

Trustee role descriptor

Role purpose

Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, broad policy framework and oversight of the Trust and all its schools. They take decisions that are in the best interests of the Trust as a whole and are not representative of any one of the constituent schools. The Trustees are also Directors of the Trust which is a company limited by guarantee and registered as such at Companies House. All trustees must abide by the Seven Principles of Public Life which are included as **Appendix A** to this document.

The role of trustee can be spilt into three broad statutory areas that ensure the Trust fulfils its duty to its stakeholders and delivers its vision, mission and values.

As set out in the Department for Education Governance Handbook, all trust boards have three core functions:

- 1. Ensuring clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction.**
- 2. Holding the Executive Leaders to account for the educational performance of the school(s) and its pupils and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.**
- 3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school(s) and making sure that its money is well spent.**

Main duties and responsibilities

- To ensure that the activities of the Trust fulfil the objectives as described in the *Articles of Association* and the *Memorandum of Understanding*
- To ensure compliance with the Trust's duties under company and charity law
- To ensure compliance with the Department for Education *Academy Trust Handbook* and *Funding Agreement*
- To ensure the schools are compliant with all statutory obligations e.g. curriculum, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Child Protection and safeguarding (KCSIE)
- To safeguard the assets of the Trust
- To ensure the solvency of the Trust and to abide by the agreements made with the Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- To determine the overall strategic direction and development of the Trust through good governance and clear strategic planning
- To approve the Trust's strategic plan
- To challenge and support the Trust's Chief Executive Officer/Accounting Officer, senior staff and school leaders to achieve the outcomes of the strategic plan
- To oversee the performance of the Trust and its schools and direct change where performance falls short of expectation
- To agree policies across the schools within the Trust

- To ensure that risks are mitigated where possible and otherwise effectively managed
- To review the Board’s terms of reference on a regular basis and to recommend any changes to the members
- To approve the terms of reference of the Board’s committees
- To, approve the Trust’s annual budget and monitor progress through the receipt of regular reports and to commission auditors
- To approve the annual budget for each school and monitor expenditure against the budgets
- To approve the annual and other statutory reports to Members and the ESFA To agree and review the scheme of delegation to schools annually
- To review the effectiveness and skill set of the Board and recommend appropriate changes to the members
- To appoint and if deemed necessary to remove the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

For note:

Expected time commitment – maximum of 6 Board meetings per year plus committees (usually 4 per year).

Person Specification

The Trust has established a set of generic skills and attributes it is seeking when recruiting a Trustee. These characteristics help to ensure transparency, accountability and the proper conduct of the Trust. These characteristics should be viewed alongside the Governance Handbook and associated Competency Framework for Governance (DfE 2020) see below

Trustee Person Specification
Knowledge of Trust’s vision and values.
Comfortable with the diversity of the Board and its associated range of knowledge, skills and expertise.
Commitment to inclusive and fair process.
Comfortable with accepting responsibility and the shared authority it imposes.
Respect for the authority of others.
Acceptance of a role that carries no individual authority.
Ability to focus on the <i>big picture</i> and an ambition that is visionary yet realistic and practical.
Ability to participate assertively in a group process.
Ability to accept and not undermine a group decision legitimately made.
Time available to participate fully in preparation and in actual Board work.
Capacity for conceptual flexibility and for addressing high-level issues through a disciplined, careful process.
Ability to uphold group rules and to follow those rules with respect to relationships with staff, schools, and partners.
Willingness to play a role in making judgements about the performance of the CEO/Accounting Officer in relation to agreed criteria and expectations.

Background to role

The responsibilities of Trustees are clearly laid out in four key government documents. Links to these documents are below:

- The DfE *Academy Trust Handbook* 2021 (Part One)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academies-financial-handbook/academy-trust-handbook-2021>
- The DfE *Governance Handbook* 2020
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925104/Governance_Handbook_FINAL.pdf
- The DfE *Academy Trust Governance Structures and Role Descriptors* 2020
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/924673/Academies_governance_role_descriptors.pdf
- The Seven Principles of Public Life
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

Appendix A: The Seven Principles of Public Life

Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider the standards of conduct in various areas of public life and to make recommendations.

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefit for themselves, their family, or their friends

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful. They have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

For further information on the 7 principles and the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, visit the Committee's [website](#) and [blogsite](#).

Appendix B – taken from 'A Competency Framework for Governance' (DfE 2017)

