

Candidate Information Pack

Become a Trustee

(Non-Executive Director)

www.fet.ac

Volunteering as a Trustee

Main purpose of the role:

We have an exciting opportunity for individuals looking to play a key leadership role in education. We seek candidates with experience across various sectors to bring their expertise to the non-executive leadership of our Trust.

Our Executive Leaders work alongside Trustees as a team, united by the shared purpose of achieving the Trust's vision and mission. As a Trustee, you will be expected to attend our main board meetings four times a year, with additional meetings depending on the committee you join.

Trustees are responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the Trust, including its financial health, the integrity of its activities, and the development of the organisation's aims, objectives, and goals in line with the governing document, legal, and regulatory guidelines. This responsibility encompasses both the Trust's culture and its performance.

Governing a successful school trust is a challenging and demanding role, but it is also highly rewarding, with the opportunity to work alongside like-minded, supportive colleagues.

Term of office

Trustees are appointed on a voluntary basis for a 4-year term, with the option for reappointment for additional 4-year terms. We provide an induction as well as opportunities for training and personal development.



Safeguarding children

Safeguarding the welfare of children is the Trust's top priority. Trustees are therefore subject to safeguarding checks as part of the recruitment process.



What would your position be?

Trustees serve as both charity-law trustees and company-law directors. The Trust Board is the decision-making body of the Trust, holding accountability and responsibility for all schools within the academy trust equally. The Trust also acts as the employer for central staff and all staff within our academies.

Trustees collaborate with Executive Leaders, primarily the CEO, who oversees the Trust's daily operations.

All trust boards have three core functions:

- 1.** Strategic leadership of the academy trust, defining the vision for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable objects, establishing and fostering the trust's culture.
- 2.** Accountability and assurance, having robust, effective oversight of the operations and performance, including the provision of education, pupil welfare, appropriate use of funding through effective financial performance, and keeping the estate safe and well-maintained.
- 3.** Engagement, having strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders, including parents, schools and their communities, so that decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement.

What duties will you have?

Trustees must comply with the Trust's charitable objective/s, with company and charity law, and with their funding agreement.

Company directors' duties are described in sections 170 to 181 of the Companies Act 2006, but in summary, are to:

- Act within their powers
- Promote the success of the trust company
- Exercise independent judgement

An Introduction to Forward Education Trust

Forward Education Trust (FET) brings together a family of seven unique special schools across Birmingham. Established in 2017 by two pioneering schools, The Bridge School and Brays School, FET has since grown to include Hallmoor School and expanded further in 2021 and 2023.

Our name, "Forward," reflects Birmingham's coat of arms and embodies our commitment to progressive change and excellence. Every day, we strive to achieve the best outcomes for our pupils and support the growth and development of our dedicated staff.

At FET, we challenge outdated perceptions within the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) system, advocating for a model that respects and empowers individuals rather than one based on deficits. We are driven to shift societal views, fostering dignity and respect for those with learning or physical disabilities.



Our Strategic Goals

As we continue to evolve, FET has set five strategic goals to guide our journey:

- 1. Clear Vision & Governance:** Strengthen our vision and values to ensure a well-defined direction where governance is effective and unified.
- 2. High-Quality Education:** Provide a supportive, ambitious environment where all pupils receive tailored, high-quality education.
- 3. Collaborative Working Culture:** Foster a high-performing culture that values collaboration, support, and professional growth for every staff member.
- 4. Sustainable Financial Strategy:** Implement robust financial and administrative processes that optimize resources for the benefit of our children.
- 5. Community Engagement:** Build strong community partnerships that expand opportunities for our pupils, staff, and schools.

We invite you to join us on our journey to create meaningful change in the lives of our children and within the wider community.



Ethos, Vision and Values

Ethos

Moving forward together, striving for and achieving opportunities to improve outcomes and provide stability and success for all.

Values

- **We are Forward Thinking:** Always looking to move things forward and embrace change to provide the best outcomes for all.
- **We are Ambitious:** Always working to the best of our ability. Instilling a 'can do' culture by encouraging others to share knowledge, skills and expertise.
- **We are Principled:** Always looking to do the right thing, being conscientious, polite and friendly, speaking out and challenging accepted thinking for the greater good.
- **We are Motivated:** Always looking to overcome obstacles and move forward to ensure educational excellence.
- **We are Trustworthy:** Always being honest, open and consistent in our approach to any issues we face. Being steadfast in our desire to improve outcomes for all.
- **We are Nurturers of Talent:** Our vision, ethos and values are not achievable without a great workforce, and their personal development, contentment and enjoyment in working for Forward Education Trust really matters to our Trust.





Welcome from the Trust Chair

Kate Canty
Chair of Trustees

I'm pleased to welcome you to Forward Education Trust. I have been involved with the Trust since its inception in 2017, so I know the Trust well. I became Chair in 2022 and it's a real pleasure to work with my colleague Trustees and the Trust Executive Leaders to improve the education, care and life chances of children who attend each of our schools.

Why do I do it?

I do it because I think I ought to! I strongly believe that every member of our society should contribute in some way above and beyond their usual day to day work. Education brings opportunity and every child should have the chance to learn and grow to be the best that they can be.

What do I find most enjoyable and fulfilling?

Seeing the children around us in a safe environment, learning and having new experiences every day. The role of Trustee is challenging, and it may sometimes feel hard going, but the end result is that we have excellent schools and staff who deliver education to some of the most vulnerable children in our society.

On a personal note, I am constantly learning new things myself. The strategic challenges of running a multi-academy trust are many and the lessons learned are often applied by me at work in my day job and elsewhere.

What impact do I think I have?

As a Trustee you bring experience with you from inside and outside the education sector. Whether from business, finance, operations, IT or another discipline, we all bring something different to the table and those experiences help to inform our decisions and the work of the Trust. The role of the Board is to offer constructive support and be a critical friend. We support the Executive Leaders, who run the Trust day-to-day, in their decision making as we all work together to build a thriving Trust.

It is so important that the Trust Board and the Executive Leaders work hand in hand to deliver the best we can for our children, and I believe that we are achieving this.

What benefits do I derive from my involvement?

I believe that by being involved I am playing my part in the future of the children. This is hugely satisfying. Seeing children grow into young people and adults who are able to take a place in society is very fulfilling.

What would I encourage someone to get involved?

When you attend prize giving and see the children's faces, you know that you have achieved something good. When you have seen their achievements, attended the school pantomime, heard a musical performance, or simply walked through a school, you know you are part of something good. Yes, it may take some commitment and hard work on our part as Trustees, at the end of the day, the children in our care flourish and grow.

A final closing sentence to encourage people to get in touch. Our name says it all. We are Forward Education Trust, forward thinking in our thoughts, plans and actions for our children. We would be pleased to have you with us as we move forward together into the future.

Welcome from the CEO

It's my pleasure to welcome you to Forward Education Trust (FET). I have led the Trust since January 2022, with a tremendous amount of pride in working with such a talented and committed staff team in our 7 schools and Trust Central Team, as we strive to provide a safe and supportive environment for us to care for and educate our children.

I am supported by Executive Leaders with responsibility for education, school improvement and workforce development, as well as governance, quality assurance, finance and operations. Our wider extended trust leader team has responsibility for oversight of safeguarding, business operations, health & safety, estates and our people. Their experience and knowledge enable us to harness the talents of our staff as well as engage with external partners, to support the stability of our Trust and schools, as well as any future growth.

Our aim is to create a cohesive team of Trust Central staff supporting school staff teams, working together, fiercely loyal to each other. We are committed to developing local school identity and ethos, to celebrating success and adopting strategies for school improvement that build on and enhance local reputation, raise standards and respond to the needs and aspirations of those we serve – our children and their families.

Our Trust values remain unchanged, but we want to articulate them better and give unequivocal evidence that people can see those values in the decisions we make and the things that we do every single day. We want to empower people to make the right decisions and to be creative in the way that we approach the education and care of our children. Mutual respect must pervade all our relationships and together our staff will learn, practice and collaborate – a sense of team will identify what type of organisation we are and how we nurture our talent, for the benefit of our young people. At all times, FET will be a safe place for our children, because our staff will know that this is their top priority.

I am excited about the challenges ahead. I would welcome the chance to tell you about the work of Forward Education Trust, so please do get in touch with the TrusteeWorks team if you would like to have an informal conversation and they will arrange this for you.

Simon Dilkes
Chief Executive Officer



Our family of schools



Brays School

Primary Special School

Brays School is a school for children with profound and multiple physical or learning disabilities. There are 110 children in this school, including in nursery.



**THE
BRIDGE
SCHOOL**

The Bridge School

Primary Special School

The Bridge School is for children with profound and multiple physical or learning disabilities. There are 90 children in this school.



**HALLMOOR
SCHOOL**

Hallmoor School

An All-through Special School

Hallmoor School is for children with learning difficulties, autism and complex needs. Ages range from 4-19 including a thriving Post-16 program. There are nearly 300 children in this school.



The Heights Academy

Junior / Secondary Special School

The Heights Academy is for children with autism, with a secondary SEMH need. The school is growing, it has 64 places in September 2024 and will grow to a capacity of 116 places.



High Point Academy

Secondary Special School

High Point Academy is for children with autism. There are 106 children in this school with further plans for limited expansion to a maximum of 118 children in 2025.



Lea Hall Academy

Primary and Key Stage 3 Special School

Lea Hall Academy is a boys only school for children with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). There are places for 100 children in this school.



Leycroft Academy

Primary Special School

Leycroft Academy is for children with autism. There are 170 children in this school.

Volunteering as a Trustee

What expectations are there of a Trustee?

- Exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Not accept benefits from third parties
- Declare an interest in any proposed transactions or arrangements

The Charity Commission guidance, The Essential Trustee, provides a clear and concise outline of the role of trustees under charity law. The trustees must ensure regularity and propriety in use of the trust's funds, and achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness – the three elements of value for money.

The Trust Board signs off the annual accounts and is responsible for the funding agreement – the contractual agreement with the Secretary of State.

There are four Board meetings per year. These generally take place between 4-6pm on a Thursday. Meetings are moving from a blend of hybrid and in-person to more in-person meetings,

as they are more fruitful, informative and challenging.

Additionally, the Board has three Committees, two of which meet five times a year and one of which meets three times per year. It is expected that our new Trustees will join at least one Committee. Committee meeting dates are agreed in advance, take place during weekdays and are a hybrid mix of online or in-person.

Altogether, the total expected time commitment is anticipated to be between 7.5 - 8.5 hours a month to be flexed around your other commitments outside of meetings. Reasonable, pre-agreed domestic expenses will be reimbursed.

In addition, we aim for each Trustee to deepen their understanding of our schools or key areas of responsibility, through informal contact with senior leaders, and via school visits, which are encouraged. Furthermore, Trustees are invited to Trust and school events and are occasionally asked to support interview panels for Headteachers and Senior leaders, which are again, in general, in-person commitments.



Person specification

DESIRED EXPERIENCE

Trustees bring a diverse range of skills, knowledge and experience to the Board.

The basic requirements for applicants are enthusiasm and a commitment to working collaboratively with others for the benefit of the Trust and its objectives.

We are currently seeking candidates with experience and expertise in:

- **Human Resources** - Our staff are the most important part of making our schools a success.
- **Education** - Ideally state-funded, at any age-range, in senior positions from Deputy Headteacher upwards.
- **Financial Management** - Whether in education, other public bodies, commercial enterprise or accountancy practice.
- **Business Operations** - Including project management and multi-site operations.
- **Information Technology** - Contributing to our digital systems for sustainability.

COMPETENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

- Ability to build and sustain relationships with key stakeholders and colleagues to achieve organisational objectives.
- Understanding the difference between Non-Exec and Executive responsibilities.
- Good, independent judgement and strategic vision.
- An ability to work effectively as a member of a team.
- Ability to understand and accept the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship and the respective roles of the Chair, Trustees and Chief Executive.
- Dedication to impartiality and fairness and the ability to respect confidences.
- Commitment to the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

- Commitment to promoting equality and diversity.
- Commitment to the organisation and a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort.
- A willingness to bring a diverse range of perspectives to the table.
- Willingness to be available to staff for advice and enquiries on an ad hoc basis.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Trustees are expected to:

- Act in the best interests of the Trust.
- Exercise due care and attention and use reasonable skill in dealing with the Trust's affairs.
- Apply personal skills, knowledge and experience to help the work of the board and assist in decision-making by the trustees.
- Declare potential conflicts of interest.
- Attend board and committee meetings and play an active part in discussions and decisions.
- Serve on board committees and working groups as required.
- Have a strong empathy with our vision to enable success for all.

Forward Education Trust - a diverse organisation

FET welcomes applications from everyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, faith, or disability. It is committed to equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory practices, actively encouraging applications from all sectors of the community.

As disabled individuals and those from ethnic minority backgrounds are currently under-represented on the Board, applications from these candidates are particularly encouraged to better reflect the diversity of the whole school community.

All appointments will be made on merit through a fair and transparent process.

Forward Education Trust - serious about safeguarding

FET is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of children. To uphold this commitment, applicants for voluntary positions (like our employees) are subject to safer recruitment practices, including the requirement for satisfactory references. The successful candidate will also undergo an enhanced DBS check. Additionally, certain online social media activity will be reviewed, as outlined in our published Privacy Notice for Applicants.

We promote the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share our high standards.

All volunteers receive an induction and training to ensure they understand their responsibilities and can perform their duties with confidence.



How to Apply

The TrusteeWorks Team at Reach Volunteering are supporting Forward Education Trust with their Trustee recruitment.

Applications should be made via TrusteeWorks in the first instance.

To apply please submit your CV along with a cover letter stating the following:

- Why you are interested in becoming a Trustee with Forward Education Trust
- Your relevant skills and experience (see both the Role and Person specification)

Please also supply the names and contact details of two referees. Referees will only be contacted in respect of those candidates who are shortlisted, and you will be made aware before any contact is made.

If you would like to talk to one of the TrusteeWorks team, a member of the Forward Education Trust Executive Team or to one of our existing Trustees, before you apply, please contact the TrusteeWorks team to arrange a conversation.

Please send applications and enquiries to: trusteeworks@reachvolunteering.org.uk

Applications will be accepted until 5pm on the 16th of May.



Location

Trust Central Office
c/o Leycroft Academy, Leycroft Avenue,
Tile Cross, Birmingham, B33 9UH

www.fet.ac