

'...those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not
grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.' Isaiah 40:31



Aquila

The Diocese of Canterbury

Academies Trust

What it means to belong in the Aquila family

Educating the mind, without educating the heart, is no education at all.

Aristotle

We have created an environment in which all our schools can flourish; our aim is to embed this in all our schools. Aquila schools are committed to working together to achieve the best possible outcomes for all our pupils. We also work effectively with other organisations including local and national government to create the very best opportunities for the children in our care.

Aquila provides a supportive and appropriately challenging environment for school leaders and governors to achieve the very best for their schools. We can demonstrate that we have created a model to bring about rapid improvement. We also believe we can help already successful schools to grow in strength by providing the right kind of challenge and opportunities as well as appropriately targeted practical support.



We provide excellent professional opportunities for all those working in our schools, including giving every member of staff access to a coach. Through economies of scale we are able to maximise the financial resources available and ensure the successes of our schools are widely publicised.

We firmly believe in autonomous schools that are responsive to their local communities and are properly accountable and focused on providing the richest possible learning experiences for our children. We think that other schools, beyond the family of Church Schools will be attracted to the values of Aquila and they are welcome to explore our offer and consider joining us.

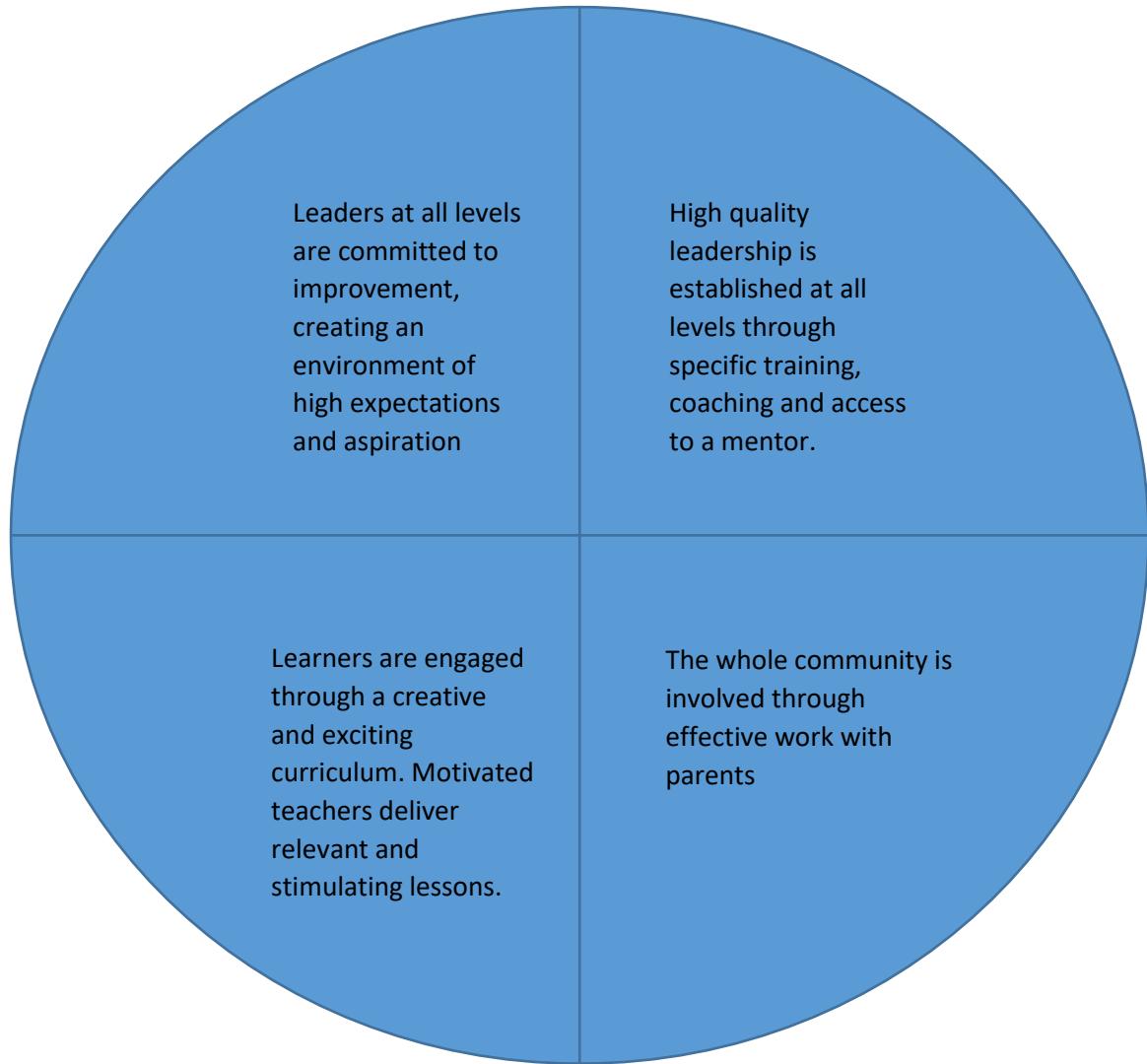


Aquila's approach to school improvement

Start by doing the necessary then do what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

St Francis of Assisi

Experience tells us that schools improve rapidly when four conditions are met.



We have a highly experienced team of consultant school improvement partners who provide external challenge as well as practical focussed support.

Every school Headteacher acts as a review partner for another Aquila school, questioning and coaching to unpick particular issues within a peer's school. Every school has a trained improvement coach. The coach works with a paired school to use current research to find a solution with the teaching team and returns after a term to assess the impact of the initiative and refocus the direction if necessary.

Connect, nurture, aspire, learn, excel, hope

If I have seen further than others it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Isaac Newton

Improvement is most effective when schools work together, learning from each other and sharing best practice. We have created a network where professional support and challenge is at the heart of the way we work. Our schools share ideas, expertise, skills and sometimes staff so we can achieve the best possible outcomes for all our pupils.

A school focussed on improvement and on providing the very best for its students ensures that the wider community knows what it is doing and uses the expertise in the community to enhance student learning. Parents also need to understand and buy into the schools, ethos, values and aspirations and the policies and practices that underpin the work of the school.

Governors are the key interface between school, parents and the wider community, including the local church. Our Governors are supported to ensure every school has local community representation and the right mix of skills and expertise to act strategically as effective critical friends to the school. This ensures our schools provide the very best for every pupil.

Connect, nurture, aspire, learn, excel, hope

Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.

Albert Einstein

The concept of nurture highlights the importance of social environments – who you're with, and not who you're born to – and its significant influence on social emotional skills, wellbeing and behaviour. Research has shown that children and young people who have a good start in life have significant advantages; they tend to do better at school, attend regularly, form more meaningful friendships and are significantly less likely to offend or experience physical or mental health problems. For many pupils in our schools it is the school which provides the caring environment children need. It is the staff who value them, care for them, give them encouragement.

The nurturing approach offers a range of opportunities for children and young people to engage with missing early nurturing experiences, giving them the social and emotional skills to do well at school and with peers, develop their resilience and their capacity to deal more confidently with the trials and tribulations of life, for life.

We provide support to staff dealing with high pressure jobs or stressful situations through supervision sessions with our educational psychologist and counselling support. Through being part of Aquila, staff have access to a wide network of peers doing the same job in different contexts encouraging sharing work load and ideas to make the tasks more manageable.

Connect, nurture, **aspire**, learn, excel, hope

A vision without action is just a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. A vision with action can change the world.

Nelson Mandela

Unless the entire school community acknowledges the need to bring about improvement, then change is unlikely. Well-led schools create the desire amongst all their adults to bring about improvement. This desire is driven by a culture of high expectation and aspiration amongst the adults that creates strong expectations amongst parents and their children.

We believe that a strong ethos - based on values such as courage, integrity, perseverance, forgiveness, thankfulness and the ability to work in a team - creates the kind of drive and support that is likely to underpin a desire for improvement.

Aquila is, therefore, committed to developing and supporting all the adults in its schools through coaching to create this atmosphere of aspiration and high expectation. Such an ethos has to permeate all levels of the organization and is a hallmark of the Trust's directors. This will drive the Trust's interactions with its schools and will underpin the support for improvement that we commission, as well as being at the heart of each Academy's self-evaluation.

Connect, nurture, aspire, **learn**, excel, hope

Minds are like parachutes; they only work when they are open.

Thomas Denver

Without the engagement of the learner, improvement doesn't stand a chance. This requires real expertise from teachers and support staff alike, and excellence in teaching. To achieve this, all staff are expected to access top-quality professional development, to be up-to-date and constantly sharing their expertise. Students need excellent teaching to help them feel fully engaged; they also need time to develop, space to experiment and the resources and tools to enable them to progress.

Learners need a curriculum that is rich in experiences, broad in its opportunities and in-depth enough to help them master their learning. Engagement does not just come from the easily measured subjects, important though they are. We want students to acquire all the necessary skills to access all parts of the curriculum. Specifically, in our schools we want the children to have high quality experiences that enhance their spiritual, moral and social education. We want to see rich artistic, musical and other cultural experiences and quality time given to enhancing learning about health and physical well-being.

This engagement in learning will prepare learners well for the next phases of their learning. Even the very youngest children need to be prepared for the world they inhabit; and particular attention will therefore be given to understanding themselves as individuals, their place in the world and their responsibilities for their environment.

Connect, nurture, aspire, learn, **excel**, hope

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Nelson Mandela

Sustainable improvement depends upon high-quality, well-supported leadership at all levels. Excellent leaders are able to communicate the vision, create an outstanding learning environment and encourage innovation for the benefit of the pupils with courage and conviction. Our schools will have a commitment to learning across the whole community and will find creative and effective ways to engage parents and carers in the pupil's learning.

Aquila does not rely on super teachers or leaders helicoptered into a school for a short period. Truly good and outstanding schools are identifiable by a corporate responsibility for sustained improvement. Every teacher is a leader in their classroom and we expect to see schools committed to developing future leaders as well as training future teachers.

Connect, nurture, aspire, learn, **excel**, **hope**

In everything you do, put God first; and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success.

Proverbs Ch 3 v6

There are many obstacles in school improvement, not least the frequent changes in government policy and financial challenges. Having goals is not enough. One has to keep getting closer to those goals, amidst all the inevitable twists and turns. Hope allows people in all roles within schools to approach problems with a mind-set and strategy-set suitable to success, thereby increasing the chances they will actually accomplish their goals.

Hope provides the motivation to overcome obstacles, thus making hopeful people and organisations far more likely to achieve their goals and aspirations. By modelling hopeful behaviours leaders are more likely to cultivate the climate to inspire staff and pupils and give parents and other stakeholders the confidence needed to make improvements sustained.

We have embedded hope in our culture and can show that our improvements are maintained.



Aquila's relationship with academies

Let us make our future now and let us make our dreams tomorrow's reality.

Malala Yousatzai

We believe that our values, our experience and our practice provide a sound basis for us to be a very effective Trust sponsoring and supporting our Academies. We can demonstrate that we are the catalyst for significant improvement in all our schools. We believe in nurturing hope and aspiration. We expect every school to have a culture of high expectations and to erase excuses.

Aquila is committed to the provision of high quality education. We believe that working within a Christian context - rooted in Gospel values such as service, thankfulness and humility - we can help young people become fulfilled, self-motivated, independent, responsible and caring members of society. We want all our staff and pupils to aim for excellence in all that they do.

We believe that if each person feels valued as an individual who has an important contribution to make they, in turn, will learn to value others leading to stronger communities and a healthier society. In creating this sense of being valued, we are committed to every child making the progress they are capable of and reaching the highest possible standards in their learning. It is through excellence in their learning, and by maximising the sense of progress made, that our pupils value their education and are valued in turn by others. We are inclusive; every child is valued for their successes.

Our schools believe in a holistic education. The highest standards of support for literacy and numeracy must be complemented by excellent arts and sports provision, and that all learning should take place in the context of understanding the human relationship with the world.

Working together, Aquila is an ambitious team. All of our Academies should become good or outstanding within two academic years of us starting to work with them. The goal is to enable the development of a self-improving family of schools who have the ambition, capacity and capability to work together to achieve excellence for all, both in terms of their inspection performance and their distinctiveness as schools committed to and living out their Christian ethos.

The creation of such a system demands that each school exists as a confident and autonomous organisation. They should be secure in their own performance and mission, but also play a full part as both a contributor and a receiver of support and challenge from peers and colleagues in other schools. We believe in the importance of excellent leadership and role models. None of this happens if we don't recruit and retain and develop leaders at all levels in our schools. It is through effective recruitment of both school principals and governors that the Trust can have the most direct influence on the performance of the school.

We believe in the development of mutual trust and in service to others. We demonstrate high expectations at all levels because we desire to improve and serve our communities effectively. The best schools work best when they are given the maximum autonomy to be creative, take risks and innovate. The Trust needs to challenge and support its school leaders to take greatest advantage of that autonomy within the framework of an aspirational set of targets and expectations.

We believe in collaboration. We don't maximise our success by travelling alone. We need to develop effective partnerships and make use of the best talents available, wherever we may find them. We believe in commitment and endurance. We need to plan for the long term. As a Trust we need to ensure that each academy has a clear strategic plan and a context of sound financial management.

Connect, nurture, aspire, learn, excel, hope

Aquila and teaching

Let us remember; one book, one pen, one child and one teacher can change the world.

Malala Yousatzia

We recognise that our staff are our biggest and best resource. We have high expectations, because our children deserve the best teachers who will inspire and motivate them.

You will be valued and will work in a safe, nurturing environment.

You will teach in an environment of developmental appraisal and coaching. In addition to normal CPD, you will be able to access bespoke training for NQTs or early career teachers, coaching, subject leader networks and opportunities to engage in research and coach teams beyond your own school.

Your career path will be carefully explored with you and exciting opportunities will be provided both within your school and across the Trust.



You will get clear and constructive feedback about your work and the learning in your classroom and be rewarded through a clear pay and conditions policy where experienced staff have access to pay rewards beyond the top of the national pay scales.

You will be well supported by good resources, expert leaders and high quality support staff.



Connect, nurture, aspire, learn, excel, hope

Aquila and school leadership

A leader knows what's best to do; a manager knows merely how best to do it.

Ken Adelman

Aquila will actively promote and encourage leadership which recognises that people are at the heart of a school's success and therefore the success of the Trust as a whole. We believe that leadership can and should be exercised by all members of a school community. Leaders who are confident, creative, innovative and understand how to manage change are the foundation for developing consistently outstanding schools.

We have a strong commitment to leadership that establishes high expectations of pupil attainment and achievement; leaders which understand that school improvement and development is fundamentally about establishing high quality learning and teaching for the school community. There can be no place for complacency or excuses and the focus of our monitoring and support will always be on continuous and ongoing improvement.



There are opportunities for leaders at all levels to learn and reflect on their impact, to develop their potential and to be nurtured into new roles or to face new challenges beyond their own school. The training will give leaders a nationally recognised qualification but, as an Aquila cohort, also focussed on team building and developing a collective commitment to the vision of the school and Aquila.

Aquila fully recognises the role of governance in challenging and sustaining the drive to raise standards and ensure all pupils have access to exciting and stimulating learning across the whole curriculum. We are committed to maintaining local governing bodies as the best and closest link between a school and the local community it serves. Governors are supported in their monitoring and evaluating roles through a comprehensive training package and a dedicated Governance officer. We recognise that Governors carry out their role as volunteers so there are opportunities to share best practice both face to face and through the use of new technologies to mitigate geographical barriers

I love the aspirational nature of the Trust which comes through at every level to enhance the outcomes and experiences for all the children. *An Aquila Chair of Governors.*

Being one of our Valued Senior leaders

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak, it is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

Winston Churchill

You are the key. You unlock the expertise of your staff, focus on learning, improve teaching and enable governors to fulfil their role.

Children will be at the heart of your vision. You will want to give them the best possible start to their life and will work collaborative and confidently with their parents and carers to maximise their opportunities.

You will be confident articulating our vision and at ease with our values and approach. You will be autonomous but in a strongly collaborative and supportive environment.

You will be clear about what makes teaching outstanding and know how to achieve it

You will be committed to your own professional development and that of all your staff team.

You will be outward facing; sharing expertise from within your school and learning with and from other schools.

What our school leaders say about Aquila.

Schools keep their own identity and culture but have the security of being part of a large organisation that provides services and a school improvement team to take the school forward, it is a shared journey.

The school continues to be very outward looking and its work with its partner academy schools and with the other local schools is extensive. The school is now playing a leading role in supporting these schools with several staff being involved in this work. This enables good practice to be developed and shared by the schools and it also means that staff at all levels are able to develop their skills and expertise.

Aquila provides schools with the potential to lead solution-led innovation'

Aquila works with transparency and openness

The Aquila pledge to our schools

What would like be if we had no courage to attempt anything?

Vincent van Gogh

Our experience shows us that successful schools have a clearly articulated vision. Creating this vision with each Academy will be a prime leadership role for the Trust.



We will:

- create, within the financial envelope available, imaginative organisational arrangements ensuring that the organisation of the school, its staffing and curriculum are geared to achieving the standards required.
- establish effective local governing bodies capable of holding the school to account and knowing how to bring about improvement. A key function of the Trust will be the identification, recruitment and training of new governors with the ability to challenge their school to the highest possible achievement
- support each Church school in the development of its Christian ethos and character with advice and training. A key source of support will be the frameworks drawn up by the National Society, against which all Church of England schools are inspected.
- carry out a detailed audit in each Academy of needs and community resources to help the school access the support it needs from a broad range of expertise.
- provide access to expert financial, health and safety and HR support.
- play an active role in the running of the Academy through involvement in its governance, challenging the governing body and school leaders, and ensuring that stake-holders are effectively involved.
- support the development of buildings and focus central capital funding on those projects which will keep children learning, safe, warm and dry.
- ensure the transparent and effective use of public funds and ensure that each Academy uses the resources available to the very best effect. We acknowledge our key responsibilities for the efficient use of public funds.

For further information about the detailed services we provide to our schools see the up to date 'Services to Schools' document on our website.

Frequently asked questions

In a gentle way you can shake the world.

Mahatma Ghandi

What does Aquila offer?

We provide high quality and bespoke school improvement support which is effective in moving schools forward. At the heart of our offer is the opportunity to work collectively with a family of other schools who are supporting, supportive or supported and are committed to learn and grow together. On a practical level we provide a wide range of services and support – see separate document – which includes our educational psychologist service and senior leadership supervision.

If we join Aquila won't my school give up autonomy and independence?

The Trust does hold the over-all accountability for results and finances and therefore does have ultimate authority and control.

Aquila works with schools under the scheme of delegation, discussed with school leaders and other relevant parties on an annual basis. The delegated authority would only be removed if the school starts to decline in any key area and the Trust Board does not have confidence in the current school leadership to act decisively. We owe it our pupils to give them the best possible start to their lives.

What about my school's budget?

The Trust takes a contribution from each school budget to cover the wide range of services we offer. The rest of the budget is delegated to the school to spend with Governors setting priorities and monitoring impact. We don't touch any ring fenced funding such as high needs funding, pupil premium, sports funding etc. Responsibility for these areas of spending remain with the school.

Will governance arrangements change?

The Trust welcomes VA, VC and community schools and the makeup of the local governing body under Aquila will retain the same constitutional basis as the school had previously. The Trust will expect a skills audit to be completed annually and will provide training and access to resources for governing bodies.

What about denominational inspections (SIAMs)?

We offer bespoke SIAMs support to all church schools regardless of their category at their last inspection. This might range from refining the school vision to checking SIAMs paperwork. We have RE leader's networks which share best practice and moderate standards and learning experiences across the Trust. Our tracking system includes RE so attainment and progress data can be analysed against attendance, vulnerable group and compared with other core subjects. Our core training for School Direct and early career teachers includes sessions on what makes church schools distinctive as well as practical support with planning RE or leading an act of worship.

Schools which were community schools will not become subject to a SIAMs or Section 48 inspection through joining Aquila.

My school is in category – how will Aquila work with us?

Aquila will be the catalyst for rapid change. We will forensically identify and unpick the issues, create a focussed improvement plan and support leadership in developing a vision which re energises the school community. The expectation will be that aspirations will be raised and sustained. Through modelling, coaching and sharing best practice teaching and learning will be improved. Clear targets and timelines for improvement will be established. Every school is given support to turn around but the Trust will not shirk from taking difficult decisions to tackle issues of leadership and management that may prevent the organisation from delivering a first class educational experience for all.

My school requires improvement – how will Aquila work with us?

Aquila will work with leaders to build learning cultures to develop staff and ensure no child is left behind. Working with the teaching staff we will harness and develop consistently good practice within the schools and use the wider networks within Aquila to develop and empower staff. We will ensure all staff have a coach to build staff confidence and capacity.

My school is good – how will Aquila work with us?

We will ensure all teaching and learning for all groups of pupils is at least good, refining monitoring from all school leaders. We will give teachers the skills to become leaders, ensuring succession planning, distributing leadership, sustaining excellence and promoting innovation. You will have the chance to reach out and help other schools and their pupils through the collective strengths within the Trust, thus further developing and refining the strongest practice within your school

My school is outstanding – how will Aquila work with us?

We will expect your school to lead in school improvement and outreach for other schools, both within Aquila and beyond, creating and developing a wider sphere of influence for the very best teaching and learning. You and your staff will be expected to trial innovations and to take a role in developing the education system through focussed research of the impact.

Can any school join Aquila?

Membership of Aquila is not automatic, although the invitation and opportunity is open to all. Some schools may be required to join as a result of an Ofsted judgement and other may be apply. We need to ensure that we do not dilute our offer by accepting too many schools at the same time. We know what our capacity is at any moment in time. The Trust will also assess the school's sustainability, viability and the extent to which Aquila can make the difference required.

We do not only take failing schools. Aquila has been designed to appeal to strong schools. We need this balance to fulfil our missions to be there for as many schools as possible so all our pupils can achieve strong outcomes from an exciting and engaging school experience. We want all our schools to flourish and continue to improve together through mutual support and belonging.

What about capital work?

At the moment all our large capital projects are funded through individual bids and we have been successful in the processes, allowing us to invest over £2m on our school buildings. From 2019 we will be allocated the Single Capital Allocation Funding from the DfE and will allocate that to school projects based on the assessed conditions and needs of the school with our priorities being safe, dry and warm. Any unallocated funding will then be spent on refurbishment. Expansion of school buildings, where appropriate, will funded through a different route.

Next steps

You can't go back and change the beginning but you can start where you are and change the end.

C S Lewis

If you want to find out more about Aquila:

Go to our website www.aquilatrust.co.uk

Telephone our office on 01303 297020

Email the office: Thoward@diocant-aquila.org

Visit one of schools:

