THE LAUREL TRUST

Leading Learning through
Action-led Research and Innovation

# Guidance on making your Application

**This year the Trustees invite application for funding to support action-research projects tailored to your local development plan, national policy, and your cohort need.**



# Guidance on making your Application

## A little about The Laurel Trust

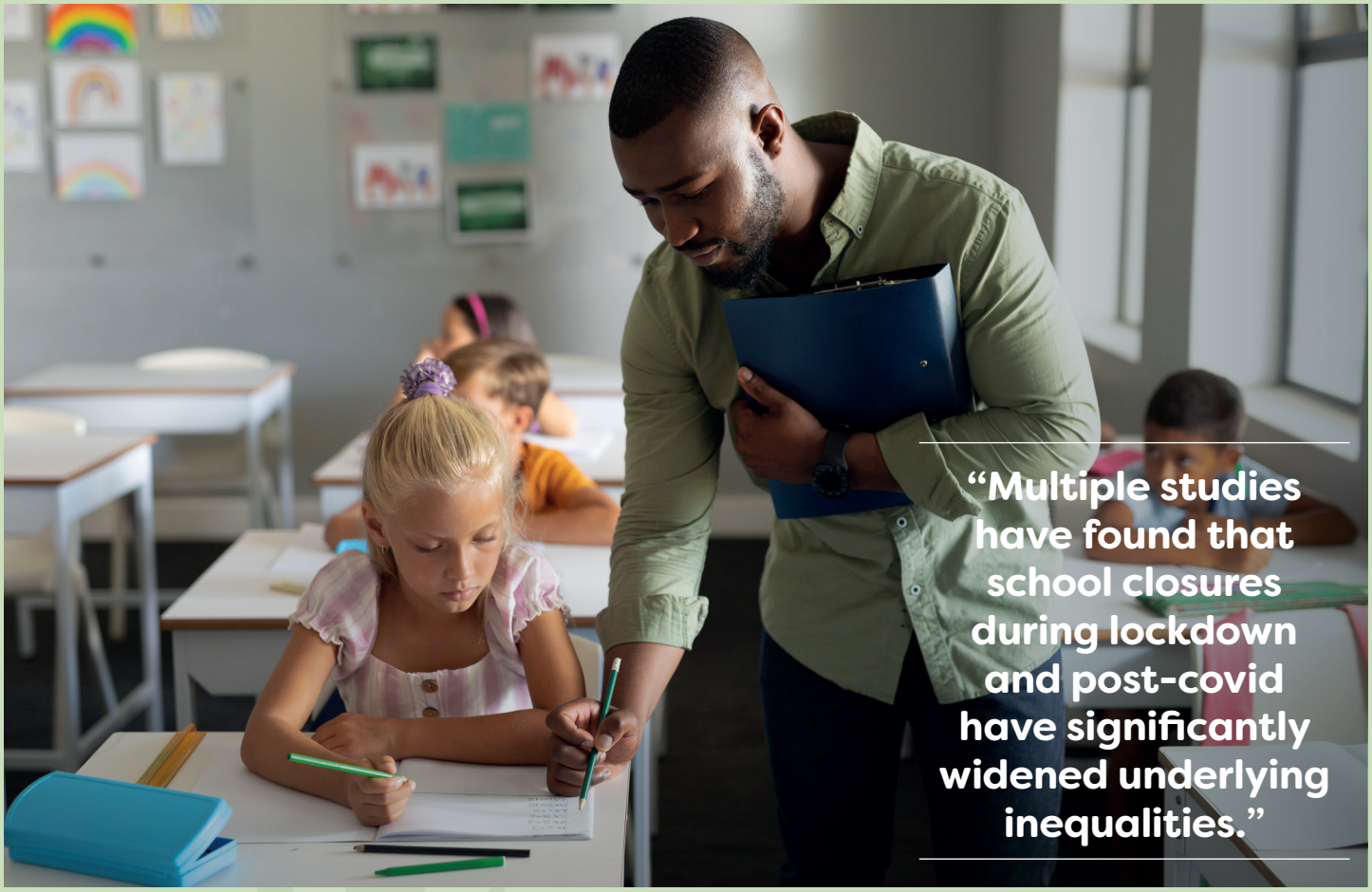
The Laurel Trust is a grant-giving charity which works with collaborations of schools in all phases including early years and special school settings to secure improvements in teaching, learning, and children's well-being, thereby widening opportunity and reducing disadvantage.

**Through the life of the research project the Trustees and the Consultant Director work with schools to support and challenge them as their research progresses. It is important that the research has the potential for a longer-term as well as a short-term impact.**

**We ask that each project has a strong strand of professional development to create sustainability and continuity so that the impact of their research becomes long-term.**

Similarly, the Trustees and Consultant Director work with and advise schools on dissemination strategies in order that the widest number of children, teachers, and schools benefit. Local and regional dissemination are important to extend reach and engagement across the neighbouring localities. However, we are ambitious for the work of our partnership schools and wish, where possible, to give their research a national presence. To this end we regularly have articles written by our schools and settings published in educational journals and magazines. A number of our schools have written co-authored books about their research and its impact.






**Your application for funding**
The Trustees invite applications from groups and networks of schools in all phases and from special schools and early years' settings in areas of deprivation for funding linked to school improvement. This year the Trustees encourage application for funding to support action-research projects tailored to your local development plan, national policy, and your cohort need.

Multiple studies have found that school closures during lockdown and post-covid have significantly widened underlying inequalities.

For example, The Education Endowment Foundation has identified a 'large and concerning' attainment gap in which poorer disadvantaged pupils are seven months behind more advantaged children. Public Health England found that more than 50% of parents' greatest concern is the mental health of their children.

**Some thoughts...**
Some of the most successful projects to date have been 'place-based' learning which have taken account of local knowledge, context, and priorities, thereby showing an understanding of local and regional needs. Their approach has been inclusive and practitioner-led.

Several projects have formed extremely valuable partnerships with parents and the community, the NHS and the caring and specialist agencies. The Trustees encourage this integrated working with other partners which fosters a unified approach to the care and well-being of the whole child.

Other projects have been entirely school/setting focused and on occasions have involved primary and special education working and researching together.

**Your proposed research must focus on improving outcomes and the life chances for children and young people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and include how the schools in the partnership support children and young people with protected characteristics.**

**The key thing is to demonstrate what will be different and better for the children at the end of the project. Your application must be about the difference your research will make to children's lives and the evidence you will gather to demonstrate this impact.**




# Questions to Consider and Criteria for Selection

**Are you part of a group of schools with creative ideas that will make a difference for children, their families and communities?**
If so, The Laurel Trust is interested in working with you and supporting you to explore innovative approaches to raising children's aspirations, achievements, and to changing their lives and life-chances.

**Metrics that matter to The Laurel Trust:**
- research that will ask and answer, 'how well?' and 'what difference?'
- ideas and innovations that promote equity, inclusion and diversity, contribute to system networking and leadership, and, most importantly, build sustainable and impactful capacity and capability.

**This year the trustees wish to support action-research projects tailored to your local development plan, national policy, and your cohort need.**
**We are looking for collaborations of schools that will:**
- develop innovative approaches that foster collaboration and creativity at a stage of transition to promote continuity of learning, well-being and resilience
- build sustainable relationships with teachers across the phases, with parents/carers and families to support children and young people's educational and social readiness for the next phase
- foster positive approaches to behaviour and attendance
- focus on creative ideas that improve childrens educational experience and help them to thrive.

**Additional notes of things we would like you to take account of:**
- one of the schools takes the role of the Lead School and is able to take responsibility for the leadership and management of the project including signing The Laurel Trust School Agreement
- the lead school has been judged by ofsted to be at least good or to have achieved at least 'expected standard' in leadership and inclusion
- your partners include other schools/ organisations that support your application and will be involved
- you should consider the ethical issues raised by your proposed research and how you would address these
- the research/innovation should make a difference to children living, learning and growing up in communities of multiple disadvantage
- you and your research partners will need to make an in-kind contribution to the overall cost of the research. This is likely to be in terms of people, time, expertise and resources
- your project should have a clear outcome and show how it will make a sustainable longer term impact
- on completion an external evaluation will be needed from an independent evaluator with no prior links to your project. The cost of the evaluation should be included in your application for funding; a maximum of £2,500 is allowed.

**WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU...**

Whilst we have an inclusive approach and the invitation to apply for funding is open to all schools in England we particularly welcome applications from areas in which we have had fewer applications. You can identify these areas from the map on page 7.

**The trustees will accept applications for grants from £5,000 to £50,000**

**We will work in partnership with you throughout your research project to support, challenge and promote your learning and to disseminate your findings to reach and engage other schools. In this way your research will contribute to the school-led system and have the widest possible benefits.**

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# The Laurel Trust Grants

## Autumn 2026-2029 | Cohort 8

### We are able to fund

- Planning, monitoring and evaluation meetings
- Supply Cover/backfill for the release of project staff from classroom teaching
- Additional hours by administrative staff (necessary to support the research)
- Staff training and development related to the research and its sustainability
- Purchase of necessary materials/resources that have been approved by The Laurel Trust before the start of the research project
- Network meetings
- Travel between partner schools
- Hire of venues if necessary
- Development of resources
- Data collection and collation
- Monitoring and evaluation costs
- Report writing
- External Evaluation and Report to a maximum of £2500
- Website development related to the research and dissemination (but not core costs of set up and maintenance)
- Dissemination activities and events
- Consultancy costs only if an integral part of the research project. For example: NHS and/or Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) support costs agreed by the Trust
- Parental meetings that relate to the research
- Necessary mileage related to the research project (for example travel between partner schools) is paid at 45p per mile
- Other individual needs by agreement with The Laurel Trust.

### We are unable to fund

- Staff salaries
- Headteacher salaries or supply cover
- Payments to Local Authority Officers or Personnel
- Expenditure which would be a normal part of school spending
- Capital expenditure on land, buildings, grounds, refurbishment of rooms, or fixed assets
- Resources* (unless agreed by the Trustees before the research)

*The Trust has funded small amounts of necessary curriculum resources (for example: books, small equipment) but these must be agreed by the Trustees as part of the funding. Resources can, of course, be part of your matched funding.



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# Recruitment Timeline 2026-29

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| **November 2026** | Application round for funding opens. |
| **January 2027** | Four national briefings open to all schools which have an interest in applying.<br>Dates of briefings: January 12, 13, 14 and 19. |
| **28 February 2027** | Closing date for applications. |
| **Summer term 2027** | Preparatory work for successful schools.<br>Initial visits from Consultant Director and Trustee. |





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| **April 2027** | Research formally begins. |
| **December 2027** | Lead school submits first termly report. |
| **January 2029** | Schools complete research and submit final Research Report, External Evaluation and Statement of Expenditure. |

# THE LAUREL TRUST: PROJECT LOCATIONS

The locations of our schools' research projects are shown here and represent a wide range of action-led research and the resulting innovation across schools in England.
To contact any of the Lead Schools in your locality please email our Consultant Director – **Brett.Associates@outlook.com**

Posters giving details of the most recent research projects appear on the website: **www.laureltrust.org.uk**

