



Becoming a Trust Governor

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Trust Governor within a Spencer Academies Trust school.

This document explains the process to become a Trust Governor. For ease of use, it is set out as the answers to 'FAQs' regularly received from new Trust Governors.

What is a Trust Governor?

Trust Governors are a unique role to The Spencer Academies Trust.

As a group of schools, our strengths include the professional knowledge and experience of our 3,000+ colleagues, and a thoughtful growth strategy which, over time, has seen the Trust develop as a closely located network of good and outstanding primary and secondary schools, and post-16.

Our mission is to improve the life chances of children and young people across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. We believe that all children and young people deserve an outstanding end to end education. When a new school is sponsored or welcomed into the Trust, we use the networks and the resources this 'local approach' makes available to us to ensure that it is rapidly on the journey to outstanding.

The Trust Governor programme is one of the ways in which we ask colleagues to use their professional knowledge and understanding to contribute to the running of another school within the Spencer group.

As with parent and community governors, Trust Governors are attached to a named school and are volunteers. Rather than being elected in some circumstances, Trust Governors are always 'co-opted' - brought into a role by the assent of the Local Governing Body (LGB).

Whereas parent and community governors may serve an initial term of two or four years, Trust Governors are asked to commit for an initial six month or one year term, depending on the strength of the LGB. This is to allow colleagues interested in the Trust Governor programme to support a number of schools in the group over time, and to use their specific skills as broadly as possible.

All LGBs have at least two committees: the Quality and Standards Committee and a Finance and Resources Committee, both meeting termly. Another difference is that while parent and community governors will be given a choice of committee to support, Trust Governors would always be asked to attend the Quality and Standards Committee meeting to use their knowledge of curriculum and data on behalf of the committee.

Lastly, termly 'learning walks' or school visits are part of a parent or community governor's duties. As the focus for Trust Governors is on monitored indicators and data, it is not an expectation that this should be part of the role.

What contribution do Trust Governors make?

You may not have governance experience (although experiencing life as a school governor is a big part of what attracts colleagues to the Trust role) but teachers and other colleagues have an invaluable understanding of life in school, Trust values and particularly of school scrutiny and expectations. The purpose of the Trust Governor programme is to model these skills, making the work of the LGB stronger.

For example, many new school governors and boards say they find the acronyms and data metrics used in schools to be confusing. We have a full governor training programme and also encourage governors to access external training (although recognising that the difference between academy and maintained school processes can turn external training into a 'false friend') but there is no substitute for seeing effective, knowledge-based scrutiny or curriculum knowledge modelled in meetings.

Once your commitment to an LGB is completed, we hope that the skills you have shown will remain within the board, making a lasting contribution to the life of the school.

We also hope – and frequently hear – that being part of the programme will make you stronger in your own professional practice. In the first year, we have had secondary Trust Governors shocked to understand how challenging Y6 SATs are – and changing their Y7 teaching practice accordingly; secondary governors surprised and impressed by the strengths of safeguarding practice in primaries, and primary teachers benefitting from an improved understanding of transition and Y7 need.

In addition to the school you represent, your own school should therefore benefit from your contribution. Although most LGB meetings are outside school hours, we will ask your school to recognise your commitment and to make adjustments accordingly, including releasing you early if you have a meeting to attend.

Can I pick the school board I join?

We will always try to take preferences (and indeed, traffic) into consideration, but will ultimately ask you to support the school where your experience is most needed. Not all Trust schools will need or want Trust Governors, while others may benefit from support from two or more colleagues, each with a distinct remit. This may particularly be the case in new boards for example, where curriculum work, policies and the school environment will be developing in tandem.

We will also consider that if you would like to volunteer for a similar school closely located to your own, that you will almost certainly be in regular professional contact. The purpose of the programme is not to provide professional or operational support, but rather governance, which requires independence of thought. We are therefore unlikely to place you in a school which you already know well.

There are three programme strands which we know to be particularly valuable for schools.

1. Secondary curriculum specialists or teachers in core subjects / Subject Directors to primary schools
2. Primary peer to peer advisors for new boards
3. Primary specialists advising on transition planning and Y7

Based on the determined needs of the LGB, we may ask you to consider one of these roles as a specific challenge.

Do I have to attend every meeting?

We ask all governors to use their best endeavors to attend meetings, which should include full board and one meeting of each committee not less than once per term. Meetings should be held outside school hours (often immediately following) and no meeting should last more than two hours as an absolute maximum.

Given that the Trust Governor commitment is short-term, we ask that the level of commitment is equivalent, but will understand of course if you are unable to make a meeting or two. In this case the process would simply be to notify the clerk to the LGB.

How do I apply?

We regularly ask colleagues to consider being a Trust Governor through our recruitment bulletins and Trust communications. The process is straightforward – in the first place we ask you to email the Head of Governance via info@satrust.com. We will then ask you to complete a personal statement using a format which is shared across all governors. Based on the information you provide here, we will consider which school would most benefit from your support and will also talk to you about what you hope to derive from the role.

What information will I receive?

After joining any LGB you will receive a copy of the Trust Governor Induction Pack by email, as would any governor. A difference is that as an existing member of staff in a Trust school, you would not have to complete enhanced DBS or other checks in order to be in school and will also have completed mandatory training elements including safeguarding training as a condition of your employment.

What training do you offer to governors?

In addition to the external training offered in key areas, The Spencer Academies Trust delivers a busy year-around training schedule. Training sessions are delivered in the evenings and typically from the George Spencer site, which offers ease of access to Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Training sessions cover topics including new governor induction, safeguarding, quality and standards in school and education data and analytics.

All training sessions are open to all governors and school staff, but LGBs are asked to ensure that at least one governor attends every training evening and is then responsible for sharing training materials and content in school. It is not expected that a Trust Governor should be mandated to attend training sessions, which will mostly cover material with which you are familiar, but you are very welcome should you choose to attend.

The annual training schedule for governors is published [here](#).

Where can I find further information?

The Trust Governor programme has been introduced in 2018-19. Further information on the programme will be added to the Governance Handbook in the next edition, which is due in September.

Further questions

For further questions, please contact the Head of Governance via info@satrust.com