

FOOTSTEPS TRUST GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Footsteps Trust Academy is committed to maintaining effective governance and leadership arrangements that promote high standards of education, safeguarding, inclusion and accountability.

The Board of Trustees/Proprietor Body operates strategically, providing oversight, challenge and support, while delegating the day-to-day leadership and management of the Academy to the Principal and Senior Leadership Team.

As an Independent School and Alternative Provision, the Academy recognises that strong governance is essential to:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Delivering high-quality education.
- Ensuring effective use of resources.
- Meeting statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Supporting continuous school improvement.
- Promoting positive outcomes for all learners.

2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

This policy has regard to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026.
- Independent School Standards Regulations.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Companies Act 2006 (where applicable).
- Charity Commission guidance.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.
- Alternative Provision statutory guidance.

The Board recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that safeguarding governance must be embedded within all strategic decision-making.

3. Core Functions of Governance

The Board's core strategic functions are to:

Strategic Direction

- Set the Academy's vision, values and strategic priorities.
- Approve long-term improvement plans.
- Monitor implementation and impact.

Accountability

- Hold the Principal to account for educational performance.
- Monitor quality of education.
- Scrutinise student outcomes and progress.
- Monitor attendance, behaviour and destinations.

Financial Oversight

- Ensure financial resources are used effectively.
- Maintain financial sustainability.
- Ensure value for money.
- Monitor risks and compliance.

These remain the Board's primary responsibilities.

4. Safeguarding Governance

The Board will ensure that safeguarding remains a standing priority.

Trustees will:

- Receive safeguarding reports regularly.
- Review safeguarding effectiveness.
- Ensure compliance with KCSIE 2026.
- Monitor child protection arrangements.
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding training.
- Review safeguarding policies annually.
- Oversee filtering and monitoring arrangements.
- Ensure safer recruitment procedures are followed.
- Monitor allegations and low-level concerns processes.

The Board will identify a named Safeguarding Trustee to provide strategic oversight of safeguarding arrangements. This role does not replace operational safeguarding leadership carried out by the DSL.

5. Alternative Provision Responsibilities

As an Alternative Provision, Footsteps Trust Academy recognises additional responsibilities relating to:

- Vulnerable learners.
- Reintegration pathways.
- Attendance monitoring.
- Multi-agency working.
- Child Criminal Exploitation.
- Mental health and wellbeing.
- Post-16 progression.
- Commissioning arrangements.

Governors and Trustees will maintain oversight of these key areas and evaluate their effectiveness regularly.

6. The Role of the Board of Trustees

The Board acts at a strategic level and should not become involved in routine operational matters.

The Board will:

- Provide strategic leadership.
- Monitor policy implementation.
- Review performance information.
- Monitor safeguarding and wellbeing.
- Approve key policies.
- Monitor compliance.
- Support risk management.
- Monitor health and safety arrangements.

Trustees must provide challenge and support through informed scrutiny based on accurate information and evidence.

7. The Role of the Principal

The Principal has responsibility for:

- Day-to-day management of the Academy.
- Educational standards.
- Staffing.
- Curriculum delivery.
- Behaviour management.
- Operational safeguarding.

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- Budget implementation.
- Academy improvement activities.

The Principal is accountable to the Board for performance and operational effectiveness.

8. Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) supports the Principal by:

- Implementing strategic priorities.
- Monitoring quality of education.
- Leading safeguarding arrangements.
- Supporting staff development.
- Managing Academy operations.
- Ensuring compliance with statutory responsibilities.

SLT members will provide reports to the Board when required.

9. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will:

- Lead safeguarding practice.
- Advise staff on safeguarding matters.
- Coordinate referrals.
- Liaise with external agencies.
- Report safeguarding matters to senior leaders and Trustees.

The DSL must be supported by sufficient time, funding, training and resources to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

10. Delegation

The Board may delegate specific responsibilities to:

- Committees.
- Individual Trustees.
- Senior Leaders.

However, the Board retains overall accountability for all delegated functions.

A formal **Scheme of Delegation** will be maintained and reviewed annually.

Terms of Reference for committees will clearly identify:

- Scope of responsibility.
- Decision-making powers.
- Reporting arrangements.

11. The Chair of Trustees

The Chair is responsible for:

- Providing leadership to the Board.
- Promoting effective governance.
- Ensuring meetings are productive.
- Supporting succession planning.
- Ensuring appropriate trustee development.
- Facilitating constructive challenge.

The Chair will support but not replace executive leadership functions.

12. Trustee Skills and Development

Trustees should possess appropriate knowledge, skills and experience.

All Trustees will receive:

Induction

Including:

- Safeguarding.
- Governance responsibilities.
- Alternative Provision context.
- KCSIE requirements.
- Equality duties.

Continuing Development

Trustees will undertake regular training relating to:

- Safeguarding.
- Cyber security.
- SEND.
- Finance.
- Alternative Provision.
- Leadership and governance.

Training records will be maintained.

13. The Role of the Clerk

The Clerk plays a key role in the effectiveness of governance.

Responsibilities include:

- Meeting administration.
- Governance advice.
- Maintaining records.
- Supporting compliance.
- Recording decisions.
- Supporting policy review cycles.

The Clerk should be appropriately trained and supported.

14. Meetings and Decision-Making

The Board will:

- Meet regularly throughout the academic year.
- Receive papers in advance.
- Maintain accurate minutes.
- Record decisions clearly.

Trustees may attend meetings:

- In person.
- Via secure virtual arrangements.

Decision-making will be transparent, evidence-based and focused on the best interests of students.

15. Conflicts of Interest

Trustees must:

- Declare relevant interests.
- Update declarations annually.
- Declare conflicts during meetings.
- Withdraw from decision-making where appropriate.

A Register of Interests will be maintained and reviewed annually.

16. Risk Management

The Board will oversee strategic risk management including:

- Safeguarding risks.
- Financial risks.
- Cyber security risks.
- Operational risks.
- Reputational risks.
- Health and safety risks.

A risk register will be maintained and reviewed regularly.

17. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Board is committed to:

- Equality of opportunity.
- Diversity in leadership.
- Inclusive decision-making.
- Compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Trustees will monitor equality information and consider equality implications in strategic decisions.

18. Self-Evaluation and Governance Review

The Board will periodically review its:

- Effectiveness.
- Skills profile.
- Structure.
- Committee arrangements.
- Strategic impact.

Evaluation may include:

- Self-assessment.
- External review.
- Skills audits.
- Governance action planning.

19. Monitoring and Accountability

The Board will monitor:

- Academic outcomes.
- Attendance.
- Behaviour.
- Safeguarding.
- SEND provision.
- Post-16 destinations.
- Staff wellbeing.
- Financial performance.

Monitoring information will be used to challenge, support and improve Academy performance.

20. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner following:

- Legislative changes.
- Updates to KCSIE.
- Changes to governance arrangements.
- Significant organisational developments.