

Trustee role description

For trustees in an academy trust

A [role description for those governing in maintained schools](#) is available from www.nga.org.uk

August 2020

National Governance Association

The National Governance Association (NGA) is the membership organisation for governors, trustees and clerks of state schools in England.

We are an independent, not-for-profit charity that aims to improve the educational standards and wellbeing of young people by increasing the effectiveness of governing boards and promoting high standards. We are expert leaders in school and trust governance, providing information, advice and guidance, professional development and e-learning.

We represent the views of governors, trustees and clerks at a national level and work closely with, and lobby, UK government and educational bodies.

www.nga.org.uk



Trustees work together to carry out their core functions:

1. ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent
4. ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard

Trustees are responsible for governing a charitable company and directing how it is managed and run. Trustees must also ensure that the trust complies with all legal and statutory requirements. Trustees should seek the advice of the board's governance professional and other professional advice as appropriate.

The board of trustees' strategic responsibilities

The board of trustees 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

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 governing body

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), reading papers and preparing questions for the senior executive leader 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

In trusts with local governance arrangements

In most medium-sized and larger multi academy trusts, there will be some form of governance below the trust level. In such cases, trustees are responsible for:

- ensuring that the trust's governance structure meets the needs of the trust
- agreeing clear schemes of delegation, outlining the responsibilities delegated to the senior executive leader and the responsibilities of the board and academy committees
- ensuring effective communication channels are in place

Expenses

Trustees should receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as trustee and NGA recommends that a board of trustees should have such an expenses policy. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and dependency care, but not loss of earnings.