

Candidate Information Pack

Become our Chair of Trustees

(Non-Executive Director - Chair of the Trust Board)

www.fet.ac

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 6 schools and Trust Central Team, as we strive to provide a safe and supportive environment for us to care for and educate our children.

The Chair of the Trust Board is key in leading the Board and advancing FET's mission. The Chair provides direction and support to me as Trust CEO, and actively engages with Trustees and Members. They are an advocate for the Trust, bringing strategic oversight, helping the Trust to be able to react to challenges and inspiring confidence across the Trust.

With operational responsibility along with my Executive Leaders, we are responsible day-to-day for education, school improvement and workforce development, as well as governance, quality assurance, finance and operations. Our wider extended trust leadership 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.

Simon Dilkes
Chief Executive Officer



The Role of the Chair

Forward Education Trust (FET) is a not-for-profit educational charitable company with a governance structure designed to ensure probity, strong governance, and outstanding performance. The Board, comprised of Trustees and overseen by the Members of the Trust, is responsible for setting the Trust's vision, ethos, culture and strategic direction; holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the schools, their students, and the performance of staff; and overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance as well as operational efficiency. The Board has strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders so that decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement. Stakeholders include senior leaders and staff at FET, students, parents and the broader FET community as well as the Department for Education.

The Chair of the Trust Board plays a pivotal role in leading the Board and advancing FET's mission. The Chair provides direction and support to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as a sounding board and critical friend, ensures the effectiveness of the wider Trust Board, and strengthens governance across the MAT. In addition, the Chair actively engages with Trustees, Members, other Boards, schools, and external stakeholders, recognising that the Trust's growth and continued development are strategic priorities.

In line with national governance guidance, the Chair will:

- Champion high professional standards of governance, ensuring that the Board sets and monitors a clear long-term strategy aligned with the Trust's charitable objects and values.
- Collaborate with Trust leaders to ensure that all levels of governance across the Trust are effective.
- Lead Board meetings in a way that reflects FET's ethos and values, encouraging diverse perspectives and consideration of all voices, and guiding the Board to reach clear decisions that are implemented by executive leaders.
- Maintain sufficient independence from the executive team to enable robust scrutiny of performance and risk.
- Promote meaningful engagement with stakeholders, ensuring the Trust remains anchored in the needs of the communities it serves and the wider education system.
- Oversee and lead on effective, purposeful and developmental management of the CEO.
- Ensure succession planning for Trustees and the executive team, and lead regular Board self-evaluation and performance review.
- Model the highest standards of conduct and integrity, embodying the Nolan Principles of public life.
- Ensure the Trust's safeguarding culture is robust and that the [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#) is effectively implemented across all schools.



Person specification

The new Chair will bring strategic foresight and the ability to adapt dynamically to new challenges, inspiring confidence across the Trust. Decisive when required yet collaborative in style, they will demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills to listen, persuade and build trust among Trustees, Members, the CEO and wider stakeholders.

They will balance regulatory oversight with strategic ambition, combining commercial acumen and an appetite for growth with empathy and an understanding of the challenges facing the education and SEND sectors. A central part of the role will be forging a strong partnership with the CEO acting as both a sounding board and a critical friend, while ensuring clear alignment between the Board and the executive team. The Chair will lead with openness and transparency, encouraging innovation and collaboration while driving continuous improvement in governance and performance.



Additional qualities sought include:

- Knowledge of national and regional educational priorities, and their implications for multi-academy trust governance.
- Confidence in providing strategic leadership during periods of change or external scrutiny.
- Ability to think strategically about the future direction of the Trust and able to identify the steps needed to achieve goals.
- Commitment to ensuring Trustees are inducted, supported, and developed to make a full contribution.
- Ability to foster a culture of openness and inclusivity, ensuring the Board works effectively as a team.
- Willingness to invite feedback on their own performance as Chair and to step aside at the appropriate time in line with good governance practice.
- Ability to represent the Trust Board with gravitas and integrity, to be an advocate for the Trust in our communities and wider region.
- Ability to work closely with Trustees, the governance professional and Accounting Officer to plan an effective and efficient programme of work, focussed on the Board's key responsibilities and strategic priorities, leading to well-informed and well-considered decisions.

While direct experience in education is not required, candidates must demonstrate a genuine commitment to the mission and values of FET, with the passion and leadership to make a lasting difference.

An Introduction to Forward Education Trust

Forward Education Trust (FET) is an established and developing multi academy trust (MAT) of six special schools across Birmingham, Solihull and Sandwell, educating over 850 children and young people across all age ranges, all of whom hold Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). With over 400 talented and committed staff and an annual turnover of c.£25m, the Trust provides safe, supportive environments where pupils are cared for and enabled to thrive. Each school retains its individuality while benefiting from the collective strength and collaboration of the wider Trust. Staff and leaders are recognised as FET's most important asset, and the Trust actively values, develops and supports them, confident that this investment delivers the best outcomes for pupils.

FET's governance comprises Members, a Board of Trustees, supported by committees for Education, Audit Risk & Finance, and HR & Pay, and a Local Academy Council for each school. Since its formation in 2017, the Trust has grown steadily and is now consolidating as a six-school organisation. The Board is clear that future growth will only be pursued where there is alignment of values, it strengthens sustainability, enhances provision and extends impact for children and families.

Underpinned by its values — forward thinking, ambitious, principled, motivated, trustworthy and nurturing of talent - and commitment to inclusive education, FET is dedicated to improving life chances for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) across the West Midlands. Above all, it believes in its children and strives to ensure that every day is the best it can be for each pupil.



This is an exciting moment for Forward Education Trust as it enters the next stage of its development. With a strong foundation in place, the Trust is looking ahead to a period of considered growth, consolidation and strategic renewal. The new Chair will not be tasked with redefining the organisation, but rather with guiding and supporting its talented Board and Executive Team as they build on what has already been achieved, helping to shape the Trust's direction and ensure it continues to deliver outstanding outcomes for children and young people. Having said that, there is clear opportunity for the new Chair to bring their influence to deliver demonstrable impact for the benefit of pupils in schools and staff in the Trust.

Our Strategic Goals

As we continue to evolve, FET has set six 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 optimise resources for the benefit of our children.
5. **Community Engagement:** Build strong community partnerships that expand opportunities for our pupils, staff, and schools.
6. **Growth:** Offer inclusive education to all students, regardless of background, ability or individual specialist needs.

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.



Hear from our Trustees

Why join Forward Education Trust?



Alison Levey
Trustee

The Trust stood out to me as one with real ambition for its students. I've been impressed by the knowledge and care of the staff.



Pamela Stacey
Trustee

It might be challenging - balancing regulation, resources, and the diverse needs of learners isn't simple. But that's what makes it so meaningful.



Everton Burke
Trustee

I've been struck by the professionalism of the staff and their patient, caring approach to educating and supporting children. The resources and learning environments are also impressive.



Paul Roberts
Trustee

I benefitted greatly from governors' support and challenge during my time as a headteacher, and I wanted to give something back. I was drawn to the Trust's values and the integrity of its leadership.



Paul McManus
Trustee

I always ask myself, 'If this were my child, what would I want for them?' That mindset helps guide every decision.



Vikash Joshi
Trustee

I would encourage anyone considering a Trustee role to embrace the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in children's lives. It is a rewarding experience offering personal growth, working with inspiring colleagues to make lives better.

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

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

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.



Leycroft Academy

Primary Special School

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

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, 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.





Get in touch

Forward Education Trust has retained *Nurole* to support recruitment to this post. If you'd like to know more, or to apply, follow this [link](#) to the vacancy details.

Location

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

www.fet.ac