



BUILDING A STRONGER
EDUCATIONAL FUTURE TOGETHER

ONE TRUST – ONE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS – ONE COMMUNITY



WELCOME FROM THE CEO

Excellence isn't a destination. It's who we are, every day.

At Great Schools Trust we believe genuine success is forged through ambitious teaching, compassionate leadership and an unshakeable belief that every child must achieve their potential.

Excellence is never left to chance; it grows daily through clear behaviour norms and evidence-informed teaching. Guided by our Six Pillars of Excellence, we work with staff, students and communities to create academies that are aspirational.

Every child deserves to flourish. Our journey began with a simple conviction. That a child's background should never dictate their destiny. We're proud to pursue a future where an independent-style education is accessible to every young person, whatever their postcode.

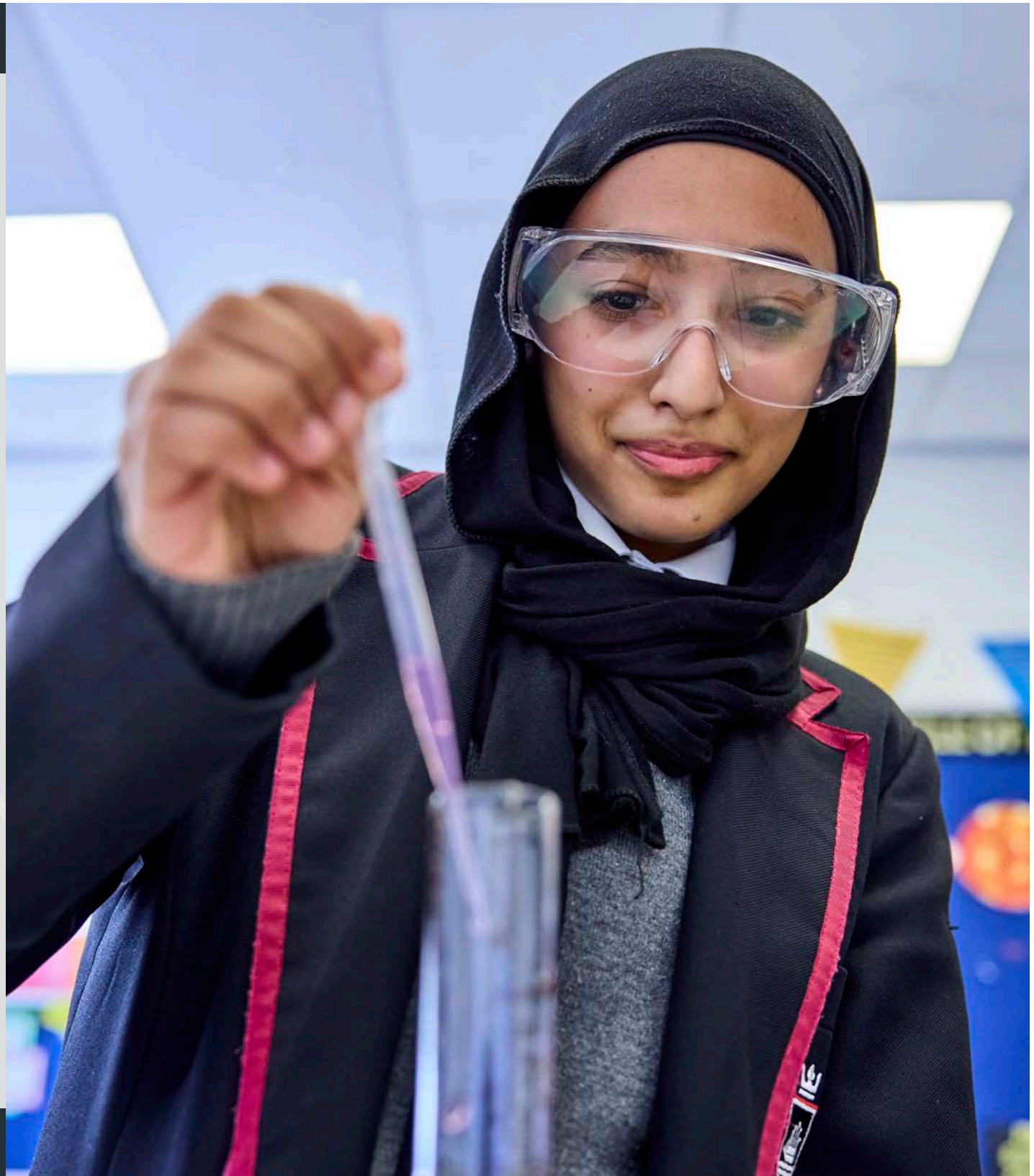
This is our promise:

- Believe in every child's potential and match that belief with exceptional staff.
- Provide an education that is academically rigorous and always values-driven.
- Innovate responsibly and generously, using technology to deepen, not replace, human connection.
- Empower staff through world-class development and protected time to grow and lead.
- Partner with communities so every Great Schools Trust academy shines as a beacon of opportunity, inclusion and excellence.

The road ahead is exciting and we'd love you to join us on it.



Shane Ierston
Shane Ierston
Chief Executive Officer



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DARE TO IMAGINE

Imagine if every child, whatever their background, received an outstanding education. At Great Schools Trust, we chose not to imagine it. We chose to build it. Build high expectations. Build unwavering support. Build character, leadership and real social mobility.

And because of that commitment, we're proud to have achieved the following.

- No.1 most improved MAT in the North West (Progress 8 uplift of +0.33 in 2024).
- 74% of students enter the EBacc (vs. 39% national average).
- 50% of Great Schools Trust academies have eliminated the Progress 8 gap.
- Top 10 nationally for staff values alignment (Edurio 2024).

Yet, our success is about more than numbers; it's about the lives we transform, the communities we uplift, and the leaders we nurture.



95% staff retention



Top 10 national staff engagement and satisfaction (Edurio 2024)



National lead for behaviour and culture



74% EBacc, curriculum equity for all



+0.33 Progress 8 uplift (Top 2 nationally)



All schools judged good or outstanding



World class training through the IPCL



100% of students complete King's Adventure leadership pledges



Credimus AI removes mock marking



Every member of staff benefits from weekly tailored coaching and CPD

OUR VISION



Our Vision

To build a family of outstanding academies where all students, irrespective of their starting point, flourish, are happy and achieve their full potential.



Our Values

Aspiration

Dream big and work relentlessly to achieve it.

Self-Awareness

Reflect on strengths and areas for growth.

Professionalism

Conduct yourself with integrity and respect.

Integrity

Do the right thing, even when no one is watching.

Respect

Value others, embrace diversity, and lead with kindness.

Endeavour

Persevere through challenges and embrace resilience.



Our Ethos

Rooted in character and leadership, we provide a knowledge-rich, values-driven education with uncompromising ambition and inclusive excellence.



Our Beliefs

We believe that all students have the potential to reach their highest aspirations, that our academies shape life chances, and that the best preparation for the future is through leadership.



**Credo – Credimus’
(‘I Believe – We Believe’)
is the foundation of our success.**



OUR PROMISE

Our Mission

To develop in every student the academic skills, intellectual habits, qualities of character, and leadership traits necessary to become a successful, healthy citizen in the global community.

How Great Schools Trust develops students who flourish.

Imagine if education not only prepared children for exams, it prepared them for life. From Early Years to GCSE and beyond, our commitment is to develop every learner into a confident, compassionate and capable young leader, equipped to thrive in the modern world. Through a unique blend of academic rigour, leadership development, and personal character, every Great Schools Trust student will leave us:

- With academic excellence that opens doors to the future.
- Intellectually agile and personally responsible, with independent learning habits, integrity and self-awareness.
- A leader in action, empowered through voice, service and real-world leadership experiences thanks to our Kings Adventure programme.

Our Promise to Every Child

1. Your education will be academically excellent through:

- A knowledge-rich curriculum that gives you real depth in every subject.
- Personalised learning with CredimusAI, helping you practise exactly what you need.
- A digital device for every student, so your learning can adapt and prepare you for a future where AI is part of everyday life, making sure you're never left behind.

2. You will develop strong intellectual habits through:

- Clear routines and “ready to learn” habits that help you begin every lesson with confidence.
- High expectations for attendance and behaviour, so you can focus, progress and feel proud of your standards.
- Calm, purposeful classrooms that give you the feel of an independent-school learning environment.

3. You will grow powerful qualities of character through:

- Our ASPIRE code and the leadership-through-character programme.
- Developing strong professional attitudes and a genuine work ethic.
- Becoming a confident, compassionate and globally-minded young person.

4. You will develop leadership and a sense of service through:

- The King's Adventure leadership curriculum.
- Co-curricular pledges: Enrichment, Residentials, Cadets & Duke of Edinburgh.
- Student leadership pathways, voice and system generosity through community service.





OUR 6 PILLARS

Cultivating Habits of Excellence

By embedding our vision, mission and values into every decision and interaction, we underpin our daily actions that lead to exceptional outcomes.



1. Excellence in People-Centred Leadership

Empowering staff with 1:1 coaching and two hours of weekly training through the Institute of People, Character & Leadership (IPCL). Great Schools Trust ranked in the top 10 nationally in 2024 for organisational values, psychological safety and staff satisfaction as part of the Edurio survey. Our 95% retention rate enables leaders to grow at Great Schools Trust.



2. Excellence in Education

From EYFS to Sixth Form, we raise standards, close gaps and embed sustainable improvement. In 2024, Great Schools Trust eliminated the Progress 8 gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students in half of its academies, with an overall Progress 8 improvement of +0.33, placing the Trust number one in the North West and in the top two nationally for progress gains.



3. Excellence in Character & Leadership

Developing resilient, confident leaders through the King's Adventure Programme, where 100% of students engage in character-building and leadership activities. Students document their growth in their "King's CV" portfolios, fostering traits for future success.



4. Excellence in Artificial Intelligence

As national leaders in AI and EdTech, we personalise learning to make excellence accessible to every student. The CredimusAI platform has revolutionised work-life balance for our staff, saving over 100 hours of marking time per GCSE series and delivering personalised support for SEND students and for absent students.



5. Excellence in Culture

We support the sector via our National Behaviour Hub and Federation of Great Schools and host not only the largest ResearchEd conference every year but also the latest thinking in AI through our CredimusAI annual conference.



6. Excellence in Partnerships

We believe lasting school improvement is rooted in the sharing of expertise, the cultivation of strong communities of practice and a commitment to preserving each school's unique identity within a collaborative framework. Our Executive, Faculty and Governance teams work together to ensure that your school is fully supported and gains collective strength and community.

OUR JOURNEY

What happened when we dared to imagine

“We do not build academies. We build leaders who build the future.”

Great Schools Trust began, not with buildings, but with belief. In 2012, 38 young people joined our pioneering first academy, King's Leadership Academy Warrington, with a simple promise: to create an academy as ambitious as any independent school, but accessible to all. From this spark, a national force for educational excellence and leadership was born. In the years since, Great Schools Trust has grown not just in size, but in influence, diversity and ambition.

- From one to eight academies, serving 4,500+ students across all phases and communities.
- From local leadership to a national voice, a DfE Behaviour Hub, an EdTech innovator, and a partner of choice for rebrokered and growing academies alike.

• From traditional schooling to future-shaping, with AI embedded into every classroom through Credimus AI. Our multi-phase curriculum guides students from their earliest experiences, beginning with the 'Sleeping Under the Stars' King's Adventure leadership pledge in Early Years, and culminating in confident, characterful young adults achieving their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award.

Our belief remains the same as it was in 2012 - every child has greatness within them.

Our story proves what happens when that belief is matched with opportunity, expertise and care. “This is the Great Schools Trust way. This is how we lead.”

2010:

An application to open a free school is submitted based on international research, with a bold aspiration to provide an independent school standard of education for everyone.



2012:

King's Leadership Academy Warrington opens as a start-up secondary free school and the country's first leadership academy. In 2014 it becomes the UK's first National School of Character.



2015:

Great Schools Trust is asked by DfE to rebroker two schools in special measures and on the brink of closure - now as King's Leadership academies, King's Liverpool and King's Hawthornes stand proudly as oversubscribed, Ofsted-rated Good schools, pillars of their communities.



2018:

Great Schools Trust opens an Alternative Provision Secondary Academy. King's Leadership Phoenix Academy is based in a state-of-the-art building in Wavertree, Liverpool, and is rated Good in all areas.



2019:

Great Schools Trust opens its second start up secondary free school, King's Leadership Academy Bolton. This academy is at maximum capacity and rated Good in all areas by Ofsted.



2020:

Great Schools Trust becomes an EdTech lead for the North West during lockdown and launches the country's first fully virtual initial teacher training programme nationally.



2022:

System generosity was our heartbeat during and post lockdown. From supporting national policy as a DfE adviser Trust, Great Schools Trust is appointed as a National Behaviour Hub to help transform regional schools and trusts through partnerships on attendance, behaviour and culture.



2023:

Great Schools Trust launches Credimus AI, Credimus Culture and the Federation of Great Schools, a commitment to raising standards not just within, but beyond, the Trust. The Federation of Great Schools model allows other trusts and academies to exchange capacity and benefit from Great Schools Trust expertise.



2024:

Great Schools Trust welcomes its first primary partners into its family of academies, each aligned to the vision and ethos as one family, one Trust, one community. The Trust launches a groundbreaking King's Adventure programme for all its students; 18 leadership pledges embedding resilience, compassion and ambition.



2025 and beyond

Great Schools Trust continues to grow sustainably and by design with the opening of a brand-new secondary school, King's Leadership Academy Wavertree, which will integrate cutting edge AI and leadership education. Over 600 staff are now supported by our People Centred Leadership strategy and world-class weekly CPD, voted top 10 nationally in the Edurio 2024 staff wellbeing survey.



OUR COMMUNITY

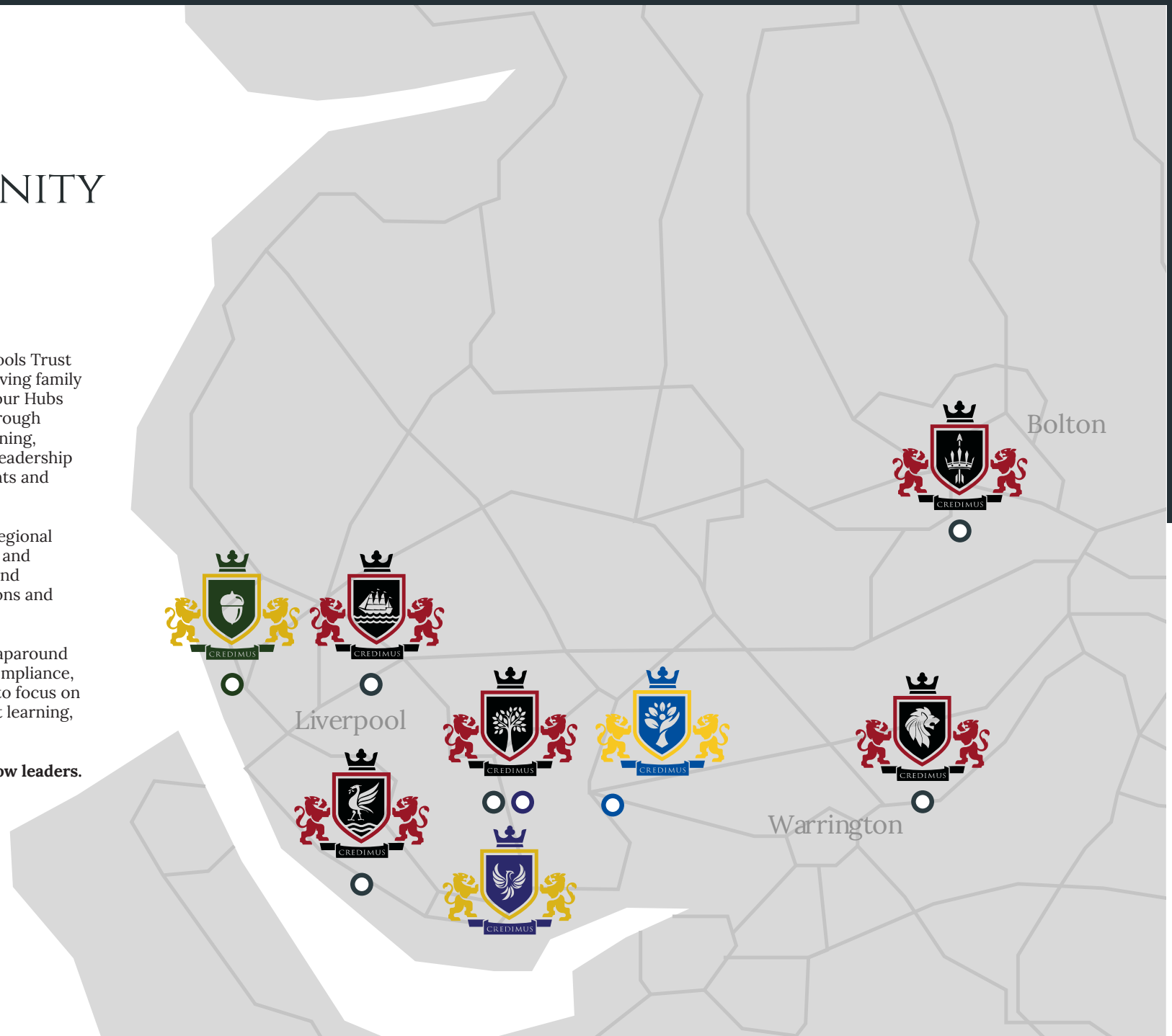
Where We Operate

Since our founding in 2012, Great Schools Trust has grown from one academy to a thriving family of eight academies operating within four Hubs across the North West of England. Through academic excellence, AI-powered learning, character education and world-class leadership development, we empower our students and staff to shape their futures.

We build communities of practice in regional hubs, with shared CPD, shared values, and shared purpose, connecting primary and secondary leaders, improving transitions and aligning vision across every phase.

Our Faculty for Education delivers wraparound support in HR, Finance, IT, Estates, Compliance, Marketing, and Legal, freeing leaders to focus on the core mission: great teaching, great learning, and great outcomes.

We don't just grow academies. We grow leaders. And we grow together.



OUR TRACK RECORD

The Great Schools Trust has established a proven track record of transforming schools in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the North West, raising aspirations and outcomes well above national expectations. Since opening its founding academy in 2012, Great Schools Trust has consistently delivered improvement at scale: today, 4% of students are entered for the English Baccalaureate compared to a 39% national average, while GCSE Progress 8 scores have risen sharply, eliminating the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. Ofsted has validated these gains, with King's Liverpool and King's Hawthornes moving from "Inadequate" before joining the Trust to "Good" in their most recent inspections. All Great Schools Trust academies are now Good or better, oversubscribed, financially secure, and recognised for their ambitious, broad and inclusive curriculum.

Our impact goes beyond academic outcomes. Through our King's Adventure programme, Trust-wide participation in initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Combined Cadet Force is among the highest in the state sector. As a DfE-appointed National Behaviour Hub, Great Schools Trust academies are nationally recognised for high standards of attendance and behaviour, while our pioneering role in AI and EdTech is reducing teacher workload and supporting SEND provision.

This combination of strong outcomes, inclusive opportunities, and sector-leading innovation demonstrates our ability not only to transform individual schools but to sustain excellence across a growing family of academies.

Academy	Prior to Great Schools Trust Sponsorship	Most recent Ofsted judgement
King's Warrington		Outstanding (2025)
King's Liverpool	Inadequate (2014)	Good (2023)
King's Hawthornes	Inadequate (2014)	Good (2023)
King's Bolton	Opened 2019 as 11-16 Mainstream Free School	Good (2023)
King's Phoenix	Opened 2018	Good (2024)
King's Lander	Joined Great Schools Trust in 2024	Good (2024)
King's Northway	Joined Great Schools Trust in 2025	Awaiting First Inspection
King's Wavertree	Opened 2025 as 11-16 Secondary Free School & Awaiting First Inspection	



THE KING'S ADVENTURE

King's Adventure is our Trust-wide student character and leadership programme, running from EYFS to Year 13. It develops life skills through experiential learning, strengthens ethical and resilient decision-making, and builds environmental and community awareness through conservation and social action. Every student aims to complete all 18 Character Pledges, tracked through the digital King's CV and supported by weekly enrichment, Cadets, DofE, residentials and curriculum integration.

Imagine if every child, no matter their background, moved through school with a guaranteed programme of rich life skills.



KING'S
ADVENTURE



Structure:

- 4 progressive Base Camps from Early Years to Year 13.
- Culminates in the Y13 Summit and Gold DofE accreditation.

Core Elements:

- 18 Character Pledges (e.g. Sleep Under the Stars, Serve in the Cadets).
- Digital King's CV to track engagement and progress.
- Skills Rucksack and King's Compass to guide personal reflection.
- Delivered through core curriculum, weekly core enrichment, DofE, Cadets, residentials, and expert partners.

King's Adventure Develops:

- Life skills through experiential learning.
- Leadership qualities rooted in ethical, resilient decision making.
- Environmental & community awareness via conservation and social action.

All students, regardless of background, are entitled to participate and "fill their King's Rucksack" with valuable skills and experiences.

Why it Matters:

- King's Adventure sits at the heart of our Trust specialism: Character through Leadership.
- 100% of Great Schools Trust students complete the King's Adventure.
- Values-driven personal development aligned with Ofsted PD strand.
- Leadership nurtured from Early Years through structured experiences.



OUR OFFER

For Students

Your Journey, Our Commitment

Every student who joins Great Schools Trust becomes part of a family that believes in them.

- Knowledge-rich curriculum and AI-powered personalised learning.
- Calm, safe and inclusive academies.
- The King's Adventure leadership, character and co-curricular experience.
- Enrichment and future-ready pathways from coding to cadets.
- A community where you belong and succeed.

For Staff

Your Profession, Our Priority

Every member of staff joins a mission-driven Trust where their talent is nurtured and celebrated.

- Nationally recognised for values and staff wellbeing (Top 10 Edurio 2024).
- Protected CPD time + clear career pathways.
- AI-powered workload reduction via CredimusAI.
- Leadership development from ECT to Executive.
- A purpose-driven culture where you grow as others grow too.


For Schools and Leaders

Your Identity, Our Partnership

- Bespoke pathways from Federation to full membership.
- The Great Schools Trust MAT Dividend expert wraparound support in HR, Finance, Estates, Marketing, IT and more.
- Behaviour Hub recognised expertise and rapid culture transformation.
- Leadership coaching, communities of practice, shared improvement and shared success.
- Operate locally in hubs, lead nationally with purpose.

Schools do not lose who they are by joining Great Schools Trust, they become the best version of themselves.





From a single academy to a nationally recognised Trust...

From 38 students to thousands of future leaders...

From an idea on paper to a movement in motion...

Great Schools Trust is proof that belief, when paired with action, can transform lives.

Join us on our journey.
Believe in the future.
Believe in every child.

Credo – Credimus
I believe. We believe.

To arrange an informal conversation, visit or exploratory session:

Contact:
info@greatschoolstrust.com

More Information:
greatschoolstrust.com/mat-dividend

Based in the North West. Built on beliefs.



KING'S LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY BOLTON



KING'S LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY HAWTHORNES



KING'S LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY LIVERPOOL



KING'S LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY WARRINGTON



KING'S LEADERSHIP
ACADEMY WAVERTREE



KING'S LEADERSHIP
PHOENIX ACADEMY



KING'S LANDER
PRIMARY ACADEMY



KING'S NORTHWAY
PRIMARY ACADEMY

ONE TRUST – ONE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS – ONE COMMUNITY