

In partnership to
Educate, Nurture & Empower



Abbey Multi Academy Trust

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Code of Conduct for Abbey MAT Governors and Trustees

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Code of Conduct for Governors and Trustees

Academic Year 2021/2022

Introduction

“To work in partnership to educate, nurture and empower”

Our vision is that the academies, supported by Abbey MAT, will provide an environment which is welcoming, caring, calm, disciplined and purposeful and will stretch our young people academically, support them pastorally and help them develop socially and spiritually.

We are committed to raising the skills base across our communities by ensuring a focus on quality, encouraging innovation and strengthening the ethos of the academies as distinctive schools. The framework will strive to maintain academies which will retain their own independent culture and ethos whilst operating within a strategic partnership to improve quality, share best practice and operate effectively and efficiently.

This Code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from our governors and trustees in order for our boards to properly carry out their work within Abbey MAT and its individual academies.

This Code is anchored in the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life and is also aligned with the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education which outlines principles that support ethical decision-making and challenge unethical behaviour in schools and trusts.

This Code should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation, our role descriptions, and our constitutional documents (the Abbey MAT Articles of Association, our agreed Scheme of Delegation and any other direction issued by the Abbey MAT Board of Trustees from time to time).

Aims, scope and principles

This Code aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all involved in governance at Abbey MAT to follow.

By creating this Code, we aim to ensure that governors/trustees carry out their role with honesty and integrity, and help us to ensure our Trust is an environment where everyone is safe, happy and treated with respect.

By undertaking a governance position within Abbey MAT, all governors/trustees agree to faithfully abide by this Code.

Failure to follow the code may result in disciplinary action being taken, as set out in the appendix.

Please note that this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, governors/trustees will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the Trust and its pupils.

Review and monitoring

The Trust Board will review and approve the code of conduct annually, ideally at the first meeting of the autumn term. The Trust Boards will also review the code of conduct upon any significant changes to the law or Trust policy.

Code of Conduct

1. We agree to abide by the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life

We will follow these principles set out by the government at all times. They apply to anyone who holds a public office:

- **Selflessness**

We will act solely in terms of the public interest

- **Integrity**

We will avoid placing ourselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence us in our work. We will not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

- **Objectivity**

We will act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

- **Accountability**

We understand that we are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions and will submit ourselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

- **Openness**

We will act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. We will not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

- **Honesty**

We will be truthful

- **Leadership**

We will exhibit these principles in our own behaviour. We will actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

2. We will follow the Framework for Ethical Leadership in Education

The Ethical Leadership Commission has developed a Framework for Ethical Leadership which builds on the Nolan Principles to help academy leaders take difficult decisions. The framework helps to support a culture in which ethical decision making can flourish. Leaders include both those who are paid to lead academies and those who volunteer to govern them.

Academies serve children and young people and help them grow into fulfilled and valued citizens. As role models for the young, how we behave as leaders is as important as what we do. Abbey MAT leaders, including governors/trustees, should show leadership through the following personal characteristics or virtues:

- **Trust:** *Leaders are trustworthy and reliable*
We hold trust on behalf of children and should be beyond reproach. We are honest about our motivations.
- **Wisdom:** *Leaders use experience, knowledge and insight*
We demonstrate moderation and self-awareness. We act calmly and rationally. We serve our academies with propriety and good sense.
- **Kindness:** *Leaders demonstrate respect, generosity of spirit, understanding and good temper*
We give difficult messages humanely where conflict is unavoidable.
- **Justice:** *Leaders are fair and work for the good of all children*
We seek to enable all young people to lead useful, happy and fulfilling lives.
- **Service:** *Leaders are conscientious and dutiful*
We demonstrate humility and self-control, supporting the structures, conventions and rules which safeguard quality. Our actions protect high-quality education.
- **Courage:** *Leaders work courageously in the best interests of children and young people*
We protect their safety and their right to a broad, effective and creative education. We hold one another to account courageously.
- **Optimism:** *Leaders are positive and encouraging*
Despite difficulties and pressures, we are developing excellent education to change the world for the better.

3. We will focus on our core governance 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

4. As individual board members we agree to:

Fulfil our role and responsibilities

1. We accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management.
2. We will respect the roles of the executive leaders and staff, and their responsibility for the day to day management of the school/Trust and avoid any actions that might undermine such arrangements.
3. We will fulfil our role and responsibilities as set out in our scheme of delegation and role descriptors, understanding the ways in which our role differs from and works with others in the Trust.
4. We will develop, share and live the ethos and values of our Trust and our school/s.
5. We agree to adhere to school/trust policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law.
6. We will work collectively for the benefit of the Trust/school/s.
7. We will be candid but constructive and respectful when holding senior leaders to account.
8. We will consider how our decisions may affect the school/s and local community.
9. We will accept that we have no legal authority to act individually, except when we have been given delegated authority to do so, and therefore we will only speak or act on behalf of the board when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
10. We accept that where responsibility has been delegated to a governing board, committee, or individual, the governing board as a whole remains accountable to the Abbey MAT Board of Trustees

11. We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the board or its delegated agents and will not speak against majority decisions made as a collective outside a board meeting.
12. We will ensure our comments reflect current organisational policy even if they might be different to our personal views when formally speaking or writing in our governing role.
13. Where decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or may place pupils at risk, we will speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities.
14. We will act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
15. When making or responding to criticism or complaints, we will follow the established procedures.
16. We will strive to uphold the school's/trust's reputation in our private communications (including on social media). (see appendix 1)
17. We will be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school/trust and our actions within the Trust, school/s and the local community will reflect this.
18. We will not discriminate against anyone and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all.
19. We will not undermine fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs
20. We will responsibility for our self-evaluation, regularly reviewing our own and our board's performance, constitution and skillset
21. We will take part in any training or development required to fill any gaps in the skills we need for effective governance
22. We will comply with relevant guidance and legislation and our funding agreement that sets out how we must manage school/trust funds, and procure goods and services
23. We will act with integrity and transparency when making financial decisions, and understand that our financial management and decision-making will be scrutinised and audited
24. We will declare all gifts worth more than £0 and record them on the gifts and hospitality register as set out in the Abbey MAT Gifts and Hospitality Policy
25. We will not accept bribes

26. We will work to actively identify and manage risks to the school/trust.

Demonstrate our commitment to the role

1. We acknowledge that accepting office as a governor/trustee involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy
2. We will involve ourselves actively in the work of the board, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving on committees or working groups where required.
3. We will make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to.
4. We will recognise the importance of being a present part of our community and will ensure that our use of videoconferencing facilities to participate in meetings organised to take place face-to-face is by exception, not routine.
5. We will arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol.
6. We will utilise the Governors Virtual Office (GVO) to carry out our role effectively and follow the Governors Virtual Office protocol (**see appendix 3**)
7. We will get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities.
8. We will visit the school/s and when doing so will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and undertake them within the framework established by the Trust, observing school and board protocol.
9. When visiting the school in a personal capacity (for example, as a parent or carer), we will continue to honour the commitments made in this code.
10. We will participate in induction training and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis.

Build and maintain relationships

1. We will develop effective working relationships with Trust and school leaders, governance colleagues, staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders from our local community/communities.
2. We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings.
3. We will work to create an inclusive environment where each board member's contributions are valued equally.

4. We will support the chair in their role of leading the board and ensuring appropriate conduct.

Respect confidentiality (see appendix 2)

1. We will observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of meetings when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families.
2. We will not reveal the details of any board vote.
3. We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.
4. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave office.

Declare conflicts of interest and be transparent (see appendix 2)

1. We will declare any business, personal or other interest that we have in connection with the board's business, and these will be recorded in the register of business interests.
2. We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise.
3. If a conflicted matter arises in a meeting, we will offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote.
4. We accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust's website.
5. We will act in the best interests of the school/trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group.
6. We accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the board, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor/trustee and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school/trust website.
7. We accept that information relating to board members will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database (Get information about schools), some of which will be publicly available.

We understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions.

Appendix 1

Social Media and Email Use

When using email, social media, or posting online, we will:

- Uphold the reputation of the school and Abbey MAT at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with the academy community
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure we are happy with the information about us that is publicly available
- Report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards governance colleagues to the chair and the principal/headteacher/CEOs as appropriate

We will not:

- Accept friend requests from pupils or join any private parent groups associated with the school/s
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any governor/trustee, staff member, or other member of the school/s or trust communities
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us, the school/s, or the trust into disrepute
- Use personal email addresses to discuss board matters. This includes discussions about the school and its operations, or any of its pupils, staff or governors.

Use of personal email addresses

Abbey MAT uses the GVO to manage governor papers and discussion posts. As the GVO is a secure platform, Abbey MAT governors may choose to use a personal email address to receive notifications from the GVO and to receive and respond to non-confidential email communications from the school and Trust such as newsletters, meeting or event notifications, and availability requests.

Governors must not use personal email addresses for official governing board business, for discussions about the school and its operations, or any of its pupils, staff or governors or to share information relating to pupils' personal data, assessment data or sensitive information about members of staff.

Where a governor needs to use email for any of these purposes because it is unfeasible to use the GVO, a school email account must be used. School email accounts, which include online access to the Trust's Office 365, can be obtained by contacting the Trust's Governance Professional.

Use of WhatsApp and other social media platforms

Abbey MAT governors/trustees must not use WhatsApp or similar platforms as a method for official governance communications and governing board business as this may have safeguarding, employment law, and data protection implications under the GDPR.

This is because the Trust and school has no lawful way to gain access to the data or information stored or processed by WhatsApp or similar platforms should they need to.

This is important for cases which may need to include HR investigations, legal action, defence against a legal claim, or instances that require the ability to demonstrate to external agencies that the school's/trust's records are kept in a managed structure.

Governors/trustees are likely to use WhatsApp and similar platforms on their personal devices for personal communication and of course this is not a problem. However, where governors/trustees begin to communicate with other governors and staff members using their personal WhatsApp accounts to share school-/trust-related information which could include categories of personal data this becomes a risk.

Governors/trustees must therefore ensure that they use a GVO discussion post or their school/trust email account to conduct board business and contact other governors and staff members about school-related issues. This includes discussions about the school/trust and its operations, or any of its pupils, staff or governors/trustees. Governors/trustees must never share information relating to pupils' personal data, assessment data or sensitive information about members of staff using personal email addresses or any social media platform, including WhatsApp.

Appendix 2

Openness, Transparency and Confidentiality

Conflicts of interest

To make sure our board takes impartial decisions without bias, we will:

- Publish an up-to-date register of business and pecuniary interests of all governors including associate members
- Declare any potential conflicts of interest at the beginning of each meeting, and withdraw from the meeting for the relevant item of business and not vote on the matter.

The general principle is that no one should be involved in a decision where their personal interests may conflict with those of the board or, where their interest is greater than any other member of the board. Those involved in the governance at Abbey MAT have a legal duty to act only in the best interests of the Trust and its pupils.

Where a situation arises in which they may not be able to do this due to a personal interest they have, steps should be taken to identify, prevent and record the conflict.

As governors/trustees, we agree to disclose:

- Ownership or partnership of a company or organisation which may be used to provide goods or services to Abbey MAT or its academies
- Goods or services we offer which may be used by the Abbey MAT or its academies
- Trusteeships and governorships at other educational institutions or charities
- Any close relation to someone who satisfies either of the above
- Any close relationship to someone who is employed by Abbey MAT or its academies

As governors/trustees, we agree to withdraw from meetings and not vote when:

- There may be a conflict between our personal interests and the interests of the board;
- A fair hearing is required and there is any reasonable doubt about our ability to act impartially; or
- We have a pecuniary interest.

If there is any dispute as to whether an individual is required to withdraw from a meeting and not vote, the rest of the members of the board present at the meeting must vote on it.

The key guidelines for withdrawal from a meeting are:

- Governors/trustees have to withdraw when their own appointment, reappointment or removal as a member of the board or a committee is under consideration.
- Where a governor/trustee, or a person acting as an advisor to the board, is also employed by the Trust, they must withdraw themselves from the part of any meeting at which there is a discussion about their own employment, pay, or performance appraisal.
- Any governor serving on an LGB/GAB who is employed to work at the school (other than the Principal/headteacher), must withdraw from a meeting where the pay or performance appraisal of any particular person employed to work at the school is under discussion. They can remain in meetings where the quality of teaching is discussed in general terms, but not where they could identify the staff members being discussed. For other matters, there will only be a conflict where their interest is greater than the generality of other staff at the school.
- A Principal/headteacher must withdraw from any meeting where their own pay or performance appraisal is under discussion or where their interest is greater than the generality of staff at the school.
- A clerk may have a conflict of interest or pecuniary interest but is not required to withdraw from a meeting unless the clerk's appointment, remuneration or disciplinary action is being considered. However, where a conflict of interest or pecuniary interest occurs they must only act in the capacity of a clerk.

Publishing information

To ensure our boards are transparent and open to the community we serve, we will make certain information publicly available.

We accept that the following information will be published on the school/trust website to ensure transparency:

- The structure and remit of the members, board of trustees, committees and local governing bodies/GABs, and the full name of the chair of each one
- For each member, trustee and local governor (where applicable) who has served at any point over the past 12 months:
 - o Their full name

- o Their date of appointment
- o Their term of office (trustees and local governors only)
- o The date they stepped down (where applicable)
- o The body that appointed them (trustees and local governors only)
- o Their relevant business and pecuniary interests
- o Their attendance record over the last academic year (only for trustees at board and committee meetings and local governors at local governing body meetings)

We accept that the information about governors will be published on Get information about schools (GIAS).

We accept that the approved board and committee minutes and any agenda and papers considered at a meeting will be made available to any interested person.

Openness

We will ensure that any meeting of the board, whether scheduled or not, is conducted in an open and transparent manner and in accordance with the procedures set out in our terms of reference.

Where it is necessary for a small group of governors/trustees to meet outside of normal meeting arrangements, for example, as a working group, we will ensure that the purpose of the meeting is clearly defined and agreed as a board, setting out the remit and responsibilities of the governors/trustees involved, and that the proceedings and any outcomes are recorded and reported back to the full board.

We will ensure openness and transparency outside of meetings by sharing our comments and queries via the GVO. Where our work as governors/trustees requires us to meet or hold discussion with staff for a particular purpose, we will ensure that we record a summary of the discussion, our findings and any outcomes on a Visit Form and return it to the clerk to be reported back to the full board.

Confidentiality

In the course of our role, we are sometimes privy to sensitive information. We will observe confidentiality when discussing this information, and will not publicly disclose:

- Matters that are deemed confidential or concern specific members of staff or pupils, both inside or outside of the academy/trust
- Details of individual governors'/trustees' contributions in meetings or how they may have voted

We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding academy or Abbey MAT business arise outside a board meeting.

We will ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately.

Confidential information will never be:

- Disclosed to anyone without the relevant authority
- Used to humiliate, embarrass or blackmail others
- Used for a purpose other than what it was collected and intended for

Our commitment to confidentiality does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

We will continue to observe confidentiality after we have left office.

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, we will inform the chair as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further.

We understand that if we breach confidentiality, they may be suspended.

Data protection

We will follow Abbey MAT's information security processes and measures and data protection policy when using, storing, sharing and disposing of personal data.

Our commitment to data protection does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

We will inform Abbey MAT's Data Protection Officer (Kerry Weatherill, Abbey MAT Governance Professional, dpo@abbeytrust.org) immediately if we believe that there has been a personal data breach.

Appendix 3

Governor Virtual Office Protocol

Our aims in using the GVO:

- To provide a single, secure location where governors/trustees can find all the information they need in their role whenever they want
- To improve communication and collaboration between meetings
- To reduce the length of meetings, make them more focused, reduce the time spent informing governors and increase the time available for discussing strategic issues

GVO Structure

Trust Key Documents Area: Abbey MAT resources for governors and trustees, including meeting schedules, templates, Abbey MAT Articles of Association and Scheme of Delegation.

National Key Documents Area: National resources for governors and trustees, including statutory guidance affecting academies including the Governors Handbook, Academies Financial Handbook, Keeping Children Safe in Education, etc.

Calendar: Contains details of all relevant governance meetings and events across Abbey MAT.

Board Area: information that pertains to the work of the board, including Meeting folders, Tasks folders (details of actions that have been assigned and the steps taken to carry them out), reference information in the relevant library folders, and discussion posts.

Meeting agendas and papers can be found in the meetings folder of the Board Area in the 'meeting pack'. These can also be accessed from the calendar on the relevant date

Our practice in using GVO:

- We will look in GVO at least once per week
- We will respond to Notifications sent from the GVO within 48 hours using the Comment function as appropriate. Notifications will only be used when it is genuinely urgent that governors/trustees are alerted
- We will express our views using the Comment function when requested

- We will use the attendance function on Calendar entries to indicate whether we will attend an event
- We will never attach board documents to emails and send them outside the security of the GVO
- We will access meeting agendas and papers via the GVO (available 7 days before the meeting), ensure that we are well-prepared and use the comments function to raise queries in advance of the meeting wherever possible
- We will not table papers at the meeting or communicate them by any other means than through the GVO
- We understand that draft minutes will be put into the GVO within 14 days of the meeting and will review these for accuracy in a timely fashion, raising any queries with the clerk via the chair
- We will review the weekly digest of activity in the GVO and use it to keep up to date with board activity
- We will familiarise ourselves with the workings of GVO and seek help from the Support desk if and when required

Appendix 4

Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Procedure

If a governor/trustee is suspected to have breached the code of conduct, the following procedure will apply:

1. An initial investigation undertaken by the Chair*
2. The Chair will hold a meeting with the governor/trustee to discuss the issue. The governor/trustee may bring a friend to the meeting to support them. Another governor/trustee will attend to corroborate any decisions

*Should it be the Chair that is believed to have breached this code, an alternative investigator (e.g. Vice Chair or another governor/trustee) will be appointed by the Chair of the Trust Board. The Trust Board Vice Chair will investigate where it is suspected that the Code has been breached by the Chair.

Following the meeting with the governor/trustee, if the situation doesn't improve or there is another suspected breach, further action will be taken improve the issue. This may involve:

- Further meetings with the Chair to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
- Support, mentoring or training for the governor/trustee
- Making sure the governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

If there is no improvement in the governors'/trustees' behaviour, the board will vote on a motion to suspend them for up to 6 months. This is a last resort and will not usually be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances.

Governors/trustees may be suspended if they:

- Are a staff governor undergoing disciplinary proceedings at the school
- Breach confidentiality
- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the ethos and/or religious character of the school (where applicable) or Abbey MAT, and has brought, or is likely to bring the school or the Trust into disrepute
- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the board (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not

directed to do so by Abbey MAT) and has brought, or is likely to bring the school, Trust, or the office of the governor/trustee into disrepute

'Bringing into disrepute' may include, but is not limited to:

- Speaking out publicly against the school or trust
- Being disrespectful to members of the school and trust communities
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a PTA meeting or on social media

A governor/trustee may be removed from office where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension
- There has been serious misconduct. We will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 principles of public life, if sufficiently serious
- They display repeated and serious incompetence
- They have engaged in conduct aimed at undermining fundamental British values
- Their actions are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school and/or trust

Appendix 5

Role Descriptions

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Abbey MAT Local Governing Board Member

Governors work together to carry out their core functions:

- 1 Ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- 2 Holding school leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and the performance management of staff
- 3 Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent
- 4 Ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard

Governors must also ensure that the governing board complies with all legal and statutory requirements. Governors should seek the advice of the clerk to the governing board and other professional advice as appropriate.

Governing body strategic responsibilities

Governing bodies work closely with headteachers and senior leaders. Headteachers are responsible for day-to-day management whereas the role of the governing body is strategic. As such, governors are responsible for:

- Determining the mission, values and long-term ambitious vision for the school, in line with the Trust's strategic plan
- Deciding the principles that guide school policies and approving key policies delegated to the governing board
- Working with senior leaders to develop a strategy for achieving the school's vision in accordance with the Trust's strategic plan
- Ensuring that parents, pupils, staff and the wider community are involved, consulted and informed as appropriate
- Ensuring that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum such that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and adult life
- Monitoring the school's budget and ensuring it is managed effectively together with premises and other resources
- Monitoring the school's staffing structure and keeping it under review to ensure it supports delivery of the strategy
- Ensuring the Trust's risk management procedures are implemented in the school and that risk control measures are appropriate and effective

Monitoring and evaluating school performance

Governors must monitor the priorities that have been set to ensure progress is being made by:

- Measuring the school's impact and progress towards its strategic objectives
- Ensuring the required policies and procedures are in place and the school is operating effectively in line with these policies
- Evaluating relevant data and feedback provided by school leaders and external reporting on all aspects of school performance
- Asking challenging questions of school leaders in order to hold them to account
- Holding the headteacher to account for standards, financial probity and compliance with agreed policies
- Visiting the school to monitor implementation of the strategy and reporting back to the board (this could be in a link governor capacity)
- Ensuring that complaints are dealt with effectively in line with policies and procedures

Panels and committees

When required, governors are expected to serve on panels or committees in order to:

- Appoint the headteacher and other senior leaders
- Review the appraisal of staff and make pay recommendations
- Hear staff grievances and disciplinary matters
- Review decisions to exclude pupils
- Deal with formal complaints

Contribution to the governing body

Governors should ensure that they are making a positive and meaningful contribution to the governing body by:

- Attending meetings (a minimum of 6 full governing board meetings and a number of ad hoc/ panel meetings each year), reading papers and preparing questions for senior leaders in advance
- Establishing and maintaining professional relationships with senior leaders and colleagues on the board

- Getting to know the school, including visiting the school occasionally during school hours
- Undertaking induction training and developing knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis

Expenses

Governors should receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as governor. Full details are contained within the Trust's Expenses Policy for Governors and Trustees. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and dependency care, but not loss of earnings.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Abbey MAT Chair

Applicable to chairs of all Abbey MAT boards, including local governing boards and committees

Note: for chairs of local governing boards in Abbey MAT schools, the relevant organisation in the description below will be the school and references to headteacher will apply. For the Chair of the Trust Board, the relevant organisation shall include the Trust and its academies and references to the chief executive(s) will apply.

Chair role description

The chair of the board is a leadership role that provides clear direction to the board who work as a team to challenge, support and contribute to the strategic leadership of the school/trust.

Governing boards at all tiers should focus on 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 (school or trust as applicable) and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation (school or trust as appropriate) and making sure its money is well spent
4. Ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard

Strategic and leadership responsibilities

The chair provides strategic leadership that allows governors/trustees to fulfil their functions by:

- Ensuring that there are transparent and effective processes for recruiting and inducting a new headteacher/chief executive(s)
- Ensuring appropriate governor/trustee involvement in the recruitment of senior leaders
- Ensuring the board has good knowledge of the school(s) and has mechanisms in place to obtain and listen to the views of parents, pupils and staff
- Ensuring that the board sets a clear vision and strategy for the trust/school(s)
- Ensuring that the board and headteacher/chief executive(s) have a shared vision and sense of purpose

- Leading the board in monitoring the headteacher/chief executive's implementation of the strategy
- Setting the culture of the board, balancing and valuing both the support and challenge responsibilities
- Ensuring the board acts as a team
- Ensuring that there is a succession plan for the chair, vice chair and any committee chairs

Wider leadership responsibilities

The chair has wider leadership responsibilities associated with the role and status of lead governor/trustee on the board, such as:

- Being a first point of contact and playing a leading role in employment matters as required by the adopted procedures of the school/trust (for example, grievance, disciplinary, capability)
- Where required, acting as a first point of contact and respondent in matters raised with the school/trust by external bodies (such as the local authority or Department for Education)
- Where required, representing the board in its dealings with external partners and be an advocate for the school/trust
- Attend school/trust events as appropriate and encourage other governors/trustees to do so

Developing the team

Boards needs a range of skills and knowledge to carry out their functions effectively. It is the responsibility of the board's chair to:

- Ensure the board has the required skills and commitment to govern well, and that appointments made fill any identified skills gaps and ensure a diverse team
- Ensure all members of the board have a thorough understanding of their role and receive appropriate induction and ongoing development as required
- Ensure that board members are involved, feel valued and encourage their development
- Ensure members of the board act reasonably and in line with the board's agreed code of conduct
- Develop a good working relationship with the vice chair, keeping them fully informed and delegating tasks as appropriate

Working with school leaders

Chairs and school leaders (headteachers in schools and the chief executive(s) of a trust) must develop effective working practices which are mutually supportive. It is the responsibility of chair to:

- Ensure that the governing board fulfils its duty of care to the headteacher/chief executive, including ensuring a safe and secure working environment, a reasonable work-life balance, and support for their wellbeing
- Ensure all board members concentrate on their strategic role and hold the headteacher/chief executive to account
- Build and encourage a professional relationship with the headteacher/chief executive which allows for honest conversations, acting as a sounding board and ensuring there are no surprises at meetings
- Meet regularly (normally monthly) with the headteacher/chief executive
- Oversee and participate in the headteacher/chief executive's performance review, ensuring that appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) is provided
- Ensure that the headteacher/chief executive provides staff with an understanding of the role of the board and acts as link between the two

Influencing improvement and achieving outcomes

The board's activities should be focused on school / trust improvement and achieving the best outcomes for pupils. The chair of the board is expected to:

- ensure the board is involved at a strategic level in the school's self-evaluation process and that this feeds into its key priorities
- ensure the board's business is focused on the strategic priorities
- collaborate with school leaders to ensure the board has the information it needs to monitor the implementation of policies; pupil attainment and progress and the financial health and sustainability of the school or trust
- evaluate and question information in order to identify appropriate actions, modelling this approach for other board members
- take the lead in representing the governing board at relevant external meetings with agencies such as Ofsted, the DfE and the local authority

Leading governing board business

Chairs are responsible for the smooth and effective running of board meetings and so are required to:

- Ensure that the board appoints a professional clerk capable of advising the board on its functions and relevant procedure (*Trust Board only*)
- Ensure that a development and appraisal process is in place for the clerk that includes a conversation about the pay and remuneration they receive (*Trust Board only*)
- Work with the clerk and the headteacher/chief executive to plan for board meetings, ensuring that agendas focus on the board's key responsibilities and strategic priorities and reduce unnecessary paperwork
- Chair meetings effectively and promote an open culture on the board that allows ideas and discussion to thrive while ensuring clear decisions are reached as quickly as possible
- Collaborate with the clerk to establish effective working procedures and sound committee structures
- Ensure that decisions taken at the meetings of the board are implemented
- Ensure that complaints made to the board are dealt with in a timely and effective manner through the adopted complaints procedure

Expenses

Trustees/governors should receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as trustee/governor. Full details are contained within the Trust's Expenses Policy for Governors and Trustees. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and dependency care, but not loss of earnings.

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Abbey MAT Trustee

Trustees work together to carry out their core functions:

- 1 Ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- 2 Holding school leaders to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils and the performance management of staff
- 3 Overseeing the financial performance of the school 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 Trust Board's strategic responsibilities

The trust board works closely with their senior executive leaders. 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(s) 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 budget and ensuring it is managed effectively together with premises and other resources
- 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 leaders 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 leaders in order to hold them to account
- Ensuring that there are policies and procedures in place to deal with complaints effectively

Panels and committees

When required, Trustees are expected to serve on panels or committees in order to:

- Appoint senior leaders
- Review the appraisal of staff and make pay recommendations
- Hear staff grievances and disciplinary matters
- Deal with formal complaints

Contribution to the Trust Board

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 plus committee meetings and a number of ad hoc/ panel 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
- 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 between all tiers of governance

Expenses

Trustees should receive out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of fulfilling their role as trustee. Full details are contained within the Trust's Expenses Policy for Governors and Trustees. Payments can cover incidental expenses, such as travel and dependency care, but not loss of earnings.