

The Blue Kite Academy Trust

COGS



2023

“We’re just cogs in a machine really, aren’t we?’ Miss Fawcett said to her and Ursula said, “But remember, without the cog there is no machine.”

Kate Atkinson, Life After Life

ONE VISION, ONE SYSTEM, ONE TEAM

Introduction

A multi-academy trust is not simply a collection of schools working under one umbrella. Evidence shows that where schools and trusts work in separate bubbles too independent of each other it has led to falling standards and a chaotic environment for all involved. However, where trusts operate in an overbearing manner, schools become flat and uninspiring.

The key is to understand that we work in one system, that we are part of one team and we each have a role to play in delivering the goal of high-quality education and experiences for all of our children. Each role is a crucial one and an essential part of the overall system, the overarching goal of ensuring the best education possible for the children in our care.

Autonomy - Alignment - Standardisation

Often, when a school is considering joining a trust they talk about autonomy. However, in reality this is a misnomer. Schools have always been required to work within different imposed structures and have been accountable to governors, local authorities and the DfE. What is important is to understand which aspects of the system we have responsibility over and then who holds us to account for the quality of that; which aspects are in alignment across the trust and which elements are schools free to choose (autonomy). If an activity is something the school has autonomy to deliver, then the trust must hold school leaders accountable for those actions.

If an activity is highly standardised across the trust e.g. assessment, then the trust is responsible. In areas where there is alignment – that is, the schools can choose how to implement a policy as long as it is in line with the trusts' values and preferences -there will need to be more two-way dialogue and both parties holding each other to account. We sometimes refer to this as our golden thread: there may be some aspects of a policy, such as GDPR which are standardised across the trust to ensure compliance, but how certain aspects are delivered in each school must match the local context, as long as they are in line with the overall procedures laid down by the trust and follow our aims and values.

Deep Collaboration

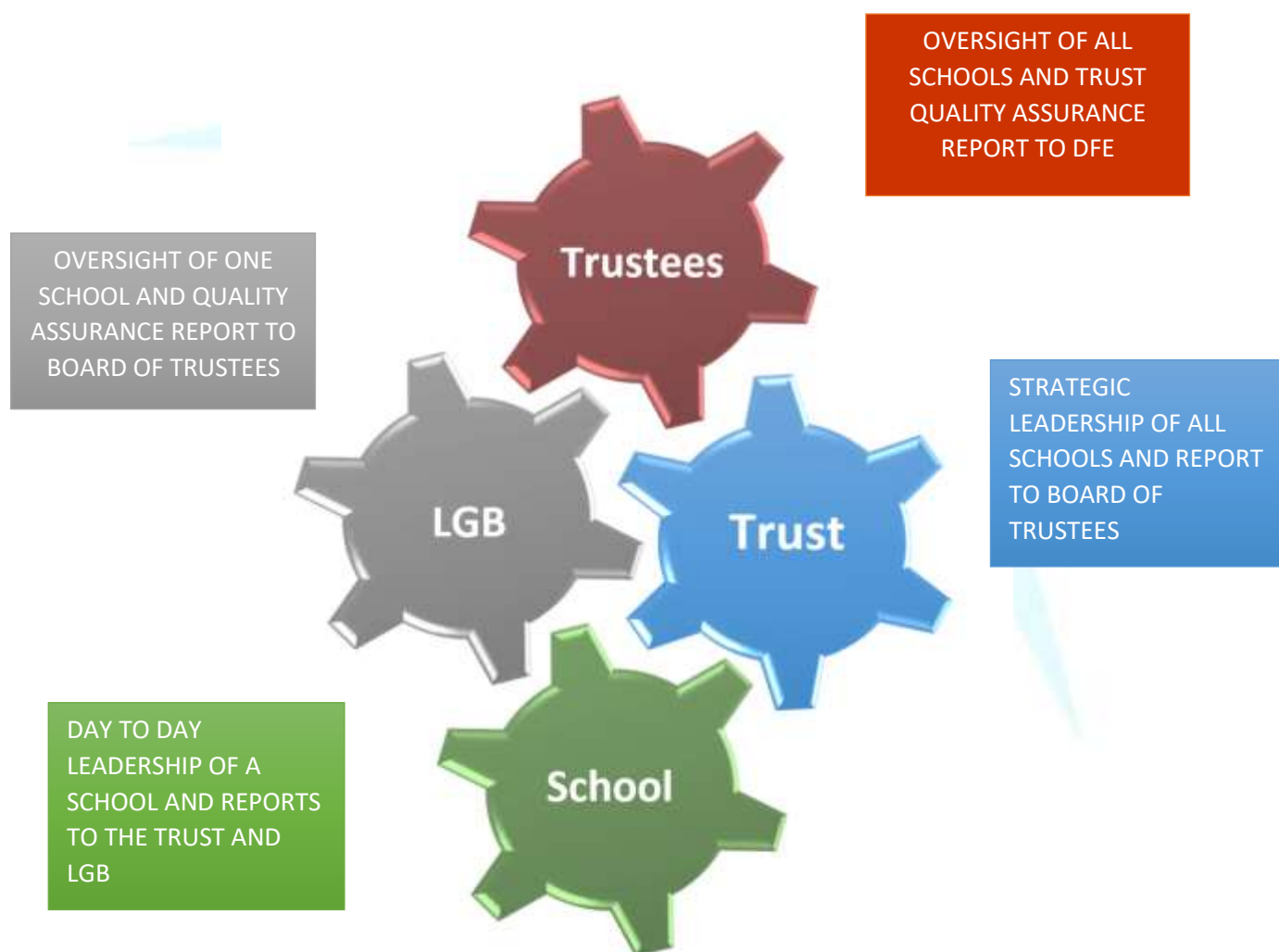
There are other aspects of the trust which would fall under the umbrella of 'deep collaboration'. For example, the model of our 'Bricks' which support teaching and learning is standardised across the trust, however the delivery of that model is based around school leaders working together for the good of all the children in the trust.

This document is designed to help define not only, which aspects of the trust are autonomous, aligned or standardised, but to demonstrate that we are all working as part of one system for the greater good – high quality education for all children and an excellent working environment for all staff in the trust. For want of a better analogy, we are all cogs in the educational machine that is the trust. No single cog can fulfil its aims on its own and neither is any one cog more important than the other. To be successful, each cog must complete its role and the more effective each individual cog is, the more joined up the

thinking and the timing, the more successful the entire machine becomes. Good communication between each layer helps the cogs keep turning and accountability at each level is what keeps them turning at a pace. It is when all of the individual cogs turn, at the correct speed and in tune with each other, that the machine as a whole become greater than the sum of its parts. Surely, that has to be a key purpose for any successful multi academy trust.

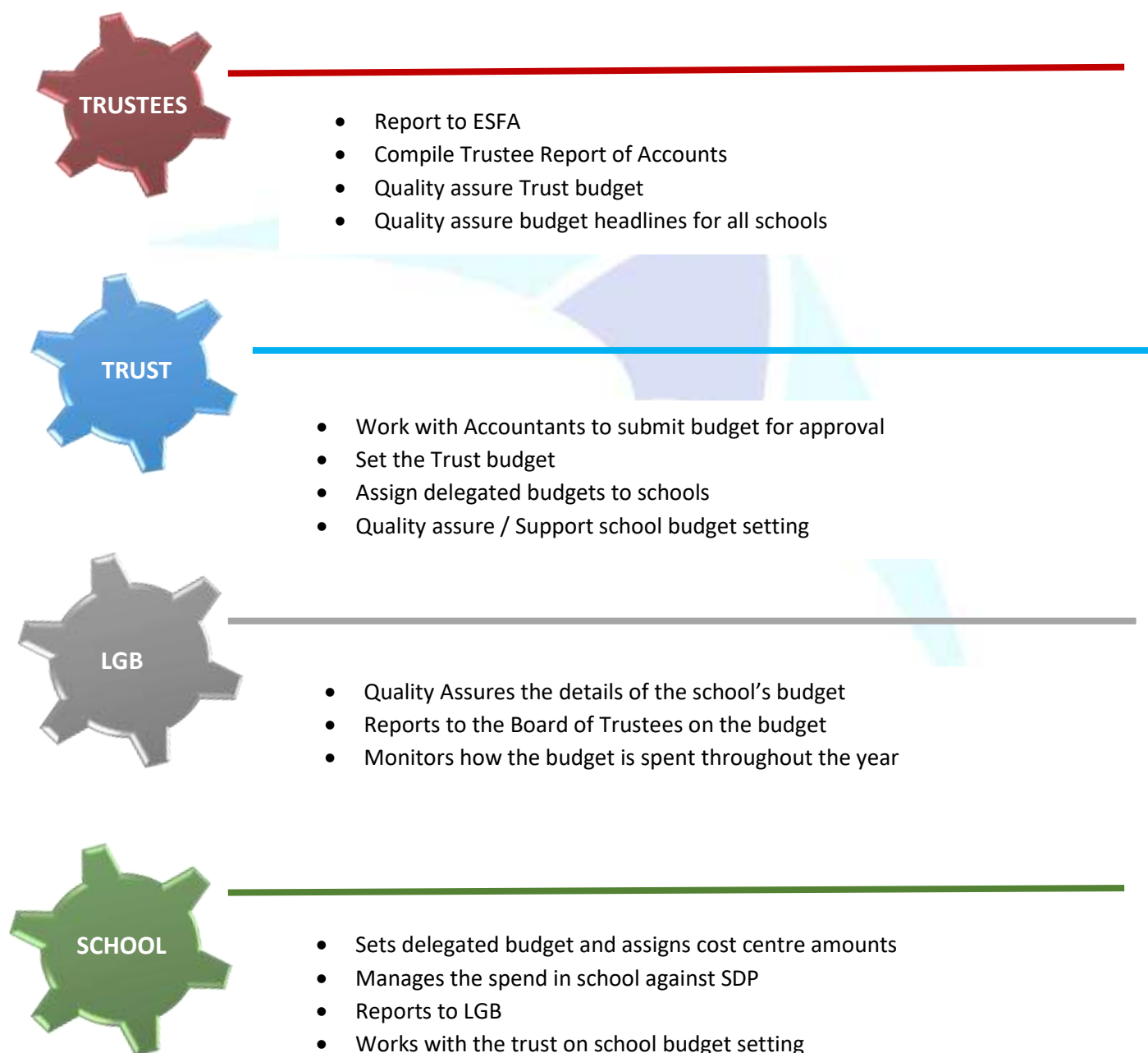
Below is a general representation of the trust as a whole, with its key constituent parts defined:

Figure 1:



Example: The Budget.

BKAT has one bank account, one overall budget which gets reported on directly to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA the Accounting aspect of the DfE) The Trustees have the responsibility of reporting the accounts to the ESFA and the public, the CEO is the Accounting Officer, who alongside the Director of Finance and Operations is responsible for setting, managing and delegating the budget to each school. Each local governing body oversees the school who is responsible for managing their delegated budget and spending it in the best interest of their children.



School Effectiveness

One Vision:

One School Leadership

It is the Trust's responsibility to ensure that all schools maintain a high level of education or are on a journey towards that. They must create a proactive not reactive system that doesn't allow the quality of education in schools to drop or a school to fail. The Trust must have oversight of how each school is performing, quality assure that performance and deploy resources and collaborative working in a way that supports schools achieve the best for their pupils.

It is for schools to adapt these aims for their own school context and then deliver them in the best way possible. To self-evaluate their performance and set strategic actions to improve areas of weakness and develop areas of strength

One Governance

Trustees review the overall performance trends of each school in the Trust. They challenge improvement plans and how resources are being best deployed. Trustees evaluate the effectiveness of the Strategic Education Board and the Trust Leaders of Education (TLE). They will have scrutiny on outcomes and pupil groups across the Trust and pay special attention to any school deemed to be vulnerable in any way. Unless a school is vulnerable, the trustees focus on overall trends and headline data for all schools.

Governors focus in detail on the outcomes of pupils and groups of pupils in just their school. This is essential as trustees don't have the capacity to look in detail at all schools. Also, it is important for each school and their pupils to have a champion and school leaders have a critical friend to ensure no pupils (or groups) are left behind.



TRUSTEES

- Review, analyse and challenge trusts reports on school outcomes
- Review findings from Ofsted and ensure QA visits are supportive but appropriately challenging
- Review deployment of resources and effectiveness of the Strategic Education Board and Trust Leaders of Education
- Feedback to schools and LGBs
- Review pupil, parents and staff voices
- Review SEND and inclusion policy and provision across the trust
- Review Governance effectiveness across the trust
- Review information on curriculum and quality issues including Early Years



TRUST

- School Development Plan/Self Evaluation Form systems and analysis - deploy resources to support
- Assessment system and Data analysis
- Moderation
- Quality Assurance visits
- Governance reviews
- Trust Leaders of Education/ Subject Champion deployment and development
- Inspire school improvement training (including using TLEs)
- Blue Kite Bricks (Including Research and innovation groups)
- Reporting to Trustees
- Risk Assessing schools and responding accordingly
- Collect pupil, parents and staff voices from across the trust



LGB

- Monitor SDP actions and impact
- Review outcomes and analyse trends
- Risk assess and evaluate their own school and governance
- Request support or offer support when required
- Review pupil, parents and staff voices.
- To approve the school's curriculum statement and ensure a broad and balanced curriculum is taught including community engagement.
- To monitor the implementation of an Ofsted action plan
- To ensure the requirements of all pupils are met including (but not exclusive) SEND, gifted, talented and more able, EAL and pupil premium.
- Receive reports from the headteacher on quality of teaching and learning.



SCHOOL

- Self-evaluate and keep the SEF up to date
- Set the SDP
- Run effective Monitoring and evaluation cycles
- Innovative curriculum matched to their school
- Ensure quality of teaching and curriculum leads to the best outcomes for children.
- Review and request (through the trust and beyond) targeted CPD for staff.
- Analyse school data and respond in an appropriate and timely manner
- Report to the trust and the LGB
- Collect pupil, parents and staff voices from school

Finance

One Vision:

One School Leadership

Our finance system has had to grow rapidly to accommodate the needs of the trust alongside the ever-growing needs of the schools. We have in place, a comprehensive finance software system as well as recently updated budgeting software. Our rapid growth has led to us having to respond quickly to the changing requirement on our central team but we are finally in a place to be able to redefine roles and devolve tasks as our HR and Operation functions also come on line.

The immediate challenge for us now is to increase our capacity to process the volume of financial transactions and to meet deadlines to support and streamline our budget setting and monitoring processes. We have increased the capacity of our Operations team to provide the essential link needed between school business management and trust financial systems. This will have the added benefit of helping us increase the efficiency of trust reporting to governors and trustees.

One Governance

The Trust has one bank account and one overall budget which gets reported on directly to the ESFA (the Accounting aspect of the DfE). The Trustees have the responsibility of reporting the accounts to the ESFA and the public. The Chief Executive Officer is the Accounting Officer, who alongside the Director of Finance and Operations is responsible for setting, managing and delegating the budget to each school.

Each local governing Body is responsible for ensuring the Senior Leadership Team are managing their delegated budget and spending it in the best interest of the pupils.



TRUSTEES

- Recommend to the Members the trust's external auditors for appointment and present the audited annual report and accounts to them at the Annual General Meeting (subject to the Companies Act).
- Approve a written scheme of delegation of financial powers.
- Appoint, in writing, a senior executive leader as the Accounting Officer and a Chief Financial Officer.
- Oversee and ensure effective financial performance.
- Declare interest in proposed transactions or arrangements.
- Advise the board on the adequacy of the trust's internal control framework, to include financial controls and risk management arrangements.
- Direct a programme of internal scrutiny and consider the results and quality of external audit.
- Ensure that financial plans are prepared and monitored, satisfying itself that the trust remains a going concern and financially sustainable.
- Take a longer-term view of the trust's financial plans consistent with the requirement to approve and submit three-year budget forecasts using an integrated approach to curriculum and financial planning.
- Post audit - review auditor's findings and actions taken by the trust's managers in response to those findings.
- As part of its management of the trust's funds, explain its policy for holding reserves in its annual report.
- Determine and set executive pay and benefits.
- Ensure Educational and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) compliance.
- Review how school premiums are spent (Sport Premium, Service Premium and Pupil Premium).
- Receive management accounts six times a year.



TRUST

- Manage conflicts of interest and related party transactions.
- Prepare annual accounts and supplementary information for audit.
- Submit annual audited accounts to the ESFA and publish on website.
- Complete and sign an annual statement on regularity, propriety and compliance and submit to the ESFA.
- Submit Academies 3-year budget forecast return (BFR) in line with ESFA deadlines.
- Report to the board that there is compliance with the funding agreement and handbook.
- Take full responsibility for financial affairs, stewardship of assets and use resources efficiently ensuring value for money.
- Ensure delegated financial authorities are complied with.
- Ensure financial controls maintain appropriate segregation of duties.
- Complete procurement process for schools.
- Manage debtors, creditors, cash flow and monthly bank reconciliations.
- Provide schools with support to assist their budget monitoring.
- Manage and co-ordinate the planning and budgeting process.
- Prepare monthly management accounts with KPI's for Chair of Trustees.
- Prepare quarterly management accounts with KPI's for trustees, LGB, and HTs.
- Prepare management accounts for Headteachers and local governing bodies.
- Competitive tendering adhering to procurement rules and thresholds.
- Manage and oversee assets, and maintain a fixed asset register.
- Complete financial benchmarking, school resource management self-assessment and school financial efficiency metrics.
- Obtain prior ESFA approval for transactions arising outside the normal course of business.



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- Review financial reports and budget monitoring with Headteacher.
 - Ensure that school expenditure is in line with development plan objectives
 - Review areas of over or underspend.
 - Examine budget forecasts and liaise with the trust on any actions required.
 - Contribute to discussion surrounding spending plans and capital projects.
 - Ensure that they are aware of and that the school is following the Trust's financial policies and procedures.
 - Raise any concerns about the school's financial management with the Trust.
 - Monitor how school premiums are spent (Sport Premium, Service Premium and Pupil Premium).



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- Manage procurement process up to point of goods receipt, and adhere to authorisation protocols.
 - Liaise with suppliers regarding service contracts or product information and delivery schedules.
 - Process sales invoices, cheque and cash receipts through the bank and provide Trust with details.
 - Review debtors list and implement debt recovery process.
 - Review outstanding purchase orders and goods receipt notes to ensure accurate financial commitments.
 - Assist the Trust in the preparation 3-year budget plans.
 - Undertake regular financial reviews and budget monitoring.

Human Resources

One Vision:

One School Leadership

The HR function within the central team has developed as more schools join the Trust and staffing responsibilities increase. One of our guiding principles is that as we are one organisation all of our employees from the point of work force reform, recruitment, professional development and career pathways to pension and retirement, receive the best service possible and there is parity between our schools.

As a HR team our main objectives over the next 12 months are to:

- Provide a professional, consistent and integrated HR service to our growing academy trust and its schools, including responsibility for Safer Recruitment, absence management, contractual arrangements and pay and conditions.
- Implement and maintain our integrated HR software solution to provide efficient HR, recruitment and payroll workflows.
- Provide support and guidance to our schools on the Trust's agreed HR policies, processes, procedures, systems and current employment, equalities and safeguarding legislation.
- Implement and maintain ways of engaging our workforce and providing a working environment where staff feel supported and valued - for those already working for us and for those looking to join the trust.

This includes:

- Developing the team's skill set and knowledge to provide a supportive and responsive HR service to school leaders and staff on all matters relating to contracts, pay and terms and conditions of employment.
- Developing clear policy and guidance on all HR matters meeting employment and education legislation.
- Supporting any change management processes effectively, working closely with trade unions.
- Implementation of Every HR software to manage HR data/contracts and pay. To develop additional modules for recruitment, Schools Single Record and managing absence
- To underpin Equalities legislation in all of our work ensuring that we do not discriminate against any sector

One Governance

The Trust Board is the responsible body; it is the employer of all the staff and shoulders accountability for its employees across a range of legislation covering general employment law and conditions affecting teaching and working with children. Trustees oversee employment policy and strategy.

The review and performance of individual staff within a school sits with the LGB, delegated to the Headteacher. The remit is to focus on staff well-being and any issues which arise in general. The Trust staff support schools with general recruitment procedures and also any more wide-ranging restructure or redundancy situations that may arise.



TRUSTEES

- Responsible body; employer of all staff. Accountable for all employees and for following employment law.
- Ratify and oversee the trust pay strategy.
- Ratify all HR policies and guidance.
- HR appeals.
- Health and safety and staff wellbeing.
- Board manages CEO appraisal with external advice.
- Managing Staff Appeals in line with Disciplinary Policy.
- Ensure safer recruitment policy is implemented including DBS checks and section 128 checks.
- Ensure compliance with equality legislation.



TRUST

- Develop HR policies and procedure in accordance with employment law and equalities legislation. e.g. change management/ workforce planning; grievance, discipline and whistleblowing.
- To develop trust wide CPD plans and opportunities for all staff at every level, match to school needs.
- Develop trust wide pay policy.
- Develop trust wide recruitment policy and safer recruitment elements.
- Work closely with schools providing professional HR advice and support.
- Staff wellbeing initiatives and support managing health and absence.
- Employer pension responsibilities.
- Implement HR system across and provide information for Management information systems.
- Manage HR contracts on behalf of schools e.g. DBS, Occupational Health etc.
- Develop a positive employee relations culture including liaising with Trade Unions.
- HR support to academy conversion.
- CEO manages HT and trust staff appraisals.



LGB

- Agree pay recommendations in accordance with trust pay policy.
- Schools and Local governors to be responsible for setting pay recommendations up to deputy head level.
- Headteacher appraisal with CEO.
- With trust advice, participate in staffing / appeal panels.
- Take part/conduct exit interviews if appropriate, receive information on exit interviews.
- Adopt trust HR policies and use them to ensure schools are compliant.
- Monitor wellbeing of staff and Headteacher.
- Ensure a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) has been appointed.
- Ensure a designated teacher to promote the educational achievement of Looked After Children (LAC) and previously LAC has been appointed.



SCHOOL

- Follow trust HR policies and guidance.
- Practice safer recruitment processes at all times.
- Keep SCR up to date and in line with latest guidance.
- Seek HR advice in complex case management.
- Manage absence, including return to work interviews.
- Provide duty of care and well-being to all staff.
- Give due consideration to requests for flexible working with a view on the wider school.
- Ensure that staff are given opportunities for career progression and promotion where appropriate with matched professional development.

Health and Safety

One Vision:

One School Leadership

As part of our Operations Team, our Estates Manager currently provides advice and support for all of our schools and provides documentation and templates for schools where they are required. All compliance checks are monitored through Every and an annual health and safety audit is carried out for each school by the Estates Manager. Further guidance and support is provided to complete resulting actions.

One Governance

Overall compliance with Health and Safety regulations sits with the Board of Trustees. We have a Risk, Audit, Health and Safety and Premises Committee where the Risk Register for each school is reviewed as well as the overarching register for the trust. We have an appointed trustee for Health and Safety.

Local governors are responsible for ensuring that their school is complying with the Trust's policies and procedures and reporting any issues that they are concerned about. Each LGB will have a designated H&S link governor who will support the school in meeting the requirements of the Trust Health and Safety Policy and challenging where appropriate.



- Responsible body as determined by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Accountable for all employees and for following associated H&S legislation and guidance.
- The Trust Board is the “main duty holder” and has overall responsibility for the organisation and arrangements for asbestos management.
- Ratify a health & safety policy that is embedded across all schools as an integral part of the trust’s culture and standards and clearly sets out roles and responsibilities within its processes.
- Nominate a trustee to review Health & Safety and the effective implementation of the policy.
- The Trust Board has a Risk, Audit, Health, Safety and Premises (RAHSP) committee which receives regular reports from the trust team to enable review and scrutiny of health & safety issues using a trust wide compliance matrix capturing key compliance elements.
- The Trust Board receives an update from the RAHSP committee at each Trust Board meeting.
- Ensure compliance with health and safety legislation, including food safety, supporting pupils with additional health needs, first aid and fire safety.



- Appoint a Competent Person to ensure H&S duties are met in all trust schools.
- Implement and develop a monitoring and reporting system that includes arrangements to undertake periodic school audits to ensure appropriate management documentation is in place. Monitor implementation of corrective actions.
- Appoint external body to review trust practices.
- Develop policies and procedures in accordance with H&S legislation and school security and emergency preparation guidance.
- Provide support and guidance to schools to include updates on H&S legislation and changes to policies, procedures and risk assessments.
- Monitor and evaluate policies and procedures to ensure they are reducing risks, communicating corrective actions to schools.
- Where appropriate investigate accidents and incidents and report to trustees and LGB’s the effectiveness of procedures and response.
- Provide regular reports to the trust board and its committees to enable review and scrutiny of health & safety issues using a trust wide compliance matrix which captures key compliance elements.
- Ensure that schools adopt and follow the Asbestos management policy for their setting
- Consult with Trade Unions and their H&S Representatives.
- Develop trust wide H&S training programme to incorporate first aid, manual handling, food safety etc.
- Work with the HR Team to develop wellbeing initiatives and to raise the importance of H&S within the workplace through induction and training opportunities.
- Implement premises management system to support schools in managing H&S issues.
- Support schools when appointing specialist contractors.
- Train and coach the trust board, governors and school leaders on H&S matters.



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- Ensure that the Health & Safety Policy and associated local policies, procedures and risk assessments are being adhered to and the wellbeing of all staff, pupils and visitors is promoted and valued.
 - Regularly review plans to accommodate any educational or additional needs to ensure the safety and inclusion of all pupils and staff.
 - Ensure the safe management of local asbestos arrangements are in place.
 - Receive H&S audit reports and ensure any corrective actions are implemented.
 - Nominate a Governor to review the implementation of the H&S Policy is effective and to undertake an annual site inspection with the Site Manager.
 - To ensure fire risk assessments are undertaken.
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- Follow and implement the trust's Health & Safety policies and guidance to protect staff, pupils and visitors.
- Implement risk assessments specific to the school setting and ensure risks are dealt with sensibly and proportionately using practical control measures. To include fire, asbestos, legionella, COVID-19 and COSHH.
- Ensure that the school is accessible to all pupils and staff and make reasonable adjustments to accommodate educational or additional needs safely.
- Provide instruction, information and training to enable employees (including new starters) to work in a safe environment to include how to deal with emergency situations such as fire outbreak, serious accidents and site security.
- Undertake an assessment of first aid needs and implement the appropriate level of equipment, facilities and staff training.
- Ensure appropriate risk assessment of all educational trips and residential visits are undertaken by a suitably trained Educational Visits Co-ordinator.
- Provide opportunity for staff to raise concerns or suggest improvements in H&S practice.
- Ensure recording and reporting of accidents (including near misses) undertaking investigation of accidents or incidents to understand cause.
- Bring to the attention of the Trust any H&S concerns or defects which are identified as unsafe and take action to minimise the risk until repairs can be undertaken.
- Ensure that staff are aware of H&S policies and procedures, understand their H&S duties and how to report incidents or concerns including maintenance and repair issues.
- A programme of statutory testing is in place and the responsibility is assigned to an appropriately trained employee.
- Participate in regular audits and undertake corrective actions within timescales. Report findings to LGB.
- Ensure that external providers or those hiring the premises are following procedures and operating safely.
- Ensure that all procedures are followed in relation to asbestos management.
- Ensure that welfare facilities are suitable and appropriate (i.e. toilet provision, lockers, drinking water, ventilation, lighting and working temperature).