

**Guidance for Academy Councils – (Local Governing Bodies)**

**June 2021**

The Priory Learning Trust is an educational charity. Our purpose is to advance education for public benefit. TPLT will facilitate knowledge building for all through professional development, with a determination to improve curriculum and pedagogy.

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6. **General Background / Information**

* A Trust Board is **the** Governing Body of all Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs)
* We have a system of local Academy Councils. In our ACs Trustees appoint volunteers to serve as **governors** – we do not use the nomenclature ‘councillors’
* Our Academy Councils are sub-committees of the Trust Board – they hold our **parental voice**
* Our governors should support our community and civic responsibilities – act as ‘**champions**’ of our schools in the locality
* Our ACs are **very important** to our model of school improvement – their focus must be on **outcomes** for children – see below
* We do **not have sub-committees** at AC level – there will be no other minuted meeting bar an AC meeting held 6x a year. Clearly, if school leaders wish to informally discuss issues – especially data - with ACs - then that is fine but it is not directed time by CEO.

Please also refer to our RASCI Scheme of Delegation – RASCI is an acronym which breaks down levels of delegation / authority

Responsible, Accountable, Supporting, Consulted and Informed

Our annual updated Scheme of Delegation will be in a RASCI format 2021-22

Trustees have considered how to build a system of governance, that is not only fit-for-purpose but is also future-proofed in what we envisage to be a wisely growing MAT. They have also considered how to achieve the balance necessary between the Board’s accountability with its capacity to support and challenge both our schools and our Strategic Central Team (SCT). This document seeks to clarify the underlining structure of governance especially the role of our Academy Councils.

1. **The responsibilities of our Academy Councils**:

The overarching responsibility of all Trustees and all local governors is to be the guardians of our values.

More specific responsibilities are listed below. Reference to David Carter ‘Leading Academy Trusts’ page 189 – 198.

* Assessing the quality of education that the academy provides for our children and the impact of the staff on outcomes for children
* Supporting the academy leaders, especially the senior leaders, and holding them to account for standards in the academy
* Ensuring all TPLT policies are followed and notably assessing the quality of engagement with parents and carers
* Holding the academy to account for delivering the budget outcomes agreed with Trust Board
* Ensuring that the operational objectives are closely monitored to ensure children and staff are safe
* Ensuring that the academy contributes to the capacity of the Trust and is willing to offer and receive support from the other academies in the Trust

**ACADEMY COUNCILS MUST BE GUARDIANS OF TPLT VALUES**

The AC will know and understand TPLT values set within our Strategic Plan. The most important aspect of TPLT is that we are ONE TRUST and share these values. The values are repeated below:

The mission of The Priory Learning Trust (TPLT) is to develop happy, confident and successful young people. We are committed to social equality and the principles of fair access and opportunity. Our underpinning values are respect for each other, creating an environment for successful learning and giving everyone the tools to maximise their potential. Our primary focus is providing great student outcomes whilst also thinking about the holistic welfare of our students. This is called - **STUDENTS FIRST**

TPLT values its employees. It is committed to staff development and to fair and transparent dealings with all employees. Employees are the most precious resource and they must be deployed for maximum gain for our students and their welfare. This is called - **CHERISHING STAFF**

As we grow our family of schools the priority is local families and we will retain a local focus. There will be measured growth as we must maintain outstanding outcomes. Growth, therefore, will be wisely planned and intentionally designed. TPLT will extend business services to support great teaching and learning. All our academies will deliver a ‘world class’ modular curriculum that is relevant, dynamic, forward-looking and balanced. This is called - **SERVING COMMUNITIES**

**Exemplification of the responsibilities**

The Academy Council (AC) will identify how well the school and individual pupils are achieving and challenge any underperformance of cohorts and groups each year and over time. The Chair will be asked views about this key responsibility at Scrutiny Panels which happen three times per year. Here the Chair has an opportunity to answer the Board’s questions and discuss progress to objectives. Specifically, our ACs must monitor the progress of Pupil Premium and SEND pupils as ‘key’ groups. It will identify whether pupils are making expected progress, and where pupils fall behind, what action the school is taking to support those pupils, and whether that remedial action is successful. It will report via its minutes and as above to Scrutiny Panels / Board.

The AC must challenge and support the school on student outcomes – this is to include attendance and student admission numbers as key metrics. This is clearly linked with the impact staff make across the school. Retention of good staff and leadership planning is an important consideration for the AC – as is the morale and wellbeing of the staff. The total number of staff employed remains the Trust Board’s responsibility but the recruitment and appointment of new staff is the responsibility of The Principal assisted by the AC.

The Trust Board with the CEO appoint The Principal and they (The AC – normally Chair) carry out the performance management of the Principal each year with a member of the SCT (normally Head of School Improvement or Deputy Head of Head of School Improvement). The AC will ensure pay decisions are linked to performance with performance targets linked to agreed priorities. Support and holding senior leaders to account for standards is a key function of our ACs.

The AC adopt Trust-wide polices and must ensure TPLT polices are implemented locally. They also make crucially sure parental voice is carefully monitored. It is for the school and the AC to devise systems to achieve this through the year – TPLT will conduct bi-annual parental surveys. Local governors play a key part in supporting the school with any parental complaints and questions. They must not become involved in operational matters.

The AC will approve, monitor and evaluate the ‘Academy Review and Improvement Plan’, based on the values of TPLT and the metrics in the Strategic Plan. These are the operational annual objectives of the school jointly set by the Leadership Team and the Central Team of TPLT. AC governors should be informed and have a voice in the plan.

The AC will agree the school’s risk document – with a financial risk always being present in terms of annually balancing the agreed budget. The Academy Operations Manager will report 3x a year to AC the progress with delegated budget. On financial risk they will ensure the school balances the delegated budget in year and they will approve and monitor financial and procurement procedures ensuring compliance with the financial scheme of delegation.

1. **A Common Meeting Agenda**

To ensure consistency across our schools a common agenda is in place for Chairs and Clerks to follow. To ensure time to discuss outcomes, business items from the AOM will only be added in three of the six meetings. Effective chairing is vital. Risk reporting by Principal will be the common approach based upon the risk document. The meeting is planned and led by the Chair with the Principal.

**

*Academy Logo*

***Academy***

**Full Academy Council Meeting**

*Date and Time.*

*Location/via Zoom*

**AGENDA**

1. Apologies
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of previous meetings and matters arising

3.1  Full Academy Council Meeting – DATE

1. Update from the Chair
2. Principal’s report

5.1  Learning and teaching, progress and outcomes, attendance and behaviour

5.2  Safeguarding, personal development and well-being

5.3  Staffing

5.4  Update on School Improvement Plan to include risk document

5.5  Internal Scrutiny – Education

5.6  Wider Trust initiatives – Covid 19 testing / GAG pooling / School Direct

5.7  Early Years\*

5.8  6th Form \*

6. AOM report – business matters – Terms 2, 3 and 4

6.1 Budget monitoring – MMAs and self-generated income

6.2. Business

6.2.1. Finance and HR

6.2.2. Estates and Compliance

6.2.3 IT

1. Link Governor / Governor visit reports
2. Governors

7.1  Feedback from recent Governor Training

7.2  Upcoming training

1. Any Other Notified Business

*\* These can be removed if there is no Early Years or 6th Form provision*

*For SACA an additional agenda item for Prayer to be added to the agenda.*

1. **Tasks From Scheme of Delegation** – ‘tasks’ for the AC

* Elect and have conﬁrmed by the Trustees, the appointment a Chair and Vice Chair of the Academy Council
* Monitor the implementation of Trust / school Policies
* Approve any specific school policies
* Approve and monitor the School Improvement Plan (SIP)
* Monitor the provision for daily collective worship [\* VA]
* Submit to the Trustees the school budget for the three academic years for approval
* To monitor effective deployment of Pupil Premium in the school and report finding to the Board
* To enter into contracts within the terms of the Financial Scheme of Delegation
* Approve and monitor ﬁnancial and procurement policies for their school which are consistent with those of the Trust
* Manage appeals following absence warnings at Stage 1 and 2 for school staff
* Manage an appeal against a warning for school staff
* Hear stakeholders’ complaint appeals
* Manage appeals due to capability for all staff within their schools
* Manage appeals due to capability for all staff within their schools
* Approve recommendations from the Principal for pay progression all teaching and learning school staff
* Manage appeals against pay decisions by an Academy Council
* Approve a Risk Management Document for the school
* Make ﬁrst instance admissions application decisions
* Consider reinstatement and inform parents of outcome
* Arrange suitable full-time education for ﬁxed period exclusions of more than 5 school days
* Consider parents’ representations about an exclusion
* Reconsider an exclusion within 10 school days of receipt of notice of independent review panel decision and inform Principal, parents and LA of its reconsideration
* Ensure that a student is removed from the school roll following permanent exclusion
* Consider reinstatement of a pupil who has been excluded
* Appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead

1. **Role of ‘linked’ Academy Council Trustee**

We support each Academy Council through asking a Trustee to act as a ‘linked’ colleague to the Chair of each Academy Council. This arrangement acts to increase and improve communication but also to reinforce the division of responsibilities between the Board and our Academy Councils.

**So, what do linked Trustees do:**

A Link Trustee will…

* Be a line of contact with the Chair of an Academy Council;
* Read the Academy Council’s minutes on behalf of the Board and respond to these if appropriate with views, corrections or queries;
* Redirect points raised in the minutes, if appropriate, to Chair of the Trust Board and to the CEO;
* Monitor, if feasible, how effective the Academy Council is in undertaking the responsibilities it has been delegated
* Be first port of call for an Academy Council Chair if they wish to talk to a Trustee about the work within the Trust or the role their Academy is playing in this or plans for change; …or, redirect (as above)

**What it’s not:**

* Not be a champion within the Trust for an individual Academy;
* Not an be extraordinary member of an Academy Council;
* Never be a source of unofficial interference in any business between an Academy Council and the Board, the CEO and the Central Team

**Should a Link Trustee attend the odd Academy Council Meeting?**

Entirely up to the individual – there is no expectation

As with Trustee visits to schools it is for the Principal, senior leaders and local governors to devise their own systems to see the school in action. We do not prescribe.

**June 2021**

**NC**