



Tees Valley Education Trust

Trustees' Handbook September 2024

Our Mission is to deliver educational excellence for all our children by fostering a culture of creativity, curiosity, care, courage and commitment.



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1 Welcome to TVED (Chair's Introduction)

As chair of the trust board, I would like to welcome you as trustees to TVED at the start of the 2024/25 academic year. If you have been a trustee for some time, welcome back and thank you for your service. If you are new to TVED and, especially, if you are new to the role of academy trust trustee, you are very welcome and thank you for volunteering to spend your time and expertise to support the trust.

This is a particularly special year for TVED. 2024/25 marks our tenth anniversary as a multi-academy trust (MAT). Since being first established, we have continued to grow and develop and this year marks some particularly exciting developments and projects with a particular focus on promoting inclusion and ensuring that all of our pupils are given the support they and their families need to ensure they can achieve and succeed.

As trustees we have a key role to ensure the ongoing development and success of TVED, putting the children and families we serve at the heart and centre of what we do. We work with the trust's CEO and senior leadership team to shape and frame TVED's vision, mission and strategic priorities. We need to understand how the trust works and how, as trustees, we should be both supporting trust and academy senior leaders and holding them to account.

Having signed up to TVED's vision, mission and values when we became trustees, in our role we need, with our TVED colleagues, to understand and live this so it comes the reality in all our academies and across the trust in everything we do and how we work with each other.

This handbook has been designed to support all trustees to understand the way TVED's governance systems and structures work, as well as our expectations of the way in which trustees should work with each other and with TVED colleagues. The handbook is reviewed annually to keep up to date and ensure that all trustees are supported in their governance role.

Suzanne Hague, chair of TVED's trust board.

2. About TVED

Tees Valley Education is a multi-academy trust (MAT) and sponsor that originally comprised three academies across Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. The two founding academies, Brambles and Pennyman, formed a dedicated partnership in 2010 underpinned by a passionately shared commitment to improve outcomes for all children and their communities. Since we started to work together, a number of significant events led to the formation of the trust in September 2015 and the MAT's ongoing development.

- Brambles and Pennyman were two of the first primary schools in Middlesbrough to become academies in September 2012.
- Since 2012, both academies have also worked closely with Dormanstown Academy in Redcar and Cleveland.
- TVED was established as a MAT in September 2015, comprising Brambles, Dormanstown and Pennyman academies.

- Wilton Primary Academy joined TVED in September 2018.
- In April 2017, the DfE approved TVED's application to set up a primary special academy as part of the free schools programme. Discovery Special Academy opened in temporary accommodation in September 2018 and moved to its new building at Sandy Flatts Lane in Middlesbrough in September 2022. Discovery has continued to grow in numbers, as during 2021 the academy was given permission from DfE to include a nursery (2 and 3 year olds) and secondary provision (11 to 16 year olds). The temporary nursery building was installed in September 2023 and the secondary building is on track to be completed by mid-October 2024. The secondary children will remain in high quality temporary accommodation until the secondary extension has been completed. This development programme means that the Discovery site at Sandy Flatts Lane will accommodate a purpose built 'all-through' special academy for children from 2 – 16.
- In line with the trust's growth strategy, TVED is committed to welcoming additional schools into the trust where there is a shared vision and clear capacity to support school improvement for all academies in the trust.

Within the trust, there is a wealth of knowledge and expertise across both mainstream and specialist provision. We pride ourselves on our inclusivity: currently, we have over 1200 mainstream places and 224 specialist and unit places across the Trust's academies. This includes the specialist provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) at Discovery Special Academy and units, located at Dormanstown and Pennyman, that offer places to pupils with a range of moderate, complex and, in some cases, significant medical, physical, learning, sensory and communication needs.

We also offer a range of outreach for both mainstream and specialist settings as well as leadership development and individual curriculum areas as a recognised outreach centre, providing programmes recommended by the local authority and at a regional level.

As a group, we have constantly demonstrated our commitment and ability to nurture, share and encourage outstanding educational practice in a range of settings. We firmly believe that excellence happens, not in isolated moments, but when we strive to achieve it on a daily basis: an aspiration we have for all.

3. The PLACE project

The PLACE project is an exciting new development that starts in 2024/25.

It stands for:

- **People:** enhancing expertise in diagnosing and tackling education disadvantage through continued professional development (CPD) and resources.
- **Learning:** establishing community hubs in Teesside to promote research to help to understand and address child poverty and its impact on children's learning.
- **Community Engagement:** creating local projects such as the TVED magazine to provide cost-of-living support and a programme to connect classrooms with industry, fostering meaningful community engagement.

The project is at the core of TVED's commitment to foster holistic growth in education and communities. Through PLACE, TVED aims to become a regional and national leader in addressing education inequality through policy, professional development and community engagement.

The ongoing development of the PLACE project sits at the heart of TVED's strategic vision and planning. Its development and evidence of impact will be a key driver of the trust's strategic direction of travel over the next five years if not beyond.

It is therefore important that all trustees develop their understanding of the project and its impact on the trust in general and in each TVED academy. The board will receive regular reports on the project's progress and hold this development to account.

4 TVED 2023/24 governance work plan

TVEd's 2024/25 governance work plan is available on the [Trusts website](#).

5 TVED vision, mission and values

TVED's vision is *to transform children's life changes* by providing outstanding learning environments where the highest levels of aspiration and achievement for all pupils are the norm.

Through our mission to deliver educational excellence for all of our children by fostering a culture of creativity, curiosity, care, courage and commitment.

The trust's ethos is fully inclusive by recognising and celebrating the achievements of all pupils and staff, underpinned by a commitment to work effectively with a wide range of agencies and partners. TVEd has a culture of co-production and growth, where professionals and agencies from a variety of settings and organisations work together to support the holistic development of all pupils. This outstanding inclusive practice has been the primary driver for the evolution of TVEd's provision and infrastructure.

This is underpinned by the trusts diamond standards:

'We are all diamonds: none of us start off polished, but with the right environment, time, support and development we become brilliant.'

These standards are:

- **Commitment:** To be dedicated, hard working and always try our best
- **Courage:** To be adventurous, bold and brave
- **Curiosity:** To be inquisitive, excited and explore
- **Care:** To be kind to ourselves, each other and our communities
- **Creativity:** To use our talents to imagine, innovate and inspire.

Whilst signing up to the trust's vision and values, each academy is encouraged to develop its own individual culture and ethos, reflecting the particular needs and interests of the pupils who attend each school and the communities they serve.

The trust is fully committed to continuing this way of working and enhancing the lives of all the pupils in its care in order to enable them to secure the best possible life chances as they move through their educational career and life.



6 Trustee code of conduct

The trust board has agreed that, on appointment, all trustees are asked to sign up to the [National Governors' Association \(NGA\) code of conduct](#).

This code sets out the expectations and commitment required from TVEd trustees and committee members in order for the trust board to properly carry out its work within the MAT and the community. This code should be read in conjunction with the relevant law and the trust's articles of association and agreed scheme of delegation.

7 Trust board principles

Collectively, the TVEd trust board and committees espouse the principles [Charity Governance Code](#).

8 Organisational purpose

The board is clear about the trust's aims, vision and values and ensures these are being delivered effectively and sustainably.

The trust is led by an effective board that provides strategic leadership in line with the trust's aims and values. The DfE's most recent (2023) multi-academy trusts good practice guidance, Academy Trust Handbook and the descriptors of quality trusts sets out 5 pillars of academy trust quality, these include:

1. High-quality and inclusive education
2. School improvement
3. Workforce
4. Finance and operations
5. Governance and leadership

They are outlined in [appendix 2](#).

9 The board creates a positive culture

- The Trust sets a positive culture through:
 - act in the best interests of the trust
 - be open and ensure transparency about their decisions and actions
 - be prepared to explain their decisions and actions
- As an effective board it also sets and safeguards high expectations for the trust's community, including for:
 - the expected behaviours, progress and attainment of all children and young people
 - the conduct and professionalism of its staff, the board and its committee members including any local academy committees
 - achieves the best outcomes for the trust's children and young people through a full understanding of the needs of children, young people, staff, parents, carers and local communities
 - ensures all systems, processes and policies operate with the best interests of children and young people at their centre

- The trust's culture actively promote the fundamental [British values](#) of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs.
- The trust also lives the Seven Principles of Public Life through the [academy trust governance code: principle 3 - integrity](#).

10.1 Decision making, risk and control

The board makes sure that its decision-making processes are informed, rigorous and timely and that effective delegation, control and risk assessment and management systems are set up and monitored. The board has ultimate responsibility of the Trust's strategic risk register, it has delegated risks for close monitoring and oversight to its standards and audit, risk and finance committees. It is within these committees to report exceptions to board and at least annually for trust board to review the whole strategic risk register. In addition, academies manage and report their risks for scrutiny to termly challenge board meetings as a minimum.

In addition, the [Academy Trust Governance Guide](#) also sets the expectations of Boards on how accountability and assurance help to deliver a trust's strategy.

10.2 Board effectiveness

The purpose of the Trust's governance is to provide:

- strategic leadership
- accountability and assurance
- strategic engagement

The board has collective accountability and strategic responsibility for the trust. It has a focus on ensuring the trust delivers an excellent education to pupils while maintaining effective financial management and **must** ensure compliance with:

- the trust's charitable objects
- regulatory, contractual and statutory requirements
- their funding agreement

The board also has:

- strategic and statutory responsibility for [safeguarding](#) and [special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\)](#) arrangements within (and across) the academy trust ensuring the promotion of pupil welfare and for keeping their estates safe and well-maintained
- a role in making sure that it delivers its commitment to other schools and academies.

It therefore utilises the [Academy Trust Governance Code](#) to inform its approach on Board Effectiveness (principle 5). For the Board to work as an effective team, it uses an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills, experience, and backgrounds to make informed decisions.

The board and executive leadership team anchor the trust's strategy in the needs of its academies, the communities it serves and the wider educational system in line with its charitable objects.

The board oversees strategic relationships with external stakeholders, including the involvement of parents, schools and communities so that decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement.

10.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion is an integral part of the board’s strategy and development plans. Equality, diversity and inclusion are championed as well as embedded throughout the Trust and all of the Trust’s academies have achieved the ‘Inclusion Quality Mark’, with Discovery Special Academy achieving ‘Centre of Excellence’ under the Inclusion Quality Mark.

The trusts abides by the [Equality Act 2010](#) and is fully aware of its responsibilities under the Equality Act.

Under the [Public sector equality duty \(PSED\)](#) the trust has due regard to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

DfE’s [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](#) provides detailed information for academies, including on general exceptions and special issues for some protected characteristics.

10.4 Transparency and accountability

The board leads the organisation in being transparent and accountable. It does this through have clear and ambitious KPI’s which are regularly reviewed and monitored by trust board and the relevant committee. In addition, the trust makes visible the academy statistics, benchmarking data, integrated curriculum financial planning (ICFP) and demographics, which are used to inform the trust strategies, risk management, plans and policies. The trust is transparent in its work unless there is good reason for it not to be.

11 TVED members, trustees, committee members

Members	
Catherine Devereux	
Richard Hodges	
Norma Newell	
Sister Anita Smith	
Paul Swalwell	
Trust board	
Trustee	Lead responsibility
Suzanne Hague	Chair
Adrian Dougherty	Vice Chair, Education and Link for Pupil Premium
Anne Cowley	Link for Finance and audit



Helen Dudiak	Education and Link for school standards
Richard Hodges	Compliance, Link for health and safety, risk management and Safeguarding
Katrina Morley	TVED CEO
Carolyn Roberts, September 2024	Education with lead for SEND
Andy Taylor	Education/school improvement
Chris Zarraga	Link for Education Policy

Trust board committee membership

Trust Board	Audit, Risk and Finance Committee
Chair – Suzanne Hague Adrian Dougherty Anne Cowley Helen Dudiak Richard Hodges Katrina Morley Carolyn Roberts, September 2024 Andy Taylor Chris Zarraga	Chair – Richard Hodges Anne Cowley Katrina Morley, CEO (reports to Committee) Chris Zarraga Trust staff Emma Chawner, Director of Finance, Resources and Operations Jennifer Duncan, Deputy CEO and Executive Headteacher (Discovery Special Academy) Emma Lowe, Director for Inclusion and SEND Resources
Standards Committee	Challenge board
Chair - Adrian Dougherty Helen Dudiak Katrina Morley, CEO (reports to Committee) Andy Taylor Carolyn Roberts, September 2024 Trust Staff Jennifer Duncan, Deputy CEO and Executive Headteacher (Discovery Special Academy) Helen Hall or Joanne Stuart, Director for Improvement and Standards Sean Harris, Director for PLACE	Independent chair – Carol White, former NLG 1 trustee - Andy Taylor (External special school leader as required especially to challenge Discovery Special Academy) Jennifer Duncan, Deputy CEO and Executive Headteacher (Discovery Special Academy) Academy headteachers in attendance Chairs of local academy committees invited as observers Deputy headteachers to attend as part of leadership training programme. Trust Directors for domain specific expertise
Local academy committee	



Headteacher appoints chair
Head teacher
Up to 2 x parent, carer or individual with parental responsibilities governors
Staff governor
Up to 2 x Community governor

12 Governance terms of reference

12.1 Members

- Appoint trustees with the exception of the CEO who is, ex officio, a trustee.
- Approve changes to master funding agreement, trust articles of association and academy supplemental funding agreements.
- Receive annual auditor's report and appoints the external auditors.
- Meets once a year for an annual general meeting including receiving the auditor's report.
- Ensure effective governance of the trust.

12.2 TVED trust board and committees

Links to the terms of reference for the trust board and committees can be found below

- [Trust board](#)
- [Audit, risk and finance committee](#)
- [Pay review committee](#)
- [Standards Committee](#)
- [Challenge board](#)
- [Local academy committee](#)

12.3 Discipline committee

This committee is held with three trustees that are available to consider specific issues at an academy level e.g. admission and exclusion appeals.

13 Scheme of delegations

TVED's scheme of delegation is designed to:

- ensure the executive leadership is clear about the decisions for which the trust board remains responsible, which are delegated to a trust board trustee committee or to the CEO, executive headteachers, academy headteachers or heads of academy;
- ensure that the role of the executive leadership is fully understood throughout the MAT;
- promote a culture of honesty, transparency and accountability;
- identify responsibility for key strategic appointments and performance management (e.g. CEO, Deputy CEO, directors, executive head teachers, head teachers and heads of academy, deputy head teachers and deputy heads of academy);
- identify responsibility for policy and practice (trust/academy);
- identify responsibility for setting and management of each academy's budget;
- identify responsibility for assessing, managing and pre-empting risk in each academy and across the trust; and
- identify responsibility for pupils' outcomes and educational entitlement.



TVED has two documents that sets out the scheme of delegation for:

1. Governance and
2. Financial

Both scheme of delegations is founded on the principle that decisions should be made at the appropriate level of governance and not automatically referred to a higher level. This not only ensures the most effective way of working and rapid decision making but also ensures an appropriate referral hierarchy where this is required.

The scheme of delegation supports trust employees and trustees to clarify the key decisions for which they have responsibility and which should be referred to the appropriate committee, trust board or members.

Terms of reference for the trust board and all committees are reviewed annually together with the scheme of delegations. The board considers and approves recommended changes at its September meeting.

TVED's full scheme of delegation is available from the trust [website](#).

14 Trustees' annual work programme

The trust board and committee annual work programme can be viewed from the trust [website](#). While most of this work programme is generic and will be repeated annually unless otherwise indicated, in September each year, at its first meeting, the trust board reviews the work programme, identifies any workstreams that are specific to current priorities and ensures they are included and referred to the appropriate governance level for both scrutiny and decision making.

15 Policies and policy review

The trust board is responsible for reviewing and approving all trust policies. Usually, policies are reviewed every three years and will not require changes unless there have been changes in national policy or the trust wants to make changes. However, it is important that the trust has a review programme so that trustees can be confident that all policies are up to date and meet statutory requirements.

16 Trustee support and training

The trust board undertook an independent review of its governance arrangements in 2018/19 in addition, continually undertake skills audits to ensure the skills, knowledge and expertise is up to date and supports the strategic running of the board. This is already built into the trust board training and development programme (see below). Recent trustee appointments have strengthened the trusts governance arrangements, with expertise across:

- financial monitoring and strategic planning,
- risk management;
- business and enterprise; and
- building and capital planning.
-

Through its in-house training programme for trustees, TVEd ensures that trustees are fully supported to keep up to date with key national policy developments and expectations of governance. Individual

trustees are also supported to attend relevant local, regional and national training programmes for trustees. The trust subscribes to NGA, The School Bus and The Key and supports and encourages trustees to undertake appropriate on-line training such as safeguarding support programmes.

16.1 Induction programme for new trustees

At the first meeting in each academic year (September), the board reviews trustee roles and responsibilities, including committee membership and lead responsibility for the forthcoming year. The chair of the trust board and CEO meet with each trustee to agree their individual training needs. These are addressed through a combination of mentoring and coaching, support and training for all trustees and bespoke internal and external training to meet individual trustee needs, including the induction of new trustees and governors. Crucially, all members, trustees and LAC Chairs meet together in February and May each year to refresh and update their knowledge and understanding of current national education policy and practice and consider the implications for TVEd's strategic vision and direction.

The TVEd trustees' handbook is designed to help recently appointed trustees to familiarise themselves with the trust's vision, values and governance procedures. The handbook is reviewed and updated annually to ensure it is kept up to date.

16.2 Support and training for all trustees

Currently, all TVEd members and trustees attend an annual training day, usually scheduled for February and May each year in which members and the board are updated on national developments for trust governance expectations and requirements.

Trustees with lead responsibilities are supported by:

- regular briefings from the CEO and directors;
- briefings from externally commissioned consultants as appropriate;
- membership of the NGA, School Bus and The Key for governors and the associated briefings; and
- external governor training.

Resources

This document should be read in conjunction with:

[Academy Trust Governance Code](#)

[Academy Trust Handbook](#)

[TVEd Articles of Association](#)

[Annex A - Trust Quality Descriptors](#)

[The Independent School Standards](#)

[The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do](#)

[Trust partnerships: guidance for academy trusts and prospective joiners](#)

[Model code of conduct for trustees and trust boards](#)

[Model governing board code of conduct](#)

[The Equality Act 2010 and schools](#)