



# **Cornerstone Multi Academy Trust**

## **Governance Plan 2023/24**



## CORNERSTONE ACADEMY TRUST GOVERNANCE PLAN 2023/24

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## 1. Introduction and vision

### 1.1 Introduction to the Governance Plan

The Governance Plan sets out:

- The vision for Cornerstone Academy Trust
- The structure and operational procedures of the Members' and Trustees
- The structure and organisation of the Trust Board
- Processes for strategic planning for developing the schools within the Trust
- Processes for securing accountability

The Trust's constitution and framework for governance arrangements are set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association for Cornerstone, as recommended for academies.

### 1.2 The vision for Cornerstone

Mission Statement:

*"The Cornerstone Academy Trust creates and promotes a challenging learning environment that inspires children to achieve high standards and become life-long learners. The Trust has high expectations, builds children's confidence, and ensures success for all.*

*We seek to foster creative thinkers, inquisitive questioners, avid problem solvers with flexible skills, who are successful communicators. Children learn to collaborate effectively at all levels, including working with our international partners and are able to adapt to the needs of a diverse and fast changing society."*

We know that education in the 21st Century is a key to securing economic growth and the social fabric of society. In our ever-changing world today's learners will need to be confident, adaptable citizens who are able to take advantage of the many employment opportunities in the ever-increasing digital and creative industries.

Each Digital Academy creates and promotes a challenging learning environment that inspires children to achieve high standards and become life-long independent learners. The academies set consistently high expectations, build children's confidence and ensure engagement for all. The aim of each school within the Trust is to give all the pupils a strong foundation for the future, not just in terms of a core education but the ability to question and challenge the world they live in, interact effectively with others and think imaginatively and creatively.

By embracing technology as part of everyday teaching, each school can take a new approach to digital tools, embedding their use within a broad and balanced curriculum. Each school creates a challenging computational learning environment where children learn from an early age to program, to develop good logical thinking skills, to solve problems and to collaborate effectively with their peers.

Our ethos of being fully inclusive and having unlimited aspirations for all, ensures that all individuals and target groups are encouraged, supported and inspired – so that everyone achieves and any barrier (potential or real) will be overcome. We work extensively with parents and carers – offering a wealth of enrichment opportunities after school as well as

wrap-around care facilities from 7.30 am to 6.00 pm, and a daily community café for families to use after school in some of our schools. We ensure that the requirements of the national curriculum will be fulfilled in an innovative, relevant and exciting way by giving, for example, children the opportunities to sing, play musical instruments, sail boats, ride bikes and many other activities.

### **i) Educational Excellence**

The schools within the Trust will provide a creative and exciting curriculum, which enables children to exceed national standards with a clear emphasis on spoken English, reading, writing, maths and computing.

The schools are committed to:

- Being fully inclusive and meeting the needs of all children
- Delivering the National Curriculum in creative and exciting ways
- Ensuring high standards of achievement that exceed national standards
- Challenging all children to achieve their full potential and preparing them to move to next stage of their education with confidence.

### **ii) Development of the whole child**

The Trust is committed to all aspects of a child's development, supporting them to become responsible and moral members of the community, to make healthy lifestyle choices and to become creative and inquisitive life-long learners. Children will have opportunities for reflection and spiritual growth. High standards of behaviour will be expected, and through education inside and outside the classroom, the Trust will raise awareness of core British values and prepare children for life in modern Britain. High standards of behaviour will be maintained.

### **iii) Community**

The Trust will ensure that each of the schools with the MAT will forge strong links with the local communities. The schools offer remote attendance, as well as in person, to Parent Evenings and Information events, to give opportunities to those that usually could not attend. The Trust also includes training on the school systems and IT to encourage parents to be involved in and support their children's education. The Trust has made many international links, forging great working relationships between schools. We have been twinned with schools in Ethiopia, to which, we have sent teachers from across the Trust. We work closely with a school in The Netherlands, and have established an annual residential, for our Year 6 children.

## **2. The Members**

### **2.1 Composition of the Trust and Member's pen portraits**

The Members of the Trust are:

1. Angie Hurren (Chair)
2. Henry Massey
3. Stewart Noakes
4. Stephen Taylor
5. Samantha Chapman (Chair of Trustees)

### **2.2 Roles and responsibilities of the Members**

The members will meet termly. They will hold an Annual General Meeting in December. Other meetings may be held in addition if deemed necessary.

The members may appoint up to two of the Trustees of the Trust. They will consider the needs of the trust and the skills and expertise that are required by the Trust Board to fulfil its functions effectively based on a skills audit of the Trustees. It will be carried out again with appointed Trustees and Schools Advisory Board representatives whenever new appointments are required, and subsequently repeated each school year.

The Members will oversee the financial management of the trust, being responsible to the Secretary of State for Education for the school's effectiveness in providing value for money. Members will receive a finance report three times a year, will agree the final accounts and will appoint the auditors annually.

### **2.3 Conflict of Interests**

A conflict of interests register is in place to ensure no conflict of interests between Members and Trustees and the school.

## **3. The Trust Board**

### **3.1 The Trust Board structure**

There will be no fewer than three Trustees and no maximum number of Trustees on the Trust Board. Trustees will be appointed by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Articles of Association for Cornerstone, under the Companies Act 2006.

If the CEO is willing, she / he will be appointed to the Board by the Trustees.

Each school will have a Schools Advisory Board (Schools Governing Body) and parents will be elected to sit on this Board by the parents of children on roll at the school. Staff will also be invited to join this board. The SAB has responsibility for reviewing the curriculum, teaching and learning in each school and reports into the Trustee Board.

### **3.2 Trust Board skills and attributes**

When appointing Trustees, The Trust will seek to fill these posts with people who live in the local area where possible whilst having regard for the balance of skills and experience that the Trust Board needs to fulfil its functions. It is aimed to include the following skills/experience:

- Education: experience of secondary education; understanding of current education policy, the Ofsted framework and school performance indicators
- Financial expertise and commercial experience
- Ability to analyse school data, ask questions and hold to account
- Legal expertise
- Community engagement/community cohesion
- School governance
- Premises management
- Strategic planning

- Human resources management, including performance appraisal
- Marketing

A skills audit was carried out in September 2023 to establish the skills, knowledge and experience of the Trust Board and to identify gaps in skills to enable planning for future recruitment. The audit revealed a spread of skills and expertise across the Trust Board, but areas where Trustees need to develop skills will be addressed through a training schedule.

Skills in Finance need to be strengthened within the Trust Board. It is planned to address these gaps when recruiting Trustees.

The Trust has appointed Trustees who can provide the necessary skills to ensure a strong and effective Trust Board. Trustees with specific expertise will be co-opted as necessary.

The Trust Board will review its own performance annually using a standard Trust Board audit procedure. The audit will include analysis of the impact of the Trust Board on the educational standards and organisational effectiveness of the Academies. This will enable each Trustee to reflect on his/her individual impact on the school and so identify training needs for the coming year. Results will be analysed and actions will be identified for the Trust Board development plan for the coming year.

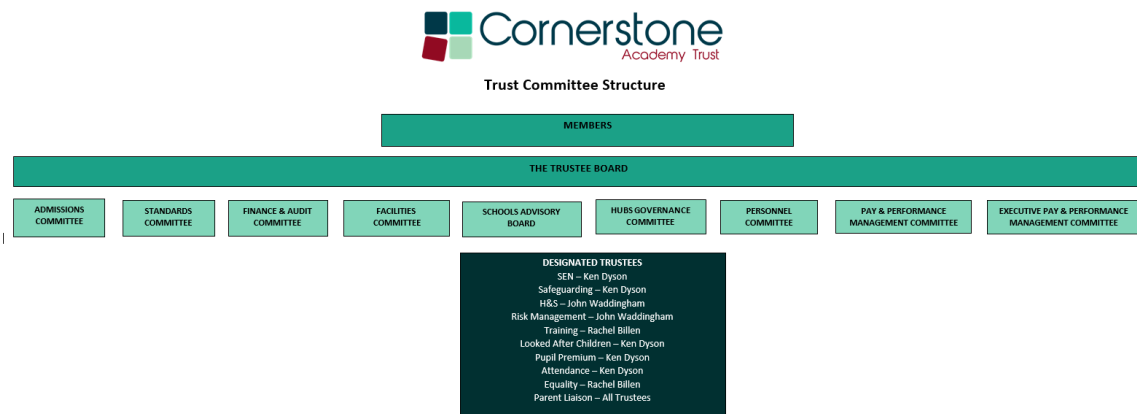
Every two years, or at other times if deemed necessary or helpful, an external review of governance will be commissioned to enhance the Trust Board’s self-analysis.

### 3.4 Training

The Trustees receive ongoing training to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities as Trustees. Training includes the following:

- Safeguarding Training
- Duties and Responsibilities of a Trustee (external training by Browne Jacobson Solicitors)

## 4. Trust Board Structure



#### **4.1 Meeting structure**

The full Trust Board will meet monthly, totalling 11 meetings a year. Minutes of meetings will be sent to the members of the Trust.

#### **4.2 Trust Board Committees**

Committees will carry out the delegated roles of the Trust Board. The committees will ensure that the school is performing effectively in all areas in accordance with its targets and vision. The Trust Board will delegate decision-making powers to committees, but the Trust Board will always retain overall accountability.

##### **i) Finance Committee**

The remit of this committee will cover all aspects relating to finance. This committee will work with the CEO, as accounting officer, and the business manager to ensure that financial decisions enable the school to provide value for money, and to ensure that processes are compliant with The Academies Financial Handbook, as follows:

- Appoint a lead trustee for finance with professional experience of compliance, modelling and budgeting. Ashley Dyer is the acting chair of the Finance Committee whilst we are actively seeking an individual with a more formal accountancy background to assume the role.
- Follow the Financial Scheme of Delegation
- Provide training for all members of the Finance committee
- Propose to members external auditors with experience of academy finances
- Receive termly reports from the Trust Business Manager to the Finance and Premises Committee, Initial review and recommendation to the Trustees of the annual budget
- Ensure all priorities in the school development plan are costed and reflected in the budget
- Set out the budget in a standard format, which allows transparent benchmarking against other schools and easy monitoring, for example, the use of Pupil Premium funding.
- Regular monitoring of actual expenditure and income against budget
- Ensuring the annual accounts are produced in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 1985 and the DfE guidance issued to academies and appoint auditors for the accounts
- Authorising the award of contracts up to the amount stated in the Scheme of Delegation
- Monitor the effectiveness of the staffing structure in terms of supporting best outcomes for pupils
- Reviewing the reports of the Responsible Officer on the effectiveness of the financial procedures and controls. These reports must also be reported to the Trust Board.
- To review the financial policies of the Trust in the light of any changes to the Academies Financial Handbook and where necessary make recommendations to the board.

The whole Trust Board will be responsible for approving the budget, and the committee will provide financial reports to the Trust three times a year.

This committee will also contribute to the recruitment process for new staff and support the CEO in dealing with human resources issues as they arise.

It will make decisions about the development of the school premises to ensure that the learning environment is safe and appropriate for pupils. It will have overall responsibility for health and safety.



The committee will be responsible for ensuring compliance with charity commissions and company law.

All Trustees will be expected to have read The Academies Financial Handbook and Keeping Children Safe In Education 2023.

#### **ii) Standards Committee**

The remit of this committee will include curriculum, attainment and progress, SEND and inclusion, safeguarding and behaviour. The committee will work with school leadership on the development of the curriculum, ensuring the implementation of the plans as the school expands.

The committee will ensure the quality of education provision as follows:

- Termly comprehensive monitoring of data, including progress and attainment by cohort and groups (including by ability, ethnic background, EAL, gender, Pupil Premium, SEND), punctuality and attendance. Trustees will closely monitor the attainment gap between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils.
- Ensuring educational priorities are reflected in the School Development Plan and monitored termly,
- Visiting the school at least termly in the trustee capacity to help review the impact of initiatives and school policies and to support ongoing development of the curriculum and the learning environment as the schools expand.
- Undertaking learning walks with the CEO or a member of the senior leadership team,
- Receive termly updates from the SLT on the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The committee will triangulate information from school data, reports from independent and external moderations and inspections and observations from school visits and monitor progress against targets to enable its contribution to the school self- evaluation process.

One trustee on this committee will have specific responsibility for SEND pupils to ensure that individual pupils are making good progress and that delegated SEND funding is being used cost effectively to secure best outcomes.

One trustee on this committee will have specific responsibility for Pupil Premium pupils to ensure that delegated funding is being used appropriately to improve outcomes and close the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils.

The committee will ensure that all safeguarding procedures are up to date and compliant with national requirements.

It will report to the full Trust Board and ensure that necessary steps are taken to ensure improvement, if underperformance or under-achievement is identified. Committee minutes and reports will be presented to the Trust termly.

### **iii) Admissions Committee**

This committee will oversee the admissions process to ensure that the admissions criteria are fairly adhered to. It will propose changes to the admissions. It will be responsible for ensuring Devon admissions follow the academy policy. It will meet termly as a minimum.

### **iv) Personnel Committee**

This committee will oversee:

- Pay
- Grievances
- Staff discipline & dismissals
- Staff appeals
- Personnel

It will meet termly as a minimum.

### **v) Schools Advisory Board**

The Trust will have a Schools Advisory Board (SAB) with representation from each of the schools within the Trust. The structure of the Board will be as follows:

- Head of School(s)
- 2 x Trustees
- 4 x Parents from each school (if parents are not on board of Trustees)
- 2 x Staff Members of the Teaching Staff (if staff are not on board of Trustees)

The Trust Board will delegate the following functions to the SABs:

- Achievement
- Teaching
- School Engagement
- Curriculum
- Safeguarding

### **vi) Performance & Pay Committee**

The Committee review the Performance management and approve staff pay.

### **vii) Executive Pay Committee**

The Committee review the CEO and Deputy CEO Performance Management and approve the CEO and Deputy CEO pay.

### **viii) Facilities Committee**

The remit of this committee will include site, staffing and health and safety. This committee will work with the CEO, and the Facilities manager to ensure that we are compliant with all health and safety legislation.

### **ix) Hubs Governance Committee**

The remit of this committee will be to meet with the staff who lead the curriculum hubs on behalf of the Trust to review their progress and how they are meeting the KPIs set for each. The curriculum hubs include:

- English Hub
- Science Learning Partnership
- Computing Hub
- Behaviour Hub

### **Delegation of authority and terms of reference**

#### Delegation of authority to committees and individual Trustees

At the first Trust Board meeting of each academic year, Trustees will agree the Terms of Reference of each committee, and Trustee lead roles and responsibilities for the year.

Terms of reference set out the following:

- The role of the Trust Board / committee / panel / working group
- Membership
- Voting rights
- Appointment of Chair and Vice-chair
- Individual responsibilities
- Delegated decision-making rights
- Powers of delegation
- Frequency of meetings
- Quorum
- Clerking arrangements

The committees will have agreed delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the Trust Board but will be required to report back to the full Trust Board in order to keep all Trustees fully informed, and to have decisions formally endorsed. The Trust Board retains overall accountability for the performance of the school.

### **Committee composition**

The membership of the committees will include members of the Trust Board, co-opted Trustees and others who would be able to contribute to the work of the committee. The Trustees will always be in the majority on the committee. Only Trustees and co-opted Trustees will be able to vote on any decisions. Committee structure as detailed in above diagram.

### **4.3 Clerking arrangements**

The Trust has appointed two clerks.

## **5. Fulfilling the core functions**

### **5.1 Core functions**

The Trust Board will focus on three core strategic functions:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
- Holding the CEO to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils;

- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

The Trust Board needs to be strategic in function, providing overall leadership for the school without being involved in the day today management. Trustees are expected to hold the school to account for its performance and be accountable to the Trust.

## **5.2 Developing the schools**

Trustees will work with the CEO, the financial plans and development plans developed by the Steering Group to determine the key priorities for establishing and developing the schools, with a focus on the new schools in their first three years. These will be based on the strategic objectives in the Education Brief all which were agreed with the DfE prior to opening. The Standards Committee will shortly set targets for each cohort of pupils, which will be endorsed by the Trust Board.

Key performance indicators and targets will be set for the first year of operation, and longer term targets relating to pupil progress and attainment have been presented at the Standards Committee. These have been based on benchmarking against local and similar schools, and on national data and expectations.

The Standards Committee will be involved in determining academic priorities for the school and setting education targets for future years. This process will be driven by internal assessment data indicating attainment and progress, the results of national tests and assessments, and published hard data as in Analyse School Performance. When determining the strategic direction of the school, Trustees will also take into account 'soft' data i.e.

- The CEO's & Head of Education reports on the quality of teaching (classroom observations, work scrutinies)
- Feedback from parent, pupil and staff surveys
- Pupil Voice
- Curriculum Review outcomes
- Information gathered through trustee visits (see below)

Hard and soft data gathered will feed into the school self-evaluation process before the strategic priorities for the following year can be determined. Trustees will also set objectives for the year-on-year growth of the school and the annual addition of a new cohort.

The School Development Plan for the following academic will consist of:

- Consultation period involving all staff, Trustees, parents and pupil voice (surveys/questionnaires)
- Collection and analysis of pupil performance data [SLT with Standards committee]  
Evaluation of school performance and final review of previous SDP report to Trustees
- SLT and Trustees to determine priorities for following year for the School Development Plan
- Trustee ratification of SDP
- Review of progress against priorities – Pupils and Standards Committee + FGB

- Final review of plan

### **5.3 Monitoring school performance**

The Trustees will be expected to make regular visits to the school during the school day and Trustees on appointment must commit to taking time off work, if necessary, to fulfil this requirement of their role. The purpose of the visits is to gain a good understanding of how the school is operating to enable them to evaluate and challenge school performance. Visits will also support positive relationships between staff and Trustees. Some Trustees will have specific areas of responsibility e.g. special educational needs, safeguarding, pupil premium. A manageable programme of visits will be set up at the beginning of each school year to ensure that each visit has a relevant focus and enable Trustees to see how the school is addressing improvement priorities. A secure knowledge and understanding of the school will enable Trustees to be involved in strategic planning and setting targets for improvement.

Trustees will be responsible for ensuring that the views of parents, staff and pupils, and the wider community are sought on an annual basis during the consultation period for the School Development Plan. This will be carried out as follows:

- Parents: online survey
- Pupils: through an age appropriate online survey + pupil voice samples -
- Staff: online survey with staff meeting or face to face follow up
- Community groups and employers: online survey of those already involved in the Academy, with public invitation to groups not involved in the Academy to also make returns

Monitoring data: The CEO will provide Trustees with all relevant information to enable them to have a fuller picture of school performance. Trustees will be trained to understand and analyse school data, which will include Ofsted's school performance dashboard, school performance tables, Analyse School Performance and financial benchmarking tables. Trustees will consider employing the services of an external partner to assist them in the task of understanding and monitoring performance. This will include overview of progress data, monitoring the quality of teaching and learning provided by the school and guidance on setting future targets.

If Trustees judge that there are shortcomings in any aspect of school performance, the school leadership may be challenged through direct questions in committee meetings, in meetings of the Trust Board, or through meetings with the senior leadership team. If improvement does not progress according to plan, Trustees will seek the advice of the school improvement partner in order to set timed targets for improvement. This will be monitored by the Trust Board and reported to the Trust. Improvement priorities for the school will be linked to performance appraisal objectives to secure accountability for progress and improvement.

There will be an expectation that the Trustees are fully committed to the school and its development and are responsible for ensuring that the school complies with all legal requirements.

### **5.4 Performance Management of the CEO**

The performance management of the CEO is the process whereby the CEO is held to account for school progress. Two Trustees will be nominated to carry out the performance appraisal of

the CEO each year. They will be appointing an external professional adviser to lead the process who has the necessary skills, experience and objectivity to provide them with advice and support. This will take place in the Summer Term of each academic year. The purpose of this process is to appraise the performance of the CEO during the past year, assessing performance against the responsibilities of their role and against the National Standards for Headteachers. Objectives will be set for the coming year to support the improvement and development of the school and the CEO's own professional development. Progress against objectives will be reviewed in March each year, and finally in July.

A clear Pay and Appraisal Policy will set out the rewards, sanctions and processes so that this is a transparent process.

The Chair of the Trustees will not be one of the nominated Trustees to allow for a fully open relationship between the Chair and the CEO and to enable the Chair to act as mediator if necessary.

### **5.5 Accountability for financial processes**

The CEO will be the Accounting Officer and has overall responsibility for the school's financial affairs, including ensuring value for money. Specifically, the accounting officer will be personally responsible to the Trust Board for:

- Ensuring regularity and propriety
- Prudent and economic administration
- Avoidance of waste and extravagance
- Efficient and effective use of available resources; and
- The day to day organisation, staffing and management of the Trust

The Accounting Officer has the duty to take action if the Trust Board or chairperson is contemplating a course of action, which he or she considers an infringement of propriety or regularity. Objections should be put in writing to the Trust Board details sent to the Permanent Secretary and the Trust's external auditors.

Along with the Finance and Premises Committee, the CEO will be responsible for ensuring compliance with the Academies Financial Handbook and this will be reviewed each year. Similarly, this committee will check that all requirements of the Funding Agreement are being adhered to. All members of the committee are required to have read and be familiar with the Academies Financial Handbook, Articles of Association, legal framework for the Charities Commission and company law as affecting the school, the school's finance policy and procedures manual, procurement policy and Scheme of Financial Delegation.

The Finance and Premises Committee will meet monthly to enable rigorous monitoring of the budget and ensure the school continues to provide value for money. This will include monitoring the cost-effective deployment of staff to ensure best outcomes for pupils.

Termly reports on financial monitoring by the Finance and Premises Committee will be submitted to the Trust.

Full information on how financial transactions will be carried out and monitored is detailed in the Finance Policy. The policy includes:

- Organisation and responsibilities: the structure for reporting Financial planning and budget management
- Management of bank accounts and cash management Financial accounting systems
- Keeping and maintaining full and accurate accounting records Process for carrying out financial transactions
- Value for money procedures, how the trust will use resources and ensure value for money
- Tendering, purchasing and payment procedures.
- Measures to prevent losses or misuse of funds Scheme of Delegation
- Reporting to the DfE

### **Procurement**

Arrangements for procurement are outlined in the Finance Policy.

### **Register of Business Interest**

All Members, trustees, LAB representatives, the CEO and other senior staff are required to complete a declaration of business interests.

Declarations will include all business and pecuniary (monetary) interests such as directorships, shareholdings and other appointments of influence within a business or other organisation. They should also include interests of related persons such as a parent, spouse, child, cohabitee and business partner where that person could exert influence over a Trustee or member of staff.

The existence of a register of business interests does not of course detract from the duties of the Trustees and staff to declare interests whenever they are relevant to matters being discussed by the Trustees or a Committee.

Where an interest has been declared, Trustees and staff should not attend that part of the meeting.

The Register is in place and will be kept up to date by the Clerk to the Trustees. The Trust Board has appointed a Responsible Officer to provide an independent oversight of the Academy's financial affairs. The Responsible Officer, Bishop Fleming, will provide the Trust Board within on-going independent assurance that:

- The financial responsibilities of the Trust Board are being properly discharged;
- Resources are being managed in an efficient; economic and effective manner;
- Sound systems of internal financial control are being maintained; and
- Financial considerations are fully taken into account in reaching decisions (further details in Finance Policy).

## **5.6 Trustee responsibilities for Safeguarding, Prevent, SEND and Pupil Premium**

**Safeguarding:** The Trust Board must ensure that:

- They comply with statutory safeguarding procedures
- They have regard to the DfE statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020' to ensure that the policies, procedures and training in their schools and colleges are effective and comply with the law at all times

- The school contributes to inter-agency working in line with the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Their safeguarding arrangements take into account the procedures and practice of the Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP)

The Trust Board should also:

- Ensure that a member of the Trust Board, usually the Chair, is nominated to liaise with the designated officer from the LA or DCFP and partner agencies in the event of an allegation of abuse made against the CEO;
- Consider how children may be taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities within the curriculum e.g. through PSHE and SRE
- Ensure that the child's wishes are taken into account and there are systems in place for children to express their views and give feedback
- Ensure that staff members do not promise confidentiality to a child and always act in the interests of the child.

One trustee will take responsibility for ensuring that all safeguarding requirements are met in terms of DBS checks, the Single Central Record, up to date training and safeguarding policies. This trustee will draw up an annual report on safeguarding for the Trust Board, and this will be submitted to the members of the Trust. The annual report on safeguarding will include:

1. A record of all training relating to safeguarding:
  - DSP and DDSP training
  - Safeguarding training for staff
  - Safeguarding training for Trustees
  - Safer Recruitment training for those with recruitment responsibilities
  - Reducing and Managing Allegations against staff (HT, trustee)
  - Staff induction training relating to safeguarding
2. A dated record of all policies relating to safeguarding:
  - Anti-bullying
  - Attendance
  - Safeguarding & Child Protection (with up to date references to current guidance on safeguarding requirements)
  - Children looked after
  - Concerns and Complaints
  - Drugs and substance misuse – part of the disciplinary policy
  - Equality statement
  - First Aid (including management of medical conditions and intimate care)
  - Health and safety
  - E Safety
  - Staff Code of Conduct
  - Use of force and restraint including in the emergency plan
  - Whistle blowing
3. Confirmation that all staff have read 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020'.



4. How the school ensures that all policies have been read, understood and implemented by staff, and how this is monitored.
5. Confirmation that school safeguarding policies are published on the school website. Single Central Record in place and up to date; all DBS checks for staff, Trustees and volunteers up to date.
6. Total number of Children Looked After on role throughout the academic year
7. Number of allegations made against staff
8. The safety of the physical environment
9. Updates on the school's Prevent arrangements regarding training, policy and concerns.
10. Completion of the Safeguarding Annual Checklist and report on any areas which need further action.

Safeguarding will be a standing item on the agenda for meetings of the Trustee Board.

All Trustees will attend safeguarding training once every year and Trustees involved in recruiting staff will attend Safer Recruitment training.

A lead trustee for Health and Safety will be nominated with a remit to 'walk the site' termly and to support the school with the review and development of health and safety policies.

### **Safeguarding risks**

Trustees have a legal responsibility to ensure that children are kept safe in school. In the event the any of the safeguarding requirements are not being met, the Trust Board will take immediate remedial action. The actions taken will depend on the area of non-compliance. If there is any immediate risk to children, the Safeguarding Trustee and Chair of Trustees in liaison with the CEO will act straightaway to remove this risk. Officers from the LA or DCFP will be called in to advise if this is deemed necessary.

The Chair will be responsible for liaising with the designated officer from the LA or DCFP in the event of an allegation of abuse made against the CEO. If any member of staff poses an alleged risk to the safety of children, he/she will be suspended from her role, until investigations have been carried out. If a parent/carer or volunteer poses an alleged risk to the safety of children on the school premises, he/she will not be allowed to enter school premises until an investigation has been carried out.

If any adult working with children has been removed or dismissed because of safeguarding concerns, this will be reported immediately to the DBS by the CEO or the Chair in the case of the CEO. There is a policy in place for managing allegations against staff.

Full information on keeping children safe is detailed in the Child Protection Policy.

**Prevent:** The Safeguarding trustee will ensure that the school, in exercise of its functions, will have due regard to the guidance in the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. A training session to raise awareness of the Prevent duty will be set to take place in the Autumn Term. The Safeguarding Trustee will be responsible for ensuring that new staff are familiar with the Prevent strategy, and for checking whether there are any concerns in relation to individual pupils. The Trust Board will take into account the policies and procedures of the DCFP, with reference to the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019 document. The school's Prevent arrangements with regard to training and policy will be reported to the Trust Board.

**SEND:** There will be one Trustee designated to take responsibility for the support and progress of SEND pupils. To carry out his role, he/she will meet with the SENCO twice a year to monitor the provision of support and the progress of pupils and to ensure that allocated SEND funding is being used to improve outcomes for SEND pupils. The Trustee will monitor the tracking processes for these pupils, scrutinize the progress data (using the school's online tracking system) and also look at end of year outcomes. The SEND Trustee will discuss the cost and effectiveness of interventions and 1:1 support for pupils to ensure value for money in terms of securing best outcomes for SEND pupils. This will be reported to the Trust Board and the Trust annually. The SEND Trustee will attend training as appropriate to develop knowledge and understanding of pupils with special needs and disabilities.

**Pupil Premium:** One trustee on the Standards Committee will have specific responsibility for the progress of Pupil Premium pupils. He/she will be responsible for ensuring the Pupil Premium funding is being used to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils receiving it and to enable the gap to be closed between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils. The Trustee will meet with the SENCO each term to discuss progress and monitor the impact of the funding. This will be reported back to the Standards Committee termly and through the committee's minutes to the whole Trust Board. If progress is less than good, the Trustees will meet with the SENCO and CEO to discuss alternative strategies for supporting these pupils.

### **5.7 Compliance with Charity Law**

This will be reviewed each year by the Business Manager and reported to the Trust Board. Trustees will be encouraged to subscribe to DFE updates, including the Trustees' Handbook and termly reminders about dates and deadlines, especially those relating to compliance. Trustees will be expected to attend regular training relating to their lead area to ensure they are fully aware of the legal responsibilities in that area.

## **6. Managing the work**

### **6.1 Meeting structure**

**Trust Board:** The full Trust Board will meet 11 times a year, normally monthly. Minutes of meetings will be available to the Members of the Trust.

#### **Sub-Committees:**

Admissions

Finance

Pay & Executive Pay

Standards

Personnel  
Schools Advisory Board  
Facilities  
Hub Governance

## **6.2 Trustee succession plan**

A term of office for Trustees will last for four years and in normal circumstances Trustees will serve no more than two terms. The serving chair of Trustees will create a succession plan for preparing Trustees to take a leadership role on the Trust Board and to plan a rolling programme for the recruitment and induction of new Trustees.

## **7. Training and Induction**

### **7.1 Training:**

An annual skills audit will be carried out. Trustees will be expected to commit to at least one training session during the school year. Training sessions for the whole Trust Board will be put in place as necessary to cover issues relating to the school's expansion and development.

### **7.2 Induction:**

Induction for new Trustees will take place once being appointed to the Board. These procedures will be followed for all new Trustees, including the staff and parent Trustees appointed after opening. The induction process will include:

- Trustee induction training as soon as possible after appointment
- Induction meeting with the Chair of Trustees Induction pack containing:
  - Education Brief
  - School Development Plan
  - Governance Plan
  - Trustees' Handbook
  - Details of all Trustees
  - Details of Committees
  - Schedule of Committee Dates for all meetings
  - Trust Board Code of Conduct
  - Committees' Terms of Reference
  - Term Time Dates (including holidays and INSET Days)
  - Forthcoming Events
  - Summary of latest Ofsted Report (when these are available)
  - Summary of any DfE officer visits
  - Trust Board Visits Policy
  - Minutes of the last two years Full Trust Board meetings
  - Minutes of the last two years sub-committee meetings
  - School Budget details
  - Useful website and contact information.

All Trustees are required to have read:

- The Academies Financial Handbook
- The Trustees Handbook (DfE)
- The Funding Agreement for Cornerstone
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE 2023)

If the school attracts more Trustees than the number specified for a vacancy on the Trust Board, a selection and recruitment process will be put in place, ensuring that there is balance of skills and experience.

## **8. Risk**

### **8.1 Background**

The Risk Management Strategy aims to ensure that Cornerstone Trust complies with risk management best practice as adopted by academies. It forms the start point for Corporate Governance with the requirements of the Turnbull guidance and sets out the current processes and responsibilities for risk management in Cornerstone.

The Turnbull guidelines for Corporate Governance were published in 1999, updated in 2005 and can be summarised as:

- The Trust Board acknowledges responsibility for the system of internal control
- An ongoing process is in place for identifying, evaluating and managing all significant risks
- An annual process is in place for reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control
- There is a system in place to deal with internal control aspects of any significant issues disclosed in the annual report and accounts.

In assessing what constitutes a sound system of internal control regarding risk management, the Turnbull report states that consideration should be given to:

- The nature and extent of the risks facing the organisation
- The extent and categories of risk which it regards as acceptable
- The likelihood of the risks concerned materialising
- The organisation's ability to reduce the incidence and impact of the risks that do materialise.

### **8.2 Objectives**

The objectives for managing risk across the Trust are:

- To comply with risk management best practice
- To ensure risks facing the Trust are identified and appropriately documented
- To provide assurance to the Trust Board that risks are being adequately controlled, or identify areas for improvement
- To ensure action is taken appropriately in relation to accepting, mitigating, avoiding and transferring risks.

### **8.3 Risk Management Strategy**

This strategy aims to:

- Outline the roles and responsibilities for risk management.
- Identify risk management processes to ensure that all risks are appropriately identified, controlled and monitored
- Ensure appropriate levels of awareness throughout Cornerstone Roles and Responsibilities. The Trust Board has overall responsibility for risk management.

The designated Risk Management Trustee has lead responsibility for risk management processes and Cornerstone Risk Register. This responsibility includes:

- Monitoring the performance of risk management processes
- Ensuring that appropriate controls are in place to manage identified risks
- Preparation of periodic reports to the Trust Board
- The Risk Register is formally and an update on risk status is a standing agenda item at the monthly Trust Board meeting.

The Risk Management Plan is monitored by the CEO and Business manager regularly.

#### **8.4 Identification of risks**

The Risk Management Standard states that risk identification should be approached in a methodical way to ensure that all significant activities have been identified and all the risks flowing from these activities have been defined. Our approach to risk management is linked to Cornerstone's strategic aims and objectives. These have been set and agreed by the Trust Board and encompass 5 key aims:

- Control risk to create capacity for sustainable and managed growth
- Engender a culture of acute awareness of financial risks throughout the trust
- Create clear lines of sight of accountability
- Ensure clarity with all use of public funds
- Provide efficient central support for the trust

The structure and organisation of Cornerstone Trust's risk register follows the above structure to ensure that all significant objectives and activities have been identified and the risks associated with each area have been identified. Through the register, accountabilities and the use of public funds can be both identified and protected.

#### **Addressing risks**

When responding to risks, Cornerstone Trust will seek to ensure that it is anticipated and managed early so risk does not develop into an issue where the potential threat materialises. The main tool for doing so is projected monthly cash flow.

#### **Risk Reporting and Communication**

The aim of reporting risk is to provide assurance to the Trust Board, Senior Management and Internal Auditors that Cornerstone Trust is effectively managing its risks and has a robust system of internal controls.

#### **Risk register**

The reporting mechanism will be Cornerstone Trust's Risk Register. This will highlight the key risks facing Cornerstone Trust, as well as a breakdown for each key strategic aim. Any significant changes in risk impact or probability, or the occurrence of an event which raises the profile of a risk will be recorded on the risk register as it occurs. Any new or increased risks identified in Finance sub-committee or FTB meetings or raised by a member of staff will be evaluated and, if appropriate, recorded in the Risk Register.

#### **8.4 Communicating Risks**

The Finance sub-committee monitors the risk management plan each term. The Business Manager will ensure that any perceived new, increased risks or significant failure of risk management control measures are considered by the Finance sub-committee along with a summary of actions taken.

The Business Manager will endeavour to raise awareness that risk management is a part of Cornerstone Academy Trust's culture and seek to ensure that:

- Individual members of staff are aware of their accountability for individual risks
- Individuals report promptly to senior management any perceived new risks or failure of existing control measures.

### **8.5 Annual risk review and assessment**

The internal audit reviews will aim to provide an annual assessment of the effectiveness of Cornerstone Trust's management of risk.

This will enable the Trust Board to identify:

- The significant risks facing Cornerstone
- The effectiveness of the risk management processes
- That Cornerstone Trust has published a risk management policy covering risk management philosophy and responsibilities