



Confederation
of School Trusts

An Education Renaissance

- 1 Thank you all for attending our conference today. A particular thanks to our platinum partners. I am delighted to announce a new partnership today – with Renaissance Learning. All our platinum partners share our fundamental values and beliefs about education. Renaissance believes every child can be a successful learner. They are a company founded by parents, upheld by educators, and enriched by scientists who all know that learning is a growth process. They aim to light the path toward growth.
- 2 Colleagues, I believe we are living through something of an education renaissance – a rebirth of a conversation about ethics, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment – and how education charities that run schools are the enablers of these most important professional conversations.
- 3 There is an energy in education now that I have not felt for many years – a sense of optimism about what can be achieved. The recent report from

the Commission for Ethical Leadership, on which I sat as a commissioner, gives us a language and framework for talking about ethics in leadership.

- 4 The framework gives us not just the principles of public life, but re-introduces the language of *civic virtues*:

Trust - We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.

Wisdom - We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our schools and trusts with propriety and good sense.

Kindness - We demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper.

Justice - We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.

Service - We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.

Courage - We work courageously in the best interests of children and young people. We hold one another to account courageously.

Optimism - Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.

- 5 CST's own values are drawn from the Nolan principles and appear on everything we do.
- 6 At the legal and ethical heart of what we do lies something grand and aspirational – our core charitable purpose to advance education for the public benefit – to make children and young people's lives better. To change lives. And to cite CST's vision - our collective promise to hold trust on behalf of the nation's children.
- 7 This is why we exist. We are contributing to creating a great education system and making a better world.
- 8 And this has never been more important. How will we bring together a divided country? How will we chart the path for future generations? It is education that will shape the next generation who will make society whole again.
- 9 I know there are times when it all feels too much. When the relentless negative narratives feel so oppressive that we are wont to give up. When the pressures of the accountability system feel so punitive that it takes its toll on the body and mind. When we are battered and hammered in

all directions. Colleagues that is the way it is. But does it have to be this way?

- 10 Those of you who know me, know that I am first and foremost an English teacher, so I want to share a poem with you – **The Way It is**, by William Stafford.

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.
While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

- 11 **SO Don't ever let go of the thread.**

- 12 But I'm not sure we've explained enough about the thread.

- 13 We've allowed the narrative about academies and multi-academy trusts to be dominated by others. By those who want to believe that the motive is about business interest – the wholly false idea of

corporatisation and privatisation of education by the back door. By those who want to believe we are motivated by money or worse, that we are tyrannical. The relentless and incorrect negative narratives that will break us if we allow them to.

- 14 Colleagues, it is time we took control of the narrative – time we explained about the thread.
- 15 So let's say proudly that academy trusts are education charities that run schools to give children a better future.
- 16 Let's say, "Our trust is a group of schools working in collaboration as one entity to improve and maintain high educational standards across the group. Our trust has a single legal and moral purpose: to advance education for the public benefit."
- 17 To parents, let's say "As a family of schools, we improve your child's education by sharing ideas and expertise with each other. Like any other state school, our schools are free to attend, we're inspected in the same way, and children take the same tests and exams." Let's say that we help our local communities thrive by giving children the best opportunities to learn inside and outside the classroom.

- 18 To teachers, let's say "As a family of schools, we work closely together and share expertise, which creates great opportunities for children and teachers. We share good practice on the important things - curriculum, assessment and behaviour. We offer structured career pathways for teachers, supported by high-quality professional development so teachers and leaders learn together."
- 19 We help teachers and leaders spend more of their time focussed on the one thing that counts the most – the education of children. The advancement of education in the public benefit.
- 20 Let's stop using the language of MATs and CEOs. Let's talk about school trusts – charitable trusts that run schools, trust leaders and trustees. People who hold trust on behalf of children.
- 21 Let's stop asking "Should my school become an academy?" Let's encourage a better question – one that Steve Munby original asked: "How can my school best collaborate with others in a strong and resilient structure to ensure that each child is a powerful learner and that adults have the opportunities to learn and develop as teachers and leaders?"
- 22 Let's talk about the fact that in other liberal nations in the world – Canada and the Netherlands for example – schools are organised into

strong and sustainable groups, legally independent from municipal authorities. This is *normal* in those countries. It is perfectly *normal* for education leaders to run groups of schools. Nobody rails against these structures in those countries. What on earth could be wrong with creating an entity whose sole function is education – and then have this entity, a charity, run schools to give children a better future?

23 I'd like this to be our new narrative. To that end, CST has today published this core narrative on our website for all trust leaders to use. I'd like to extend my thanks to James Russell for his excellent leadership of this work.

24 So colleagues, there *is* a thread we follow.

25 It goes among things that change. But *it* doesn't change.

26 People wonder about what we are pursuing.

27 We have to explain about the thread.

28 It can be hard for others to see.

29 So let's explain about the thread.

30 This is our education renaissance. We are rediscovering the things that count the most – that make the biggest difference to the common good.

31 Thank you for the work you do every day to make a difference in the lives of children across the country – to change England and world for the better.

Leora Cruddas

Chief Executive

1,270 words – approx. 10 minutes (2200 words = 15 minutes)