

Academy Committee Terms of Reference

September 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 Academy Committees act as a critical friend to their school. They are not responsible for operational management, but provide strategic monitoring, support, scrutiny and challenge in the following areas:

- Progress against the School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Curriculum delivery and outcomes
- Pupil Premium and Sports Premium
- Community engagement
- Sustainability

1.2 Academy Committees act as the 'eyes and ears of the Trust Board' at school level, helping to ensure that the Trust's values and strategic priorities are lived out in each school.

1.3 Academy Committees provide local scrutiny and assurance in accordance with the Trust's Scheme of Delegation. They report and escalate key themes, risks, concerns and assurance through the Trust's agreed governance reporting arrangements, including to the Trust Board and relevant Board committees where appropriate.

1.4 In carrying out their role, Governors should seek assurance, triangulate evidence and test the information presented by school leaders through appropriate questioning and challenge.

2. Composition and Academy Committee Membership

2.1 Chair

- Each Academy Committee shall have a Chair nominated by the Committee and approved by the Trust Board.
- Term: 1 year, renewable.
- If no suitable candidate is approved, the Trust Board may appoint a Chair.

2.2 Vice Chair

- Elected annually by the Academy Committee.
- Chairs meetings in the absence of the Chair.

2.3 Headteacher/Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The Headteacher is an ex-officio member of the Academy Committee. Attendance may be arranged on a rota basis where appropriate.

2.4 Parent/Carer Governors

As provided for within the SECAT Articles of Association, there is no requirement for Academy Committees to appoint parent/carers Governors. However, Academy Committees are strongly encouraged to include parent/carers Governors, subject to the following terms:

- Up to 3 parent/carers Governors for primary schools, and up to 4 for secondary schools or multi-school Committees.
- Where an election is required under the SECAT Articles of Association, the appropriate election or nomination process will be followed.
- Appointments must be approved by the Trust Board.
- Term of office: 4 years.
- Must be a parent/carers of a pupil within the Trust at the point of appointment.
- Must step down if employed by the Trust.

2.5 Community Governors

- Minimum of 3 per Committee.
- Nominated by the Academy Committee and approved by the Trust Board.
- Must not be a member of Trust staff.
- Term of office: 4 years.

2.6 Governance Professional

Appointed by the Trust Board. Usually the Trust's Governance Advisor. Duties include arranging meetings, circulating papers, recording minutes, tracking actions and supporting governance compliance.

2.7 Size of Committee

- Primary: maximum 9 Governors.
- Secondary or multi-school: maximum 12 Governors.

2.8 Term Limits

Governors may serve a maximum of 2 terms (normally 8 years).

2.9 Diversity

Committees should seek to reflect the diversity of their school community in Academy Committee membership.

3. Quorum

3.1 There must be three Governors in attendance at a meeting, consisting of a minimum of two non-staff Governors, for the meeting to be quorate. If the meeting is not quorate, no formal business can be undertaken and the meeting must be rearranged where necessary.

4. Appointment Requirements

Prior to confirmation as a Governor, all appointees must:

- Complete an Enhanced DBS check (and any other safeguarding checks as required).
- Provide contact details.
- Sign the Code of Conduct.
- Complete a Declaration of Business Interests.
- Consent to required details being published on the school/Trust website.
- Complete the induction programme for new Governors.

5. Conditions of Academy Committee Membership

5.1 Governors are expected to contribute actively and positively to the work of the Committee.

5.2 A Governor must be removed if they:

- Refuse to complete safeguarding checks.
- Fail to attend 3 meetings in one academic year (or miss 6 months consecutively).

5.3 A Governor may be removed if they:

- Breach the Code of Conduct.
- Fail to disclose a relevant business interest.
- Become subject to disciplinary or legal dispute with the Trust.
- Act in a way inconsistent with the ethos of the school or Trust.

6. Meetings

6.1 Frequency: at least once per term, and more frequently if required.

6.2 Agenda: agreed between the Chair and Governance Advisor, with input from the Headteacher and Governance Manager.

6.3 Safeguarding updates will be provided at every meeting as a standing agenda item, and Governors will complete safeguarding training annually. Responsibility for safeguarding oversight remains with the Trust Board.

6.4 The CEO, CFOO and Trustees may attend and contribute.

6.5 Trustees may not serve as Academy Committee Governors without Trust Board approval (reviewed every 6 months).

6.6 All declarations of interest relevant to the business of the meeting must be made at the start of each meeting and recorded in the minutes.

6.7 Resignations should be notified formally and recorded in the minutes of the next Academy Committee meeting.

7. Remit and Role

7.1 The Academy Committee supports the Trust Board through local scrutiny, assurance, support and challenge in the following key areas:

- SEND monitoring.
- Curriculum delivery and outcomes.
- Monitoring the use and impact of Pupil Premium and Sports Premium.
- Monitoring implementation and impact of the School Improvement Plan.
- Engagement with parents, carers and the community.
- Promoting sustainability.

7.2 The Academy Committee will act as a critical friend: questioning, monitoring, supporting and challenging school leaders while remaining strategic and respecting the distinction between governance and operational management.

7.3 Governor monitoring should be purposeful, proportionate and evidence based. It should be driven by the assurance required by the Academy Committee and linked, where appropriate, to SIP priorities, agreed Link Governor responsibilities and areas identified through Academy Committee scrutiny.

7.4 Governors may triangulate information through appropriate sources including discussions with leaders, performance information, SIP milestones, learning walks and pupil, staff or parent/carer voice.

7.5 Governor monitoring is not an inspection activity and Governors must not become involved in operational management or the evaluation of individual staff performance.

7.6 Where scrutiny or monitoring identifies questions, concerns or actions, the Academy Committee should ensure appropriate follow up. Minutes and monitoring records should provide a clear governance trail from evidence and challenge through to leadership response, agreed action, follow-up and, where appropriate, evidence of impact.

7.7 Significant risks or concerns, recurring themes, areas of challenge and relevant assurance should be escalated through the appropriate Trust governance route. This enables the Trust Board and its committees to draw on local governance intelligence without duplicating the work of Academy Committees.

8. Additional Responsibilities

- Opt in to participate in Trust panels (e.g. behaviour, exclusions and complaints) once appropriately trained.
- Undertake an annual skills audit to ensure the Committee has the necessary range of skills and expertise.
- Keep the Register of Business Interests up to date.
- Maintain an annual schedule of business.
- Complete an annual impact evaluation of the Committee's work.
- Conduct annual contribution reviews of Governors.
- Support succession planning and ongoing CPD for Governors.

9. Review and Approval

9.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually and approved by the Trust Board.

9.2 The September 2026 review has updated terminology, governance reporting and the description of Governor monitoring and assurance. It does not make a substantive change to the core delegated responsibilities of Academy Committees.

Date	Version	Approval	Summary of changes
September 2026	2.0	Trust Board – 28 th September 2026	Annual review. Updated terminology from Academy Committee Representative to Governor; updated COO to CFOO; clarified strategic assurance, evidence triangulation, monitoring and follow-up; and updated reporting arrangements. No substantive change to the core delegated responsibilities of Academy Committees.

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