

Guidance note

Specimen induction pack for academy trustees/directors

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Specimen induction pack for academy trustees/directors

Introduction

This ICSA guidance note is aimed at trustees/directors/governors of academy trust schools and can be adapted for any size of academy to reflect good practice for each organisation's needs. This document, and others in the series, should provide sufficient detail for trustees/directors/governors, and others interested in governance, to think about the governance arrangements within their own academy, and apply those aspects of good practice that are most appropriate and proportionate.

It is good practice for each academy to undertake a periodic review of their governance arrangements and, where appropriate, amend policies, procedures and the governing document¹ to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and are structured in the most effective way to meet the academy's objects and environment in which it operates.

Academies are independent but state funded schools established as charitable companies limited by guarantee. As such, they are required to comply with legislation and regulation that applies to schools, charities and companies.

For academies it is essential that those responsible for the governance of an academy are aware of their legal duties as a trustee under charity law, as a director under company law, and as a governor under education legislation. It is because of this triple responsibility that the terms 'trustee', 'director' and 'governor' may be used interchangeably. For the purpose of this document, we use the terms trustee, director and governor to emphasize the triple legal duties.

The information in this document draws upon and expands the principles highlighted in *Good governance: A code for the voluntary and community sector*.²

1 There are specific actions that must be taken in order to change an academy's articles of association depending on the corporate structure of the organisation; in all cases changes to the charitable objects will require approval from the Charity Commission, other changes will require the approval of the Secretary of State for Education. See ICSA guidance note on changing a charity's governing document for further details.

2 This can be downloaded from www.governancecode.org.

If you have any feedback on the content of these resources, or additional questions that you'd like to discuss, please contact the ICSA information centre: **020 7612 7035** | informationcentre@icsa.org.uk

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Specimen induction pack for academy trustees/directors

For the purpose of this guidance note, it is assumed that the academy employs a company secretary, or other governance and compliance professional (who is not the chief executive officer) to provide guidance and support to the governing body.³ Furthermore, this guidance is written predominantly for individual academies. Multi academy trusts operating local governing bodies may wish to adapt the document to cover the needs of all governors and committee members.

Overall purpose

For a trustee/director/governor of an academy to be effective it will be necessary to provide the individual with sufficient information about the academy trust for them to be able to contribute to governing body/board discussions in a meaningful manner as soon as possible. It is unrealistic for each and every trustee/director/governor to be fully versed with the issues facing the academy at their first governing body/board meeting, but each trustee/director/governor should be working towards gaining that comprehensive knowledge. The induction pack is just one method in which necessary information can be imparted.

As individuals absorb information in different ways a number of methods should be used for inducting each trustee/director/governor. These could include:

- an induction pack that uses both text and graphics to display contextual and performance data
- site visits to observe the school in action
- meetings with key members of the senior leadership team, fellow trustees/directors/governors and other key individuals
- observing governing body/board or committee meetings to gain an overview of the scope of the academy's activities
- a buddying system with a more experienced trustee/director/governor.

As well as providing a checklist of topics and documents to consider that could be covered in an induction programme, this note makes suggestions for induction design, because the way in which any induction is delivered is an essential factor in its success. The time taken to complete an induction will depend on the academy trust, its size and complexity, but it may take 12 months in order to cover a full governing body/board cycle.

³ Further details on the role of the charity secretary can be found in an ICSA guidance note of the same title, *The Company Secretary*.

Specimen induction pack for academy trustees/directors

The following outlines all the information about an academy a new trustee/director/governor may require in the first months in office. By staggering the approach of when and what kind of information is provided, it is hoped that the new trustee/director/governor will not be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information to be digested.

This guidance, therefore, has broken down the information into those documents and activities that should be offered to the new trustee/director/governor upon appointment (election or co-option), three months, and six months into the first year of tenure.

Induction design

The following suggestions are offered to company secretaries when designing an induction programme for a new trustee/director/governor.

To ensure that the trustee/director/governor receives the information they require in the most appropriate format it is advisable to consult the new trustee/director/governor before devising the induction. This conversation should inform how the programme should be tailored, in relation to both content and delivery. Previous trustee, director or governor experience and knowledge is of course relevant to the induction design, as the individual may already be aware of some or all of the legal and regulatory aspects of the roles of trustee, director or governor. An update of any developments may however, be advisable.

The company secretary, in consultation with the chairman, should prioritise the information to be provided to the trustee/director/governor; and schedule the various induction elements over an extended period; and arrange meetings with employees, advisors, parent and pupil representatives and fellow trustees/directors/governors over an extended period. However, they should let the trustee/director/governor see the whole induction plan at the start so they have the option to request certain elements earlier, or to have access to particular documents sooner.

Specimen induction pack for academy trustees/directors

Vary the delivery of information, and limit the amount of data presented just as reading material (whether in hard copy or via a board portal/online reading room), for example by designating meetings with staff, and fellow trustees/directors/governors to cover certain academy matters, making use of advisors, other key parties (such as the sponsor organisation or local authority), external training courses and organising site visits.

Take account of any relevant training and development programmes (in place or planned), when drawing up the induction programme, so as to complement other activities and avoid any unnecessary duplication. It might be worth thinking about whether some training and development activities could be delivered to the whole governing body/board, thereby providing a useful refresher to established trustees/directors/governors and developing the relations of the entire governing body/board. For example:

- consider asking an existing trustee/director/governor to bring their experience to bear by commenting on the content and design of the draft induction intended for an incoming trustee/director/governor
- to maximise the time of trustees/directors/governors and staff, the company secretary should consider arranging induction meetings and site visits around existing governing body/board, committee, other meetings and official school events
- a buddying or mentoring system may be beneficial to a new trustee/director/governor in order to speed up the individual's understanding of the academy's values and softer aspects of the governing body/board, such as informal behaviours and ways of working

The trustee/director/governor should be encouraged to contact the company secretary for any other guidance and information they may require.

Equally important to the induction process is receiving feedback from the trustee/director/governor as to the effectiveness of the package provided. Feedback should be sought midway through the process, at the end and about six months afterwards to gain a balanced view of the individual's experience. Any suggestions for improvement should be given due consideration and incorporated into the design of the next induction process.

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Specimen induction pack for new academy trustees/directors/governors

The objective of induction is to provide a new trustee/director/governor with the information they will need to become as effective as possible in their role within the shortest practicable time. The induction process should aim to achieve four things:

- build an understanding of the nature of the academy trust, its purposes and the communities in which it operates
- develop understanding of the role, including legal duties
- build a link with the academy's people – whether senior leadership team members, teachers, other staff, or pupils and their parents
- build an understanding of the academy's main relationships, particularly with the academy's sponsor (where there is one).

The expectation is that the induction will be tailored to the needs of the particular trustee/director/governor to avoid repeating information the individual is already well aware of, and that the content will be delivered using a variety of methods, over an extended period.

Many of the topics listed below will be best conveyed by making the trustee/director/governor aware of the source document, and providing a summary of the key points and how they relate to the academy, where appropriate.

This list should not be seen as exhaustive, and certainly will not apply to all academy trusts in all cases. Where an academy has an intranet that includes the documents listed, the trustee/director/governor will be able to access relevant papers at a time of their choosing. Where this is the case, the company secretary should ensure an ongoing dialogue with the trustee/director/governor to avoid any gaps or oversights in the individual's developing knowledge.

Specimen induction pack for academy trustees/directors

Role of the trustee/director/governor

Suggested document/activity	Suggested timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A brief outline of the role of the trustee/director/governor and a summary of their responsibilities and continuing obligations. This may need to be more detailed where the appointee has no previous experience 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charity Commission booklets, for example CC3 <i>'The Essential Trustee: What you need to know'</i> and <i>Charities and charity trustees – an induction for school governors</i> 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department for Education's <i>Governor's Handbook</i> 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the role of the company secretary in supporting the trustee/director/governor 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The academy's guidelines on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> matters reserved for formal governing body/board meetings and scheme of delegations the procedure for obtaining independent professional advice by the governing body/board other standing orders, policies and procedures of which the trustee/director/governor should be aware, or where they can be obtained from (including investment and reserves policies, CRB checks, child protection policies, anti-bribery, money laundering, diversity and equality, and data protection to name a few) 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any trustee/director liability insurance that may be in place 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal development programme. 	Three to six months

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Governing body/board issues

Suggested document/activity	Suggested timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing body/board structure and schedule of meeting dates 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biographical and contact details of other trustees/directors/governors or director/trustees and the senior leadership team 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes of the meetings of the governing body/board of the last six meetings and agendas for board meetings held in the last three years, where possible 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of current trustees/directors/governors, the company secretary and their respective dates of appointment 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the procedures to be adopted at governing body/board meetings. These would normally cover details such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ when the papers are sent out ○ normal location of meetings ○ how long meetings last ○ an indication of the routine business transacted ○ procedure for raising items for consideration ○ board etiquette policy ○ domestic arrangements e.g. access, parking, lunch, child care and other expenses, etc 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts of interest policy and register of interests⁴ 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing body member code of conduct 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in the use of any board portal or online board paper/reading room facility 	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate calendar which details important dates for the school, including annual returns, general meetings, etc 	Three to six months

⁴ See the ICSA *Best practice guide managing conflicts of interest in the not-for-profit sector* and the Charity Commission's *A Guide to Conflicts of Interest for Charity Trustees*, for further information.

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Governing body/board issues (continued)

Suggested document/activity	Suggested timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of relevant committees, e.g. executive, finance and general purposes, with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ terms of reference for each committee ○ specifications of those responsibilities delegated by the trustees/directors/governors to any committees ○ reporting requirements ○ names of those serving on any committees, including biographical details of any non-trustees/directors/governors serving on committees 	Three to six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board, committee and individual trustee/director/governor evaluation processes 	Three to six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board training and development programme 	Three to six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most recent board evaluation report and Ofsted report 	Three to six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board composition, board renewal, succession plans and policy on trustee/director/governor re-election/re-appointment. Details of procedure for resigning or removal from office, where appropriate. 	After six months

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The nature of the academy

Suggested document/activity	Suggested timeframe
• An up-to-date copy of the articles of association	Upon appointment
• A copy of the strategic plan	Upon appointment
• A copy of the business plan, and any school improvement plan	Upon appointment
• A copy of the mission statement, vision and values	Upon appointment
• A brief history of the academy, including educational performance	Upon appointment
• The annual report and accounts for the past three years (where they exist), audit report and Ofsted reports, current annual budget and most recent management accounts	Upon appointment
• Details of the academy's sponsor(s) and professional advisers (e.g. accountants and solicitors), together with the name of the partner or other nominated person dealing with the academy's business	Upon appointment
• Details of the academy's funding agreement and other information held by the principal regulator and website details for each regulator or registrar (including the Charity Commission and Companies House)	Upon appointment
• A glossary of charity, company and education sector jargon and acronyms	Upon appointment
• Current non-statutory review and/or impact report, where applicable	After six months
• A copy of all management accounts prepared since the academy's last audited accounts	After six months
• Details of any significant contractual obligations	After six months
• Summary details of the academy's insurance policies	After six months
• Details of any ongoing litigation presently being undertaken either by the academy or against it	After six months
• The academy's risk profile and tolerance, risk management and internal control procedures and relevant disaster recovery plans	After six months
• Marketing and branding.	After six months

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Building a link with the academy's people

Suggested document/activity	Suggested timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An organisational chart – including senior leadership staff, premises, etc	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The internal telephone directory, email and web addresses	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with senior leadership team	Appointment and ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal staff satisfaction survey results, or similar	After six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site visits and observations.	Ongoing

The academy's main relationships

Suggested document/activity	Suggested timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant media coverage, of a positive nature or otherwise	Upon appointment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recent and relevant correspondence with regulator(s)	Three to six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• List of stakeholders and any agreed engagement plan for each group	Three to six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Copy of complaints procedure for pupils/parents and suppliers, including a précis of major complaints and incidents resolved in past two years	Three to six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The minutes of general meetings of the last three years	After six months
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• List of major suppliers.	After six months

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Committee induction

Where the trustee/director/governor will be joining a committee, they should be provided with copies of the committee minutes from the preceding 12 months.

Suggested document/activity	Suggested timeframe
• Name, role, remit and terms of reference of committee	Three to six months
• Link between committee policy and the academy's strategic objectives	Three to six months
• Members of the committee, and those regularly invited to attend meetings	Three to six months
• Meeting schedule with pro forma forward agendas of regular items or an indication of when routine business is transacted	Three to six months
• Main business and financial dynamics and risks	Three to six months
• Current issues affecting the committee's business	Three to six months
• Technical training on key matters, tailored according to level of expertise.	Three to six months



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We seek to develop the skills, effectiveness and profile of people working in governance roles at all levels and in all sectors through:

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- market-leading entity management and board portal software.

Guidance notes are prepared by the ICSA policy team to support the work of company secretaries and other governance professionals working in the business and not-for-profit sectors, and in the NHS.

Guidance notes offer authoritative advice, interpretation and sample materials for the many issues involved in the management and support of boards. As such, they are invaluable for those helping their organisations to build trust through good governance.

There are over 100 guidance notes available to ICSA members at www.icsa.org.uk/guidance

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