
Induction policy for new schools joining the Trust

Rationale

This policy sets out the agreed considerations and processes of the Trust Board which will ensure that any new schools joining our Trust understand their role and position in doing so, how processes of due diligence and information sharing will be carried out, and how the Trust Board will support and develop new Trustees when a new school joins.

As Southport Learning Trust develops and grows over time, it will be essential to do so in a way that is in harmony with our vision and values and in a way that does not jeopardise our future success and stability. Regard will always be given by members and Trustees to the risks and benefits of any expansion in the number of schools in the Trust.

Induction of a new school

When an application is made to join the Trust, the Trust Board will assess the probable impact of the new school joining. This will involve meeting with the senior leadership team and the governing body of the school.

Subject to permission granted from the Department for Education (DfE) the Trust Board will meet to approve a new school joining in principle, and will launch the formal assessment.

Due Diligence

An applicant school being considered for part of the Southport Learning Trust, will be subject to professional scrutiny in the following areas:

- Financial Position
- Historic attainment and trends
- Views of parents and the local community
- Current assessment of the schools' performance
- Leadership and Governance Capacity
- Asset Condition
- Risks and mitigating factors

This scrutiny will be carried out by our solicitors, currently Browne Jacobsen, and our Central Team led by the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director for Business and Finance.

A formal report will then be provided back to the Trust Board and the Governing Body of the school, sharing the outcomes of the due diligence. The report may include actions that must be undertaken by the school if they want to proceed with joining the Trust.

Proceeding to conversion

Upon a successful recommendation for progression to conversion, and the awarding of an Academy order from the DfE, the relevant processes to support the conversion will ensue. It is the expectation that any school joining Southport Learning Trust will utilise the existing expertise and consultancy provided by the Trust Board's solicitors, accountants etc. The Senior Executive Leader and the Chief Finance Officer will provide support to the school in this period to support the process of conversion, communicating progress within this back to the Trust Board. Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors will meet as per an agreed calendar to support this process at local level.

Induction of new Trustees to the board

The DfE believes effective governance at all levels is based on six key features:

- Strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy.
- Accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance.
- People with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity.
- Structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements.
- Evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance

The Southport Learning Trust believes that for the Trust to be successful, strong linkage between the Trustees and the Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) is essential. To achieve this, the Chair of Governors of the LGB is normally invited to be on the Trust board. Prospective Trustees must demonstrate that they have the required personal qualities and pre-requisite skills for joining the Trust Board. This may be ascertained through the use of a skills audit or interview.

The Trust Board also recognises that principles and personal attributes that individuals bring to the Trust board and our LGBs are important. All those involved in governance should be:

- Committed – devoting the required time to the role
- Confident – of an independent mind, able to lead and contribute to courageous conversations
- Curious – an enquiring mind and analytical approach
- Challenging – providing appropriate challenge to the status quo, not taking information at face value
- Collaborative – prepared to listen and work in partnership with others
- Critical – critical friendship which enables both challenge and support
- Creative – able to challenge convention wisdom and be open-minded

New members of the Trust Board are given a full and comprehensive induction. Within this they must read and understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to the important public duty they hold. A list of these can be found below:

- Code of Conduct For Trustees at Southport Learning Trust
- [Academy's Trust Handbook](#)
- [Governance Handbook](#)
- [Articles of Association](#) and [Funding Agreement](#)
- [CC3: the essential Trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do.](#)
- [21 Questions for Mat Boards](#)
- [7 Principles of Public Life](#)

All members of the Trust Board are accountable and responsible for all the decisions made. All schools joining Southport Learning Trust must operate within the powers and authority delegated to them via the Scheme of Delegation.

Throughout the conversion process and beyond

As part of the induction process and ongoing schedule of evaluation and improvement, the Trustees will be involved in the following activities which will form part of the Trust board's cycle for continual improvement:

- Agreeing and formulating the plans for medium and long-term development of the Trust and how they build capacity within their Trust and their schools.
- Continually evaluating the needs and development challenges for all the schools within the Trust, irrespective of current performance levels.
- Determining how the Trust will contribute to wider system improvement and develop and retain good links with other MATs, teaching schools and a wide range of stakeholders.
- Ensuring there is sufficient expertise to oversee the Trust's financial operation.
- Carrying out financial planning which is integrated into the Trust's overall strategy for its schools.
- Ensuring the Trust's vision remains deliverable and resilient to operational changes in income, such as changes in pupil numbers or characteristics or the implications of the introduction of a national funding formula.
- Making sure that there are robust contingency plans in place, with clear triggers for enacting these plans.

Risk Management

The Trust Board will ensure that Southport Learning Trust and any new schools have effective procedures in place to identify, monitor and mitigate at both school and Trust level.

A robust risk register is maintained, which encompasses a range of challenges. Risk management is not a box-ticking exercise. Management of risks will be achieved in the following ways:

- The Trust's Scheme of Delegation makes clear what risks are managed at what level, and ensures that no issues are unassigned.
- The Trust regularly evaluates the methods it uses to manage risk, and recognises these may need to change as the Trust grows
- The Trust has made a balanced assessment of the risks that expansion might pose to its existing schools, and ensures these risks are kept visible and managed.
- The Trust has access to appropriate due diligence expertise to ensure clear visibility to the benefits and risks related to a school joining.
- The Trust ensures it has capacity to manage the estate for which it is responsible.

Appointments to the Trust Board

The Trust Board is structured as per the Articles of Association. Any new schools joining the Trust will understand the representation at Trust Board level available to them. Any new Trustees must possess the requisite skills and demonstrate the ability to meet the expectations of the Code of Conduct and other above-mentioned documents.

Training and Professional Development

All Trustees and members will access training which will support them in fulfilling their public duties, as determined by the needs of the board and individuals. The Trust has membership of the National Governor's Association and training can be accessed through the Learning Links online modules. To support the local context, the Trust has membership of Sefton Governor Training package. The Trust Governance Professional would signpost Trustees to the training. All training is logged on Governor Hub, our Governance IT platform.

Post Conversion Policies

Post conversion the new joining school will be asked to adhere to key Trust Policies such as Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Performance Management, Whistleblowing, and Financial based policies in the first instance. These are supported by the Scheme of Delegation which describes the authorities each school will have. These documents will be shared as part of the induction package, and can be found on our website.

Systems

New schools joining will be offered the support of schools already within the Trust for the implementation and management of new processes, such as our PS Financials package, ARBOR management Information System, Microsoft IT system and any other processes that may be pertinent. This will be organised by the Executive Director of Business and Finance with the individual Head Teachers.

Support for Staff

Times of change can be challenging for staff, especially if it feels there is more work to be done as an academy. Established Southport Learning Trust schools will support new joining schools by “buddying up” key staff as a first point of support. In addition to this, support will be increased in the first year after conversion for new tasks, such as the month-end returns the school has to do.

We believe that by providing an adequate level of support at the start, we will help schools to achieve the benefits of our systems and processes more quickly. Peer to peer support for office staff and individual school Head Teachers is essential in the early stages post conversion. Southport Learning Trust is committed to putting this level of support in place for all schools that join.

Cost of conversion

Funding to assist with the costs of conversion is available from the DFE for maintained schools. The grant of £25,000 can be used for:

- Obtaining legal advice
- Costs associated with software licences
- HR/TUPE advice
- Re-branding etc

The Trust may also be able to access funding from the DFE’s Trust Capacity Fund for centralising processes, training, staffing and specialist advice.

Linked documents to support induction

- Southport Learning Trust Scheme of Delegation
- Southport Learning Trust Structure Chart
- Southport Learning Trust Central Fund