



Online Meet-Up

Becoming a School Governor / Academy Trustee

Friday 11th November 2022
20:00-21:30

Agenda

- Introduction
- What is a school Governor/Trustee?
- Key Terms
- What do they do?
- What do they not do?
- Is it a lot of work?
- Does it make a difference?
- How do you become one?
- Appendix

Introduction

- All children in England aged 5-16 are entitled to a free place at a state school.
- State schools receive funding through their Local Authority (LA) or directly from the government. The most common ones are:
 - **Community / Maintained schools** - funded by the LA, they are not influenced by business or religious groups and follow the national curriculum. **Managed by Governors**
 - **Foundation / Voluntary schools** - funded by the LA but they have more freedom to change the way they operate. Sometimes they are supported by representatives from religious groups. **Managed by Governors**
 - **Academies and Free schools** - run by not-for-profit Academy Trusts, they are independent from the LA - they have more freedom to change how they operate and can follow a different curriculum. They can also be supported by representatives from religious groups. **Managed by Trustees**

Introduction

"By 2030, all children will benefit from being taught in a family of schools, with their school in a strong Multi Academy Trust (MAT) or with plans to join or form one"

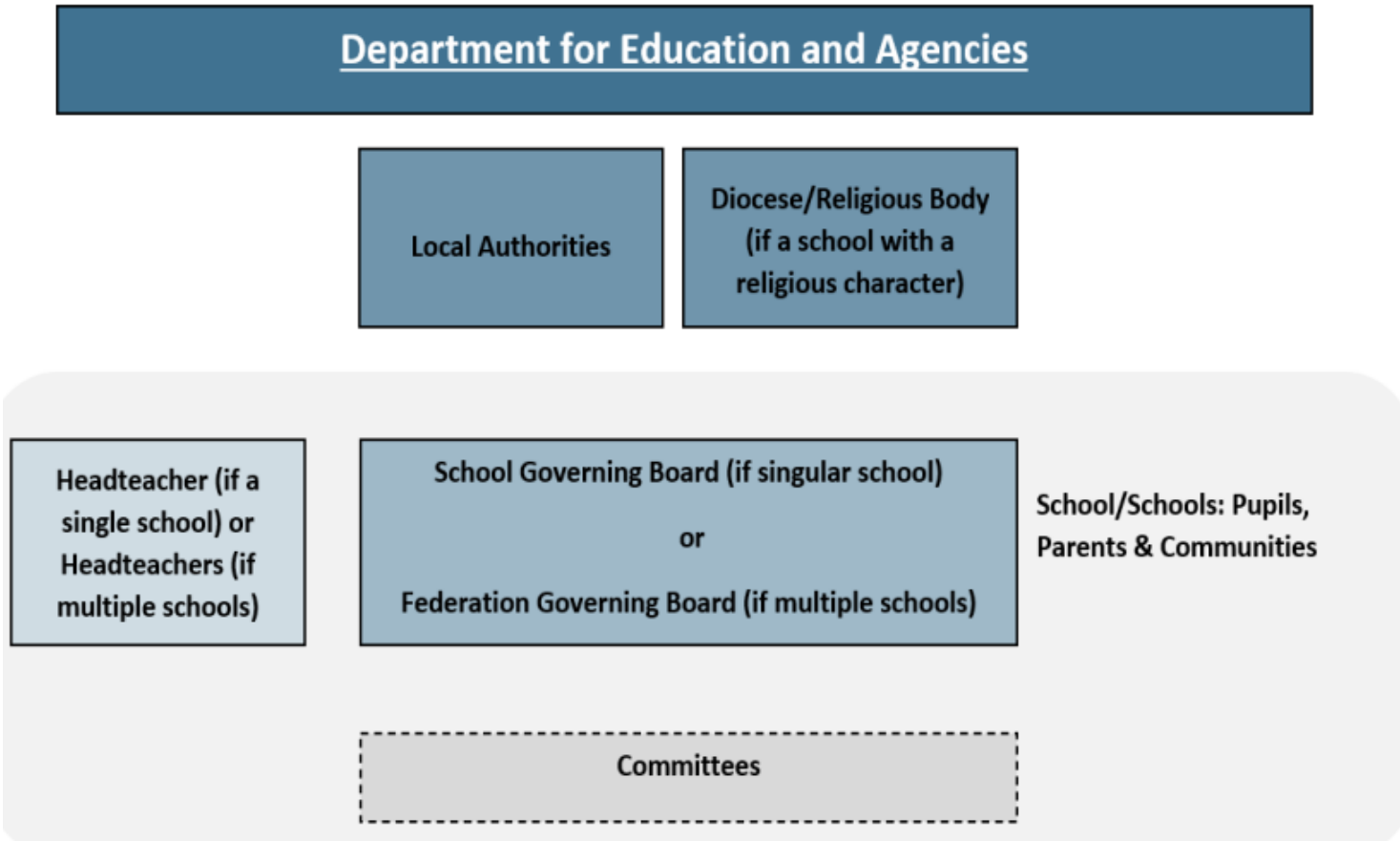
Mar 2022 White Paper

The Department for Education (DfE) wants all schools to benefit from the support and opportunity to collaborate that comes from being in a strong Multi-Academy Trust. A strong Academy Trust can provide:

- Financial resilience
- The opportunity for a central approach to curriculum design and expertise
- Economies of scale in the procurement of key services
- The best structure for effective teacher recruitment, training and deployment across the Trust

What is a school Governor?

Map of common Governance structures in a Maintained school



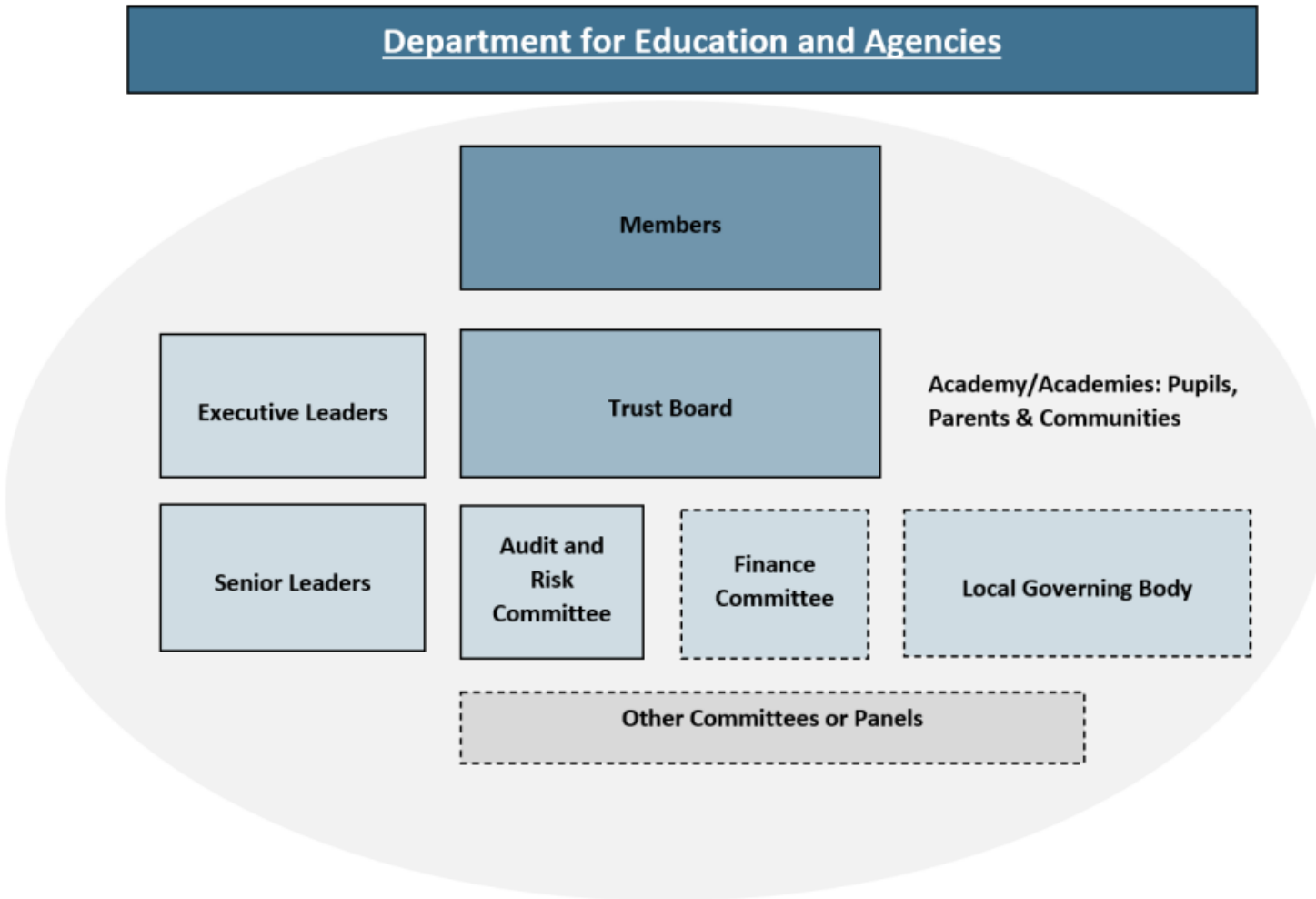
- The LA is involved in the governance of Maintained schools.
- All categories of maintained school, including voluntary-aided, foundation schools and maintained school nurseries can federate together under one governing body.
- The establishment and membership of a Federation means that the governors and school leaders commit to improving the outcomes for all children across the Federation, not just a single school.

Key Terms – Maintained Schools

- **Federation** - defined in law as two or more maintained schools (including nursery schools) operating under the governance of a single governing body. Each federated school is treated as an individual school, meaning it:
 - keeps its existing DfE category and does not gain, lose, or change its religious character through being part of a Federation
 - continues to have its admissions determined by the appropriate admission authority
 - will receive individual budgets, noting that the local authority can allocate this as a single budget share to the federated governing body. Additionally, the federated governing body, upon receiving the delegated budget for all the schools in the Federation, can allocate the budget to each individual school or pool all or part of the budget with the agreement of governors.
 - is inspected individually by OFSTED

What is an Academy Trust?

Map of common Governance structures in an Academy Trust



- Academy Trusts continue to have the freedom to design their structure and scheme of delegation to best ensure they have robust and effective governance. Academy Trusts with a religious character use alternative terminology and have slightly different structures
- The Trust board must include at least two parent Academy Trustees, unless (in a MAT) there are at least two parents on each LGB.
- In Academies with a religious character the Members and Academy Trustees must support and develop the religious character of the academies in accordance with the objects of the Academy Trust, as set out in its articles of association

Key Terms – Academy Trusts

- **Members** - Academy Trusts are founded by Members who have a general duty to exercise their powers to further the Academy Trust's charitable purpose. Members should ensure that the objects of the Trust are met, determine the Trust's constitution, and appoint/remove Directors.
- **Trust Board** - the Trust board, led by a Chair, is the decision-making body of the Academy Trust and is accountable and responsible for all the academies in the Academy Trust.
- **Local Governing Body (LGB)** - a Trust board may decide to set up one or more LGBs to oversee an Academy or group of academies (sometimes grouped by region) in the Academy Trust. This would more commonly be the route of entry for parent Governors/Trustees.
- **Executive Leaders** - the Executive Leader in an Academy Trust with a single Academy is the Executive Principal and, in an Academy Trust with multiple academies is the Chief Executive. There may be other Executive leaders e.g. Primary/Secondary Leads, COO, CFO etc.
- **Audit and Risk Committee** - Academy Trusts must establish an Audit and Risk committee. Academy Trusts with an annual income over £50 million must have a dedicated Audit and Risk committee. Smaller Trusts must either have a dedicated Audit committee or combine the function with another committee.
- **Finance Committee** - Academy Trusts should have a Finance committee to which the Trust board delegates financial scrutiny and oversight.

Key Terms – Academy Trusts

- Academies receive funding directly from the government and are run by an Academy Trust. They have more control over how they do things than community schools. Academies do not charge fees for standard state education.
- Academies are inspected by Ofsted. They must follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools and students sit the same exams.
- Academies have more control over how they do things, for example they do not have to follow the national curriculum and can set their own term times.
- Some schools choose to become academies. If a school funded by the local authority is judged as 'inadequate' by Ofsted then it must become an Academy.

What is a school Governor/Trustee?

The governing body is often defined as the '**critical friend**' of the Headteacher, and therefore the school:

"A critical friend offers support, constructive advice, a sounding board for ideas, a second opinion on proposals and help where needed. But a critical friend may also challenge, ask questions, seek information, improve proposals and so seek to arrive at the best solution."

Roles of Governing Bodies and Headteachers (DFE, September 2000)

What do they do?

Regardless of structure, all governing boards have three key functions:

- 1. Ensuring clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction.**
- 2. Holding the Executive Leader(s) to account for the educational performance of the school(s) and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.**
- 3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school(s) and making sure that its money is well spent.**

What do they do?

A good Governor/Trustee will have the following qualities:

Commitment

- Making the necessary time available to fulfil the role
- Having a desire to make a difference in supporting the school(s) to achieve high levels of success for pupils.

Considered (balanced)

- Taking a balanced view of issues – listening to a variety of viewpoints and making a reasoned judgment. This will make others more willing to listen when concerns are raised.

Contributor

- Making meaningful contributions to discussions from an informed perspective on issues that are being dealt with.

What do they not do?

The following points should be considered:

- **Governance should be strategic and not operational.** It is very easy for parents to think they can control day-to-day matters as Governors/Trustees, however this is not their role. The strategic direction of the school(s) is a different aspect and where governor input is needed.
- **Parent governors should avoid reference to their own children.** Observations should be made relating to issues affecting all pupils, as they represent all parents.
- **There must be, of necessity, a degree of tolerance.** It will be necessary to speak up on issues, but to do so carefully. Being on a committee requires a level of working with others. The power of persuasion is vital and a real attribute for a governor.
- **Teachers are the experts.** Most parents are not trained in teaching and learning. However, parents can be influencing the style and approach to controversial areas in teaching and to extra-curricular matters and should feel free to do so.

Is it a lot of work?

Activities can include:

- Attending meetings, both the Full Governing Board, and any committees you are asked to join.
- Looking at information and evidence on the school's progress and discussing with school leaders.
- Visiting the school(s) and listening to the views of staff, pupils and parents.
- Selecting and appointing a Headteacher/other staff.
- Making decisions about issues such as pupil exclusions and staff disciplinary matters.
- Undertaking induction training and ongoing development.

A typical expectation of a parent Governor/Trustee:

- Six meetings/year of up to two hours each (usually evenings), needing to read the documents in advance.
- At least two school visits/year - these would be two hours maximum.

Does it make a difference?

What does the Bible say?

"Ye are the salt of the earth...Ye are the light of the world".

Matthew Ch.5

- As **salt** prevents decay in food, so Christians should stand against evil on this earth.
- As **light** illuminates a dark place, so Christians should bear witness to the truth of God's Holy Word.
- None of us can do everything, but all of us can do something. We must act according to Biblical principles, and dependent upon God.
- As enabled, being 'salt and light' brings glory to God.



Does it make a difference?

- The need for Christian representation in schools is great. Becoming a Governor/Trustee is an ideal way to have an influence for good - wisdom and grace is needed to use the influence in a right way.
- Involvement in school governance gives opportunities to speak up on PSHE, RSE, and other areas.
- All school policies must be approved by the Board/LGB – this allows scrutiny of key issues.
- As a parent, having a deeper understanding of how the school operates can be very beneficial.

How do you become one?

Anyone over the age of 18 can be a Governor/Trustee, and you don't need to be a parent.

Educational, financial, HR, health and safety, marketing and general business skills are desirable, however, simply being a parent, having good listening skills and demonstrating commitment will be valuable.

- Apply for any open vacancies at your local school / Trust.
- Prepare for application and interview process with the materials in the Appendix
- If no vacancies are advertised, write to the Headteacher or Chair and indicate your interest.

Appendix – Further Reading

- National Governance Association - <https://www.nga.org.uk/>

GOV.UK - [School governance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook-2019)

- [Governance Handbook 2019 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook-2019)
- [The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-constitution-of-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools)
- [Academy Trust governance - structures and role descriptors \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-governance-structures-and-role-descriptors)
- [Maintained school governance - structures and role descriptors \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maintained-school-governance-structures-and-role-descriptors)
- Education White Paper March 2022 - [Opportunity for all -Strongschools withgreatteachers for yourchild \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-for-all-strongschools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child)

Appendix – Seven Principles

Governors / Trustees should uphold the **Seven Principles of Public Life**:

Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity - Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness - Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty - Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership - Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Lord Nolan, Committee on Standards in Public Life 1995

Q&A / Open Discussion