

The Trust Board at Denefield School

Our role

The Trust Board at Denefield School is responsible for ensuring the school provides the best possible education for its students. The Board acts as a corporate body and provides strategic leadership by working closely with the Headteacher and members of the Senior Leadership Team. As Denefield is an Academy Trust school, the Trust Board is directly accountable to the Members, the Secretary of State for Education and to the wider community for the quality of education received by all students at the school and for expenditure of public money.

The Academy Trust Governance Guide (2025) sets out that the Trust Board's purpose is to provide strategic leadership, accountability and assurance and strategic engagement. The board has collective accountability and strategic responsibility for the trust, and it has a focus on ensuring the trust delivers an excellent education to pupils while maintaining effective financial management. The board must ensure compliance with the trust's charitable objects, regulatory, contractual and statutory requirements, and its funding agreement. The board also has strategic and statutory responsibility for safeguarding and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) arrangements, promotion of pupil welfare, keeping the trust's estates safe and well-maintained and making sure that it delivers its commitment to other schools and academies.

The Trust Board must also follow the mandatory requirements as set out in the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) 2025, published by the Department for Education (DfE). The ATH provides an overarching framework for financial governance, management and other controls. Compliance with the requirements set out in this document is a condition of the funding agreement between each trust and the Secretary of State for Education. Trustees, accounting officers, principals, senior leaders and others with responsibility for governing, managing or auditing an academy trust must understand this handbook and adhere to its contents.

As you will see from the Trust's Board section of the school's website, we are a strong, committed and diverse group, who bring with them a wide range of experiences and knowledge. Many of the Board's members are parents of children at the school. We are deeply committed to the school, are proud to be Trustees and are very ambitious for the students and community we serve.

The Board is also responsible for appointing the Headteacher, Deputy Head teachers, Assistant Headteachers and the Finance and Business Director.

The Headteacher is responsible for the internal organisation, management and control of the school and the implementation of the strategic framework established by the Board.

Composition of the Board

The Trust Board has 12 Trustees at the start of the 2025/2026 school year. The Headteacher is a permanent member by virtue of office. Parents elect 2 Parent Trustees. The remaining 9 Trustees are either Academy Trustees or Co-opted Trustees who have been appointed by the Members or the Trust Board, for their skills and experience. All Trustees have a term of office of four years.

Members and their role

The Trust Board has 4 Members at the start of the 2025/2026 school year. Members are like a company's shareholders - they sit above the Trust Board in an academy trust and have a largely hands-off role. Their key responsibilities include appointing the trustees and holding them to account for the successful governance of the trust.

The work of Trustees

Our work is conducted at board level and across a range of committees which have delegated responsibilities and decision-making capabilities. We have two committees: Standards and Resources. Committees meet 6 times per year. The Trust Board meets 7 times per year.

Our Standards committee monitors many aspects of student's performance (across a number of key performance indicators) e.g. attendance, behaviour, exclusions and students' destinations at the end of year 11 and year 13. In addition, the committee reviews careers provision, GCSE and A level/BTEC options choices, school trips and curriculum coverage. All student centred and curriculum policies are reviewed by this committee.

The Resources committee monitors all aspects of the school's financial performance. Some examples of the committee's work are listed below:

- Regular budget monitoring, include 3-year budget forecasts and taking strategic decisions as appropriate
- Reviews of the implementation and effectiveness of all financial and personnel policies.
- Consideration of all capital projects, premises matters, health and safety matters
- Review and approval of pay determinations for staff.
- Determining the scope of all internal audit assurance work, reviewing reports and recommendations from the internal auditor and reviewing the statutory accounts.

The Trust Board receives termly reports from the Headteacher on many aspects of the school's work including students' academic performance. The Board carefully monitors and reviews students' performance data and holds school leaders to account for any areas of underperformance. The Board also monitors the school's performance against key improvement priorities in the annual school action plan. Annual budgets and the

school's staff structure are approved by the Board as well as the annual statutory accounts. Members of the Board are responsible for the appointment of an external auditor.

Transparency

In line with government expectations, the attendance of all Trustees at meetings during the year is monitored and details of historic Trustee's attendance is published on the school's website.

We maintain a register of Trustee's business interests for each academic year which is also published on the school's website. Trustees are also expected to declare any business interests at the start of each meeting.

Details for each Trustee are published on a national database maintained by the Department for Education called "Get information on schools".

Development and training

Each year, we devise an annual development plan which outlines how we plan to develop and improve as a corporate body. The plan is monitored termly by the Chair of Trustees.

Trustees complete a skills audit which identifies areas of experience and knowledge and also highlights skills gaps. The results are used to inform vacancies, new Trustees are appointed based on the skills required by the Board.

Trustees are encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills by accessing external training sessions provided by West Berkshire Council and Reading Borough Council. The Board has access to specialist websites, namely GovernorHub Knowledge and National Governance Association.

Each year the Board conducts an annual review of its performance and effectiveness by completing an annual self-evaluation against the Ofsted school's inspection framework. The outcome of this exercise is used to identify areas for development and training needs as well as informing the Board's annual action plan.

Department of Education:

The Trustees must also take into consideration priorities as highlighted by The Department of Education. In September 2024 the following three areas were highlighted and are being actively considered by the Trust Board:

- 1) More kindness in Schools
- 2) Continued absenteeism of pupils and
- 3) Inappropriate behaviour by Parents and Carers towards school staff and property.

Clerking

The Board is supported by a Governance Professional who provides administrative support and procedural and legal advice. All meetings are minuted and copies held at school. Minutes of Trust Board meetings are available to interested parties on request.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Trustees for more information (GovPro@Denefield.org.uk).

Stephen Lewis
Chair of Trustees
September 2025