



A Vision for Excellence

Governors' Handbook

August 2023

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CAST's Vision

We will work together as one Trust, one family of schools, a community inspired by a vision for excellence. We commit ourselves to deepen our mission and raise standards in order to provide an excellent Catholic education for every child in our care.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governance responsibilities in Plymouth CAST Trust Structure

Responsibilities of the Members:

- Guardians of the governance of the Multi-Academy Trust
- Accountable to the Bishop (unless the Member is the Bishop)
- Signatories to the Memorandum and Articles of Association
- Akin to shareholders

Responsibilities of the Directors:

- Trust Directors and Charity Trustees
- Accountable to the Members and the Bishop
- Duty to uphold the Multi-Academy Trust's objects and to comply with any directives, advice and/or guidance issued by the Bishop
- Responsible for preserving and developing the Multi-Academy Trust's Catholic character at all times, and this overriding duty (which is also a legal duty) should permeate everything that the Directors do.
- Responsible for the general control and management of the administration of the Multi-Academy Trust and for delivering the three core functions
- Responsible for standards of education in the academies within the Multi-Academy Trust
- Delegate functions to sub-committees, Senior Executive Leadership Team, LCBs, and Headteachers
- Appoint the Senior Executive Leadership Team

Responsibilities of the LCB Governors:

- Appointed/elected to be a Governor of a specific school within the Multi-Academy Trust in accordance with the Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA)

- Have oversight of one (or more) schools in the Multi-Academy Trust and are accountable to the Board of Directors of the Multi-Academy Trust for their conduct as Governors and their support of the Catholic character of their school and the Trust
- Vital link to the local community
- Are sub-committees of the Board of Directors and have an important role in supporting the Board of Directors with the delivery of the strategic aims of the Trust, in line with both the Trust Improvement Plan (TIP) and School Improvement Plan (SIP)

Management Responsibility in Plymouth CAST Trust Structure

Responsibilities of the Senior Executive Leadership Team:

- Appointed by the Board of Directors and employed by the Multi-Academy Trust
- Expectation that this must include a CEO (to act as Accounting Officer) and a CFO, in line with the Academy Trust Handbook
- Responsible for 'operations' and for delivering the Board's vision and ethos – the 'professional leaders'
- Responsible for the Multi-Academy Trust's financial effectiveness and stability and for ensuring value for money
- Responsible for the performance management of the Headteachers with the support of the Local CAST Board.

Responsibilities of the Headteacher:

- Responsible for day to day management of the school (or schools in an executive headship type arrangement)
- Responsible for performance management of staff in school/schools
- Responsible for standards in their school/schools
- Full description of the Headteacher's responsibilities can be found in the revised Job Descriptions. This document does not cover the full range of Headteacher responsibilities or replace their Job Descriptions
- To conduct work and performance in line with the National Professional Standards for Headteachers

The role of the Local CAST Board

- To support and promote the Trust's vision and values

- To support and champion the Trust’s strategic priorities
- To follow and undertake the governance duties as set out in the Schedule of Accountability
- To attend all Diocesan and Trust training for Governors
- To be responsible to the Trust Board for the quality of governance in their schools
- Foundation Governors are accountable to both the Trust Board and the Bishop
- To follow and uphold the Trust Code of Conduct
- To support and uphold the Catholic life and mission of the school
- To act as champions and advocates in the local community for their school, especially parents, carers and the local parish
- To support and challenge the Headteacher in fulfilling their responsibilities as set out in the Scheme of Delegation (SoDA)
- To have oversight and develop knowledge in the following key areas: RE and Catholic Life, Curriculum and Standards, Safeguarding, Inclusion, and Health, Safety and GDPR
- To support and challenge the Headteacher in the delivery and impact of the School Improvement Plan priorities

The expectations of Governors are detailed in the Code of Conduct for Governors

Foundation Governors will be required to complete a Foundation Governor’s Declaration at the point of application.

Constitution of the Local CAST Board

The constitution of a Local CAST Board (LCB) in Plymouth CAST is set out in the Local CAST Board Terms of Reference. Below is a summary of the main points.

The members of the Local CAST Board shall be known as Governors, with not less than four on an LCB. The constitution and delegated powers of the LCB are in accordance with the Scheme of Delegated Authority.

Foundation Governors on the LCB will be those appointed by the Bishop. They shall “outnumber all the other members by two so as to ensure the preservation and development of the Catholic character of the Academy.”

The Chair must be elected annually by a simple majority of the LCB. Only Foundation Governors may be considered for the post.

The arrangements for the appointment, removal, and disqualification of members of the LCB are covered in the SoDA.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the Local CAST Board are detailed in the SoDA.

Business and Proceedings of the Local CAST Board

The Local CAST Board must meet **six times** in an academic year or once per half-term.

The business of the Local CAST Board must be conducted in the line with the Schedule of Accountability, the LCB Meeting Management Plan and the agenda as set by the Board of Directors for a consistent and standardised approach to local governance across the Trust.

Governor Training, Communication and Updates

Governor training is offered online via Zoom and is led by the CEO, members of the Senior Executive Leadership Team, and the Trust Board Lead for Governance, supported by the Clerk to the Trust Board. Where possible, training is recorded.

The training sessions include training for new Governors, specific areas of focus, and training in lead roles.

Attendance at training is monitored to ensure all schools are represented.

The Trust also holds Chairs' Forum sessions for all LCB Chairs to meet online (termly), to receive feedback, a termly Clerks' Forum for all Clerks to attend online to discuss best practice and receive updates.

A termly Governing News newsletter is shared with all Governors and Directors providing links to training, updates to the Trust Board, policies, Diocesan training and updates.

The GovernorHub portal provides a school governance and topical education newsfeed to keep Governors updated and informed.

Statutory Safeguarding training for Governors is delivered online by SSS Learning.

Governor Database

Clerks are asked to return information for a Governor database, identifying Governors in their lead roles and providing contact information and terms of office. This information is securely stored in line with GDPR guidelines.

Link Directors

The purpose of the Link Director role is to ensure that governance is carried out robustly and consistently in all Trust schools and in line with the Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA). The specific role of the Link Director is to both offer support and challenge to the Chair of the Local CAST Board and to ensure that local governance is effective in supporting Plymouth CAST schools to offer the best education and experiences to the children and young people served by Plymouth CAST.

Furthermore the role also facilitates effective communication between the different layers of Trust governance and provides a local perspective for Directors to ensure that the Board understands local needs and considers these in the light of its decision making on behalf of all Trust schools.

The Link Director role is detailed in the Link Director Protocol.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the role of the LCB in an Ofsted inspection?

The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (September 2023) states that, “In a school that is part of a trust, the board of trustees is the accountable entity and governance body. Often, local governing bodies can appear responsible for governance, when in reality it is trustees who are accountable for the academy trust. Local governing bodies are committees to which trustees may choose to delegate some specific responsibilities, but in some cases, they may act purely as advisory bodies and engage with the community. Their responsibilities are set out in the trust’s scheme of delegation. Sometimes, their powers are delegated from trust leaders; if this is the case, they are part of the school’s management, not its governance. Inspectors will therefore need to be careful to establish who has overall responsibility for governance. Inspectors will also ensure that meetings are with those who are directly responsible for exercising governance of the school and for overseeing its performance.”

In the Plymouth CAST Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA), due to the size and geographical reach of the Trust, the Board of Directors have made the distinct decision to delegate the responsibility to LCBs, to attend an Ofsted inspection. This will most likely be the Chair of Governors due to their detailed knowledge of the school. It is acknowledged that due to the local links with the school community, this is the most rigorous approach to governance at school level. Furthermore, it is the role of the school’s Link Director to both support and hold the Chair of Governors to account for the impact of governance on school improvement in line with the Scheme of Delegated Authority. The mechanism to do this will be through termly meetings and attendance at LCB meetings to quality assure the work of the Local CAST Board.

What is the role of the LCB when appointing the Head or other senior reserved posts?

A representative of the LCB is invited to support the Senior Executive Leadership Team, delegated by the Directors as employers, in senior appointments. In practice, this means sitting on appointment panels.

Is the LCB responsible for the Head’s appraisal and pay?

The LCB is not the Head’s employer or line manager and as such has no statutory role in the appraisal of the Head or determination of their pay. However, the Senior Executive Leadership Team will ensure that the Chair of the LCB is involved in the appraisal process so that they can contribute their knowledge of the impact of the Headteacher, using the Plymouth CAST Appraisal Review Template for Headteachers.

What is the role of the LCB in a redundancy process or any major restructuring of staff, including reviews of job descriptions for senior staff?

The LCB will be informed by the Headteacher of any necessary staffing changes that need to be made in line with the school budget.

Does the LCB approve the budget?

No, this is set by the Headteacher for the school in conjunction with the SIO, SBM and CFO. This is approved by the Board of Directors.

Is the LCB responsible for educational standards?

The LCB is responsible for the monitoring of educational standards, reporting and challenging the Headteacher but it is the Headteacher who is ultimately responsible for educational standards.

Are 'Lead' Governors responsible for certain areas?

Lead Governors with 'oversight' of RE and Catholic Life, Inclusion, Safeguarding, Health, Safety and GDPR, and Curriculum and Standards.

Are Governors responsible for Health and Safety in the school?

The Headteacher is responsible for Health and Safety in the school but the Board of Directors, as the employer, has oversight of Health and Safety across all CAST schools. The role of the LCB is to monitor the implementation of the CAST Health and Safety Policy.

Does the LCB need to approve any policies?

The role of the LCB is to adopt any statutory or other policies approved by the Board of Directors for CAST schools and to approve any supplementary policies local to the school put forward by the Headteacher and SIO.

Can the LCB initiate or bid for capital projects?

All schools capital funding is pooled by Plymouth CAST and the capital programme for all schools is scheduled and managed by the CAST Central Team.

Capital project funding bids, for works not covered by Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) and School Condition Allocation (SCA) monies, are made by SELT and the Board of Directors, in consultation with Headteachers.

The LCB is welcome to support the Headteacher in applying for grants from external bodies and if successful, the school should liaise with SELT for advice on how to implement the project and to ensure compliance.

Procedure for appointing Governors and Foundation Governors?

See Scheme of Delegated Authority.

Do we have Terms of Reference?

Yes, see the Terms of Reference for the Local CAST Boards.

Do we have a Governors' Code of Conduct?

Yes, see the Code of Conduct

How do I arrange a meeting with school staff?

All meetings with school staff should be directly arranged between the Governor and the Headteacher. The purpose of meetings will be restricted to the remit of the Schedule of Accountability, but Governors will be warmly welcomed into school at all times as volunteers and 'friends of the school'.

How do Link Directors access LCB meeting minutes?

Each Link Director has an allocated and restricted folder on Governorhub, where the Clerks to the LCB can securely upload and store meeting minutes for Link Director perusal.

Appendix I

The Nolan Principles

(Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minister in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations)

- Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

- **Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under the financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

- **Objectively** – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit

- **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

- **Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands

- **Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest

- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example