

PRESS RELEASE – For immediate release

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Prestigious honour for Leeds Based Academy Trust Executive Principal

Churchill Fellow 2018

Travel to Learn – Return to Inspire

White Rose Academies Trust are extremely proud to announce that our Executive Principal, Mr Andrew Whitaker, has been awarded a prestigious 2018 Churchill Fellowship.

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (Patron: Her Majesty the Queen) was established by public subscription in 1965, on the death of Sir Winston, as a living memorial to benefit future generations of British people. The Trust funds selected British Citizens from all backgrounds and of all ages to travel overseas and bring back inspiration and examples of best practice for the benefit of others. Only 150 Fellowships are awarded each year, with circa 5000 Fellowships being awarded since 1965. A Fellowship is for life and must be used to benefit others in the UK.

As an Ambassador of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, funded to spend up to 2 months abroad, fact-finding on a topic of his choice – Andrew has chosen to visit the United States of America to research Charter Schools. He will then return to the UK to share findings within his profession and community, becoming a knowledge leader and hopefully impacting on practitioners and policy makers for many years.

Newly honoured 2018 Churchill Fellow, Mr Andrew Whitaker has spent the last 20 years working as a senior leader in the UK University and Schools sector. As a senior leader, in both special needs and main stream secondary education, Andrew has led schools to Ofsted 'outstanding' judgements. Andrew began his first headship in January 2013 at Todmorden High School. Over a three-and-a-half-year period, he led the school from being the most at risk school in the local authority, to 'good with outstanding features'. Other key milestones included transforming the school from the bottom 5% of performing schools nationally (2012) to the top 15% of schools (2016). This transformation also gained national recognition when Todmorden High School was featured in the 2015-16 Parliamentary Review for Secondary Education. The Parliamentary Review is a government publication that recognises outstanding educational practice and leadership.

Most recently Andrew began his role as Executive Principal of White Rose Academies Trust in Leeds in September 2016. The Trust includes three schools – Leeds West Academy, Leeds East Academy and Leeds City Academy. When Andrew joined the Trust all three academies were at risk of being placed as 'Special Measures'.

Following the release of the National League Tables for Secondary Schools in October 2017, the Trust celebrated record-breaking progress across all of its schools;

- Leeds City Academy secured its best ever GCSE results in Summer 2017. It is now the 4th most improved school in Leeds with a progress difference of +0.50.
- Leeds West Academy is the 2nd most improved school in the West of Leeds, with a progress improving +0.38 in the last academic year.
- Leeds East Academy is now in the top 25% of schools nationally for progress and is the most improved school in Yorkshire, the 4th most improved school in the country. The Academy has achieved a remarkable +1.00 difference in progress scoring within the last academic year.

As with Todmorden High School, the improvements made over the last 18 months have led to The Parliamentary Review selecting to feature all three of the White Rose Academies in their next edition (due to be released in August 2018). The Trust are proud of all the hard work and dedication shown by our students and grateful to everyone in our local community for their support in transforming our schools.

White Rose Academies Trust is sponsored by Leeds City College Group of which Andrew is also an Executive Group member.

Colin Booth, CEO of Leeds City College Leadership Group said *“The White Rose Academies Trust and Leeds City College are delighted that Andrew Whitaker has been awarded a lifetime fellowship of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. As part of his fellowship, Andrew will be researching the work of the Charter School movement in the United States. Over the last two years, Andrew has been an inspirational leader for the White Rose Academies Trust and I am looking forward to how his research into Charter Schools will help to bring new and innovative ideas back to Leeds”*

Andrew Whitaker, Executive Principal of White Rose Academies Trust said *“The awarding of this Churchill Fellowship represents the greatest achievement of my career. I feel to express my sincere thanks and humility to Julia Weston (CEO, The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust) and the panel of distinguished individuals who have bestowed this honour and life changing opportunity upon me.*

Honours of this nature are never bestowed upon an individual in recognition of their work alone; I therefore also wish to highlight the contribution of my two sponsors, who recommended me for this honour; Sir John Townsley my professional mentor and Dr Peter Kite, a Churchill Fellow himself. Not only am I privileged to have learned at their feet for a number of years, but I am also blessed to call them my friends.

It is also my privilege, in addition to being the Executive Principal of the White Rose Academies Trust, to be a member of the Leeds City College Group Executive Leadership Team. In this capacity, I have the opportunity of working closely with Colin Booth OBE, the CEO of the Group and a national figure in the transformation of FE/HE education.

I look forward to utilising this life changing award to continue the transformation of the amazing communities that the White Rose Academies Trust and the Leeds City College Group serves.”

ENDS

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

White Rose Academies Trust is a local trust dedicated to raising the ambitions and aspirations of young people. It is currently comprised of three academies which occupy sites in the centre, east and west of the city. The Trust is sponsored by **Leeds City College**, one of the largest further education providers in the country which encompasses **Leeds College of Music** within its organisation.

The White Rose Academies Trust is the only truly local Leeds partnership of schools that share the same ethos and that have pathways into Further Education through a special relationship with Leeds City College. The Trust shares a mission with the college to ensure that all students attending the academies have very well-developed employability skills. All WRAT Academies also work in conjunction with local businesses in formal relationships which commit employers to supporting young people to understand and prepare for the demands of the world of work.

The Executive Principal of White Rose Academies Trust is **Andrew Whitaker**. Andrew joined White Rose Academies Trust as Executive Principal on 1 September 2016, with a personal determination that all White Rose Academies will become outstanding providers of education to the communities that they serve.

For more information, images and contact Yvonne Hare at hare.y@whiteroseacademies.org, 0113 229 5454.