



How to become a member, trustee or governor

Governors and trustees make a valuable contribution to children's education, opportunities and futures in Abingdon Learning Trust.

Being a school governor or trustee with Abingdon Learning Trust is a challenging but hugely rewarding role. As a governor you will be part of a school's Local Academy Board (LAB) offering support and challenge to your headteacher, and as a trustee you will sit on the trust board, overseeing the work of the trust as a whole. It will give you the chance to make a real difference to our children and young people, give something back to our local community and use and develop your skills in a board-level environment. You will also be joining the largest volunteer force in the country: there are over a quarter of a million volunteers governing state funded schools in England.

Schools and the Trust need a trust board and governing boards that have a balance and diversity of knowledge, skills and experience to enable them to be effective. Ofsted (the national inspection body for schools) has repeatedly noted that the most effective schools demonstrate effective leadership and management - including by the governing board.

Anyone aged over 18 can be a governor or trustee (but there are some exceptions) and you do not need to be a parent. There is no requirement for you to have an understanding of the education system, just the necessary skills, character and time to contribute. There is plenty of training available to help you learn about education. Schools need and benefit from a range of professional knowledge on their governing board including education, finance, human resources, legal, marketing and public relations, property and estates management, and organisational change.

As a governor or trustee, you will be able to:

- Use your own experience of education and life beyond school to inform conversations
- Develop and utilise your skills in a board-level environment
- Make a valuable contribution to education and your community
- Support and challenge the school and the trust so that there are improvements for pupils and staff
- Bring your unique experiences, perspectives and insights in to decision-making in the interests of the school/s community

What do governors and trustees do?

The governing board (LAB) provides strategic leadership and accountability in schools. It has three key functions:

- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent
- Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

At trust board level you will have these responsibilities across all the schools.

Governors or trustees set the aims and objectives for the school or group of schools and set the policies and targets for achieving those aims and objectives. They monitor and evaluate the progress the school/Trust is making and act as a source of challenge and support to the Headteacher/CEO. In action, this means:

- Appointing and performance reviewing the head teacher and senior leaders, including making decisions about pay- or CEO at Trust-level
- Managing budgets and deciding how money is spent
- Engaging with pupils, staff, parents and the school community
- Sitting on panels and making decisions about things like pupil exclusions and staff disciplinary issues
- Addressing a range of education issues within the school including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special needs, staff workload and teacher recruitment
- Looking at data and evidence to ask questions and have challenging conversations about the school

Governors and trustees must be prepared to adopt the Nolan principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Governors and trustees should also be committed to their role and to young people; confident in having courageous conversations; curious with an enquiring mind; able to challenge the status quo to improve things; collaborative to build strong relationships; critical to improve their own work and that of the board; and creative in problem solving and being innovative.

What will be expected of me?

The average time commitment is five to eight hours per month, although it will vary depending on the needs of the school and the role. This includes meetings, background reading and school visits. As well LAB or trust board meetings, many schools have various committees and link governor roles which you may like to contribute to – this depends on each individual school.

Like magistrates or members of a jury, school governors and trustees have a right to reasonable time off work for their public duties, although this may be unpaid. Your company's HR department will be able to tell you about its policy.

Each school sets a term of office for its governors and trustees – this is normally four years. Many people choose to serve multiple terms, however as a volunteer you can resign before your term is finished if your circumstances change. Governance is a voluntary role and therefore it is not paid.

If you are interested

Please do contact Dr Fiona Hammans, CEO, (CEO@abingdonlearningtrust.org) or Jonathan Hopkins, Chair of Abingdon Learning Trust, (jhopkins@abingdonlearningtrust.org) for an informal conversation. We would very much like to hear from you.