

(Non-Executive) Trustee Recruitment: Forward Education Trust Governance Charter

Governance Structure

Trust Board (Members)

Board of Trustees

Local Academy Councils

Members

The Trust currently has five Members and the Board is chaired by Simon Topman. Our Members have a diverse range of experience but a shared passion for education. In line with the Academy Trust Handbook requirements for Members to be regularly appraised of Trust performance and issues, the Members meet twice per year, including holding an Annual General Meeting in the autumn term. Other meetings may be held in addition if deemed necessary.

The core functions of the members are:

- To amend the articles of Association
- To appoint or remove Members
- To appoint or remove Trustees
- To issue direction to the Trustees to take specific action
- To appoint the Trust auditors and receive the Trust Annual Accounts
- To change the name of the company and, ultimately, to wind it up

Board of Trustees

As Directors of a charitable Trust, our Board of Trustees ensure that they comply with charity and company law. The Board is also accountable in law and to Ofsted for the Trust's performance. The role of Trustee is a non-executive position, so the term Trustee should be taken to mean Non-Executive Trustee throughout this document.

Our Board of Trustees is active, visionary and focussed on enabling and empowering Forward Education Trust to be a leading Trust, provider of outstanding education for children and young people with special educational needs and an employer of choice. The Board is chaired by Kate Canty.

Trustees are appointed to the Board by the Members, by ordinary resolution. In addition, the Trustees may appoint Co-opted Trustees. The Chair of the Board of Trustees is accountable for identifying prospective Trustees for recommendation to the Board and then to the Members for appointment. The Trust has in place a rigorous recruitment process for Trustees, including an application, references and an informal meeting/interview with Trustees and with final approval by Members.

The Board of Trustees is strategic in function, providing overall leadership for the Trust and therefore for the schools without being involved in or responsible for the day-to-day management. As set out in the Academy Trust Handbook, the purpose of the Trust Board is to provide:

- Strategic leadership of the Academy Trust: the board defines the Trust vision for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable objects. It establishes and fosters the Trust's culture

and sets and champions the Trust strategy including determining what, if any, governance functions are delegated to the local tier.

- **Accountability and assurance:** the Board has robust effective oversight of the operations and performance of the Academy Trust, including the provision of education, pupil welfare, overseeing and ensuring appropriate use of funding and effective financial performance and keeping their estate safe and well maintained.
- **Engagement:** the Board has strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders. The Board involves parents, schools and communities so that decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement.

The Trustees carry out an annual skills audit as part of their self-evaluation and can receive ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities as a Trustee.

The Board of Trustees meets four times per year.

Sub-committees

The Board of Trustees has the following sub-committees:

Education

Audit, Risk and Finance

HR and Pay

A Local Academy Council for each school

Every Trustee is expected to sit on at least one of the Education; Audit, Risk and Finance; HR and Pay Committee. Membership of each of those Committees is up to 5 Trustees, including a Chair appointed by the Board. The Chair of the Education Committee sits on the HR and Pay Committee. The Chair of the Trust Board cannot Chair the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee, but must sit on it. Both the Education Committee and Audit, Risk and Finance Committee meet five times per year, and the HR and Pay Committee meets once per term.

In addition, each Trustee is linked to one of the schools or a member of the Trust Central Executive team and is expected to carry out link Trustee visits to inform their understanding of practice 'on the ground' and support them in providing appropriate support and challenge.

Local Academy Councils

Each school in our Trust has a Local Academy Council which is made up of up to 9 members who meet formally half termly and report to the Board of Trustees. As outlined in the Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of reference, membership of the Local Academy Councils is independent of the Board of Trustees and is made up of the following:

4 Trust-appointed members, including a Chair appointed by the Trust

2 elected parent representatives

2 elected staff members (1 teacher and 1 support staff)

Headteacher, ex-officio by virtue of their role

All Committees, including the Local Academy Councils, work to the Trust's Scheme of Delegation which outlines their powers and relationship with the Trust Board, CEO and schools.

Governance Professional

Forward Education Trust recognises and supports the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook in respect of the role of the governance professional and ensures that The Trust Board (Members), Board of Trustees and each Committee is serviced by an appropriately qualified independent governance professional to clerk the meetings and provide professional support.

Skills and qualities expected of Trustees

All Members, Trustees and LAC Members must adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)

1. Selflessness
2. Integrity
3. Objectivity
4. Accountability
5. Openness
6. Honesty
7. Leadership

In addition, the skills and experience required across the Board of Trustees include:

- Strategic leadership
- Governance
- HR
- Finance
- Education
- SEND
- Risk Management
- Facilities management
- Law

Expectations and Commitment of being a Trustee

The role of Trustee requires a commitment of around 90-100 hours per year. This includes:

- Preparation for and attendance at all Board of Trustees meetings
- Preparation for and attendance at meetings of the Committees of which they are members
- Regular Link Trustee meetings and contact with the linked Senior Leader
- Attendance at school and Trust events (e.g. Annual Conference, Presentation Evening etc) by invitation where possible
- Interview support for senior leaders and Heads.

There are additional responsibilities and associated time commitment for those (Non-Executive) Trustees with chairing roles.

Forward Education Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. All Trustees and Local Academy Council members are subject to an enhanced DBS check and identity checks prior to appointment and the commencement of their duties.

Trustees and Local Academy Council members are also required to declare their personal details which are filed with the DFE's Get Information About Schools (GIAS) service in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, Trustees must be registered as Directors at Company's House.

Appendix 1 (Non-Executive) Trustee Role Description

The trust board's strategic responsibilities

The trust board works closely with their senior executive leader. Senior executive leaders are responsible for day-to-day operational management of the trust and its schools, whereas the role of the board is strategic. As such, trustees are responsible for:

- determining the mission, values and long-term ambitious vision for the trust
- deciding the principles that guide trust policies and approving key policies
- appointing and appraising the senior executive leader and making pay recommendations
- working with senior leaders to develop a strategy for achieving the vision
- ensuring that stakeholders are involved, consulted and informed as appropriate
- ensuring that all schools in the trust deliver a broad and balanced curriculum such that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and adult life
- taking ownership of the trust's financial sustainability and ensuring effective resource management across the trust
- agreeing the trust's staffing structure and keeping it under review to ensure it supports delivery of the strategy
- ensuring robust risk management policy and procedures are in place and that risk control measures are appropriate and effective
- Holding the CEO and Deputy CEO to account for the successful running of the Trust

Monitoring and evaluating trust performance

Trustees must monitor the priorities that have been set to ensure progress is being made by:

- measuring the trust's impact and progress towards its strategic objectives
- ensuring the required policies and procedures are in place and the trust is operating effectively in line with these policies
- holding the senior executive leader to account for standards, financial probity and compliance with agreed policies
- evaluating relevant data and feedback provided by senior executive leaders and external reporting on all aspects of trust performance
- asking challenging questions of the senior executive leader in order to hold them to account
- ensuring that there are policies and procedures in place to deal with complaints effectively

Contribution to the trust board

Trustees should ensure that they are making a positive and meaningful contribution to the board by:

- attending meetings (typically 6 full board meetings each year, with Committee meetings in addition), reading papers and preparing questions for the senior executive leaders in advance
- establishing and maintaining professional relationships with senior executive leaders and colleagues on the board of trustees
- getting to know schools within the trust, including visiting occasionally during school hours
- undertaking induction training and developing knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis