

**ASPIRE**  
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

**"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."  
- Henry Ford**

## A Message from Kate

Week commencing 1st September 2025

Welcome back dear colleagues,

I hope you've had the chance over the summer to rest, recharge, and enjoy some well-earned time with the people and activities that matter most to you.

As we begin the 2025/26 academic year, I want to warmly welcome you back and thank you, once again, for the dedication, resilience, and integrity you continue to bring to your roles. The work you do has a profound and lasting impact on the children and communities you serve, be that in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire or Nottingham City.

This year, the educational landscape continues to evolve. The government has committed to "evolution, not revolution," but as we know, even small shifts can carry weighty implications for school leadership. Among the changes ahead are:

- A refreshed school's white paper, expected to outline the next phase of SEND reform
- The final report from the curriculum and assessment review
- Updates to Ofsted's inspection framework
- The likely passage of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

Alongside these developments, technology continues to accelerate, particularly in the field of AI. What felt experimental only a year ago is quickly becoming embedded in everyday tools, teaching, and administration. Some schools are further along this journey than others, and that's okay. As a trust, we will keep learning from each other and exploring thoughtfully and carefully, without pressure or haste.

In the face of these shifts and the potential changes ahead, our role is to remain steady, focused, and strategic. Our priority this year is to continue ensuring that you are supported, heard, and equipped to lead in your schools well at every level, and that is why we'll be using a simple but powerful framework across our school improvement and quality assurance work this year. Thank you to Nigel Frith, who used the 3 words that really resonated with me, during our summer term board meeting, when he was discussing the Values and Ethos committee: Evaluate. Celebrate. Facilitate.

Each term, we'll ask:

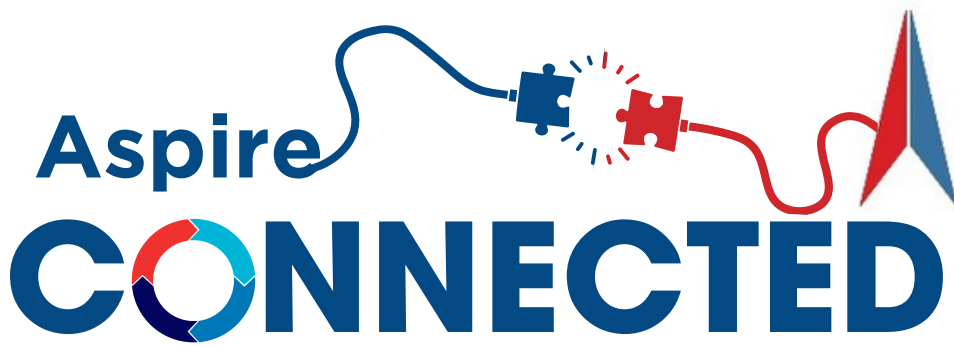
- Have we evaluated effectively? Have we helped you identify what's working and what needs to improve?
- Have we celebrated success? Have we recognised the progress, resilience and innovation in your school?
- Have we facilitated improvement? Have we made it easier for you to move forward, removing barriers and enabling action?

We'll invite you to reflect on this with us regularly, because improvement is a two-way partnership, and your feedback will help shape how we work.

Thank you for everything you've done, and for everything ahead. I'm excited to see what this year holds, and confident in our collective strength to meet it.

Wishing you a great start to the term,  
Kate Watson  
Chief Executive Officer





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**WELCOME**

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We're delighted to welcome Muskham Primary School, Newark, to the Aspire family, having formally joined the Trust on 1st September. A very warm welcome to Amanda Crossland, the Headteacher, her team, and the entire Muskham community—we're thrilled to have you with us and look forward to supporting your continued journey.

Muskham Primary School is a thriving village school for children aged 3 to 11 and recent Ofsted findings affirm that the school continues to build on its legacy of excellence—sustaining its previous "Good" rating by maintaining high standards across leadership, governance, and teaching, with particular praise for its inclusive ethos, strong reading provision, and joyful, respectful environment marked by "playground helpers" and "Take 5 Ambassadors".

We're also pleased to welcome Clare Thorne, who has taken up the role of Headteacher at Underwood Primary School following the retirement of her predecessor in August. Aspire will be working closely with Underwood in a formal partnership as we progress towards the school's future academisation into the Trust. We're excited about the opportunities this collaboration will bring and look forward to the road ahead with both Muskham and Underwood.



## Aspire Inset Day - 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025

We're looking forward to welcoming you to our next Aspire INSET Day!

This is set to be a day of development, collaboration, and insight designed to support and inspire all staff across the Trust. All Aspire heads will be contributing to the design of the day, so there will be something of value for everyone.

We're delighted to confirm that Paul Longden, former Ofsted Inspector, will be our keynote speaker. He will lead a focused session on SEND and curriculum design for all teaching staff, as well as a tailored workshop for SENCOs in the afternoon.

Alongside Paul's sessions, the day will include a range of workshops, and as we move closer to the date, we'll share a full workshop schedule and session sign-up details. We're excited for a day of learning, sharing and reconnecting across Aspire and we look forward to seeing you there.

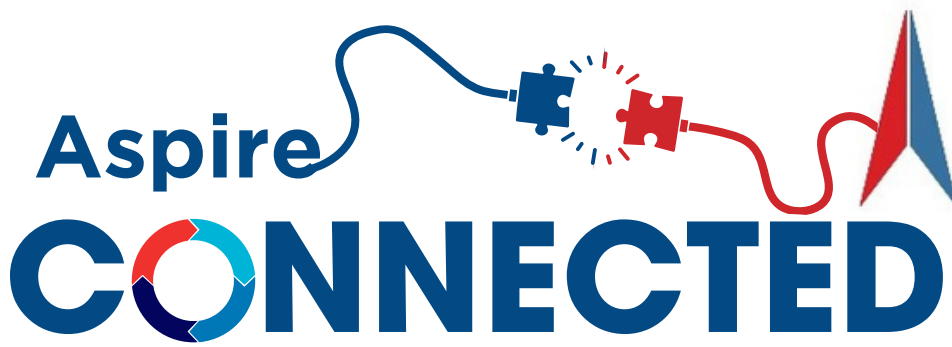
## Chair's Update - Aspire & Shine Merger

I am pleased to share an update on the progress of our merger with Shine Multi-Academy Trust.

Key steps have already been completed, including the submission of our official application to the Department for Education, agreement of the joint merger document, and the appointment of a dedicated project manager. We now have a clear timeline in place to guide us through the next stages.

As we move forward, our focus will be on open communication and collaboration, ensuring that staff, families, and our wider communities remain fully informed and engaged throughout the process. This merger represents an exciting opportunity to bring together the strengths of both Trusts, allowing us to enhance the support and opportunities we provide for our children and young people. Thank you for your continued commitment as we take these important steps together. Peter Golightly — Chair of Trustees

**STRONGER  
TOGETHER**



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## Celebrating our church schools



We're strengthening our work with our church schools by introducing termly QAs focused specifically on Christian distinctiveness. As Church of England schools continue to align with the Vision for Education —deeply Christian and serving the common good—this new cycle of focused reviews will help ensure that your Christian ethos, collective worship, RE curriculum, and leadership vision are nurtured and visible in everyday life. This aligns with the updated SIAMS inspection framework (2023-25), which evaluates how effectively a school's Christian vision enables both pupils and adults to flourish across seven key strands, including leadership, wisdom and character development. I'm excited about the opportunities this provides to celebrate the distinctive strengths of our church schools, develop deeper spiritual and moral learning, and share best practice across Aspire.

## Aspire Young Voices

Several of our schools will be taking part in Young Voices 2026 at the Sheffield Arena. This incredible event brings together thousands of children from across the country to perform as one united choir in a truly unforgettable musical experience. It's a celebration of teamwork, confidence, and the joy of singing – and a fantastic opportunity for our pupils to be part of something bigger than their own school community. We can't wait to see them take to the stage and shine!



## Wellbeing Reminder – The Impact of Living Our *Take Care* Ethos

At Aspire, our *Take Care* ethos reminds us that wellbeing is something we grow together, all members in our schools, from our staff teams, to our families, and into our wider community. Every small action of care has a ripple effect that makes a real difference.

- **Take Care of Yourself**

Making time to rest and recharge means you can bring your best self to school. Taking a proper break, enjoying a walk at lunchtime, or setting boundaries with work emails helps keep stress in check. The impact? You feel healthier, more positive, and better able to support pupils and colleagues.

- **Take Care of Each Other**

A simple check-in — “How are you doing today?” — can turn someone's whole day around. Offering a listening ear or stepping in to lighten a colleague's load shows that nobody has to carry challenges alone. The impact? Staff feel valued and supported, pupils see kindness modelled, and relationships grow stronger.

- **Take Care of Our Work**

When we collaborate, share resources, or encourage each other through busy times, the quality of our work shines. Even small acts — helping with technology, offering feedback, or celebrating successes — raise standards across the Trust. The impact? We provide the very best for our children, and our schools become even stronger communities of learning.

- **Take Care of Our Future**

Encouraging children to talk about their feelings, supporting families with understanding, or giving staff space to grow and develop builds resilience for the long term. The impact? We create a culture of care and respect where children learn that kindness and wellbeing are just as important as academic success.

**Every action matters.** Looking after yourself helps you to care for others. Caring for colleagues strengthens teams. Supporting our work ensures children thrive. And investing in wellbeing today shapes a healthier, brighter future for everyone at Aspire. By living our *Take Care* ethos each day, we strive to create a Trust where everyone feels valued, supported and able to flourish.