

Chair of Trustees

Role purpose

To provide leadership to the trust board, ensuring that it fulfils its functions well, and to work closely with the CEO to support, advise and help shape proposals to be discussed at board meetings, ensuring the focus is strategic.

Leading governance

- ensure the board and CEO have a shared vision and sense of purpose
- ensure the board sets a clear vision and strategy for the trust
- lead the board in monitoring the implementation of the strategy
- set the culture of the board, balancing and valuing the support and challenge responsibilities, the generative and fiduciary modes of operation
- ensure the board acts as a team
- collaborate with trust leaders to ensure that all levels of governance across the trust are effective and receive adequate governance professional support
- where required, represent the trust board in its dealings with external partners and be an advocate for the trust
- attend school and trust functions (performances/sports days/prize-giving) as appropriate and encourage other trustees to do so
- meet regularly with the chairs and vice chairs of local governing boards
- report to the trust's members, in particular at the AGM

Leading and developing the team

- ensure the board has the required skills and commitment to govern well, and that identified skills gaps are filled
- ensure a diverse team that reflects the communities served with a mix of new and experienced trustees and a variety of backgrounds
- ensure all trustees have a thorough understanding of their role and receive appropriate induction and training as required
- encourage the board, and individual trustees, to conduct annual self-evaluation (and model this approach to others through a chair's 360 review)
- ensure that trustees are involved and feel valued
- carry out a performance review of each trustee (or delegate this to the vice chair)
- encourage the development of trustees
- model and reinforce the board's agreed code of conduct

- develop a good working relationship with the vice chair, ensuring they are kept fully informed and delegating tasks as appropriate
- ensure that there is a plan for succession for the chair, vice chair and any committee chairs
- ensure that those governing at academy level are also developed to govern well

Working with the CEO

- build a professional relationship with the CEO that allows for honest conversations, acting as a sounding board and ensuring there are no surprises at meetings
- meet regularly (normally monthly) with the CEO
- ensure there are transparent and effective processes for the recruitment and induction of the CEO
- ensure appropriate trustee involvement in the recruitment of other executive leaders
- ensure all trustees concentrate on their strategic role and hold the CEO to account
- ensure that trust leaders provide information that allows the board to fulfil its function
- oversee and participate in the CEO's appraisal ensuring that appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) is provided
- ensure the workload and wellbeing of executive leaders is considered
- ensure the CEO provides staff with an understanding of the role of the trust board and acts as a link between the two
- play a lead role in any decision to suspend the CEO

Leading improvement

- ensure the board is involved at a strategic level in the trust's self-evaluation process and that this feeds into its key priorities
- ensure the board's business is focused on the trust's strategic priorities
- ensure the board has the information it needs to monitor the progress of pupils and consider appropriate actions to improve outcomes
- ensure the board has good knowledge of the schools and the work of the trust
- ensure there are mechanisms in place to listen to the views of parents, pupils and staff

Leading trust board business

- ensure the trust board appoints a governance professional capable of advising the board on its functions and relevant procedure and that they are appraised and developed
- collaborate with the governance professional to establish effective working procedures and, where relevant, sound committee structures
- work with the governance professional and the CEO to plan for board meetings, ensuring that agendas focus on the board's key responsibilities and strategic priorities and avoid unnecessary paperwork

- chair meetings effectively, promoting an open culture that allows ideas and discussion to thrive while ensuring clear decisions are reached as quickly as possible
- ensure that decisions taken at the meetings of the trust board are implemented
- ensure that effective arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints made to the trust board under the adopted complaints procedure
- ensure that effective arrangements are in place for dealing with employment matters, (for example, grievance, disciplinary, capability) under the adopted procedures of the trust

Person specification

Candidates for the role of chair should be able to demonstrate a good number of the following skills and attributes:

- commitment to the trust and its mission
- personal integrity
- good understanding of the environment in which the trust is operating
- good understanding of the role and legal responsibilities of the board and trustees
- strong relationship-building and communication skills
- negotiation and diplomacy skills with the ability to have courageous conversations
- ability to think strategically and objectively, take the long view and prioritise
- capacity to process information quickly and understand relevant data, drawing valid conclusions with a considered approach to risk
- ability to chair meetings well, encouraging debate and facilitating decision-making
- ability to build and get the best out of a team while addressing any skills or experience gaps
- ability and willingness to delegate and trust others