



GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1. Introduction

1.1 The Trustees believe that the role of the Trust Board is pivotal to the success of the Trust. We believe that effective governance arrangements are vital not only to provide legal accountability, but to make sure our organisation keeps working to its *vision and remains accountable to the pupils, parents, local governing bodies and the communities it serves.

*NET aims to ensure that each academy provides learning experiences enabling every individual to begin to look at learning as a life-long activity, pursued within a community which proclaims that:

The welfare of others is the first concern of all

Such a guiding principle requires all those skills and attitudes that encompass such words as tolerance, flexibility, sensitivity, compassion and respect. Trustees endorse the strength of each of these words and to expect that each of them be associated with the single most important principle of a comprehensive education. That is:

The education of every child is held to be of equal value in the community academy

1.2 The purpose of this document is to describe the governance arrangements by which the Board will lead the Trust, and document the mechanisms by which the Board will ensure that the staff employed within the Trust are appropriately trained and supported to operate effectively and deliver the organisational objectives to ensure that the systems and policies in place are reviewed for fitness for purpose and minimising any gaps in assurance through the Assurance Framework.

1.3 The Assurance Framework describes the organisational key priorities, identifies potential risks to their achievement and gaps in assurance on which the Board relies. It will be considered in conjunction with the Trust's Risk Register which provides detail on operational risks and planned mitigations plans to address these. This framework provides the structure against which the Board can fulfil its responsibilities and will be reviewed on a quarterly basis at each Board meeting.

1.4 Academy Trusts, as Accounting Officers, are required to sign an Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Board to assure 'stakeholders' on the robustness of internal financial controls. Stakeholders include pupils, relatives and carers, the public and partner organisations. This duty expands beyond financial assurance to the production of an Annual Governance Statement covering wider organisational controls, including risk management.

1.5 The Trust has developed an integrated governance approach. Integrated governance enables the Trust Board to take a holistic view of the organisation and its capacity to meet its legal and statutory requirements as well as school improvement and financial objectives.

1.6 The Governance Statement and Assurance Framework aim to clearly document the elements of governance.

2. The Role of the Trust Board

2.1 The Trustees

Our Trustees are collectively responsible for the exercise of the powers and the performance of the Trust and:-

- Set the Trust's vision, values and standards of conduct and ensure its obligations to its stakeholders are understood, communicated and met.
- Set the Trust's strategic aims, taking into consideration the views of local governing bodies, Principals, parents and carers, statutory bodies such as the EFA as well as other stakeholders.
- Ensure that the Trust complies with its, constitution, mandatory guidance and contractual and statutory duties.
- To oversee the financial performance of the Trust and ensure the Trust's assets (financial, physical and human) are used effectively and efficiently.
- Provide effective and proactive leadership of the Trust within a framework of processes, procedures and controls which enable risk to be assessed and managed.
- Ensure the quality and safety of education delivered by the Trust, applying the principles and standards of governance set out by the Department of Education/EFA and other relevant bodies.

2.2 The Code of Corporate Responsibility and Code of Conduct sets out a common overarching framework for the corporate governance of the Trust and expected behaviours and complements the statutory and regulatory objectives placed upon it.

2.3 In ensuring that the organisation consistently follows the principles of good governance applicable to Multi Academy Trusts, the Board has responsibility for:

- Agreeing the vision, values, key priorities and performance targets of the Trust.
- Establishing an audit and risk committee as a formal sub-committee of the Board to ensure the effective financial and performance scrutiny. The Audit & Risk Committee is the scrutineer of all other Committees and acts on delegated responsibility from the Trust Board.
- Establishing an Achievement & Climate committee to oversee school improvement
- Establishing a committee (the Corporate Coordination Group) for overseeing risk management and staff remuneration and dealing with urgent business.
- Ensuring the Trust complies with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and related regulations.
- Ensuring there are Financial Regulations and a Scheme of Delegation is in place.
- Identifying the types of decisions reserved for the Board and adopting a scheme of delegation for other decisions.
- As part of its regular review of the Assurance Framework, conducting a review of the effectiveness of the systems of internal control at least annually, including the robustness of the internal and independent assurance mechanisms.

- Ensuring the organisation is fit for purpose, i.e. that it has the capability and capacity to meet its priorities and deliver appropriate outcomes.

2.4 In fulfilling these responsibilities the Board:

- Implements the Governance Statement and Assurance Framework outlined in this document.
- Ensures the systems of internal and independent assurance on which it relies will allow it to submit the Annual Governance Statement with confidence.
- Identifies how individual Trustees will participate in the Assurance Framework.
- Identifies the type and frequency of information it requires from its Trustees, sub-committees and members of senior management.
- Utilises best practice processes to ensure robust systems are in place and embedded in the day-to-day functions of the Trust.

3. Role of the Chair of the Trust Board

3.1 The role of the Trust Chair is to: -

- Lead the Board, ensuring its effectiveness on all aspects of its role and setting its agenda.
- Ensure the provision of accurate, timely and clear information to Trust Board members.
- Together with the Chief Executive ensure the Trustees and the Leadership Team work together effectively.
- Ensure effective communication with staff, parents and pupils, the public and other stakeholders.
- Ensure arrangements are in place for the evaluation of the performance of the Trust Board, its sub-committees, and the Chief Executive.
- Act as an ambassador for the Trust, promoting its key values and vision, at a local, regional and national level.

4. Role of the Chief Executive

4.1 The Chief Executive helps to create the vision for the Trust to modernise and improve services. He is responsible for ensuring that the Board is empowered to govern the Trust and that the priorities it sets are accomplished through effective and properly controlled executive action.

4.2 The Chief Executive's roles and responsibilities cover; -

- Leadership - by helping to develop the vision with the Board and to communicate this vision to others and the ability to empower them to deliver the Trust's agenda.
- Delivery planning - by ensuring that the Board has sufficient information to monitor the Trust's Business Plan and other priorities and that they are based on realistic estimates of physical, workforce, financial capacity and stakeholder involvement.
- Performance management - by ensuring that the Board's plans and priorities are implemented and that progress towards implementation is regularly reported to the Board using accurate systems of measurement and data management. By agreeing the objectives of the Leadership Team and reviewing their performance and publication of statutory information.

- Governance -by ensuring that the systems on which the Board relies to govern the Trust are effective. This will enable the Chief Executive to sign the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Board, to state that the systems of governance, financial and risk management, are properly controlled.

As Accounting Officer the Chief Executive has responsibility for ensuring that the Trust meets all its statutory and legal requirements and adheres to guidance issued by the DfE and/or the EFA in respect of governance. This responsibility encompasses the elements of financial control, organisational control, corporate governance, Health & Safety, risk management and emergency and contingency planning.

4.3 Whilst this overall responsibility is maintained, responsibilities for some aspects of governance have been delegated to members of the Leadership Team and Principals as local accounting officers.

4.4 In order to fulfil his responsibilities for governance, the Chief Executive has an input into relevant committees, and receives minutes of these committee meetings and has a process for meeting the Trust Chair and sub-committee chairs on a regular basis.

5. Role of the Leadership Team

5.1 The Leadership Team is led by the Chief Executive and comprises the following senior officers:

- Chief Operating Officer
- Director of Finance
- Director of Human Resources
- Director of Governance and Projects
- Director of Secondary Academies
- Director of Primary Academies

5.2 The Leadership Team is accountable to the Chief Executive for key functions and for ensuring effective governance arrangements are in place in their individual areas of responsibility and in those key functions, supported by consistent evidence and a cascade of Performance Indicators that feed down from the Trust's Business Plan.

5.3 Collectively, the Leadership Team is responsible for providing the systems, processes and evidence of governance, working together irrespective of their individual areas of responsibility, to ensure that matters which cut across the Trust are actioned.

5.4 The team is responsible for ensuring that the Board, as a whole, is kept apprised of progress, changes and any other issues affecting the Assurance Framework.

6 Role of the Chief Operating Officer

6.1 The Chief Operating Officer is accountable to the Chief Executive for ensuring that the Trust operates sound systems of operational performance ensuring the delivery of efficient and effective services across the Trust, working in conjunction with the remaining members of the Leadership Team to assist the Chief Executive with strategic planning and policy development across the Trust.

6.2 The Chief Operating Officer must ensure that services are delivered against plan, meeting all national targets, and within the available financial resources.

6.3 The Chief Operating Officer is accountable for the following four key elements:

- Operational leadership of all central services (including those procured externally) ensuring that they meet academy requirements and represent value for money
- Performance management and delivery of all national and local targets
- Modernisation and process redesign of the Trust's business processes
- Business continuity management (including emergency planning).

6.4 The key responsibilities of the Chief Operating Officer are outlined in the job description for the post.

6.5 They will ensure that the Chief Executive and the Board are kept apprised of progress and any changes in requirements, drawing to their attention shortfalls or omissions which will/may impact adversely on the Board's ability to fulfil its governance responsibilities.

7. Role of the Director of Finance

7.1 The Director of Finance (whilst appointed by and responsible to the Trust Board) is accountable to the Chief Executive for the strategic development and operational management of the Trust's financial control systems. He is, with the Chief Executive, responsible for ensuring that the statutory accounts of the Trust are prepared in accordance with the Academies Financial Handbook.

7.2 The Director of Finance ensures that, on behalf of the Chief Executive, the Trust has in place systems and structures to meet its statutory and legal responsibilities relating to finance, financial management and financial controls. They ensure the Trust has in place Standing Orders and Standing Financial Instructions, including a Scheme of Delegation, which takes responsibility for the financial management aspect of internal controls. This will include the procurement of both internal and external audit services.

7.3 As part of the Trust's performance framework the Director of Finance, together with the Chief Operating Officer oversees a 'compact' between the Trust Board and each individual academy and the central team based on the financial objectives and targets agreed by the Board and maintains the review/monitoring process. The outcome of the review / monitoring process will contribute to the Board's Assurance Framework.

7.4 The Director of Finance ensures the Board receives the relevant and timely information and annual reports. He will keep the Board apprised of any changes in requirements and draw to their attention shortfalls or omissions which will/may adversely impact on the Board's ability to fulfil its governance responsibilities.

7.5 The key responsibilities of the Director of Finance are outlined in the job description for the post.

7.6 He ensures, on behalf of the Chief Executive, that the Trust has in place the systems and structure to meet its statutory and legal responsibilities relating to his area of accountability and that these are based on good practice and guidance from the DfE, EFA and other external advisory bodies including the provision of both internal and external audit services to ensure robust scrutiny of the Trust's statutory obligations as both a Company and a Charity.

8. Role of the Director of Human Resources

8.1 The Director of Human Resources (whilst appointed by and responsible to the Trust Board) is accountable to the Chief Executive for ensuring the Trust has in place systems of staff management which meet legal and statutory requirements and are based on best practice and guidance from the DfE and other external advisory bodies. Working closely with other Directors they maintain a system of monitoring the application of the Trust's Human Resources strategies, policies and procedures and, on behalf of the Board ensure it receives the relevant information and annual reports.

8.2 The Trust's Organisational and Development function falls within the remit of the Director of Human Resources. As such s/he works with relevant directors to ensure the systems in place meet the developmental needs of staff highlighted through the Trust's financial controls, organisational controls, risk management and governance processes and its duties under the Equality Act.

8.3 To act as the Trust's point of contact and liaison for Trade Unions and other staff representative bodies.

8.4 The key responsibilities of the Director of Human Resources are outlined in the job description for the post.

8.5 They will ensure that the Chief Executive and the Board are kept apprised of progress and any changes in requirements, drawing to their attention shortfalls or omissions which will/may impact adversely on the Board's ability to fulfil its governance responsibilities.

9. Role of Director of Governance and Safeguarding

9.1 The Director of Governance and Safeguarding is responsible for ensuring that, within his area of responsibility staff are aware of, and comply with, the processes for assuring sound governance in each of the academies within the Trust.

9.2 The Director of Governance and Safeguarding also holds a specific responsibility in relation to Safeguarding across the Trust.

9.3 They will continue to develop local systems and structures to support the various governance strategies, policies and procedures and ensure these are monitored and audited.

9.4 As part of the Trust performance framework, the Director of Governance and Safeguarding agrees with the Chief Executive the objectives and targets for the service based on those agreed by the Board. These are cascaded to Local Governing Bodies as part of the Trust's individual objective setting, appraisal and performance development processes and individual performance reviews.

9.5 The Director of Governance and Safeguarding ensures Local Governing Bodies provide and receive the required information to support the assurance process and draw to the attention of the Board areas of shortfall or omissions which will/may adversely impact on the Board's ability to fulfil its governance responsibilities and which impact upon the Assurance Framework.

9.6 The Director of Governance and Safeguarding is supported and facilitated to meet their governance requirements by the remaining members of the Leadership Team.

9.7 They will ensure that the Chief Executive and the Board are kept apprised of progress and any changes in requirements, drawing to their attention shortfalls or omissions which will/may impact adversely on the Board's ability to fulfil its governance responsibilities.

9.8 The key responsibilities of the Director of Governance and Safeguarding are outlined in the job description for the post.

10. Role of the Directors of Primary and Secondary Academies

10.1 The Directors of Primary and Secondary Academies are responsible for ensuring that, within his/her area of responsibility, staff are aware of, and comply with, the processes for assuring sound governance in each of the academies within the Trust and that there are clear links with Principals, and senior and middle management in academies.

10.2 The Directors of Primary and Secondary Academies will support the Director of Governance and Projects to ensure Local Governing Bodies provide and receive the required information to support the assurance process and draw to the attention of the Board areas of shortfall or omissions which will/may adversely impact on the Board's ability to fulfil its governance responsibilities and which impact upon the Assurance Framework.

10.3 The Directors of Primary and Secondary Academies are supported and facilitated to meet their governance requirements by the remaining members of the Leadership Team.

10.4 They will ensure that the Chief Executive and the Board are kept apprised of progress and any changes in requirements, drawing to their attention shortfalls or omissions which will/may impact adversely on the Board's ability to fulfil its governance responsibilities.

10.5 The key responsibilities of the Directors of Primary & Secondary Academies are outlined in the job description for the posts.

11. Trust Secretary

11.1 The Trust Secretary's functions include:

- Acting as Secretary to the Trust Board, and any sub-committees
- Summoning and attending all Trust Boards and sub-committee meetings (excluding Local Governing Bodies), and keeping the minutes of those meetings
- Keeping the register of members and other registers and books required by the constitution
- Publishing to members in an appropriate form information which they should have about the Trust's affairs
- Preparing and sending to Companies House, the Charity Commission and any other statutory body all returns which are required to be made
- To keep secure the Minutes of every Trust Board and sub-committee meeting.

11.2 The Trust Secretary is to be appointed and removed by the Trust Board and is accountable to it.

11.3 Notwithstanding his/her day-to-day reporting obligations the Trust Secretary retains the right in all case to make a report to the Trust Board where, after consultation with the Chief Executive, s/he is of the opinion that it is necessary in order to respond properly to possible maladministration, impropriety or breaches of statutory or constitutional requirements.

11.4 The key responsibilities of the Trust Secretary are outlined in the job description for the post.

12. Principals

12.1 As Local Accounting Officer the Principal of each Academy is responsible for ensuring that the Academy meets all its statutory and legal requirements and adheres to guidance issued by the DfE and/or the EFA in respect of governance. This responsibility encompasses the elements of financial control, organisational control, corporate governance, Health & Safety and risk management.

12.2 Whilst this overall responsibility is maintained, responsibilities for some aspects of governance may be delegated to members of the School Leadership Team.

12.3 In order to fulfil his/her responsibilities for governance, the Principal has an input into the local governing body and its sub-committees, and receives minutes of these committee meetings and has a process for meeting the committee chairmen on a regular basis.

13. Staff

13.1 This Statement is aimed at achieving a holistic approach to governance, which engages all staff members, wherever they may be based.

13.2 All staff members employed by this Trust have a responsibility to perform their duties in accordance with the values, policies and procedures of the organisation, any national good practice standards and to contribute to the achievement of the Trust's priorities and targets.

13.3 In the context of this framework all staff members are expected to fulfil their responsibilities as identified within all supporting strategies.

14. Organisational Framework

14.1 Core Governance - Committee Structure

The core committees integral to the governance framework for the Trust are identified in **Appendix 1**

The Committee Structure had been revised to strengthen the assurance processes.

The Chief Executive and relevant Trustees, on behalf of the Board, will ensure the structure is in place and each committee has complementary terms of reference which are reviewed annually as part of the assurance process.

The terms of reference identify the reporting structure for the committee and its membership and are set out in **Appendix 2**.

A copy of the terms of reference of each committee will be held centrally by the Trust Secretary, and will be available to staff through the Trust website and, on request, be made available to partner organisations and the public.

14.2 Supporting Policies and Strategies

This document provides the overarching framework for governance within the Trust.

It is supported by the following policies and strategies:

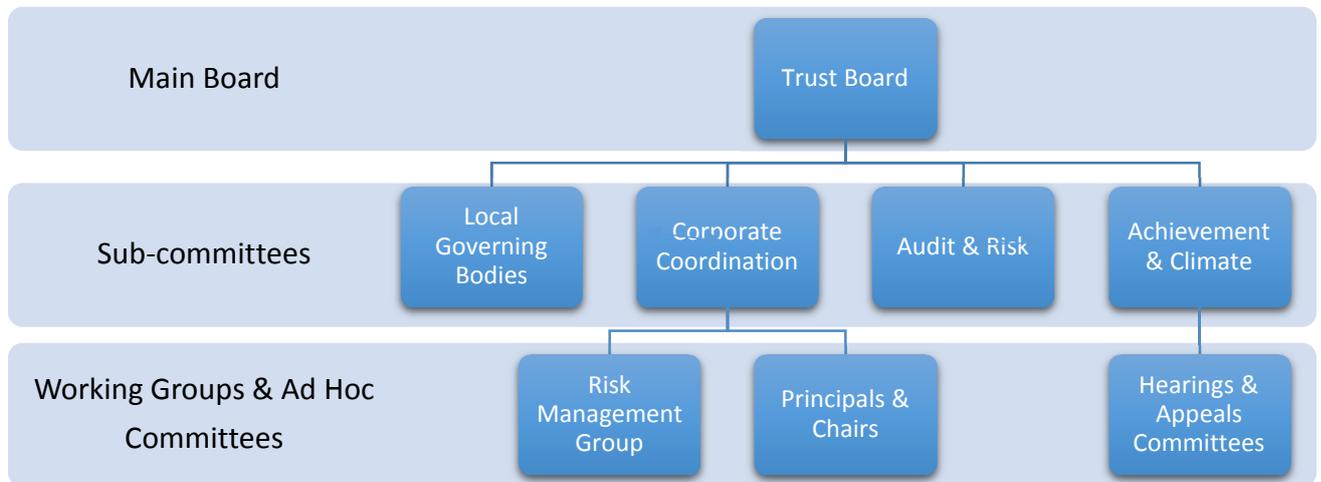
-  Constitution
-  Standing Orders within the Articles of Association
-  NET Financial Regulations
-  Scheme of Delegation
-  Code of Corporate Responsibility
-  Code of Conduct
-  Assurance Framework
-  Business Plan
-  Whistleblowing Policy
-  Risk Management Policy
-  Health & Safety Policy
-  Learning and Development Strategy
-  As well as a number of Human Resources strategies

Monitoring of the Statement will be monitored by assessing whether the Board priorities have been met through measuring performance against the Assurance Framework.

Further monitoring will take place through internal and external audit and by external accreditation. The production of an annual report will also ensure that the Statement is monitored.

Once approved this Statement will be communicated to all staff within the Trust.

Appendix 1 – Committee Structure



- ✚ In addition to those listed above the Trust can also call upon ad hoc panels of Officers and Trustees for task and finish groups for specified projects.