



# Coppice

## Primary Partnership

Growing Together, Striving for Excellence.

### **Guide to Governance**

**Approved:** Term 1 2025/26

**Next Review:** Term 1 2026/27

## Introduction

Coppice Primary Partnership (“the trust”) is a school trust established to enable schools to collaborate, share expertise and resources, and secure excellent outcomes for every child. Each school maintains its unique character while benefiting from the collective strength of the trust.

The trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and operates within:

- **Company law** (Companies Act 2006)
- **Charity law** (Charities Act 2011)
- **Education legislation**
- The **Academy Trust Handbook (2024/25)**
- The **Academy Trust Governance Guide (2025)**
- Its **Articles of Association, Funding Agreement**, and related legal documents

These requirements set expectations for governance, financial integrity, safeguarding, ethical leadership and compliance. They reinforce the Department for Education’s (DfE) **five pillars of trust quality** and create a clear framework for how the trust should be governed.

In accordance with the DfE Governance Guide and sector guidance from the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) and National Governance Association (NGA), CPP’s governance structure is built on **three interconnected layers**:

- **Members:** custodians of the trust’s governance arrangements
- **Trustees (the Trust Board):** the accountable body overseeing strategy, performance, risk and finance
- **Local Governors:** providing school-level insight, community connection and monitoring within delegated authority

The **Scheme of Delegation (July 2025)** sets out all delegations and accountabilities between these tiers and should be read alongside this Guide.

Statutory information about Members, Trustees and Local Governors is published on the trust and school websites in line with legal requirements.

## Members

Members are the guardians of the trust’s constitution. They provide independent oversight to ensure the trust remains true to its charitable purpose, is well-governed, and is positioned for long-term stability.

In line with the **Academy Trust Handbook**, the trust must have at least **three Members**, though five or more is recommended to ensure strong capacity and independence.

Members cannot be employees of the trust.

Members fulfil several important constitutional functions:

- Appointing (and, where necessary, removing) Trustees based on skills and suitability
- Amending the Articles of Association
- Appointing the external auditors
- Receiving the **Annual Report and Accounts**
- Reviewing the effectiveness of governance through Trustee self-evaluation or external reviews

Members apply an **“eyes on, hands off”** approach, ensuring oversight without involvement in the Trust Board’s strategic or operational decision-making.

Members meet at least **once annually** at the AGM. Meetings are clerked by the Governance Professional, with the Trust Leader and Chief Financial Officer normally attending to answer questions.

Members are appointed indefinitely unless they resign or are removed in line with the Articles of Association. All Member information is published on the trust website.

### **Trustees (The Trust Board)**

The Trustees form the Trust Board, which is the **single accountable body** for the trust. Trustees ensure that the trust fulfils its charitable objects, provides high-quality and inclusive education, maintains strong financial stewardship, manages risk effectively and complies with all statutory obligations.

Trustees are both **charity trustees** and **company directors**. They exercise all powers of the trust except those reserved to Members or delegated through the **Scheme of Delegation**.

Trustees are expected to bring skills in areas such as education, finance, law, HR, risk, estates, safeguarding and governance. Trustees serve a **four-year term** and may be reappointed.

The Trust Board’s work aligns with the DfE’s five pillars of trust quality:

- High-quality and inclusive education
- Strong strategic and leadership capacity
- Effective financial management
- Safeguarding and wellbeing
- Trust sustainability

The Board meets **six times per year**. Meetings are structured to provide strategic oversight of performance, improvement, risk, finance, estates, safeguarding and compliance. The Governance Professional provides clerking and governance support. Trustees undertake regular training and governance development. At least once every three years, the Board considers commissioning an **External Review of Governance (ERG)** in line with CST and DfE recommendations.

## **Committees and Advisory Groups**

The Trust Board may establish committees and advisory groups to support effective governance. Committees operate under **Terms of Reference (ToR)** approved annually by the Board.

Where a committee is making decisions under delegated authority, it must have a **majority of Trustees** in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook.

### **Finance and Audit Committee**

A formal committee providing assurance over financial management, compliance and risk. It:

- Meets **six times per year**
- Oversees financial strategy, budgeting and monitoring
- Reviews internal scrutiny and ensures effective internal controls
- Monitors reserves, procurement, fraud prevention and compliance
- Oversees internal and external audit processes

### **Education and Curriculum Group (Advisory)**

An advisory body supporting oversight of educational quality. It:

- Meets **three times per year**
- Reviews trust-wide performance trends
- Advises on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment
- Supports the sharing of effective practice across schools

Accountability remains with the Trust Board.

Committee information is published through the Scheme of Delegation.

## **Local Governing Bodies (LGBs)**

LGBs operate at school level as committees of the Trust Board. They provide crucial local insight, support and monitoring within the delegated authority outlined in the **Scheme of Delegation**.

LGBs support governance by:

- Monitoring educational quality, behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, SEND and wellbeing
- Ensuring the trust's values and ethos are lived out within each school
- Strengthening links with pupils, staff, parents and the wider community
- Monitoring progress against the **School Strategic Development Plan (SSDP)**
- Providing local intelligence to Trustees

### **Composition**

Each CPP LGB normally consists of **seven governors**:

- Headteacher (ex officio)

- 1 staff governor (elected)
- 2 parent governors (elected)
- 3 co-opted governors (appointed by the Trust Board)

Associate Members may be appointed without voting rights.

### **Meetings**

LGBs meet **six times per year** aligned to the trust's monitoring schedule. Governors conduct planned visits, reviewing curriculum, safeguarding, leadership and school priorities.

Local governors serve **four-year terms**.

### **Governance Meetings, Minutes and Transparency**

All governance meetings—Trust Board, committees and LGBs—are formally clerked by the Governance Professional.

Minutes:

- Provide a clear record of decisions and challenge
- Identify actions, responsibilities and deadlines
- Are published on the trust or school websites (non-confidential items)
- Are stored securely on **GovernorHub**

Confidential matters are recorded separately following statutory guidance and trust policies.

The Governance Professional ensures compliance with data protection, record-keeping and accessibility requirements.

### **Useful Documents and Sources of Information**

#### **GovernorHub**

The trust uses GovernorHub for:

- Meeting papers, agendas and minutes
- Governance policy documents and the Scheme of Delegation
- Training records and compliance monitoring
- Statutory declaration tracking
- Secure storage of governance documentation

All governors are required to use GovernorHub regularly.

#### **Essential Trust Documents**

All Trustees and governors must be familiar with:

- Articles of Association
- Funding Agreement
- **Scheme of Delegation (July 2025)**
- **Academy Trust Handbook (2024/25)**

- **DfE Academy Trust Governance Guide (2025)**
- Trust-wide statutory policies
- School Strategic Development Plans (SSDPs)

### **Sector Guidance**

Recommended sources include:

- CST – *Governing a School Trust* (2025)
- NGA – *Twenty-One Questions for MATs*
- NGA – *Being Strategic*
- The Key for School Governors – MAT governance guidance
- Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (latest edition)

The Governance Professional signposts support, induction and development as required.