Southern Education Trust

Terms of Reference for Trust Board Committees

The Board of Trustees, at its meeting on 16th December, 2025, resolved to adopt these Terms of Reference. These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually at the start of the academic year.

Signature
(Chair of the Trust Board) M.E.A

Date of signature 16/12/25

SOUTHERN EDUCATION TRUST
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR TRUST BOARD COMMITTEES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In accordance with the Articles of Association, the Board of Trustees has established the following committees and delegates authority to the committees to act in accordance with the approved Terms of Reference below.

1.1.1 Finance, Audit and Risk
1.1.2 Human Resources and Development
1.1.3 School Standards/Quality of Education

1.2 The Terms of Reference of the committees, along with the Articles of Association, the Scheme of Delegation and the Trust's policies, form the framework by which the Trust is governed and managed, in particular:-

1.2.1 how Trustees ensure compliance with the various statutory and regulatory requirements placed upon them,
1.2.2 the relationship between Trustees, local governing boards, the executive team and (in the case of Church Schools) the local Diocese,
1.2.3 how the Trustees, local governors and the executive team work together effectively.

1.3 These Terms of Reference may be amended at any time by decision of the Trust Board.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE OF COMMITTEES

2.1 The Trust Board will appoint trustees with relevant expertise ensuring that committees have the right balance of skills, knowledge and overall experience to fulfil their respective functions.

2.2 Additional committee members who are not Trustees may be appointed by the Board for their expertise, whilst noting that the majority of members must be Trustees.

2.3 The minimum number of members on any committee will be three.

2.4 The committee membership will be reviewed annually by the Trust Board at the last meeting of the academic year.

2.5 The Chief Executive Officer will have the right to attend all committee meetings and each committee will be supported by appropriate members of the Executive Team in attendance and not voting. The committee may invite other people to attend if they consider it helpful.

2.6 Committees may establish time-limited working groups if required, but these should have clear terms of reference to clarify their purpose and reporting lines, and details of any working groups must be reported to the Board.

3. COMMITTEE CHAIRS/VICE CHAIRS

3.1 Committee Chairs will be trustees, will be recommended by the Committee and approved by the Board, taking into account the skills and experience required for the position, the balance of chairing responsibilities within the Trust and any requirements from the DfE.

3.2 Committee Vice Chairs will be trustees and will be elected annually by the committee at the first committee meeting of the academic year.

3.3 The Trust Board will have the right to remove the Chair and/or Vice Chair where they have cause for concern that the committee is not fulfilling its responsibilities.

4. MEETINGS

4.1 Committee meetings will take place at least once a term and may be more frequent if deemed necessary to fulfil the remit of the committee.

4.2 The quorum will be 50% with the majority of members present being Trustees.

4.3 Every matter that requires a decision at committee meetings will be determined by a majority of votes of members present and eligible to vote. The outcome of all votes will be recorded in the minutes.

4.4 The Chair will have the casting vote in the case of equal votes.

4.5 Committees will regularly review their own performance, constitution and terms of reference to ensure that they are operating effectively, and regularly review the Risk Register where it relates to the remit of the committee, ensuring checks are modified as appropriate.

5. CLERKING

5.1 The Director of Governance Operations will ensure that each meeting is clerked.
5.2 Minutes of all committee meetings will be circulated to the Board of Trustees.

6. PURPOSE OF FINANCE, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

6.1 The Committee provides assurance to the Board regarding the integrity and efficiency of financial planning and reporting, internal controls, risk management, audit functions, premises development, ICT strategy, and health and safety compliance.

Key Responsibilities:

6.2 Review and recommend the annual budget and monitor financial performance across all academies.

- 6.2.1 Review and recommend to the Board the draft 3-year consolidated budget, taking into account the Trust's vision, known risks and opportunities including growth plans, and ensuring that individual school budgets do not show a deficit unless they hold the appropriate level of reserves.
- 6.2.2 Receive monthly management reports to monitor the Trust's performance against budget and alert the board to any significant variances.
- 6.2.3 Approve expenditure from reserves, in accordance with the Reserves Policy and financial delegations set out in the Scheme of Delegation.
- 6.2.4 Maintain the stability of the Trust's financial position by monitoring cashflow and ensuring the effectiveness of financial controls.
- 6.2.5 With Trust leaders, develop and agree the Trust's procurement strategy, monitor compliance in relation to procurement and measure the effectiveness of procurement processes in delivering value for money.
- 6.2.6 Regularly review pupil numbers that underpin revenue projections.
- 6.2.7 Ensure local committees carry out their financial delegations in line with Scheme of Delegation, using the Trust's recognised method
- 6.2.8 Carry out benchmarking at least annually.

6.3 Oversee internal and external audit processes, ensuring implementation of recommendations.

- 6.3.1 Review and recommend to the Board the appointment/re-appointment of the Trust's auditors (for recommendation to the Members).
- 6.3.2 Ensure the statutory audit of annual accounts, reviewing and recommending the audited accounts to the Board.
- 6.3.3 Review and recommend to the Board the appointment of the internal scrutineers.
- 6.3.4 Agree the annual programme of internal scrutiny.

6.4 Maintain a Trust-wide risk register, advising on risk appetite and mitigation strategies, ensuring regular review within board committees.

6.5 Monitor compliance with financial, regulatory and legal obligations including DfE, Academy Trust Handbook and School Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist (which should be recommended to the Board).

6.6 Review capital projects, estates strategy, condition and maintenance plans.

6.6.1 Develop and maintain the Trust's estates and asset planning strategy.
6.6.2 Develop and recommend to the Board the Trust's capital investment programme in line with capital funding and the Trust's estates strategy.
6.6.3 Monitor capital spend to ensure the Board's capital investment objectives are being met.
6.6.4 Monitor the condition of the Trust's estate to ensure all facilities remain fit for purpose.
6.6.5 Monitor land and buildings leasing arrangements and approve new leases on behalf of the Board.

6.7 Oversee the development and implementation of ICT strategy, infrastructure and cyber security measures.

6.8 Ensure robust health and safety policies, risk assessments, training and statutory health and safety compliance across all sites.
6.8.1 Ensure safety inspections of all premises and grounds is undertaken.
6.8.2 Agree a Lettings Policy for the Trust.

6.9 Oversee financial and premises aspects of due diligence of new schools and significant projects.

7. PURPOSE OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Human Resources

7.1 To consider, determine and keep under review any strategies and policies for human resources and organisational development.

7.2 To consider, determine and keep under review effective arrangements for consultation with staff as a whole and for negotiation and consultation with appropriately recognised trade unions and/or other representatives.

7.3 To ensure effective measures are in place to promote equality and diversity in employment.

7.4 To ensure effective measures are in place to promote and monitor staff well-being.

7.5 To develop strategy and policy in all matters relating to the recruitment, reward, retention, motivation and development of the Trust's staff, in line with the Trust's vision, values and ethos.

7.6 To monitor HR key performance indicators such as staff turnover and absence.

7.7 To approve, following input from finance specialists, annual inflationary pay awards within the context of national and local agreements and the wider employment market.

7.8 To support the Board in providing an added level of scrutiny in the monitoring of the Trust's compliance with its statutory obligations in relation to HR.

7.9 To be consulted in any redundancy proposals across the trust, in line with Scheme of Delegation.

7.10 To be consulted in any changes to key Trust staffing structures and Executive Head/Headteacher, in line with Scheme of Delegation.

Development

7.11 Work with the Trust Lead and senior team to recommend changes to the Trust Strategic Plan to the Board for discussion.

7.12 Consider requests from schools who wish to join the Trust/mergers with other MATs to ensure any additional schools reflect the Trust's ethos, and make recommendations to the Board

7.13 Support the Executive Team in discussions with, presentations to and due diligence of any school or MAT seeking to join SET (other Trustees may support these processes)

7.14 Support the Executive Team in developing the central team so it has the capacity to support Trust growth

7.15 Support the process of recruiting new Trustees

7.16 Review the operation of the Board and its associated documentation, and make any recommendations for changes to the Board

7.17 Receive any external reviews of governance and produce a draft action plan for discussion by the Board should this be necessary

8. PURPOSE OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE

8.1 Support the trust board, CEO and trust leadership team in their responsibilities for the educational performance of the trust and its pupils in the context of the trust's strategic plan.

8.2 Monitor the performance of schools within the trust, by exception and positive performance reporting, and look for trends in relation to:-

8.2.1 Safeguarding
8.2.2 Inclusion
8.2.3 Curriculum and teaching
8.2.4 Achievement
8.2.5 Attendance and behaviour
8.2.6 Post-16 provision
8.2.7 Early years provision

8.3 Receive progress reports on the implementation of post-Ofsted action plans and any other formal evaluation.

8.4 Ensure that schools are fulfilling their responsibilities regarding safeguarding, child protection and the Prevent duty, taking account of current guidance.

8.5 Have a strategic overview of attendance, behaviour and welfare of pupils.

8.6 Review educational collaboration within the trust, monitoring how effectively best practice is being shared between trust schools.

8.7 To reassure the Board that robust school performance review is carried out by local academy committees.

8.8 Monitor the delivery of the trust's ethos of inclusion at school level, including through admissions policies (where applicable) and practice.

8.9 Receive assurance that each school's policy on SEND is consistent with the Code of Practice and Equality Act and that arrangements are made to ensure that the policy is monitored and regularly reviewed.

8.10 Receive visit reports from SEND and Safeguarding Trustees.

8.11 Ensure admission arrangements for each school meet statutory requirements and monitor any significant changes to policy, for recommendation to the Board as appropriate.