Governance Framework 2026-27

This framework defines what 'governance' means for the Trust and outlines how governance is structured and organised as part of a whole-trust approach to improving standards.

Version number	6
Consultation groups	All governance tiers / Executive & Senior Leadership, Headteachers
Approved by	Board of Trustees
Approval date	
Implementation date	September 2026
Policy/document owner	Director of Governance and Compliance
Status	Regulatory
Frequency of review	This is a dynamic document which will be updated annually to reflect changes in process built on experience and will be formally agreed by the Trust Board every 3 years.
Next review date	September 2027
Applicable to	Trust-wide

Document History

Version	Version Date	Author	Summary of Changes
V1.0		Helen Stockill – Head of Governance	Document created
V2.0	29 June 2017	Head of Governance	Formal Board approval
V2.1	October 2017	Head of Governance	Removed tables for cluster board and advisory board members names.
V2.2	8.8.2018	Head of Governance	Updated role of Trustees in line with Academies Financial Handbook. Updated role of cluster and advisory board to align with handbooks.
V3.0	June 2019	Head of Governance	Cluster Board tier of governance removed. School Improvement Committee added. Minor clarifications in wording. Appendix 2 updated. Table of contents added.
V3.1	July 2020	Head of Governance	Updated branding and logo. Minor edits to wording of AB role. Removed the detailed governance structure model.
V3.2	November 2020	Head of Governance	Update to chairing arrangements and new vision added.
V3.4	August 2021	Head of Governance	P&G committee removed. SEND Committee included. Some minor updates to wording. Senior leadership section updated.
V3.5	November 2021	Head of Governance	Trustees updated
V3.6	December 2021	Head of Governance	Trustees updated. Ruth Malkin added. Photos removed
3.7	March 2022	Head of Governance	Trustees updated.
3.8	May 2022	Head of Governance	Trustees updated.
4.0	June 2023	Head of Governance	Committees, Senior Leadership, and principles of governance updated. Updates to wording.
4.1	August 2024	Head of Governance	Trustees and Committee Membership updated.
5	July 2025	Head of Governance & Corporate Services	Strategy Updated with new Members, Trustees and Senior Executive Team. AB meetings and relevant job title changes.

			Added new link roles
6	January 2026	Director of Governance & Compliance	• Renamed 'framework' over strategy • Extended our governance principles to reflect our organisation and strategy. • Changes made to Trust Board membership, Committee membership and Executive/Senior Leaders. • Re-worded framework to focus on 3 tier system of governance with each tier of governance further explained.

Contents:

Contents: 3

Discovery Trust's Approach to Outstanding Governance ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Discovery's Vision and Values 5

Our Christian Ethos 5

Strategic Pillars 6

Discovery Governance Model 9

Tier 1: Members 11

Tier 2: Trust Board and Executive Leadership 13

Tier 3: Advisory Board - Advisory Board Handbook 20

How the Three Tiers of Governance Work Together 28

Scheme of Delegation 30

Effective Governance Systems 31

Ofsted 33

Discovery Trust's Approach to Outstanding Governance

At Discovery Trust, outstanding governance at all levels is rooted in a Stewardship mindset— with the Trust board setting the strategic direction of the Trust and holding executive leaders to account for the delivery of that strategy. Trustees act as custodians of the Trust's mission, resources, and relationships, ensuring that decision-making is focused on long-term sustainability, educational excellence, and positive outcomes for all at the centre.

This approach is shaped by a Christian ethos that values service, integrity and responsibility. Governance is supported by clear structures and well-established systems that promote accountability, collective responsibility and ethical decision-making. Arrangements are deliberately designed to encourage thoughtful listening, meaningful engagement and constructive challenge, ensuring that the voices of schools and communities inform strategic oversight and wise leadership decisions.

Discovery Trust's approach to outstanding governance is underpinned by the Academy Trust Governance Code principles, drawing heavily on the *Charity Governance Code* and can be found here - Academy Trust Governance Code.



Discovery's Vision and Values

Our mission:

Our purpose is to nurture belonging, champion equity, and ignite ambition, so that all learners can unlock their true potential and flourish.

Discovery vision:

At Discovery Schools Academy Trust, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Our vision is to be a beacon of inclusive excellence and innovation, fostering a community where all individuals feel valued and have a true sense of belonging.

Discovery values



Belonging: We want everyone at Discovery to feel a strong sense of belonging.



Equity: We ensure accessibility and opportunity for everyone.



Ambition: We are highly ambitious for all Discovery pupils and colleagues.

Our Christian Ethos

Discovery Trust is recognised as a Church of England Multi-Academy Trust operating under majority Articles, and an active member of the Diocese of Leicester family of MATs. Our governance is therefore not only shaped by statutory and regulatory expectations, but also by a clear commitment to the vision, values and educational principles of the Church of England.

At the heart of our approach is a belief in education as a transformational, inclusive and deeply moral endeavour, rooted in the Church of England vision for education: ***serving the common good, enabling all to flourish, and living well together***.

How our governance systems reflect our Christian foundation

Governance within Discovery Trust reflects and actively sustains our Christian ethos, ensuring that it informs both strategic decision-making and the lived experience of our schools and communities. Rooted in ***life in all its fullness***, this ethos underpins all aspects of our work and provides a strong foundation for our pupils, colleagues and communities to flourish.

• **Stewardship and service** – Trustees and governance leaders act as stewards of the Trust's mission, adopting a model of service leadership in which responsibility is understood not solely as accountability, but as active service to pupils, families and communities.

• **Alignment with diocesan vision and expectations** – Through our close relationship with the Diocese of Leicester, including diocesan representation within governance structures, the Trust ensures that its strategy, policies and oversight are aligned with the Church of England's vision for education as serving the common good.

• **Foundation governance and accountability** – Members and Trustees play a key role in preserving and developing the Trust's Christian character. Governance structures ensure that the Trust's charitable object and Church of England foundation are actively upheld and reflected in strategic direction, leadership culture and decision-making.

• **Spiritual development and human flourishing** – Governance recognises the importance of spiritual development as part of enabling ***life in all its fullness***. This includes consideration of how Trust strategy and school practice support individuals in exploring meaning, purpose and connection to self, others and the wider world, regardless of faith background.

• **Ethical leadership and decision-making** – Governance is underpinned by values such as dignity, integrity, hope and compassion. These shape board culture, support respectful and constructive challenge, and ensure that decisions are principled, evidence-informed and aligned with the Trust's moral purpose.

• **Justice, inclusion and courageous advocacy** – The Trust's governance framework promotes a strong moral commitment to addressing disadvantage, inequality and injustice. This includes a focus on inclusive practice, equitable systems, and advocacy for those whose voices are less often heard, ensuring that governance contributes to positive social impact across the Trust's communities.

• **A shared foundation for all schools** – The Trust's ethos provides a shared moral and educational foundation for both Church and community schools, while recognising and respecting their distinct identities and contexts. This enables all schools to contribute to, and benefit from, a collective vision centred on belonging, equity and ambition.

• **Assurance, culture and impact** – The Board of Trustees receives assurance that the Trust's ethos is being effectively lived and embedded through both qualitative and quantitative measures, including:

- SIAMS outcomes and Church school self-evaluation
- stakeholder feedback and community engagement
- evaluation of inclusion, behaviour and wellbeing
- reporting aligned to the Community Strategic Pillar
- Feedback from the Advisory Board Foundation Committee's (Kibworth and Barwell)

This ensures that the Trust's ethos is not only articulated, but experienced in practice, actively evaluated, and used to inform ongoing strategic development.

Strategic Pillars

Discovery Trust's governance is underpinned by a clear set of strategic pillars which define the Trust's core priorities and provide the framework through which the Board of Trustees sets direction, monitors and tracks performance and ensures sustained improvement.

These pillars represent the key capabilities required to deliver the Trust's mission, vision and values, and ensure that governance remains focused on long-term impact for pupils, colleagues and communities.

The Trust's strategic pillars are:

1. Education

To deliver an engaging, ambitious and inclusive curriculum, supported by high-quality teaching and learning, so that all pupils achieve strong outcomes and are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.

Governance oversight focuses on pupil outcomes, quality of education, safeguarding effectiveness and the delivery of the Trust's educational strategy, ensuring excellence for every school.

2. Community

To build strong, inclusive and outward-facing school communities, underpinned by effective stakeholder engagement and a deep sense of belonging for pupils, families and colleagues.

Governance ensures that stakeholder voice is captured and acted upon, partnerships are developed, and the Trust's commitment to inclusion, community engagement and Christian distinctiveness is reflected in practice.

3. People

To develop a highly skilled, engaged and supported workforce, ensuring that colleagues are empowered to deliver excellence and contribute meaningfully to the Trust's mission.

Governance oversight includes workforce planning, recruitment, retention, professional development and colleague engagement, recognising that strong people systems are critical to achieving sustainable improvement.

4. Operations

To maintain high-quality systems and processes that ensure compliance, efficiency and operational effectiveness across the Trust.

Governance focuses on areas such as risk management, compliance, digital infrastructure, data protection and the effectiveness of governance systems, ensuring that the Trust operates securely, efficiently and in line with statutory requirements.

5. Finance

To ensure financial sustainability and equitable resource allocation across the Trust, enabling continued investment in school improvement and strategic growth.

Governance ensures robust financial oversight, including budget management, reserves, income generation and value for money, so that resources are deployed effectively to support the Trust's priorities.

The Role of Governance in Delivering the Strategic Pillars

The Board of Trustees sets, monitors and evaluates progress against each of the strategic pillars through a structured framework of Key Result Areas (KRAs), performance indicators and regular reporting.

Each of the Trust's strategic pillars is aligned to a specific area of governance scrutiny, ensuring that there are clear accountability, focused oversight and regular reporting to the Board of Trustees.

This structure enables the Board to delegate detailed scrutiny to its committees, while retaining overall responsibility for strategic direction and performance.

The alignment is as follows:

- **Education** – overseen by the *Education Standards Committee*
- **Community** – overseen by the *Board of Trustees*
- **People** – overseen by the *Resources Committee*
- **Operations** – overseen by the *Audit and Risk Committee*
- **Finance** – overseen by the *Resources Committee*

Each committee receives regular reports aligned to its respective pillar, supported by Key Result Areas (KRAs), key performance indicators (KPIs) and assurance activity. This ensures that:

- Progress and challenge is focused against strategic priorities
- Risks are identified and managed effectively
- Strategic decision-making is informed, robust and evidence-based

Through this structured alignment, Discovery Trust ensures that governance is both strategically focused and operationally effective, with each pillar receiving the level of scrutiny required to drive sustained improvement.

Discovery Governance Model

Discovery Trust's governance structure is designed to ensure clear accountability, effective oversight, and strong collaboration at every level of the organisation. Our model operates across three tiers:

- **Tier 1: Members**

  Members are the guardians of the Trust's constitution and have a distinct, strategic role in holding the Board of Trustees to account for the overall direction and integrity of the Trust.

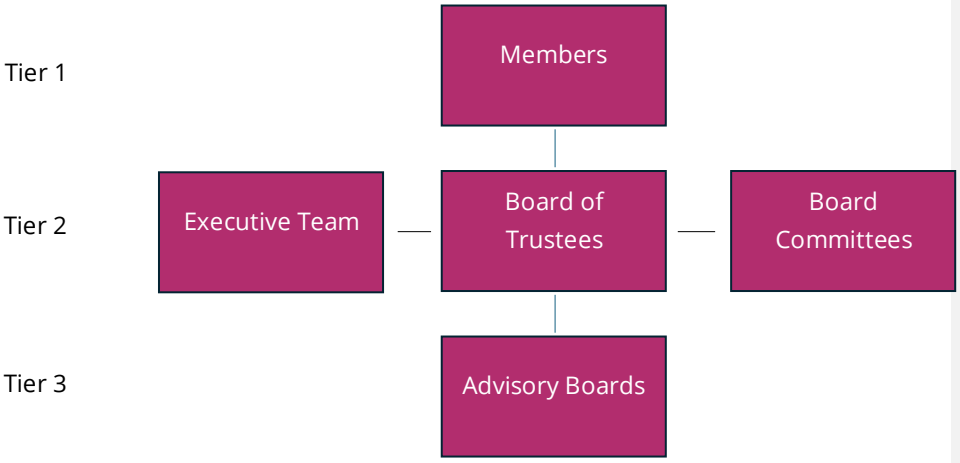
- **Tier 2: Board of Trustees, Executive Team, and Board Committees**

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic leadership, oversight, and accountability of the Trust. Trustees are supported by Board Committees, which provide focused scrutiny on key areas such as finance, audit, and standards. The Executive Team works closely with the Board to implement strategy and manage the day-to-day operations of the Trust.

- **Tier 3: Advisory Boards**

Advisory Boards operate at a local or thematic level, providing valuable insight, stakeholder engagement, and contextual understanding to inform Trust-wide decision-making. They ensure that the voices of pupils, staff, families, and communities are heard and considered.

The Three Tiers of Discovery Governance



Tier 1: Members

Purpose:
Members oversee the Trust's constitutional integrity, ensuring that the Trust's charitable objectives are being met and that the governance structure remains robust, effective, and aligned with the Trust's vision and values. Members provide an additional layer of oversight, holding the Board of Trustees to account for the overall direction and integrity of the Trust. To fulfil these responsibilities, the Members meet with the Trust twice a year, once at the Annual General Meeting and a further meeting for the Trust to provide assurance that the Trust is continuing to be governed in a way that supports long term success, financial sustainability, faithful upholding of the Christian ethos and charitable purpose.

Powers (as defined in the Scheme of Delegation - Scheme of Delegation 2025-2026 **):**
Members have specific, reserved powers to safeguard the governance of the Trust.

These typically include:

- Appointing and removing Trustees.
- Agree to changes to the Articles of Association.
- Receiving the Trust's annual accounts and reports.
- Ensuring the Board of Trustees is acting in accordance with the Trust's charitable purpose.
- Appointing and removing Members, as appropriate.
- Ensuring the Trust's Christian ethos and distinctiveness are upheld and strengthened across all academies.
- Exercising any other powers set out in the Trust's Articles or Scheme of Delegation.

Who They Are:

- Caroyln Shoyer – Director of Education Leicester Diocese
- Rt Rev'd Saju Muthalaly
- Rev'd Richard Trethewey

- Robert Woolston
- Shane Bray - Chair of Trustees

Members play a vital role in upholding the integrity and sustainability of Discovery Trust, ensuring that governance remains strong, transparent, and focused on delivering the best possible outcomes for all.

You can find out more about our Members on our website - Discovery Trust Governance

Annual General Meeting

The Trust's Annual General Meeting (AGM), held each January following the auditing of the accounts, brings together Members, Trustees, Advisory Board members and colleagues from across the Trust.

The AGM plays a vital role in the Trust's governance cycle, providing a formal opportunity to review the Trust's performance over the previous financial year, formally approve key governance actions (appointment of the auditors etc), and provide an opportunity for Members to ensure the Trust is being governed effectively.

By convening key governance and leadership stakeholders at this point in the year, the AGM ensures that the Trust's strategic direction, financial position and governance effectiveness are clearly understood and collectively owned.

This event serves as both a development opportunity and a formal governance forum, designed to

- Share strategic updates from the Trust Board and Executive Team, ensuring clarity on Trust-wide priorities and direction.
- Deliver interactive workshops on governance effectiveness, compliance, stakeholder engagement, and school improvement.
- Facilitate networking and best practice sharing to strengthen collective impact
- Provide assurance that the Trust continues to uphold its Christian foundation, ethos and distinctiveness, in line with its Articles of Association and strategic vision.
- Enable Members to discharge their statutory responsibilities as guardians of the Trust.

A typical AGM agenda would look like this: AGM Agenda

Tier 2: Trust Board and Executive Leadership

Purpose:

The Trust Board is the principal decision-making body of Discovery Trust, responsible for setting the strategic direction, ensuring robust oversight, and upholding the Trust's vision, values, and statutory duties. The Board works in partnership with the Executive Leadership Team to secure the highest standards of educational and financial performance across all schools within the Trust.

Responsibilities:

- Setting and monitoring the Trust's strategic vision, priorities, and policies.
- Ensuring compliance with all legal, regulatory, and ethical obligations.
- Overseeing financial management, risk, and assurance processes.
- Holding the Executive Leadership Team to account for the quality of education, safeguarding, and outcomes for all pupils.
- Promoting a culture of ambition, equity, and belonging throughout the Trust.
- Engaging with stakeholders and ensuring effective communication across all levels of governance.

The Board is made up of 11 trustees each with an area of specialism, the CEO is **not** a Trustee but is on the board as ex-officio:

Appointing body: Members

Name	Specialism	Appointed	Term
Lucy Welsford	Commercial and Business	August 2026	4 years
Gary Sims	Finance	June 2026	4 years
Mihir Trivedi	Regulatory Change	August 2025	4 years
Shane Bray	Commercial and Business	October 2023	4 years
Raj Tugnet	Business Development and Strategy	August 2025	4 years
Stephen Dixon-Mould	Human Resources	June 2026	4 years

Appointing body: Diocese of Leicester Education

Name	Specialism	Appointed	Term
Maggie Spence	Ethos and Education	July 2025	4 years
Faith Geary	Transformational Change	July 2024	4 years

Appointing body: Trustees

Name	Specialism	Appointed	Term
Richard Bettsworth	Public Relations	September 2023	4 years
Stuart Wilson	Secondary Education	August 2025	4 years

Organisation of the Trust Board

- The Trust Board elects a Chair and Vice Chair annually. The current Chair is Shane Bray and the current Vice Chair is Mihir Trivedi.
- The Board is supported by the Director of Governance and Compliance and is clerked by the Local Governance Manager; these are appointed by the Trust Board.
- The Board meets a minimum five times a year and holds an Annual Strategy Day, while committees meet four times annually or as required.
- The Board receives professional advice and assurance from the Trust Leader and members of the Central Executive Team in relation to educational performance, operational delivery, risk management and strategic implementation.

Governance and Compliance

- Trustees complete an annual register of personal and business interests, which is reviewed and published in summary on the Trust's website.
- An annual skills audit is undertaken by all trustees.
- Each trustee is linked to one or more School Advisory Boards.
- Trustees complete statutory training in Safeguarding and Cyber Security on an annual basis.

- All Trustees register and verify their identify with Companies House as is required by law.

Lead Trustee Roles

Lead Role Trustees are appointed to strengthen the Board's ability to carry out its core governance functions by providing dedicated, informed oversight in key strategic areas such as Safeguarding, SEND, Finance, Estates, People, Digital Strategy, Careers and Christian Distinctiveness. They allow the Board to maintain a high standard of scrutiny without creating unnecessary committees or over-burdening the full Board agenda.

Having Lead Role Trustees ensures that:

- Key statutory and strategic areas receive focused attention between board meetings.
- Trustees build deeper knowledge and expertise, enabling them to ask sharper, more informed questions.
- The Board has assurance that risks and performance in high-priority areas are being monitored effectively.
- The executive is supported and challenged through constructive professional dialogue with an identified trustee lead.
- Board reporting is strengthened, as Lead Role Trustees can channel insights back to the full Board in a concise, high-quality way.

Lead Role Trustees are appointed by the Board of Trustees, based on a combination of skills, experience, interest, and capacity to fulfil the role. A Lead Trustee Role Job Description is created for each of the area to give transparency and direction for both the Trustee and Trust executives.

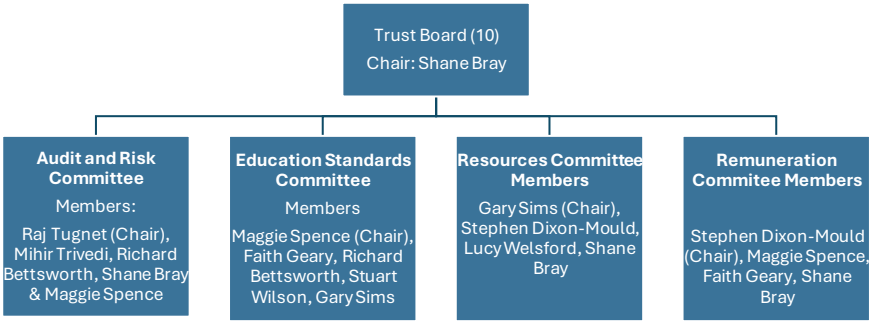
Our Lead Role Trustees

- Safeguarding: Maggie Spence
- Estates & Health and Safety: Shane Bray
- SEND: Faith Geary
- People Lead: Stephen Dixon-Mould
- Digital Strategy: Mihir Trivedi

- Finance: Gary Sims
- Careers: Stuart Wilson
- Christian Distinctiveness: Shane Bray (Chair)

Our Lead Role Descriptors: Lead Role Descriptors

Trust Committee Membership



Purpose of Board Committees

The Trust Board operates through committees to enable focused scrutiny, informed challenge, and effective oversight of key strategic and statutory areas. Committee structures, terms of reference, and membership are designed to support the Board in discharging its responsibilities efficiently and proportionately

Membership of Board committees is determined by the Trust Board, based on a clear assessment of skills, experience, knowledge and capacity. Appointments are made to ensure that each committee collectively possesses the expertise required to fulfil its remit, while also promoting balance, objectivity and continuity. All committee members receive appropriate training on the purpose and responsibilities of the committee, and new members undertake an induction with the Committee Chair to support effective contribution from appointment.

Trustees are supported and prepared to serve on committees through a structured and proportionate programme of induction, our Trustee Handbook and on-going training through certified governance professionals (i.e, National Governance Association) and in-house support from our Governance Team.

Each committee operates under terms of reference approved by the Board, reports regularly, and escalates matters requiring Board-level consideration.

Audit and Risk: Audit and Risk Terms of Reference

Resources: Resources Committee Terms of Reference

Education Standards: Education Standards Terms of Reference

Remuneration: Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference

Trust Board and Committee Assurance

The Trust Board and Committee's are provided assurance by:

- **Targeted Strategic Scrutiny –** Undertaking focused, in-depth review of their aligned strategic pillar(s), scrutinising performance against Key Result Areas (KRAs), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and agreed priorities to ensure progress is clearly understood and evidenced.

- **Performance Monitoring and Reporting –** Receiving structured termly reports from the Executive Team, including performance data, trend analysis, areas of concern and planned actions, enabling the board and its committees to assess impact and challenge effectively.

- **Internal and External Reviews**: The Board commissions and receives findings from both internal and external reviews, audits, and evaluations to validate the effectiveness of its key operational functions.
- **Risk Management Framework:** Assurance is provided through the systematic review of Trust and school-level risk registers, including regular monitoring of risk ratings, mitigation actions and control effectiveness. Risks are scrutinised by relevant committees, with significant risks escalated to the Board of Trustees. The Board reviews key risks, challenges mitigation strategies and tracks movement over time to ensure that risk is being effectively managed and reduced.
- **Compliance Monitoring –** The Board receives assurance that statutory and regulatory requirements are being met through compliance reports, policy reviews, and declarations of interest.

- **Constructive Challenge and Decision Support –** Applying professional and evidence-based challenge to Executive leaders, testing assumptions, validating performance and supporting robust, informed decision-making.

- **Clear Reporting from Committee to Board –** Reporting to the Board of Trustees through formal minutes and committee reports, ensuring transparency and clear routes of escalation.

- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Assurance is informed through structured stakeholder feedback gathered at school and Trust level, including pupil, parent, colleague and community voice. This is considered through Advisory Boards, termly reporting to relevant Board Committees, and escalation to the Board of Trustees where themes or concerns emerge. The Board uses this insight to inform strategic decision-making, assess the impact of Trust activity, and ensure that priorities remain responsive to the needs of the communities it serves.

Executive Team and Senior Leaders

The Executive Team comprises senior officers who exercise delegated authority from the board and are responsible for the day-to-day leadership and management of the Trust.

Current senior officers include:

- **Paul Stone** – Chief Executive Officer
- **Steve Orton** – Chief Financial and Operating Officer (CFO)
- **Rosalind Hopkins** – Director of Specialist Provision
- **Ben Solly** – Director of Mainstream Education
- **Mike Sanderson** – Chief Technical Officer
- **To be appointed** – Chief People Officer

In addition, the following Senior Leaders also act as agents on behalf of the Board:

- **Louise Barber** – Director of Operations
- **Nathan Odom** – Director of Estates and Place Planning
- **Zack Minton** – Head of Safeguarding

- **Adam Lapidge** – Director of Governance and Compliance
- **Wayne Allsop** – Trust Business Development Manager
- **Hannah May** – Director of People

Responsibilities

The Executive Team is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the Trust, identifying areas for development and formulating strategies for consideration by the Trust Board.

- The Trust Leader holds delegated responsibility for the overall operation of the Trust, including the performance of all schools. This includes performance management of the Directors for each phase, who in turn oversee Headteachers.
- The Board has appointed the Trust Leader as the **Accounting Officer**, with overall responsibility for financial compliance. The Accounting Officer ensures the Trust operates with financial effectiveness, stability, and probity, avoiding waste and securing value for money.
- The **Chief Financial and Operating Officer** serves as the **Chief Financial Officer**, overseeing financial strategy and compliance.

The executive team is encouraged to attend all board and committee meetings relevant to them to provide key insights and strategic vision within their area.

- **Training and Development:** The Board monitors the induction, ongoing training, and development of Trustees and governance volunteers to ensure high standards and continuous improvement.
- **Transparent Communication:** Assurance is supported by clear, timely and transparent communication of decisions, policies and outcomes to all stakeholders. This is achieved through agreed communication routes and reporting cycles, including formal Board and committee reporting, published policies and statements, regular stakeholder updates, and the use of established Trust platforms to ensure information is accessible, consistent and appropriately targeted

Tier 3: Advisory Board

Each school operates an Advisory Board, delegated by the Board of Trustees to provide local governance and assurance.

Advisory Boards play a vital role in connecting local school communities with the Trust's strategic governance. They provide insight into the school's context, champion its values, and ensure that local voices inform Trust-level decision-making. Advisory Boards do not exercise formal decision-making powers outside the Scheme of Delegation, but add value through constructive challenge, support and advice to Trust leaders and Trustees, contributing to strong educational outcomes, effective safeguarding and robust compliance.

Furthermore, the Advisory Board acts as an essential conduit for independent, objective perspectives from the local community, enabling the Trust to make evidence-based decisions that enhance governance effectiveness and stakeholder impact.

Advisory Board Responsibilities:

Advisory Boards operate under the Scheme of Delegation, which grants them specific responsibilities delegated by the Trust Board. These responsibilities are designed to ensure strong local governance while maintaining alignment with Trust-wide strategy.

Governance and Compliance

- Support strong community voice and uphold the school's values and distinct character.
- Ensure local implementation of Trust-wide policies to ensure that the policy meets the needs of their community and recommend amendments to the board where needed.
- Review the progress of the school's risk register and where progress isn't being made escalate concerns to the Trust Board.
- Attend the school Ofsted inspections and share their impact.
- For Church of England schools, to support schools in their readiness for SIAMS inspections.

- To monitor and evaluate the impact of the school's Christian vision and ethos and challenge school leaders on it's effectiveness.

Strategic Oversight

- Maintain a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development by reviewing the school's Self Evaluation Form. Raise concerns to board
- Understand the school's priorities for the year by reviewing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) to ensure it's matched to community needs. Raise concerns to board
- Provide advice to the school and trust on local issues, emerging risks, and community perspective of the school. Raise to the board.
- To provide strategic oversight and assurance that all settings deliver age-appropriate careers education, and, where statutory requirements apply, to monitor the quality and impact of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG), including oversight of engagement and destination outcomes.

Performance of school

- Review headline data on attainment, quality of teaching and the school's action plan.
- Review the safeguarding and behaviour trends throughout the year and subsequent actions.
- Review the school's report card on an annual basis and champion with parents/carers.
- The designated safeguarding member will join the Head of Safeguarding (where possible) during the school's safeguarding audit to provide assurance and oversight – upon agreement with headteacher and School Improvement Advisor.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Foster a culture of openness and collaboration between the school and its stakeholders, including parents/carers, pupils, staff, and the wider community.

- Review stakeholder surveys and views to inform decision-making and ensure local needs are understood at school and trust level.
- Review effectiveness of communication strategies to ensure school priorities, performance, and policies are accessible and transparent.
- Support the school in seeking and maintaining community partnerships that enhance opportunities for pupils and strengthen the school's role within its local context.
- Encourage parental involvement in school life, including governance, volunteering, and consultation on key initiatives where appropriate.
- Complete a self-evaluation of their impact on an annual basis.

Advisory Board membership

- Each Advisory Board will comprise of a minimum and recommended maximum membership, with all constitutions excluding the Headteacher. Each phase membership constitution is listed below.
    - **Primary Phase** – minimum of six and recommended maximum of eight members.
    - **Special Phase** – minimum of six and recommended maximum of eight members
    - **Secondary Phase** – Minimum of eight and recommended maximum of ten members.
- Membership may exceed the recommended limit where high-quality recruitment strengthens governance capacity and brings additional skills and perspectives.
- The composition of the Advisory Board will include a balanced mix of:
    - **Parent/Carer Members** – to represent the voice of families and ensure decisions reflect the needs of pupils and their of their school community.
    - **Community Members** – to provide local insight and strengthen links between the school and its wider community. External skillset (business)
    - **Colleague Member** – to contribute professional expertise and ensure staff perspectives inform governance discussions.

To ensure the Advisory Board retains independence and can provide objective, constructive challenge in the best interests of pupils, the community and the Trust,

colleague or parent/carer representation will not constitute a majority of the Board's membership.

Church of England Schools

For Church of England schools that are Voluntary Controlled:

- The Advisory Board will consist of the same membership structure as other Advisory Boards (a mix of parent/carer, community, and staff members) but will additionally include **up to two Foundation Members**, appointed to uphold the school's Christian ethos and ensure alignment with the principles of the Church of England.

For Church of England schools that are Voluntary Aided:

- The Advisory Board will consist of the same membership structure as other Advisory Boards (a mix of parent/carer, community, and staff members) but will also additionally include a number of **Foundation Members**. In Voluntary Aided schools, Foundation Members, as set by the Diocese of Leicester, must hold a majority of the Advisory Board plus two.
- Foundation Members will work collaboratively with other Advisory Board members to provide assurance that the school's vision and values are embedded in its strategic and operational processes.

Advisory Board Organisation

- The Advisory Board elects a Chair and Vice-Chair annually.
- The Advisory Board is clerked by the Local Governance Manager (Trust Clerk).
- The Trust Clerk sets the core agenda to ensure consistency and that key areas of governance are routinely and effectively covered. The Headteacher and Advisory Board Chair may propose additional items for inclusion as appropriate.
- The Advisory Board meets three times a year, with each meeting being a **maximum of two hours**.
- An additional informal meeting known as an 'Engagement Day' is also scheduled in to provide an opportunity for the school to showcase the work of it's pupil's and colleagues to the Advisory Board.
- The Advisory Board reports to the Board of Trustees through the chair's meeting report following each Advisory Board meeting.

Advisory Board – Programme of work / agendas

Advisory Board programme of work is designed to ensure that all areas of responsibility are covered throughout the year – our core programme of work is as follows:

Autumn Term	• Elect the Chair and Vice Chair • Adopt the Code of Conduct and reaffirm confidentiality • Complete annual declarations of interest • Review Advisory Board membership, vacancies, recruitment and succession planning • Appoint Lead Advisory Board Member roles • Review and update the Advisory Board Development Plan • Review and reaffirm the school vision and values • Review the Pupil Premium strategy and the impact of spending in the previous year • Adopt the safeguarding and child protection policy
Spring Term	• Review the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) • Review SEND provision, including the SEND Policy, SEND Information Report, Accessibility Plan, SENCo report and annual report for looked-after children • Review equality objectives and seek assurance that statutory equality duties are being met • Consider careers, aspirations and enrichment provision, where applicable
Summer Term	• Consider strategic priorities for the next academic year • Review the impact of Sports Premium funding and compliance with reporting requirements • Identify priorities for the Advisory Board Development Plan for the following year • Confirm the meeting cycle for the following academic year

Advisory Board Committees

- Advisory Boards do not generally operate through sub-committees, with the only exception the Foundation and Community Committee for CofE schools. Instead, they adopt a model of designated 'Lead Roles' for key areas such as safeguarding, SEND, pupil voice, and community engagement.
- Where a key issue arises that the school and Advisory Board consider requires additional discussion or timely consideration, an extraordinary meeting may be convened. Any such meeting must be formally recorded and minuted.

Foundation and Community Committee

- All Church of England Advisory Boards operate a Foundation and Community Committee, which meets at least once each term, to provide focused oversight of the school's Christian foundation and its relationship with the local community and church.

- The membership of the Foundation and Community Committee includes the Foundation Members appointed by the Diocese of Leicester, ensuring appropriate diocesan representation and a clear link between local school governance, parish structures and diocesan expectations.

Purpose and role of the Foundation Committee

- The principal purpose of the Foundation and Community Committee is to protect, promote and develop the Christian ethos and distinctiveness of the school, ensuring that its character as a Church of England school is actively upheld and reflected in the life, culture and direction of the school. **Meeting to be recorded and summary.**

- The committee provides assurance to the Advisory Board, the Trust Board and the Diocese that the school:

    - remains faithful to its founding Trust Deed and Christian foundation;

    - is living out its Christian vision and values in practice;

    - continues to serve its community as a Church school for all.

    - considers how ethos is embedded across worship, curriculum, relationships and inclusion;

    - supports the school's readiness for SIAMS inspection and ongoing Church school effectiveness.

Training for Advisory Boards

High-quality Advisory Boards do not happen by accident. Effective local governance is dependent on capable, confident and well-supported Advisory Board members, and Discovery Trust is clear that this requires deliberate investment in training, development and ongoing support.

Advisory Board members are volunteers who bring valuable experience, insight and commitment. To ensure their contribution has maximum impact, the Trust invests in a structured, comprehensive training and development programme designed to upskill members, deepen understanding of governance, and strengthen their ability to provide effective support and challenge.

The Trust training programme for Advisory Board members, which is coordinated by the Governance Team includes:

When joining an Advisory Board

- An in-depth induction on the role of the Advisory Board, the school context and an overview of the governance structure.
- An Advisory Board handbook that provides information about all aspects of being an Advisory Board Member.

On-going training throughout the year focused on:

- How Discovery operates as a MAT – Finance & Estates, IT
- Complaints
- Ofsted
- How to be an effective Advisory Board Chair and Vice-Chair
- Lead Advisory Board Member Roles (e.g. safeguarding, inclusion, careers)
- Targeted updates through Microsoft Teams in response to changes in statutory guidance, inspection frameworks or Trust priorities.

All Advisory Board Chair's and Vice Chair's have access to the Trust's National Governance Association subscription and can complete any further training they wish to.

Expectations and Accountability

Completion of key training forms part of the Trust's governance expectations and is reflected in our governance evaluation arrangements. Participation in induction and core training is expected of all Advisory Board members, and engagement with training is considered as part of individual and board-level effectiveness reviews.

Safeguarding and Cyber-Security training are statutory and must be completed by all Advisory Board members on an annual basis. Completion of this mandatory training is essential to ensure that Advisory Board members are compliant to fulfil their

responsibilities. Failure to complete the required statutory training will result in the individual being unable to continue to serve on the Advisory Board and may lead to removal in accordance with the Trust's governance arrangements.

Advisory Board Training Schedule

The Trust's current Advisory Board training offer, including mandatory and optional sessions for the 2026–2027 academic year, is set out in the following programme:

[LINK TO PROGRAMME TO BE ADDED]

How the Local Board evaluate its Effectiveness

The Trust is committed to ensuring that governance at local level is effective, proportionate and focused on impact. Local Advisory Boards play a vital role in supporting school leaders, providing challenge, forming key links and partnerships with the local community and ensuring that the school's values, standards and priorities are enacted.
To ensure this role is discharged effectively, the Trust undertakes annual and ongoing evaluation of Local Advisory Board effectiveness, using a combination of structured self-evaluation, assurance activity and evidence-based review.

How the Trust evaluate the board's effectiveness

Governance Rubrics

The Trust uses a governance evaluation rubric to assess and strengthen the effectiveness of its Advisory Boards. This approach provides a consistent, transparent and proportionate mechanism for evaluating governance practice, supporting continuous improvement and ensuring that local governance remains effective, independent and aligned with Trust priorities.

Purpose of the governance rubric

The governance rubric is designed to:

- assess the effectiveness and impact of Advisory Boards
- identify strengths and areas for development in local governance;
- support Chairs and school leaders through constructive, evidence-based dialogue
- provide assurance to the Trust Board that local governance arrangements are functioning as intended.

This is not a single annual exercise. Evaluation takes place throughout the year, using a range of evidence (data) and professional judgement, enabling timely support, challenge and improvement.

How the Three Tiers of Governance Work Together

Establishing effective feedback loops between local governance and the Trust Board is essential for informed and responsive decision-making. Advisory Boards provide critical context about individual schools—their strengths, challenges, and community needs—which helps shape the Trust's strategic priorities.

This two-way communication not only strengthens governance but also enables local voices to influence the Trust's direction, ensuring strategies remain relevant, inclusive, and aligned with real-world needs.

Linked Trustees

To strengthen the connection between local governance and Trust-wide strategy, the Trust provides structured opportunities for two-way communication and collaboration.

Each trustee serves as a **Linked School Trustee** for at least one school within the Trust. This role builds a strong link between trust-level governance and local oversight. Linked Trustees are informed by receiving and acknowledging the Chair's Report after each School Advisory Board meeting to provide them with information at the local setting.

Link Trustee's act as a conduit for local perspectives at Trust Board level, ensuring strategic decisions are informed by real school experiences while maintaining the clear distinction between governance and operational management. This linkage is essential for creating effective feedback loops—helping Trust-wide priorities reach schools and ensuring local voices shape strategic planning.

Chair's report - Chair Report Template

After each Advisory Board meeting, the Chair prepares a Chair's Report summarising key outcomes. This report highlights:

- Strengths identified during the meeting
- Areas for development

- Any other relevant insights or issues

The completed report is shared with the Director of Governance and Compliance and the Linked Trustee for that school. The Director of Governance and Compliance will analyse all the Chair's Reports from each school on a termly basis and provide key themes, strengths and areas of concern to the Board at the next meeting.

This process ensures that local perspectives and priorities are communicated effectively to the Trust Board, creating a clear feedback loop between school-level governance and trust-wide strategic decision-making.

Termly Chairs' Network Meetings

The Trust operates a termly Chairs' Network, bringing together all Advisory Board Chairs to strengthen alignment, communication and the effectiveness of local governance across the Trust.

The network provides a structured forum to:

- Receive Trust-wide updates on strategic priorities, key policies, operational developments and any future initiatives
- Discuss shared challenges and effective practice, supporting consistency and continuous improvement in governance across the Trust.
- Provide an opportunity for Chair's to receive training or guidance that will allow them to be more effective in their role.
- Provide informed feedback to Trustees and the Executive Team on the local impact of Trust decisions, initiatives and strategic direction.
- Provide an opportunity for Chair's to ask relevant and appropriate questions to the CEO and Chair of the Board of Trustees.

These meetings are attended by the Chair of Trustees and the Chief Executive Officer, alongside governance leaders, ensuring strong alignment between local governance intelligence and Trust-level leadership and oversight.

The Network is not a decision-making body but acts as a **key engagement and assurance mechanism**, supporting effective two-way communication between Advisory Boards, the Executive Team and the Trust Board.

Annual Discovery Day Conference

The Annual Governance Community Conference is an annual event that brings together Members, Trustees, Advisory Board members, parents, and the wider community to celebrate and explore what Discovery is all about. More than a governance meeting, this is a Discovery Day—an opportunity to showcase our vision, values, and impact across the Trust.

The conference is designed to:

- **Open Our Doors** – Provide a welcoming space for stakeholders and the community to learn about Discovery – what we offer, the vision for our pupils and colleagues and how they can get more involved.
- **Share Strategic Insights** – Hear updates from the CEO, Executive Leadership Team and the Director of Governance on Trust priorities and future direction.
- **Engage Through Workshops** – Participate in a programme of interactive sessions that both showcase the Trust's expertise and respond to current priorities and stakeholder need. Topics are shaped annually and may include areas such as governance, inclusion, pedagogical technology (PedTech), safeguarding, and community engagement through our Extended Services Team.
- **Strengthen Connections** – Foster relationships between governance teams, colleagues, parents/carers and the wider community to ensure inclusive and informed decision-making.

By positioning the conference as a Discovery Day, we reinforce our commitment to transparency, collaboration, and continuous improvement—ensuring that governance is not only effective but deeply connected to the communities we serve.

Scheme of Delegation

The Scheme of Delegation (SoD) is a foundational governance document that defines how authority and accountability are distributed across the Trust. It ensures clarity, consistency, and compliance in decision-making by setting out who is responsible for what at every level of governance.

Key Objectives of the Scheme of Delegation

- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities**
  The SoD specifies the distinct responsibilities of Members, Trustees, Trust Leader, Executive Team, School Leaders and the Advisory Board, reducing ambiguity and preventing overlap.
- **Ensure Accountability**
  By outlining decision-making powers and reporting lines, the Scheme of Delegation ensures that governance remains robust and transparent, with clear accountability for outcomes.
- **Support Effective Decision-Making**
  Delegation enables decisions to be made at the most appropriate level—balancing strategic oversight with operational efficiency.
- **Maintain Compliance and Standards**
  The Scheme of Delegation aligns governance practice with statutory requirements, regulatory frameworks, and the Trust's Articles of Association.
- **Promote Collaboration and Communication**
  It provides a structured framework for interaction between local governance and trust-level leadership, ensuring that local insights inform strategic priorities and trust-wide decisions are communicated effectively.

Access the full Scheme of Delegation here:

Discovery Trust Scheme of Delegation 2025-2026

Commented [AL1]: Update following approval of 26/27 SoD

Effective Governance Systems

Discovery Trust is committed to ensuring that governance is not only compliant, but also highly effective, strategic, and responsive to the needs of our schools and communities. This commitment is underpinned by the Nolan Principles of Public Life, which define the standards of behaviour expected of all those involved in governance across the Trust and shape how trustees and governance leaders exercise their roles and responsibilities.

We achieve effective governance through a coherent range of systems, processes, and practices designed to monitor, evaluate, and continuously strengthen governance at every level. These arrangements promote selflessness, integrity, objectivity,

accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership, ensuring that decision-making is ethical, transparent, and focused on the best interests of pupils and the wider community.

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How we ensure Effective Governance of Board's

1. Board Composition and Diversity
We regularly review the makeup of our Board and committees to ensure a broad range of skills, backgrounds, and perspectives. Diversity is actively sought and monitored, recognising its value in robust decision-making and stakeholder representation. Advisory Boards are expected to reflect the communities they serve, ensuring local voices, experiences, and backgrounds are present in governance discussions and decisions.

2. Skills Matrix and Gap Analysis
A comprehensive skills matrix is maintained for Trustees and Advisory Board members. This is reviewed annually to identify strengths and areas for development, informing recruitment, succession planning, and targeted training.

3. Governance Rubrics and Internal Performance Reviews
We use governance rubrics—clear, evidence-based criteria—to assess the effectiveness of governance at Trust and school level. These are presented at Internal Performance Reviews on a termly basis and presented to the board through the CEO Report at each formal meeting.

4. Annual Self-Evaluation and External Reviews
All governance tiers undertake annual self-evaluation against the DfE's Governance Handbook and the Trust's own standards. Periodic external reviews of governance are commissioned every 3-4 years to provide independent assurance and challenge.

5. Induction and Ongoing Training
A structured induction programme is provided for all new Trustees and Advisory Board members. Ongoing training is tailored to individual and collective needs, including statutory updates, safeguarding, and specialist topics.

6. Regular Board and Committee Evaluation
Meeting effectiveness is reviewed through feedback, attendance monitoring, and

analysis of decision-making impact. Chairs and governance professionals play a key role in ensuring meetings are purposeful and outcomes-focused.

7. Stakeholder Voice and Engagement
We actively seek feedback from pupils, parents, staff, and the wider community through surveys, forums, and direct engagement. This informs governance priorities and ensures decisions are grounded in real-world needs.

8. Clear Delegation and Accountability
The Scheme of Delegation sets out clear roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines. This ensures that decision-making is efficient, transparent, and aligned with the Trust's vision and statutory requirements.

9. Assurance and Risk Management
A robust assurance framework is in place, including internal audit, risk registers, and regular reporting to the Board and committees. This enables proactive identification and management of risks.

10. The role of the Governance Professional

A dedicated and highly trained Governance Professional in place to support the Trust Board and Advisory Boards to ensure that Members, Trustees, Trust Leaders and Advisory Board members have a point of contact to ask for support and guidance.

Ofsted

Under Ofsted's current inspection framework, governance is evaluated as part of the Leadership and Governance judgement, with inspectors focusing on the impact of governance in setting strategic direction, holding leaders to account and securing sustained improvement for pupils and colleagues.

In academy trusts, inspectors expect to understand how governance operates across all levels of the Trust, including the respective roles of the Trust Board, committees, executive leaders and local governance arrangements, and how these work together to support strong outcomes.

Governance during an Ofsted inspection

During inspection, governance may be explored through:

- Discussions with Trust Leaders, Advisory Board Chair's and Governance Professionals.

- Scrutiny of governance documentation, including minutes, schemes of delegation and self-evaluation to check for challenge and impact.
- Consideration of how governors know their school, understand its strengths and risks, and take action where improvement is needed.

The Trust ensures that the impact of governance is clearly evidenced through routine governance practice, including robust meeting records and minutes, clear schemes of delegation, strategic use of data to improve pupil and colleague outcomes, focused agendas and includes regularly reviewing the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) and School Improvement Plan (SIP).

This provides clear assurance that governance actively supports school improvement, secures accountability and contributes to positive outcomes for pupils.

The Trust is committed to providing support and guidance to schools, its leaders and Advisory Board Members before, during and after Ofsted inspections by:

- Ensuring governance structures, documentation and delegation arrangements are clear, current and inspection-ready.
- Supporting Chairs and advisory board members to articulate their role, impact and understanding of the school.
- Coordinating Trust-level information for inspectors where required.
- Providing post-inspection governance support to respond to findings and recommendations

The Director of Governance and Compliance and CEO will attend each inspection to provide Trust-level support to the school and to speak to inspectors as they require.

Discovery Trust					
Governance Tier	**Membership**	**Meetings**	**Responsibilities/Authorities**	**Reporting**	**References**
Members	• Signatories to the memorandum • Chair of the Board	AGM	• To appoint/remove Trustees • Receive financial statements and annual report • To change the Articles • To appoint external auditors	N/A	Articles of Association
Trust Board Clerked by Local Governance Manger	• Up to 12 Trustees	5-6	• Determine the vision and strategic priorities for the MAT and agreeing the policy framework • Ensure the quality of educational provision, overseeing standards and outcomes of academies • Monitoring the performance of the schools across the Trust • Ensuring appropriate governance and decision making • Overseeing the Trust's finances and property • Sign off company accounts and annual report • Ensure that the Trust complies with all regulatory requirements (charity and company law Independent Schools Standards and the Funding Agreement)	Reports to Members at AGM on progress for the year and to present financial statements and annual report Accountable to Secretary of State for Education through the Education Funding Agency and Regional Schools Commissioner	Articles of Association Funding Agreement Terms of Reference

Board Committees Clerked by Local Governance Manager or DOG&C	• 3 to 5 Trustees • Up to 2 Co-opted members	3 - 4	• Delegated decision-making power as determined by the Trust Board from time to time	Reports back to the Trustees in advance of each Board meeting through approved minutes and Chairs Reports	Terms of Reference Scheme of Delegation Minutes and reports
Advisory Board Clerked by Local Governance Manager	Primary Phase Up to 8 members: • Headteacher • Elected Staff • 2 Elected Parents • 2-4 Community Special Phase • Headteacher • Elected Staff • 2 Elected Parents • 2-4 Community Up to 10 members Secondary Phase: • Headteacher • 1 Staff member	4	• Supporting good governance of the school • Safeguarding and promoting the values of the school, ensuring that the school continues to strongly demonstrate its distinctiveness • Working in collaboration with the Headteacher to improve pupil achievement and well-being • Maintaining a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school • Contributing to the development of strategic priorities to promote school improvement • Regularly reviewing data on achievement, quality of teaching and behaviour and safety • Regularly monitoring the risk register and escalating concerns to the trustees • Providing the Trust Board with the views of the local community and advising on	Reports to the Board of Trustees through approved minutes and Chairs Reports	Minutes AB Chair Report Scheme of Delegation Terms of Reference

	• 2-3 Elected Parents • 3-6 Community Additional 2 Foundation Members for each phase if Church of England school.		local issues and risks they need to consider that affect the school • Recommending to the Trust Board any developments or amendments to policies and procedures • To report to the Director of Governance & Compliance through the chairs report any recommendations for the Board or central services team to consider • Ensuring there is local adaptation/adoption of Trust-wide policies • Engagement with the school's key stakeholders e.g. parents/carers, pupils and staff • [Kibworth CofE or any other CofE school] to ensure a denominal inspection is carried out (SIAMS) and to help evidence the impact of the Christian vision on school performance		