



Bright Futures

EDUCATIONAL TRUST

The best *for* everyone, the best *from* everyone



Handbook for Local Governing Bodies

Bright Futures Educational Trust

Handbook for Local Governing Bodies

Foreword

Thank you for volunteering to be a local governor as part of Bright Futures Educational Trust. It's great to have you as part of our team that is committed to fulfilling our shared vision, 'the best *for* everyone, the best *from* everyone'.

Whilst ultimate accountability for the work of the Trust rests with the Board of Trustees and the Accounting Officer, in order to ensure accountability to the children, families and communities that we serve, we need also to have robust local governance for each academy.

This Handbook sets out how local governance works in Bright Futures and provides helpful guidance on the constitution of local governing bodies, what they will focus on and how they will work.

We hope you will enjoy your time as a governor and thanks again for stepping up to take on this important role.

Lisa Fathers OBE
Chief Executive Officer (Interim)

Robert Leggett
Chair of Trustees

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To view our Local Governing Body Terms of Reference please follow the link:

<https://www.bright-futures.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/LGB-Terms-of-Reference-1.pdf>

1. About Bright Futures

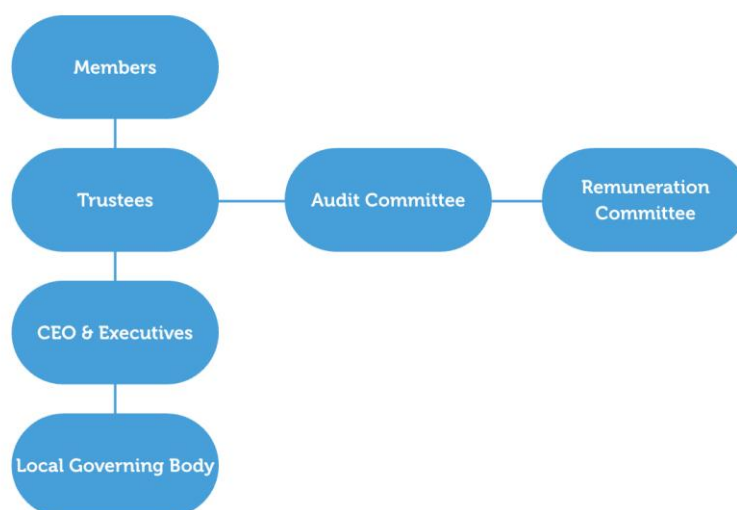
We operate eleven academies in the north-west of England. We are proud to have a diverse group of seven primary schools, one 11-16 secondary school, one 11-18 selective grammar school, a specialist primary school and a 11-19 specialist school providing for the needs of young people with complex learning difficulties and disabilities.

Bright Futures Professional Development Institute is another important outward-facing component of our organisation. Underneath this umbrella we have several hubs: Bright Futures Training, a North West Maths' Hub and a SCITT (School Centred Initial Teacher Training). Bright Futures also has two Teaching School Hubs and SEND Outreach. We have also been designated as an Early Years Stronger Practice Hub to work across the North West.

We are a values-led organization working to six core values:

- **Leadership:** We take ownership of our responsibilities and find the leader in all of us.
- **Integrity:** We do the right things for the right reasons, always being courageously true to our mission.
- **Passion:** We love what we do and feel the power of possible through innovation and creativity.
- **Community:** We work in collaboration with communities and wider partners celebrating diversity as our strength.
- **Equality:** We nurture, value, respect and empower all, understanding that equity sits at the heart of all opportunities.
- **Resilience:** We prioritise our wellbeing whilst embracing challenge, adapting flexibly and learning as we grow.

2. Governance Overview: how do local governing bodies contribute?



Members:

The Members of the Trust are the signatories to the Trust’s Memorandum and Articles of Association and are responsible for approving any amendments to the Articles.

Members appoint Trustees and are also able to remove Trustees if they fail to fulfil their duties properly.

Board of Trustees: The Board of Trustees sets the vision and strategic direction of the Trust and is the accountable body. It may delegate some of its responsibilities to executive leaders or committees, which includes local governing bodies. In doing so it holds these executive leaders and committees to account. The Board of Trustees also oversees the financial performance of the Trust and ensures that public money is well spent.

Trust Leaders: The Executive team comprises of the Chief Executive Officer, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Finance Officer and the Director of People and Strategy. They operate as a collective governance body as defined in the Executive Team Meeting terms of reference. Headteachers and principals as well as other people in leadership roles across the Trust make important contributions to individual schools and to Bright Futures as a whole.

Local governing bodies (LGB):

The responsibilities of the LGBs are set out in detail within their terms of reference. In summary their main responsibility is to provide scrutiny of the delivery of the School Development Plans, to ensure the academy is working within agreed financial budgets, to monitor the academy is working within agreed policies and help the Academy to engage with all stakeholders. The LGB should also provide strong support and challenge to the academy leadership team. If you’re interested in finding out more, follow the links to the detailed terms of reference in the contents page.

Responsibilities and powers delegated to the LGB may be further delegated to a sub-committee or to the Principal as appropriate. See the detail in the delegated responsibilities section below and in the Local governing body handbook or Bright Futures’ Financial handbook.

3. Role of the LGB

The main role of the Local Governing Body is to help make a positive difference in the lives of children, families, colleagues and communities in keeping with the Trust’s vision and values. LGBs will focus on:

- The design and impact of the school’s curriculum – what students learn, how well they are taught and how well they achieve as a result of this.
- Making sure that resources are properly targeted to make the biggest positive difference.
- Ensuring that children are safeguarded and staff work safely

This is achieved through:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision and strategic direction. This will be relevant to the school's communities and context and rooted in the Trust's overall vision and values
2. Holding the Principal to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
3. Ensuring that the school's budget is effectively utilised.

The LGB achieves this by effectively supporting, challenging and scrutinising senior leaders through a regular meeting cycle. Areas of focus across the year will typically include

- Education, standards and outcomes
- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety
- Community
- Effective Use of Resource (for school improvement)
- Human Resources
- Risk management
- Self-assessment and LGB training and development

The LGB is supported in holding the schools' senior leadership team to account by the Executive. Governors are expected to triangulate the information they receive from the Principal with information generated from a range of sources, including evaluative reports from senior leaders, school development plans, risk registers, benchmarked numerical data, information from governor visits or from quality assurance reports and inspection or review evidence.

4. Role of the Governance Professional (sometimes called the 'clerk')

Each local governing body will be supported by a governance professional. Their role is to ensure that the business of the local governing body is effectively administered and that all relevant guidance and policies of the Trust are adhered to in reaching decisions. The governance professional may provide procedural advice to the chair. They will make sure that a careful record is kept of the LGB meetings. The minutes are an important document that sets out how the LGB carries out its role in supporting, challenging and holding leaders to account.

5. How can governors help to improve the Quality of Education?

The primary purpose of the LGB is to ensure good and improved outcomes for pupils. The LGB will seek to improve pupil outcomes and attainment by understanding and challenging performance data presented in a meaningful format at its meetings. Typical performance data should include an analysis of statistics, trends, benchmarks and outcomes/evaluation for:

- Attainment (including by particular groups of students) – for some children this data will chart outcomes without being referenced to national benchmarks
- Progress (including by particular groups of students)
- Behaviour/well-being and safety
- Pupil attendance
- Teaching and learning quality
- Impact of the curriculum and participation in enrichment activities

The quality and depth of the curriculum in the way that it is planned, implemented and its impact on learning is essential to improvement. Local governors will want to know that all learners are benefiting from a broad, aspirational curriculum that enables all children to achieve, and especially those who face the greatest barriers.

6. How do governors contribute to safeguarding?

Local governing bodies need to be assured that children are safe and that all staff are working safely. The LGB will want to know that robust safeguarding procedures are in place and that they are followed rigorously. LGBs may also want to observe how safeguarding is implemented 'actively'. For example, are all visitors expected to sign in? Are all pre-employment checks carried out effectively and properly recorded on the Single Central Record? In discussions with students do governors find that all children feel safe in the academy? All LGBs should appoint one of their number to be a lead for safeguarding, and all should be familiar with the requirements of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2023 and updated annually). The local governor leading on safeguarding will want to liaise closely with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

7. What does the LGB need to do about Health and Safety?

The local governing body is responsible for ensuring that the Trust Health and Safety policy and procedure is implemented and that there is full compliance locally.

8. How is the LGB involved in monitoring the Effective Use of Resources

The LGB is responsible for making sure that the academy budget is well spent and that resources available and budgeted for are deployed for effective school improvement. The LGB does not have a specific 'finance' administrative function – this is carried out by the central team. Instead, governors check that the money available to the school is having maximum impact on the identified priorities.

9. How can LGBs help to develop our people?

The people that work with and in our schools are a hugely valuable resource. When people feel a strong sense of belonging they are often happier at work and perform well. The LGB can help by encouraging and supporting staff, encouraging a healthy culture of professional development.

Some of the activities you may be involved in are:

- Looking at how the budget is allocated to staffing and asking appreciative questions, e.g. how much is spent on supply staff? Is it good value? Are there any alternatives? Are we getting good impact from the money we allocate?
- Ask for anonymous reports on absence levels at school and track trends and be assured that absence management procedures are working well.
- Consider staff turnover and reasons for leaving to identify trends – is there anything we could be doing better?
- Consider the training and development that staff undertake – are we seeing positive impact from it?
- What are staff telling us in surveys?

The LGB will be asked at times to be involved in recruitment and selection processes. This is a great opportunity to contribute and understand the robustness of safer recruitment practices, as well as the selection processes. Additionally, governors may be asked to sit on appeals panels from time to time.

10. How do governors help with Risk Management?

In 2024 Bright Futures is looking at a new, more standardised and simplified form of risk management. This will enable LGBs to really focus on the key risks for their schools – identify them, mitigate them and check that they are properly under control. It also means that new risks will be able to be identified. This shouldn't be an onerous process but it will mean that we can keep an eye on those things that could easily take us off course.

11. How do we know that we are making a difference as a local governing body?

It's good practice for LGBs to reflect briefly at the end of each meeting on what went well and what could be better next time. Once a year the LGB should think more deeply about their effectiveness. Are we making a positive difference to the school? How do we know? Have we got the right mix of skills on our LGB or do we need to recruit people who will add to the LGB?

Every couple of years the Trust commissions an external review of governance. That review will look at how LGBs are doing and may give some helpful advice on next steps.

12. Training and Development

The Trust organises annual safeguarding training for governors. We also commission training for governors depending on need. We have termly meetings with Chairs (or their representatives) to keep in touch and to update on any big issues for governors.

13. Expenses

Local governors are unpaid roles. Reasonable expenses associated with carrying out the role of a local governor may be claimed in accordance with the Trust's Travel and Expenses Policy.

14. The Nolan Principles

All Bright Futures LGB Governors will abide by the Nolan principles of public life.

NOLAN PRINCIPLES

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.