



Tees Valley Education Trust

Trustees' Handbook

September 2022



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1 Tees Valley Education Trust (TVED) Chair's Introduction

Welcome to the TVED trustees' handbook. First may I thank you for volunteering your time, experience and expertise to TVED. Your contribution to our trust, communities, academies and ultimately to our pupils is very much appreciated.

At TVED we pledge to deliver educational excellence so that all Tees Valley Education children can achieve their dreams, hopes, aspirations and a great sense of self-worth. By doing this, our children will become outstanding citizens able to contribute to society with the skills, ability, confidence and a voice to shape a better future for all.

The TVED Board is committed to ensuring that the trust's governance is compliant, robust, fit for purpose and forward thinking to facilitate delivery on its pledge. As a learning institution our aspiration is to be a model of what multi-academy trust (MAT) governance should be.

Since TVED was established in September 2015, we have continued to grow and develop in terms of governance, the quality of teaching and the quality of learning in our academies through the pursuit of our "Diamond Standards" and a progressive, transparent and innovative approach. We are also proud of the trust's ongoing contribution to outreach work locally, regionally and nationally, in particular to support TVED's passion for and commitment to ensuring full inclusion for all pupils and their families, especially the most vulnerable.

This handbook provides an easily accessible guide to TVED's governance arrangements both for current and recently appointed trustees and for our partners and stakeholders to understand how the trust operates and works to fulfil its vision and purpose. Further information and documentation relating to our governance arrangements (including this handbook) are available on TVED's website www.teesvalleyeducation.co.uk together with links to the websites of each of our academies.

The strength of TVED's governance arrangements have been tested over the years but never more so than to guide the trust's response to COVID-19 since its first local impact in 2020. TVED robustly responded with assured resilience to maintain the maximum access to the best possible education and pastoral support for its children. With constant reflection, refinement, risk analysis and mitigation the trust was at the forefront responding positively for the benefit of children, staff and the community.

After three years of planning and preparation we were proud in 2018 to open Discovery Special Academy as a free school in temporary accommodation for our first intake of children. In 2019 we opened a purpose built temporary facility for Discovery Academy to accommodate our children for the period until the permanent buildings are completed and delivered in conjunction with the Department for Education, hopefully by September 2022.

In 2018 TVED welcomed Wilton Primary Academy to the TVED family .

TVED maintains a clear vision of the future reflected in its Growth Strategy which includes the commitment to delivering Discovery Special Academy on its own purpose-built site by September 2022, supporting education establishments in the geographical area, developing a sustainable and excellent curriculum and being at the heart of educational developments .

As these developments are ongoing, we need to ensure that TVED's governance arrangements remain fully fit for purpose so that the TVED board can be assured that, as we continue to develop, we ensure the full commitment to our vision pledge and our aspiration for all TVED's pupils and staff.

I hope you find this handbook informative and helpful. As the commitment to continuous improvement is one of our founding principles, the trust is always happy to receive constructive feedback about this handbook and our governance arrangements.

Jason Brine

Chair of Tees Valley Education Trust Board

2 Welcome to TVED

Tees Valley Education is a multi-academy trust (MAT) and sponsor that originally comprised three academies across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. The two founding academies, Brambles and Pennyman, formed a dedicated partnership in 2010 underpinned by a passionately shared commitment to improve outcomes for all children and their communities. Since we started to work together, a number of significant events led to the formation of the trust in September 2015 and the MAT's ongoing development.

- Brambles and Pennyman were two of the first primary schools in Middlesbrough to become academies in September 2012.
- Since 2012, both academies have also worked closely with Dormanstown Academy in Redcar and Cleveland.
- TVED was established as a MAT in September 2015, comprising Brambles, Dormanstown and Pennyman academies.
- Wilton Primary Academy joined TVED in September 2018.
- In April 2017, the DfE approved TVED's application to set up a primary special academy as part of the free schools programme. Discovery Special Academy opened in temporary accommodation in September 2018. Discovery will continue to grow in numbers in high quality temporary accommodation funded by the DfE until the academy is able to move into its new building in September 2022.
- In line with the trust's growth strategy, TVED is committed to welcoming additional schools into the trust where there is a shared vision and clear capacity to support school improvement for all academies in the trust.

Within the trust, there is a wealth of knowledge and expertise across both mainstream and specialist provision. We pride ourselves on our inclusivity: currently, we have over 1000 mainstream places and 110 specialist unit places across the four mainstream academies. These units, located at Dormanstown and Pennyman, offer places to pupils with a range of moderate, complex and, in some cases, significant medical, physical, learning, sensory and communication needs. With the opening of Discovery Special Academy in September 2018, the trust is now also able to offer specialist provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD). Discovery's provision is for pupils aged from 4 - 11 with education health and care plans (EHCPs) for SLD, many of whom are also likely to have a range

of medical and health challenges. The academy has a phased admission programme, starting with 36 pupils in 2018/19, rising to up to 90 pupils from September 2022 when it moves into the new school building. From September 2021, the Department for Education has also approved a 10 place nursery for Discovery. This provision will be based at Pennyman until the new school opens.

We also offer a range of outreach for both mainstream and specialist settings as well as leadership development and individual curriculum areas as a recognised outreach centre, providing programmes recommended by the local authority and at a regional level.

As a group, we have constantly demonstrated our commitment and ability to nurture, share and encourage outstanding educational practice in a range of settings. We firmly believe that excellence happens, not in isolated moments, but when we strive to achieve it on a daily basis: an aspiration we have for all.

3 TVED 2022/23 governance work plan

TVED's 2022/23 governance work plan is available on the [Trusts website](#).

4 TVED vision and values

TVED's vision and mission is to provide outstanding learning environments where the highest levels of aspiration and achievement for all pupils are the norm.

The trust's ethos is to be fully inclusive, recognising and celebrating the achievements of all pupils and staff, underpinned by a commitment to work effectively with a wide range of agencies and partners. TVED has a culture of co-production and growth, where professionals and agencies from a variety of settings and organisations work together to support the holistic development of all pupils. This outstanding inclusive practice has been the primary driver for the evolution of TVED's provision and infrastructure.

Whilst signing up to the trust's vision and values, each academy is encouraged to develop its own individual culture and ethos, reflecting the particular needs and interests of the pupils who attend each school and the communities they serve.

The trust is fully committed to continuing this way of working and enhancing the lives of all the pupils in its care in order to enable them to secure the best possible life chances as they move through their educational career and life.

5 Trustee code of conduct

The trust board has agreed that, on appointment, all trustees are asked to sign up to the [National Governors' Association \(NGA\) code of conduct \(2022\)](#).

This code sets out the expectations on and commitment required from TVED trustees and committee members in order for the trust board to properly carry out its work within the MAT and the community. This code should be read in conjunction with the relevant law and the trust's articles of association and agreed scheme of delegation.

6 Trust board principles

Collectively, the TVED trust board and committees espouse the principles [Charity Governance Code](#).

Organisational purpose

The board is clear about the trust's aims, vision and values and ensures these are being delivered effectively and sustainably.

Leadership

The trust is led by an effective board that provides strategic leadership in line with the trust's aims and values. The DfE's multi-academy trusts good practice guidance and expectations for growth document December 2016 outlines 10 ways effective MATs make sure they have a strong team.

1. Have a strategic plan which turns your vision in to reality for the organisation as a whole rather than for individual schools. This will help you be clear about the workforce you need.
2. Build staffing structures at the MAT level as well as the school level. The trust's workforce needs to think of itself as one team if it is to make the most of the talent and resources within the trust.
3. Develop your strategic plan collaboratively, involving those who will be charged with delivering it. This helps to ensure every employee understands their role in delivering the plan and feels valued for their wider contribution.
4. Trust leaders, chief executives or executive leaders, need to be able to lead, performance manage and develop the team of academy principals and senior leaders.
5. Executive leaders need support too, both from good people and good structures. It helps them be better able to deal with pressure and unforeseen problems. It can also make the difference between incremental and transformational improvement.
6. Create a culture, systems and processes that promote ongoing development and progression of both individuals and the organisation.
7. Identify skills (and skills gaps) across the trust and all schools through a trust-wide skills audit.
8. Establish a programme for continuous professional development involving staff across the trust.
9. Grow and develop the next middle and senior leaders by deploying them across a group of schools, with the expectation of movement between schools within the trust. This helps to create a healthy environment for promotion.
10. Ensure succession planning is part of the trust's overall strategic management, not as a response to crisis. This enables the trust, or schools within the trust to withstand a change of leadership or a sudden or unexpected departure of a member of staff.

Integrity

The board acts with integrity, adopting values and creating a culture that helps to achieve the trust's purposes. The board is aware of the importance of the public's confidence and trust in state funded school academies and trustees undertake their duties accordingly.

The 7 principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes people who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in:

- the civil service
- local government
- the police
- the courts and probation services
- non-departmental public bodies
- health, education, social and care services

These principles also apply to all those in other sectors that deliver public services. They were first set out by Lord Nolan in 1995 and they are included in the Ministerial code.

1. **Selflessness:** holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
2. **Integrity:** holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
3. **Objectivity:** holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
4. **Accountability:** holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
5. **Openness:** holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
6. **Honesty:** holders of public office should be truthful.
7. **Leadership:** holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

6.1 Decision making, risk and control

The board makes sure that its decision-making processes are informed, rigorous and timely and that effective delegation, control and risk assessment and management systems are set up and monitored. While the audit, risk and finance committee has lead responsibility for the ongoing development of the trust's approach to risk management and updating the trust's corporate risk register, following its most recent governance review, the trust has now adopted a more holistic approach to risk so that risk management is a standing item on all committee agendas and leaders of individual academies have been supported to develop specific risk registers for each academy.

6.2 Board effectiveness

The board works as an effective team, using the appropriate balance of skills, experience, backgrounds and knowledge to make informed decisions. This skills based approach aims to increase effectiveness ensuring that it sets the vision and direction for the future and holds the CEO to account

for TVED academies' standards and conduct. The role of the board is critical to the effectiveness of the trust.

There are eight main principles needed to transform the team of diverse people with a range of skills, experience and knowledge into a highly effective board:

- the right people around the table;
- understanding roles and responsibilities;
- good chairing;
- professional clerking;
- strong relationships based on trust;
- knowing the data;
- commitment to asking challenging questions; and
- confidence to have courageous and, when needed, challenging conversations in the interests of the pupils/trust.

6.3 Diversity

The board's approach to diversity is underpinned by the trusts diamond standards:

'We are all diamonds: none of us start off polished, but with the right environment, time, support and development we become brilliant.'

These standards are:

Commitment: To achieve, succeed and create the best life and future.

Curiosity: Be inquisitive, be brave and learn.

Courage: To face our challenges and the unknown.

Care: For ourselves, each other and our communities.

These standards support the trusts effectiveness, leadership and decision-making.

6.4 Openness and accountability

The board leads the organisation in being transparent and accountable. It does this through having clear and ambitious KPI's which are regularly reviewed and monitored by trust board and the relevant committee. In addition, the trust makes visible the academy statistics and demographics, which are used to inform the trust strategies and policies. The trust is open in its work unless there is good reason for it not to be.

[DfE Good Practice guidance.](#)



7 TVED members, trustees, committee members

Members Catherine Devereux Richard Hodges Norma Newell Sister Anita Smith	
Trust board	
Trustee	Lead responsibility
Jason Brine	Chair, GDPR, Legal and compliance
Anne Cowley	Finance and audit
Helen Dudiak	Education
Richard Hodges	Compliance, health and safety, risk management
Pauline Holbrook	SEND, Education and Safeguarding
Katrina Morley	TVED CEO
Andy Taylor	Education/school improvement
Paul Swalwell	Education Business and Marketing
Chris Zarraga	Education Policy
Trust board committee membership	
Trust Board	Audit, Risk and Finance Committee
Chair - Jason Brine Anne Cowley Helen Dudiak Richard Hodges Pauline Holbrook Katrina Morley Andy Taylor Paul Swalwell Chris Zarraga	Chair – Richard Hodges Anne Cowley Katrina Morley, CEO (reports to Committee) Paul Swalwell Chris Zarraga Trust staff Emma Chawner, Director of Finance, Resources and Operations Emma Lowe, Director for Inclusion and SEND Resources
Standards Committee	Challenge board
Chair - Vacant Helen Dudiak Pauline Holbrook Katrina Morley, CEO (reports to Committee) Andy Taylor Trust Staff Helen Hall, Director for Improvement and Standards	Independent chair – Carol White, former NLG 1 trustee - Andy Taylor (External special school leader as required especially to challenge Discovery Special Academy) Katrina Morley, CEO Academy headteachers in attendance Chairs of local academy committees invited as observers Deputy headteachers to attend as part of leadership training programme.



Local academy committee
Headteacher appoints chair Head teacher Up to 2 x parent governors Staff governor Community governor

8 Governance terms of reference

8.1 Members

- Appoint trustees with the exception of the CEO who is, ex officio, a trustee.
- Approve changes to master funding agreement, trust articles of association and academy supplemental funding agreements.
- Receive annual auditor's report and appoints the external auditors.
- Meets once a year for an annual general meeting including receiving the auditor's report.

8.2 TVED trust board and committees

Links to the terms of reference for the trust board and committees can be found below

- [Trust board](#)
- [Audit, risk and finance committee](#)
- [Challenge board](#)
- [Local academy committee](#)

8.3 Discipline committee

This committee is held with three trustees that are available to consider specific issues at an academy level e.g. admission and exclusion appeals.

9 Scheme of delegations

TVED's scheme of delegation is designed to:

- ensure the executive leadership is clear about the decisions for which the trust board remains responsible, which are delegated to a trust board trustee committee or to the CEO, executive headteachers, academy headteachers or heads of academy;
- ensure that the role of the executive leadership is fully understood throughout the MAT;
- promote a culture of honesty, transparency and accountability;
- identify responsibility for key strategic appointments and performance management (e.g. CEO, Directors, Executive Head Teachers, Head Teachers and Heads of Academy, Deputy Head Teachers and Deputy Heads of Academy);
- identify responsibility for policy and practice (Trust/academy);
- identify responsibility for setting and management of each academy's budget;

- identify responsibility for assessing, managing and pre-empting risk in each academy and across the trust; and
- identify responsibility for pupils' outcomes and educational entitlement.

TVED's scheme of delegations is founded on the principle that decisions should be made the appropriate level of governance and not automatically referred to a higher level. This not only ensures the most effective way of working and rapid decision making but also ensures an appropriate referral hierarchy where this is required.

The scheme of delegation supports trustees to clarify the key decisions for which they have responsibility and which should be referred to the appropriate committee, trust board or members.

The scheme of delegation will also assist leaders at all levels to fulfil their roles throughout the trust. This will in turn help the trust to enable all of our pupils to be the very best learners, citizens and community advocates they can be and ensure they can play a fulfilling and productive role in the future economy.

TVED's full scheme of delegation is available from the trust [website](#).

10 Trustees' annual work programme

The trust board and committee annual work programme can be viewed from the trust [website](#). While most of this work programme is generic and will be repeated annually unless otherwise indicated, in September each year, at its first meeting, the trust board reviews the work programme, identifies any workstreams that are specific to current priorities and ensures they are included and referred to the appropriate governance level for both scrutiny and decision making.

11 Policies and policy review

The trust board is responsible for reviewing and approving all trust policies. Usually, policies are reviewed every three years and will not require changes unless there have been changes in national policy or the trust wants to make changes. However, it is important that the trust has a review programme so that trustees can be confident that all policies are up to date and meet statutory requirements.

12 Trustee support and training

During 2018/19 Trust Board undertook an independent review of its governance arrangements. It is a recommendation to review the skills audit and this will be completed once all trustee vacancies have been filled. All trustees recognise the importance of keeping up to date with recent DfE legislation and expectations about trust governance. This is already built into the trust board training and development programme (see below). Recent trustee appointments have strengthened the trusts governance arrangements, with expertise across:

- financial monitoring and strategic planning, especially in terms of education finance and new national funding formula proposals, including high needs funding;
- risk management;
- corporate legal and compliance responsibilities; and
- building and capital planning.

Through its in-house training programme for trustees, TVED ensures that trustees are fully supported to keep up to date with key national policy developments and expectations of governance. Individual trustees are also supported to attend relevant local, regional and national training programmes for trustees. The trust subscribes to NGA, The School Bus and The Key and supports and encourages trustees to undertake appropriate on-line training such as safeguarding support programmes.

12.1 Induction programme for new trustees

At the first meeting in each academic year (September), the board reviews trustee roles and responsibilities, including committee membership and lead responsibility for the forthcoming year. The chair of the trust board and CEO meet with each trustee to agree their individual training needs. These are addressed through a combination of mentoring and coaching, support and training for all trustees and bespoke internal and external training to meet individual trustee needs, including the induction of new trustees and governors. Crucially, all members and trustees meet together in March each year to refresh and update their knowledge and understanding of current national education policy and practice and consider the implications for TVED's strategic vision and direction.

The TVED trustees' handbook is designed to help recently appointed trustees to familiarise themselves with the trust's vision, values and governance procedures. The handbook is reviewed and updated annually to ensure it is kept up to date.

12.2 Support and training for all trustees

Currently, all TVED members and trustees attend an annual training day, usually scheduled for March/April each year in which members and the board are updated on national developments for trust governance expectations and requirements.

Trustees with lead responsibilities are supported by:

- regular briefings from the CEO and directors;
- briefings from externally commissioned consultants as appropriate;
- membership of the NGA, School Bus and The Key for governors and the associated briefings; and
- external governor training.