



SECAT

Trustee Recruitment Pack

2026/27

EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS

Join our Trust Board and help shape the strategic direction of a family of schools serving children and young people from age 2 to 18.

A strategic leadership opportunity

Our Trustees bring their experience, judgement and curiosity to collective Board decisions, keeping SECAT's mission, values and 2025–2030 strategy at the heart of governance.

Southend East Community Academy Trust

Welcome to SECAT

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Trustee of Southend East Community Academy Trust (SECAT). This is an opportunity to contribute at strategic level to an organisation that exists to empower children, young people and schools.

SECAT is one organisation made up of a family of schools. We work together to get the best from each school while recognising its individual context and community. Trustees govern for SECAT as a whole: they bring a Trust-wide perspective rather than representing a particular school or stakeholder group.

Our mission and vision

OUR MISSION

To empower children and young people to embrace learning, preparing them for their futures.

OUR VISION

For children and schools to be empowered by SECAT.

Our values

Our values apply to everyone across SECAT, including our volunteers and Trustees. They shape not only what we seek to achieve, but how we work together and govern.

INCLUSIVE Everyone can take part equitably.	ASPIRATIONAL Ambition for everyone, whatever their background.	COLLABORATIVE Working collectively and sharing knowledge.	NURTURING Creating the support people need to flourish.	RESPECTFUL Professional, accountable and respectful when views differ.
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What this means for Trustees

We look for Trustees who will work collaboratively, act respectfully, support inclusive decision-making, maintain high aspirations for every child and school, and contribute to a culture in which people can flourish.

Our Strategy 2025–2030

SECAT's five-year strategy sets the direction for the Trust and is intended to underpin everything we do to 2030. As a Trustee, you will share collective responsibility for keeping that strategy at the centre of Board decisions, testing progress and ensuring that resources and priorities remain aligned with our mission and values.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Consistent, equitable teaching and learning; inclusive provision; opportunities and experiences that enable pupils to meet their potential.

EMPOWERING SCHOOLS

Safe, secure and fit-for-purpose environments, with professional expertise and practical central support that enables schools to focus on teaching and learning.

COMMUNITY

Strengthening relationships and reputation within our communities, exploring broader services and considering growth where it aligns with mission, values and need.

The strategy is brought to life through practical priorities, school improvement plans and strategic service plans. The Board's role is to remain focused on whether those plans are delivering the intended impact for children, schools and communities.

The difference Trustees make

- Keep mission, values and strategy visible in Board decision-making.
- Ask whether activity and investment are producing the intended impact.
- Hold executive leaders to account for delivery while respecting the boundary between governance and operations.
- Ensure risks, resources and opportunities are considered through a whole-Trust lens.
- Stay connected to local schools and communities through proportionate assurance and stakeholder insight.

Strategy to assurance

Mission & values → Strategy 2025–2030 → Trust priorities and improvement planning → school and service delivery → committee and Academy Committee assurance → Trust Board scrutiny and decisions

How we govern at SECAT

SECAT is committed to governance that is strategic, proportionate and focused on impact. Following our wider governance effectiveness work, we have been strengthening the way information, challenge, assurance and local insight reach the Board.

A stronger assurance approach

- Clearer Board papers, with the purpose of each item and the decision or assurance required made explicit.
- Full-year governance planning and earlier agenda-setting so Board and committee time is focused on strategic priorities.
- A Trust dashboard that supports exception-based oversight of key strategic, performance and compliance areas.
- Structured reporting of Academy Committee themes, assurance and escalations into Trust-level governance.
- A clearer focus in monitoring on evidence, constructive challenge, assurance gained, impact and appropriate follow-up.
- More purposeful link Trustee roles, aligned to Board assurance rather than operational inspection.
- Ongoing Board development and regulatory briefings, including implementation of the Academy Trust Handbook 2026.

This means Trustees are expected to do more than attend meetings. They engage with evidence, identify where further assurance is needed, ask constructive questions and keep the Board focused on impact rather than operational detail.

A connected governance model

Members	Custodians of the Trust's governance with specific powers under the Articles of Association.
Trust Board	The legal governing body, collectively accountable for the whole Trust.
Audit, Risk & Resources (ARR)	Detailed scrutiny and assurance across finance, audit, risk, resources and controls.
Curriculum & Pupil Matters (CPMC)	Detailed scrutiny and assurance across education, pupils and relevant Trust-wide priorities.
Academy Committees	Local monitoring, stakeholder insight and assurance within responsibilities delegated by the Trust Board.

Collective accountability

Delegation helps SECAT govern effectively, but it does not remove the Trust Board's overall accountability for the Trust.

The role of a SECAT Trustee

SECAT Trustees are both charity trustees and company directors. They act collectively as the Trust Board and are responsible for the governance of SECAT as a whole.

Three core aspects of the role

Strategic leadership Set and champion vision, culture, strategy and priorities, keeping a long-term focus.	Accountability & assurance Hold executive leaders to account and oversee education, finance, risk, compliance, safeguarding and organisational effectiveness.	Engagement Maintain strategic oversight of relationships with schools, parents, communities and other stakeholders so decision-making is informed by meaningful engagement.
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What Trustees do

- Prepare for and contribute actively to Trust Board and relevant committee meetings.
- Read papers in advance and test the evidence behind the assurance provided.
- Monitor strategic, educational, financial and organisational performance at Trust level.
- Oversee risk, internal control, safeguarding, health and safety, estates and other key responsibilities.
- Contribute relevant professional expertise while recognising that authority rests with the Board collectively.
- Undertake agreed link Trustee or working-group responsibilities where appropriate.
- Maintain confidentiality, declare and manage conflicts of interest, and uphold SECAT's Code of Conduct.

What the role is not

Trustees are not operational managers and do not direct individual Headteachers or Trust staff. They do not inspect schools, duplicate the work of Academy Committees or advocate for one school at the expense of the Trust as a whole. Executive leaders run the Trust; Trustees govern it.

Who we are looking for

We want to maintain a Board with the right collective mix of skills, knowledge, experience and perspectives. Recruitment therefore considers both the contribution of an individual candidate and the current needs of the Board.

The qualities we value

- Commitment to SECAT's mission, vision and values and to improving outcomes and opportunities for children and young people.
- Strategic thinking and the ability to distinguish governance from operational management.
- Sound judgement and confidence to ask constructive, appropriately challenging questions.
- Integrity, discretion and a strong understanding of collective responsibility.
- An inclusive, collaborative and respectful approach, including when views differ.
- Curiosity and willingness to develop knowledge of academy trust governance.
- Capacity to prepare properly and contribute consistently.

Skills and experience

Depending on the Board's current skills profile, relevant experience may include finance, audit and risk; education; HR and organisational development; legal or governance; estates and health and safety; digital,

cyber, data and AI; SEND, safeguarding and inclusion; communications and community engagement; strategy, transformation, sustainability or business leadership. No candidate is expected to cover every area.

Standards and suitability

Trustees are expected to demonstrate the Seven Principles of Public Life and comply with SECAT's Code of Conduct. Appointment is subject to the Trust's Articles of Association, statutory eligibility requirements and appropriate checks. Relevant interests and relationships must be declared and kept up to date.

Commitment, development and support

Trustees need sufficient capacity to prepare for meetings, attend consistently and undertake training and agreed governance activity. The exact commitment varies according to committee and link responsibilities.

Activity	SECAT expectation
Trust Board	Scheduled across the academic year; Trustees should attend and prepare for all meetings wherever possible.
Committee contribution	Trustees may serve on ARR and/or CPMC according to skills, experience and Board needs.
Preparation	Papers are circulated in advance through GovernorHub and should be read before meetings.
Link / assurance activity	Trustees hold designated link responsibilities and undertake proportionate activity between meetings.
Development	Mandatory compliance training, induction and ongoing governance development.
Additional activity	Occasional strategy, development, recruitment, panel or working-group activity may arise.

Supporting you to contribute effectively

- Structured Trustee induction and access to key SECAT governance and strategic documents.
- Mandatory training in safeguarding, data protection/GDPR, Prevent and NCSC cyber security.
- Access to National College training and NGA Learning Link.
- Regular governance and regulatory briefings, including emerging areas such as cyber, AI governance and wider compliance.
- Support from the Governance Manager & Company Secretary and Governance Advisor.
- GovernorHub as the principal platform for governance papers and information.

You are not expected to know everything on day one

We expect Trustees to bring judgement, experience, curiosity and commitment. SECAT provides the induction, information and development needed to help new Trustees contribute effectively.

Our Board and recruitment process

Current Board leadership

- Chair of the Trust Board: Emma Hawker
- Co-Vice Chairs: Harriet West and Steve Churchyard
- Audit, Risk & Resources Committee: Chair Andy Skulimowski; Vice Chair Ross Legon
- Curriculum & Pupil Matters Committee: Co-Chairs Emma Hawker and Harriet West

Appointment process

1. Initial conversation about SECAT, the Trustee opportunity and your interests and experience.
2. Completion of candidate and skills information.
3. Meeting or interview with relevant Trust representatives.
4. Consideration of skills, Board composition, eligibility and potential conflicts of interest.
5. Formal appointment in accordance with SECAT's Articles and governance arrangements.
6. Required checks, declarations and onboarding.
7. Induction, GovernorHub access and mandatory training.

Key information

Is this a paid role? No. Trustees serve in a voluntary, non-executive capacity.

Do I need education experience? No. Education expertise is valuable, but the Board benefits from a broad range of professional skills and perspectives.

Am I responsible for one school? No. SECAT Trustees govern the Trust as a whole. Academy Committees provide local governance within delegated responsibilities.

Will I visit schools? Trustees may undertake proportionate visits or link activity where this supports Board assurance. Visits are not inspections and should not become operational.

Will I receive training? Yes. SECAT provides induction, mandatory compliance training and ongoing governance development.

Interested in joining us?

We welcome an informal conversation with prospective candidates before any formal appointment process. It is an opportunity to learn more about SECAT, understand the Board's current priorities and skills needs, and explore whether the role is a good fit.

Next step

Please contact the Governance Manager via katylove@secat.co.uk to arrange an initial conversation. Candidate application and skills information can then be provided separately.

Help us empower children and schools.

Regulatory context: SECAT is a charitable company and publicly funded academy trust. Governance operates within the Articles of Association, funding agreement, company and charity law, the Academy Trust Handbook 2026 and relevant Department for Education guidance.