



Scheme of Delegation

2023/24

1 Rationale

- 1.1 As a charitable company, limited by guarantee, The Gosforth Federated Academies Limited (the “Gosforth Group” or the “Trust”) is governed by a Board of Directors also known as Trustees.
- 1.2 As a Multi Academy Trust (MAT), the Board of Trustees is accountable in law for all major decisions about their academies and any subsidiary companies.
- 1.3 The Trust Board, however, is not required to carry out all the Trust’s governance functions and many can, and should, be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Executive Team, the Trust Board’s committees, and the Academy Advisory Groups (AAG). Without such delegation, the individual or committee has no power to act.
- 1.4 The Scheme of Delegation (SoD) is the key document that defines the lines of responsibility and accountability in a MAT to ensure that Members, Trustees, board committees, AAGs, executive leadership and academy Principals understand their roles and responsibilities.
- 1.5 This overarching SoD for all decision making in the Trust should not be confused with the written scheme of delegation of financial powers referred to in the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s [Academy Trust Handbook 2023](#).
- 1.6 As the MAT matures and grows the workings of the MAT, both in terms of governance and management are likely to change. The SoD must be reviewed annually, with changes made as the context changes, in recognition of the need to be responsive to changing circumstances and to adapt accordingly. It is important to the Trustees to ensure that all involved in governance are made aware of any changes and what these mean in practice.
- 1.7 This Scheme of Delegation applies to all academies within the Gosforth Group:
 - Callerton Academy
 - Gosforth Academy
 - Great Park Academy
 - Jesmond Park Academy
 - Junior High Academy
 - North Gosforth Academy

2. Characteristics of an effective scheme of delegation

- 2.1 In accordance with the Department for Education’s (DfE) [Governance handbook 2020](#), the Gosforth Group’s scheme of delegation:
 - Reflects the Trust’s ethos, promoting a positive climate and a culture of honesty, transparency, and accountability for the benefit of all stakeholders;
 - Ensures that executive leadership is clear about which decisions the Board of Trustees retains, and the extent of executive powers
 - Identifies responsibility for the appointment and performance management of the CEO, the Executive team and academy Principals;
 - Ensures that the role of executive leadership is fully understood throughout the Trust; and

- Identifies where the Board of Trustees retains responsibility for:
 - determining policy;
 - management of risk;
 - oversight of budgets and financial management;
 - oversight of educational performance.

3.0 Governance structure and accountability

3.1 Vision and ethos

3.1.1 'Create your future' encapsulates our purpose as a MAT: to educate, support and nurture all of our students so they can achieve their potential and fulfil their ambitious aspirations.

3.1.2 We are a dynamic and diverse MAT – this means we have a clear energy and purpose and all students are valued equally, regardless of their background or ability. We pride ourselves on our comprehensive, diverse intake and our inclusive approach.

3.1.3 Our principal aim is to encourage high expectations and high standards of achievement, both academic and personal. Our values embrace honesty, trust, reliability, creativity, respect for the legitimate rights of others, care for the vulnerable members of society, regard for the environment and kindness towards other people.

3.1.4 We believe that a safe, calm, friendly, disciplined atmosphere, in which hard work and co-operation are respected, is the best way to promote these values.

3.2 The DfE's Governance handbook (October 2020) confirms three core governance functions and the Board of Trustees fulfil these responsibilities with passion and rigour to determine and support the vision and ethos of the Gosforth Group.

DfE Governance Handbook 2020 – Effective Governance¹

Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and

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

3.3 This is achieved through a model and structure with three clear layers of governance:

¹ Department for Education (2020), 'Governance handbook. Academy Trusts and maintained schools', page 13

1. Members
2. Trustees
3. Committees, including Academy Advisory Groups

3.4 Gosforth Group governance structure



Members	Ensure the Trust meets its charitable objective by appointing trustees, agreeing articles of association, appointing the auditors
Trustees	The employer and accountable body, carries out the core governance functions, ensures compliance with statutory and regulatory functions, appoints Chief Executive Officer
Committees, including AAGs	Responsible for specific tasks as outlined in their terms of reference and for oversight of academy performance, escalating any concerns to the Board of Trustees

3.5 The Trust's model of delegation makes it clear that:

- Members have a limited yet distinct and vitally important role;
- The Board of Trustees is responsible for the core governance functions;
- The Board of Trustees appoint the CEO, to whom it delegates responsibility for the conduct and performance of the trust, including the performance of the academies within the trust, and for its financial management;
- The Board of Trustees has constituted its main committee for Finance and Audit that looks in detail at resources and risk. Progress and attainment across the Trust is overseen and is a matter reserved for the Board of Trustees;
- The Board of Trustees also convenes various committees/ panels to consider matters in relation to pupil discipline, pupil admissions, staffing appointments

and dismissals, staff pay, as well as independent panels to consider any appeals and formal complaints;

- AAGs provide links to parents and the community, as well as providing additional scrutiny of how the Trust is managing its schools. AAGs act as a critical friend to the Principals on matters of performance, education, behaviour attendance and staff performance. They provide support in the effective operation of the Trust and its policies and provide a vehicle for Trust board engagement. They will escalate any concerns to the Board of Trustees

3.6 Exercising powers and decisions

- 3.6.1 The Trust ensures that there is separation between the individuals who sit as Members, Trustees and Academy Advisors to ensure objectivity when exercising powers under this scheme.
- 3.6.2 The Board of Trustees require that all powers and decisions are determined in accordance with the Trust's policies and any statutory or regulatory requirements, and in a manner consistent with the Trust's vision and values.
- 3.6.3 A Governance Code of Conduct for Trustees and Academy Advisors sets out the standards expected of individuals, when exercising their role and responsibilities. It incorporates the seven principles of public life that apply to all individuals elected or appointed to public office, or to work in, all sectors that provide public services.
- 3.6.4 Members, Trustees, Academy Advisors and selected staff complete a Declaration of Interests to identify any conflicts of interests and ensure any effect on decision-making is prevented.
- 3.6.5 A detailed decision planner is provided at Appendix A, illustrating the specific delegation of decision making powers the Board of Trustees has approved.
- 3.6.6 Appendix B provides the Terms of References of Trust committees which confirms their purpose, remit and status.

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The role of Members

- 4.1.1 The Members of the Trust are guardians of the Trust's governance and must ensure it carries out its charitable objective.
- 4.1.2 There must be at least three Members, although the Trust conforms to the DfE's preference for at least five; Members are not permitted to be employees of the Trust.
- 4.1.3 The Members agree the Trust's articles of association, appoint Trustees and appoint the Trust's external auditors.
- 4.1.4 The Members should receive information about the Trust's business and receive the annual report and accounts. If they have concerns that the Trust is not carrying out its charitable objective, Members should remove the Trustees that are failing to fulfil this responsibility.

4.2 The role of Trustees

- 4.2.1 The Trust is a charitable company and so Trustees are both charity trustees (within the terms of section 177(1) of the Charities Act 2011) and company directors (within the terms of the Companies Act 2006).
- 4.2.2 Trustees are bound by both charity and company law so the terms 'trustees' and 'directors' are often used interchangeably. Gosforth Group uses the term Trustee as it avoids the possible confusion caused when executive and senior leaders are called directors but are neither company directors nor trustees. The use of Trustee also serves to highlight the overarching charitable purpose of the organisation, distinguishing it from other directorships that may be held in the private sector.
- 4.2.3 Trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the Trust, and in accordance with the provisions set out in the memorandum and articles of association and its funding agreement are legally accountable for all statutory functions and for the performance of all the academies within the Trust; they do this by carrying out the core governance functions, outlined in section 3.2.
- 4.2.4 The Board of Trustees must approve a written scheme of financial delegation and if they choose to delegate to board committees and AAGs, must approve a written scheme of delegation and committee terms of reference.
- 4.2.5 The Trust creates information pathways between the Board of Trustees, board committees, AAGs and the CEO so that concerns or celebrations can be shared.

4.3 The role of Trust Board Committees

- 4.3.1 Trustees delegate some governance functions to board committees, one of which must include audit and risk which advises on the adequacy of the Trust's controls and risks. At Gosforth Group this is the Finance and Audit Committee.
- 4.3.2 Board committees must have at least three Trustees in membership, and Trustees must be in the majority for voting purposes; it is usual for the Board of Trustees to appoint board committee chairs and committee members according to their skills.
- 4.3.3 The Board of Trustees delegates detailed scrutiny of financial management and performance to the Finance and Audit Committee.

4.4 The role of the Academy Advisory Groups

- 4.4.1 Trustees delegate some governance functions to AAGs; the Articles of Association do not require Trustee members of local governing bodies and by committing to the separation of individuals on each tier in the governance structure, trusts are able to demonstrate transparent decision making and prevent bias and conflicts from emerging, thus strengthening the governance checks and balances within the Trust. Currently there are a limited number of Trustee members of AAGs to enhance communications and governance.

- 4.4.2 It is advisable, however, for the Board of Trustees to approve the appointment of the AAG chairs. The Board of Trustees must approve the appointment of the Academy Advisors.
- 4.4.3 In accordance with the DfE Governance Handbook the Trust may choose to delegate to an AAG that oversees more than one academy and these committees may include Trustees.
- 4.4.4 Parent representation will be at Academy Advisory Group level with parents elected to sit on the AAGs.
- 4.4.5 AAGs afford a valued point of consultation and representation in the development of the Trust's policies and are the recipients of detailed information about how their academies are being managed.
- 4.4.6 The AAGs are tasked with scrutinising management information thus providing assurance to Trustees that the academy is:
- operating within the ethos and values of the trust and creating a positive climate for all stakeholders
 - working within agreed policies
 - meeting agreed targets
 - engaging with stakeholders
 - acting as an ambassador for the trust
- 4.4.7 The Board of Trustees demonstrates the value it puts on local governance by ensuring effective channels of communication between Trustees and Academy Advisors, as well as providing specific training and development programmes for all involved in the governance of the Trust.

4.5 The role of the Chair of Trustees

- 4.5.1 The Chair provides visionary strategic non-executive leadership to the Trust taking the lead in the effective functioning of the Board of Trustees with a vital role in setting the highest expectations for professional standards of governance.
- 4.5.2 It is the Chair's responsibility to give the Board of Trustees clear leadership and direction, keeping it focused on its core functions.
- 4.5.3 A sounding board for the CEO, the Chair provides support as well as challenge. This includes working collaboratively with the CEO to engage with the Regional Schools Director, the DfE and local authorities.

4.6 The role of the Chief Executive Officer

- 4.6.1 The trustees delegate the day to day management of the Trust to the CEO, line managing in line with the Trust's appraisal and performance management policies.
- 4.6.2 The CEO is also the Accounting Officer and is responsible for the performance of the Trust as a whole, and has a personal responsibility to parliament for the regularity, propriety and value for money, and for assuring the Board of Trustees

about compliance with the funding agreements and the Academy Trust Handbook.

- 4.6.3 The CEO is responsible for the leadership and management of the central executive team and the academy's Principals and reports to the Board of Trustees and its committees.

4.7 The role of Principals

- 4.7.1 The CEO delegates the day to day management of the Trust's academies to Principals, line managing them in accordance with the Trust's appraisal and performance management policies.
- 4.7.2 Principals share information about how the Trust is managing the academy with the AAGs so that Advisors build an understanding about how the academy operates and are enabled to monitor and scrutinise how key policies and improvement plans are working in practice.

GOSFORTH GROUP DECISION PLANNER 2023/24

This planner outlines the areas that the Board of Trustees has agreed to delegate. Although decisions may be delegated, the Board of Trustees, as a whole, remains responsible for any decision made under delegation. The Trustees may delegate decisions to Committees of the Board, as outlined in the Committee Terms of Reference.

Key Function	No	Tasks	Decision Level				
			1 Trustees	2 CEO	3 Exec Team	4 AAG	5 Principal
Budgets	1	To approve the first formal budget plan each financial year	✓				
	2	Regular monitoring of the individual academy budget position within the MAT	✓*				
	3	To monitor monthly expenditure		✓			
	4	To determine and implement a charging and remissions policy	✓				
	5	To enter into contracts (in line with authorisation limits at the end of this document)		✓	✓		✓
	6	To approve payments, in line with the Financial Regulations		✓	✓*		✓*
Staffing	7	CEO appointments (selection panel)	✓				
	8	Executive Team/Principal/Leadership Team appointments (selection panel)	✓				
	9	Pay discretions for Executive Team/Principal/Leadership Team	✓				
	10	Appoint teachers at SLT level				✓	
	11	Appoint teachers below SLT level					✓*
	12	Appoint academy support staff below Chief Officer grade					✓*
	13	Appoint MAT support staff at Chief Officer Grade			✓		
	14	Appoint MAT support staff (MAT) below Chief Officer grade			✓*		
	15	Agree a pay policy	✓				
	16	Pay discretions for teaching and non-teaching staff	✓				
	17	Establishing disciplinary/capability procedures	✓				
	18	Dismissal/Suspension (start and end) of CEO	✓				
	19	Dismissal/Suspension (start and end) of Executive Team/Principal		✓			
	20	Dismissal/ Suspension (start and end) of other staff (delegated as appropriate to the circumstances)			✓		✓
	21	Determining staff structures (teaching and non-teaching)			✓		
	22	Determining settlement payments/ early retirement of CEO/Executive Team	✓				
	23	Determining settlement payments/ early retirement of all other staff			✓		

Appendix A – Decision Planner

Key Function	No	Tasks	Decision Level				
			1 Trustees	2 CEO	3 Exec Team	4 AAG	5 Principal
Curriculum (including RE and Collective Worship)	24	Ensure National Curriculum (NC) taught to all pupils and to consider any disapplication for pupil(s)	✓				
	25	To determine and implement a curriculum policy	✓				
	26	Responsible for standards of teaching	✓				
	27	To decide which subject options should be taught having regard to resources, and implement provision for flexibility in the curriculum (including activities outside school day)					✓
	28	Responsibility for individual child's education					✓
	29	Provision of sex education – to establish and keep up to date a written policy	✓				
	30	To prohibit political indoctrination and ensuring the balanced treatment of political issues	✓		✓		
Performance Management	31	To determine and implement a performance management policy	✓				
	32	To review annually the performance management policy	✓				
Target Setting	33	To set and publish targets for pupil achievement			✓		✓
Discipline/ Exclusions	34	To establish a pupil discipline policy	✓				
	35	To review the use of exclusion and to decide whether or not to confirm all permanent exclusions and fixed term exclusions where the pupil is either excluded for more than 15 days in total in a term or would lose the opportunity to sit a public examination. (Can be delegated to chair/vice-chair in cases of urgency)				✓	
	36	To direct reinstatement of excluded pupils (Can be delegated to chair/vice-chair in cases of urgency)				✓	
Admissions	37	To determine and implement an admissions policy, and consult as appropriate	✓				
	38	Admissions: application decisions					✓
Premises & Insurance	39	Buildings insurance and personal liability			✓*		
	40	Developing school buildings strategy or master plan			✓*		
	41	Procuring and maintaining buildings, including developing properly funded maintenance plan			✓*		
Health & Safety	42	To determine and implement a health and safety policy	✓				

Appendix A – Decision Planner

Key Function	No	Tasks	Decision Level				
			1 Trustees	2 CEO	3 Exec Team	4 AAG	5 Principal
School Organisation	43	To publish proposals to change category of school	✓				
	44	To set the times of school sessions and the dates of school terms and holidays	✓				
	45	To ensure that the school meets for 380 sessions in a school year			✓		
	46	To ensure that school lunch nutritional standards are met			✓		
	47	To prepare and publish the school prospectus			✓		
	48	To ensure provision of free school meals to those pupils meeting the criteria					✓
MAT development	49	To consider requests from other schools to join the MAT	✓				
Extended Schools	50	To decide to offer additional activities and to what form these should take					✓
	51	To put into place the additional services provided					✓
	52	To ensure delivery of services provided					✓
Appeals	53	Any appeal hearings will be determined by a panel of Trustees/Advisors (panel constituted as appropriate) who were not involved in the original decision making process	✓				
Delegated Executive Powers	54	In special circumstances Trustees can give delegated powers to the Chair of Trustees, CEO and one relevant Executive Team Member. This action can be approved by Trustees via email for urgent matters	✓				
Safeguarding	55	Ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are in place across the Trust and implemented	✓				
	56	Ensure each AAG appoints a safeguarding representative	✓				
	57	Monitor the effectiveness of safeguarding policies and procedures, providing regular reports and updates				✓	
	58	Ensure safer recruitment procedures are implemented and adhered to	✓				
Policies	59	To approve the Trust's policies or agree the delegations of such policies	✓				

Financial Authorisation Levels, as indicated in the Trust's Financial Regulations

Up to £1,000 by budget holder

£1,001 to £5,000 by budget holder and Finance Manager

£5,001 to £20,000 by budget holder and MAT Director of Finance

£20,001 to £100,000 by budget holder and Chief Operating Officer

£100,001 and above Chief Executive Officer and Trustees

Notes

Budget holders are operational staff (usually Heads of Department or staff in management roles) who have been allocated responsibility for one or more budget. Academy Advisors, Trustees and Members are not budget holders.

Key:

✓ Decision responsibility

✓* May be delegated onwards

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Board of Trustees

1 Overview and purpose

- 1.1 The Board of Trustees is legally responsible for the performance of each academy. The Board requires the active support of Academy Advisory Groups (AAGs) to ensure effective governance
- 1.2 The Board of Trustees shall exercise duties and powers as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and Funding Agreements. Its remit in accordance with the Governance Handbook focuses on:
 - 1.2.1 Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
 - 1.2.2 Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
 - 1.2.3 Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent

2 Frequency of meetings

- 2.1 Meetings shall be held at least quarterly, i.e. at least four per annum. Additional meetings may be convened if required.

3 Membership and constitution

- 3.1 The composition of the Board of Trustees is set out in the Articles of Association, as follows:
 - 3.1.1 Eleven (11) Trustees appointed by the Members on the nomination of the Trustees in post with a view to the candidates providing particular skills and experience relevant to the running of the Trust and Company.
 - 3.1.2 The Chief Executive Officer (ex-officio)
 - 3.1.3 Co-opted Trustees appointed by the Trustees

4 Aims and objectives

- 4.1 To deliver governance and strategic leadership that sets and champions, vision, ethos and strategy;
- 4.2 To ensure accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance
- 4.3 To maintain a Board of Trustees and appoint senior leaders with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity

Appendix B – Terms of Reference

- 4.4 To develop and maintain structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- 4.5 To uphold and sustain compliance with statutory and contractual requirements
- 4.6 To advance and support continuous evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Academy Advisory Group

1 Overview and purpose

- 1.1 The Board of Trustees is legally responsible for the performance of each academy but to do this the Board requires the active support of Academy Advisory Groups (AAGs) to ensure effective governance across each of the academies.
- 1.2 The AAGs assist the Board of Trustees to exercise its duties and powers as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association and Funding Agreements. The AAGs remit is to support the Board to comply with the requirements of the Governance Handbook to focus on:
- 1.2.1 Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
 - 1.2.2 Holding local academy leaders to account for the educational performance of the academy and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff; and
 - 1.2.3 Overseeing the financial performance of the academy and making sure its money is well spent

2 Frequency of meetings

- 2.1 Meetings shall be held at least four times a year. Additional, ad-hoc meetings may be convened if required.

3 Membership and constitution

- 3.1 The composition of the Academy Advisory Group is as follows:
- 3.1.1 Up to nine (9)² AAG members comprising of:
 - i. Up to five (5) community members
 - ii. Two (2) staff representatives (one teaching and one support)
 - iii. Two (2) parent representatives
 - 3.1.2 Ex officio members will include the Chief Executive Officer and the Academy Principal.

4 Aims and objectives

- 4.1 To undertake responsibility for any of the decision making powers delegated by the Board of Trustees

² It should be noted that the composition as outlined in the Terms of Reference will differ during the academic year 2023/24. Two Academy Advisory Groups will each support two academies; to ensure that governance in the two new Free schools at Callerton Academy and Great Park Academy benefit from the experience of established Academy Advisors at North Gosforth Academy and the Junior High Academy. There will still, however, be appropriate representation from the new Free schools.

Appendix B – Terms of Reference

- 4.2 To support the effective operation of the Trust and its policies
- 4.3 To provide support and challenge to academy leaders
- 4.4 To provide a vehicle for Board of Trustee engagement with the academy, its parents and local community, to help ensure that the Trustees stay connected
- 4.5 To bring issues and risks to the attention of the Board of Trustees
- 4.6 To help to ensure that the Trust works as one entity, in the interests of all of its academies equally.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Finance and Audit Committee

1 Overview and purpose

- 1.1 The Finance and Audit Committee is responsible for the executive oversight, governance and validation of the Trust's responsibilities to the Secretary of State as outlined in the Academy Trust Handbook
- 1.2 The Finance and Audit Committee has high level responsibility and ownership of financial operations, controls and fiscal governance as well as accountability for all of the Trust's broader business and central service operations and functions.

2 Frequency of meetings

- 2.1 Meetings shall be held quarterly, i.e. four per annum. Additional, ad-hoc meetings may be convened if required.

3 Membership and constitution

- 3.1 The composition of the Finance and Audit Committee is as follows:
 - 3.1.1 Five (5) Trustees normally appointed by the Members on the nomination of the Trustees in post with a view to the candidates providing particular skills and experience relevant to the running of the Trust and Company.
 - 3.1.2 The Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Finance attend meetings in an advisory capacity.

4 Aims and objectives

- 4.1 To ensure compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook
- 4.2 To acknowledge all correspondence from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), ensure it is brought to the attention of the Trust Board, and respond within the timelines required by the ESFA to secure compliance and effective financial governance
- 4.3 To recommend to Members external financial auditors to conduct statutory audit and assurance statements of Gosforth Group, as well as the appointment of an independent internal assurance provider to deliver in-year financial and process assurance
- 4.5 To ensure the provision of an annual budget, in accordance with ESFA timelines, that forms the basis for financial monitoring, forecasting and budgetary control. This will include the provision of monthly management accounts at both Trust and individual academy level, to monitor the overall financial operating performance of the Gosforth Group
- 4.6 To assure effective financial governance in financial operations by rigorously assessing the effective impact of expenditure, including best value and contract management. This will also include the maximisation of all sources of income to seek to drive efficiency and leveraging the economies of scale that are possible with the multi academy structure.

- 4.7 To approve such policies as delegated to the Committee by the Board of Trustees.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Staffing, Salaries and Performance Committee

1 Overview and purpose

- 1.1 The Staffing, Salaries and Performance Committee is responsible for the oversight of the Board of Trustees's responsibilities in relation to Staffing, Salaries and Performance.

2 Frequency of meetings

- 2.1 One meeting must be held each year, to comply with the performance management requirements outlined in the Teachers Pay and Conditions document. Additional, ad-hoc meetings may be convened if required.

3 Membership and constitution

- 3.1 The composition of the Staffing, Salaries and Performance is as follows:

3.1.1 Three (3) Trustees on the nomination of the Trustees in post with a view to the candidates providing relevant skills and experience

3.1.2 The Director of HR (or nominee) attends the meetings in an advisory capacity. The Chief Executive Officer would attend on an as needs basis.

4 Aims and objectives

- 4.1 To ensure compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook in relation to the setting of executive pay, making recommendations to the Board of Trustees.
- 4.2 To ensure compliance with the Teachers Pay and Conditions document, to the setting of teacher pay, making recommendations to the Board of Trustees.
- 4.3 To act as the appeal body for the Trust's suite of HR policies.
- 4.4 To approve such policies as delegated to the Committee by the Board of Trustees.