Trust Governance
Welcome Handbook

Name of the School
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Welcome
May I take this opportunity of extending a very warm welcome to you and hope you enjoy being part of the Local Governing Body for Name of the School.

The purpose of this welcome pack is to serve as part of your induction by giving you a brief overview of what to expect as a Governor of your school, and as being part of The Spencer Academies Trust. You will find enclosed with this pack information about:

- The Spencer Academies Trust
- Name of the School

The Spencer Academies Trust is a Multi-Academy Trust established by George Spencer Academy, an outstanding converter academy in 2010-11. George Spencer Academy has recently sustained its outstanding judgement in May 2015.

“They have a strong track record in improving teaching and achievement both in this academy, and in the schools they support

– George Spencer Academy, lead school, Ofsted May 2015

The Aim of the Trust is:

- To improve the life chances of children and young people by raising aspiration and fulfilling potential, challenging and supporting all the schools within the Trust on their journey to and beyond outstanding.
- To achieve this by developing world-class system leaders.
Supporting World-Class Governance

World class governance is essential for continuous and sustainable improvement – more so today than ever before. There is now greater scrutiny on governance including governance within multi-academy trusts and within individual Academies.

“Governors strengthen the leadership of the academy, because they are highly skilled and strategic in their outlook. They play an important role in evaluating the academy’s work and setting the direction for the future.

– George Spencer Academy, Ofsted May 2015

“They hold school leaders to account for how well the school is doing and have made a good contribution to the improvements made.”

– Long Field Academy, Ofsted February 2016

We provide a range of support and training for Governors, putting improvement and development at the heart of governance leadership and management and we work with organisations such as the National Governors’ Association (NGA) and FASNA (Freedom and Autonomy for Schools – National Association) by providing membership for all our schools to these organisations.

All our Academies, with the exception of Inkersall Primary School, has a Local Governing Body (LGB) in operation. Inkersall operates a Local Advisory Council (LAC) during a transition period. The Trust has a Scheme of Delegation in place with each LGB or LAC which can be found on the individual Academies website.
Chairs of Governors

- Chetwynd Primary Academy - Malcolm Batchelor
- Fairfield Primary Academy - Donna Kinderman
- George Spencer Academy - Jill Wilkinson
- Glenbrook Primary School - Patricia Shaw
- Heanor Gate Science College - Please contact Jill Wilkinson for further information
- Inkersall Primary Academy - Local Advisory Council
- Long Field Academy - Janet Marriott
- Portland Spencer Academy - Jill Wilkinson
- Sunnyside Spencer Academy - Dianne Raynor
- Wyndham Primary Academy - Geoff Weightman

Clerking Services

We have a team of 6 Clerks who providing full clerking services to our Local Governing Bodies:

- Chetwynd Primary Academy - Claire McMillan
- Fairfield Primary Academy - Claire McMillan
- George Spencer Academy - Lynne Hoptroff
- Glenbrook Primary School - Hazel Charlton
- Heanor Gate Science College - Kylie Burbage
- Inkersall Primary Academy - Sarah Ray
- Long Field Academy - Claire Smith
- Portland Spencer Academy - Hazel Charlton
- Sunnyside Spencer Academy - Claire McMillan
- Wyndham Primary Academy - Sarah Ray

Please contact Jill Wilkinson for more information relating to our Clerking Services.
# List of Schools in the Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools in the Trust</th>
<th>Date joined the Trust</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Spencer Academy (Secondary) Lead Sponsor</td>
<td>1 September 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chetwynd Primary Academy</td>
<td>1 April 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyndham Primary Academy</td>
<td>1 September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield Primary Academy</td>
<td>1 September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Spencer Academy (Primary)</td>
<td>1 February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenbrook Primary School</td>
<td>1 April 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunnyside Spencer Academy (Primary)</td>
<td>1 May 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heanor Gate Science College</td>
<td>1 September 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Field Academy (Secondary)</td>
<td>1 April 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inkersall Primary Academy</td>
<td>1 September 2015</td>
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</table>
Getting Started – The Induction Process

School Visit

As part of your induction to the Local Governing Body, I would encourage you to make an appointment to visit your school and have a look around. This is usually done with either the Principal, Head of School or senior member of the Leadership Team within the school. Prior to the visit, consider what it is that you need to know about the school. You may already know quite a lot but in the event you don’t, this will give you the opportunity to find out more about the school – its strengths and best practice along with their aspirations and key priorities in terms of improvement or areas for development. It will also give you the chance to meet some of the staff, clarify any questions you may have and get a feel for how the school operates on a daily basis. Having a deeper understanding of how the school operates will give you the opportunity to share and celebrate the school’s achievements and successes as they occur, along with providing the right level of appropriate challenge when the school is not doing as expected. To arrange your visit, please contact the school office in the first instance.

Code of Conduct

If you are new to school governance, then it is very important that you understand how you go about undertaking your role – the expectations, the commitment required, providing the right balance between support and challenge, what can and cannot be communicated beyond the governor meetings and how to develop effective relationships. The Spencer Academies Trust has produced a Code of Conduct which it expects all Governors to read and sign. This is enclosed and you will need to return the signed copy to the school office.

School Website

You will be able to glean a lot of information by visiting your school’s website:

School Website URL

Looking on the site is a great way to get to know your school. It will include information about the school, the curriculum they offer, news, events, along with a range of school policies. As a Governor, all policies are brought to the Local Governing Body – either through a committee or Full Governors for approval at certain points throughout the year. This is something you will need to become familiar with as there are statutory policies which, by law, all schools should have in place.

A list of these can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools
Training and Development

Mandatory Training

Induction and Basic Safeguarding training is mandatory for all new Governors and should be completed within the first academic term of your joining the Governing Body.

Induction training

This is in two parts:

- Trust Induction which is delivered by Jill Wilkinson at the school at a time convenient to you.
- Introduction into school governance – this is a bought-in, online course so is more flexible of when and how you choose to complete it.

Basic Safeguarding

For all Governors we expect them to participate in some basic safeguarding and child protection training which is usually done through the school. Some schools will do this by inviting you along to a session that they hold for new staff, or some ask all staff to complete an online course. So please check with your school.

Please remember to let your Clerk know when you have completed training as we keep a running record of all Governor training undertaken.

Link Governor Training

If you are a Link Governor for any of the below areas, we expect that you will either be working in this area or that you will undertake further training:

- Safeguarding Link Governor
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Link Governor
- Health and Safety Link Governor
- Finance Link Governor
- Exclusions
- Other areas where schools have Link Governors are:
  - Pupil Premium
  - Subject specific areas

It is not necessary to have any specific expertise or training in these areas, rather than about fulfilling the statutory role or monitoring role.
Other Training

As a Governor within the Trust, you will be contacted about a range of training and development opportunities. These are FREE to you, although we recognise that there is a time commitment and also your travel expenses which are not reimbursed. You will also be able to access a range of information for Governors through our Moodle site which is:
http://www.george-spencer.notts.sch.uk
– see the attached booklet for how to use the site. Information about our next training sessions is enclosed.

**Your login details are:**

Username:  *Username*
Password:  *Password*

Your school may also have bought in other Governor training packages and they will alert you of these as necessary.

Moving Forward—Growing Confidence

After a few meetings and school visits your knowledge and confidence will deepen. Don’t underestimate your contribution as this will increase over time, based on your developing knowledge and understanding of the school and its aspirations and priorities. You are there to help the school move forward and become as successful as it can be. Remember you are not alone and there is no such thing as a stupid question.

The enclosed booklet ‘Welcome to Governance’ has been produced by the National Governors’ Association (NGA) and provides all you need to know about your role. Please take time to read this booklet.

I do hope you enjoy your role as a School Governor and once again thank you for giving up your valuable time to support Name of the School.

If there is anything you are unsure about and its related to the school, please make direct contact with the school office; if it is related to the Trust then please contact myself. I look forward to meeting you at an event soon.

Kind regards,

**Jill Wilkinson**

Chief Operating Officer

The Spencer Academies Trust Email:  jwilkinson@satrust.com
## Enclosures – Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Documents</th>
<th>The Spencer Academies Trust Documents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A list of Governors and Committee Structures for the school</td>
<td>Eligibility to be a Governor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dates of all Governor meetings</td>
<td>Welcome to Governance Booklet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School organisation Chart: Teaching and Support Staff</td>
<td>Code of Conduct for Governors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Improvement Plan</td>
<td>Training and Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Self Evaluation</td>
<td>Moodle Guide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pecuniary and Business Interests Form</td>
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</table>
School Information and Documentation

The School will provide you with a range of documentation, some of which we hope will be included with this Welcome Pack. As a Governor you should be given access to a range of documentation to help you in your role and if these are not provided you should request them. As a minimum you should expect to receive:

- A list of all the future governor meetings, including committee meetings that you have agreed to serve on.
- A staff organisation chart. This should, at least, show you who is on the leadership team and their responsibilities. During your role as a Governor you may get to know some of the staff, but you are not expected to get to know them all!
- A copy of the school’s improvement plan and key priorities for the current year.
- A copy of the school’s current self-evaluation. Although it is not a requirement for schools to have a self-evaluation (known as the SEF), there should be something in place that shows how the school is performing, how it knows what the strengths are and areas for development.

The School may also provide you with:

- A copy of the latest Ofsted report, although you can access this online for yourself by visiting: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- A copy of the latest Raiseonline document, which shows how the school is performing. This is a large document and to help Governors, there are pages marked with a G in the top right-hand corner. This document provides lots of information about achievement and progress over the last 3 years and presents it in different formats so can at first be confusing. Your Principal should be able to explain the key messages to you.
- Please ask the Principal, head of School for a copy of the latest performance data for the school.
- Other information that is appropriate for your school.
Safeguarding

Key Safeguarding Tips (taken from the DfE website):

All schools should protect children and promote their welfare by:

- Providing a safe environment for children to learn in;
- Creating a culture which recognises and understands the importance of safeguarding, – including listening to and discussing with children;
- Identifying children who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, both at school and at home, and referring immediately any concerns to the local authority children’s social care services;
- Preventing unsuitable people from working with children;
- Having systems and processes that ensure children are kept safe and allow for poor and unsafe practice to be challenged;
- Identifying instances in which there are grounds for concern about a child’s welfare, and initiating or taking appropriate action to keep them safe; and
- Contributing to effective partnership working between all those involved with providing safeguarding services for children.

The Single Central Record

It is a requirement that your school undertakes robust safeguarding and recruitment checks for anyone involved in the school – eg. staff and Governors and that it maintains a record of these checks which is then verified as part of the Ofsted inspection. You will be asked to present certain identity information for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to be undertaken. This is a legal requirement to ensure you are eligible to conduct your role. The DBS has replaced the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Safer Recruitment

As a Governor you may be involved in the future recruitment of staff at the school. All organisations in England that work with or provide services for children and families have a duty to protect their welfare. From January 2010 it has been a legal requirement that recruitment panels appointing paid school staff and volunteers into the children and families workforce should include at least one person who has been trained in safer recruitment. Ofsted will request evidence that each recruitment panel meets this requirement as part of their inspections.

All Governors must also complete a Declaration of Eligibility Form. This form should be signed annually and is available from your school.
School Website

Schools are expected to publish key school information online

This will include for all schools:

- Details of the school’s pupil premium allocation (sports premium/Year 7 catch up) and plans to spend it in the current year; and, for the previous year, a statement of how the money was spent and the impact that it had on educational attainment of those pupils at the school in respect of whom grant funding was allocated.

- Details of the school’s curriculum, content and approach, results survey.

- Where applicable, details or links to the school’s admission arrangements, including its selection and over subscription criteria, published admission number and the school’s process for applications through the Local Authority.

- Details of the school’s policies on behaviour, charging and SEN and disability provision.

- Links to the school’s Ofsted reports and DfE School Performance Tables and details of the school’s latest Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 4 attainment and progress measures as presented in the School Performance Tables.

- A statement of the school’s ethos and values.

All schools will need to ensure that they continue to comply with any separate requirements that apply in respect of developing specific policies and communicating them.
The Governing Body – Role and Responsibilities

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced a Governors’ Handbook which outlines all the statutory requirements and expectations for school Governors. A copy of this can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook

We suggest you don’t print this off as it is a very large document.

The role of school governance is strategic and Governors do not and are not expected to get involved in the day-to-day running of a school. There are three main strategic responsibilities of a Governor:

1. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction;
2. Holding the Headteacher/Principal/School Leadership Team to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and
3. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure that money is well spent.

This amounts to a demanding role for Governing Bodies. Evidence suggests that those that deliver it well do so by:

- Understanding their strategic role – building a productive and supportive relationship with the Principal and Senior Leadership Team while holding them to account for school performance and taking hard strategic decisions in the light of objective data;
- Ensuring Governors have the necessary skills and commitment, including to challenge the school to bring about improvement and hold leaders to account for performance;
- Appointing an effective Chair to lead and manage the Governing Body – guidance on the crucial role of the Chair of Governors, developed jointly with the National Governors’ Associations (NGA) is available through the NGA website: www.nga.org.uk
- Appointing a high quality clerk to advise them on the nature of their functions and duties and ensure that Governing Body operates efficiently and effectively;
- Asking the right questions, at the right time and in the right way, of both the school and the rest of the Governing Body;
- Being confident to have courageous conversations in the interests of the children and young people;
- Evaluating their performance regularly in the light of Ofsted expectations and other good practice and making changes as necessary to improve their effectiveness.

It is expected that each Local Governing Body will conduct an annual review on itself in terms of how effective it is and how it is utilising the skills and expertise of the Governors.
Declaration of a Pecuniary Interest

It is a requirement under the Scheme of Delegation, that the school maintains a register of pecuniary interests. This is usually done at the start of a new academic year, but if you are joining a Governing Body mid-way through a year, then you will need to complete the form at that point.

All Governors and school staff have a statutory responsibility not to take part in the decision making process relating to any contract or agreement in which they have a personal interest (Education (School Government) Regulations 1989). Any such declaration should be minuted. The purpose of this is to demonstrate that the Governors and staff do not benefit personally from decisions made on behalf of the school.

Enclosed in this Welcome Pack should be the declaration form. If not, please ask your school office to provide you with one. Please then sign and return to the school as soon as possible.
What to Expect at a Governors’ Meeting?

Your school will have at least three Full Governing Body meetings each academic year, plus a number of committee meetings. It is important that all members of the Local Governing Body make every effort to attend these meetings. There must be 2/3 thirds of the Governors present in any meeting in order for the meeting to be quorate and decisions implemented. In the case of committee meetings, the quorum is a minimum of three members. If a meeting is not quorate, recommendations can be given which could be approved at a later date, but no decisions can be finalised.

The clerk is an invaluable resource for any Governing Body and often provides advice and guidance. They will circulate the agenda for the meeting, attaching any relevant papers, plus the minutes of the previous meeting at least seven days in advance. However, less notice may be given if the Chair decides to call an urgent meeting. Your school should set out its timeline of meetings annually at the start of the academic year (or at the end of the previous summer term).

Declaring an Interest

Governors and all staff are asked to complete and sign a ‘declaring an interest’ form. This information is then kept by the school and must be available for inspection. This item should be on every agenda throughout the year for meetings. This allows Governors to state whether they have an interest in any of the items on the agenda and it will be minuted accordingly.

Sometimes there may be restrictions on those taking part in the proceedings of a Governing Body meeting or its committees. The general principles are:

- Where there is a conflict between the interests of any person and the interests of the Local Governing Body, that person should withdraw from the meeting and should not vote.
- In a situation where the principles of natural justice require a fair hearing and there is any reasonable doubt as to a person’s ability to act impartially, he or she should also withdraw from the meeting and not vote.
- Where a Governor has a personal financial interest in any matter he or she should also withdraw from the meeting and not vote.
- If there is any dispute as to whether or not a person must withdraw from a meeting the other Governors at the meeting must decide on this.

Unable to Attend a Meeting

In the event you are unable to attend a meeting, please let the school know and the reason for absence, as it is legal requirement for the minutes to record acceptance or otherwise of a Governor’s absence.
What Can You Do as a New Governor?

In order to be an effective Governor it is important that you prepare well for meetings, develop good relationships with other governors and members of staff, increase your knowledge of the school and understand how your skills can support the school. Some tips are:

- Arrive at the meeting in good time.
- Read the agenda and any supporting papers before the meeting. Highlight any parts that you wish to query.
- Speak clearly and make sure your contribution is focused and to the point. Avoid using jargon and ask what something means if others use it.
- Be courteous and listen to others’ opinions. If you disagree, do so in a respectful way.
- Consider joining a specific committee in order to utilise your specific skills or knowledge.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions; you have a fresh perspective which is very valuable. If you don’t want to ask questions in the meeting, ask them afterwards.
- Talk to existing Governors before the next meeting to help break the ice.
- Don’t feel you have to understand everything all at once. Read up on something you are interested in/feel passionate about, and offer to undertake some training to increase your knowledge.
- Check out Governor training opportunities. Induction courses are available through the Trust and it is really helpful to join a group of new Governors who will share your anxieties and want to ask similar questions.
- If there is an issue or concern that you are keen to explore, talk to the Principal or the Chair of Governors about it before the meeting. Don’t launch into a criticism of the School or a staff member as it will prevent a good working relationship developing from the start.
- Respect confidentiality in meetings, especially when talking about individual staff or children/young people. Governors who do not do this may result in being removed from the Governing Body.

Remember to enjoy your school 😊
Useful Websites

The National Governors’ Association:
www.nga.org.uk
General information and advice for all Governors. The Trust has bought a corporate membership package so your school will provide you with their discrete login to be able to allow you to access the members’ area.

FASNA:
http://www.fasna.org.uk
A national forum for self-governing schools. A charity and not-for-profit school membership organisation that expressly represents the interests and views of self-governing schools.

Academies Financial Handbook:
A handbook issued by EFA that describes financial requirements for academy trusts.

The Key for Governors:
https://schoolgovernors.thekeysupport.com
General Information and advice for all Governors.

The Governors’ Handbook:
Guidance outlining the roles and duties of school governors and academy trusts.

Modern Governor:
http://www.moderngovernor.com
Online learning for Governors.
New Governor Induction Checklist
Please tick the appropriate box once completed.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familiarisation with the School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrange meeting with the Principal and/or Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrange a visit to have a guided tour around the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide with school contact details – telephone, email address, website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received Trust Governors’ Welcome Handbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received and completed documentation for DBS check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received, signed and returned Pecuniary Interests/Business Forms/Eligibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received code of conduct</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familiarisation with the Local Governing Body</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welcomed by the Local Governing Body – first meeting, introduced to all members Photograph taken for Governors’ notice board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide with a copy of the School Improvement Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide with a list of school policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide with copies of the minutes of at least the last two Local Governing Body meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide with a list of Governors – with contact telephone numbers and email addresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide with the Scheme of Delegation including dates and start times of meetings for the current year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide with information and names of the Committees, including dates of meetings for the current year, start times, membership and remits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask to complete a Governor skills audit</td>
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