



EQUITAS
— ACADEMIES TRUST —

Equitas Academies Trust
Governance Handbook 2025-2026

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About our Trust

Equitas Academies Trust was formed in September 2012 and incorporates Chilwell Croft Academy (Primary) and Aston Manor Academy (Secondary). Both Academies are happy, exciting and inspiring learning environments for their children who are from a vibrant mix of cultures. The staff and trustees have a great sense of pride in their schools and care passionately about the pupils they serve.

Our Vision and Aims

‘All Different, All Equal, All Achieving.’

This is the mission statement for both Academies and encompasses the Trust’s ethos.

Our aim is to provide a stimulating environment in which students learn exceptionally well and develop life skills that prepare them for the future. We have high expectations for all students to work hard so that they reach the highest levels of attainment possible.

The Academies in the Trust are caring and nurturing environments and place the utmost importance on student welfare and personal development. Our students are safe in school and feel safe all of the time.

Members of the Trust:

Trustee Name	Term Start Date
Wadim Wesolek	27/09/2021
David Jones	24/03/2014
Philip Godwin	23/09/2019
Simon Spencer	24/03/2014

The Board of Trustees:

Name	Start Date	Term End Date
Herville Hector	12.07.2025	11.07.2029
Michael Bartley	12.03.2022	11.03.2026
Simon Harris	7.12.2024	06.12.2028
Jane Gotschel	27.09.2025	26.09.2029
Stephen Hughes	18.03.2024	17.03.2028
Nicola Smith	27.03.2023	26.03.2027
Innocent Okoro	01.12.2024	30.11.2028
Aaron Batt	07.04.2025	06.04.2029

The quorum for the Full Trust Board meetings is three trustees.

Local Advisory Groups

Local Advisory Group meetings are held half-termly at each school and minutes are passed to the Trust Board for information.

Clerk to Equitas Academies Trust

Kelly Wasley

Trustee Committee Structure

Committees:

- Finance & General Purposes Committee (Incorporating Audit Committee)
- Raising Standards Committee

Both committees will meet once per half term and the quorum for meetings shall be two trustees.

Committee Membership

The current committee membership is as follows:

Committee	Membership
Finance and General Purposes Committee	Stephen Hughes (Chair) Herville Hector Innocent Okoro Aaron Batt
Raising Standards Committee	Nicola Smith (Chair) Jane Gotschel Michael Bartley Simon Harris

Panels:

Trustees may be called upon to sit on any of the following panels as and when required:

Trustee Panels
Pupil Exclusion Staff Appointments Staff Dismissal and Appeals Staff Redundancy and Appeals Staff Pay & Conditions and Appeals Parental Complaints/Grievances

Governance Structure

Members

Members are seen as the guardians of the governance of the trust.

- They are the signatories to the Memorandum of Association drawn up when the trust formed and will also have agreed to the trust's articles of association which is the legal document which outlines how the trust will operate.
- The Members appoint trustees to the Board to ensure that the trust's charitable objects are carried out. They are able to remove Trustees if they fail to fulfil this responsibility. They oversee the achievement of the Trust's objectives, acting as the 'conscience' and 'moral guardian' of the trust's purpose and values. Members also oversee the performance of trustees.
- The Board submits an annual report on the performance of the Trust to the Members at the Annual General Meeting to enable them to fulfil this role.
- The Academy Trust Handbook recommends that Members of the trust should not also be trustees and should not be Trustees and Equitas Academies Trust has now obtained complete separation between these layers of governance.

Board Of Trustees

- The Board of Trustees has collective accountability and strategic responsibility of the trust. Its remit is to ensure quality of education for pupils and effective financial management.
- Trustees also act as charitable trustees and directors of the trust, ensuring compliance with charity law and company law.
- The Board will produce an annual report on the performance of the Trust for Members and for external publication.
- As part of their responsibilities, a Trustee may become Chair of a committee or take on responsibility for monitoring a specific area such as SEND or pupil premium.

Board Committees

- The Board has agreed to establish two committees to carry out some of its governance functions: Raising Standards and Finance & General Purposes.
- The Board can create additional Committees, Working Parties or Panels as required. The Board may remove delegations from any Committee, Working Party or Panel if required.
- The Scheme of Delegation sets out the powers that both the Board's Committees and the CEO may exercise on behalf of the Trustees.
- The Scheme of Delegation is supported by Terms of Reference for each Committee.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

- The CEO has the delegated responsibility for the operation of the Trust, including the performance of the Trust's academies. As such, the CEO is responsible for the performance management of the Headteachers and Chief Operations Officer.
- The CEO is the accounting officer, with overall responsibility for the operation of the Trust's financial responsibilities. The CEO, in conjunction with the Chief Financial Officer must ensure that the organisation is run with financial effectiveness, stability and probity, avoiding waste and securing value for money.

Executive Management Team

- The CEO leads the Trust's Leadership Team, made up of the Headteachers and Director of Finance (CFO). The CEO may delegate executive management functions to members of these teams. This includes preparing reports on specific areas of responsibility for the Board and its Committees.
- The CEO is accountable to the Board for the performance of the Executive Management Team.

The Chair of the Board

- The Chair plays an important role, with responsibility for leading the Board and for convening and chairing meetings.
- As the main link between the Board and the Executive Management Team, they will work to build a strong partnership with the Trust
- They will liaise with the Chief Executive Officer and the Governance Professional to ensure the final agendas for meetings, as well as the management of papers and appropriate records, are in place.
- The Chair is responsible for promoting the development of the Board as a whole.
- With support from the members and the Trust, they play a decisive part in determining the appointment and re-appointment of Trustees.
- They also ensure that the Board is effective in challenging and supporting the educational performance of the Trust.

Clerking

The Board determines clerking arrangements for its meetings and committees.

The Board has delegated responsibility for governance administration to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Governance Professional will ensure that records of membership are kept up to date, and that meeting papers and other important documents are shared in a timely manner and that meetings are accurately minuted.

The Governance Professional is the first point of call for any Board governance queries.

Terms of Reference

Members Terms of Reference 2025

Purpose and Scope

Members of the trust are responsible for the following:

- To ensure that the Trust's charitable object is carried out.
- To oversee the achievement of the Trust.
- To oversee the performance of the Trustees.

Composition

- The trust shall have a minimum of 3 members but preferably 5 as per the Academies Trust Handbook.
- Members meetings will be quorate when at least 2 members are present.

Meeting Frequency

- The Annual General Meeting of members will take place annually.
- Additional meetings of the members may be called by members or trustees at other time in line with the Articles of Association.

Summary Delegations

The Members will receive the Annual Accounts from the Board of Trustees.

The Members shall consider the following matters in line with the Articles of Association:

- Appointing or removing Members.
- Appointing or removing Trustees.
- Reviewing the role description for Members.
- Approving recommendations for changes to the Articles of Association.
- Approving recommendations for a change in the name of the Trust.

Administration

- Members meetings will be clerked in line with the approved clerking arrangements for the trust.

Board Of Trustees Terms of Reference and Matters Reserved for the Board 2025

Purpose and Scope

The Board of Trustees is the main Governing Body for the trust and is responsible for establishing trust strategy and for monitoring the operations and performance of the trust.

Composition

- The agreed structure for the Board of Trustees consists of up to 12 Trustees.
- The quorum for the Board of Trustees is no less than three Trustees in attendance.
- The Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected annually by the Trustees.

Meeting Frequency

- The Board shall meet four times per year with the first of these meetings being the trustees' "set-up" meeting.
- Trustees may request additional meetings in line with the Articles of Association.

Matters reserved for the Board

Items reserved for the board, that is items which cannot be delegated, are:

- Agreement of strategy, vision and values and mission statement for the trust.
- Approval of the Scheme of Delegation and terms of reference for committees on an annual basis and approval of any delegation to committees or to senior leaders.
- Appointment of the CEO.
- Appointment of the Clerk to the trust/governance professional.
- Approval of the budget.
- Approval of investment strategy and of investment proposals.
- Approval of policies pertaining to internal control and risk management.
- Approval of any changes to the governance structure of the trust.

Administration

- The meeting will be clerked in line with the approved clerking arrangements for the trust.

Finance & General Purpose Committee (Incorporating Audit Committee) Terms of Reference 2025

Purpose and Scope

The committee is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the Trust's arrangements for budgeting, financial planning, financial performance and financial reporting in respect of both revenue and capital activities.

Composition

- The committee will consist of up to 6 Trustees with a minimum membership of four Trustees.
- The committee will be quorate if two Trustees are present.

Meeting Frequency

- The committee will meet no less than three times per academic year, but ideally once each half-term.

Administration

- The meeting will be clerked in line with the approved Trust clerking arrangements.
- The minutes of each meeting of the committee shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees for consideration at the next meeting of the Board.
- The Committee shall report to the Board of Trustees as required and make whatever recommendations to the board as are deemed appropriate within the context of its terms of reference.

Delegations

The Board of Trustees delegates authority to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to:

Finance

- Review the annual trust and academy budgets, ensuring resources are allocated in line with the trust's strategic priorities and present the annual balanced budget to the trust board for approval.
- Review and approve a realistic three-year financial plan, taking into account the Trust's vision, known risks and opportunities.
- Receive the Trust's management accounts in order to monitor the Trust's cash position and income and expenditure against the approved budget
- Report back to each meeting of the Board of Trustees, alerting to potential problems and significant variations to the approved budget.
- Review and approve any adjustments to the trust's approved budget (subject to the scheme of delegation)
- Approve expenditure and virements of sums over £10,000 up to £50,000 – sums below this amount are delegated to the trust's senior executive leader
- Review Condition Improvement Fund bids.
- Ensure that the trust board's approach to pay and benefits is transparent, proportionate and justifiable

- Develop a framework for the pay of the senior executive leader.
- Ensure that sufficient funds are allocated for staff pay increments.
- Ensure compliance with statutory requirements to publish information in respect of staff pay and benefits.
- Monitor spending of pupil premium, PE and sport premium (and other relevant premiums); ensure that funding is spent effectively and is having the intended impact on pupil outcomes.
- Undertake detailed scrutiny of and recommend approval of the school resource management self-assessment checklist annually.
- Ensure that the Trust's financial procedures are complied with
- Review and act upon any issues identified by benchmarking against similar trusts, internal or external scrutiny.
- Ensure that the trust follows basic procurement rules and achieves best value for money when acquiring goods and services
- Review, adopt and monitor all policies delegated by the board.

Audit

- Oversee and approve the trust's programme of internal scrutiny
- Support the development and review of the Trust's risk management policy, setting out the framework the trust has adopted for risk management.
- Ensure that risks are being addressed appropriately through internal scrutiny.
- Evaluate the adequacy of the Trust's internal control framework, including financial and non-financial controls and management of risks and report back regularly on this to the Board of Trustees.
- Review the external auditor's plan each year.
- Review the annual report and accounts and recommend this to the Board of Trustees.
- Review the auditor's findings and actions taken by the Trust's managers in response to those findings.
- Review findings from other assurance activities by third parties including ESFA financial management and governance reviews, funding audits and investigations.
- Assess the effectiveness and resources of the external auditor.
- Produce an annual report of the committee's conclusions on the above for the board of trustees and members, including recommendations on the reappointment or retendering of the external auditor, and their remuneration.
- Review the ratings and responses on the risk register, ensuring risks and control measures are adequately identified and modified as appropriate and that these risks inform business continuity planning.
- Agree a programme of work annually to deliver internal scrutiny that provides coverage across the year and agree who will perform the work.
- Consider reports from those carrying out the programme of internal scrutiny and monitor the progress in addressing recommendations.
- Review the trust's insurance cover in compliance with its legal obligations

HR and Recruitment

- To oversee staff appointment processes ensuring that Trust recruitment protocols are followed (other than the recruitment of the CEO or Headteacher which shall be the responsibility of the Board of Trustees).
- To attend staffing related panels supported / facilitated by Trust officers.
- To receive appropriate staffing reports and monitor the impact on educational provision and outcomes.
- To attend disciplinary panels as required.

Raising Standards Committee Terms Of Reference 2025

Purpose and Scope

The Committee is responsible for the Monitoring & Evaluation of all standards across Equitas Academies Trust.

At the first meeting of the Trust Board in each academic year, the Trust Board should:

- Consider and confirm the committee's recommendations for its terms of reference, delegated powers and priorities for the academic year. The terms of reference should include the activities listed below, together with any additional items that the Trust Board may wish to include.
- Consider and confirm the membership of the committee, process for electing a chair, clerking arrangements and financial delegation to the Headteachers

At the first meeting of the Raising Standards committee the committee should:

- Agree a programme of meetings for the year, having regard to the dates for the full Trust Board meetings for the same period
- Agree work priorities

The activities of the committee will include the following:

- To analyse and evaluate Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) in order to determine areas for improvement.
- To facilitate improved performance in all key areas including EYFS and Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.
- To facilitate improved performance in the key Ofsted areas of Safeguarding, Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement, Attendance and Behaviour, Personal Development and Well-being, and Leadership and Governance.
- To facilitate the implementation of the School Improvement Plan for each school.
- To monitor the development of the School Improvement Plan for each school.
- To facilitate the aim for all schools within the Trust to be at least moving towards Strong Standards in all areas with an aspiration to be Exception in all areas of the Ofsted toolkit.

Composition

- The committee will consist of up to 6 Trustees with a minimum membership of four Trustees.
- The committee will be quorate if two non-executive Trustees are present.

Meeting Frequency

- The committee will meet no less than three times per academic year, but ideally once each half-term.

Delegations

The Board of Trustees delegates authority to the Raising Standards Committee to:

Academy Improvement and Inclusion

- Appoint from its members a designated Pupil Premium / Disadvantaged Governor and a link focusing on Looked After Children
- Monitor educational outcomes and progress against targets and the associated strategies for improvement and impact including the outcomes of specific pupil groups including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), disadvantaged, pupils, looked after pupils and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Monitor patterns, trends and risks in respect of attendance and behaviour, including the levels of suspension and exclusions across the Trust.
- Consider wider outcomes across the trust, including health and wellbeing, cultural capital and careers education.
- Contribute to and review school self-evaluation documentation.
- Approve the Academy Development / Strategic Plan.
- Monitor implementation of any post OFSTED action plans and if relevant, any Trust related improvement plans.
- Ensure the schools effectively implement strategies for inclusion.

Safeguarding

- Appoint from its members a designated Child Protection and Safeguarding Governor.
- Monitor the implementation of the Trust Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.
- Undertake an annual Safeguarding audit and act upon any recommendations ensuring that a completed submission is provided to the Board of Trustees, community, Governance and Local Issues
- Monitor the implementation of Trust policies.
- Approve and monitor the implementation of agreed local Academy policies.
- Promote partnership working between parents/carers in order to promote high quality educational provision and outcomes.
- Ensure that feedback from stakeholder engagement is used to support the development of best practice and the quality of experience for young people and staff.
- Attend complaints panels as required.
- Ensure appropriate representation at Parents Forum and Academy events.

Administration

- The meeting will be clerked in line with the approved Trust clerking arrangements.
- The minutes of each meeting of the committee shall be submitted to the Board of Trustees for consideration at the next meeting of the Board.
- The Committee shall report to the Board of Trustees as required and make such recommendations to the board as are deemed appropriate within the context of the terms of reference.

Local Academy Boards Terms Of Reference 2025

Purpose and Scope

The Committee is responsible for the engagement of stakeholders (parents and local community) at each academy. The committee shall be a sub-committee of the Raising Standards Committee.

The activities of the committee will include the following:

- Share and review student attendance, achievement and outcomes
- Provide curriculum updates
- Discussion of local community issues which may affect the academy
- Be a consultative body for the academy's stakeholders
- Provide updates on the School Self Evaluation and School Development Plan
- Provide an update on school admissions and student numbers
- Review and advice on marketing and promotion.

Composition

The committee will include the following:

- Academy Headteacher
- A minimum of two parent representatives per academy
- A minimum of two members of staff per school
- Equitas Academies Trust CEO

Equitas Academy Board Trustees may be invited to attend the meetings by the Headteachers. It may be also useful to invite community leaders for appropriate agenda items.

Parent Representatives should normally be elected by the parent body. In order to be eligible for election the individuals have to be the parent of a child at the academy.

Meeting Frequency

- This committee meets no less than three times per year, but ideally once each half-term.

Trustees with Named Responsibility

Responsibility	Named Trustee	School Lead
CEO Performance Management	Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees	N/A
Headteacher's Performance Management	Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees	CEO
Safeguarding	Jane Gotschel	Jill Sweeney Pippa Jones Nanette Wragg Ruksana Fazil
SEND	Simon Harris	Ruksana Fazil Bhupinder Oubhie
Whistleblowing	Nicola Smith	Mrs Jill Sweeney Mrs Nanette Wragg
Health & Safety Estates	Stephen Hughes	Donna Lewis
Pupil Premium Careers	Nicola Smith	Andrea Welter Jas Kular

Meeting Dates 2025-2026

	Meeting	Date	Time	Location
Autumn 1				
Week 3	Full Board (set up meeting)	15 September 2025	5pm	AMA
Week 3	Local Advisory Board (AMA)	17 September 2025	4 pm	AMA
Week 5	Finance and General Purposes	6 October 2025	5pm	AMA
Week 6	Raising Standards	20 October 2025	5pm	CCA
Week 6	Local Advisory Board (CCA)	23 October 2025	2.30pm	CCA
Autumn 2				
Week 2	Health & Safety (Staff Committee)	13 November 2025	3.30pm	TEAMS
Week 3	Raising Standards	17 November 2025	5pm	CCA
Week 3	Local Advisory Board (AMA)	19 November 2025	4 pm	AMA
Week 4	Finance and General Purposes	24 November 2025	5pm	AMA
Week 6	Full Board	8 December 2025	5pm	CCA
Week 6	Local Advisory Board (CCA)	11 December 2025	2.30pm	CCA
Week 7	AGM	15 December 2025	11 am	TEAMS
Spring 1				
Week 3	Raising Standards	19 January 2026	5pm	AMA
Week 3	Local Advisory Board (AMA)	21 January 2026	4 pm	AMA
Week 5	Local Advisory Board (CCA)	2 February 2026	2.30pm	CCA
Spring 2				
Week 2	Raising Standards	2 March 2026	5pm	CCA
Week 3	Finance and General Purposes	9 March 2026	5pm	AMA
Week 3	Health & Safety (Staff Committee)	11 March 2026	3.30pm	TEAMS
Week 4	Full Board	16 March 2026	5pm	CCA
Week 4	Local Advisory Board (AMA)	18 March 2026	4 pm	AMA
Summer 1				
Week 3	Local Advisory Board (CCA)	27 April 2026	2.30pm	CCA
Week 5	Raising Standards	11 May 2026	5pm	AMA
Week 5	Local Advisory Board (AMA)	13 May 2026	4 pm	AMA
Week 6	Finance and General Purposes	18 May 2026	5pm	CCA
Summer 2				
Week 2	Local Advisory Board (CCA)	8 June 2026	2.30pm	CCA
Week 2	Health & Safety (Staff Committee)	10 June 2026	3.30pm	TEAMS
Week 3	Raising Standards	15 June 2026	5pm	CCA
Week 3	Local Advisory Board	17 June 2026	4 pm	AMA
Week 4	Finance and General Purposes	22 June 2026	5pm	AMA
Week 5	Full Board	6 July 2026	5pm	CCA