



Ethical and effective governance 2020-21 Governance Guide

September 2020

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Links to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">2020-21 Governance Scheme of Delegation			

Our Vision

We have one core purpose:

To have the biggest positive impact in the varied communities we serve through ensuring top drawer education for our learners. #TransformingLives

How do we ensure this across our trust?

In all we do we are

1. ethical to the core, ensuring that education is always front and centre
2. futures-focused system leaders – never simply followers
3. collaborative in every endeavour
4. resolutely learner centred.

What does this look like across our trust?

Education

We are

1. ruthlessly ambitious for all who learn and work with us
2. unwaveringly inclusive – determined on eradicating barriers to educational success
3. committed to excellent teaching
4. determined upon academic excellence for all in our communities
5. compassionate, ethical and caring advocates for all in our communities
6. outwardly facing and globally conscious.

Operations

We are

1. committed to the very best people development and empowerment
2. determined to shout loudly and share proudly our successes
3. the best professional and technical experts (supporting education) in the sector
4. committed to the very best understanding and management of risk.

Financial

We are

1. providing the best possible public service for the best possible value
2. determined to supplement our public income with shrewd income generation
3. building financially sustainable models of educational improvement in our communities
4. demonstrably efficient in all we do.

Our values

- We will work inclusively within our communities, embracing the varied localities we serve while sharing our common vision and values.
- We will develop the very best leaders of the future, working to improve education and transform lives.
- We will adhere unwaveringly to the ‘Nolan Principles’ of Public Service, which is made clear in our commitment to Ethical Leadership.

About this document

This *Governance Guide* is intended as a practical guide to governance within our Trust. It is designed to offer practical help with the day-to-day business of governance for all those involved. It focuses in the main on those involved in our local governance as part of a Local Academy Committee (LAC).

It should be read alongside the formal *Governance Scheme of Delegation*, which provides much of the technical detail in regard to how our governance operates. The *Scheme of Delegation* document should be referred to for

1. a copy of the formal Scheme of Delegation as it applies to our Trust
2. role descriptors for those involved in our governance
3. terms of reference for Board sub-committees, including LACs
4. the governance code of conduct
5. our policy on governance allowances
6. details of board-level activity
7. details of our process for the quality assurance of governance.

About ATT

There are 22 academies within Academy Transformation Trust (ATT). The ATT academies family now includes ten primary, ten secondary, one 'all-age' and one further education provider. Our dedicated staff of around 2,000 are transforming the lives of over 12,000 young people.

Our provision is overwhelmingly in areas of significant socio-economic disadvantage, evidenced by the large numbers of young people eligible for 'pupil premium' funding. This is where we believe we can make the biggest difference, and our academies are proving that they know how to deliver the best outcomes for their pupils.

We group our academies into two broad regions (the 'West' and the 'East'). In the West, we have academies in Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Walsall, Sandwell, Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire. In the East, our academies are in Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Thurrock.

We believe passionately in the need for academies to be both supported and challenged to deliver the best for every pupil as they work together to drive up educational standards, and our Board of Trustees is legally responsible for making sure that happens.

We will ensure that all our children and young people, regardless of their background, fulfil their educational potential. We will do this in safe, supportive and ambitious environments, ensuring we maximise life chances for them all.

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WELCOME FROM CHAIR AND CEO



Effective governance is critical to our success and to the success of our academies. It must fulfil the three core functions of governance as defined in the Department for Education's *Governance Handbook*:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent.

A significant part of the responsibility of governance is to ensure legal and financial compliance with a range of statutory and legislative requirements. But we believe it can also do much more than this in helping us to fulfil our strategic objectives

- by enhancing the educational experience of our pupils and learners
- by ensuring that the voices of pupils, learners, parents and colleagues are heard across the organisation
- by giving an equal voice to every academy within our trust-wide governance
- by embedding our academies within the communities they serve.

We are committed to the seven 'Nolan principles' of public life – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. We believe there is an 'ethical framework' within which our governance arrangements should operate, which ensures

- respect for the views of all those involved in shaping our future
- clarity of both accountability and responsibility at different levels within the organisation
- the removal of duplication, doubt and uncertainty
- open and transparent communication across the organisation
- the development of policies and operating frameworks which are understood and owned by everyone
- a commitment to the professional and personal development of those who support our governance activity.

Critical to the success of our governance model are a number of principles and behaviours which we expect all involved in our governance to adopt. These include

- a commitment to developing a deep personal understanding of our academies and our broader work
- a focus on productive personal and professional relationships, rooted in respect and honesty
- a willingness to question and interrogate the information provided by executive leaders in a challenging, yet supportive, way
- an understanding of the need for Tight Policies and Principles (TPPs), to which all our academies must subscribe, balanced with respect for local and individual context
- an agreed 'code of conduct' for all those involved in governance which espouses the Nolan principles
- ensuring that we have the 'right people' around every table, by regularly auditing the skills of those involved in our governance and utilising everyone's talents to best effect
- effective two-way communication between all involved in governance and opportunities for regular interaction with others
- bespoke support to all those involved in governance in areas where professional expertise is needed
- regular development opportunities.

We are fortunate to have many committed people engaged in our governance at both Trust level and local academy level.

This *Guide* has been put together to enable our local governance in particular to be both effective and ethical. We also want our local governance to be both fun and rewarding for all those who get involved!

We would welcome feedback on its contents.



Bernard Dickenson
Chair of Trustees



Debbie Clinton
Chief Executive Officer

WELCOME FROM THE GOVERNANCE TEAM



Governance is important!

All those involved in our governance act on behalf of the communities we serve, and on behalf of taxpayers, in providing an external and impartial balance to our work. In short, those involved in our governance – whether Trustees or members of our Local Academy Committees (LACs) – are helping to ensure that we deliver the best possible outcomes for the learners in our academies.

If you are involved in our governance, you are a critical part of the leadership team – your thoughts and opinions, your challenge and support, help all of us to do a better job. The value of this cannot be underestimated.

And we must never forget that everyone doing this vital work is doing so voluntarily. You give of your time in the service of our learners and our communities, and we need to do all we can to support you.

One of the key purposes of a multi-academy trust such as ours is to enable and facilitate collaboration which drives up the outcomes of all our academies. That applies to governance as much as any other aspect of our work.

For a national Trust such as ours, though, the connection between Trust-wide governance and our local communities can sometimes feel a little vague. For the record, we are a Trust which believes passionately in the importance of local governance – the very existence of our team is proof that we want to do all we can to support it!

For those of you involved in our local governance, this guidance and networking is doubly important. We want all our Governors to feel as though they are part of a wider community – a ‘family’ if you like.

So this guide is intended to help with some of the practicalities of local governance in particular. We have tried to bring together a wide range of material, but if you have any suggestions about what else can be included please let us know!



Andy Gannon
Head of Corporate Affairs



Della Shipton
Regional Governance Manager (West)



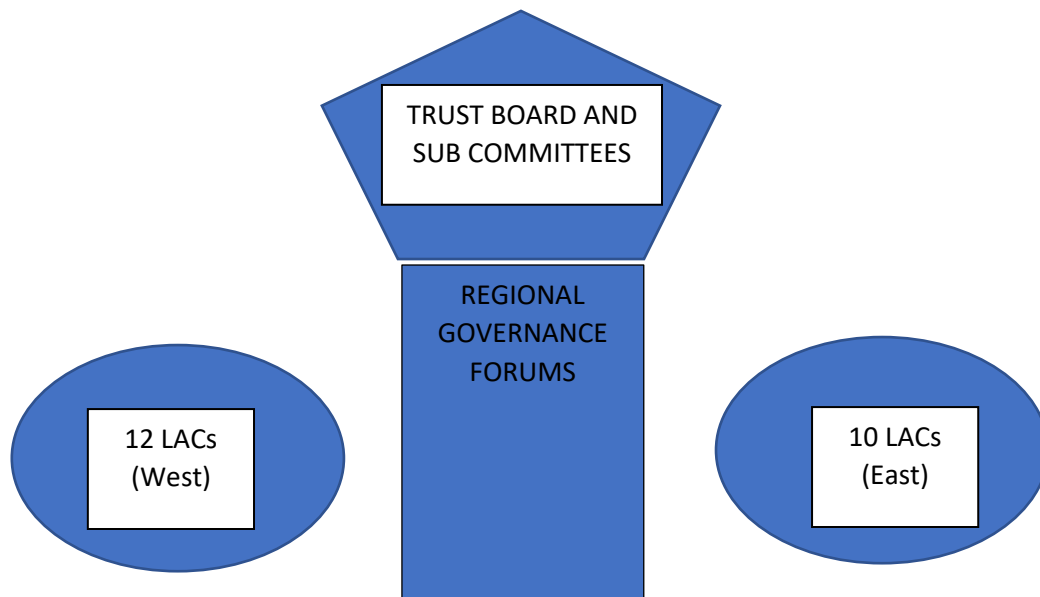
Sam Elms
Regional Governance Manager (East)

The role of Local Academy Committees (LACs)

LACs are important in our approach to governance in the following ways. They are

- responsible for providing assurance to the Board of Trustees (and to external bodies, such as Ofsted) that the academy's work has been scrutinised with an eye to pupil outcomes, performance improvement and impact on the local community, and that Trust-wide and statutory policies are being properly followed
- accountable for the decisions made as part of a panel within the parameters of our policies on complaints, exclusions, admissions appeals and staff disciplinarys
- responsible for engaging with collaborative development or quality assurance activities (such as Regional Governance Forums, FARs and other ECSI activity) or supporting the process whereby decisions affecting the academy (such as the appointment of a new Principal or an Ofsted inspection) are made
- responsible for ensuring that they have the right membership and balance of skills to do an effective job
- charged with engaging fully with our communities and championing the Trust and each academy as their 'heartbeat', developing work that will support positive attitudes to learning among future pupils, parents and others and bringing the outside world into the classroom through the use of their own professional networks.

The Terms of Reference for LACs as well as the outline agenda provide a framework for discussions and activity. These can be found in the *Scheme of Delegation* document.



The work of LACs

This section provides guidance on how LACs should conduct their business. While the Principal is the lead executive for all LAC activity, LACs should note that the Regional Education Directors and the Executive Principals also have a responsibility to ensure that local governance is effective. In particular, the Executive Principal will take a lead on ensuring that local recruitment activity within the LAC is meaningful.

Who should be on LACs?

LACs should contain enough members to do an effective job. There must be two parents of pupils currently in the academy and one member of staff. In practice, this usually means a LAC should have between 8 and 11 members.

Other members of Trust staff **must not** be members of a LAC, even if it is not their own academy. This principle ensures that governance remains impartial.

Each LAC must appoint, from among its number, a 'lead member' with responsibility for the following areas, who develops some expertise in the area concerned and leads LAC activity:

- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs
- Disadvantages and specific groups of pupils (including the monitoring of pupil premium and other specific government grants)

LACs may also choose to appoint lead members around key areas of the academy's Evaluation and Improvement Plan (EIP), or around key areas of risk but this is not compulsory.

The RGMs can provide support with the recruitment of new members of a LAC. Parents and staff members should be elected, whereas other members can be recruited via a variety of avenues, including online matching services and local advertising. Some material is provided in **Appendix A**.

While the Principal and other academy leaders can help with sourcing potential recruits, we must remember that the ultimate responsibility for appointing to the LAC lies with the LAC itself.

The clerk should support the process of recruitment and check any new application against the list of disqualifying criteria included in the LAC application form, which is available from the RGMs. HR colleagues are able to support with the DBS process.

All new Governors must complete the declaration of interest at their first meeting, and ensure this, along with their understanding of the conflict of interest policy, is on record.

Specific roles

- LAC Chair (supported by the Vice Chair) – these two posts are formally approved by the Board of Trustees. The LAC Chair is the most likely member of the LAC to be invited to take part in Ofsted inspections or in ECSI activity, supported by other members. The LAC Chair should maintain regular communication with the Principal and also marshal all the activity of the LAC. The Chair should also work with the clerk to ensure that meetings and other activity are well planned.
- Link governors – as detailed above, the link governor for particular areas should develop some expertise in those areas and ensure they conduct a 'deep dive' into practice at least once a year. They should also maintain regular contact with the key people within the

academy, for example with the Designated Safeguarding Lead for the link governor for safeguarding.

What should LACs do?

The following should take place during the year, with the 'load' spread as evenly as possible across the membership of the LAC:

- Regular meetings with the Principal – this should take the form of a meeting between the LAC Chair and Principal once a fortnight
- Attendance at the academy's ECSI meetings (seven per year)
- Involvement in the academy's FAR (once a year) and a review of its findings
- Visits to the academy, which should always focus on specific areas of practice (such as when a 'lead' Governor is looking into their area of responsibility) and always follow the principles set out in **Appendix B** below
- Meetings with specific academy leaders as regularly as needed
- Conversations and engagement with the local community, pupils, parents and other stakeholders to form a rounded view of the academy's performance
- Formal meetings of the full Local Academy Committee – see below for guidance in this area
- Engagement with the other non-executive bodies across our trust, for example, through attendance at the Regional Governance Forums or submission of information to the Board
- Analyse their own skill gaps and engage in professional development
- Ensure that any 'gaps' in membership are swiftly filled so that there are enough members to conduct effective governance.

The clerk should be used to support and arrange any of the above activity.

LACs will also be required to convene panels when necessary to deal with exclusions, admissions appeals or complaints. See **Appendix C** below.

If an academy is due to receive a visit from Ofsted, at least one member of the LAC will be required to participate in an interview with inspectors. Training and support for this will be provided by the RGMs.

Annual cycle and meetings

There are six 'windows' for LAC meetings on the Global Calendar, each two weeks long.

In consultation with both the Regional Governance Manager and the Regional Education Director, LACs may choose

- to hold meetings in each of the slots (i.e. six in the year)
- to hold meetings in slots 1, 3 and 5 only and then to use the time in slots 2, 4, and 6 for other governance activity – including governor visits, meetings with leaders, stakeholder engagement etc.

RGMs and REDs will monitor any proposals to hold fewer than six meetings a year – and may instruct a LAC to hold more meetings if there is a good reason (for example, a forthcoming Ofsted visit).

The agenda for meetings should be agreed by the Chair well in advance and the papers circulated at least five school days ahead of the meeting. Ideally, Governors will have the opportunity to ask questions by email ahead of the meeting in order to inform discussions.

Meeting agendas

This agenda provides a framework which can be used to construct agendas appropriate to the time of year with guidance from the clerk and the academy Principal. REDs will provide all LACs with a helpful set of questions to prompt more detailed scrutiny of the reports provided.

Good chairing is critical to the success of meetings. In particular, it should be assumed that all the papers have been read and executives only invited to highlight key points in a paper rather than presenting the whole thing. Most of the talking should be done by Governors!

AGENDA - LAC	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologies • Declarations of interest • Minutes • Matters arising • MEETING 1 ONLY: formal business interest forms, skills audit, mandatory training – safeguarding, data protection, induction of new governors, role of LAC, Chair and Vice Chair
2	<p><i>Safeguarding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review any urgent issues (verbal) • SPRING TERM – Annual safeguarding report
3	<p><i>Performance monitoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal’s Report – review and challenge and determine any areas (e.g. subjects or matters such as attendance) that you would like to investigate further: a relevant middle or senior leader could produce a report and come to the next meeting, and a governor could carry out a ‘themed visit’ to inform this • Review academy risk register and complaints activity (as a learning tool)
4	<p><i>Specific matters (ensure there is consideration of both executive input and evidence from other sources)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key areas determined for ‘deep dives’ • AUTUMN TERM: Review pupil premium impact and impact of sports funding (statutory requirement) • SUMMER TERM: Review academy SEND activity • ANNUALLY: Review staff wellbeing and pupil enrichment • ANNUALLY: Specific focus on EYFS (if primary) and sixth form (if needed) • ANNUALLY: Review of finance and operations activity within the academy
5	<p><i>Community and stakeholder engagement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of ways in which the LAC is engaging with the local community to provide feedback to the academy or to develop its reputation
6	<p><i>Policies and compliance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review compliance with Trust-wide policies
7	<p><i>Communication</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of any key issues to communicate
8	<p><i>AoB</i></p>

Executive data and reporting

Those involved in governance rightly expect that information provided to them by executive leaders will paint a full and accurate picture of performance and be accompanied by some analysis which will enable them to ask questions and probe its veracity.

For this reason, executive reports to any committee must be presented at least five school days before a meeting or a visit, to give those involved in governance time to digest the contents and decide which aspects need probing.

It is important to remember that information provided by executives will always be ‘triangulated’ with evidence from other sources as Trustees and Governors form their views.

It is tempting to provide lots of data without analysis in the hope that the committee will be able to draw its own conclusions. However, it must be remembered that Trustees and Governors are volunteers and will not always have the knowledge or expertise to do this. Nor is it their job to do so – a key part of their role is to determine the extent to which the executive is itself capable of analysing and interpreting data in order to have an accurate picture of performance and to generate a plan to improve.

Any executive report should relate to one topic only, and the analysis which accompanies any data should clearly outline **five key areas of analysis**:

1. What positive conclusions can be drawn about performance?
2. What areas of challenge does the evidence suggest we still need to tackle?
3. What is the plan for tackling these areas?
4. How has the plan been determined (i.e. what evidence has been used to come up with proposed actions)?
5. How will the impact of the plan be measured and when can Trustees or Governors expect to see an update with an assessment of this impact?

It is helpful to have a **standard data set** which can be reviewed at each meeting – for LACs, this will usually be a copy of the Principal’s report.

Communication

After each LAC meeting, the clerk must ensure that the minutes from the meeting are shared with the Regional Governance Manager. Governors may themselves also make contact with relevant executive leaders, or indeed with Trustees directly, if they wish to raise concerns.

We encourage members of our LACs to form their own formal and informal networks in order to share problems and develop joint solutions.

We will be putting in place a bespoke governance online system during 2020-21, which will be both a repository for documents and a place for communication.

All those involved in our governance have an ATT email address assigned to them when they take up their post – local IT support can be used to ensure this can be accessed as smoothly as possible (for example, by enabling emails to come through on the same mobile phone app as the Governor’s personal email).

Clerks

The role of the clerk is vital in the performance of local governance. The clerk is not just a minute taker – they must be a knowledgeable source of support and information for everything the LAC does. Clerks are supported by the RGMs. The role descriptor for a clerk is in **Appendix D**.

Skills and effectiveness

The RGMs will provide template materials for annual skills audits and any LAC recruitment activity that is needed. Your clerk should be able to lead local activity, supported by the Executive Principal and the RGMs. It is the responsibility of the LAC itself to ensure there are sufficient people available to carry out its functions adequately.

The LAC should develop its own action plan and feel free to organise its own development activities. We ask that activities which have had an especially positive impact are shared with the rest of our Trust (via the RGMs) so that we can all learn together.

Appendix E provides more information about our approach to training and development across the Trust.

Key questions for LACs to think about...

- Do we have the right skills on the LAC? Does its size enable effective working?
- Do we recruit new Governors on the basis of our skills needs?
- Do we have a professional clerk who provides advice and oversees our induction and development needs?
- How do we make use of good practice from other LACs in and out of the Trust?
- Does our chair show strong and effective leadership?
- Do we engage in good succession planning so that no governor serves for longer than two terms of office and the chair is replaced at least every six years?
- Are we clear about the key performance measures we are using to monitor the academy's performance?
- Do we have a strategic planning cycle which helps the academy leaders to plan?
- Are we effectively engaged with our local community, the wider academy sector and the outside world?
- How well do we listen to, understand and respond to our pupils, parents and staff?
- How do we make regular reports on the work of the Trust and the LAC to our parents and local community?
- What benefit does the academy draw from collaboration with other academies in and out of the Trust and other sectors, locally and nationally?
- What impact are we having on the academy's educational performance?
- How well do we understand the academy's performance data (including in-year progress tracking data) so we can properly challenge and support leaders?
- Do we regularly visit the academy to get to know it and monitor the implementation of strategy and policy?
- How do we ensure and monitor compliance with key policies?
- Do we know how effective performance management of all staff is within the school?
- How much has the academy improved over the last three years, and what has the LAC's contribution been to this?

How do we want local governance to feel?

The 'do's and don'ts' we have covered so far can sometimes make governance feel very procedural, but, in reality it is as much about relationships and local autonomy as it is about confirming to expectations.

During 2019-2020, we have spent some time thinking about the importance of impactful two-way relationships between our Local Academy Committees and our academy leaders, establishing the following principles:

1. That there should be mutually challenging proactive two-way exchanges between the executive and the LAC: 'part of the team'.
2. That there should be a recognition that Governors have skills and talents that they want to use to further the academy.
3. That the LAC should make a contribution to the urgency of academy improvement.
4. That the LAC should contribute to the development of academy strategy which inextricably links to trust vision and values, community need and local strategic developments.
5. That LACs should be a conduit to the academy leadership's personal inclusive work with communities.

There are five key areas for all to work on to ensure this happens. These are described below and reflect the expectations that Governors should be able to have of all executive leaders.

Local ownership and relationships

Local governance must be local – it should not follow a set agenda which is about 'ticking boxes'.

- Governors are **a part of** the leadership of the academy
- Critical is the relationship between Principal, LAC Chair and clerk (also other Governors and key people)
- There should be open and regular communication
- Agendas, activity and action plans should be tailored to each academy's needs:
 - Regular performance monitoring (key data in the Principal's Report)
 - Statutory requirements (e.g. monitoring pupil premium) – on the calendar
 - 'Deep dives' (determined by the LAC themselves)

Impact

Local governance is more rewarding for all if it is focused on delivering genuine impact for our students.

- 'What difference is local governance making?' should be a regular question for all
- The biggest impact is unlikely to come about through meetings alone
- LACs should be enabled to 'triangulate' their evidence about academy performance (e.g. through planned and themed visits, stakeholder discussions, observations)
- The executive should always respond to questions and use to inform actions
- Link governors should be appointed for safeguarding and 'disadvantage' (SEN/pupil premium) as well as others according to EIP/IDSR evidence and key areas of risk

Openness

The relationship must be based on honesty and transparency at all times if it is to have an impact.

- There should be a culture of challenge and action
- Reports must tell an honest story – the good and the bad
- Leaders must highlight risks and encourage debate of these
- Reports should contain just the right amount of detail to enable questions
- Questions should make leaders think – not just provide answers
- Governors should determine where ‘deep dives’ would help
- A wide range of leaders and staff should be involved in the work of the LAC
- LACs should be well prepared for the role they will play in Ofsted inspections

Effectiveness

The workings of local governance must be professional above all.

- Clerking is far more than ‘just minute taking’ – clerks must be knowledgeable and have a similarly open relationship with all
- Reporting must be clear, consistent and easy to interpret and ask questions of
- Meetings must be prepared professionally with clear objectives, papers presented ahead of meetings, questions tabled
- Meetings must be chaired to time and focused on questions and actions
- The ‘right people’ must be around the table – recruitment and skills review is key and the skills needed must be allied to academy priorities

Support and development

The environment must be supportive, as well as challenging, for all.

- Managing local governance constitutes good professional development for academy leaders in managing non-executive work
- Local training and development is important – it can be incorporated into meeting times
- Opportunities for Trust-wide and local networking and learning should be developed locally
- As a Trust, we will ensure that guidance is clear and that good online communication systems exist and we will monitor the impact of our governance.

APPENDIX A – RECRUITMENT COLLATERAL

NAME Academy is seeking Local Academy Committee members

An exciting opportunity has arisen for committed local individuals to become members of the Local Academy Committee (LAC) at **NAME** Academy, a long-established and well-respected **PHASE** school at the heart of **COMMUNITY**.

The LAC is a key part of the governance of the Academy as part of Academy Transformation Trust, monitoring performance on behalf of the Board of Trustees and providing both support and challenge to the academy's leadership team.

BRIEF INTRODUCTORY CONTEXT-SETTING PARAGRAPH FROM LAC CHAIR/PRINCIPAL (include current Ofsted grade and any particular strengths or weaknesses for potential applicants to be aware of)

Strong local governance is absolutely critical to our future, and so you will be joining us at a most important time. You will bring your own professional or community expertise to bear in enriching the experience of and opportunities for our pupils.

You can find more details about the role in the following document, but I strongly urge you to apply as I know you will find this a fulfilling role.

The role is unpaid, although reasonable travel expenses will of course be covered. You will need to attend six meetings a year (usually **TIME** at the Academy) and it would also help if you are able to spend additional time in the school supporting myself and our dedicated staff to do a great job.

I look forward to receiving your application.

NAME OF LAC CHAIR

Chair of the Local Academy Committee

(OPTIONAL) ADDITIONAL SIGNATORY FROM PRINCIPAL

About NAME OF ACADEMY

TEXT ABOUT ACADEMY (taken perhaps from website description of academy, updated to reflect specific issues within the EIP, community aspects etc.)

The Academy is part of the Academy Transformation Trust (ATT) who are a leading multi academy trust committed to transforming the learning opportunities and aspirations for its students and the communities in which they live. ATT believes that by embracing the 7 'Nolan Principles' of public service of public life (Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership) that we can transform lives. We are committed to playing our part in giving young people the education and opportunities they need to succeed in a changing world.

About Academy Transformation Trust

NAME OF ACADEMY is one of 22 academies within Academy Transformation Trust (ATT). The ATT academies family now includes ten primary, ten secondary, one 'all-age' and one further education provider. Our dedicated staff of around 2,000 are transforming the lives of over 12,000 young people.

Our provision is overwhelmingly in areas of significant socio-economic disadvantage, evidenced by the large numbers of young people eligible for 'pupil premium' funding. This is where we believe we can make the biggest difference, and our academies are proving that they know how to deliver the best outcomes for their pupils.

We group our academies into two broad regions (the 'West' and the 'East'). In the West, we have academies in Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Walsall, Sandwell, Warwickshire and Nottinghamshire. In the East, our academies are in Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex and Thurrock.

Each academy has a ‘local academy committee’ (LAC) whose role is to monitor and scrutinise the academy’s performance on behalf of our Trustees and to provide support and challenge to the Principal in equal measure.

We believe passionately in the need for academies to be both supported and challenged to deliver the best for every pupil as they work together to drive up educational standards, and our Board of Trustees is legally responsible for making sure that happens.

We will ensure that all our children and young people, regardless of their background, fulfil their educational potential. We will do this in safe, supportive and ambitious environments, ensuring we maximise life chances for them all.

About multi-academy trusts

Academy schools, which are charities run independently of local authority control, now account for 71% of secondary schools and 26% of primaries – and their number continues to grow.

Although some academies operate on a ‘standalone’ basis, many are grouped together within multi-academy trusts (MATs). MATs take on all the responsibilities that come with running a school, including the leadership of school improvement, responsibility for standards and outcomes and the management of finance, HR, estates and a range of other ‘back-office’ functions.

Within a MAT, the Board of Trustees fulfils the legal responsibilities that the Board of Governors has in an individual school. Trustees may devolve some responsibilities to Local Academy Committees (LACs).

The Department for Education’s *Governance Handbook* (2017) sets out clear expectations for Trustees:

“Academy boards must be ambitious for all children and young people and infused with a passion for education and a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes. Governance must be grounded in reality as defined by both high-quality objective data and a full understanding of the views and needs of pupils/students, staff, parents, carers and local communities. It should be driven by inquisitive, independent minds and through conversations focused on the key strategic issues which are conducted with humility, good judgement, resilience and determination.”

ATT subscribes absolutely to this approach and is determined that the quality of governance across the Trust should not just meet but exceed these expectations and develop a national reputation for excellence over the coming three years.

The role of Governor

Our Governors are a vital part of driving improvement and excellence and they are specifically accountable to our Trustees.

The role of Governors is to ensure high standards of achievement for all children and young people in the academy by

1. providing *challenge* and *support* to executive leaders in relation to the educational performance of the academy
2. performing the required non-executive functions in relation to staff and student-related panels and appeals processes
3. ensuring at all times that their own skillsets, development needs and programmes of activity are reviewed and their effectiveness appraised.

As part of the LAC team, a Governor is expected to

1. support and challenge executive leaders by monitoring the academy’s educational performance, which includes

- a. monitoring the outcomes from and progress against the academy's annual EIP
 - b. considering all relevant data and feedback provided on request by academy leaders and external sources on all aspects of academy performance
 - c. asking challenging questions of academy leaders
 - d. ensuring senior leaders have arranged for the required audits to be carried out and receiving the results of those audits
 - e. monitoring the impact of the deployment of funding and resources within the academy, including specific grants
 - f. monitoring the academy's understanding of and approach to risk management
 - g. acting as a link governor on a specific issue, making relevant enquiries of the relevant staff, and reporting to the LAC on the progress on the relevant academy priority
 - h. seeking out, listening to and reporting to the academy's stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community, including local employers
 - i. actively seeking out other sources of information and evidence about the academy's performance, for example, by conducting independent governor visits
 - j. working to secure the academy's place at the heart of its community
2. conduct investigations and/or serve on panels to
 - a. hear the second stage of staff grievances and disciplinary matters
 - b. hear appeals about pupil exclusions
 - c. hear admissions appeals
 - d. hear stage 3 (or, occasionally, stage 2) complaints
 3. contribute actively to, and engage with, self-evaluation and professional development activity to ensure that the LAC has the skillset necessary to perform its role
 4. engage with Trust-wide governance activity by communicating proactively and attending Trust-wide governance forums and training opportunities
 5. represent local governance if required in official settings, for example, during an Ofsted inspection
 6. ensure that, at all times, they represent the needs of their local community.

The role of a Governor is a thinking and questioning role, not a doing role.

Is the role for you?

In order to perform this role well, a Governor is expected to

- get to know the academy, including visiting during school hours and in agreement with the Principal, and gaining a good understanding of the academy's strengths and weaknesses
- attend induction training and regular relevant training and development events
- attend meetings and read all the papers before the meeting
- act in the best interests of all the pupils of the academy
- behave in a professional manner, as set out in the code of conduct, including acting in strict confidence.

Governors are expected to have experience (and, in some cases, qualifications) which enable them to directly support and scrutinise the work of the academy. It is important that the LAC as a whole has an appropriate breadth of skill across these areas. Two members of the LAC must be parents of current pupils at the academy, and there should be one staff Governor.

In common with all those involved in our governance, Governors must espouse the values of the Trust, commit themselves to working in accordance with the Nolan Principles and our statement of Ethical Leadership and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct.

How to find out more and/or apply

If you would like an informal conversation about the role, please contact **NAME OF LAC CHAIR (PRINCIPAL IF APPROPRIATE)** on **PHONE NUMBER**.

To apply, please fill out the attached application form and return it to:

CONTACT NAME AND ADDRESS (Clerk to the LAC)

or by email to **EMAIL ADDRESS**.

Your application should arrive by 12 noon on **DATE**.

APPENDIX B - Governance visits

It is important for Trustees and Governors to source their own evidence of what it feels like to be in an academy and how things are operating. Governors must have a deep, accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness informed by the views of pupils, parents and staff. They should use this to keep the school improving by focusing on the impact of their actions in key areas.

Visits to the academy during working hours are an important way in which Trustees and Governors can seek further evidence relating to performance and, importantly, to the pupil/learner experience.

Trustee visits to academies will always be arranged via the Head of Corporate Affairs and will be scheduled to coincide with other quality assurance activity wherever possible.

Governors may visit their academy at any mutually convenient time between them and their link member/s of staff. The focus of a visit may be in one of the areas where the LAC has appointed a 'lead member' (e.g. safeguarding) or it may choose to focus on an aspect of performance highlighted within the papers for or discussion at a LAC meeting (e.g. behaviour of pupils or learning environments). The visit must be arranged in advance and the focus area agreed upon.

When conducting a visit, Governors should sign in at reception and bring their Academy ID, which must be worn visibly on their orange lanyard while in the building. All visitors must be mindful of safeguarding training and report any urgent concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Governors must always remember their **non-executive** function – the purpose of a visit is to gain a sense of life in the academy to back up or to challenge the information provided at meetings.

Governance visits should be recorded via descriptive notes and a report logged with the LAC clerk, using the template below.

Before a visit

- Contact the Head of Faculty or SLT that your visit relates to and clarify the purpose of the visit.
- Agree a date and time for the visit. Considering staff and governor time, visits usually last around one hour.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) visit

- Email agenda for the visit, which includes a review of any actions from the previous visit report.
- Email any specific questions you are seeking to answer.
- Request appropriate data.
- Review action points in the Evaluation and Improvement Plan (EIP), prior to your visit.
- Read any relating policies; governors have a responsibility to monitor the academy's policies.

Head of Faculty visit

- Request up to date data for the appropriate area you want to discuss at the visit.
- Agree arrangements for a 20/30 minutes classroom visit if appropriate.
- Email any specific questions you are seeking to answer.
- Read any appropriate Policies or Curriculum guidance.

Classroom visits

- Observe discreetly, become involved with student's activities when invited.
- Never comment on the teacher's conduct of the lesson or on individual students.
- Ensure you make a note of what you see.
- Thank the member of staff/students.

Meetings with SLT or HoF

- Review any action points from last visit report.
- Discuss relevant data and note progress being made.
- Relate discussion to any Improvement Plan targets.
- Request to see Quality Assurance Folders (QAF) from HoFs/middle leaders, which will include latest Faculty Improvement Plan.
- Provide oral feedback and thank the member of staff.

Following the visit

- Provide oral feedback to the Principal and/or Senior Leadership Team line manager.
- Governor visit notes should be written up after the visit.
- Compose notes to record the highlights of the visit and demonstrate challenge and monitoring.
- Aim to provide completed visit reports to the Principal within 10 days of the visit.
- The Governor visit notes should be logged with the LAC clerk for consideration at the next LAC meeting.
- Governors should aim to conduct a visit at least once per term.

Reports from governance visits will be considered as part of LAC business at the meeting most immediately following the visit. The views of executive leaders will be sought in evaluating the impact of these visits on performance.

Annually, the LAC should assess the overall impact of visits and consider ways of enhancing their value.

Academy visit record form

Part 1: Plan the visit	
Name and role of governor(s)	
Name and role of staff member(s)	
Date and time of visit	
Purpose of Visit <i>This might be taken from the school improvement plan (SIP) objectives or the School inspection data summary report (IDSR)</i>	
Questions to ask <i>Note specific questions you want to ask. Share these questions with the staff member you are visiting in advance, so they can prepare.</i>	

Part 2: Make notes during the visit

What are your observations?

Ask open questions beginning with 'what', 'how', 'when', 'how often', 'why', 'who' and 'where.'

You are looking for what is working well and why and what is not working well and why. Please note: specific evidence that demonstrates the positive impact and where this is 'work in progress' note down why that is and what steps are being taken to make progress.

Part 3: Summary of the visit

Remember you remain an observer. Remember this is a summary and bullet points add clarity.

When recording your visit, use neutral language and do not name individual teachers and pupils.

Part 4: Actions from the Visit

List up to three points to raise at the next LAC meeting when you report on your visit. Please make sure you include one or two positive points and one developmental point.

APPENDIX C – PANELS

LAC panels are required as a part of several policy areas:

- staff disciplinarys and grievances
- exclusions
- complaints
- admissions.

Each of these areas has slightly different requirements and we cannot cover all the necessary content in this *Guide*. You should familiarise yourself with our relevant policies in these areas.

However, a number of principles do apply which these areas have in common:

1. the responsibility for arranging and clerking panels sits with the LAC clerk, who will be supported by the RGM
2. many of these processes are 'time-bound', which means we have to make sure that they are convened swiftly and papers circulated in advance
3. the requirements for people not to have been involved in a case before mean that we often have to support across our family of academies. If you are asked to support a panel at an academy that is not your own, please try to do so – as it may be your academy needing help next!

The RGMs will ensure that people involved in panels are briefed and appropriately trained ahead of time.

APPENDIX D - CLERKING

Role descriptor – Local Academy Committee clerk

The LAC clerk is a vital link within our non-executive activity. The role of the clerk, put simply, is to enable local governance to be effective and to facilitate communication within our non-executive line. Our LAC clerks are managed by the Regional Governance Managers.

Our clerks

- provide advice to the Local Academy Committee (LAC) on governance, constitutional and procedural matters
- provide effective administrative support to the LAC and its committees
- ensure the LAC is properly constituted
- manage information effectively in accordance with legal requirements

Relationships

- Build effective professional relationships and channels of communication with the committee, external contacts and others
- Use appropriate influencing skills to gain the committee's confidence
- Help the committee to create a culture in which challenge is welcomed
- Support the committee when carrying out self-evaluation exercises
- Remain committed to improving own performance and that of others involved in governance, taking advantage of opportunities to attend training and development

Strategic knowledge and support

- Uphold the features of effective governance, and the committee's core functions
- Support their role as set out in ATT Governance Guide and Scheme of Delegation
- Advise on key national education policies and the wider context in which the committee is operating
- Update the committee on changes to legal or statutory requirements
- Provide clear, logical, credible and impartial advice to the committee
- Understand the principles of conflicts of interest, and advise the committee on managing and avoiding these
- Understand how and when to escalate concerns
- Advise on the appropriate skills mix within the committee
- Establish and facilitate transparent procedures to fill vacancies
- Liaise with the academy and shape the induction of new members and those taking on new roles
- Inform the committee about training and development opportunities
- Enable the committee to fulfil its strategic role
- Apply the principles of records management and have working knowledge of the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act
- Apply the committee's code of conduct and strategic priorities

Operational aspects

- Establish and maintain efficient procedures for the organisation of meetings
- Support the chair in identifying priorities and upcoming issues
- Ensure that committee papers are clear and accurate, and that minutes capture discussion points and actions
- Prepare thoroughly for meetings and oversee the completion of action points

- Ensure meetings are conducted in a professional and orderly manner
- Develop the use of appropriate reporting and monitoring tools
- Maintain accurate registers (e.g. register of interests or attendance) and advise on procedural matters (e.g. quoracy)
- Clerk any statutory panels the LAC is required to convene
- Lead the elections of parent and staff governors
- Maintain archive materials
- Maintain an up to date 'Ofsted ready' presentation pack
- Prepare briefing papers for the LAC, as necessary
- Evaluate administrative procedures to ensure effectiveness, and adapt these where necessary
- Apply the principles of confidentiality to all work
- Perform such other tasks as may be determined by the LAC, HoCA or RGM from time to time

Development

- Undertake appropriate and regular training and development to maintain knowledge and improve practice
- Keep up-to-date with current educational developments and legislation affecting academy governance
- Participate in regular professional development conversations
- Participate in, and contribute to the training of governors

Person specification

Experience

- Previous experience and evidence of impact working in a governance environment
- Relevant personal and professional development in a clerking environment
- Working in an environment where experiences included taking initiative and self-motivation
- Experience working as a member of a team

Skills, knowledge and aptitudes

- Have excellent listening, oral and literacy skills
- Have an eye for detail and excellent proofreading skills
- Communicate information clearly, logically and impartially using a range of presentation methods
- Use technology effectively and innovatively, including for research
- Have a systematic approach to managing documentation and other records
- Organise time and working to deadlines
- Have knowledge of school governance
- Have knowledge of equalities and data protection legislation

Qualifications

- Minimum of C grade GCSE or equivalent passes in English and Mathematics
- Have already attended or make a commitment to attend the National Training Programme for Clerks or its equivalent

Personal qualities

- Commitment to ATT's vision, values and ethos

- Commitment to high quality education
- Commitment to safeguarding and understanding of its importance
- Be a person of integrity
- Have good interpersonal skills, including a willingness to challenge
- Be able to maintain confidentiality and remain impartial
- Have an openness to learning and change

Special requirements

- Be able to work at times convenient to the LAC, including evening meetings
- Be able to attend additional meetings or training opportunities
- Be able to travel to meetings
- Be available to be contacted when necessary

APPENDIX E – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

We take the development of our people very seriously and this includes those who support our governance operations.

Everyone involved in our governance will complete a skills audit once a year and the Board, as well as LACs, are responsible for ensuring that they have a development plan which will enable them to address any gaps (either in skill or knowledge) which are identified. They will be supported to do this by the relevant clerk. We use the skills audits provided by the NGA and available at [https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Good-governance/Effective-governance/Skills-Audit-and-Skills-Matrix-\(1\).aspx](https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Good-governance/Effective-governance/Skills-Audit-and-Skills-Matrix-(1).aspx).

We provide regular opportunities for Governors to come together in regional and national development forums. The same opportunities are provided for those who provide clerking support and challenge to these bodies.

Accordingly, in addition to the Trustee development days held on a regular basis we have

- a Trust-wide Annual Governance Conference, to which all Trustees and Governors are invited – this will be held on Wednesday 9 June 2021
- Regional Governance Forums (RGFs), to which all regional Governors are invited, each of which meets three times a year
- regular opportunities for clerks to meet with RGMs for their own training and development.

Increasingly, our people development activity will be led by those involved in governance themselves. The forums, though, will provide an important opportunity for the consideration of important issues such as

- safeguarding
- the management of risk
- analysing and interpreting data
- convening and conducting panels in relation to issues such as complaints, staff disciplinarys and exclusion appeals
- conduct and expectations during Ofsted inspections.

Mandatory compliance training is overseen through the ATT Institute (our umbrella organisation for people development), and clerks are responsible for ensuring that all Governors have completed the required training within a three-week window at the start of the academic year.

In addition, Regional Governance Managers will co-ordinate an offer of additional one-off training opportunities (many of which are delivered online) and more in-depth professional development programmes for both clerks and Governors. This will include specific training around panels, Ofsted and data analysis.

The Head of Corporate Affairs coordinates a similar training and development programme for Trustees.

Glossary of acronyms

AGM	Annual General Meeting, convened by the Trust's Members
ARC	Audit and Risk Committee, sub-committee of the Trust Board responsible for the monitoring and management of risk
ATT	Academy Transformation Trust ('the Trust')
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (of the Trust), also Accounting Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer (of the Trust)
COO	Chief Operating Officer (of the Trust), also Deputy Chief Executive Officer
CSI	Challenge, Support and Intervention – the Trust's regular programme of performance monitoring meetings in regard to each academy (additional letters signify different types of CSI: ECSI (education), FCSI (finance), OCSI (operational), SCSi (safeguarding), GCSI (governance))
DfE	Department for Education, the Government department with overall responsibility for national educational performance
EIP	Evaluation and Improvement Plan, each academy's annual development plan
ELT	Executive Leadership Team, senior executive team for the Trust
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency, the arm's length DfE body responsible for the allocation and monitoring of funding to the Trust
FAR	Full Academy Review, the Trust's annual peer-to-peer quality assessment of each academy
FRC	Finance and Resources Committee, sub-committee of the Trust Board responsible for the monitoring and oversight of financial and operational performance
HoCA	Head of Corporate Affairs (of the Trust)
LAC	Local Academy Committee, sub-committee of the Trust Board at academy level
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, the body responsible for inspecting education provision in England
PAPP	Pay and People Performance Committee, sub-committee of the Trust Board responsible for the monitoring and oversight of people-related matters
RED	Regional Education Director (of the Trust), of whom there are four – two in each region, one leading our primary academies and one leading our secondary and FE academies
RGF	Regional Governance Forum, Trust-wide development forum for all those involved in our governance
SLT	Senior Leadership Team, within an academy, led by the academy Principal
SOC	Standards and Outcomes Committee, sub-committee of the Trust Board responsible for the monitoring and oversight of educational performance

Wider reading

You may find the following useful:

DfE Governance Handbook and Competency Framework at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>

DfE Clerking Competency Framework at
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/609971/Clerking_competency_framework.pdf

Information on our Trust's governance and corporate performance at
<https://www.academytransformationtrust.co.uk/about-the-trust/company-information>

Policy positions on governance and other matters from the Confederation of Schools Trusts (CST), of which we are a member at <https://cstuk.org.uk/policy-and-research/cst-policy-positions/>

Resources on academy governance from ICSA, The Governance Institute at
<https://www.icsa.org.uk/knowledge/academies>

A recent article from Forum Strategy to focus our thoughts on the nature of accountability at
<https://www.forumstrategy.org/its-time-for-a-purer-more-community-focused-notion-of-accountability/>