

Introduction

This is the first in a series of articles aimed at enhancing governance across the Southport Learning Trust.

We believe that the benefits of the levels of governance within the Trust will be best delivered when the structure is well understood and can be challenged and improved.

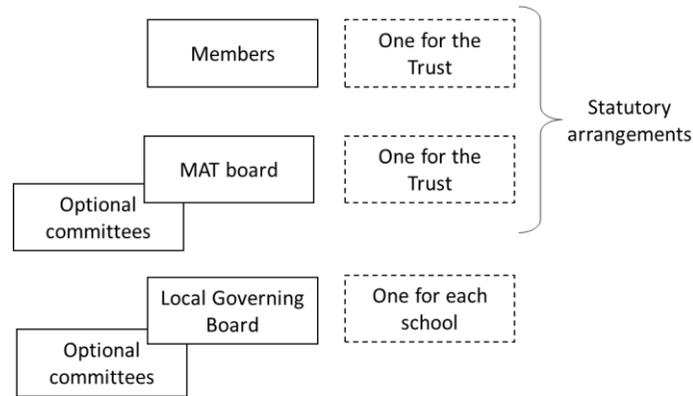
The arrangements have been considered and designed to deliver high value to the schools and across the Trust. Working together within this framework will allow us to provide the support that governors and trustees are relied on to deliver. It will also allow us to improve the arrangements as the Trust matures and grows.

These articles will explore various aspects of governance within the Southport Learning Trust, and are an opportunity for you to raise questions and have them addressed in future editions.

These are some of the planned articles:

- The scheme of delegation in detail, exploring each category (finance, employment, and operations) and why the delegation is as it is.
- The autonomy of the schools as part of the Trust, and how this links with the Trust overall.
- Value of being an LGB governor within the MAT, including value for the school such as robust panels and opportunities for mentoring.
- Ofsted, examining findings and recommendations from inspections that may have relevance to the Southport Learning Trust.

What is the structure of the Southport Learning Trust governance?



From a day-to-day perspective, you can ignore the Members.

Their role becomes visible if the other governance arrangements fail, and serious problems arise.

Statutory arrangements

From a statutory point of view, the authority for the Trust belongs with the MAT board (the trustees), as that is the lowest level of governance required by the government.

The trustees believe that there are powerful advantages in having a local level of governance with the close attention the Headteacher and LGB can provide, and the familiarity with the school pressures that they can be aware of.

The various levels of governance

If you imagine a business, say a retail empire or a hotel chain, the MAT board is the equivalent of the headquarters, and the schools are the customer facing divisions within the company such as the shops or hotels.

To continue the analogy, the Members can be equated to the shareholders; they are not involved in the running of the business, but will hold the board of directors to account for overall performance.

Naturally, the headquarters must have a level of authority over the divisions, and you would expect to see some commonality across the company. Equally, to be effective, the divisions must have the authority to run the day-to-day business they are responsible for.

Delegation of responsibilities

For the schools to function, the MAT board delegates responsibilities, and these are described in the Scheme of Delegation, which is available on the Southport Learning Trust website. It is essential that you are familiar with this document, and that you refer to it to ensure you are working within your authority.

It is also important that Headteachers and LGBs work up to their authority, with support if required.

For example, the MAT board do not expect to be asked to make decisions that have been delegated to the Headteacher or LGB.

Who is on the MAT board?

The MAT board has these members.

- The CEO of the Trust
- The Executive Director of the Trust
- Three co-opted trustees
- The Chairs of Governors of the schools in the trust
- Two parent trustees
- Two staff trustees

The reasoning behind our MAT board design is to have good representation across the key stakeholders, with the addition of skilled individuals who are independent.

You can read the biographies of the trustees on the Southport Learning Trust website. As the trustees are also directors of the Southport Learning Trust, there are further details in the annual report which is also available on the Trust website.

Who is on the school boards?

There is some flexibility by school, however the board will be a mix of people, as in the MAT board, and with the same aim of ensuring representation from stakeholders, along with some independence.

- The Headteacher
- Co-opted governors
- Staff governors
- Parent governors

It is a statutory requirement that the full names of all governors are published on the school website along with details of any possible conflict of interest. It is also necessary to publish attendance records for LGB meetings.

What are the relative roles of the MAT board and the LGBs?

As mentioned above, the Southport Learning Trust is one organisation, just in the same way that a corporation or a company is one organisation.

The main purposes of trustees, are these:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.

- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff.
- Overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance.

You will recognise these as the same items that guided you when you were a full governing body.

There are various drivers for deciding what to delegate, and to whom:

1. To put the decision at the most effective level to make the right choice, where the necessary information is most readily available, and well understood.
2. To ensure that the LGBs and the Headteachers have the authority to do their job.
3. To ensure that the MAT board add value when they are involved.

The main categories of delegation are:

- Financial
- Employment
- Operations

The next article will explore the Scheme of Delegation in detail. If you have any questions or comments on any aspect of governance, or would like to suggest an article, please send an email to:

governance@southportlearningtrust.org

Website

<https://www.southportlearningtrust.org/>



Enhancing Governance

Introduction

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