



**DISCOVERY**  
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

## **Trustee Recruitment Pack**

## **Advertisement**

### **Discovery Educational Trust (DET) – South Essex - Trustee Opportunity**

We are looking for new Trustees to join our Board.

Are you committed to improving the educational experience and outcomes of children, and to supporting a team of dedicated staff in their vital role?

As a Trustee, you will get a chance to

- make a real difference to the lives of our children
- leverage your current skills and expertise for the benefit of the schools within our Trust
- participate in significant support for your local community
- widen your network of contacts
- gain high level strategic experience and
- insight into becoming a non-executive director.

Our Trust currently comprises five very different schools – one in Southend and four in Brentwood.

We welcome applications from people from a wide range of backgrounds and experience. No prior knowledge of education or governance is required - we will provide all relevant training.

For an informal conversation about the role, or to apply, please contact Ms. Helen Witty, Chair of the Trust Board ([hwitty@discoveryeducationaltrust.co.uk](mailto:hwitty@discoveryeducationaltrust.co.uk)). Please send a CV with your application.

More information on the role is available on the Trust website via this [link](#).

## **Brief Synopsis of the Trust and the Role**

### **The Trust**

Discovery Educational Trust is a multi-academy trust, created in 2014. It consists of five very different schools, three of which (Larchwood Primary School and St. Martin's School in Brentwood, and Chase High School in Southend) have been a part of the Trust for a number of years, a fourth (Hogarth Primary School in Brentwood) joined on 1 September 2023 and a fifth (Kelvedon Hatch Community Primary School) joined on 1 January 2024.

The Trust has a combined pupil roll of 3,965, a staff of circa 500 and a combined budget of circa £25m. Our schools are supported by a strong Central Trust team.

Our vision is to improve the life chances of our pupils by placing them at the heart of everything we do.

1. To offer our children and young people a high quality inclusive education, a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum and a safe and stimulating place to grow, learn and develop. To ensure our pupils are fully prepared to seize the opportunities of the rapidly changing world and become active and responsible global citizens.
2. To provide effective support for the wellbeing of pupils and collaborative multi-agency working. To develop in our pupils a positive attitude to their education, reflecting a respectful culture and high expectations for behaviour.
3. To ensure our Trust is an employer of choice, recognising the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion, and investing in the professional development and wellbeing of its workforce.
4. To deliver rigorous financial planning, careful risk management, and effective and efficient operational support, underpinning improvement and innovation, and create sustainability, enabling our Trust to expand to include local schools that share our ambitions.
5. To encourage our schools to be collaborative and mutually supportive, but challenging, partners. To build wide-ranging communication with stakeholders within the schools and in the wider community. Their feedback will help us continue to improve.

### **The Role**

A multi-academy trust (MAT) is a group of schools that is run in partnership with each other, and exists outside of Local Authority control. MATs receive their funding directly from the Department for Education (DfE) and make their own financial decisions. MATs have the legal status of a Company and a Charitable Trust, and Trustees are, therefore, both Company Directors and Charity Trustees.

This role is challenging, but rewarding, and enables professionals to use skills and experience gained throughout their career to help DET improve the life chances of young people. All roles are pro bono.

The trust board has collective accountability and responsibility for the academy trust and assuring itself that there is compliance with regulatory, contractual, and statutory requirements.

The board provides:

- **Strategic leadership:** the board defines the trust vision for high quality and inclusive education in line with its charitable objects. It establishes and fosters the trust's culture and sets and champions the trust strategy.
- **Accountability and assurance:** the board is responsible for overseeing the operations and performance of the trust in line with the vision and the strategy. This includes
  - defining medium and long-term trust-wide strategic goals, including development and improvement priorities
  - monitoring and reviewing progress rigorously against the agreed strategic goals
  - strategic and statutory responsibility for safeguarding and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) arrangements within the Trust ensuring the promotion of pupil welfare
  - embedding appropriate strategies and risk management at every level of governance
  - overseeing and ensuring appropriate use of funding and effective financial performance and
  - keeping DET's estate safe and well-maintained.
- **Engagement:** the board has strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders. The board involves parents, schools and communities to support its decision-making.

The Trust Board, typically, meets five times each academic year. All meetings are held in person at each of the DET schools in turn.

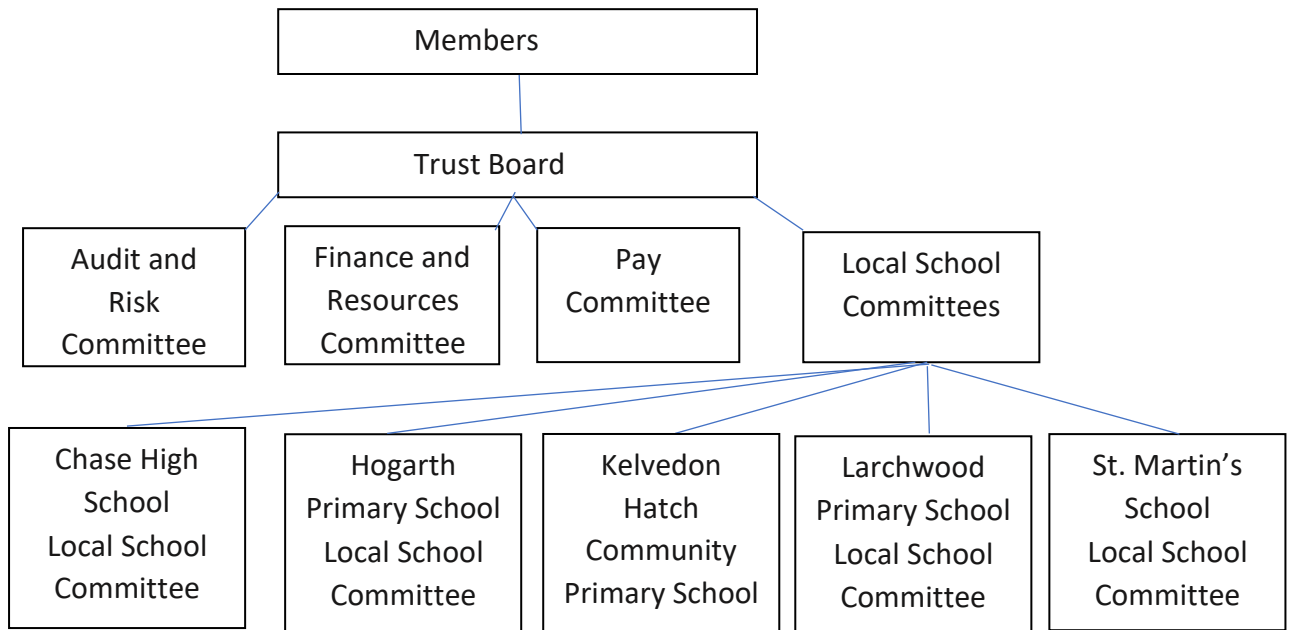
Additionally, Trustees are expected to serve on a committee of their choice: Audit and Risk, Finance and Resources, or Pay, which each meet virtually three times in the academic year. Some take on a link role with a responsibility for a certain area to support strategic decision making. For example, there are Link Trustees for Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Careers and Health and Safety.

There are no specific qualifications needed to be a Trustee. A Trust Board should be diverse and be comprised of people with different skillsets. Professional backgrounds in areas such as education, HR, law, finance, and marketing are key skills needed on our Trust Board, but softer skills, such as negotiation, problem solving, and leadership, would also be great additions. Trustees must be able to confidently support and challenge the leadership of the Central Team and our schools, and must have the time to fully commit to the role.

We believe that diverse Trust Boards lead to better decision making in the interests of the whole Trust community, and, therefore, we are keen to improve the diversity of our Board across all protected characteristics, as well as background and experience.

Discovery Educational Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. The Trustee role is subject to an enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service, and a character reference.

## Governance Structure Chart



## Trustee Person Specification

The Department for Education (DfE) provides extensive guidance on the role of governance in academy trusts and has stipulated that those involved in governance should be:

- Committed:** Devoting the required time and energy to the role and ambitious to achieve best possible outcomes for young people. Prepared to give time, skills and knowledge to developing themselves and others in order to create highly effective governance.
- Confident:** Of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations, to express their opinion and to play an active role on the board.
- Curious:** Possessing an enquiring mind and an analytical approach and understanding the value of meaningful questioning.
- Collaborative:** Prepared to listen to and work in partnership with others and understanding the importance of building strong working relationships within the board and with executive leaders, staff, parents and carers, pupils/students, the local community and employers.
- Critical:** Understanding the value of critical friendship which enables both challenge and support, and self-reflective, pursuing learning and development opportunities to improve their own and whole board effectiveness.
- Creative:** Able to challenge conventional wisdom and be open-minded about new approaches to problem-solving; recognising the value of innovation and creative thinking to organisational development and success.

The following characteristics, knowledge, and experiences (or commitment to gain them) would be advantageous to the role of Trustee of DET:

- a high level of understanding or interest in education;
- a commitment to the values and principles of DET;
- strong business and financial acumen;
- experience of committee work;
- highly developed interpersonal and communication skills;
- ability to understand complex strategic issues, critically assess, analyse and resolve difficult problems;
- emotionally intelligent with sound, independent judgement, courage, common sense and diplomacy;
- politically astute, with the ability to grasp relevant issues and understand relationships between interested parties;
- clear understanding, and acceptance, of the legal duties, liabilities and responsibilities of trustees;
- sound knowledge of charity governance, and sufficient time and commitment to fulfil the role;

- resilience;
- ability to listen to and welcome alternative opinions and experiences;
- flexibility in thinking; and
- a desire to implement the highest standards of governance.