaches to monitoring and self-evaluation and implementation of strategic plans.

A number of additional school improvement strategies have been implemented this year aligned with our commitment to empowering and supporting leaders as agents of change. A key priority has been improving Year 6 outcomes, with tailored support enabling schools to implement evidence-informed approaches that maximise pupil progress and readiness for transition. In addition, we have prepared for the Trust-wide rollout of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) approach to mathematics teaching, laying clear foundations for a consistent, high-quality implementation from September that will further strengthen curriculum delivery and pupil outcomes across all schools.

Our approach continues to prioritise headteachers as the prime leaders of school improvement in their schools, equipping them with the skills and autonomy to lead transformational change.





Support for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Waterton Academy Trust is deeply committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of need or background, receives the support they need to thrive.

Throughout 2024-25, our team of special needs coordinators (SENCOs) worked together to improve how we spot children who may need extra help. We've introduced shared systems to identify needs early, plan the right support, and make sure every child gets the help they need. This is part of a step-by-step approach called the 'graduated response', which means putting support in place at the right time and adjusting it if a child needs more help as they grow.

A collaborative forum now meets regularly to review case studies, share expertise, and align practice with national developments and best practice. The impact is already evident. Targeted interventions are more closely matched to pupil needs, staff report greater confidence in supporting learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and progress for pupils with SEND across the Trust is strong. For example in 2025 at Key Stage 2, pupils receiving support without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

have achieved higher than their peers nationally, and pupils with EHCPs have also secured strong progress.

This year we took a significant step forward in strengthening our inclusive practice through the development of a Trust SENCO Model. Where vacancies for school-based SENCOs have arisen, we have taken the opportunity to recruit centrally building a team of highly skilled Trust SENCOs who work across more than one school. This approach enables us to attract specialists with deeper levels of expertise and experience, while ensuring consistent, high-quality provision for pupils with SEND across all settings.

Led by our Head of SEND and Inclusion, the team works in close partnership with school leaders to develop and embed inclusive strategies, build staff confidence, and respond swiftly to emerging needs. This flexible, collaborative model is already making a meaningful difference to pupil outcomes and ensuring that our most vulnerable learners are supported by the best possible practice.

Safeguarding

In 2024/25, Waterton Academy Trust continued implementing our comprehensive Safeguarding Strategy to strengthen our commitment to creating a safe and nurturing environment for all pupils. The outcomes from recent external reviews and Ofsted inspections consistently highlight our

compliance with safeguarding standards and identify examples of good practice across the Trust. These results reaffirm that our safeguarding processes are robust and effectively implemented in every school.

Developing Our People

Our mission is to deliver a high-quality education by ensuring that staff are well-supported, developed, and valued. Our People Strategy aims to position the Trust as an employer of choice, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and excellence across the organisation.

Key Themes include:

- Recruitment and Retention
- Professional Development
- Wellbeing
- Appraisal and Accountability
- Equality and Diversity
- Organisational Development

Professional Development

At Waterton Academy Trust, we are committed to providing our staff with high-quality professional development opportunities that align with our School Development Priorities and the Trust Strategic Plan. In 2024–2025, our professional development offer aimed to ensure that all staff - from Early Career Teachers to senior leaders - have access to the training and development they need to excel.

Key Highlights:

- **National Professional Qualifications (NPQs):**
In partnership with the Exchange Teaching Hub, we continue to support schools in securing NPQs in areas such as Senior Leadership, SENCo, Headship, Behaviour and Culture, Leading Teacher Development, and Early Years Leadership. These qualifications support our teachers and leaders in developing specialist expertise and leadership skills. In 2024–25, 19 leaders started an NPQ.
- **Early Career Teacher (ECT) Training:**
Our ECTs took part in a robust two-year development programme through the Early Career Framework, designed to equip them with the core skills and confidence needed for successful classroom practice. Each ECT was supported by a dedicated in-school mentor, alongside expert guidance and oversight from our Trust ECT Lead, ensuring consistent, high-quality support throughout their journey.

- **Professional Learning Networks:**

We continued to support subject-specific professional learning networks in areas including Reading, Writing, Attendance, Maths, Science, and Assessment. These networks foster collaboration, resource-sharing, and curriculum development across schools. In 2024–25, there were 73 network meetings, mostly held at the Centre for Excellence (with some held online). In addition, there were 69 moderation events, enabling teachers in every year group to agree standards for pupil assessment. All mainstream teachers participated in end-of-year moderation to validate their judgments. Network leaders also received bespoke training to equip them with the skills to facilitate high-quality discussions and share best practice.

- **Leadership Development:** Leadership development remained a priority, with the launch of Headteacher Update Meetings and Development Days. These sessions were designed to improve communication with Headteachers while supporting their professional growth. Training focused on key areas such as MBTI profiling, managing difficult conversations, assessment strategies, and lessons learned from other schools. These sessions fostered a strong sense of collaboration, and Headteachers have commented positively on the impact the development days have had.

- **Flick Learning:** In 2024–25, Waterton Academy Trust continued to utilise Flick Learning, an online platform offering a wide range of interactive courses to enhance staff development and support continued professional growth across the Trust.
- **Specialist training in relation to SEND:** This year, Waterton Academy Trust has delivered a wide-ranging programme of specialist SEND training, designed to embed inclusive practices and raise expectations for all learners. Our approach has been shaped by collaboration, reflection, and the belief that success is a shared endeavour.

A key focus has been the SENCO Network, which explored the principles of adaptive teaching and high-quality, inclusive classroom practice. Over six focused sessions, SENCOs worked in peer groups to reflect on current approaches, quality assure provision and identify improvements. The year culminated in a showcase event, where each setting shared strong subject-specific practice—celebrating progress and reinforcing our collective commitment to excellence.

We also launched our 'Waterton Specialists' programme, co-led by our Head of SEND and Inclusion and Senior Educational Psychologist. This group explored relational practice and the concept of unconditional positive regard. As they move into Year 2, specialists will lead training in their own schools, further extending the programme's reach and impact.

Our Team Teach trainers have enabled consistent, Trust-wide delivery of positive behaviour support strategies, with over 80 staff trained in de-escalation, safety, and care. This has strengthened our collective understanding and ensured a unified, child-centred approach.

Additionally, the Early Years SEND Network, led by our EY Lead and Trust SENCO, focused on provision for pupils with complex needs entering Reception. Supported by external professionals, the programme helped settings enhance their inclusive practices from the very start of a child's school journey.

Through this broad and inclusive offer, Waterton Academy Trust ensures that all staff are well-equipped to contribute to the continued success and improvement of our schools.



Apprenticeships

Waterton Academy Trust's apprenticeship provision has continued to thrive in 2024-2025, with significant growth, innovation, and impact across the year. Our commitment to high-quality professional development has seen increased participation, new programme launches and strengthened partnerships across the sector.

Programme Expansion and Innovation

This year, we continued delivering our well-established Level 3 Teaching Assistant Apprenticeship, building on the strong foundation developed since its launch in 2021. In a major milestone, we also introduced a brand-new Early Years Educator Level 3 Apprenticeship, with 8 learners enrolled from Waterton and 5 from Nexus. This addition reflects our dedication to meeting the evolving needs of schools and early years settings across the region.

To further extend our reach, we diversified our delivery model to include hybrid learning, allowing us to support apprentices more flexibly while maintaining high standards of training and support.

Looking Ahead: New Specialism and Continued Growth

A key achievement this year was securing approval to deliver the Level 5 Teaching Assistant – Specialist Apprenticeship, launching in September



2025. This advanced programme is designed for experienced support staff ready to deepen their professional expertise. The first cohort will include 14 learners from Waterton and 18 from Nexus Multi-Academy Trust, marking a significant step in our ambition to lead workforce development across the region.

Achievement Rates

Waterton's apprenticeship programme has consistently achieved high results. In the most recent year, our achievement rate is 76.9%, surpassing the national average achievement rate of 71.2%. This has continued to rise year on year. Additionally, during the year 24/25, 19 apprentices have so far completed their End Point Assessment (EPA) with a remarkable 18 (95%) achieving an overall distinction and 1 learner achieving an overall merit.





Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Teachers

In 2024-25, we deepened our valued partnership with Leeds Trinity University, continuing to deliver high-quality Initial Teacher Training (ITT) for postgraduates on both the 3-7 and 5-11 routes to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to building a strong, research-informed foundation for the next generation of teachers, with an emphasis on long-term professional development.

Since launching our ITT programme in 2017, over 70 teachers have successfully completed their training with us, with a 100% qualification rate for those who completed the course. This year, twelve student teacher placements were offered across

our schools, with ten Waterton student teachers successfully completing the programme. The two who did not complete the training deferred for valid medical reasons.

We're proud to report that 100% have secured teaching roles, with 30% securing these roles within the Trust.

We also took proactive steps to prepare for upcoming changes to teacher training. This year saw the successful roll out of the Intensive Training and Practice (ITaP) modules, ahead of their mandatory implementation in 2025.

Key Highlights:

- 70+ teachers trained since the ITT programme began
- 100% qualification success for all completers
- 100% of newly qualified teachers in 2025 secured positions and 30% remained within the Trust

We remain committed to supporting our Early Career Teachers (ECTs) beyond qualification. In 2023, we partnered with the Exchange Teaching Hub as our Appropriate Body provider, aligning our ECT programme with University College London (UCL). This ensures every ECT receives structured support as they continue to grow in skill and confidence.

Our dedicated ITT/ECT Lead plays a key role in delivering consistent, high-quality support for all early career teachers across the Trust.

In 2024-25:

- We welcomed 9 Year 1 ECTs.
- We supported 6 Year 2 ECTs

The Waterton Teachers Council

The Waterton Teachers' Council is a vibrant professional learning community made up of classroom teachers from across the Trust. Established to ensure that teacher voice shapes our strategic direction, the Council plays a central role in driving innovation, informing policy, and championing best practice.

This year, the Council has contributed to key projects including the development of our AI toolkit, discussions about oracy (teaching pupils to speak well and listen actively) and workload reduction strategies. Teachers to trial new approaches, share insights, and provide feedback on Trust-wide initiatives—ensuring they are grounded in classroom reality.

By investing in teacher leadership and valuing practitioner expertise, the Council is helping to build a culture of trust, curiosity and continuous improvement. Members describe the Council as energising, empowering, and impactful. As we look ahead, its influence will continue to grow—supporting our mission to ensure that every child in a Waterton school benefits from excellent teaching.



Wellbeing

In 2024/25 Waterton Academy Trust continued its commitment to fostering a culture of wellbeing for both staff and pupils.

We continued to offer a wide range of employee benefits, including access to counselling services, health and wellbeing resources, and other initiatives that support a positive work-life balance. Efforts were made to improve communication around our wellbeing offer, ensuring that all staff were aware of the support available to them. We also sustained our focus on building a consistent and supportive culture of wellbeing across all schools.

Looking ahead to 2025-26, a key development will be the integration of the Wellbeing Network into our Headteacher meetings, which will now take place six times a year. This change will ensure that wellbeing is a leadership led priority, reinforcing its importance across the organisation. By embedding wellbeing into leadership conversations, we aim to further strengthen a culture of care, shared responsibility, and high expectations for staff wellbeing throughout the Trust.



Employees have continued to benefit from our comprehensive Employee Benefits Package to enhance support for staff well-being, professional growth, and work-life balance. This comprehensive package aims to ensure that every team member feels valued and supported, both professionally and personally. Key highlights of the package include:

- **Employee Assistance Programme:** Offering free, confidential services through the Schools Advisory Service (SAS), including access to counselling, lifestyle health screening, and mental health support.
- **Flexible Working Arrangements:** Tailored to meet the diverse needs of employees, options include part-time hours, job sharing, hybrid working, and phased retirement plans.
- **Pension Schemes:** Access to both the Teachers' Pension and Local Government Pension Schemes, providing secure, tax-efficient retirement benefits.
- **Wellbeing Support:** A focus on mental health through the Wellbeing Charter, lifestyle health screenings, discounted gym memberships, and an NHS Stop Smoking Service.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Schemes like Cycle to Work and the Electric Vehicle Salary Sacrifice Scheme offer eco-friendly commuting options with significant cost savings.

Finance and Operations

Finance Developments

The current educational landscape continues to present a complex mix of challenges and opportunities, shaped by increasing financial pressures, rising operational costs, and evolving expectations around digital capability and sustainability. Despite these external pressures, the Trust remains in a strong and resilient financial position, underpinned by healthy reserves and robust financial management.

This stability enables us to continue investing strategically in our IT infrastructure, estate development, systems improvement, and operational efficiency. These investments are vital in supporting our education teams to deliver high-quality learning experiences for our pupils; while ensuring we remain agile and future-focused as a Trust.

Headline achievements

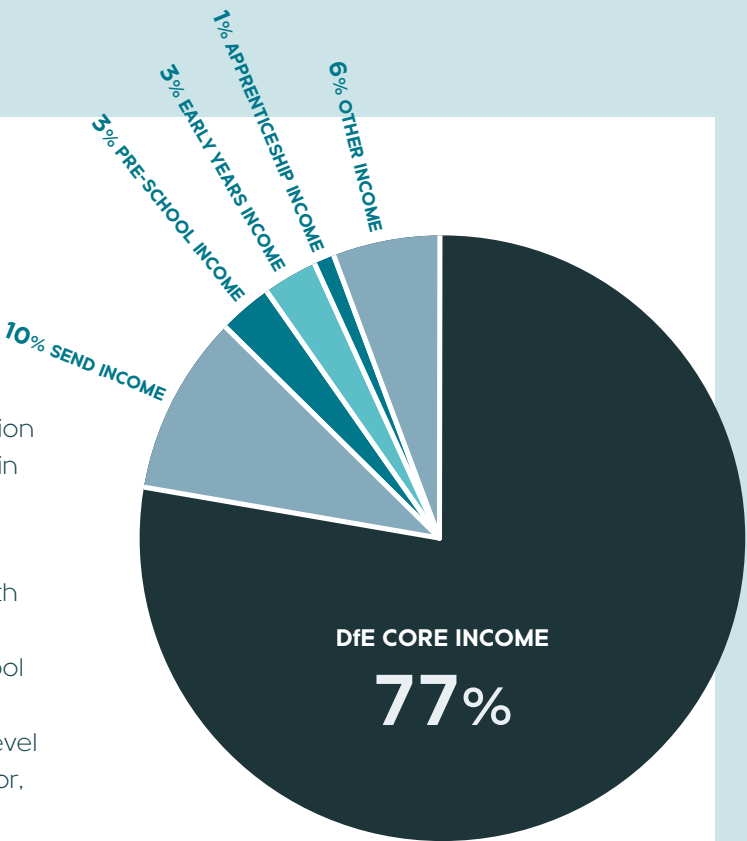
- **Successfully secured a £2.4m Salix grant** through Phase 4 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, working with Nero Energy to reduce emissions across Trust buildings, with matched funding committed via School Condition Allocation.
- **Opened a new specialist SEND provision at Hunningley**, supported by approximately £270k in local authority investment.
- **Secured £165k in High Needs Sensory Grant funding** from Wakefield Local Authority to enhance facilities across four Trust schools.
- **Awarded a £45k grant from Enfinium** to purchase a new school minibus, improving transport access for pupils.
- **Successfully secured a £150k DfE School-Based Nursery Grant (SBN)** to establish a new early years provision at the Trust's Ackworth Mill Dam site.
- **Invested approximately £260k across the Trust** to drive forward our digital transformation strategy, enhancing infrastructure and classroom technology.



Trust Funding

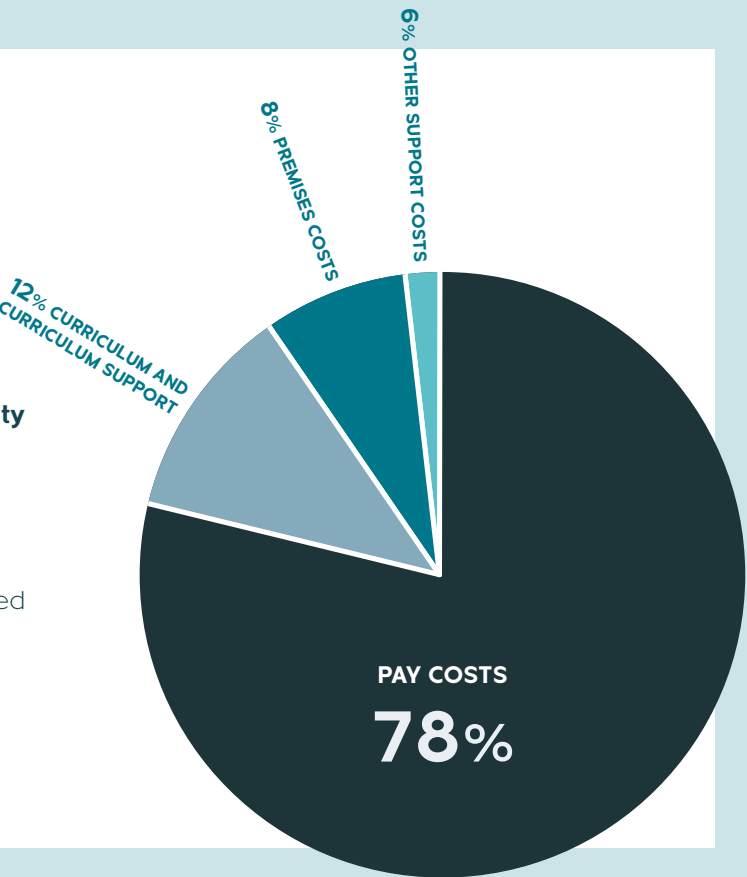
The majority of the Trust’s income comes from government funding. This includes core per-pupil allocations, as well as targeted funding such as pupil premium, free school meals, and support for pupils with additional needs. These income streams form the foundation of our financial position and enable us to maintain high-quality provision across our schools.

Alongside this, we receive funding for three specialist SEND units, delivered in partnership with Barnsley and Wakefield local authorities. Other income includes revenue from our four preschool settings, and from delivering apprenticeship programmes in key education roles including Level 3 Teaching Assistant, Level 3 Early Years Educator, and Level 5 Specialist Teaching Assistant. These additional areas of work continue to support our broader commitment to early years and workforce development.



Trust Expenditure

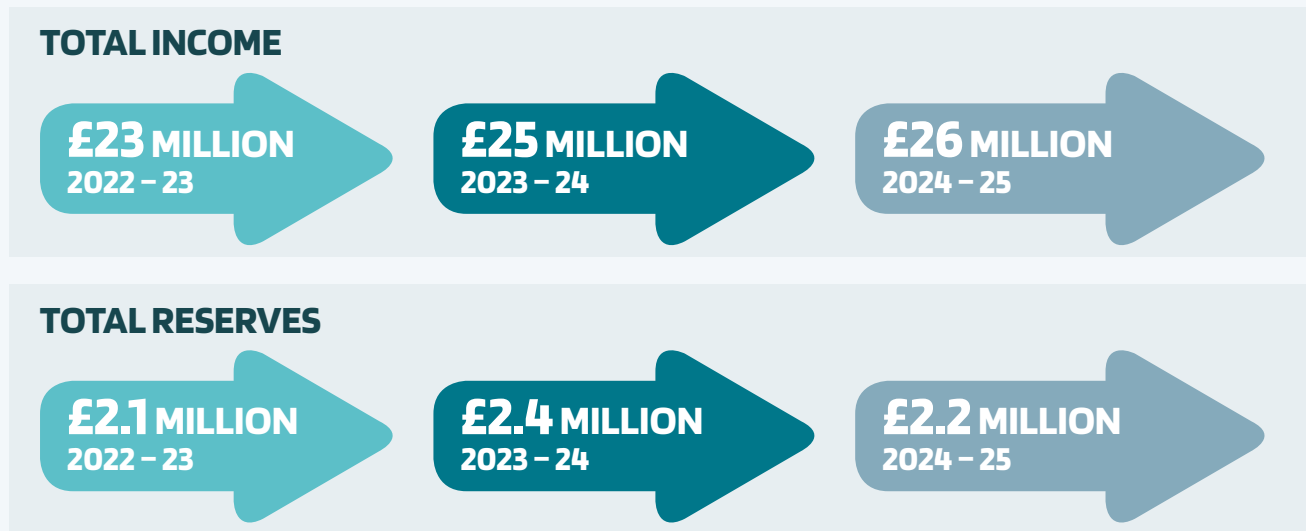
Staffing remains the Trust’s most significant area of expenditure, representing approximately 78% of total income. This is in line with sector expectations and reflects our commitment to investing in high-quality teaching and support for pupils. Ensuring **value for money** and long-term **financial sustainability** remains central to all spending decisions. In line with the **Academy Trust Handbook**, the Trust maintains robust financial oversight, focusing on cost-effectiveness, impact, and alignment with strategic priorities to ensure public funds are used efficiently and transparently.



Financial Outlook

The financial outlook remains cautious as future government funding is uncertain, and cost pressures persist. However, prudent budgeting, a maturing procurement strategy, and proactive

grant-seeking have positioned the Trust to continue delivering high-quality, inclusive education across all its schools.



Estates Developments

Our small, dedicated Estate team plays a vital role in supporting the wider Trust, and creating a welcoming environment for learners is at the heart of our approach. From routine servicing to urgent repairs, the team responds promptly and professionally to a wide range of needs, keeping facilities, equipment, and systems running at their best. With a proactive approach to preventative maintenance and improvement works, along with a commitment to quality, we play a crucial role in maintaining reliable and comfortable working environments for all staff and pupils across The Trust.

Our facilities management team plays a key role in ensuring that schools are clean, safe, and comfortable environments for students, staff, and visitors. Our commitment to creating well-kept, welcoming spaces helps foster a positive learning atmosphere where students can focus, thrive, and feel proud of their school environment.

Our team is also committed to raising Health and Safety standards across the organisation by identifying risks, implementing best practices, and fostering a culture of safety awareness. Through regular inspections, clear communication, and practical training, the team ensure that everyone is equipped to work safely and confidently. We actively collaborate with schools to develop practical solutions, reduce incidents, and promote continuous improvement, helping to create a safer, healthier environment for all.



By aligning our expertise with the requirements of school, we ensure maintenance, refurbishment and improvement projects are delivered cost effectively and efficiently, with the needs of the schools at the forefront.

Over the past 12 months, the Estates Team has successfully developed and delivered several high-profile projects. Notable examples include:

- Re-modelling of the old caretakers' bungalows at Wrenthorpe Academy and South Kirkby Academy to turn these into useable spaces for the individual schools, these include meeting rooms, PPA spaces and cookery rooms.
- Installation of new boilers at Normanton Common Primary Academy
- Installation of EV charging points at all schools across the Trust
- SEN outdoor learning pod built at Ackworth Mill Dam School
- Installation of full Solar PV system to West End Academy

- Design and remodelling of existing buildings at Sharlston to create new SEN provision 'Hammer Lane Academy'
- The team have been working alongside the DfE on the concept and design of the new school which will be built to replace Sharlston Community School under the schools re-building programme in the next school year
- The team was also successful in securing funding for a £2.7m programme to replace the aged boilers in 6 schools across the Trust.
 - Crofton Infants
 - Ackworth Mill Dam
 - Lee Brigg Infants
 - Churchfield Primary School
 - Walton Primary Academy
 - Wrenthorpe Academy

This will see air source heat pumps replace gas boilers at each school, along with improved insulation and efficient heating systems. This programme will run over the 2025-26 school year and will both improve the energy efficiency and reduce the negative environmental impact of these schools.



Digital Transformation and IT Developments

This year, Waterton Academy Trust has made significant strides in digital transformation, creating the conditions for a more connected, secure, and future-ready learning environment across all schools.

Improving Infrastructure and Cyber Security

We've continued to upgrade the IT infrastructure across our schools, including improved cabling, wireless access points, and modern equipment, ensuring that every setting meets the same high standards. Most schools have now received these upgrades, and remaining work is scheduled for completion by January 2026. Alongside this, we've standardised IT equipment across the Trust, meaning every classroom has access to secure, modern devices that support high-quality teaching. This year, we have taken decisive action to strengthen our cyber security, auditing existing systems, and accelerating the transition to secure cloud storage - ensuring our schools are better protected against data loss, cyber threats, and system failure.

The Work of the EdTech Network

Made up of staff from across our schools, the network brings together Ed Tech Leaders, practitioners, and digital enthusiasts to collaborate, innovate, and share best practice. This group acts as a bridge between the classroom and the Trust's central digital strategy—ensuring that decisions about technology are informed by the real needs of teachers and pupils.

A Move to iPads

In consultation with school leaders and the Ed Tech network, we've moved from pupil laptops to iPads as the main device for learning. This decision supports more interactive, engaging teaching and makes best use of educational apps. Each school is being equipped with iPads suited to their size and needs, helping to level the playing field and improve access for all pupils.

AI for Teacher Workload

A real highlight has been the development of our own suite of AI tools, co-designed with staff and tested by our Teachers' Council. These tools help

teachers create pupil reports, risk assessments, SEND support plans and lesson resources—saving time and ensuring consistency across the Trust. Early feedback from pilot schools has been excellent, with teachers reporting real reductions in workload and more time for focused teaching.

Building Bridges

This year, the leader of our EdTech Network - Jonathan Bean - was selected to take part in the prestigious British Council Building Bridges programme, which included a study visit to Singapore—one of the world's leading nations in education technology. His insights into the use of AI and digital innovation have directly influenced the development of our Trust-wide strategy, helping us to think differently about how technology can enhance teaching, reduce workload, and improve outcomes. This international perspective has strengthened our vision for digital transformation across Waterton.

Looking Ahead

In 2025-26, we will launch a Trust-wide computing curriculum built around the concept of "digital wellness" - teaching children not just how to use technology, but how to do so responsibly and healthily. We're also preparing to go out to tender for a new IT support provider, to ensure we get the high-quality service our schools and staff deserve.

Waterton's digital transformation journey is about more than just tech—it's about enabling great teaching, keeping children safe, and preparing them for a digital world.



Data Developments

Throughout 2024-2025, there were significant improvements to the portfolio of reports available to staff at the school and Trust level, and how effective this data was used to drive school improvement. A range of reports are now available in the following areas:

- Pupil attainment, including the addition of monthly Year 6 forecasts. Notably, Key Stage 2 SATs results improved significantly in 2025 following the introduction of the monthly forecasts and the use of these to ensure pupils are on track to meet their targets.
- Statutory assessment results, used to identify, strengths, weaknesses and patterns to inform school and trust-wide improvement strategies.
- Pupil attendance, persistent absenteeism and severe absenteeism. Reports enable easy identification of pupils requiring intervention, highlight the performance of different groups and breakdown the different reasons for pupils' absence. Data is compared against the previous academic year and the latest national averages.
- Suspensions and exclusions data, with exclusion rates and repeat exclusion rates tracked over time and against national averages.
- Staff absence is broken down by role and tracked within and across different academic years.

- Supply spending is monitored closely and against supply budgets for each school and for the Trust as whole. Supply spending decreased by over £450,000 from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024 following the introduction of the supply spending reports.

As the size and complexity of the reporting function has expanded significantly, work has begun on creating a secure central system where all Trust data is brought together in a 'data lake'.

Smarter Use of Data

We've strengthened our use of data across the Trust to support better decision-making. Whether it's monitoring attendance, tracking pupil progress, or managing safeguarding, our systems are now more integrated and efficient—giving leaders clearer insights and more time to act.



Governance and Leadership

Trust KPIs and Objectives

Our Board of Trustees has set clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and overall performance of Waterton Academy Trust. These indicators are

intentionally broad, encompassing every facet of the Trust's work—from educational outcomes to financial security and estate quality—ensuring a holistic view of success.



During 2024-25, we have made significant strides in meeting the expectations outlined in these KPIs:

- **Outcomes are Excellent:** Outcomes for 2025 show a clear and positive trajectory across the Trust, with notable improvements in attainment—particularly for pupils with SEND and those previously at risk of underachievement. This progress reflects our sustained commitment to inclusive, high-quality education. Trust-wide, outcomes are above the national average in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Phonics Screening Check, Multiplication Tables Check, and the combined Key Stage 2 measure. While there is still work to do at an individual school level to secure full parity and equity, we are firmly on the path toward achieving this, with focused support and targeted strategies now in place.
- **Academies are Good or Better:** All inspected schools either sustained their positive Ofsted judgements or improved, with two schools receiving indications of potentially outstanding provision.
- **Governance is Robust:** The Board and its committees, including the Academy Standards Committees at each academy, have played an active role in scrutinising strategy implementation, educational outcomes, safeguarding, and resource use. The systematic reporting of progress against the Trust Development Plan has ensured transparency and accountability.
- **Finances are Secure:** A revised procurement model and more centralised financial processes are improving efficiency and delivering better value, with budget setting and forecasting increasingly data led.
- **Reputation is Strong:** Our communications strategy has led to improved community engagement, with a focus on consistent messaging, professional branding, and stakeholder confidence—particularly in recruitment and safeguarding.
- **Employer of Choice:** Implementation of our People and Talent Strategies has seen strengthened succession planning, new leadership development pathways, and improved workforce retention. The apprenticeship programme is thriving, with above-national achievement rates.
- **Community Contributor:** Our sustainability and enrichment programmes, including pupil-led climate action and charitable work via the Children's Parliament, have reinforced our identity as a Trust committed to wider social impact.
- **Estate is Fit for Purpose:** Major works on condition, safety and aesthetics have taken place across the estate, with Salix funding leveraged and internal capacity developed to improve environments while saving costs.

Objectives in 2023-2026

In the final year of our three-year Trust Development Plan, we remain firmly focused on achieving our vision through five strategic pillars. These priorities are aligned with the needs of our pupils and communities and ensure that we remain accountable, ambitious, and inclusive.

Pillar 1: High-Quality and Inclusive Education

Our core purpose is to deliver a high-quality, inclusive education for all pupils. This year, we are refining internal systems for target setting and accountability to ensure every child meets their potential. We are strengthening curriculum design and assessment, particularly in Maths, Science and Reading, and embedding a Trust-wide approach to high quality teaching underpinned by oracy. Improving outcomes and attendance, for disadvantaged and SEND pupils remains central to our work. We are also focused on behaviour, and relational practice, aiming to make every school a place where pupils feel safe, engaged, and ready to learn.

Pillar 2: School Improvement

We continue to drive a culture of continuous improvement, supported by strong leadership at every level. This year, we are enhancing our school improvement model to better harness the capacity across our Trust—through shared leadership roles, subject expertise, and peer collaboration. We are making smarter use of assessment data, especially in Year 6, and contributing to system-wide improvement by supporting other schools and Trusts with our SEND and specialist expertise.

Pillar 3: Workforce

Our people are our greatest asset. In 2025-26, we are further embedding our People Strategy, including a defined leadership development pathway, expanded professional development, and refined succession planning. Wellbeing and workload remain priorities, and we are enhancing flexibility and inclusivity in the workplace. Through internal development and our apprenticeship offer, we are creating visible pathways for career progression across the Trust.

Pillar 4: Finance and Operations

We are strengthening our financial resilience and improving how we allocate and manage resources. This includes embedding our digital transformation strategy, ensuring compliance across our estates, and improving procurement to achieve better value. We are also enhancing the use of data to inform operational and educational decisions, while maintaining reserves to protect against uncertainty.

Pillar 5: Governance and Leadership

Strong governance underpins everything we do. This year, we are implementing the updated scheme of delegation, continuing bespoke training for governors, and refining how we manage risk. Our board is deeply connected to the needs of our schools and communities, and we remain committed to transparency, ethical leadership, and strategic oversight.

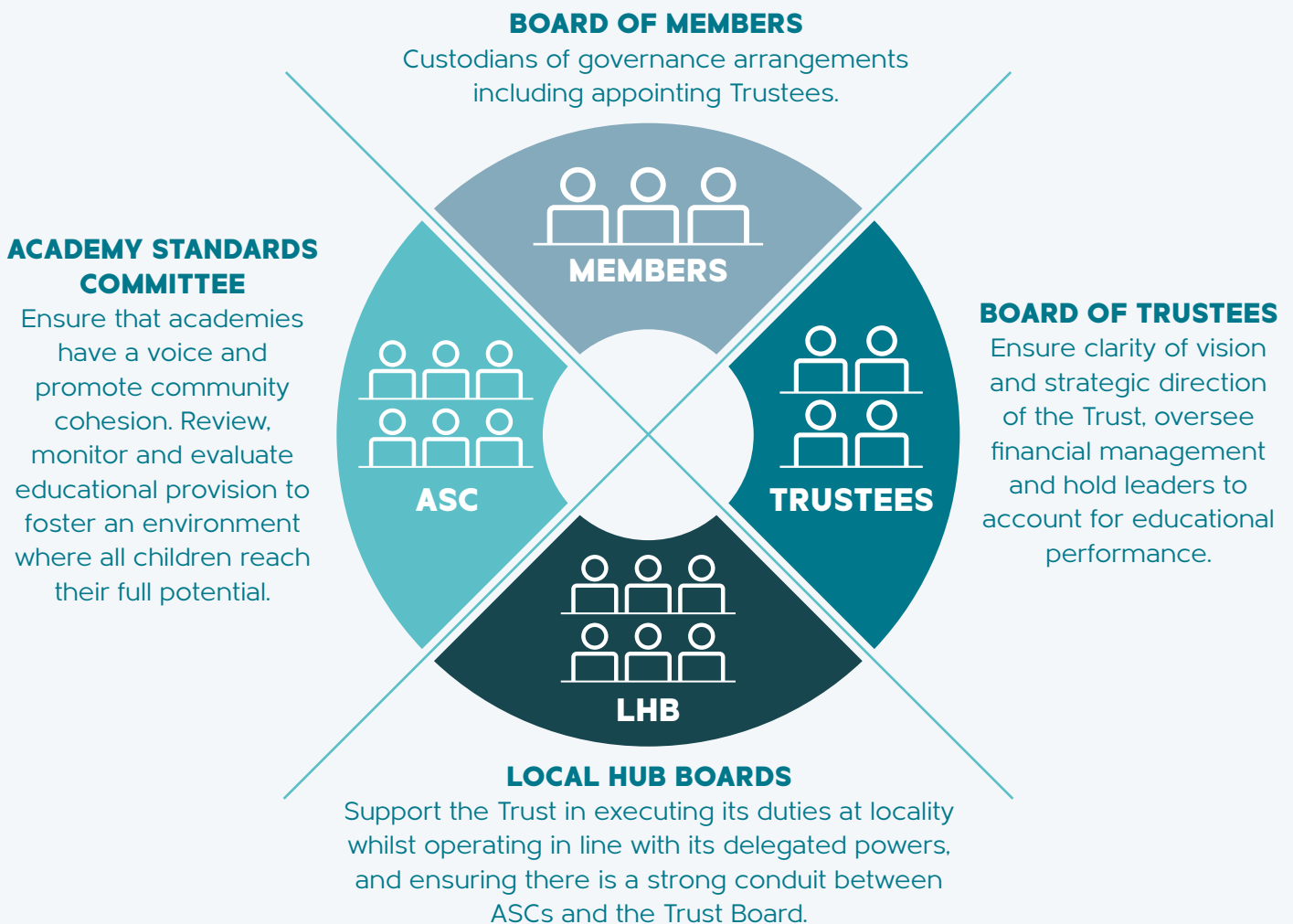
THE WATERTON FIVE PILLARS



Governance Structure

The Waterton governance model has been developed over time to ensure strong governance is present throughout all levels of the Trust. As a direct result of growth over several years, the Trust has developed a somewhat bespoke hub model of governance. The benefits of the hub approach are many-fold: scalability, ease of commute, stronger joined-up governance, greater collaboration, and a feeling of strong stakeholder voice at all levels of governance. Local Hub Boards represent a locality link between the Academy Standards Committees

at school level, and the Trust Board. They are able to support the Trust Board in their duties and likewise are a key conduit for local scrutiny and challenge arrangements. The model was reviewed during 2024-25, and a number of enhancements will be implemented in 2025-26 to further strengthen accountability, increase clarity of roles, and improve communication across all layers of governance.



Board of Trustees



Steve Johnson
Chair of Trustees
Civil servant (Deputy Governor
HMP Buckley Hall).



Andrew Goudie
Vice Chair of Trustees
Equity Release adviser
(also worked in managerial
roles in the recruitment and
leisure sector).



Joanne Henson
Learning Partner for School
Improvement (Early Years).



Kate Davies
CEO of a primary
multi academy trust
(South Yorkshire).



Jonathan Shaw
Corporate Banking Manager
- career in managerial roles
across commercial and
corporate banking finance.



Steve Bates
Director of training companies
for the education, corporate
and public sector.



Jonny Wathen
Founding Director and
CIO of The TransforMATive
Group undertaking digital
transformations and improve
organisational digital maturity
(previously Chief Information
Officer for a MAT; and a
teacher/ Head of Learning).



Lorraine Harrison
Education professional (retired)
- previously a teacher;
Ofsted Inspector; primary
school literacy consultant
and advisory teacher for
Wakefield LA.



Lucy Hutton
Business Development
Director - HR professional.



Craig Nicholson
Regional Education Director
(North) of a large multi
academy trust.



Tony Dennant
Experienced FE professional
(retired) with a strong
background in business
transformation, and
governance.



www.watertonacademytrust.org

Annual Report for Stakeholders 2024/25

