Transforming Lives
EDUCATIONAL TRUST

TLET Governance Handbook:
Our Systems of Governance and Working Practices

For Members, Trustees, Governors and Executive Leadership

January 2026

Version Control

Category:	Governance
Authorised By:	TLET Trust Board
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Version	1.3
Status:	Under Review:	
	Approved:	✓
Issue Date:	January 2026
Next Review Date:	January 2027
Statutory Policy:	Yes	
	No	✓
Printed Copies Are Uncontrolled		

This Governance Handbook, as adopted by Transforming Lives Educational Trust, provides for, and establishes, integrity and transparency of the governance methodology considered central to the effective operation of the Trust.

Chair of Trustees

Transforming Tomorrow, Today

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Appendices – *to be accessed via the Trust website*
  1) TLET Members Terms of Reference
  2) TLET Trust Board Terms of Reference
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  6) TLET Safeguarding & Standards Committee Terms of Reference
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1 – The TLET Way

Transforming Lives Educational Trust (TLET/The Trust) is a family of academies. Every TLET policy is rooted in and reflects our ambitions for pupils, students and wider stakeholders alike.

OUR AMBITIONS -
As a Trust family, our shared ambitions drive everything we do, we call this 'The TLET Way'.

Through the transformative values of courage, kindness and loyalty, together we:

NURTURE POTENTIAL

We flourish in the places we create together.
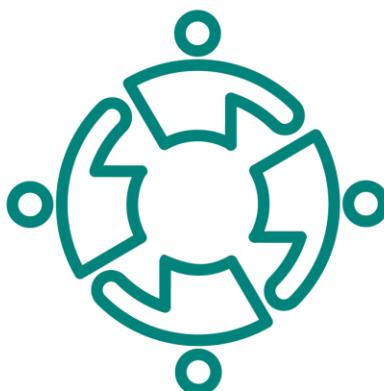
INSPIRE COMMUNITY

We champion each other to make a difference.

DELIVER EXCELLENCE

We strive to achieve our best.

2 – Introduction

Purpose

2.1 This manual is provided by way of induction for Transforming Lives Educational Trust (TLET) Members, Trustees, Local Governing Board (LGB) Governors, and the Executive Leadership and serves to inform the interaction across the respective governance layers of the Trust.

> *Governance is the process of making and enforcing decisions within an organisation. It encompasses decision making, rule-setting, and enforcement mechanisms to guide the functioning of the organisation. Effective governance is essential for … achieving objectives and addressing the needs of members within the organisation … [it] promotes transparency, fosters trust and adapts to changing circumstances.* (Wikipedia)

Context

2.2 TLET is a charitable company limited by guarantee and an exempt charity. As such, and satisfying the requirement of the [Companies Act 2006](#), is has hierarchical governance structure comprising:

- Members;
- Trust Board;
- LGB Governors;
- Executive Leadership.

2.2.1 As guardians of governance, **Members** hold strategic and legal oversight of the Trust and have a general duty to further the Trust's charitable objective, which is 'to advance, for the public benefit, education in the United Kingdom'.

2.2.2 The **Trust Board**, made up of **Trustees,** is recognised by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) agreement and the Regional School Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education as the accountable body for the Trust.

2.2.3 **Local Governing Boards** ensure learning provision at individual Academy level is fit for purpose and sustains the Trust's vision - 'Transforming Tomorrow, Today'. To this end, LGBs operate as sub-committees of the Trust Board.

2.2.4 The **Executive Leadership** is responsible for the delivery of the Trust's Strategic Plan and the effective implementation of the Trust-wide business functions, educational provision, and performance standards.

Our Standards

2.3. We uphold the Nolan Principles (7 Principles of public office) and champion the Department for Education's (DfE) '*Six key features of effective governance*' within a Multi-academy Trust, specifically:

- strategic leadership that sets and champions vision, ethos and strategy;
- accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance;
- people with the right skills, experience, qualities and capacity;
- structures that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
- compliance with statutory and contractual requirements;
- evaluation to monitor and improve the quality and impact of governance.

2.3.1 In exercising our collective duties, we acknowledge our civic leadership responsibilities as an 'anchor institution'

within the communities we serve - this being the cornerstone of our decision-making and governance.

Our Strategy

2.4   The essence of TLET's governance practice is predicated on organisational unity and an absolute commitment to transform the life chances of children and young people.

2.4.1   Our Strategic Plan is refreshed regularly, in response to progress and changing circumstances. The Strategic Plan describes how we will achieve our purpose - to transform tomorrow, today - through our three ambitions - Nurture Potential, Inspire Community and Deliver Excellence.

2.4.2   In realising our Strategic Plan, TLET will be recognised as a strong schools' trust, delivering a consistently strong quality of education and school experience for every pupil and student.

3 – Regulation

Overview

3.1   The business and educational environment in which the Trust operates is highly regulated. In this regard, TLET falls within the jurisdiction and powers, amongst others, of:

- [The Charities Commission for England and Wales](#)
- [The Department for Educations (DfE)](#)
- [The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)](#)
- [The Office of Qualification and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)](#)
- [The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)](#)
- [The Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC)](#)
- The Trust Quality Descriptors

3.2   Awareness and an understanding of regulatory and operational direction pertinent to robust, transparent and consistency of governance is paramount. Therefore, Members, Trustees, LGB Governors and those in Executive Leadership are directed to familiarise themselves with the associated documents listed below. These are to be read in conjunction with this Handbook as they inform and underpin the organisational governance as adopted by the Trust.

3.2.1   Legal and Statutory Provision

- [The Companies Act 2006](#)
- [Charities Act 2011](#)
- [Education & Skills Act 2008](#)
- [The Schools Admissions Code 2021](#)

3.2.2   Regulatory and Compliance Obligations

- [Academies Trust Handbook*](#)
- [DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education*](#)
- [Academy Trust Governance Guide](#)
- [The 7 Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles)](#)

* **Note:** Documents update around June of each year for implementation as at the beginning of the Academic year.

3.2.3 Operational Governance

- [TLET Articles of Association](#)
- [TLET Terms of Reference](#) for:
    - Members;
    - Trust Board;
    - Audit and Risk Committee;
    - Safeguarding and Standards Committee;
    - Local Governing (LGB) Board;
    - Link Trustee.
- [TLET Scheme of Delegated Authority](#)
- [TLET Master Funding Agreement](#)

4 – Accountability

Ethos

4.1 Accountability for governance within and across the Trust originates from a culture of governance designed to establish, develop and maintain proper business accountability. Furthermore, ensuring adherence to internal and external documented protocols, process and management standards and an openness to independent scrutiny is our hallmark of compliant governance, whilst evaluating performance through applied operational reporting frameworks, checks and balances confirms governance.

Effective Governance

4.2 Consistent and effective governance across the Trust is shaped by the collective skills and experience of the Trust's Members, Trustees and LGB Governors, and is central to the Trust delivering its stated and published objectives.

Non-Executives

4.2.1 The roles of Member, Trustee and LGB Governor are designated as non-executive and voluntary in nature. Therefore, to ensure transparency and integrity of process regarding the appointment and selection of TLET volunteer office holders, the Trust appoints in accordance with TLET's documented procedure (formal application, professional discussion, uptake of references). Appointments reflect identified skills need, with such skills being assessed using the National Governance Association's skills audit and skills matrix assessment tool.

Economies of Scale

4.2.2 To enable each of the Trust's Academies to work in an effective and consistent manner, and to build the opportunities afforded by economies of scale, TLET provides a number of centralised services, such as Finance, IT, HR and Estates. Such services and core provision are fundamental in the building capacity in our Academy leaders allowing them to focus on improving outcomes for pupils, as well as ensuring focussed learning capacity and provision.

Education Improvement

4.2.3 Augmenting the core service provision, the Trust also incorporates an Education Improvement Service designed to provide a consistent and strategic approach to improving pupil outcomes through ITT and recruitment, CPD and training, peer review and external validation, school-to-school support and talent management, so giving

Academy leaders the tools they need to innovate and deliver change.

Governance 'Lead'

4.2.4 To ensure focus of business objectives, effectiveness of governing practice and to underpin depth of discussions at Trust Board, Trustees with pertinent skill sets have been appointed to provide oversight for Trust-wide areas of Safeguarding and of Operations (covering Health & Safety, Estates and HR). Similarly, Trustees can be assigned as 'lead' for each of the key ambitions of the Trust's Strategic Plan.

Terms of Reference

4.2.5 Each of the TLET's sub-committees operates to specified Terms of Reference (ToR) as ratified by the Trust Board. All ToR, including those for the Trust Board, together with relevant Schedule of Activities and/or Standard Agendas can be found in the Appendices to this document.

Trust Management

4.2.6 The management of the Trust is vested in the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO is also the Accounting Officer (AO). Although not an elected trustee and therefore carries no voting rights, the CEO is pivotal to the efficient and effective operation and governance of the Trust.

Governance Professional

4.2.7 The Trust is supported by a team of governance professionals. The Clerk to the Trustees, as well as providing professional secretarial services in support of Board activities, also ensures regulatory matters as informed by internal protocol and external regulatory demand are considered, managed and processed in a timely and compliant manner. The Chair, CEO and Clerk to the Trustees work closely regarding all matters of governance.

4.2.7.1 Likewise, the Clerks to our LGB Boards provide professional secretariat services and the administration and guidance of regulatory compliance data and information pertaining to the local operation of the Academy.

Structure

4.3   TLET's governance and working practices are integral to the structure of the Trust with robust and transparent governance demonstrable across the organisation.
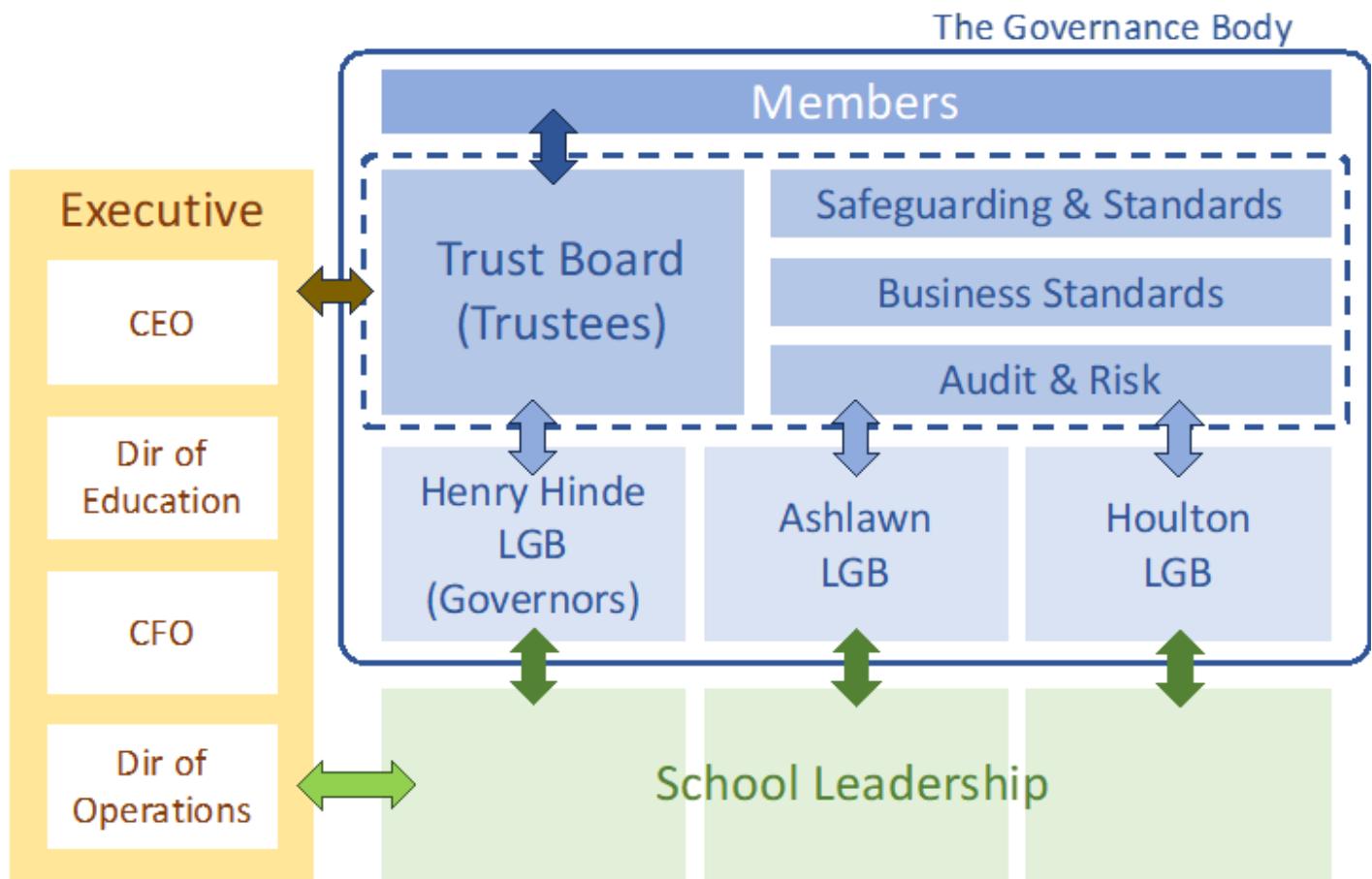
Members

4.4   Members are essential to the integrity of Transforming Lives Educational Trust. Holding strategic and legal oversight, Members are the guardians of the governance of the Trust and have a general duty to exercise their responsibilities and powers to further the Trust's charitable object, which is 'to advance for the public benefit, education in the United Kingdom'.

4.4.1   Members are required to fulfil their legal and business duty in an 'eyes on, hands off' mode so as to remove potential of direct influence/business persuasion of the Trust Board operational responsibility and business discretion.

4.4.2   However, whilst accountability and responsibility for the Trust's strategic and business operation sits with the Trust Board, Members should, if they determine that the Trust is/is becoming dysfunctional, have a strong interest in ensuring the Board has plans to address issues, or otherwise to remove the Board or individual Trustees and re-appoint Trustees with the skills necessary for effective governance.

4.4.3   Members have a limited and distinct role. By utilising a range of responsibilities/powers, members help to ensure that the Trust Board is exercising effective governance. The powers afforded to Members include:

●   Appointing and removing Trustees;

- Appointing and removing Members;
- Directing Trustees by way of special resolution should governance be deemed dysfunctional;
- Amending the Trust's Articles of Association;
- Appointing and removing the Trust's external auditor

4.4.4 In fulfilling their role, it is important that Members do not overstep their responsibilities / powers or undermine the Trust Board's discretion when exercising their responsibilities. The DfE's strong preference is '….for at least the majority of Members to not sit on the trust board….' However, the Trust Board recognises the importance of keeping Members informed about Trust Business so members can be assured that the Trust Board is exercising effective governance.

Trust Board

4.5 The Trust Board as recognised by the ESFA Funding Agreement and the Regional School's Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education, is the accountable body for the Trust, with accountability extending (but not limited) to:

- Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Overseeing the financial performance of the organisation and making sure its money is well spent
- Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the trust's schools and its children
- Holding executive leaders to account for the effective and efficient performance management of staff

All of these are the accountability of the Trust Board, and it is supported in this by its sub-committees.

Financial Performance

4.5.1 Financial performance is managed and monitored by the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC). The ARC is a sub-committee of the Trust Board with delegated authority and chaired by a nominated lead trustee with the pertinent skill set.

4.5.2 The scope of the ARC encompasses:

- Audit Regularity;
- Risk Evaluation and Management;
- Financial Management Policies;
- Internal Scrutiny.

Educational Performance

4.5.3 Educational Performance is addressed through the Safeguarding and Standards Committee (SSC). The SSC is a sub-committee of the Trust Board with delegated authority and chaired by a nominated lead trustee with the pertinent skill set.

4.5.4 The scope of the SSC encompasses:

- Safeguarding Performance;
- Educational practice;
- School improvement.

Staff Performance Management

4.5.5   Staff matters are monitored by the Lead Trustee for Operations and will be discussed by the Trust Board as necessary.

Local Governing Boards (LGB)

4.6   TLET governance recognises Local Governing Boards as integral to its governance framework, acting as the 'eyes and ears' of the Trustees. The inclusion of LGB ensures learning provision at individual Academy level is fit for purpose and sustains the Trust's vision as expressed through our strapline of 'Transforming Tomorrow, Today'.

4.6.1   LGB are sub-committees of the Trust Board with authority and powers cascading from the Trust to the LGB through the instrument of a documented Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA), with meeting discipline and governance directed by the Trust Board through the TLET LGB Standard Agenda.

4.6.2   LGB Governors hold the Academy leadership to account and provide independent scrutiny, challenge and the proactive assessment of operational performance at the local level.

4.6.3   Day-to-day operational accountability of the Trust's academies is vested in the LGB, having specific accountability with regard to intent, implementation and impact of: Teaching and Learning; Safeguarding; Compliance; Leadership and Management.

4.6.4   Parental/community 'voice' is delivered through LGB Governors drawn from the Academy parent/carer/local community. This reflects the Trust's desire for our Academies to be anchor institutions at the heart of the communities we serve.

Executive Team

4.7   The Executive Team is responsible for the effective and efficient implementation of the business and educational functions across the Trust.

4.7.1   The Executive Team compromises:

- Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer (CEO/AO)
- Chief Finance Officer (CFO)
- Director of Education (DoE)
- Director of Operations (DoO)
- Director of People (DoP)

4.7.2   Operationally, the Executive team is augmented by the TLET Leadership Group.

5 – Communications and Reporting

Dependency and Inter-Dependency of Communication

5.1   Communication between the respective layers of governance of the Trust is geared to ensure all those involved in governance are, pertinent to their defined governance role (Member, Trustee, Governor), suitably knowledgeable regarding the performance of the Trust.

5.1.1   In so doing, the reporting interaction between Members, LGB and the Trust Board not only satisfies required regulatory and legal obligation but allows for informed communication and dialogue so enabling:

- Members through the principle of 'eyes on, hands off' to comment on, and confirm the business operation and strategy of the Trust;
- Trustees to be assured of local governing practices and Academy performance management;
- Governors, through delegated authority and properly informed operational protocols, to ensure Academies deliver accessible high-quality meaningful learning.

Communication Flow Overview

5.2   TLET promotes a spirit of open and accessible communication in all matters of governance. Proper and timely communication across the Governance Body (see diagram in Section 4.3) enables all involved to be on the same page.

Meetings

5.3   Meetings are scheduled to enable optimum two-way communication and consultation. The Trust Board normally meets 6 times across the academic year.

5.3.1   The SSC, ARC and LGB meetings are scheduled between the dates of the main Trust Board meetings to facilitate flow of information to and from the Trust Board.

5.3.2   The members meeting (Annual General Meeting) is normally held at the mid-point of the academic year.

Communication between the Trust Board and the Members

5.4   The primary communication channel with Members is the AGM and as per reporting formats set out in paragraph 5.7.1. However, the Chair of the Trust Board shall notify Members immediately of:

- a reputational risk considered non-manageable;
- material breach of governance;
- identified fraudulent behaviour and/or financial impropriety.

5.4.1   A second Members' meeting is held, usually in October, to provide an update to Members on progress.

Communication between the Chair of the Trust Board and the Chairs of the LGB

5.5   The normal communication flow between the Chair of Trustees and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the LGB is a direct and 'open channel', on an 'as and when' basis.

5.5.1   This 'norm' is augmented via a Chair/Vice Chairs meetings, hosted by the Chair of Trustees and normally held three times per year.

Communication between Trust Board, its sub-committees, and LGB

5.6   The normal communication flow between the Trust Board, its sub-committees, and LGB is a direct and 'open channel' on an 'as and when' basis.

5.6.1   This flow is supported by the allocation, at the discretion of the Trust Board, of a Link Trustee to any / each LGB. The Link Trustee assignment is for a specified period and the Link Trustee shall be an additional communication conduit between the Trust Board and the LGB.

Reporting Framework

5.7   At the commencement of each Academic Year the Trust establishes an overarching schedule that provides for comprehensive up/down in person, virtual, and documented information reporting interaction and protocols.

Trust Board and Trust Members

5.7.1   The purpose of the reporting interaction between the Trust Board and Trust Members is to fulfil regulatory and legal obligation, enabling Members through the principle of 'eyes on, hands off' to comment on and confirm the Trust's business operation and strategy.

Autumn Term		Spring Term		Summer Term	
Focus	**Format**	**Focus**	**Format**	**Focus**	**Format**
Priorities for the Academic Year.	Strategic Plan	Regulatory Compliance	Safeguarding Audit Report	Strategic Plan Progress	RAG-Rated Plan Update
Awareness of Risk	Risk Register	Performance and Vision	AGM	Governance Evaluation	Self-Evaluation Report

Trust Board and LGB

5.7.2   The purpose of the reporting interaction between the Trust Board and the LGB Board is to provide through professional dialogue, opportunity to share/reinforce strategy, assess management of risk and to determine areas of LGB Board performance where training and/or support could be beneficial.

Autumn Term		Spring Term		Summer Term	
Focus	**Format**	**Focus**	**Format**	**Focus**	**Format**
Priorities for the Academic Year.	Strategic Plan	Regulatory Compliance	Safeguarding Audit Report	Strategic Plan Progress	RAG-Rated Plan Update
Governance Evaluation	Annual Review	Even Better If	Self-Evaluation Report	Performance: Vision & CPD	TLET Conference
Review of LGB Board Minutes/Revisions & Updates to SoDA and Trust-Wide Policies					

Trust Board and its sub-committees (ARC, SSC)

5.7.3   The purpose of the reporting interaction between the Chair of Trustees/Trust Board and the SSC and the ARC is the assurance of governance. The SSC and ARC report formally to the Trust Board at each Board meeting. This may take the form of a written report or verbal update.

Trust Board and Executive

5.7.4   The purpose of the reporting interaction between Trust Board & Executive Reporting (CEO & CFO) is not only to fulfil regulatory obligation but also to update Trustees regarding operational and financial matters, including receipt of the management accounts and to allow for required specific Board action where necessary. The CEO and CFO meet (as minimum) 6 times per year - this provides operational 'finger on pulse'.

6 – Governance Standards

Transparency

6.1   With the exception of what is acknowledged as commercially sensitive and/or confidential information regarding governance, the Trust is transparent in respect of information accessible on its official website and/or that of its Academies. This includes, but not limited to:

- This Handbook;
- Members, Trustees, Partners Professional Biographies;
- Committee Structures;
- Declaration of Pecuniary Interests;
- Trustees & LGB Governor Appointments & Attendance Record;
- Regulatory and Legal documentation;
- Policies and Scheme of Delegated Authority;
- Terms of Reference and where applicable, associated Schedule of Activity;

6.1.1   Minutes of Trust Board meetings, and of its sub-committees, including Academy LGB, are available upon request, which may be redacted due to commercially sensitive and/or confidential information.

Processes

6.2   The financial processes, which the Trust operates, are set out in the ESFA Academies Handbook, whereas guidance pertaining to good/best practice governance and governance competencies is as per gov.uk and the National Governance Association (NGA).

6.2.1   Delegated process is cascaded by way of a version-controlled Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA). The SoDA sets out the prescribed operational authority levels for the LGB together with the interrelationship between Trust, CEO, LGB and Principal(s). The SoDA extends to: Strategy & Leadership; Education & Curriculum; HR and Operations; Strategic Impact Support (investment and access); and, Finance (including financial decision levels).

Conduct

6.3   The expected behaviours pertinent to an effective and successful Multi-academy Trust (MAT) are predicated on the understanding that the MAT is not simply a collection of individual schools or academies grouped under an

umbrella organisation, but rather a collective working in accord for the betterment of the educational well-being of the children and young people that make up the learning community within and across the Trust.

6.3.1   In the delivery and expression of this [common] accord, Members, Trustees, Governors and the Clerks to LGB and Trusts Boards shall uphold the TLET Code of Business Conduct. All involved in governance across the Trust undertake to uphold the TLET Code of Business Conduct. The Code of Business Conduct, like the Conflict of Pecuniary Interest Declaration, is required to be signed annually by all involved in governance.

Protocol

6.4   The Trust Board and its recognised sub-committees work to documented and approved Terms of Reference, that are ratified annually by the Trust Board.

6.4.1   TLET also advocates the development and implementation of 'Schedule of Activities' / Standard Agendas as a governance aid for the Board and its approved and recognised sub-committees. The schedules of activities ensure that the Board/sub-committees consider relevant business, financial, regulatory and operational matters against a timeline that supports and reflects the normal cycle of educational data drops, but also provides for thought and consideration of internal/external demand.

Document Management

6.5   Central to the TLET governance working practices is that of robust document control and respect of business confidentiality. To this end, all documents developed in support of governance operational activity is managed as detailed below.

Version Control

6.5.1   All core Trust documentation e.g. Terms of Reference, Policies, etc are version controlled.

6.5.2   Regardless of format, the imperative is that the currency of the document being read/reviewed is explicit. The Trust Governance Professionals (Clerks) maintain for Trust Board and LGB a register version-controlled documents so allowing for review of historic versions. Historic versions are marked as obsolete.

Preparation, Receipt and Distribution of Agendas and Papers

6.5.3   TLET, in recognising that those involved in governance are volunteers, endeavours to operate to acknowledge good/best practice to allow for proper collation and review (reading time) of all documentation ahead of meetings, To this end:

- Clerks should receive papers **7 working days** prior to meeting date;
- Clerks should distribute agenda and papers **5 working days** prior to meeting date
- Clerks should circulate draft minutes and agreed actions within **10 working days** of meeting date

Minutes and Board Paper Format

6.5.4   The Trust Board advocates standard formatting and recording of minutes as it does for any papers supporting an agenda. All papers in support of a specific agenda item should identify a title, the author and actions/consideration which are to be considered by the Board/Sub-committee. Likewise, minutes should follow the nomenclature of Name of meeting (or sub-committee), month and agenda item number e.g. TLET10/001,

refs to the Trust Board, October board meeting agenda item No.1.

Filing

6.5.5   Minutes are securely maintained on TLET systems for the Trust Board, with approved but unsigned versions maintained until approved - accessible only to the Trustees, Clerk, and the CEO. Similar arrangements apply for LGB. The Clerk to the Trustees also has access to Academy Shared drives where governance documentation is maintained.

7 – Monitoring

7.1   It is the responsibility of the Trust Board and those to whom it delegates the authority, to ensure that the principles and procedures of this handbook are adhered to. The use of this handbook will be subject to routine monitoring to ensure its fidelity in practice. The evidence gathered from monitoring shall inform any reviews and future revisions to the policy, which will be carried out at regular intervals and no later than as stated on Page of this handbook.

Appendices

This section of the Handbook sets out the detailed Terms of Reference and associated activity schedules and/or standard agendas for the Trust Board and its recognised and approved sub-committees.

The following appendices are **provided for context only.**

N.B. To ensure all involved in governance operate to the most up-to-date versions of the documentation, the 'live' versions **must** be accessed via [Trust's website](#).