# Governance Strategy 2025-26

This strategy defines what 'governance' means for the Trust and outlines how governance is structured and organised as part of a whole-trust approach to improving standards.

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| **Version number** | 5 |
| **Consultation groups** | All governance tiers / Headteachers |
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| **Next review date** | July 2026 |
| **Applicable to** | Trust-wide |

Document History

| Version | Version Date | Author | Summary of Changes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **V1.0** | | Helen Stockill – Head of Governance | Document created |
| **V2.0** | 29 June 2017 | Head of Governance | Formal Board approval |
| **V2.1** | October 2017 | Head of Governance | Removed tables for cluster board and advisory board members names. |
| **V2.2** | 8.8.2018 | Head of Governance | Updated role of Trustees in line with Academies Financial Handbook. Updated role of cluster and advisory board to align with handbooks. |
| **V3.0** | June 2019 | Head of Governance | Cluster Board tier of governance removed. School Improvement Committee added. Minor clarifications in wording. Appendix 2 updated. Table of contents added. |
| **V3.1** | July 2020 | Head of Governance | Updated branding and logo. Minor edits to wording of AB role. Removed the detailed governance structure model. |
| **V3.2** | November 2020 | Head of Governance | Update to chairing arrangements and new vision added. |
| **V3.4** | August 2021 | Head of Governance | P&G committee removed. SEND Committee included. Some minor updates to wording. Senior leadership section updated. |
| **V3.5** | November 2021 | Head of Governance | Trustees updated |
| **V3.6** | December 2021 | Head of Governance | Trustees updated. Ruth Malkin added. Photos removed |
| **3.7** | March 2022 | Head of Governance | Trustees updated. |
| **3.8** | May 2022 | Head of Governance | Trustees updated. |
| **4.0** | June 2023 | Head of Governance | Committees, Senior Leadership, and principles of governance updated. Updates to wording. |
| **4.1** | August 2024 | Head of Governance | Trustees and Committee Membership updated. |
| **5** | July 2025 | Head of Governance & Corporate Services | Strategy Updated with new Members, Trustees and Senior Executive Team. AB meetings and relevant job title changes. Added new link roles |

Contents


1. Overview statement ..... 3
2. Our Vision and Values ..... 2
3. Discovery Governance Model ..... 3
4. Members ..... 4
5. Trust Board ..... 5
6. Senior Executive Team ..... 8
7. Advisory Board ..... 10
8. OFSTED ..... 12
9. School Risk Register ..... 12
10. Sources of Assurance ..... 13

Appendix 1 – Principles for Effective Governance ..... 14

Appendix 2: Accountability arrangements within the governance structure ..... 15

Appendix 3: Governance and accountability diagram ..... 18

1. Overview statement

*The purpose of governance is to provide confident **strategic leadership** and to create robust **accountability, oversight, and assurance** for educational and financial performance.*
*Department for Education*

Good governance is at the heart of delivering educational excellence. This strategy defines what 'governance' means for the Trust and outlines how governance is structured and organised as part of a whole-trust approach to improving standards.

Drawing on our own experience and DfE key features of effective governance this strategy is informed by a set of principles for effective governance which are set out in more detail in Appendix 1.



## 2. Our Vision and Values

### Discovery mission:

Our fundamental purpose is to ensure that all our pupils realise their potential.

### Discovery vision:

At Discovery Schools Academy Trust, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Our Vision is to cultivate a learning community where **Ambition** drives excellence, **Equity** ensures fairness and **Belonging** fosters connection.

We are committed to empowering all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have SEND, with an **equitable set of experiences and opportunities** to realise their full potential. Our schools are led by **highly skilled, passionate professionals** who are dedicated to preparing every child, academically and emotionally, for the next stage of their education and life.

As a Trust, we harness the **power of collaboration and scale** to deliver more than the sum of our parts. By leveraging our collective expertise and resources, we maximise opportunities, ensure value for money, and create a culture where every learner and educator feels seen, supported, and inspired to succeed.

### Discovery values

**Belonging**: We want everyone at Discovery to feel a strong sense of belonging.

**Equity**: We ensure accessibility and opportunity for everyone.

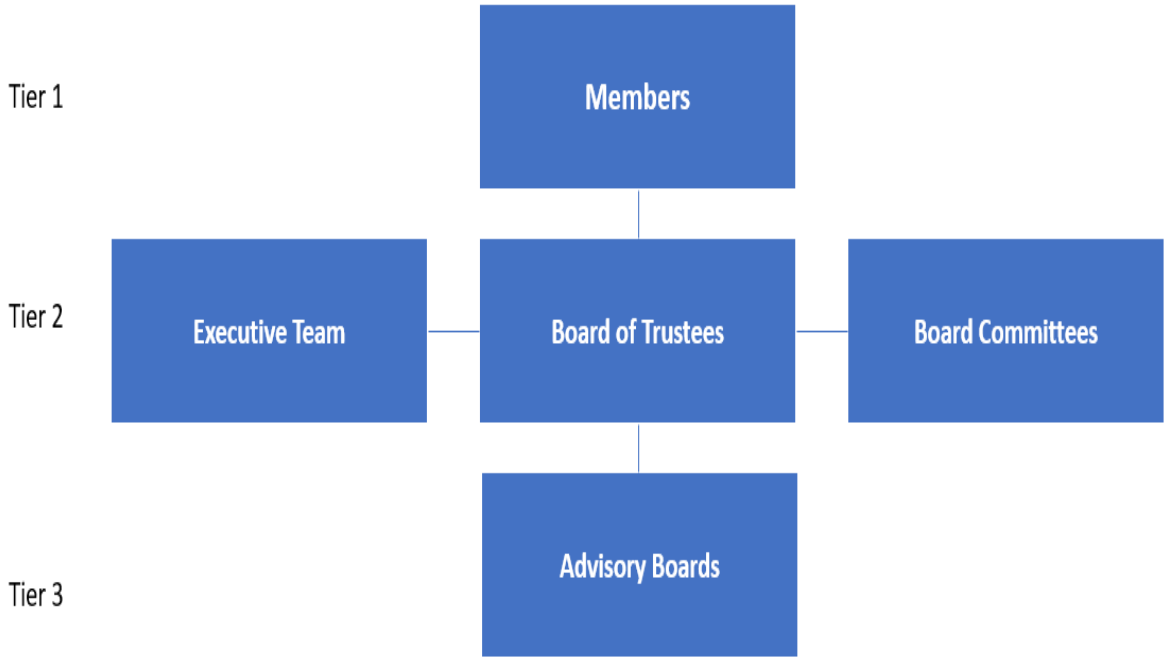
**Ambition**: We are highly ambitious for all Discovery pupils and colleagues.

## 3. Discovery Governance Model

In a multi-academy trust, a single trust is responsible for several schools. The nature of the Trust as a company running multiple schools means there are additional governance and management layers.

The Board of Trustees is the legal governing body and therefore have overall responsibility for the governance of the Trust. However, it does not perform this role alone and delegates functions across the governance structure, these are set out in the Scheme of Delegation which is available on the Trust website.

The governance model identifies three tiers of governance as shown in the diagram below and described in more detail within this strategy.



## 4. Members

As a charitable company limited by guarantee the Trust has Members who have a similar role to the shareholders in a company limited by shares. The Members are the 'guardians of the governance' of the Trust and ensure that the Trust acts within its charitable objects and values to achieve the vision.

Members have limited but significant powers, most notably they:

- Agree changes to the Articles of Association
- Appoint (and remove) Members
- Appoint (and remove) Trustees
- Appoint the Trust Auditors
- Direct Trustees to take a specific course of action

Current Members are:

- Carolyn Shoyer - Director of Education Leicester Diocese
- Rt Rev'd Saju Muthalaly
- Rev'd Richard Trethewey
- Richard Bettsworth – Chair of Trustees
- Robert Woolston

Members hold an Annual General Meeting where they review the appointments of the Board, the appointment of the external auditor and review the financial statements. In addition to this, Members will hold an additional meeting in the middle of the academic year and are invited to visit schools in the Trust and receive a regular update from the trust.

## 5. Trust Board

Trustees are charity trustees and company directors, as well as the governing body for all the schools within the Trust. The Trust Board is therefore the accountable body responsible for the performance of the Trust and its schools. The Trust Board has overall responsibility for:

a) Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos, and strategic direction.
b) Holding the Trust Leader and Trust Senior Leadership to account for the educational performance of the Trust.
c) Overseeing and ensuring effective financial performance.
d) Recruit the CEO under the direction of the Diocese of Leicester.

The Board is made up of 11 trustees each with an area of specialism:

### Appointing body: Members

**Lucy Welsford**
- Commercial and business specialist
- Appointed January 2022
- 4-year term of office

**Mihir Trivedi**
- Regulatory change specialist
- Appointed August 2021
- 4-year term of office
- Vice Chair

**Raj Tugnet**
- Business development & strategy specialist
- Appointed August 2021
- 4-year term of office
- Chair of Audit & Risk Committee

**Stephen Dixon-Mould**
- Human Resource**s** specialist
- Appointed January 2022
- 4-year term of office

**Gary Sims**
- Finance specialist
- Appointed March 2022
- 4-year term of office
- Chair of Resource Committee

**Shane Bray**
- Commercial and business specialist
- Appointed October 2020
- 3-year term of office
- Lead Trustee for Estates & H&S

**Elizabeth Needham**
- Independent School Advisor
- Appointed April 2025
- 4-year term of office
- Lead SEND Trustee

**Stuart Wilson**
- Secondary Education Specialist
- Appointed August 2025
- 4-year term of office

### Appointing body: Diocese of Leicester Education Trust

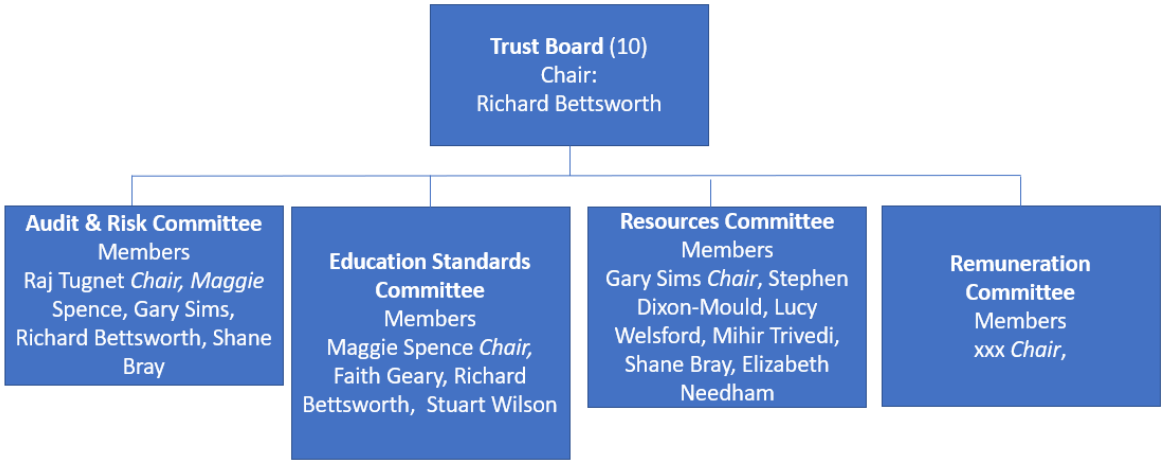
**Maggie Spence**
- Ethos & education specialist
- Appointed July 2021
- 4-year term of office
  Chair of the Education Standards Committee & Safeguarding lead

**Faith Geary**
- Transformational Change specialist
- Appointed July 2024
- 4-year term of office
- Member of Education Standards Committee

### Appointing body: Trustees

**Richard Bettsworth**
- PR specialist
- Appointed September 2020
- 3-year term of office
- Chair of the Board of Trustees

## Trust Board Structure and Committee Membership




## Organisation of the Trust Board

- The Trust Board elect a Chair annually. The Chair of the Board is Richard Bettsworth.
- The Trust Board is supported by the Director of Governance and Compliance and clerked by the Local Governance Manager.
- The full Board meets 5-6 times a year. Committees generally meet 4 times a year or as often as necessary.
- The Board is advised by the Trust Leader and members of the Central Executive Team.
- Trustees complete a register of their relevant personal and business interests, which is reviewed annually and published in summary on the Trust's website.
- Trustees complete a skills audit annually.
- Each trustee is linked to one or more school advisory board.
- Lead Trustees roles include:
    - Safeguarding: Maggie Spence
    - Estates/Health & Safety: Shane Bray
    - SEND: Elizabeth Needham
    - People Lead: Stephen Dixon-Mould

- Digital Strategy: Mihir Trivedi

## Board Committees

The work of the board is supported through 4 committees with delegated powers:

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|---|
| **Audit & Risk Committee**<br><br>The role of the Audit and Risk Committee is to have financial oversight and scrutiny of the Trust, ensuring good financial and risk management, effective internal controls and compliance with the Trust Funding Agreement, Academy Trust Handbook and Trust financial regulations. The Committee will provide assurance to the board on the adequacy of the trust's financial and other controls and management of risks. |
| **Education Standards Committee**<br><br>The role of the Education Standards Committee is to maintain an oversight of the Trust's strategy for curriculum, quality assurance, safeguarding and the standards and performance of all schools and phases within the Trust. |
| **Resources Committee (People and Finance)**<br><br>To provide the Board with assurance concerning all aspects of strategic workforce and organisational development. The Committee will maintain an oversight of the Trust's approach to remuneration, performance management, terms and conditions of employment and workforce related policy.<br>And<br>To provide the Board with financial oversight of the Trust, ensuring good financial management, effective internal controls and compliance with the Trust Funding Agreement, Academy Trust Handbook and Trust financial regulations. |
| **Remuneration Committee**<br>The Remuneration Committee are responsible for setting the framework for the pay of the wider trust executive team as well as the CEO. They must ensure that the pay and leadership structure is in keeping with the Nolan principles, is both affordable and sustainable in the long term, and is appropriate for the level of responsibility undertaken. |

Committee membership is agreed by the Board of Trustees annually. Each committee is made up of at least 3 Trustees and up to 2 co-opted members appointed for their skill and experience. Each committee generally meets four times a year prior to a main board meeting except for the remuneration committee, which meets at least once per year and then as required.

## 6. Executive Team

The Board has appointed officers to act as the Executive Team and act as agents on behalf of the Board. Current members include:

**Paul Stone**

- Trust Leader
- Accounting Officer

**Steve Orton**

- Chief Financial and Operating Officer
- CFO

**Rosalind Hopkins**

- Director of Specialist Provision

**Ben Solly**

- Director of Mainstream Education

**Mike Sanderson**

- Chief Technical Officer

Senior Leaders that also act as agents on behalf of the Board. Current members include:

**Louise Barber**

- Director of Operations

**Nicola Morton**

- Director of People

**Nathan Odom**

- Director of Estates and Place Planning

**Zack Minton**

- Head of Safeguarding

**Adam Lapidge**

- Information Governance Manager

The Executive Team are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the trust, identifying areas of development and formulating strategy to present to the Trust Board.

The Trust Leader has the delegated responsibility for the operation of the Trust, including the performance of the Trust's schools. As such, the Trust Leader is responsible for the performance management of the Director of each phase who are responsible for the performance management of the Headteachers.

The Board have appointed the Trust Leader as the Accounting Officer, with overall responsibility for the operation of the Trust's financial responsibilities. The Trust Leader must ensure that the organisation is run with financial effectiveness, stability, and probity, avoiding waste and securing value for money.

The Board have appointed the Chief Financial and Operating Officer as the Chief Financial Officer.

The Executive Team have a role in the oversight of the individual School Risk Registers, the Trust's 'tool' for the management and monitoring of strategic risk. See section on School Risk Registers.

Each school has an Advisory Board which provides local governance on behalf of the Board of Trustees. With detailed local understanding and experience, the Advisory Board's focus is on challenging and supporting the quality of provision and educational outcomes for pupils at a school level.

The Advisory Board has a key role in influencing the development of the school, providing a forum for discussion of strategy and policy matters to ensure the education delivered meets the needs of children locally.

The Advisory Board also provides a mechanism for ensuring that the Trust is provided with independent and objective views from the local community.

## Advisory Board responsibilities

The Advisory Board has a range of responsibilities which include:

- Supporting good governance of the school
- Safeguarding and promoting the values of the school, ensuring that the school continues to strongly demonstrate its distinctiveness
- Working in collaboration with the Headteacher to improve pupil achievement and well-being
- Maintaining a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school
- Contributing to the development of strategic priorities to promote school improvement
- Regularly reviewing data on achievement, quality of teaching, behaviour, and safeguarding
- Regularly monitoring the risk register and escalating concerns to the trustees
- Providing the Trust Board with the views of the local community and advising on local issues and risks they need to consider that affect the school
- Recommending to the Trust Board any developments or amendments to policies and procedures
- Ensuring there is local adaptation/adoption of Trust-wide policies
- Supporting a culture of effective engagement with the school's key stakeholders e.g. parents/carers, pupils and staff
- Representing the school at Ofsted inspections
- [Kibworth CofE and any other CofE School] to ensure a denominal inspection is carried out (SIAMS) and to help evidence the impact of the Christian vision on school performance

## Advisory Board membership

The membership of the Advisory Board is made up of parents, employees and individuals from the community that could add value. The Advisory Board is typically made up of between 6 to 9 members comprising:

- Minimum of two elected parents
- Minimum two appointed community representative
- One elected staff representative
- The Headteacher
- [Kibworth CE and any other CofE school] two foundation members

The skills, knowledge and experience members bring into the governance process is important in challenging the way their school operates, and how it anticipates and responds effectively to change. Efforts should be made to include individuals who reflect the diversity of the community served by the school.

Advisory Board meetings may also be attended by members of the Trust Board or Executive Team.

The Kibworth CofE and any other CofE school Advisory Board also includes an additional two foundation members appointed by the Diocese of Leicester Educational Trust.

Advisory Board members serve a three-year term of office.

## Advisory Board Committees

**Foundation and Community Committee**

All CofE Advisory Boards will operate a Foundation and Community Committee which will meet termly. The membership of this committee must include the foundation members appointed by the Diocese of Leicester Educational Trust. The role of the committee is to protect, promote and develop the Christian character and distinctiveness of the school in partnership with the church.

**Additional Committees**

The Trust acknowledges that from time to time an Advisory Board may require a committee/working party to look at specific issues. The formation of committees must be approved by the Trust.

Additional Meetings

The Trust hosts a chairs network meeting once a term, for all Chairs of our Advisory Boards, they also hold an annual conference for all Governance Community.

## AB Organisation

- The Advisory Board elects a Chair and Vice-Chair annually.
- The Advisory Board is clerked by the Trust Clerk.
- The Trust Clerk co-ordinates the agenda working with the Headteacher and AB Chair.

- The AB meets at least 3 times a year.
- The Advisory Board reports to the Board of Trustees through the chair's termly report.

## 7. OFSTED

During an OFSTED inspection, the quality of governance will impact on the leadership and management judgement. As part of the inspection visit the lead inspector should meet with those responsible for governance functions, this includes the following:

- Chair of the AB or their representative
- Director of Governance & Compliance
- Director of Phase or School Improvement Lead

Appendix 2 provides an overview of the accountability arrangements within the governance structure.

## 8. School Risk Register

The School Risk Register is the Trust's 'tool' for the management and monitoring of strategic risk. Headteachers are responsible for identifying the key risks to the delivery of educational excellence for the school and the key controls in place to manage the risk.

Each school's risk register is reviewed at scheduled points during the year by the Director of Phase and Trust Leader. Where the rate of improvement is insufficient a risk mitigation plan is created to secure rapid improvement.

The Advisory Board receives the risk register termly and is responsible for independent oversight. The Advisory Board will monitor and review progress and escalate concerns to the Trust Board or Executive Team through the Chairs report. Advisory Boards can recommend risks for inclusion in the risk register.

## 9. Sources of Assurance

The Trust Board typically gains its assurance from internal school, Trust and external sources which include but are not limited to:

| **Internal school** | **Trust** | **External** |
|---|---|---|
| Policies and procedures | Policies and procedures | Ofsted Reports |
| School self-evaluation | School performance data | Trust Peer Review |
| School Improvement Plan | Trust Leader Report | Annual Accounts |
| Advisory Board minutes and chair reports / Attending AB meetings | Peer Review | External Audit Reports |
| School Risk Register | Internal Audits | |
| Performance Management Review | Stakeholder Surveys | |
| School performance data | Safeguarding Audit | |
| Complaints data | Minutes of Board meetings | |
| Budget reports | Website Compliance Reporting | |
| School Effectiveness Reports | Corporate Risk Register | |
| | Strategy documents | |
| | Budget and forecast reports | |
| | KPIs Link to Trust Quality Pillars<br><br>Edurio Surveys | |

Appendix 1 – Principles for Effective Governance

1. **Strategic Leadership** that sets and champions vision, ethos, and strategy

**1a)** Setting direction, **1b**) culture, values, and ethos, **1c)** Decision making, **1d)** Collaborative working with stakeholders and partners, 1e) risk management

2. **Accountability** that drives up educational standards and financial performance.

**2a)** Educational improvement, **2b)** Rigorous analysis of data, **2c)** Financial frameworks and accountability, **2d)** Financial management and monitoring, **2e)** Staffing and performance management, **2f)** External accountability

3. **People** with the right skills, expertise, qualities, and capacity.

**3a)** Building an effective team

4. **Structures** that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

**4a)** Roles and responsibilities

5. **Compliance** with statutory and contractual requirements.

**5a)** Statutory and contractual requirements

6. **Evaluation** to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

**6a)** Managing self-review and personal skills, 6b) Managing and developing the board's effectiveness

Appendix 2: Accountability arrangements within the governance structure

| **Discovery Trust** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Governance Tier** | **Membership** | **Meetings** | **Responsibilities/Authorities** | **Reporting** | **References** |
| Members | • Signatories to the memorandum<br>• Chair of the Board | AGM | • To appoint/remove Trustees<br>• Receive financial statements and annual report<br>• To change the Articles<br>• To appoint external auditors | N/A | Articles of Association |
| Trust Board<br><br>Clerked by Local Governance Manger | • Up to 12 Trustees | 5-6 | • Determine the vision and strategic priorities for the MAT and agreeing the policy framework<br>• Ensure the quality of educational provision, overseeing standards and outcomes of academies<br>• Monitoring the performance of the schools across the Trust<br>• Ensuring appropriate governance and decision making<br>• Overseeing the Trust's finances and property<br>• Sign off company accounts and annual report<br>• Performance management of the TRUST LEADER<br>• Ensure that the Trust complies with all regulatory requirements (charity and company law Independent Schools Standards and the Funding Agreement) | Reports to Members at AGM on progress for the year and to present financial statements and annual report<br><br>Accountable to Secretary of State for Education through the Education Funding Agency and Regional Schools Commissioner | Articles of Association<br><br>Funding Agreement<br><br>Terms of Reference |
| Board Committees<br><br>Clerked by Local Governance | • 3 to 5 Trustees<br>• Up to 2 Co-opted members | 3 - 4 | • Delegated decision-making power as determined by the Trust Board from time to time | Reports back to the Trustees in advance of each Board meeting through | Terms of Reference<br><br>Scheme of Delegation |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manager or DOG&C | | | | approved minutes and chairs reports | Minutes and reports |
| Advisory Board<br><br>Clerked by Local Governance Manager | Up to 6 members:<br><br>• Headteacher<br>• Elected Staff<br>• 2 Elected Parents<br>• 2 Community | 4 | • Supporting good governance of the school<br>• Safeguarding and promoting the values of the school, ensuring that the school continues to strongly demonstrate its distinctiveness<br>• Working in collaboration with the Headteacher to improve pupil achievement and well-being<br>• Maintaining a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school<br>• Contributing to the development of strategic priorities to promote school improvement<br>• Regularly reviewing data on achievement, quality of teaching and behaviour and safety<br>• Regularly monitoring the risk register and escalating concerns to the trustees<br>• Providing the Trust Board with the views of the local community and advising on local issues and risks they need to consider that affect the school<br>• Recommending to the Trust Board any developments or amendments to policies and procedures<br>• To report to the Director of Governance & Compliance through the chairs report any recommendations for the Board or central services team to consider | Reports to the Board of Trustees through approved minutes and reports | Minutes<br><br>AB Report<br><br>Scheme of Delegation<br><br>Terms of Reference |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | • Ensuring there is local adaptation/adoption of Trust-wide policies<br>• Engagement with the school's key stakeholders e.g. parents/carers, pupils and staff<br>• [Kibworth CofE or any other CofE school] to ensure a denominal inspection is carried out (SIAMS) and to help evidence the impact of the Christian vision on school performance | | |

Appendix 3: Governance and accountability diagram

