

Local Academy Board Handbook 2021-2022

Introduction

On transfer into the Birmingham Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust there will be a variety of governance models within our schools. For those schools who were previously stand-alone academies their previous model would have involved governors being directors of the company and directly responsible for the finances and provision within the schools. For those who were local authority, some of these responsibilities remained with the local authority.

On transfer into BDMAT the previous governing body is re-defined as a Local Academy Board to distinguish that a change has occurred; this is because, as with any MAT the ultimate responsibility now rests with the main board of directors – the current directors on the board can be located at <https://bdmatschools.com/staff-department/directors/>. Local academy boards are committees of the main board of directors.

This handbook has been developed to support LAB chairs and clerks. If the answer to any query that you have isn't here then please contact Michele Fullwood (Head of School Support) at m.fullwood@bdiat.org.uk

Further details about governance across our Trust can be located in our Governance Plan, which should be read in conjunction with this handbook; this can be located at <https://bdiat.org.uk/documents/governance-plan-policy/>

The role of Local Academy Boards

LABs have a number of key roles in both a strategic and operational manner; some of these may be undertaken by the full board, others delegated to either a standing committee, a role specific group or an individual governor, all of which will report back to the full board. These roles include:

Vision and values

- For our church schools, ensuring that they preserve, develop and promote the Christian distinctiveness of the school, working closely with Church of England representatives;
- Monitoring the implementation of BDMAT's vision of 'life in its fullness for all', 'success for all' and 'positive well-being for all' and the Church of England's vision of education that allows for the development of wisdom, knowledge and skills; promotes dignity and respect; values community and living well together; and pupils having hope and aspiration;

- Monitoring the implementation of the school's own vision and aims, ensuring they are in sympathy with those of the BDMAT and in our Church of England schools the Church of England.
- Undertaking learning walks on a regular basis to ensure that the BDMAT and school's ethos is being promoted (including Christian ethos in our church schools),

Safeguarding and health and safety

- Liaise with the BDMAT Head of School Support, who oversees safeguarding across the Trust to ensure that there are no gaps in oversight for the school's safeguarding mechanisms
- Ensuring all Governors receive annual update training from a designated safeguarding leader at the school, including knowledge of PREVENT;
- Ensuring that the safeguarding governor receives more detailed training on a regular basis from the local safeguarding board;
- At least termly, analyse the school's data regarding number of pupils at risk and referrals made to Social Care for patterns and potential concerns;
- LABs should receive, discuss and challenge leaders annually on their section 175 audit return to the safeguarding board and the BDMAT safeguarding audit;
- Governors should termly check on progress towards all amber and red issues identified in the BDMAT safeguarding audit
- Ensuring that the school has in place an Educational Visits Co-ordinator who is adequately trained and approve any educational visits that involve residentials, medium to high risks visits, and all visits in the proximity of water. Where required request additional guidance from outside agencies;
- Ensuring that leaders have in place effective risk assessments for the school and out of school activities;

Risk management

- Monitoring the school's specific risks and evaluating progress towards the school risk register at each main LAB meeting;

Financial probity

- Ensuring that governors and school leaders comply with the latest version of the Academies Handbook issued by the Department for Education;
- Receiving regular finance reports from the Central Team and use this information to guide discussions regarding the allocation of resources, and inputting to the development of the annual budget;
- Monitoring the spending of Pupil Premium, Sports Premium and Catch-up Premium to ensure that these restricted funds are having an impact, and ensuring the school's website accurately reflects the position regarding these funds;

Staff appointments and staff management

- Appointing all staff (with the exception of the headteacher and deputy, which is in partnership with the CEO), and ensuring their performance supported by school leaders. Governors should follow the correct BDMAT procedures for these;
- Monitoring the school's staff sickness and absence policy – meeting with staff as required when 'triggers' are reached;

School improvement

- Ensuring that the school improvement plan, once approved by the BDMAT Director of School Improvement is implemented and has impact;
- Ensuring that statutory requirements are being made regarding the support offered to SEND pupils, that they are having impact and that the school's SEN statement on its website is accurate;
- Receiving regular reports from the headteacher regarding the quality of teaching, monitoring improvements and reporting any concerns that you have to the CEO if you feel that the quality of teaching is not improving;
- Monitoring the school's curriculum statement on its website. Ensuring that it clearly identifies what children will learn and the skills they will develop and that it is guided by an 'intent' that aligns with the school's and BDMAT's visions and values;
- Set targets for pupil attendance for the whole school and vulnerable groups (SEND, pupil premium and other specific school vulnerable groups e.g. EAL) and

monitor progress toward these targets; monitor authorised and unauthorised pupil leave in term time;

Pupil admissions

- Acting as the admission body, on behalf of BDMAT;
- Annually review the school's over subscription criteria, making any suggested amendments to the BDMAT Board of Directors.

Dispute management and resolution

- Dealing with complaints, disciplinary and grievance issues at the school in line with policies;
- Where necessary, issuing banning notices to parents or warning letters where their conduct on the premises is not acceptable;

Pupil behaviour

- Administering exclusion panels to hear all permanent exclusions and where required, fixed term exclusions (in line with regulations);
- Undertaking learning walks on a regular basis to ensure that the conduct of pupils is good and that the school provides a suitable learning environment;

Relationship with the Central Team

- Reporting any significant concerns to the BDMAT Central Team;
- Challenging the BDMAT Central Team if the services / support being provided by the BDMAT Central Team are not meeting the school's requirements;

Headteacher support and challenge

- Providing effective pastoral support for the headteacher – seeking additional assistance when it is felt that the headteacher requires this;
- Supporting the CEO / Director of School Improvement in monitoring and assessing the performance of the headteacher (this will involve the chair of governors, CEO and an additional governor);

Governor training

- Ensuring that an effective training programme is in place for governors and that an annual skills audit of all governors is undertaken to identify future training and gaps in the LAB's skills set;

Stakeholder and community engagement

- Regularly consulting with pupils, parents and staff regarding the school;

- Act as a link between the school, BDMAT and the local community – ensuring that the school is playing an active role with its local community, including other schools;
- Ensure that there is an effective and mutually productive relationship between the school, the church (church schools only) and, where appropriate, other local faith organisations.

Policies

- Review and monitor school specific policies that are not covered by generic BDMAT policies including safeguarding (which must be based on the annual BDMAT model policy) and subject specific policies.

Transferring from governing body to LAB governor

When schools transfer into BDMAT, governors will need to apply to continue being a LAB governor within a BDMAT school. This is a simple process and the form for this can be located in appendix 11.

Terms of office

Governors will normally serve four-year terms. On joining BDMAT any remaining terms of office will transfer with each governor into the LAB. For example, if a governor was appointed in Sept 2019 and the school joined BDMAT in Sept 2020 the governor would remain in post until Sept 2023. On transfer, governors will be asked to complete a transfer form, stating that they wish to transfer as a governor and agreeing to abide by BDMAT's code of practice (see appendix 1).

Governor conduct

Appendix 1 includes the code of practice for governors, including reference to the conduct that governors are expected to follow. It is a requirement of BDMAT that this is signed annually and that the clerk keeps a record on site of the signed copies (this can be completed via Governor Hub). Where there are issues with a governor's conduct these should be brought to the attention of the chair of governors; for issues related to the chair of governors these should be referred to the CEO. Following an investigation, the chair of governors in consultation with the CEO will decide if the governor has broken the code of conduct; they will then decide if the governor should be removed from post or issued with a warning / guidance note. If the complaint refers to the chair of governors, once the investigation has concluded the CEO will consult with the Chair of BDMAT regarding the next steps.

Roles of governors

Each LAB should have the following on its board:

Chair (appointed by the board of directors)
Vice Chair (selected annually by the LAB)
Special Educational Needs / Looked After Children Governor
Safeguarding Governor
Premium Funding Governor

Clerking

Each LAB requires a clerk to record its meetings and ensure that procedures are adhered to. A model job description and person specification for a clerk to governor can be located in appendix 2. In the absence of the clerk, neither the chair nor the headteacher should be asked to clerk the meeting.

Agendas for meetings should be sent out to all governors on the LAB / committee 7 clear days before the meeting using the BDMAT template (appendix 3). In order to ensure consistency across the Trust, some agenda items are set by the BDMAT Central Team for each meeting – this allows for accurate and effective reporting on issues at the same time of year to our main board. LABs will supplement the agendas with their own local agenda items.

The minutes of the meeting should be recorded on appendix 4. Once the draft minutes have been approved by the chair of the board / committee, a set should be emailed directly to the Head of School Support at m.fullwood@bdmat.org.uk

Frequency of meetings

Recently the majority of LABs within BDMAT have moved to having a full meeting each half term with no additional committees. If the LAB continues to have committee meetings then a full board meeting might only be required once per term. Governors should be mindful of the number of meetings that they hold outside of normal work hours and the additional pressure that this places on school leaders.

Timing of meetings

Ideally, governor meetings involving school staff should take place during school hours but BDMAT understands that this is often difficult for governors. Where meetings have to be held outside of normal work hours the following should be followed:

- Arrangements should be put in place by governors to ensure that the headteacher is not left alone at the end of the meeting to lock-up etc;

- The meetings should be no longer than 2 ½ hours in duration.
- Should aim to not proceed beyond 8pm.

Scheme of delegation / remits

LABs are required to follow the latest scheme of delegation which is available on the BDMAT website. The current scheme of delegation can also be located in appendix 5. This scheme of delegation acts as the 'remit' for the LAB. If LABs establish any additional committees they will need to develop a remit for that committee and seek approval from the full LAB board and the CEO.

Governor composition on LABs

It is important that Local Academy Boards remain representative of the communities they serve, their Christian foundation (for our church schools) and in some cases their historical charitable foundation. Therefore, schools should ensure that the following are represented on their LABs:

Foundation governors Within BDMAT there are currently two types of foundation governor: those appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education and those appointed by a charitable foundation:

Those appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education: for church schools previously designated as Voluntary Aided (VA), greater than 50% should be appointed to preserve and develop the religious character of your school and to promote Christian values governors and the number of Christian foundation governors must out number other governors by at least 2 governors; for church schools previously designated Voluntary Controlled, no more than 25% of governors should perform this same role. This does not necessarily mean that these governors attend Church of England churches, but they should be committed to promoting our Christian values and upholding the distinctive religious character of our schools. Such governors will need approval from the Diocesan Board of Education to be classed as a foundation governor.

Those appointed by a charitable foundation: for those schools with an historical charitable foundation, where the Trust has a lease with an organisation other than the church e.g. The Nethersole Trust and the Lady Katherine Leveson Foundation. This will normally be one governor to represent the charitable foundation. These governors are appointed by the charitable foundation and are approved by the CEO.

Parents (a minimum of 2 per school), elected by the parent body.

Staff (two members, both elected by staff, one to represent the teaching staff and the other to represent support staff). Staff governors should not be members of the school's senior leadership team.

In addition, LABs may increase the number of governors, whilst ensuring that the Christian faith is still proportionately represented through appointments of the following:

Community governors – local academy boards may appoint additional governors that represent the community the school serves.

Co-opted governors – governors that bring a specific skill set to the LAB that is currently missing.

The headteacher and the incumbent (church schools only) will be *ex officio* governors; both can elect not to serve as governors on appointment or at any other point during their tenure by informing the chair of the LAB. Headteachers will still have a duty to report and attend all governor meetings as required but within a non-governor capacity and no ability to vote on matters. The incumbent can delegate their role to another Church of England Parochial Church Council member, but the role will remain classed as '*ex officio*'.

As the local authority has no control over the school there should be no local authority governors on the board; chairs could request to the board of directors that previously designated LA governors remain on the board but as co-opted / community members etc but they would cease to represent the LA.

Further details of each school's specific composition of governors can be located in the school's Instrument of Government.

Extension of governors' terms of office

All governors serve four-year terms (with the exception of the chair of LAB which is undefined). At the end of the four-year term the body that appointed the governor (foundation, PCC, LAB or diocese etc) should be consulted by the chair of governors to discuss if they wish to re appoint the governor or select another governor to represent them. For staff and parent governors once the four-year term has concluded there should be an election for either their continued representation or replacement.

Appointment of governors

Prior to taking-up post, all new governors will need approval from the BDMAT Central Team and the Church of England, Birmingham. Appendix 6 contains the pro-forma for requesting approval from these bodies.

Appointment of chairs of local academy board

On the resignation of a chair of governors the CEO should be informed. The CEO will then liaise with the out-going chair of LAB to identify who may be best placed to take on the post (which may on occasions be someone from outside the LAB). The CEO will then put

forward a recommend name to the BDMAT Board of Directors for their consideration in being chair.

Resignation of governors

All resignations of governors should be brought to the attention of the LAB and CEO.

Governor complaints

If individual governors have complaints regarding any issue these would normally be dealt with in an informal manner by the chair of governors. If the governor feels that they cannot speak to the chair or they do not feel that the chair of governors dealt with their complaint sufficiently they should follow the Staff and LAB Governor Complaints Policy (see appendix 7); this policy should also be used when the Local Academy Board has a complaint against either a member of the BDMAT Central Team or the BDMAT Board of Directors.

Policies

The high majority of policies that LABs require will be MAT wide policies developed by BDMAT (see appendix 8 for a list of current policies in place across BDMAT). There is no requirement for LABs to formally approve BDMAT policies. There are also likely to be a set of policies that transferred through TUPE that apply specifically to the school and other policies that relate to your school only e.g. safeguarding and health and safety. Where a policy is school specific, the LAB should have in place a timetable for reviewing these policies – normally on a three-year cycle with the exception of some key policies such as safeguarding and health and safety, which should be annual reviews. LAB governors should be aware that the writing and reviewing of policies is time consuming for staff and therefore governors should consider the necessity of any policies they are requesting.

Attendance at LAB meetings

The clerk to governors will keep a log of all attendance of governors at LAB meetings. It is important for the smooth running of schools that governors aim to attend all meetings where they are required. If a governor does not attend and does not submit apologies they should be recorded as such; where apologies are given the LAB will need to consider if to accept the apologies. If a governor has not attended the last 6 months without apologies the chair may write to the CEO and request that the governor be removed; this decision will rest with the CEO, who will consult with the Deputy Director of Education, Church of England Birmingham for all Christian faith representatives or the Foundation for such governors.

Quorate rules

LABs should operate a quoracy of 1/3 of the governors on the LAB / committee (rounded-up to the nearest whole number), or a minimum of three governors for the meeting to be classed as quorate. If the meeting is not quorate it can still take place to receive information but cannot act / vote on any matters. In circumstances where a decision is extremely urgent the chair can undertake a vote and then request a decision from absent governors via a written resolution.

Auditing skills

It is imperative that our local academy boards have a wide range of skills in order to effectively support and challenge our school leaders. We therefore expect that once a year an audit of skills will be completed. LABs should use the National Governors Association model, which can be located at appendix 9.

Executive Governing Bodies

When a school is designated as a BDMAT Priority school the CEO will decide if issues regarding leadership mean that the local academy board is suspended and replaced with an Executive Governing Body (EGB). When an EGB is in place it will normally be chaired by a member of the BDMAT Executive Team. Some or all of the governors on the local academy board are also likely to be asked to be members of the EGB. The EGB will undertake all of the duties of the LAB. The CEO will determine when the LAB should be reinstated.

Constitutions

Unlike with a governing body for a stand-alone academy or a maintained school there is no requirement to have a constitution, articles or instrument for the LAB, as these documents refer to the main board of BDMAT only. Each clerk should keep a record of all governors' terms of office and the body that they represent (appendix 10 should be used to record this and a copy should be sent to the Head of School Support following any revisions). Each school though will need to abide by the Instrument of Government approved by the BDMAT Board of Directors for their school.

Governor safeguarding checks

It is a requirement that on appointment the following checks are undertaken on all governors, these should then be recorded on the school's Single Central Record:

- Evidence of identity
- DBS clearance

- Section 128 clearance
- Reference of good character

In addition, the LAB chair and headteacher should informally meet with any prospective governors (including parents and staff) to:

- Outline how the LAB operates
- Ensure that the prospective candidate is happy to support the BDMAT Code of Conduct
- Ensure the prospective candidate will support the Christian ethos of the school and the Trust
- Ensure that their motivations for being a governor are good and that there are no safeguarding concerns
- That they meet the national requirements for being a governor

Support for governors

At times being a governor can be challenging and emotional; you are dealing with the lives of both staff and pupils and have to juggle the fine line of supporting and challenging whilst being there as a pastoral support for the headteacher. If governors need support they should initially contact the Chair of Governors; Chairs of Governors should consult with the CEO for their own support. All governors have access to the BDMAT Health Assured scheme – the Head of School Support can provide governors with details regarding this.

Link directors

Each school is allocated a link director. Link directors will aim to visit their school(s) once per year. The aim of this is to ensure that directors are averse in school issues. The link director is not the school's 'advocate' on the main board. Link directors for 2021-2022 are:

Birmingham Central	Link director
Holy Trinity	Kabir Khan
St Clement's	Heidi Leung
St George's Edgbaston	Geoff Harley-Mason
St George's Newtown	Heidi Leung
St Michael's Handsworth	Barrie Scott

Birmingham South	Link director
CCSA	TBC (21 st Oct)
Hawkesley	Jan Smart
Nonsuch	Nick Pilditch
Quinton	Nigel Oram
St Michael's Bartley Green	Barrie Scott
Warwickshire North	Link director
Austrey	Christine Arrowsmith
Nethersole	Christine Arrowsmith
Newton Regis	Christine Arrowsmith
Warton	Christine Arrowsmith
Woodside	Steven Skakel
Solihull and Warwickshire Central	Link director
Bentley Heath	Steven Skakel
Coleshill	Olivia Jenkins
Lady Katherine Leveson	Steven Skakel
St Margaret's	Geoff Harley-Mason

Team Around the School Committee meetings

From September 2021 the BDMAT Executive will be introducing Team Around the School Committee (TASC) meetings for all schools – previously these had only involved our priority schools. The number of meetings will be dependent upon the school's BDMAT designation, as follows:

Priority schools – every half-term

Semi-supported schools – twice per year (first meeting before February half-term and the second meeting after February half-term)

Self-sustaining schools – once per year

Invitees to TASC meetings

- The CEO
- Chair of the LAB or their representative from the LAB if not available e.g. vice chair
- Director of School Improvement
- Head of School Finance (or their representative such as the School Finance Partner)
- Headteacher
- Deputy Headteacher

Post meeting note distribution

Notes of the meeting will be distributed to all the above with the addition of the Diocesan Director of Education and the school's link director.

Chairing of TASC Meetings and note taking

Meetings will be chaired by the CEO and a member of the BDMAT Central Team will take notes (not minutes: if school wish to have verbatim minutes etc they will need to ask one of their own admin team to provide this).

Agenda for meetings

There will be a set agenda for each meeting, distributed ahead of the meeting. The agenda will broadly follow the pattern below:

- Welcome and introductions
- Prayers / reflections
- Verbal report from the school leaders on the progress towards achieving targets identified at the last TASC meeting
- Verbal report from the school leaders on the progress towards the previous section 8 / section 5 inspection key issues
- Predictions for end-of-year assessments
- Verbal report from the chair of LAB on the progress school is making
- Targets to be achieved by the next TASC meeting
- Support required from the BDMAT Central Team / other BDMAT schools is ensuring targets are achieved
- Risk assessment:
 - Major risks that could prevent the school being judged as good at its next inspection
 - Judgement on the most likely outcome if the school was inspected tomorrow
 - Judgement on the most likely outcome of the next inspection
 - Risk level associated with not achieving good
 - Judgement by the CEO on the rate of progress being made by school leaders to ensure the school is good at its next inspection

- BDMAT designation (priority / semi-supported / self-sustaining)
- Any other business
- Date of next meeting

Action plan

The notes of meeting will be contained within an action plan – this will identify targets, actions and support to be achieved before the next meeting. The format of the plan will be based on the following:

Judgements

Most likely outcome if the school was inspected tomorrow	
Most likely outcome of the next inspection	
Risk associated with not gaining good at the next inspection	High High-medium Medium Medium-low Low
Judgement by the CEO on the rate of progress made by school leaders to ensure the school is good at its next inspection since the last TASC meeting	Good progress (<i>progress is being made and impact is now clearly being evidenced</i>) Satisfactory progress (<i>progress is being made but is yet to have impact</i>) Slow progress (<i>some progress has been made but leaders did not move at pace after the last meeting</i>) Inadequate progress (<i>very few targets / actions have been achieved since the last TASC meeting</i>)
BDMAT school designation	

Actions

Key issue	Target to achieve by next TASC meeting	Actions for school before next TASC meeting (with dates if appropriate)	Actions for Central Team before the next TASC meeting	Role of LAB

List of appendices

Appendix 1 – BDMAT governor code of conduct – *on Governor Hub*

Appendix 2 – Clerk to governor's model job description and person specification– *on Governor Hub*

Appendix 3 – BDMAT standardised agenda format – *on Governor Hub*

Appendix 4 – BDMAT standardised minute format – *on Governor Hub*

Appendix 5 – Current scheme of delegation [Scheme-of-Delegation-November-2020-FINAL.pdf \(bdmatschools.com\)](#)

Appendix 6 – Approval form for new governor appointment – *on Governor Hub*

Appendix 7 – Local Academy Board and Governors Complaints policy [Complaints-Procedure-2020-2023.pdf \(bdmatschools.com\)](#)

Appendix 8 – Policy status – *on Governor Hub*

<https://app.governorhub.com/document/5fc7d0b262b7d01ed04eda2f/view>

Appendix 9 – NGA Governor skills audit [Governing Board Self-Review | Skills audit and skills matrix - National Governance Association \(nga.org.uk\)](#)

Appendix 10 – Governing body composition record – *on Governor Hub*

Appendix 11 – Transferring from a governing body governor to a LAB governor – *on Governor Hub*