



DISCOVERY
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

Member Recruitment Pack

Advertisement

Discovery Educational Trust – South Essex – Recruiting for Members

We are looking for three new Members to join us.

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

Members act as guardians of governance, sitting at the top of the Trust's organisational structure and holding the Trust Board to account for effective performance.

We welcome applications from people from the wider world of education, or from public, private or charitable organisations, who have a passionate belief in the power of education to transform life chances.

Our Trust currently comprises four very different schools – one in Southend and three in Brentwood. A further primary school in Brentwood is set to join in late 2023. Expansion of our secondary school base is also anticipated in the coming years.

For an informal conversation about the role, or to apply, please contact Mr. Dave Smith, Member (dsmith@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 four very different schools, three of which (Chase High School in Southend and Larchwood Primary School and St. Martin's School in Brentwood) have been a part of the Trust for a number of years and a fourth (Hogarth Primary School in Brentwood) that joined on 1 September 2023. There is another Brentwood Primary School (Kelvedon Hatch Community Primary School) set to join the Trust in late 2023.

The Trust has a combined pupil roll of 3,542, a staff of circa 540 and a combined budget of circa £18m. Our schools are supported by a strong Central Trust team.

Our vision is to improve the life chances of our pupils, and 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, maximizing their achievements: academic, creative, sporting and social. We aim for each of our schools to become the school of choice within their local community, and to ensure that all of our pupils are fully prepared to seize the opportunities of the rapidly changing world, and become active and responsible global citizens.

The Role

Members provide independent oversight of the work of the Trust Board. They should assure themselves that the governance of the Trust is effective, and that the Trustees are acting in accordance with the Trust's charitable objectives. The Members must use their powers to step in if governance is failing. This role enables professionals to use skills and experience gained throughout their career to help the Trust improve the life chances of young people. All roles are pro bono.

Meetings for Members take place once per term, i.e., three times each academic year. The AGM is held in person in December at one of DET's three schools. The other two meetings are held virtually. Members are supported by our Governance Professional (clerk), who provides advice on governance legislation and procedural matters.

There are no specific qualifications needed to be a Member. A governance structure should be diverse and comprised of people with different skillsets and backgrounds. Professional experience in areas such as education, HR, law, finance, and marketing would benefit the Trust, but softer skills, such as negotiation, problem solving, and leadership, would also be great additions. Members must be confident in their support and challenge of the Trust Board, and must have the time to fully commit to the role.

Member Role Description

Overall Purpose

This Role Description should be read in conjunction with the [Discovery Educational Trust \(DET\) Articles of Association \(the "Articles"\)](#) and its [Scheme of Delegation](#).

The Members of DET (formerly Brentwood Academies Trust (BAT)) are the guardians of the governance of DET. This means that they sit at the top of the governance structure, and that their role is discrete. They are tasked with assessing if the Trust Board (TB) is performing well and that the purpose of DET and its charitable objects are being fulfilled.

Members do not need regular business meetings or committees. DET includes the responsibilities of Members in its Scheme of Delegation (SoD), thereby clarifying that they are part of the governance structure, and what governance functions they perform.

Members are not exclusive to Academy Trusts – most charitable companies have Members because of the requirements of the Companies Act 2006. As all Academy Trusts are set up as charitable companies, they must have Members.

In effect, the Members sign to say that they wish to form a company. The first Members are the signatories to the Memorandum of Association, drawn up when BAT was formed. These Members also agreed BAT's first Articles.

The Members are the final stage in the process of changing the Articles. The Articles describe how DET is governed, including how many Members can be appointed and by whom, their voting rights etc.

A register of the current members is held at St Martin's House, St. Martin's School, Hanging Hill Lane, Brentwood, Essex, CM13 2HG.

While Members hold the TB to account for the effective governance of DET, the Members themselves have a minimal role in the actual running of DET. It is the Trustees, not the Members, who are DET's key decision makers. However, there are critical decisions that sit with the Members, especially if DET should fail or be at risk of failing.

Members of Academy Trusts are safeguarding publicly funded community resources.

Members judge "success" against how much the Trustees are doing to achieve the charitable objects of the charity. Members have an Annual General Meeting (AGM) at which they can express their views and, depending on the Articles, can vote on certain key issues, such as remuneration policies. Members do not have any responsibility for the day-to-day running of DET.

One of the Members' key responsibilities is the appointment of Trustees. If DET is not achieving its purpose, the Members must consider if this is because the TB is failing to carry out its three core governance functions:

- Ensuring clarity of the vision, ethos and strategic direction.
- Holding the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and the Headteachers (HTs) to account for the educational performance of the Schools and its pupils, and the effective and efficient performance management of staff.
- Overseeing the financial performance of the Schools and ensuring that its money is well spent.

If the Members conclude that the TB is not doing this, the Members must remove Trustees.

In accordance with the Articles, employees of DET are not permitted to be Members.

Member Responsibilities/Duties

In accordance with the Department for Education's (DfE) [Academy Trust Governance – Structures and Role Descriptors](#) (October 2020), the role of Members in the running of DET is minimal and one of oversight: "Members play a limited but crucial role in safeguarding academy trust governance. While they must ensure they do not stray into undertaking the Academy Trustees' role, they should assure themselves that the governance of the trust is effective, that Academy Trustees are acting in accordance with the trust's charitable object(s) and that they, the Members, use their powers to step in if governance is failing".

The TB, not the Members, is responsible for delivering the three core governance functions and for conducting the "business of the trust".

Sign the Memorandum and Articles of Association

The first duty of the original Members, when forming BAT, was to sign the Memorandum of Association and agree the first Articles.

From this point on, Members retain responsibility for the existence and constitution of DET, as well as some very specific and integral tasks. As Members agreed the first iteration of the Articles, they retain responsibility for these going forward.

Determine the Name of the Trust

Members retain the power to change DET's name, which they must do via a special resolution.

Appoint and Remove Members and Trustees

The Articles detail how Members are recruited and replaced, which is a responsibility of the Members. As well as appointing other Members, Members can also appoint some Trustees and have the power to remove all Trustees.

Appoint and Remove the Auditors

Members appoint independent auditors, who certify whether the accounts present a true and fair view of DET's financial performance and position. A contract between DET and the auditors must be set out in writing, but includes the right for the Members to remove an auditor at any time. The decision to remove an auditor requires a majority vote from the Members, who need to give their reasons for the removal and present these to the TB. The TB then needs to advise the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Receive a Copy of the Annual Report and Accounts

Whilst it is the TB that signs-off the annual report and accounts, it is considered best practice for the report and accounts to be presented to Members at the AGM.

Ensure the Success of DET

Members have responsibility for ensuring that DET's charitable objective "to advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom" is being met. This means that Members must focus on:-

- Outcomes – are the pupils in DET making expected progress and reaching the required levels of attainment?

- Financial oversight – is DET spending public money wisely?

The annual report and accounts include a Governance Statement, to which the Members must pay particular attention. The statement must include details of the TB’s composition and what Trustees have done to review and develop the governance structure. The report also includes an assessment of DET’s governance, incorporating a review of the composition of the TB in terms of skills, effectiveness, leadership and impact. By including the self-review of the TB, Members are provided with an overview of how well the TB thinks it is meeting DET’s charitable objective and the Members are able to use this to help confirm that the TB is carrying out its role effectively.

In attempting to ensure the success of DET, the Members may, by special resolution, issue direction to the TB to take a specific action.

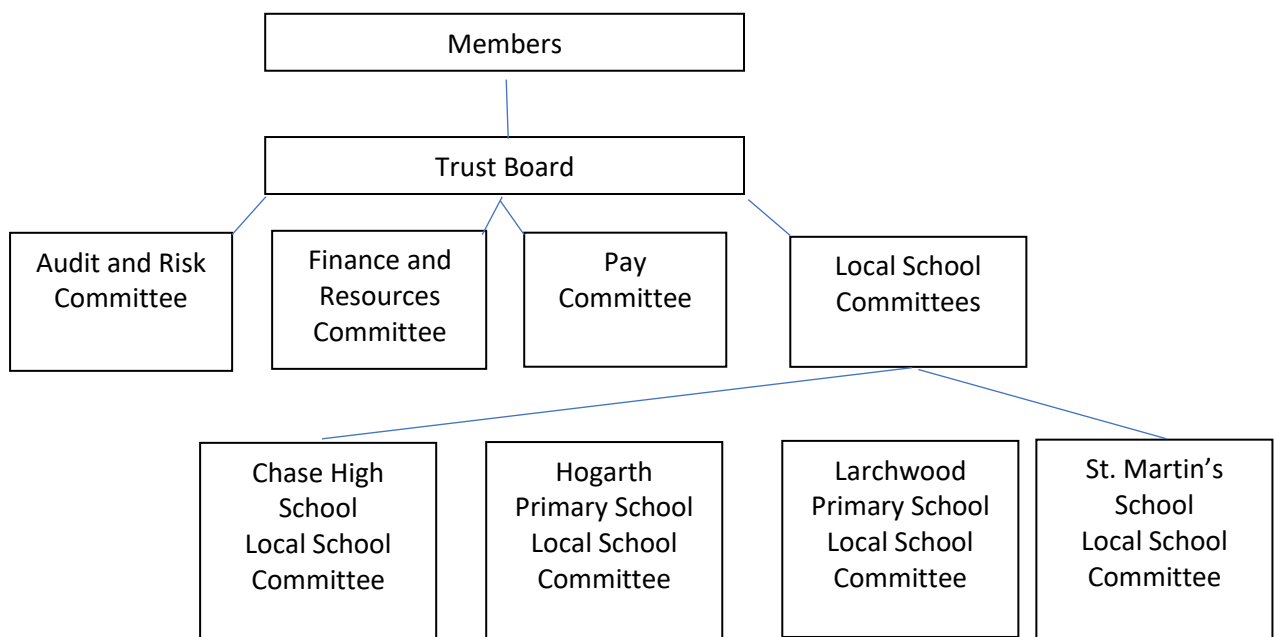
Attend the Annual General Meeting

In accordance with the Articles, DET is required to hold an AGM each DET financial year and within 15 calendar months of the last AGM. An AGM is only quorate if a minimum of two Members attend. Note that it is the TB that calls an AGM and not the Members.

Dissolve DET

If DET should fail, it is the responsibility of the Members (in conjunction with the DfE), to dissolve it. DET is a charitable company limited by guarantee. In the event that DET becomes insolvent, and, in accordance with the Articles, each Member undertakes to contribute such amount as may be required (not exceeding £10) to DET’s assets if it should be wound up while they are a Member (or within one year after they cease to be a Member), for payment of DET’s debts and liabilities before they cease to be a Member, and of the costs, charges and expenses of winding up, and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributors among themselves.

Governance Structure Chart



Member Person Specification

In addition to the legal duties, the Department for Education (DfE) provides various guidance on the role of governance in academy trusts including *A Competency Framework for Governance*, which states that all 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 Member 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 Members;

- 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.