Built on botheredness . . .

the enquire learning trust

Terms of Reference

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Version History

Approved by:	Trustees
Last reviewed:	July 2026
Next review due by:	July 2027

Date	Author	Version	Comment
	LT	V1	New document
	LT	V2	Reviewed in line with the ATH
July 2026	LT		Formatting changes only

1. Introduction

These Terms of Reference set out the governance structure of Enquire Learning Trust, defining the roles, responsibilities and delegated authority of the Trust Board and its committees.

The Trust is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and operates in accordance with:

• The Academy Trust Handbook (ATH)

• The Trust's Articles of Association

• The Master Funding Agreement with the Department for Education (DfE)

• Company and Charity Law

The Board of Trustees retains overall responsibility and accountability for the Trust and ensures compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements.

All governance within the Trust is underpinned by the **Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)**: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership.

2. Governance Structure and Delegation

The Trust Board is the **key decision-making body** and retains responsibility for:

• Strategic leadership

• Educational performance

• Financial oversight and solvency

• Risk management

• Safeguarding and statutory compliance

The Board may delegate functions to committees and Academy Improvement Committees (AICs), as set out in the **Scheme of Delegation**, but remains fully accountable.

Delegated Authority Framework

Delegated authority across the Trust is defined in detail within the Scheme of Delegation.

• The **Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as Accounting Officer**, and the **Chief Finance Officer (CFO)** exercise delegated authority in accordance with this framework.

• Executive leaders (Directors) are responsible for day-to-day operational management within the limits determined by Trustees.

• Financial approval thresholds, procurement limits, HR decision-making processes and operational responsibilities are defined in the Scheme of Delegation and associated policies.

• All parties must operate within these defined limits.

• Where responsibility for a decision is unclear or not explicitly delegated, authority rests with the **Board of Trustees**.

Reserved Matters (non-delegable) include:

• Approval of strategy and Trust vision

• Approval of annual budget and financial plans

• Appointment and performance management of the CEO

• Approval of statutory policies

• Oversight of safeguarding and risk

Trust Operating Model

The Trust operates a **centralised services model**, funded through academy contributions, ensuring consistency, efficiency and value for money across all academies.

3. Members

Members:

• Appoint and remove Trustees

• Hold Trustees to account for delivery of the Trust's charitable objectives

• Meet at least annually

Members do not engage in day-to-day governance but provide **independent oversight of the Trust Board**.

4. Conflicts of Interest

All Trustees and committee members must:

• Declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest at each meeting

• Maintain a register of business interests

• Withdraw from discussions and decisions where a conflict exists

5. Trust Board (Trustees)

Role

The Trustees are responsible for:

• Setting strategic direction

• Ensuring high standards of pupil achievement

• Ensuring financial sustainability and value for money

• Ensuring effective governance and compliance

• Overseeing safeguarding arrangements

They operate at a **strategic level**, holding executive leaders to account and avoiding operational decision-making.

Membership and Quorum

• Determined by Articles of Association

• Quorum: 50% of members, with a majority of Trustees present

Meetings

• At least termly

• Additional meetings as required

Duties include:

Strategic Leadership

• Approve and monitor strategic plans

• Ensure alignment with Trust values

Educational Performance

- Monitor outcomes across academies
- Hold executive leaders to account

Governance and Compliance

- Ensure compliance with ATH, DfE and legal duties
- Review governance effectiveness annually

Financial Oversight

- Approve annual budget and 3-year plan
- Receive assurance via CFO and Finance Committee

Safeguarding

- Ensure robust safeguarding systems
- Receive regular safeguarding reports and assurance

6. Audit and Risk Committee

Purpose

To provide independent assurance to the Board on risk management, internal control and audit.

Membership

- Minimum of 3 members
- Majority must be non-executive Trustees
- Must not include executive leaders (e.g. CEO, CFO)
- At least one member must have recent and relevant financial expertise

Meetings

- At least termly

Responsibilities

• Oversee internal scrutiny arrangements ensuring independence

• Review risk register and risk management framework

• Evaluate internal control systems

• Review annual accounts and auditor findings

• Recommend external auditor appointment

• Report key risks and issues to the Board

Internal Scrutiny

The committee ensures that internal scrutiny:

• Is independent and objective

• Reports directly to Trustees

• Provides assurance on financial and operational controls

7. Finance and People Committee

Purpose

To oversee financial management and workforce strategy in line with delegated authorities.

Responsibilities

• Scrutinise and recommend the annual budget for Trustee approval

• Monitor management accounts and financial performance

• Oversee financial planning and sustainability

• Ensure compliance with procurement rules and value for money

• Monitor staffing metrics, workforce planning and HR risks

• Oversee pay, performance management and staffing structures

Delegation Alignment

The committee operates in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, including:

- CFO oversight of financial controls and approvals
- Delegated HR decision-making processes including disciplinary, grievance and pay matters
- Financial thresholds and procurement limits

8. Standards Committee

Purpose

To monitor educational performance and standards across the Trust.

Responsibilities

- Monitor pupil outcomes and progress
- Review quality of teaching and curriculum
- Oversee attendance, behaviour and exclusions
- Monitor safeguarding trends across academies
- Evaluate the impact of professional development
- Identify risks to educational performance

9. Estates and ICT Committee

Purpose

To oversee estates, health and safety, sustainability and digital infrastructure.

Responsibilities

- Monitor health and safety compliance
- Oversee estate and asset management strategy
- Approve and monitor capital programmes
- Oversee ICT strategy and system performance
- Monitor sustainability and energy efficiency

10. Executive Leadership Team (Directors)

Role

The Executive Leadership Team (Directors) is responsible for operational delivery.

Responsibilities

- Deliver Trust strategy
- Manage day-to-day operations
- Implement Trustee decisions
- Monitor academy performance
- Manage central services and resources

The Executive Leadership Team operates within the authority delegated by Trustees through the Scheme of Delegation.

Executive leaders report to Trustees through established committee structures.

11. Academy Improvement Committees (AICs)

Purpose

To provide local oversight, challenge and support for academy improvement.

Role

- Carry the Trust's vision, values and priorities into each academy
- Provide challenge and support to academy leadership
- Monitor academy performance and improvement plans
- Support engagement with parents and communities

Composition

Typically includes:

- Academy Principal(s)
- Trust representative
- Parent representatives
- Community representatives
- Clerk

Responsibilities

• Hold academy leaders to account for outcomes

• Monitor academy improvement plans and self-evaluation

• Support school development and standards

AICs operate in an **advisory capacity**, with delegated authority defined in the Scheme of Delegation.

12. Committee Principles

All committees:

• Operate at a **strategic (non-executive) level**

• Act within delegated authority only

• Report to the Trust Board

• Maintain accurate records and minutes

13. Review

These Terms of Reference will be:

• Reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees

• Updated to reflect changes to the Scheme of Delegation or statutory guidance

These Terms of Reference were discussed and approved by the Trustees on (date)

Signed .... Chair of Trustees