**An Introduction to Local Board governance in the Link Academy Trust**

Being a governor is a challenging but hugely rewarding role. It will give you the chance to make a real difference to our pupils in the Link Academy Trust, give something back to your local community and use and develop your skills in a school environment.

Our Trust maintains Local Boards for each geographical area, currently Totnes, Newton & Teign and Woodleigh. They need a group of volunteers that have a balance and diversity of knowledge, skills and experience to enable it to be effective. The Local Boards focus on teaching and learning, the day to day operation of the school, including safeguarding, health and safety and security. Ofsted (the national inspection body for schools) has repeatedly noted that the most effective schools demonstrate effective leadership and management - including by the Local Board.

Anyone aged over 18 can be a governor (but there are some exceptions) and you do not need to be a parent. There is no requirement for you to have an understanding of the education system, just the necessary skills, character and time to contribute. There is plenty of training available to help you learn about education which we will provide either in house or by using external providers, including online training. Academies need and benefit from a range of professional knowledge on their Local Board, but the main focus for us is the effective education and well-being of our pupils as the Board of Trustees carries the overall responsibility for decision making.

Governors in our organisation offer the support, challenge and learning to every Academy Head that ensures there is a very effective and close link between the performance of each individual academy and the Trust Board. Their role is vital in ensuring Trustees have the knowledge and understanding of the academies to be able to fulfil their role effectively. It is a very important and highly valued role.

As a governor or trustee, you will be able to:

* Use your own experience of education and life beyond school to inform conversations and learn about how our Academies operate to provide the best possible education for our pupils
* Develop and utilise your skills in a local board-level environment
* Make a valuable contribution to education and your community
* Support and challenge the Academy so that it continues to advance pupils and staff through regular visits and close liaison with Academy Heads
* Bring your unique experiences, perspectives and insights in to decision-making in the interests of the school community

**What do the Link Local Board governors do?**
The Local Board provides accountability in schools. It has three key functions:

* Overseeing the educational performance of the school, making sure all pupils make good progress ensuring specific grants are well spent to have impact, in particular the Pupil Premium Grant and the Sports Grant.
* Holding the Academy Head to account for the educational performance of the staff and pupils by **learning** about educational pedagogy and research, **supporting** school actions and **challenging** outcomes and impact.
* Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and operational direction at Academy level; in our church Academies this includes Christian distinctiveness.

Governors’ work with the Academy Heads to ensure the aims and objectives for the Academies are relevant and support setting the appropriate policies and systems for achieving those aims and objectives. They support the monitoring and evaluation processes to have a good understanding of Academy progress and act as a source of challenge and support to the Academy Head. In action, this means:

* Engaging with pupils, staff, parents and the school community
* Sitting on panels and making decisions about things like pupil exclusions
* Addressing a range of education issues in partnership with the Academy Head including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special needs, staff workload and teacher recruitment
* Looking at data and evidence to ask questions and have challenging conversations about the school
* Fulfil the expectations set out in the Scheme of Delegation

Governors must be prepared to adopt the Nolan principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Governors should also be committed to their role and to young people; confident in having courageous conversations; curious with an enquiring mind; able to challenge the status quo to improve things; collaborative to build strong relationships; critical to improve their own work and that of the board; and creative in problem solving and being innovative.

**What will be expected of me?**
The average time commitment is five to eight hours per month, although it will vary depending on the needs of the Academy. This includes meetings, background reading and school visits. As well as Local Board meetings, there are specific governor roles which you may like to contribute to, examples include the representative for Local Boards on the Directors Standards and Curriculum committee (two hour meeting three- five times a year). Similarly leads such as Safeguarding have a higher level of responsibility and will need to give more time to the role.

Like magistrates or members of a jury, governors have a right to reasonable time off work for their public duties, although this may be unpaid. Your company’s HR department will be able to tell you about its policy.

The Link Academy Trust sets a term of office for its governors, this is four years. Many people choose to serve multiple terms, however as a volunteer you can resign before your term is finished if your circumstances change and you cannot commit fully to the role.

Governance is a voluntary role and therefore it is not paid. The Trust pay travel and other expenses, as set out in the policy Director and Governor Allowances.

As it is good practice for Trusts to take up references before confirming their decision to appoint, please be prepared to provide these if requested. You will need to complete a declaration of interests to declare any conflicts of interest you will have including conflicts of loyalty and financial interests – this information must be published by the Academy on its website. You must undergo an enhanced DBS check, and your appointment will be subject to this – this will be carried out by the Trust. Once all this is in place, the Local Board can then make a decision about your appointment.

**What training and support is available?**
There is no requirement for you to have any specific training to be a governor.

The Link Academy Trust has an induction folder which will give you the basic information and there will be training available both online and internally which will help you get up to speed.

The Trust belong to the National Governance Association (NGA) and they provide support and guidance to help you be confident and effective in your role, to compliment support and training provided by the Trust.

This includes access to NGA’s extensive online guidance centre containing a wealth of governance resources.

**Will I be liable?**
Each individual governor is a member of a Local Board. Individual governors may not act independently of the rest of the Local Board; decisions are the joint responsibility of the Local Board.

When governing in a multi academy trust (the Link Academy Trust), most responsibilities will lie with the trust board and others with the local boards, please check the Scheme of Delegation, part of the Induction pack.

There are also different categories of governor including parent and staff. If you do not have a connection of this nature to the school, you will be a co-opted governor invited to join the board for the skills you can contribute. The type of governor you will become depends on your situation; however all governors have the same roles and responsibilities once part of the Local Board.