

Home

# Academy trust governance guide

From: **Department for Education**  
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Contents

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Guidance on strategic leadership and the governance of academy trusts.

**This non-statutory guidance replaces the governance handbook 2019.**

This is a reference document for those involved in trust governance. It provides essential information from a range of sources on the trust board's roles and legal responsibilities.

The [Academy Trust Handbook \(ATH\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-handbook) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academy-trust-handbook>) and your funding agreement have more information on contractual requirements.

## Who should use this manual

This guidance is for:

- trustees, executive leaders, local committee governors, governance professionals and academy trust members
- academy trusts including free schools and university technical colleges

- foundations, sponsors and others, such as diocesan authorities, with an interest in the governance of trusts
- organisations supporting boards to develop effective governance

It does not apply directly to pupil referral units, sixth-form colleges or academies, or general further education colleges, though they may find its principles helpful.

## Resources for trust boards

Practical resources for trust boards are available from sector organisations including:

- [National Governance Association \(https://www.nga.org.uk/\)](https://www.nga.org.uk/)
- [Confederation of School Trusts \(https://cstuk.org.uk/\)](https://cstuk.org.uk/)
- [GovernorHub \(https://governorhub.com/\)](https://governorhub.com/)
- [Chartered Governance Institute \(https://www.cgi.org.uk/\)](https://www.cgi.org.uk/)
- [Catholic Education Service \(https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/\)](https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/)
- [Church of England Education Office \(https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools\)](https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools)

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### [Using this guidance \(/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/using-this-guidance\)](/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/using-this-guidance)

What you need to know about legal requirements, the 5 pillars of academy trust quality and resources from third parties.

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### [Definitions \(/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/definitions\)](/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/definitions)

Explanations of the terms used in this guidance.

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### [1. Culture and engagement \(/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/1-culture-and-engagement\)](/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/1-culture-and-engagement)

How boards create a culture that motivates and is ambitious for all.

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### [2. Governance of the trust \(/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/2-governance-of-the-trust\)](/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/2-governance-of-the-trust)

Information on board expertise and building an effective team.

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### [3. Strategy \(/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/3-strategy\)](/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/3-strategy)

Setting and implementing a clear strategy for the trust.

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### [4. Non-executive leadership \(/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/4-non-executive-leadership\)](/guidance/governance-in-academy-trusts/4-non-executive-leadership)

Information on structures, roles and support.

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### [5. Executive leadership \(/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/5-executive-leadership\)](/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/5-executive-leadership)

Information on how the board works with the executive leadership.

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### [6. Accountability \(/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/6-accountability\)](/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/6-accountability)

How accountability and assurance help to deliver a trust's strategy.

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### [7. Compliance \(/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/7-compliance\)](/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/7-compliance)


Guidance for boards on how to meet their legal and regulatory responsibilities with regards to compliance.

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### [Statutory policies for trusts \(/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/statutory-policies-for-trusts\)](/guidance/-governance-in-academy-trusts/statutory-policies-for-trusts)

Information for trust boards and governance professionals on the policies and documents they must have.

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