



Short Guide to Governance Arrangements

Summary of our Governance Model

The De Curci Trust is a charitable company that operates three academies as one legal entity: Solent Infant School, Solent Junior School and Springfield School (secondary).

Our model of governance allows for strategic board decision making, focused and effective executive leadership, and local engagement and input from stakeholders. Each tier of governance contributes to helping establish each academy's values and ethos, monitoring educational and financial performance and linking them with their communities.

This short guide provides an overview of our governance arrangements but should be read in conjunction with the full documents referenced within the text.

Tiers of Governance

- **Members:** The role of members is to hold the trustees to account, assure themselves that the governance of the trust is effective and that trustees are acting in accordance with the trust's charitable object(s). Members are not involved in the day-to-day business of the trust. However, members have key powers, including the appointment and removal of trustees and amending the memorandum and articles of association.
- **Board of trustees:** The board of trustees is the legally responsible and accountable body for every academy. The board holds legal liability for areas that would normally be the responsibility of a local governing body in a maintained school, such as safer recruitment practice and core policies, with support from the central team. While the board may delegate many of its functions (for example to the executive team or a committee), the board remains accountable for these functions, including overall educational performance and strategy.
- **Trustee committees:** Through the trust's governance framework and scheme of delegation, the board of trustees delegates authority and responsibility for a range of duties to the following entities to ensure effective leadership and governance of the trust:
 - Audit and Risk Committee:** Responsible for monitoring and reviewing compliance, risk management, cybersecurity and internal controls; and commissioning appropriate internal and external audit functions.
 - Finance Committee:** Responsible for monitoring and reviewing annual budgets, long-term financial strategy and planning, investment and reserves, pensions and financial submissions.
 - Human Resources Committee:** Responsible for monitoring, scrutinising and advising on safeguarding practice, staff wellbeing and professional development; reviewing

executive salaries, and advising on pay policies. Responsible for reviewing board membership and effectiveness, and advising on governance training and arrangements.

Local academy committees ('local governing body'): Responsible for localised challenge and support on community-facing aspects of school and stakeholder engagement, but advisory in nature with no legal liability or final approval of core trust policies; although a number of local policies and procedures are delegated to these committees to review and implement.

They also provide local assurance for the board of trustees on the experiences of pupils, parents, staff and the wider community. In particular, the local governing body scrutinises the areas of: pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety; the academy's outcomes, curriculum and standards; and effective deployment of the academy's allocated resources. Local governors play an active role in supporting the academy with managing procedures such as complaints and hearings.

The Executive Team

Through the scheme of governance and scheme of delegation, the board of trustees delegates authority and responsibility for a range of duties to the executive which includes:

- **Executive team and trust shared services:** Responsibility for the delivery of strategic goals and educational, financial and operational outcomes as agreed with the board. The team includes the Chief Executive Officer (who is the designated accounting officer), Chief Financial and Operating Officer, Trust IT Operations Manager and CoSec/Clerk.
- **Academy Headteachers (and Heads of School):** Responsibility for delivering all educational and operational outcomes in their individual academy and management of financial and HR matters at school level, with the support of the executive team and trust shared services.

Assurance

How does the board of trustees obtain assurance that functions are carried out properly?

The scheme of delegation and governance is reviewed annually and this directs the schedule of business conducted by the committees and respective staff teams. The CEO meets with the the academy Headteachers every fortnight, and with the Chairs of the academy committees (local governing bodies) at least once a term. Similarly, the CFOO and IT Ops. Manager provide ongoing liaison and support for the academies.

Assurance is provided via a number of mechanisms, including:

- Formal audit processes / scrutiny, e.g. finance, safeguarding, Challenge Partners Quality Assurance Reviews
- Review of reports and minutes, e.g. 'Headteacher's Report' (SEF), Academy Improvement Plans, Safeguarding Report & PSCB Compact Audit
- Presentations by senior (and other) staff
- Academy focused visits conducted by trustees and local governors

- Trust Safeguarding Forum – brings together DSLs, and link safeguarding trustee and link safeguarding governors
- Review of data and KPIs

Academies

How we differ from maintained schools

Academies deliberately operate under a different structure of governance from maintained schools, which are supported by *local authorities*. Governance structures in maintained schools are predominantly determined by legislation, whereas trusts have the ability to set their own approach to better reflect their organisation and local circumstances.

How do our local committees differ from *local authority* school governing boards?

Local committees exist within the overall governance framework of the trust and have specific delegations, just like other committees of the board. It is important that everybody understands the logic and efficiency of trust governance, and how and why it differs from a ‘standalone’ school governance model. Local committee members are not governors in the same way as the role is formally defined for *local authority* maintained schools. This is set out in the trust’s scheme of governance and scheme of delegation; as well as the full terms of reference of each trust committee.

Trustees are listed on the Get Information About Schools (GIAS) website. In addition, each academy publishes the names of its academy committee members (local governors) on its website to ensure that parents and the community have up-to-date information on who is involved in local governance.

The trust appoints a link safeguarding trustee and also a link safeguarding local governor for each academy. While the board of trustees has overall accountability for safeguarding, these link roles provide scrutiny, challenge and a ‘championing’ function at each level of the organisation. Each academy is expected to keep a compliant single central register for its employees and volunteers; and the link safeguarding governor has a role in reviewing this.

School Inspection

What does this mean for school inspection? - Establishing responsibility for leadership and governance

The Ofsted [School Inspection Handbook](#) (SIH) states: “There are a wide variety of leadership and governance models in the school sector, so it is essential that inspectors establish who is responsible for what.” Lead inspectors will therefore need to establish “the different levels of responsibility and oversight within the trust” and “who they need to meet from the trust, for example who (in the trust and in the school) is responsible for key decisions about safeguarding, behaviour and curriculum content”. The SIH makes clear:

“When inspecting academies, inspectors will need to bear in mind that governance functions can be quite different from those in a maintained school. Some functions that a governing body in a maintained school would carry out may be done by the trust’s leaders or staff. If this is the case, it will be important for inspectors to ascertain the board of trustees’ role in that process and how it ensures and assures that these functions are carried out properly.”

Who attends inspections on behalf of the trust?

For leadership, the SIH makes clear that leaders “will include the CEO and anyone else agreed between the headteacher, CEO and lead inspector” and inspectors “will, as a minimum, want to meet the CEO if possible but will recognise that (especially in large trusts) CEOs may need other senior trust leaders present to support these meetings.”

For governance, the SIH explains that inspectors “will recognise that trusts are a single legal entity and that decisions made by individual academies and those by trust leaders cannot easily be separated.” Inspectors should arrange for at least one meeting with the chair of the board of trustees or their delegate. As with the CEO it will not always be possible for the chair to attend every inspection.

The De Curci Trust

The trust will work with inspectors to ensure they speak to appropriate persons responsible for governance of the academy (school) being inspected.

In most cases, this will include: members of the academy committee (local governing body), ideally including the Chair; and a trustee, ideally the Chair or Vice-Chair. The CEO usually attends the inspection as the primary delegated representative of trust governance and leadership.

Further information

For further information about our governance model, please visit the governance page on our trust’s website or contact the Company Secretary: cosec@thedecurcitrust.co.uk

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