DIOCESE OF SOUTHWELL & NOTTINGHAM
MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

Terms of Reference for Senior Governors (Chairs and Vice Chairs) of Local Governing Bodies

Senior governors have an important leadership role within the Local Governing Body (LGB). They support the effective operation of local governance, help ensure that governors fulfil their delegated responsibilities, and work constructively with the Headteacher, senior leaders and the Trust.

The role should be carried out in line with the SNMAT Articles of Association, Scheme of Delegation, Governance Operational Handbook, Governor Code of Conduct, relevant Trust policies and current statutory guidance, including the Academy Trust Handbook, the Academy Trust Governance Guide and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Governing bodies should focus on their core functions:

1. **Ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction.**
2. **Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils and the effective performance management of staff.**
3. **Overseeing the financial performance of the academy and making sure its money is well spent.**
4. **Ensuring that the voices of stakeholders are heard.**

Wider leadership responsibilities

Senior governors have wider leadership responsibilities associated with their roles and status. They should:

- act as a first point of contact and provide leadership in employment matters, as required by the procedures established by the Trust and in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, for example grievance, disciplinary or capability matters.
- where required, act as a first point of contact and respondent in matters raised with the academy or Trust by external bodies, such as the local authority, Department for Education, Diocese or other relevant agencies.
- where required, represent the governing body in its dealings with external partners and act as an advocate for the academy and the Trust.
- attend academy events as appropriate and encourage other governors to do so.
- model the standards set out in the SNMAT Governor Code of Conduct, including integrity, objectivity, confidentiality, collective responsibility and the Seven Principles of Public Life.

- ensure that any potential or actual conflicts of interest or loyalty are declared and managed appropriately.
- promote the Christian ethos and values of the academy and the Trust, including dignity, wisdom, hope and community.

Developing the team

Governing bodies need a range of skills, knowledge and experience to carry out their functions effectively. Senior governors should:

- ensure the governing body has the required skills, commitment and capacity to govern well, and that appointments help to address identified skills gaps and support a diverse team.
- ensure all governors have a clear understanding of their strategic role and delegated responsibilities within the Trust's governance structure.
- ensure new governors receive appropriate induction, including access to key Trust documents, GovernorHub, required training and a mentor where appropriate.
- ensure all governors undertake relevant training and development, including annual safeguarding training, and consider their individual and collective training needs.
- ensure governors are involved, feel valued and are encouraged to develop in their role.
- ensure governors act reasonably and in line with the SNMAT Governor Code of Conduct.
- promote effective succession planning for key roles, including Chair, Vice Chair and link governor responsibilities.
- develop an effective Chair/Vice Chair working relationship, keeping each other fully informed and delegating tasks as appropriate.

Working with school leaders and the Trust

Senior governors should develop effective working practices which are mutually supportive and appropriately challenging. They should:

- ensure the governing body fulfils its duty of care to the Headteacher and staff, including oversight of a safe and secure working environment, workload, work-life balance and wellbeing.
- ensure governors remain focused on their strategic role and avoid involvement in the day-to-day management of the academy.
- build and encourage a professional relationship with the Headteacher and the Trust which enables honest conversations, constructive challenge and effective support.
- meet or communicate regularly as senior governor colleagues and with the Headteacher as required.
- ensure there are no surprises at meetings by maintaining appropriate communication with the Headteacher, clerk or governance professional and Trust representatives.
- attend, or ensure appropriate academy representation at, the SNMAT Governance Keep in Touch (GKIT) meetings.
- attend, where possible, the SNMAT Termly Governance Forum.

- attend, or ensure appropriate academy representation at, an SNMAT Board of Directors' meeting at least once a year, where required.
- engage with and support Trust-wide governance development, ensuring academy views are shared.
- support the wider ethos and values of the Trust in respect of collaboration and peer support for governor colleagues across SNMAT.
- oversee and participate in the Headteacher's performance review, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, ensuring appropriate continuing professional development is considered.
- ensure the Headteacher provides staff with an understanding of the role of the local governing body and acts as an effective link between staff and governors.

Safeguarding, compliance and assurance

Senior governors should help ensure the governing body provides effective strategic oversight and assurance. They should:

- ensure safeguarding remains a standing priority for the governing body and that governors understand their strategic safeguarding responsibilities.
- ensure governors complete the required annual safeguarding training and understand the current version of Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- support the Safeguarding Governor in providing appropriate scrutiny of safeguarding policy, practice, culture, training, safer recruitment, monitoring and filtering, and the Single Central Record.
- ensure the governing body understands and follows the SNMAT Scheme of Delegation and relevant Trust policies.
- ensure statutory and Trust-required policies, declarations of interest, governor records and website governance information are reviewed and updated as required.
- ensure risks, compliance matters and key lines of enquiry are escalated appropriately to the Trust where required.
- ensure complaints made to the governing body are dealt with in a timely, fair and effective manner using the SNMAT Complaints Policy.
- support a culture where governors use evidence, data and professional curiosity to provide appropriate challenge and assurance.

Leading governance business

Senior governors play a key role in the smooth and effective running of governance business and meetings. They should:

- meet termly with the Headteacher, business or office manager and clerk or governance professional to plan accountability panel and full governing body meetings.
- ensure agendas focus on delegated responsibilities, academy improvement priorities, statutory requirements, risk, safeguarding, finance and strategic matters.
- reduce unnecessary paperwork and ensure papers are purposeful, timely and support effective discussion and decision-making.

- establish and communicate who is responsible for completing statutory and administrative governance tasks each term, using the SNMAT Meeting Cycle planning document as a guide.
- promote an open and respectful culture that allows ideas and discussion to thrive while ensuring clear decisions are reached as quickly as possible.
- ensure actions and decisions from governing body meetings are recorded, monitored and implemented.
- ensure governors prepare well for meetings by reading papers in advance and preparing appropriate questions.
- ensure governor monitoring visits are purposeful, linked to strategic priorities, agreed in advance with academy leaders and reported back to the governing body.
- ensure the governing body undertakes regular self-review and considers the effectiveness of its work, including governor attendance, contribution and impact.

All Governors must ensure they:

- read and sign the SNMAT Governor Code of Conduct.
- complete annual online safeguarding training for governors.
- complete declarations of interest annually and as changes occur, including the relevant start date.
- maintain confidentiality and comply with data protection expectations.
- use their Trust governor email account and GovernorHub as required.
- undertake induction and ongoing training relevant to their role.
- act in accordance with the SNMAT Scheme of Delegation, Trust policies and current statutory guidance.