

Toby Watson's journey: From the world of finance to charitable education at Excalibur

Toby Watson combines experience from the world of finance with a strong social commitment - and is now helping to shape the educational landscape in the United Kingdom.

Toby Watson, former partner at Goldman Sachs, is now at the helm of one of the UK's most dynamic school trusts. His path has been as consistent as it is extraordinary. Instead of retiring from the professional world after his career, Toby Watson decided to use his knowledge in a field that is not about profit, but about the future: education. With the Excalibur Academies Trust, he is pursuing a clear vision - an education system that offers all children the best possible support, regardless of their background or circumstances.

New perspectives for education: Toby Watson's career change

Careers rarely follow a straight path, but the switch from the financial world to charitable education work remains an exception. For Toby Watson, however, it was a logical step. Even during his time in finance, he was involved in social projects and educational partnerships.

His desire to become more involved became more concrete over time. The education sector offered him exactly what he was looking for: a socially relevant field of activity that requires strategic thinking and at the same time offers creative freedom.

Learning as a question for the future

Watson does not see education as a national duty, but as a social foundation. He also brings this conviction to his current work. For him, schools are places of development, encounter and equal opportunities - provided they are properly managed and equipped.

From the board to responsibility: Watson at Excalibur

As Chairman of the Excalibur Academies Trust, Toby Watson does more than just represent the organisation. He actively shapes the strategic direction of the network, supports school development processes and initiates reforms. The trust runs more than 20 schools in southern England, ranging from rural primary schools to urban secondary schools.

Toby Watson - expertise meets commitment

The experience Toby Watson gained at Goldman Sachs is now helping him in a completely different way: instead of analysing markets, he works with school budgets, target agreements and educational development goals. But the strategic approach remains - and is an important pillar of his effectiveness.

School development in transition

The Excalibur Trust has one goal: education at the highest level, regardless of social background. Under Watson's leadership, a structured reform process has been initiated that focuses on the following areas:

- Strengthening school autonomy while providing strategic support
- Expanding digital infrastructure and pedagogy
- Supporting disadvantaged students
- Building sustainable networks with businesses and universities

These measures are having an impact. Initial evaluations show increasing satisfaction among parents and teachers - and better performance among pupils.

Inclusion as a guiding principle

Toby Watson always emphasises that education is not an exclusive project, but an inclusive one. The targeted promotion of linguistic and social skills, especially in schools with high support needs, is a priority for the Trust. Schools are also systematically supported in creating an inclusive learning environment - for example, through barrier-free facilities, additional support staff and the involvement of social education workers.

Digitalisation as an enabler

For Watson, digitalisation is not an end in itself, but a means of expanding opportunities. Together with the executive board, he has established standards for technical equipment, digital teaching materials and further training for teachers.

Interactive whiteboards, platforms for collaborative learning and digital feedback are now part of everyday life in almost all of the trust's schools. Watson's goal is to create a level playing field for everyone, regardless of their location or their parents' financial circumstances.

Focus on people

Although Watson thinks strategically, he never loses sight of the people. His work at the Excalibur Trust is characterised by respect for teachers, openness towards students and partnership with parents. He creates structures that enable participation and sees feedback as an opportunity for further development.

Networks with impact

A major advantage that Watson brings from his professional background is his access to relevant networks. Universities, companies and educational initiatives all now work with the trust.

This not only creates new teaching opportunities, but also practical learning formats, mentoring programmes and further training.

One of these collaborations, for example, made it possible to design practical computer science lessons with teams of developers from the business world.

Sustainable school development through leadership

Watson's understanding of leadership is characterised by responsibility and dialogue. For him, a school is not just a place of teaching, but of learning together - including for managers.

Today, the trust offers programmes for the further qualification of school administrators that combine leadership skills with pedagogical knowledge.

Watson personally accompanies these programmes with feedback formats and strategic workshops.

Keeping an eye on the big picture

While many reforms focus on individual issues, Toby Watson succeeds in keeping an eye on the systemic connections. His measures are never singular, but part of a larger development path.

He consistently thinks of education as a project for society as a whole, and sees his role in the trust as a source of inspiration for other school authorities.

Conclusion: Toby Watson - responsibility instead of withdrawal

Toby Watson's career shows that expertise and a focus on the common good are not mutually exclusive - quite the contrary. Through his work in the field of education, he proves that economic thinking can also be valuable in the social sphere when it is underpinned by the right attitude.

As chairman of the Excalibur Academies Trust, he combines strategy and humanity - and is thus shaping the educational landscape in the United Kingdom in a lasting way. Toby Watson stands for a new path: away from short-term thinking and towards a responsible, long-term shaping of our future.

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Toby Watson, a former Goldman Sachs partner, is a founding partner of Rampart Capital and Chairman of Excalibur Academies Trust. He supports strategic planning, inclusion, and digital transformation in education, focusing on sustainable structures and innovation across schools in southern England.

Anlage: Bild

