



**PONTEFRACT**  
ACADEMIES TRUST

# Governance Policy



**Summary:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the processes by which we are directed, controlled, and held to account are documented to ensure governance is retained. It includes the authority, accountability, leadership, direction and control exercised within the Trust.

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<b>Applies to:</b> (please check as appropriate)	Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pupil <input type="checkbox"/>	Community <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ratifying Committee(s):</b>	Audit and Risk Committee		
<b>Available on:</b>	Compliance Library <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Website <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Date of Approval:</b>	May 2022		
<b>Date of Next Formal Review:</b> (ensure this is aligned to committee meeting dates)	May 2025		
<b>Review Period:</b>	Tri-annually		
<b>Status:</b>	Non-contractual		
<b>Owner:</b>	Pontefract Academies Trust		
<b>Version:</b>	02		

**Document Control**

Date	Version	Action	Amendments
08 February 2022	02	Reviewed and updated in line with review period	Addition of Education Standards Committee. Update to governance structure diagram to incorporate Education Standards Committee. Changed reference to 'Education Funding Agency (EFA)' to 'Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)'. Changed 'Academies Financial Handbook (AFH)' to 'Academy Trust Handbook (ATH)'. Changed references to 'Head of School' to 'Headteacher'.

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## 1. Mission, vision, values and guiding principles

**Mission:** Running top-quality, high-achieving schools that give our children and young people the chance in life they deserve.

**Vision:** Where every child and young person makes outstanding progress.

**Values and guiding principles:** At Pontefract Academies Trust, we live by our values and guiding principles. They inform and guide our daily work from the classroom to the central team.

### Achievement without excuses

We have an unwavering focus on achievement. This is paramount so that all our children and young people enjoy greater life chances. We take responsibility for ensuring that they succeed. We own our own performance and do not rest on our laurels or seek to blame others.

### Our people matter

We know that our people make a difference to the lives of our 3 – 16-year olds. We want to make our academies places where great teachers want to teach, lead and build a career. Investment in the recruitment, development and retention of the best people is a top priority.

We aim to provide professional work environments where our young people have the support and the tools to do a great job and push our children and young people to scale new heights in a safe and secure environment.

### Excellence as standard

We set high standards. “Good enough” is simply not. We do not accept second best from our pupils or ourselves. The Trust aims to be a highly reliable school improvement organisation that is disciplined in its approach to improving performance. A Trust with clear plans and, simple and precisely executed systems that not only develop and sustain excellent performance, but never stifles individual flair.

### Students come first

Our academies are run for the benefit of children and young people, not the ease of adults. Their achievement comes first and staff in academies and the central trust office work to this end.

The Trust aims to keep low priority tasks away from front line teachers and leaders so that they can focus explicitly on our core business of teaching and learning.

### Stronger as one

We take collective responsibility for each other and the results of all our children and young people. We enjoy sharing our success as a Trust while recognising the strengths of individuals and each academy.

## **2. The Trust governance framework**

### **Introduction**

There are some key differences between the governance models for academies and those of maintained schools. The academies governance model approved by the Department for Education is flexible and allows individual trusts to constitute themselves in a way which meets their individual needs.

We have set out a structure of governance at Pontefract Academies Trust and provided an overview of the constitution its relationship with local governing boards at our academies.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in its Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) provides detailed guidance on the roles and expectations of Members, Trustees and Governors. The latest AFH for 2017 is available from the ESFA website.

The Trust has a number of layers of governance. The governance and leadership of Pontefract Academies Trust is distributed through the following bodies:

### **Members**

**The Members operate at a strategic level with ultimate control over the direction of the Trust.**

The functions of the Members include:

- Overseeing the achievement of the objectives of the Trust.
- Taking part in Annual and Extraordinary General Meetings.
- Appointing Trustees.
- Signing off the company's financial accounts and annual report.
- Power to amend the Articles of Association (subject to approval by the DfE) and, ultimately, to remove Trustees.

Overall, Members have very limited practical involvement in the management of the Trust.

### **Board of Trustees**

**The Board of Trustees have responsibility for day-to-day management and operation of the Trust and their key responsibilities are to:**

- Ensure the quality of educational provision.
- Challenge and monitor the performance of the Trust.
- Manage the Academy Trust's finances and property.
- Exercise reasonable skill and care in carrying out their duties.
- Ensure that the Trust complies with charity and company law.
- Operate the Trust and its academies in accordance with the Funding Agreement that has been signed with the Secretary of State.

## **Executive Leadership Team**

The Executive Leadership Team is led by the Chief Executive Officer who is appointed by the Trustees.

The Chief Executive Officer and Trustees in turn appoint a group of individuals to provide support in the management of the Trust's day to day activities including governance, school improvement, finance, and human resources.

The Chief Executive Officer is also designated as the Accounting Officer for the purposes of the Trust's Funding Agreement with the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This designation confers legal responsibility for financial and administrative matters.

The Executive Leadership Team meets regularly and co-ordinates the policies and activities of the Trust in conjunction with the Trustees and the Heads of School and Chairs at each individual academy.

The main purpose of the Executive Leadership Team is to monitor, challenge and improve academy performance. This includes, but is not limited to:

Academic performance of all students at every key stage.  
The implementation and consistency of a school improvement model across all academies.  
Curriculum and staffing management.  
Financial and resource allocation.

The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of the performance of the academies and for the educational outcomes of students, under delegated authority from the Board.

## **Board sub-committees**

The Trust Board will be supported by the work of a set of specially appointed committees, each with their own terms of reference. The purpose, focus and make-up of the committees is entirely at the Trust Board's discretion.

The governance framework provides for two generic types of sub-committee:

- Management assurance sub-committees.
- Performance review sub-committees.

The fundamentals of each type are the same. They will:

- Be made up of a small number of suitably capable and/or qualified individuals.
- Have a mandate to provide more detailed scrutiny and assurance of working level performance than is practical for the Trust Board to achieve in a multi-academy context.
- Be empowered to pursue any line of enquiry that is necessary and reasonable to fulfil their purpose.
- Report back to the Board as a routine part of the governance cycle.

The distinction in the two generic types is primarily one of style and focus.

The management assurance sub-committees (Audit & Risk and Finance) will generally serve to assure and reinforce high levels of compliance, effective management controls and risk management throughout the Trust. Performance review subcommittees (Performance Management & Compensation, Education and Standards Committee and School Performance Review Boards) will generally serve to reinforce the delivery of overall Trust outcomes and improved educational standards.

### **School performance review boards (SPRB's)**

School Performance Review Boards (SPRBs) merit a more detailed explanation given they are distinct from the other sub-committees of the Board in the sense that they replace something that is well-known in school governance circles: the Board of Governors.

Each academy belongs to an SPRB. SPRBs are a sub-committee of the Board. The role of the SPRB is to:

- Carry the Trust's vision, values, policies, and priorities forward.
- Provide independent challenge to the school leadership, as a critical friend primarily in respect of pupil performance, the quality of the school experience and execution of the school improvement plan.
- Formally feedback to the Board, independently of management, on standards of leadership and delivery of the outcomes targeted by the Trust in its Strategic Plan and the school in its Improvement Plan, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement and risks observed at working level in the schools.
- Work in partnership with the Trust and school leadership to ensure an active, high-quality effective program of stakeholder and community engagement is delivered.

SPRB are comprised of representatives who are expected to question, challenge, and support the academy's leadership. SPRBs has a detailed Terms of Reference which set out their roles and responsibilities and function. The authority of each group is controlled by the Board via the Scheme of Delegation.

### **Individual academy leadership**

Individual academies are led by a Headteacher who the person is responsible for the day-to-day running of the academy. The Headteachers are supported by a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which is made up of senior members of staff. Through their wide range of expertise and experience, the SLT work together to ensure that every pupil reaches their full potential.

## **3. Articles of association**

The Pontefract Academies Trust's Articles of Association set out the responsibilities and procedures for the running of Pontefract Academies Trust (which is a charitable company limited by guarantee as per the Companies Act of 2006). The Articles state that:

The Object of Pontefract Academies Trust is to advance for the public benefit:

The education in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by establishing, maintaining, carrying on, managing, developing schools ("the Academies") offering a broad and balanced curriculum with a strong emphasis on, but in no way limited to either one, or a combination of the specialism(s) specified in the relevant Funding Agreements.

Pontefract Academies Trust will have overall responsibility for the operation of member academies and will delegate limited powers to the SPRB of those academies.

The term of office for Pontefract Academies Trust's Trustees is 4 years.

#### **4. Board of Trustees**

Pontefract Academies Trust is governed by Directors constituted under a Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. This Board of Directors is responsible for ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are maintained. It will exercise its powers and functions with a view to fulfilling a largely strategic leadership role in the running of the academies. This will allow greater opportunities for collaboration not only with regards to teaching but also in terms of the management of each academy, including the procurement of goods and services.

The Board is also governed by the terms of any funding agreements that are in place and the Academy Trust Handbook.

#### **5. Responsibilities of Trustees**

The role of the Trustees mainly involves strategic oversight across the Trust, governance, contractual relationships with third parties and setting the Trust's vision and policies.

The Trustees are responsible for:

- Compliance with all statutory regulations and Acts of Parliament governing the operation of the academy, including health and safety.
- Compliance with the provisions of the Funding Agreements.
- Compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook.
- Setting the risk management strategy, reviewing the strategic risk profile, considering strategic risks in the context of future Trust planning and decision making, and reviewing the effectiveness of the risk management arrangements.

#### **6. Scheme of delegation**

The Trust Board agrees a scheme of delegation which is reviewed at least annually at a Board meeting.

The Scheme of Delegation clearly states which functions of the Trust are delegated by the Board and which are not. It also documents to who these decisions and functions can be delegated.

A copy of the most up-to-date Scheme of Delegation will be made available to all new representatives and updates will be circulated to all members of the Board sub-committees.



## Appendix A: Trust governance and leadership structure

### Trust Governance and Leadership Structure

