



# The Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust

## Governance Framework

Mission, Vision and Values

Governance Overview

Scheme of Delegation

Scheme of Financial Delegation

**SEPTEMBER 2023**



## 1. The Underlying Principles for this Governance Framework

- One Trust
- Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction at both Trust and local governance level
- Enable everyone in the Trust to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, open, honest and accountable way
- Local governance supports driving schools forward with their headteacher
- Accountability and responsibility are clearly defined so that there is a shared, practical understanding across the Trust
- Meeting flows and linkages provide for effective communication, participation and consultation
- Roles and responsibilities are so defined that duplication is avoided
- Delegated decision-making powers are clearly defined and understood by all levels of governance
- Reporting structures bottom-up and top-down are both defined and effective
- Practice is in line with the Trust's Articles of Association and the Academy Trust Handbook

## 2. Our Mission, Vision and Values

The Trust has a clear **mission** at its core, ensuring that all pupils are enabled to flourish, rooted in God's Love - academically, socially, spiritually, physically and mentally. This is central to our work and rooted in our Christian foundation (John 10 v 10). Our commitment to mutual flourishing within the school community is built upon our shared belief in Church of England principles. In our Trust, just as in the wider Church of England community, 'flourish' refers to prospering, thriving and growing – not shrinking out and dying. It means prayerfully encouraging all within our schools so that they might prove fruitful, successful and contented in the longer term. We seek to provide space generously for all to flourish in life and all of its structures. Equitable treatment for all pupils, staff and the wider community is a core part of enabling this long term, holistic flourishing.

We have a clear **vision** about creating successful schools for the benefit of their communities. We expect any school in the Trust to continuously improve, and those graded by OFSTED as RI/Serious Weaknesses/Special Measures to make rapid progress and be able to secure



an OFSTED grading of at least “Good” within 3 years post-conversion (COVID delays permitting external validation of these outcomes). All schools provide rich and diverse curricula which evolve to meet the needs of their children and local communities, as well as delivering educational excellence to enable them to continue to flourish in later life.

The way we work and deliver against our mission is critical to our Trust. We have shared, agreed **values** of:

Hope; Nurture; Equality; Respect; Collaboration

The Trust's vision is underpinned by a Christian values framework which is adopted by all schools. It provides clear expectations for all Trust employees on how we wish our values to impact on all areas of school life. It draws on, and is informed by, the National Church of England Vision for Education and the Diocesan Board of Education Vision.

Each school within the Trust has a personalised vision for education, developed locally to reflect the individual character and needs of the school community. This vision is underpinned by the Trust's wider vision, and agreed with the Trust, but it is owned and driven by the headteacher and their Local Governing Board.

### 3. The Trust's purpose

- Deliver outstanding education, with a Christian ethos, leading to high achievement and progress for all of our pupils
- Ensure that vulnerable children are nurtured and cared for, and that they are able to flourish
- Care for our pupils and staff, so that they are safe and their wellbeing is a priority
- Inspire a love of learning for all pupils through the provision of a tailored, rich and wide curriculum
- Enable our schools to work together to share knowledge, experience and expertise, for the benefit of our learning community
- Enthuse school staff by providing them with access to learning opportunities and helping them to flourish
- Help school leaders to drive continuous improvement and raise aspirations
- Deliver great governance which has a positive impact upon the outcomes, progression and care of all



- Be cost effective, ensuring that funding is maximised for the benefit of our learning community

#### 4. The Trust's Community

The Trust is dedicated to delivering education that serves local communities. Our academies are inclusive, welcoming those from all and no faiths, from all abilities and backgrounds. We believe in providing a high-quality education, underpinned by Christian values, which enables every child to flourish.

Underpinning all of the Trust's work is a belief in educational excellence. The Trust serves all stakeholders by providing academies with the highest levels of academic rigour and pastoral care.

Our academies are places where children and young people develop and thrive intellectually, socially, culturally and spiritually. All of the Trust's schools teach a broad and balanced curriculum within national guidelines focusing on core skills. This is designed to ensure that all pupils reach their academic potential and seek to enrich their experience along the way. Pupils will be enabled to succeed in an atmosphere of high expectation, aspiring to educational excellence with a firm foundation of values.



## 5. Trust Governance

The key elements of the Governance Structure are:

### a) The Members

The Members of the Trust hold the Trust Board to account for the effective governance of the Trust. The original Members were the first signatories to the original Articles of Association which set out the Trust's charitable object and governance structure. They are guardians of the Trust's Christian vision and values, and custodians of governance in the Trust. The Diocesan Board of Education is a corporate member of our Trust. The Chair of the Trust Board is also a Member, but is the only director to sit on both Boards

### b) Trust Board

The Trust Board ensure clarity of the Christian vision, ethos and strategic direction of the Trust. In our Trust, the individual members of the Trust Board are known as Directors. The Trust Board meet half termly and employ a committee structure to ensure that all duties and responsibilities are appropriately undertaken, and that there is a high level of support and challenge for the Trust. Committees' membership and Terms of Reference are reviewed each year to ensure that the focus of the Board is consistently refreshed to meet DSAMAT need, and that they support the delivery of annually agreed Board priorities. The Board may also appoint Directors or committees for key areas of work. In 2023/24 these are identified for Safeguarding and SEND.

Committee Chairs can feedback directly to the Trust Board at each full Trust Board meeting; minutes of all meetings are shared on GovernorHub for permanent reference and appear on the agenda at the following Board meeting.

Local Governing Boards (LGBs) report to the Trust Board or its Committees through the CEO, the Chairs' Network and through the minutes of LGB meetings and an 'open' invitation to contact the Board at any time.

Effective reporting and liaison through open engagement at all levels of Trust governance are seen as key to the success of the structure.



### **c) Local Governing Board (LGB)**

LGBs are committees of the Trust Board and have delegated decision-making powers in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation within this document. They drive the local Christian vision for each school and are responsible for ensuring that the school continues to flourish, with support from the wider Trust. They work with parents and the wider community to ensure that each school is at the heart of the community and reflects the evolving needs of the stakeholders in the local area.

All local governing boards are built on skillset and include at least two parents of school aged children. LGBs must have a Safeguarding link governor and should also have a SEND link. Local Governing Board members are expected to support and promote the Christian ethos in Church schools, and values of the Trust in all DSAMAT schools. In Church schools, for previously designated VC schools at least one LGB member must be specifically appointed as a 'Foundation' member with responsibility for upholding the Academy's historic Christian foundation. However, all local governors must agree to uphold the Trust vision to enable all to flourish: rooted in God's love and are committed to upholding and promoting the unique and distinctive Christian ethos, vision and values of the school. In previously designated VA schools, all appointed governors must be specifically appointed as 'Foundation' members. Whilst LGBs are mostly focussed on individual schools, some policies enable governors from one school to support another for investigations and support. Where this is possible, it is clearly stated within a policy. All governors are encouraged to share good practice within the Trust and beyond, whilst maintaining the confidentiality of each school, their staff and pupils. There are half termly, online Chairs' network meetings in place to ensure that this is facilitated, as well as termly network meetings for Safeguarding link governors.

Central team members liaise with LGB Chairs and local governors in many ways:

- Sharing news and information with Chairs via email
- Meeting with Chairs remotely each half term
- Supporting network and training for core governance roles, such as Safeguarding and SEND
- Providing guidance, support, compliance meeting notes and education reports to all LGB Chairs

Whilst the Trust's central team do not normally attend LGB meetings, they are able to do so in exceptional circumstances. LGBs are also able to commission reports and specific triangulation work from the specialists in the central team where this agreed to be useful and practicable.



Whilst the Members are custodians of governance in the Trust, it is the Trust Board that is responsible for the vision, strategic direction and compliance with the statutory or regulatory requirements of the Trust.

The Trust Board delegate responsibility for delivery of the vision and strategy to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is also the Accounting Officer. The Trust Board hold the Chief Executive Officer to account for the performance of the schools within the Trust. The Chief Executive Officer in turn works with the Chief Education Officer and Local Governing Boards (LGBs) to drive up standards, providing support, challenge and oversight to the work of the school headteachers. Where deemed appropriate by the Trust Board, a Local Governing Board may support more than one school. Specific responsibilities concerning the development of each school are delegated to LGBs.

The Chief Executive Officer reports to the Trust Board on the performance of the Trust, including the performance of the schools, which is supplemented by a cycle of monitoring. This is recommended to the CEO by the Chief Education Officer (CEdO), and approved by the CEO, following approval from the Trust Board.

## **Governance Operations**

### **Clerking**

LGBs work with the Trust to identify, employ and support the work of an LGB Administrator. The Trust Governance Manager ensures that the work of the LGB Administrators is consistent, and quality assured across the Trust. LGB Administrators liaise on a regular basis to facilitate sharing best practice, common processes, required systems and documentation and to provide each other with support, guidance and assistance when needed. The Trust Governance Manager ensures that the LGB Administrators are provided with up-to-date information regarding best practice in education and governance.

### **Meeting Schedule**

LGBs will usually meet half termly to carry out the work delegated to them. They may meet more frequently if essential although more frequent meetings should not become commonplace. The Trust Governance Manager will ensure that a schedule of work is available to guide the work of the LGBs. LGB meetings should not routinely take longer than two hours.



### **Meeting agendas and minutes**

The LGB Administrator will have available a standard meeting agenda template. Local Chairs and LGBs may add to this in order to meet the needs of their local community and school. Minutes should be stored securely by the LGB Administrator, shared on GovernorHub.

### **Common systems, Procedures and Documentation**

To enable the governance of schools to operate consistently and in accordance with the Trust's Governance Framework, the Trust disseminates templates and content for the following documentation:

- a) agendas
- b) meeting minutes
- c) terms of reference
- d) annual calendar of business
- e) Leadership report
- f) policy schedule

This documentation will be reviewed annually in the summer term by the Trust Governance Manager and will be made available for the start of the new academic year.





## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

### a) Members

The Members ensure the success of the Trust. They hold the Trust Board to account for the effective governance of the Trust but have a minimal role in the actual running of the Trust. It is the Directors, not the Members, who are the organisation's key decision makers. Members are essential to the integrity of an academy trust governance structure. They are focused on the success of the organisation, success being measured against the achievement of the charitable object of the organisation, namely to advance for the public benefit education, recognising and supporting the individual ethos of the schools.

Members have responsibility for the Articles of Association (the documents that set out the rules under which the Trust must operate). The Articles of Association describe how members are recruited and replaced, and the basis on which the Members appoint some Directors to the Trust Board. The Members may remove Directors if they fail to fulfil their responsibilities. Accordingly, the Trust Board submits an annual report on the performance of the Trust to the Members. Members are responsible for approving any amendments made to the Trust's Articles of Association.

### b) Trust Board Directors

*Directors of the Trust are bound by both charity **and** company law, therefore the terms 'Trustees' and 'Directors' are both used in the pursuance of business. 'Directors' is used throughout this document to provide clarity.*

The Directors are responsible for the management of the Trust in accordance with the provisions set out in Articles of Association. They:

- ensure clarity of the Christian vision, ethos and strategic direction
- hold the Chief Executive Officer to account for the educational performance of the schools and their pupils, and the management of staff



- oversee the financial performance of the Trust and ensure value for money
- ensure statutory and regulatory requirements are met within schools across the Trust

The Trust Board delegate to the CEO responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Trust and for holding the Trust Central Team and LGBs to account for operational performance by reference to monitoring reports and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The CEO delegates to wider Trust members.

The Trust Board have responsibility for reviewing and, where necessary amending the governance structure, which includes changes to the Scheme of Delegation. The Trust Board must ensure that the organisation has the necessary skills and that all the directors, local governors and staff are appropriately trained. The Trust Governance Manager oversees the arrangements for skills audits, reviews and subsequent training programmes designed to ensure that Trust governance is well advised and fit-for-purpose.

#### **c) Local Governing Boards (LGBs)**

The Trust Board delegates responsibility to the LGBs for each school as outlined in this document. Local Governors are responsible for:

- ensuring clarity of the local vision, ethos and strategic direction, including in Church schools the Christian ethos
- triangulating, on behalf of the Trust Board, the educational performance of the organisation and the pupils,
- ensuring the voices of stakeholders within the school community are captured by the school leadership team and considered and acted upon where appropriate.

The Trust Board may delegate any additional responsibilities as appropriate but any such responsibilities will always be delegated with additional, separate Terms of Reference.



**d) Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

The CEO is the Accounting Officer and so has overall responsibility for the operation of the Trust's financial responsibilities and must ensure that the organisation is run with financial effectiveness and stability, avoiding waste and securing value for money.

The CEO leads the Trust's Central Team and leads strategic and operational work. The CEO is accountable to the Trust Board for the performance of the Central Team.

**e) Headteachers**

Headteachers are responsible for the day-to-day management of their school, supported by the strategic leadership of the LGB, taking account of the Scheme of Delegation and the Scheme of Financial Delegation. Their work is supported and guided by the CEO and the COO and their teams.

**Decision-Making Matrix (Scheme of Delegation)**

The Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust promotes a culture of consultation and collaboration across the organisation. Whilst the tables below show where the action or responsibility for each activity lies, it is expected that key leaders across the Trust will be involved in a process in order to achieve the best outcome for our community.

Please note that Local Governing Board and/or Headteacher delegation may, in extreme circumstances, be passed to the CEO of the Trust. Where this occurs, the Trust Board will be in agreement and the local leadership informed. The intention will always be to resume standard delegation as soon as possible.

The CEO may delegate their responsibilities to the wider senior executive team.



Decision	Delegation				
	Members	Trust Board	Chief Executive Officer	LGB	Headteacher
<b>Leadership, Wellbeing and HR</b>					
Ensure that the Trust and all schools demonstrate equality, diversity and inclusion and operate within relevant employment legislation and comply with safeguarding requirements		✓			
Appoint/remove Members	See Note* on p17				
Appoint/remove Directors in line with Articles of Association	✓				
Appoint / remove co-opted Directors in line with Articles of Association		✓			
Elect the Chair and Vice Chair of the Trust Board		✓			
Approve role descriptions for the Trust Board and LGBs		✓			
Identify skills within the Trust Board, addressing gaps through recruitment and/or training		✓			
Undertake Trust Board Chairs' Action where delay would be detrimental to a school / pupil / staff member / volunteer to take emergency action or decision otherwise delegated, with CEO.		✓ See ** note on p17	✓ See ** note on p17		
Set pay scales, based on benchmarking for Trust Executive Team		✓			
Review and agree non-leadership Trust Central Team pay scale			✓		
Review and agree and headteacher pay scales in line with school group size			✓		
Recruit, appoint, suspend and remove the CEO		✓			
Undertake Performance Appraisal of CEO		✓			
Recruit, appoint, suspend and remove the Trust Exec Team		✓			
Recruit and appoint Trust Central Team members			✓		
Recruit and appoint the leadership of the Trust Central Team		✓			



Decision	Delegation				
	Members	Trust Board	Chief Executive Officer	LGB	Headteacher
Undertake performance appraisal of central Trust staff			✓		
Monitor the performance of LGBs in fulfilling their responsibilities and accountabilities		✓			
Appoint and remove local governors			✓		
Appoint and remove Chair of LGB			✓		
Approve Code of Conduct and model role descriptions for all members of LGB		✓			
Identify skills within the LGBs, addressing gaps through recruitment and/or training				✓	
Approve the annual pay award for all school staff		✓			
Approve any school restructuring which results in redundancy			✓		
Recruit, appoint, suspend and remove the headteacher			✓		
Undertake performance appraisal of headteachers including pay progression, inviting LGB Chair to meeting			✓		
Recruit, appoint, suspend and remove members of school senior leadership teams					✓
Undertake Performance Appraisal of senior leaders including pay progression					✓
Establish and review the staff structures within each school					✓
Monitor appropriateness of the staff structures within each school			✓		
Recruit and appoint school-based staff according to published structures					✓
Undertake performance appraisal of staff including pay progression					✓
Ensure compliance with ECT Statutory arrangements and provision			✓		
Appoint and remove Clerk to the Trust Board			✓		
<b>Systems and Structures</b>					
Review and agree Articles of Association	✓				



Decision	Delegation				
	Members	Trust Board	Chief Executive Officer	LGB	Headteacher
Establish and review Trust Board committees, including LGBs, and their terms of reference annually		✓			
Approve schools joining the Trust		✓			
Approve the Governance Framework annually		✓			
Agree annual schedule of business for Trust Board		✓			
Complete an Annual self-review of Trust Board		✓			
Ensure succession planning for the Trust Board		✓			
Agree Trust wide annual schedule of business for LGB		✓			
Approve annual cycle of compliance across the Trust		✓			
Complete an annual self-review of LGBs including a skills audit				✓	
Ensure succession planning for LGBs				✓	
Agree Trust Board agendas and minutes		✓			
Agree LGB agendas and minutes				✓	
<b>Statutory Reporting</b>					
Hold an annual general meeting	✓				
Ensure publication of all required details on governance arrangements of the Trust Board		✓			
Ensure publication of annual report and financial accounts		✓			
Ensure publication of all required details on governance arrangements of the LGB				✓	
Ensure publication of statutory reports on website in line with DfE requirements e.g. pupil premium, sports premium, safeguarding					✓
Ensure the Trust website is compliant with DfE requirements			✓		



Decision	Delegation				
	Members	Trust Board	Chief Executive Officer	LGB	Headteacher
Ensure school website is compliant with DfE requirements					✓
Make changes to the admissions criteria of a school		✓			
Make changes to the Published Admission Number (PAN) of a school		✓			
Make changes to the age range of a school		✓			
<b>Business Strategy</b>					
In conjunction with the Trust Executive Team produce the Trust strategic plan which will include a statement of the Trust's mission, vision, and values		✓			
Agree Trust key priorities and key performance indicators (KPIs) against which progress towards achieving the vision can be measured		✓			
Approve and monitor the academy development plan which will include a statement of the school's vision and values			✓		
Approve Trust-wide policies in accordance with the Trust Policy Schedule.		✓			
Approve local school policies in accordance with the Trust Policy Schedule				✓	
Establish Trust risk register, and review and monitor regularly		✓			
Establish and review a Trust business continuity plan			✓		
Ensure completion and regular review of a school business continuity plan			✓		
Approve annual budget plan		✓			
Approve three-year medium-term forecast		✓			
Review compliance with minimum expectation on length of school week			✓		
Agree annual term dates, INSET and occasional days			✓		



Decision	Delegation				
	Members	Trust Board	Chief Executive Officer	LGB	Headteacher
<b>Educational standards</b>					
Design and implement a school curriculum					✓
Ensure the Trust schools' curricula meet the needs of the Trust and legal requirements			✓		
Ensure a Christian vision for education in line with Trust principles and local context (Church Schools)				✓	
Approve the Christian vision for education for the school		✓			
Consider the suspension or permanent exclusion of a pupil within a Trust school					✓
Review the process of suspensions or permanent exclusions				✓	
Across the Trust, monitor and evaluate overall effectiveness of the quality of standards in education			✓		
Monitor and evaluate the school evaluation form			✓		
Establish the format and content of the CEO's report		✓			
Establish the format, content and themes of Leadership reports			✓		
<b>Ensuring Financial Probity</b>					
Approve the Trust's scheme of financial delegation		✓			
Review the Trust's actual financial performance against budget throughout the year and at year end		✓			
Manage the approved budgets, within agreed authorisation limits as set out in the Trust Schedule of Financial Delegation, monitored by the Trust Central Team					✓





Decision	Delegation				
	Members	Trust Board	Chief Executive Officer	LGB	Headteacher
Appoint external auditors	✓				
Agree focus of external scrutiny for the academic year		✓			
Ensure compliance with external auditors' report		✓			
Ensure appropriate and robust insurance cover for the Trust and its schools		✓			

\* Members can only be appointed, removed and replaced with the consent of the Diocesan Corporate Member (the Board of Education), in accordance with the Articles of Association

**\*\* Notwithstanding any provisions of the Trust's Articles of Association (the articles), if the chair of the Trust Board is of the opinion that a matter of urgency exists and it is not practicable to arrange a board meeting on short notice in the circumstances either:**

*(i) after receiving a written report from the CEO which clearly states, amongst other things, why the item concerned could not be brought to a regular meeting and why it would qualify for urgent decision under this procedure; or*

*(ii) as a result of other information that is brought to their attention and a delay in exercising the function would likely be seriously detrimental to the interests of the Trust, any Academy, pupil or their parent or a person who works or volunteers at the trust,*

*then, in consultation with the CEO, they may exercise any function of the trust which (i) can be delegated to an individual under the articles, the Trust's funding agreements with the Secretary of State for Education (including the relevant Academy Trust Handbook) or (ii) any function relating to the exclusion of pupils."*



## 7. Schedule of Financial Delegation

The approvals set out below should be followed in all cases. They are to be used in conjunction with all expenditure included within the final budget you presented to your LGB, submitted to the Central Team, which in turn was approved by the Board of Directors and submitted to the ESFA. If you do not have individual budget holders, this approval level would revert to the Headteacher.

If you find an additional spend is required, which is outside of the scope of your approved budget and would have an adverse effect on your approved balance, you must raise this in the first instance with the Trust Finance Manager (TFM) and explain the rationale for the additional spend. An internal process will then be triggered involving the CEO, COO and possibly Finance, People and Operations Committee (FP&O) depending on the size and impact of the unapproved budget spend.

With regards to procurement, please note that where a contract spans more than one year, the limits below must be applied to the total value of the contract rather than the per annum cost.

### 1a) Purchasing – school-based finance

Process	Value	Delegated Authority
		Approval
2 quotes required	Over £1,000 and up to £10,000	Budget holder/SLT/HT
3 quotes required	Over £10,000 and up to £30,000	HT
Formal Tender process	Over £30,000 and up to £75,000	COO
Formal Tender process	Over £75,000	FP&O
<b>Payments</b>		<b>Authorisation</b>
Invoices	Up to £10,000	Budget holder/SLT/HT
Invoices	Over £10,000 and up to £30,000	HT
Invoices	Over £30,000 and up to £75,000	COO
Invoices	Over £75,000	FP&O



### 1b) Purchasing - Trust Central finance

Process	Value	Delegated Authority
		Approval
2 quotes required	Over £1,000 and up to £10,000	TFM
3 quotes required	Over £10,000 and up to £30,000	TFM
Formal Tender process	Over £30,000 and up to £75,000	COO
Formal Tender process	Over £75,000	FP&O
<b>Payments</b>		<b>Authorisation</b>
Invoices	Up to £10,000	TFM
Invoices	Over £10,000 and up to £30,000	TFM
Invoices	Over £30,000 and up to £75,000	COO
Invoices	Over £75,000	FP&O

### 2a) Payroll

Each school's payroll is reviewed by the Business Lead and approved by the Headteacher on a monthly basis. For Trust Central Team, payroll is reviewed by the Trust Finance Partner and approved by the Trust Finance Manager on a monthly basis.

Payroll is administered by EPM (the Trust's HR provider) and paid to all staff via BACS.

### 2b) Headteacher expenses and mileage claims

Headteachers to send expenses and mileage claim forms to Trust Finance Manager for approval before BAC's run is processed and/or payroll is processed depending on the payment method.



## 2c) All staff expenses and mileage claims

All staff to follow process as per the DSAMAT Finance Manual

## 3) Writing off Bad Debt

All requests to write off bad debt must be approved by the COO and will be administered in line with the Academy Trust Handbook.

## 4) Disposal of Surplus Stock & Assets

All requests to dispose of surplus stock and assets must be approved by the COO.

## 5) Bank Account Management

	Delegated Authority		Requirements
	Prepare	Approve	
VAT Returns	Trust Finance Partner (TFP)	TFM	
Bank Reconciliations	TFP	TFM	To be completed at least monthly
Funding Reconciliations	TFP	TFM	To be completed at least monthly
Budget Forecast return	TFM	COO	See Finance Handbook for further details



## 6) Approval of Returns and Registers

	Delegated Authority		Requirements
	Prepare	Approve	
Register of Business Interests	Clerk	Trust Governance Manager	To be updated at least annually
Gifts and Hospitality Register	Academy Business Lead	HT	To be completed as and when required
Funding Reconciliations	TFM	COO	To be completed at least monthly

## 7) Operating and Finance Leases

Any proposal for an Operating Lease or Finance Lease must be approved by the COO. The Trust will ensure any lease maintains the principles of value for money, regularity and propriety in line with the requirement of the Academy Trust Handbook.