

EdNEDs

*A guide for senior executive education leaders
interested in trust board roles*

Winter 2019/20

 Academy
Ambassadors
Building better trust boards

Introduction

The New Schools Network's Academy Ambassadors programme has joined forces with the National Governance Association, Confederation of School Trusts and a range of education bodies to encourage educators to join governing boards at schools and academy trusts. EdNEDs are executive educators who have specific executive experience working across multiple schools and take up a trustee, or non-executive director, role at a multi-academy trust.

Joining the board of trustees at a multi-academy trust is an excellent way to gain strategic leadership experience in a different capacity and context, to see governance from a different point of view and give back to the education system. The EdNED role provides valuable development experience for aspiring and existing Chief Executives, and the opportunity to share and enhance knowledge for executive trust leaders. Board roles have long been seen as a catalyst in the professional development of senior corporate leaders and now more educators are being encouraged to take board roles to support learning across the education sector.

The Academy Ambassadors EdNEDs programme is now open for interested senior executive leaders in education. To register your interest in a board role please contact academyambassadors@newschoolsnetwork.org.

“The role of governance in our school system cannot be underestimated – it underpins our efforts to continue raising standards in our schools. This offers a fantastic opportunity for school leaders to gain more experience and develop their own careers.”

Lord Agnew, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System

Why get involved?

Board roles provide a way for senior executive leaders to gain exposure and experience across the broad areas of leadership identified under the National Professional Qualification for Executive Leadership, comprising:

- Strategy and improvement
- Teaching and curriculum excellence
- Leading with impact
- Working in partnership
- Managing resources and risks
- Increasing capability

The benefits to those entering or aspiring to MAT CEO or trust leader roles:

Even experienced educators may find themselves faced with unfamiliar challenges as they move into a CEO or trust leader role across multiple schools. New areas can include operating complex budgets, corporate governance, board dynamics, defining a compelling vision and strategy across multiple schools, managing multi-site premises and systems. By taking on an EdNED role, senior executive trust leaders gain strategic experience of these issues in a capacity and context different to their current trust and develop broader strategic leadership competencies. They also gain insight on effective working relationships with members and trustees.

The benefits to experienced CEOs and trust leaders:

An EdNED board role provides a way for senior executive leaders to have positive influence beyond their group of schools and neighbouring schools. They can provide the opportunity to pass on their experience to a new, growing academy trust or to help a trust facing significant challenge. In stepping back from their own trusts' ways of working, EdNEDs gain valuable experience of different approaches and a broader sense of perspective.

EdNEDs also become part of the Academy Ambassadors alumni network and are able to access events, webinars, networking receptions and conferences attended by Senior Government Ministers and board leaders from trusts across England.

The benefits to the employer

Support from the EdNED's current employer is critical – be it the trust CEO or the board if the current CEO is volunteering. By supporting their staff to take on an EdNED role, employers gain:

- **Professional development for their senior executive educators.** Board roles can provide, for example, strategy and financial oversight experience to those whose current role is tightly focused on standards
- **Enhanced governance experience.** An EdNED role helps leaders to understand the accountabilities of the board and provides insight to governance policies and procedures. When senior leaders have exposure to boards as a NED they are also better placed to support their current board in an executive capacity
- **Support for the trust's succession plan.** Board roles help senior leaders prepare for top leadership and help boards to identify talented people who are ready for greater accountability
- **Improved retention.** Allowing staff board experience time helps to develop the trust's commitment to learning and development
- **Exposure to new perspectives,** best-practice and ways of working
- **A boost to reputation and culture.** By encouraging senior leaders to take EdNED roles, the trust may demonstrate an open, engaging culture and build stronger, wider networks.

Where employers or volunteers have concerns about work-life balance or conflicts of interest the Academy Ambassadors team will take into account these considerations when matching the volunteer to a potential role.

Who is eligible?

Senior executive leaders from across education are welcome to apply. Applicants must:

- Be a current or recently retired (within last 3 years) senior executive leader in education: CEO, Deputy CEO, Executive Principal, cluster or Regional Director or a senior executive trust leader who has had a cross-cutting role in an academy trust, normally a multi-academy trust (MAT); or
- Senior leader from the independent or college sector who has multi-site experience or Director of Education within a local authority/school improvement consultancy; and
- Have executive experience leading across multiple schools; and
- Have demonstrable experience sustaining strong educational performance or taking an institution to Good, normally to Outstanding.

Participants should be ready to make the commitment to join a board and take on the accountabilities required. Applicants will be good at listening and ready to take an objective view of different ways of delivering a great education. All candidates are expected to provide ethical leadership and demonstrate the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life.

What type of role will I be matched to?

The Academy Ambassadors process is tailored around you and your type of experience. Experienced CEOs of larger trusts or those with experience leading across groups of schools can expect to be matched to a larger trust, usually within one hour's travel from home but usually within a different local authority/county to where you are employed. Larger trusts usually seek board members with multi-site and complex structure experience. Chair roles may be suggested to those with suitable time and capacity.

New and developing CEOs, or those with experience of smaller groups, can expect to be matched to a trust around the same size, usually within 45 minutes of home and within a different local authority/county to where you are employed. The trust may well request EDNEDs to join the Standards Committee and may ask to Chair that or another Sub-Committee.

Those seeking a first non-executive role will bring experience as an executive leader as head or Principal and will have had some experience leading beyond a single school. Roles are available at smaller and relatively stable multi-academy trusts to ensure the role is manageable alongside a busy and developing executive life.

Why only executive educators?

Multi-academy trust senior leaders who are not educators, such as Finance Director, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Operating Officer, are not eligible for the EdNEDs role, which is aimed at educators. They are most welcome to register with the Academy Ambassadors programme through our existing programme and process for leaders with key professional/business skills.

Eligibility criteria for the broader Academy Ambassadors programme can be found on our [website](#), together with our [Terms and Conditions](#) for candidates.

Other educators who do not yet have the required level of executive experience are invited to apply for a school governor role through [Inspiring Governance](#) to start their governance career.

What is the commitment?

The time commitment is likely to be around six to ten meetings per year for a term of three to four years to cover both the main board and standards or performance committee. The time commitment including board preparation and attending meetings is likely to be around 8-10 hours per month.

What support is available?

An induction pack is available, which includes introductory materials on areas such as financial oversight. A webinar, designed for educators to familiarise themselves with non-education board matters, will also be available on demand. Those appointed through the Academy Ambassadors system are regularly invited to networking events and a network of mentors are available to help with areas such as board dynamics, board presence and managing time conflicts between executive and non-executive roles.

Avoiding conflicts of interest

Educators should not take on a board role at a trust that their current employer has a commercial relationship with, such as provision of school improvement services. They should also use caution where the two organisations are considering sponsoring the same school/s or where a merger between the two organisations is in active discussion. The Academy Ambassadors team will not introduce candidates to any trusts where the candidate has close family connections with executive or non-executive leadership. Conflicts are best avoided altogether, rather than managed in this situation.

As part of this programme, New Schools Network may share your details with the RSC office to ensure the right match to a trust is made with no conflicts. Those working at trusts with an active Financial Notice to Improve (FNTI) or where there is a current RSC-led intervention are not eligible due to the commitment that is necessary.

The recruiting trust will require a reference. Educators unable to provide a reference from current or recent employer should not volunteer through this programme.

How will this process work?

1. Senior leaders interested in a NED role register their interest with Academy Ambassadors by sending a CV to academyambassadors@newschoolsnetwork.org. A reference is not required at this stage.
2. The Academy Ambassadors programme team screens applicants at CV stage and those that do not meet the specific criteria for the EdNEDs programme are referred to Inspiring Governance. This process takes up to around 10 to 14 days.
3. Applicants meeting the criteria are asked to sign up to Terms and Conditions and invited to a one-to-one call with an advisor. You should let your employer know you are interested in exploring a NED role and check that they are comfortable with you expressing your interest.
4. Applicants go forward to a telephone conversation with a Regional Adviser at this stage. The Regional Advisers are all former senior leaders in education and will discuss your specific needs, skills, experiences, expectations and time/commitment available. You must declare potential conflicts of interest at this stage.
5. The team will then look at multi-academy trusts that are registered, and any suggestions from you, and approach that trust to ask if they are interested in an EdNED. Academy Ambassadors also holds a small list of trusts actively seeking EdNEDs. Some Free Schools may also express an interest, particularly where they are planning to grow into a MAT.
6. The Academy Ambassadors team does not lead the formal sifting or face-to-face interview process – that is led by the trust and formal appointments are made by the trust Members. It is also the trust's responsibility to perform full vetting, including DBS and reference checks, of all candidates.
7. Once in role support is available, whatever your governance career stage.