



Victorious Academies Trust Spring Term 2022 Governance Briefing Note

ACTIONS REQUESTED:

Governors are asked to read this briefing note and to access relevant information and guidance via the e-links provided.

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The Trust Board is the 'accountable body', but delegates significant responsibilities to LGBs in line with the Trust's Scheme of Delegations for governance. All governors must, therefore, review, understand, and operate within the requirement set out in the key documents signposted below as relative to their remit.

Please review the document individually and discuss any matters of specific relevance and interest at LGB and as relevant at any sub-committee meetings. If you have any queries, please do seek further advice – including from your Clerk (Governance Professional) or from your Chair.

Key governor reference documents

RECOMMENDATION: The following are key reference documents providing initial guidance and signposting to other relevant documents – for use by all Trustees and Local Governors.

- **DfE Governance Handbook (revised October 2020) and Competency Framework for Governance**

These 2 documents contain guidance on the roles and duties of governing boards across schools in both the Academy Trust and LA Maintained school sectors - and on the skills, knowledge and behaviours governors need to be effective

[Governance handbook and competency framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

- **ESFA Academy Trust Handbook (effective September 2021)**

The ESFA Academy Trust Handbook:

- describes the governance and financial responsibilities of academy trusts reflecting their status as charitable companies acting in the public interest
- refers to trusts' statutory responsibilities covering safeguarding and health and safety
- explains when trusts must obtain ESFA approval in advance for financial transactions. Trusts must ensure they are familiar with these requirements as described in part 5. ESFA may intervene where trusts do not seek ESFA approval in advance
- balances the need for effective financial governance with the freedoms that trusts need over their day-to-day business
- sets out the areas of HM Treasury's Managing Public Money applying to trusts, and reflects the 7 principles of public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership) to which public office holders must adhere
- covers all types of academies including single academy trusts, trusts with multiple academies, free schools, studio schools, university technical colleges, alternative provision and special academies
- must be complied with as a requirement of trusts' funding agreements with the Secretary of State



- sets out that ESFA may intervene where it has concerns about the trust’s compliance with financial management requirements and describes potential consequences for trusts and individuals

[Academy Trust Handbook - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

- **DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education**

[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

- **DfE Academy Trust Governance Collection**

The DfE Academy Trust Governance Collection on the Gov.uk website provides links to relevant guidance and resources for academy governors.

[Academy trusts: governance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Keep yourself updated.....

Have you subscribed?..... to receive

..... The DfE School Governance Update service

Updates provide ‘important news and communications’ from the DfE providing headlines and signposting to key documents – use the link to access the latest DfE Governance Update and to sign-up to the DfE mailing list for direct receipt of future updates.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-governance-update>

.... And‘Correspondence related to Education and Education and Skills Funding Agency’

This service is primarily intended for trust executives but provides useful background for Trustees and may be of interest to other governors.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/esfa-update>

Our Trust subscribes to the following bodies which provide independent information, advice, guidance, and training:

- The School Bus
- The National Governance Association (NGA)
- The NGA Learning Link

Reminder log in details are available via your Clerk.

What’s New and Upcoming in governance: Spring Term 2022

From our Trust

Our Trust’s Scheme of Delegations for Governance, Approach to Governance and Terms of Reference for LGBs and other governance groups are available on the Trust Website.

Any governor who has not yet returned their completed Declarations and Commitments schedule (which was circulated this year with governor’ confirmation of appointment’ letters) is asked to do so



at the earliest opportunity. This is essential to enable schools and the trust to evidence compliance – including relative to an Ofsted Inspection.

Please ensure that your personal Level 1 Safeguarding Training is up to date. The trust requirement is that each governor will complete Level 1 safeguarding training on appointed and re-appointed - and complete annual safeguarding update training in intervening years. Ofsted may request sight of evidence of governor safeguarding training. Your Clerk will arrange for the circulation of an e-link to safeguarding training / gathering of evidence where a governor has completed equivalent training elsewhere.

Following Autumn Term reviews, LGBs are operating with revised monitoring arrangements over 2021/22 which ensure clear focus on the priorities of the school's 2021/22 School Development Plan and aim to minimise additional workload requirement on school leaders in line with the continued challenges of school operations.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic circumstances continue to present unprecedented challenges for schools and school leaders remain under significant pressure. The Trust follows all relevant guidance from local public health services and is continuing to recommend that governors continue to hold LGB and any sub-committee meetings virtually using the Microsoft Teams platform and to restrict in-person visits to school including for Link Governor and other monitoring activities to essential activities where these are unable to be conducted effectively via virtual means. Governors are again being asked to focus activity on key trust and school development priority areas and to minimise requests for bespoke reporting in order to deliver effective governance with the minimum impact on staff workload.

The 2021/22 Trust Governor Training Programme continues to offer one-hour online sessions covering both basic governance and topical matters (many requested by governors through the 2021 Governor Survey) – provided by the central support team or commissioned specialists. Electronic session handouts are provided to help attendees' feedback key learning points to their LGB.

From the DfE / ESFA

Priorities for Spring Term 2022:

Consensus guidance from key national bodies including the National Governors Association, The Key for School Governors etc is for a cautious return to a more-traditional governance activities including oversight through visits with due regard to the need to minimise additional leadership workload given the ongoing challenges of teaching and learning and general school operations. Guidance also encourages continued focus on mental health and wellbeing (pupil and staff) and on 'listening to the voice of stakeholders' (pupils, staff, parents and wider community)

Briefing on key updates for Spring Term 2022

DfE School Governance Update: November 2021

Contents include:

- Welcome message from Baroness Barran - appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for the School System – September 2021)
- Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees updated
- National Leaders of Governance: eligibility for funded support and new designations
- Free services for finding skilled volunteers to become school governors and academy trustees.



- Webinar for governors and trustees on implementing flexible working
- The View my financial insights (VMFI) tool has been updated with your latest data (academy trusts only)
- Update your information: Get Information about schools GIAS

[School governance update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

RECOMMENDATION: Useful background briefing for all Trustees and Local Governors.

DfE guidance on coronavirus

Keep updated on DfE guidance (including 'What school leaders, teachers and school staff need to do during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak') via the DfE website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-schools-coronavirus-covid-19>

RECOMMENDATION: Useful background information for all Trustees and Local Governors – including relative to reviews of school operating risk assessments.

Updated DfE Guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

DfE Guidance on Sexual Violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges was updated for 1 September 2021.

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

RECOMMENDATION: Useful background information for all Trustees and Local Governors. Essential briefing for governors with Safeguarding remit.

Ofsted updated guidance for summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts

In September, Ofsted launched updated guidance for summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts (MATs) to ensure that these mirror the 2019 education inspection framework. Summary evaluations look at the extent to which a MAT is delivering high quality education and improving pupils' outcomes. Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector said: "Multi-academy trusts form a large part of our educational landscape and many decisions about the day-to-day running of an academy take place at trust level. It's important, therefore, that we have conversations with the trust about the quality of education provided across their academies.

By visiting more MATs, we will be able to gain a better understanding of their contribution to the school system. And we will be able to share valuable insights and information that can help the sector improve."

This process runs separately to individual academy inspections but involves batched inspections of a number of a MAT's academies to form a basis for exploration with MAT leaders around the impact the MAT has on the quality of education that its academies provide.

[Multi-academy trusts: summary evaluations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Essential Reading for Trustees. Useful background reading for all Local Governors.

External Reviews of Governance: Guide for schools and academy trusts

DfE Guidance on how to arrange and effective external review of governance and improve the performance of the board.

[External reviews of governance: guide for schools and academy trusts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

RECOMMENDATION: Recommended background reading for Trustees.



Ofsted 2020 - 21 Annual Report

The Ofsted Annual Report 2020/21 examines the quality of schools, early years, children's social care and further education and skills. The report focuses on the impact of the pandemic on the learning and development of children and learners across the country and includes key findings on pupil absence, mental health disorders in children and the impact of partial school closures on pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Report promotes the importance of a well-planned and well-delivered curriculum with schools offering children 'a rounded experience, including a rich curriculum, sport and physical activity, and extra-curricular opportunities that broaden their horizons'. Headline findings include that:

- Good, well-structured, face-to-face education will help most children catch up
- Daily routines, and the return of sport and extra-curricular activities, will improve children's mental and physical health
- Those requiring specialist care and support must not be left wanting
- Improvements that were in progress before the pandemic need to continue and other reforms must be taken forward urgently

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-202021-educationchildrens-services-and-skills>

RECOMMENDATION: Useful background reading for all trustees and local governors.

Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees (updated)

ESFA Guidance 'Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees' was updated in September 2021.

This resource brings together a range of data to help boards analyse, discuss, and challenge the educational and financial performance of their school or academy trust. Key changes are:

- updated and improved all sections to provide new information and to reflect changes in policy
- included new subsections on cyber security, additional support for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities and governing body composition
- included links to additional sources of information, such as the 'View my financial insights' (VMFI) tool

[Understanding your data: a guide for school governors and academy trustees - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-your-data-a-guide-for-school-governors-and-academy-trustees)

RECOMMENDATION: Essential briefing for Trustees – specifically for members of the Trust Achievement and Improvement Committee and background briefing for Local Governors

Reminder: Cyber Security

Given recent ESFA sharing of aware of an Academy Trust loss due to cyber-attack all governors are asked to refresh their understanding of cyber-risk and cyber security measures.

[The General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#)

[The cyber security in schools: questions for governors and trustees](#)

For further information and tips on how to stay safe online visit [The National Cyber Security Centre website](#).

RECOMMENDATION: Essential reading for all Trustees and Local Governors.

School uniforms

DfE non-statutory guidance on school uniforms was updated in November 2021. The guidance is intended to help support schools in **developing and implementing their school uniform policy**.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-uniform/school-uniforms>

RECOMMENDATION: Useful background briefing for all trustees and local governors.



The above guidance was published at the same time as guidance on the **cost of school uniforms**. The key points within this guidance are:

- Parents should not have to think about the cost of a school uniform when choosing which school(s) to apply for. Therefore, schools need to ensure that their uniform is affordable.
- In considering cost, schools will need to think about the total cost of school uniforms, taking into account all items of uniform or clothing parents will need to provide while their child is at the school.
- Schools should keep the use of branded items to a minimum.

[Cost of school uniforms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

RECOMMENDATION: Useful background briefing for all trustees and local governors.

DfE funding announcements

Dedicated Schools Grant funding allocations 2022-23

The DfE has confirmed the dedicated schools grant (DSG) funding allocations for the 2022 to 2023 financial year, the pupil premium funding rates for 2022 to 2023, information on the allocation of the supplementary funding for schools and high needs that was announced at the spending review. Every primary school will receive at least £4,362 per pupil. To help schools target support for disadvantaged children and young people, Pupil Premium rates in 2022-23 will increase by 2.7 per cent.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-2022-to-2023>

Pupil Premium eligibility and funding rates 2022 to 2023

Pupil premium funding rates to Primary schools for each eligible child in 2022 to 2023 have been published as:

- Pupils who are eligible for free school meals, or have been eligible in the past 6 years - £1385
- Pupils who have been adopted from care or have left care - £2410

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>

RECOMMENDED: Background information for Trustees and Local Governors – confirming funding rates included in school budget projections.

Reminder:

Further information regarding Pupil Premium funding is available via:

- guidance for school leaders on [using pupil premium](#) funding effectively
- [Education Endowment Foundation's pupil premium guide](#)
- the [funding allocations](#) which show the funding given to each school and at national, local authority and parliamentary constituency level

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Essential background information for Local Governors when reviewing Academy Pupil Premium expenditure plans and impact assessment.

Essential background information for all governors with Link / Special Responsibilities relative to Pupil Premium funding.

Essential background briefing for Trustees particularly those on the Trust Finance Committee.

School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document 2021 – published October 2021

[School teachers' pay and conditions document 2021 and guidance on school teachers' pay and conditions \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

RECOMMENDATION: Essential reference document for all Trustees and Local Governors



Special educational needs (SEN) support: findings from a qualitative study

Published in December 2021, this Report presents findings from a qualitative study involving mainstream primary and secondary school leaders' and teachers', explores approaches to identifying and meeting the needs of pupils receiving SEN support and impact evaluation.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039112/SEN support - Findings from a qualitative study.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039112/SEN_support_-_Findings_from_a_qualitative_study.pdf)

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

Useful background briefing for all trustees and local governors.

Essential reading for SEND Link Governors

Reminder:

NASEN the National Association for Special Educational Needs is a charitable membership organisation that exists to support and champion those working with, and for, children and young people with SEND and learning differences.

Nasen hosts Whole School SEND - a consortium of charities, schools and organisations committed to helping children and young people with SEND or learning differences.

Nasen hosts the SEND gateway - an online portal offering access to high quality information, resources and training for meeting the needs of children with SEND.

RECOMMENDATION: Useful resource tool for all trustees and local governors – particularly for SEND Link Governors. Memberships are free.

Experiences of relationships and sex education (RSE)

Evidence from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England 2 (LSYPE2) on young people's views on RSE, and patterns of sexual risk-taking.

[Experiences of Relationships and Sex Education, and sexual risk taking \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039112/Experiences_of_Relationships_and_Sex_Education_and_sexual_risk_taking.pdf)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Useful background context briefing for all trustees and local governors – particularly relative to reviews of SRE curriculum and policy.

Recommended reading for SRE Link Governors.
