

Local Governance Handbook



2024 / 2025

Contact:

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Reviewed July 2024 - to be reviewed annually.

Introduction from the CEO

Local governance matters in our Trust. It is what ensures our schools are rooted in their communities. In order for pupils, staff and schools to flourish and succeed, governance at all levels of the Trust needs to be highly effective. Every layer of governance needs to know what it is responsible for and what it is not. We must avoid gaps, overlaps or grey areas in our governance work. We are committed to have the right people, doing the right things in the right way to support our schools.

Every school will have local governance as an entitlement. This may be delivered through a local or cluster governing committee. Largely advisory in nature, Local and Cluster Governing Committees (LGC/CGC) sub-committees of the Board of Directors. An LGC has oversight of one school. A CGC will have oversight of 2-4 schools.

Formal Constitution of Local Governance

Governance arrangements are formally constituted in line with the Trust's Articles of Association.

The Scheme of Delegation (which can be found on the QR code below) highlights where accountability for decision making rests. LGCs/CGCs have decision making roles regarding exclusions, admissions, and complaints.

Membership of the LGCs/CGCs is complex. It is linked to the historical status of the school prior to conversion or transfer into Rise (Appendix 1).



The Role of the LGC/CGC

The LGC/CGC is a sub-committee of the Board of Directors. They are volunteers who help the trust anchor their school/schools in their community. The work of local governors is driven through the Terms of Reference (ToR).

The Board ask LGC/CGCs, through the ToR, to focus on the following:

Culture and ethos (all schools) (8)

- Understands the quality of pupils' behaviour in school and support and challenge school leaders to make/secure improvements over time
- Understand pupils' levels of attendance and to support and challenge school leaders to make or sustain improvements as required, particularly for disadvantaged and SEND pupils
- Understand what pupils say about school life, through annual surveys and support and challenge leaders to identify and act upon the areas of improvement
- Support and challenge leaders to ensure the academy's vision and values are known and lived by the school community
- Support and challenge leaders to ensure that pupils understand the fundamental British values (FBV) and are ready for life in modern Britain
- Support and challenge leaders to ensure pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is as strong as it can be
- Governors will convene to uphold or rescind the Headteacher's decision to permanently exclude a pupil, working in line with trust policy and national guidance. They may also be called to consider reinstatement of a pupil who has been suspended within certain conditions
- Understand the quality and equity in the academy's personal development and extra-curricular offer and to support and challenge leaders to ensure all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, have equal access to this

Christian Distinctiveness (CofE only) (2)

- challenge and support leaders to ensure the distinctive character of worship and religious education of the academy
- Support and challenge leaders to ensure that the school's Christian vision and values are rooted in the local context and community and lived

Community (3)

- Understand what parents say about school life, through annual surveys and support and challenge leaders to identify and act upon the areas of improvement
- Governors will convene to consider applications for admissions where the school does not engage with the services of the Local Authority admissions department. Governors may be requested to attend any appeals hearings on behalf of the school
- Manage school level complaints in accordance with the relevant policies

Safeguarding (1)

- Understand the safeguarding culture that leaders have created and support and challenge them to strengthen or sustain excellence

Academy/school improvement (3)

- Understand school self-evaluation
- Curriculum impact on pupils inc SEND, EYFS
- Pupils' performance compared to trust/national (above)
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development inc attendance (above)
- The culture of safeguarding (above)
- Understand the School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Support and challenge school leaders on the delivery of the SIP

People (4)

- Support Headteacher recruitment
- Contribute to Headteacher performance management
- Support school leaders with wider staff recruitment, as required
- Understand what staff say about school life, through annual surveys and support and challenge leaders to identify and act upon the areas of improvement

Expectations for Governors (Rise MAT Code of Conduct)

Rise is a values driven trust. How we do what we do, matters. All LGC/CGC members are expected to agree to abide by our code of conduct (Appendix 2). Acceptance of the code by the LGC/CGC should be discussed and noted in the minutes of the first meeting of the autumn term each year. The code refers to both the Nolan Principles and is also drawn from the National Governors Association (NGA) 2021 Ethical Code.

The Role of the Chair of the LGC/CGC

The Chair is appointment by the Board. They lead a sub-committee of the Board of Directors. They are culture carriers for the Board; setting the tone for engagement with school leaders, trust leaders and the Board. The Chair role is vital.

The Chair will;

- Lead LGC/CGC meetings, including ensuring that the terms of reference are understood and adhered to (with clerk's support)
- Ensure advocates are in place and fulfilling their remits
- Liaise with the clerk and/or trust's Governance Officer regarding membership, including the election arrangements for new governors
- Attend Chairs and Directors meetings – ensuring they are up to date with trust wide matters

Appointment of the Chair of the LGC/CGC

Chairs will be appointed through a process that attempts to reflect the importance of the role with the fact that all governors are volunteers. Chairs will serve in blocks of 2 years. This allows for consistency over 2 school years. After 2 years, if all parties are satisfied, a further 2-year term is possible.

Chairs do not need to be appointed from within the LGC membership. Appendix 3 provides an overview of the process, from application to selection. All Chair appointments are ratified at full Board meetings.

Annual Review of the Chair

Everyone, including Chairs, must be satisfied that the working arrangements are effective. The Board need to be confident that the appointment is working as planned. School and trust leaders need to feel that the LGC is working as intended. Critically, Chairs themselves need to feel comfortable and confident in their role. No one is well served by an arrangement that feels like it needs to 'run its course.' That is why we will have quick, low stakes annual reviews.

The reviews will simply be a short conversation, most likely virtual between a Director, a trust representative and the Chair of the LGC. The focus will be on what is going well, what can we help with and how are you finding with the role and responsibilities.

Appointing a Vice-Chair to the LGC/CGC

Vice-Chairs must be nominated from within the membership of the LGC/CGC and elected by the committee. Normally, no-one will continue beyond 4 years in that role. In a CGC this may be a shared post between two governors, each serving from a different school. This decision is at the discretion of the CGC.

Nominations for the role of Vice -Chair should be made in writing, or electronically, to the clerk. LGC/CGC governors can self-nominate for this role.

Recruiting and Appointing LGC/CGC Governors

Clerks and/or the trust Governance Officer will support the recruitment processes that are required for varying roles.

Non-attendance at LGC/CGC Meetings

Membership is removed if any LGC/CGC governor who fails to attend a published LGC/CGC meeting without offering an accepted apology for two consecutive meetings or within 6 months.

Meetings

Agenda Setting and Schedule of Meetings

Each committee will meet four times per year. Twice in the Autumn and once in the Spring and Summer term. Model agendas for each meeting are determined by the Terms of Reference and are set by the Trust. There is an expectation that the model agenda is followed. However, Chairs may add additional agenda items to allow the flexibility to cover localised topics. While accepting that different LGC/CGC will have differing operating models; all meetings will be no longer than 2 hours and they will start no later than 18.00.

Quorum

The quorum is the minimum number of governors required to be present at a meeting for it to be effective in its oversight. The quorum for LGC/CGC meetings is 50% of appointed governors. Ex-Officio governors are counted within this number.

Nominating Governor Advocates

The LGC/CGC may appoint/will appoint the following advocates:

- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
- Early Years
- Christian Distinctiveness (for Church schools only)

Advocates champion a key aspect of school life. They look at decisions or improvements through their particular lens. They do not have to be experts and they have no additional accountability. Additional information can be found in the relevant area of SharePoint.



Inspections

LGCs/CGCs role in inspection has changed over time. This is not a Rise decision; it is born from changes to the Ofsted Handbook and SIAMS inspection methodology. Both inspections are increasingly MAT orientated, with SIAMS inspectors much more likely to meet with and engage with local governors.

School and MAT leaders will liaise with Chair's to advise regarding the lead inspectors plans for the inspection. We will provide high levels of support and guidance before any meeting and will ensure governors are clear about feedback mechanisms at the end of any process in any school.

The Role of the Diocesan Director of Education (DDE)

The DDE sits as a corporate member of Rise MAT. The Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) is a statutory role. Aside from the distinct responsibilities of the DDE as corporate member, interactions with Rise MAT and schools are the DDE fulfilling the DBE's statutory role. These include providing advice and support to the CEO, Headteachers and schools as described below.

- Communicates and supports the Diocese's vision for children and young people through a range of partnerships
- Supports Church Schools to stand confidently at the heart of the church's mission to children and families across Leicester and Leicestershire
- Challenges and supports church schools to recruit high quality leaders and deliver highly effective provision for the children and young people they serve
- Acts as a strategic partner and provider with Local Authorities, Teaching School Alliances, the Regional Schools Commissioner, the Department for Education, and the Church of England Education Office
- Develops closer working relationships between the DBE and other Diocesan Boards, committees, and agencies
- Advises the Bishop on educational matters from General Synod, the Church of England Education Office, Department for Education and Local Authorities
- Deals with all issues regarding academies, including initial advice for governing bodies.





School Improvement Committee (SIC)

The Board of Directors may temporarily dissolve the LGC/CGC and suspended the Scheme of Delegation and form a School Improvement Committee (SIC). A SIC may be required following either a weak inspection, or through internal MAT level evaluation. It may also be required where there is instability within the school, weak leadership, or limited school improvement happening, or capacity to deliver on this.

The SIC will subsume the role of the LGC/CGC in the short to medium term. The Board of Directors will decide how and when to re-establish the LGC/CGC, considering any recommendations provided by the CEO, Director of Education. The SIC will monitor progress against the MAT/school agreed improvement plan and to validate evidence of the impact of actions taken.



Appendix 1 – Governing Committee Membership LGC / CGC

Membership Makeup

The membership of an LGC or CGC will reflect the legacy of its predecessor school.

(VA/VC/Community) as follows:

Local Governing Committee –			
Membership guidance			
	Voluntary Aided Legacy	Voluntary Controlled Legacy	Community Legacy
Foundation	5	2	5
Trust		3	
Parent	2	2	2
Staff	1	1	1
Ex-Officio/Incumbant	1	1	NA
Total Before Co-opted	9	9	8
Co-Opted	2 max	2 max	2 max

Cluster Governing Committee- membership guidance from <u>each</u> school in the cluster				
	Voluntary Aided Legacy	Voluntary Controlled Legacy	Community Legacy	Mixed Cluster
Foundation	2	1		2
Trust	1	1	2	1
Parent	1	1	1	1
Staff	1	1	1	1
Ex-Officio/Incumbant	1	1		1
Co-opted	2 max	2 max	2 max	2 max

Voluntary Aided Legacy School

The Board of Directors may temporarily dissolve the LGC/CGC and suspended the Scheme of the academy.

Delegation and form a School Improvement Committee (SIC). A SIC may be required following either a weak inspection, or through internal MAT level evaluation. It may also be required where there is instability within the school, weak leadership, or limited school improvement happening, or capacity to deliver on this.

The SIC will subsume the role of the LGC/CGC in the short to medium term. The Board of Directors will decide how and when to re-establish the LGC/CGC, considering any recommendations provided by the CEO, Director of Education. The SIC will monitor progress against the MAT/school agreed improvement plan and to validate evidence of the impact of actions taken.

Voluntary Controlled Legacy School

25% of governors appointed by the Directors as 'Foundation Governors' with the consent of the Diocesan Corporate Member and all members sign an undertaking to the Diocesan Corporate Member to uphold the designated religious character of the said Academy.

LGC: 9 members - 2 foundation, 3 Trust appointed, 2 parents, 1 staff, incumbent as ex-officio

CGC: *(1) foundation, (1) Trust Appointed, (1) parents, (1) staff, incumbent as ex-officio

*The number in brackets represents the number of governors of each type from each school represented within the cluster e.g. a 4-school cluster = 4 foundation, 4 Trust, 4 parent ,4 staff.

Community Legacy School

All governors except parent elected and staff are appointed by the Directors. Two/three parent governors are to be elected.

LGC 8 governors: 5 Trust Appointed, 2 parents, 1 staff.

CGC (n governors): 2 Trust Appointed, 1 parent, 1 staff.

*The number in brackets represents the number of governors of each type from each school represented within the cluster e.g. a 4-school cluster = 8 Trust, 4 parent, 4 staff.

No matter the status of the local arrangement, all LGC/CGC may nominate members to the Board for approval.

Co-opted governors may be appointed based on skills needed by a committee to a maximum of 2.

Schools in Mixed Clusters

Where there are clusters with both Church schools and Community schools the makeup of the local governance cluster will reflect the VA pattern- in line with the Christian character of Rise.

CGC: n members - *(2) are foundation governors, (1) parent, (1) staff. The incumbent is an ex officio member.

*The number in brackets represents the number of governors of each type from each school represented within the cluster e.g. a 4-school cluster = 8 foundation, 4 parent, 4 staff.

Transitional Arrangements

Where schools have established good working models of cluster governance, and these are demonstrably effective, a transition plan will be drawn up in agreement with the Director of Education to allow for a natural transition to the new model over the course of twelve months. This will include substantial training and support for LGC/CGC members. Good and effective cluster governance is defined as:

- An agreed model of governance, in line with the scheme of delegation
- 5 fully quorate meetings during the last academic year (remote or face to face)
- Good representation from Foundation, Parent and Staff governors from across all schools
- Robust minutes demonstrate high levels of challenge and accountability
- An effective Headteacher reporting strategy

Appendix 2

Code of Conduct

Local Governors



2024 / 2025

Contact:

admin@risemat.co.uk

Reviewed July 2024 - to be reviewed annually.

1. Aims, Scope and Principles

This policy aims to set and maintain standards of conduct that we expect all local governors to follow. By creating this policy, we aim to ensure that local governors carry out their role with honesty and integrity and help us to ensure our schools are an environment where everyone is safe, happy, and treated with respect.

The code has been adapted from the NGA 2021 ethical code of governance. It should be read alongside our constitutional documents (e.g. our articles of association, and scheme of delegation).

Please note, this code of conduct is not exhaustive. If situations arise that are not covered by this code, Directors/local governors will use their judgement and act in the best interests of the trust and its pupils.

2. The 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life

As a Local Governance Committee/Cluster Governance Committee we agree to abide by the Seven Nolan Principles of public life:

- **Selflessness** – we will act in the public interest
- **Integrity** – we will not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family, or our friends. We will declare any conflict of interests
- **Objectivity** – we will act and take decisions impartially, fairly, and on merit. We will use the best evidence and avoid discrimination or bias
- **Accountability** – we understand that we are accountable to the public for our decisions and actions. To make sure of this, we will be scrutinised where necessary
- **Openness** – we will act and take decisions openly and transparently. We will not withhold information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so
- **Honesty** – we will be truthful
- **Leadership** – we will actively promote and support the above principles and will challenge poor behaviour wherever it happens.



3. Core Function

As a Local Governance Committee/Cluster Governance Committee we will focus on our core governance functions:

- Ensuring there is clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction
- Ensuring the voices of stakeholders are heard
- Understanding the effectiveness of your school/s
- Supporting and challenging school leaders, to secure planned improvements

As a Local Governance Committee/Cluster Governance Committee, we will:

- Agree to fulfil our role & responsibilities to the Board of Directors
- Accept that our role is strategic and so will focus on our core functions rather than involve ourselves in day-to-day management
- Fulfil our role and responsibilities as set out in the scheme of delegation/terms of reference
- Develop, share, and live the ethos and values of our school/s
- Agree to adhere to school/trust policies and procedures as set out by the relevant governing documents and law
- Work collectively for the benefit of the school/s
- Be candid but constructive and respectful when supporting and challenging school leaders
- Consider how our decisions may affect the school/s and local community
- Stand by the decisions that we make as a collective
- Where decisions and actions conflict with the Seven Principles of Public Life or may place pupils at risk, speak up and bring this to the attention of the relevant authorities
- Only speak or act on behalf of the Board if we have the authority to do so
- Fulfil our responsibilities, acting fairly and without prejudice
- When making or responding to complaints follow the established procedures
- Strive to uphold the school's / trust's reputation in our private communications (including on social media)
- Not discriminate against anyone and will work to advance equality of opportunity for all



4. Working with Others

To build and maintain relationships, individually and collectively, we will:

- Develop effective working relationships with school leaders, staff, parents, and other relevant stakeholders from our local community/communities
- Express views openly, courteously, and respectfully in all our communications with board members and staff both inside and outside of meetings
- Support the chair in their role of leading the committee and ensuring appropriate conduct
- Work to create an inclusive environment where each committee member's contributions are valued equally

5. Commitment to Governance

To demonstrate our commitment to the role, as individual LGC/CGC governors, we will:

- Involve ourselves actively in the work of the committee, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, serving as an advocate or working groups where required
- Make every effort to attend all meetings and where we cannot attend explain in advance why we are unable to
- Arrive at meetings prepared, having read all papers in advance, ready to make a positive contribution and observe protocol
- Get to know the school/s well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in school activities
- Visit the school/s and when doing so will make arrangements with relevant staff in advance and observe school and committee protocol
- When visiting the school in a personal capacity (for example, as a parent or carer), continue to honour the commitments made in this code
- Participate in induction training, undertake mandatory training and take responsibility for developing our individual and collective skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis

6. Openness and Transparency

In declaring conflicts of interest and being transparent, individually, and collectively, we will:

- Declare any business, personal or other interests that we have in connection with the LGC/CGC business, and these will be recorded in the register of business interests
- Also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the need arise
- Should a conflicted matter arise in a meeting, offer to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and any subsequent vote
- Accept that the Register of Business Interests will be published on the school/trust's website
- Act in the best interests of the school/trust as a whole and not as a representative of any group
- Accept that in the interests of open governance, our full names, date of appointment, terms of office, roles on the governing committee, attendance records, relevant business and pecuniary interests, category of governor/trustee and the body responsible for appointing us will be published on the school/trust website
- Accept that information relating to committee members will be collected and recorded on the DfE's national database Get Information About Schools (GIAS), some of which will be publicly available
- Understand that potential or perceived breaches of this code will be taken seriously and that a breach could lead to formal sanctions

7. Confidentiality

To respect confidentiality, as individual LGC/CGC governors, we will:

- Observe complete confidentiality both inside and outside of school when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern individual staff, pupils or families
- Not reveal the details of any LGC/CGC vote
- Ensure all confidential papers are held and disposed of appropriately. We will maintain confidentiality even after we leave

Breaches of confidentiality

In the event of a breach of confidentiality, we will inform the chair as soon as possible who will investigate the matter further.

Local governors understand that if they breach confidentiality, they may be suspended or removed.

8. Data Protection

We will follow the trust's information security processes and measures and data protection policy when using, storing, sharing and disposing of personal data.

Our commitment to data protection does not overrule our duty to report child protection concerns to the appropriate channel where we believe a child is at risk of harm.

Personal data breaches

We will inform the trust's data protection officer immediately if we believe there has been a personal data breach.

9. Social Media

Abide by any requirements set out in our trust's social media policy.

We will:

- Uphold the reputation of the trust at all times
- Maintain a professional presence online and carefully consider how we interact with our schools' communities
- Review privacy settings regularly to make sure we are happy with the information about us that is publicly available
- Report any incidents of harassment we experience, or see towards Directors/local governors, to the chair of Directors/the local governing body and the executive leadership

We will not:

- Accept friend requests from pupils and not join any private parent/carers groups associated with the trust or any of our schools
- Disclose any information which is confidential or would breach data protection principles
- Make comments online about any members of the board of Directors/local governors or school communities
- Post any inappropriate/offensive language, images or comments on social media that may bring us or the trust into disrepute

10. Monitoring Arrangements

This code of conduct will be reviewed and agreed annually, upon significant changes to the law, or as needed. It will be ratified by the full board of Directors/Local Governors.

11. Links with other Policies

This policy links with our policies on:

- Safeguarding
- Gifts and hospitality
- Data Protection



12. Breaches of the code of conduct:

Local/Cluster governing Committees:

If we suspect a local governor has breached the code of conduct, we will follow this procedure:

- A Trustee/Director will investigate
- A Trustee/Director will hold a meeting with the local governor to discuss the issue. The local governor can bring a friend to the meeting. Another local governor will attend to corroborate any decisions
- If the situation doesn't improve, or there is another suspected breach, we will take action to improve the issue.

This may involve:

- Further meetings with the trustee to reset expectations, based on this code of conduct
- Support, mentoring or training for the local governor
- Making sure the local governor withdraws from votes connected to any disputes they have been involved in

If there is no improvement in the local governor's behaviour, the board will vote on a motion to ask the members to remove them in accordance with the trust's articles of association. This is a last resort and will not be used without the above steps being taken, except in exceptional circumstances.

Local governors may be suspended if they:

- Have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the professional ethos of the board of Directors/local governors (including failing to undertake training appropriate to the role, whether or not directed to do so by the board)

and

- Have brought, or is likely to bring the academy trust or the office of the trustee into disrepute, or
- Acted to undermine fundamental British values or the board's commitment or ability to deliver on its Prevent Duty

Local governors may be removed where:

- There have been repeated grounds for suspension
- There has been serious misconduct. We will determine what counts as serious misconduct based on the facts of the case, but it will include any actions that compromise the 7 principles of public life, if sufficiently serious
- They display repeated and serious incompetence
- Their actions are significantly detrimental to the effective operation of the board, or their actions interfere with the operational efficiency of the school

'Bringing the board/local committee into disrepute' may include, but is not limited to:

- Speaking out publicly against the school
- Being disrespectful to members of the school community
- Behaving inappropriately in a public forum, such as a PTA meeting or on social media
- Persistently failing to undertake the training or development they need to contribute effectively to the board's operation

As Chair of Governors, I confirm that the committee understands the agreed Code of Conduct and will alert Rise Multi-Academy Trust of any concerns or support needed to ensure all governors uphold these principles.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

This Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually at the first meeting of each year. A copy will be filed with the minutes locally, with the trust and digitally online.

Appendix 3 – Appointment of the Chair of the LGC/CGC

The Chair of the LGC/CGC is appointed by the Board of Directors. He/she is responsible for oversight of all the work of the LGC/CGC. Attendance of the Chair at LGC/CGC meetings is expected. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Vice-Chair can take the chair for a meeting.

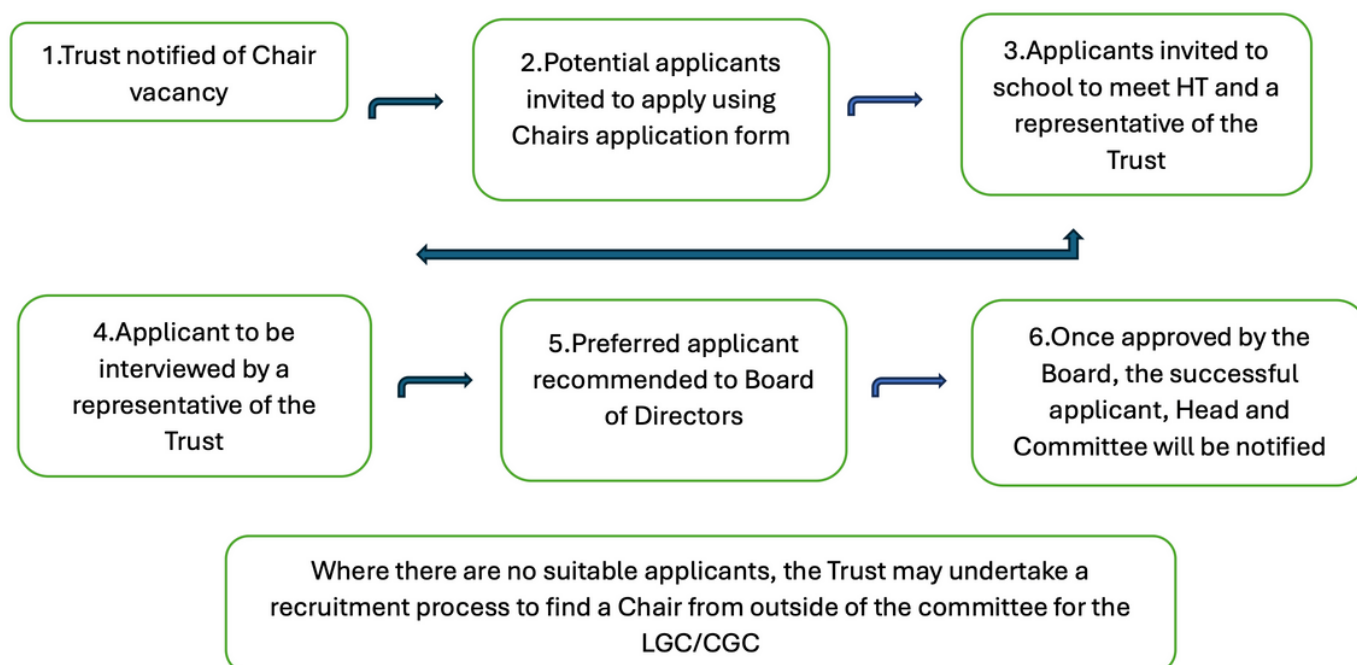
The post of Chair is reviewed annually. Normally a Chair will not continue in that role beyond 2 years. When the current Chair's term of office ends, if they wish to continue, they should alert the trust's Governance Officer.

The Leicester Diocesan Board of Education recommends that clergy do not serve as Chair of Governors. The Chair must not be an employee of the Trust.

If there is a vacancy or a pending vacancy, the LGC does not need to nominate. Potential applicants are invited to apply using the Chairs application form, returning this to the Trust via the Governance Officer. Applicants will be invited to visit the school to meet the Headteacher and a member of the Trust's Senior Leadership Team. Nominated persons will be interviewed by a member of the Trust's Senior Leadership Team with the preferred candidate being recommended for appointment to the Board of Directors.

If there are no suitable candidates, the Trust may undertake a recruitment process to find a Chair from outside of the committee for the LGC/CGC.

The flowchart below outlines the recruitment process:



The final decision lies with the Board of Directors.

All governance appointments are subject to an enhanced DBS and section 128 clearance to ensure that they are suitable persons. A declaration of suitability is to be submitted as part of the application process. For safeguarding purposes, schools must complete these checks prior to the final approval.



Rise
Flourish & Succeed

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