



Building better trust boards

— *in the north of England* —

*Recruiting the right people with
the right skills to your trust board*

“Bringing acumen and knowledge from the business world, and pairing it with the experience of leading educationalists on trust boards, allows for the strong, robust governance we are seeking to ensure the sustainable growth of multi-academy trusts across the region.”

VICKY BEER, REGIONAL SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER, LANCASHIRE AND WEST YORKSHIRE

Academy
Ambassadors

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Building your board

An education powerhouse is forming in the North as multi-academy trusts (MATs) seek to close the gap with the South. The pace of change makes robust and effective governance ever more important.

The Department for Education, Regional Schools Commissioners and the Education and Skills Funding Agency have high expectations of all academies and the North is under increased scrutiny. Trusts therefore need to have the right people with the right skills around the board table to provide challenge and scrutiny, guidance and support. A rich and ready supply of high-calibre board members is vital to raise standards for all pupils.

In a survey of 101 trusts¹, 97% of those that had used Academy Ambassadors said they would use the service again. Most trusts return to Academy Ambassadors because of the quality and the differentiated skillsets of the candidates.

Trusts grow and change and require a regular refresh of board membership. Newly formed and small multi-academy trusts outgrow their legacy membership and growing multi-academy trusts must continually develop in order to ensure the board has an evidence-based strategy, drives financial efficiencies and holds the trust's executives to account. All trusts will need strong board support to meet the financial challenge to do 'more with less'.

Chairs and chief executives increasingly recognise the benefits of acquiring external, independent expertise in order to steer their trust as it develops. **Academy Ambassadors provides free, bespoke recruitment support to multi-academy trusts looking to strengthen their board and is a not-for-profit programme funded by the Department for Education.**

RESPONDING TO LOCAL NEED:

Since 2013 Academy Ambassadors has helped fill over 600 board roles with 134 of them in the north of England

"It was really easy and convenient to use the services of Academy Ambassadors to help with this recruitment. The whole process was effective, helpful and professional."

PAUL CARVIN, CHAIR, THE THREE RIVERS LEARNING TRUST, MORPETH



What skills and experience are required on the board of a multi-academy trust?

Strong boards have diverse skills, an aptitude for governance and an understanding of the local and regional context. Recruiting a more diverse range of board-level skills is necessary to oversee the complexity of multi-academy trust governance.

Corporate and public sector leaders

- ensure the design of governance structures and processes are appropriate for the scale and complexity of the organisation

Business leaders and entrepreneurs

- are highly effective at managing risk
- bring expertise of turnaround or mergers and acquisitions to drive change

Finance professionals and CFOs

- drive efficiencies and align budgets to the trust's improvement priorities
- have financial strategic planning skills and experience in working with regulators

Human resource directors

- bring expertise in change management and engaging both staff and stakeholders
- understand personnel risks such as TUPE, recruitment and retention

Legal professionals

- can summarise large quantities of information and identify the most salient points to bring to the board's attention
- are familiar with the regulatory environment in areas such as employment and health and safety

IT and estates and property experts

- bring expert scrutiny to complex contract management, facilities management and maintenance of the trust's estate
- secure efficiencies in IT procurement and multi-academy trust-wide systems integration

Marketing and PR professionals

- help to engage stakeholders during times of change or crisis
- are ambassadors for the trust to parents, other schools and the wider community

Some trusts in Northern England struggle to recruit the range of skills they need; Academy Ambassadors can focus on a targeted geographic area.

A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNANCE, DFE, JANUARY 2017

Principles and personal attributes are important for a strong board, alongside skills and knowledge. The DfE Governance Competency Framework sets out the key competencies expected of boards. Professional, external board recruitment through Academy Ambassadors can fill gaps or enhance overall board capability in these competencies.

"We had tried to recruit on our own prior to Academy Ambassadors and had drawn a complete blank. The new directors bring a business perspective to the trust which was lacking before - Academy Ambassadors has helped and enabled us to attract and appoint some very experienced business people which we had previously been unable to do through our existing contacts."

CAROLINE BAGLEY, CHAIR, TAPTON SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST, SHEFFIELD



How do I recruit a high-calibre board?

Academy Ambassadors is expert at attracting strong board candidates from business and the professions, including in challenging urban, rural and coastal regions. The business leaders appointed via Academy Ambassadors are motivated by a desire to give back, to develop the skills of school leavers and to boost social mobility for pupils from deprived backgrounds. With an office in Manchester and advisers across the North, Academy Ambassadors is well-placed to find motivated, high-calibre board members for your trust.

A few of the organisations already involved:

LLOYDS
BANKING
GROUP



NORTHERN
POWERGRID



ID

Inspiring business



Rolls-Royce®

HOW ACADEMY AMBASSADORS WORKS

To recruit board members via Academy Ambassadors:

1. Express your interest by emailing academyambassadors@newschoolsnetwork.org or calling 0161 638 8604. We will check that you are eligible for our DfE-funded free service.
2. Complete our trust specification form in order to specify the skills required for the board and the challenge ahead: <http://bit.ly/trustspecform>
3. Discuss the board requirements with an expert Adviser to agree your recruitment strategy.
4. Academy Ambassadors will then promote and advertise the role and provide you with a shortlist of candidate CVs to review.
5. Interview your shortlisted candidates.
6. Offer the role to the successful candidate(s) and conduct vetting and reference checks.

Your new board members automatically become part of the Academy Ambassadors alumni, a network of leading board members from trusts across England.



'We had introductions to people highly skilled in the areas we really needed. Working with Academy Ambassadors, we have built an exceptional Board of Directors - I can't recommend this service highly enough.'

**BEV OWENS,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE SOVEREIGN TRUST, TRAFFORD**



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for Education



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