

## Trustee Role Description

**Dixons Academies Trust is governed by a board comprising of the charity trustees of the trust.**

The trust board is the decision-making body of the trust and is accountable and responsible for all of the academies. The board is also the employer of central staff and those within the academies. Trustees set the strategic direction of the trust. They are responsible for compliance with all financial regulations and are accountable to the members and the Department for Education. They must have regard to any guidance on the governance of academy trusts.

### Main responsibilities

All Trust Boards have three core functions:

1. Ensuring clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction.
2. Holding the executive leaders 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.

### The role of trustee and our trust board

- The trust board must operate and make decisions to further our trust's charitable object, which is 'to advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom'.
- As the strategic leader of our trust, it is vital that the board connects and engages with the communities and stakeholders it serves.
- The board should also have regard for the needs of executive leaders and teachers in their academy(ies) to be able to achieve work-life harmony, and, through their strategic role, should provide support and challenge to help reduce unnecessary burdens.
- The board must make decisions in the best interest of students, not personal interests, and welcome a diverse range of viewpoints when debating decisions. Good decision-making is well informed by both available evidence of what works or is likely to be effective, and by the views and needs of key stakeholders, particularly parents.
- The board should play a strategic role and avoid routine involvement in operational matters. They should focus strongly on holding their executive leaders to account for exercising their professional judgement in these matters and all of their other duties. However, since the board is responsible in law for the academies, it may need to intervene in operational matters if a circumstance arises where, because of the actions or inactions of the executive leaders, a school may be in breach of a statutory duty.
- Trustees **must** apply the highest standards of conduct and ensure robust governance, as these are critical for effective financial management. They should follow the Governance Handbook, which describes the following features of effective governance in more detail and will aid compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook:
  - **strategic leadership** that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy
  - **accountability** that drives up educational standards and financial performance
  - **people** with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity
  - **structures** that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities
  - **compliance** with statutory and contractual requirements
  - **evaluation** of governance to monitor and improve its quality and impact

### Statutory duties

Trustees **must** comply with our trust's charitable objects, with company and charity law, and with their contractual obligations under our funding agreement. Statutory duties are described in sections 170 to 181 of the Companies Act 2006, but in summary are to:

- act within their powers
- promote the success of the company
- exercise independent judgement
- exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
- avoid conflicts of interest
- not accept benefits from third parties
- declare interest in proposed transactions or arrangements

As an organisation, our trust has a range of obligations under current legislation and statutory guidance. Trustees' obligations include such matters as safeguarding, health and safety and estates management. Ensuring strong governance in these areas will be a key priority for our board.

Trustees must ensure regularity and propriety in the use of our trust's funds and achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness – the three elements of value for money. Trustees must also take ownership of our trust's financial sustainability and its ability to operate as a going concern.

## Strategic Responsibilities

Trustees are responsible for:

- determining the mission, values and long-term ambitious vision for the trust
- appointing and appraising the senior executive leaders 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 academies 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 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 leadership in order to hold them to account
- ensuring that there are policies and procedures in place to deal with complaints effectively.

## 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 a year), reading papers and preparing questions for the senior executive leadership in advance
- establishing and maintaining professional relationships with senior executive leaders and colleagues on the board of trustees
- getting to know the academies within the trust, including visiting occasionally during school hours
- undertaking induction training and developing knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis.

## Local governance arrangements

The trust governance structure has Local Academy Boards overseeing a cluster of (typically) 3 academies. Trustees are responsible for:

- 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 leaders and the responsibilities of the board and academy committees
- ensuring effective communication channels are in place.