

Chair of St Benet's Multi Academy Trust

Information Pack / May 2024

Background

The Norwich Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) has established two academy/school trusts to support its Strategic Plan 2024-2030 which can be viewed at www.DofN.org/SP2024-30

The DBE's contextual vision and approach draws on the Church of England's national *Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good* as we seek to build together a schools' system where all truly flourish and have life to the full. We see this as part of the mission of the church and an outworking of God's love for the world as demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

There is a close working relationship between all elements of the Diocesan education family. Although all are separate legal entities this collegiality and collaboration is part of our culture and how we work.

Fred Corbett has Chaired the St Benet's trust (www.stbenets.org) since its genesis in 2018 and will be stepping down later in 2024. We are keen to hear from suitably experienced people who would be interested in exploring if this role might be for them.



Diocese of Norwich Board of Education

LA
Maintained
VA / VC
Schools

DNEAT

St Benet's
MAT

Diocese of Norwich
Education Services Company (DoNESC)

Making a Difference

As of September 2024, St Benet's consists of 18 schools and 2,800 pupils. It employs 300 staff.

Clearly, there is the opportunity to make a positive difference in the communities we serve. Current chair Fred Corbett reflects that 'there is no doubt that working in the current educational field is very challenging but as always, the impact we can have is very rewarding. As Chair of the Trust I have felt that my influence and commitment has made a difference to the provision made for several thousand young people in recent years. Whilst the children come first there is no doubt that as chair you have to constantly remind yourself that we are a large employer, and the success of the children comes through the success of the adults. I have been proud to share some of the leadership of such an organisation that constantly strives to live by its very high standards in public life with such a strong Christian underpinning.' *Immeasurably more than we can imagine – Ephesians 3:20.*



Introduction to St Benet's and being the chair of the board

Our expansive vision of the role of education means that our schools must enable all pupils to flourish as unique individuals made in the image of God alongside being places of measurable academic excellence. As one of two Diocesan academy trusts we will continue our steady growth to enable all the schools in the Diocese to become academies. By 2030 we expect to consist of 44 schools and around 6,100 pupils.

The chair of a multi academy trust board has a vital role in setting the highest expectations for professional standards of governance and accountability and providing confident, visionary strategic leadership to the trust. They lead by example, setting the tone from the top. They are the key link between the trustees, with legal and strategic responsibility for the trust, and the chief executive and senior team who are responsible for day-to-day operations.

The Board meets four times a year and has three subcommittees which meet termly. Meetings can be attended face to face or online (hybrid). Dialogue with the CEO between meetings and some visits to schools is also an expectation of the role.



The Role

Strategic leadership

- Knowledge of national and regional educational priorities and the implications of these for the board and the trust.
- Ability to think strategically about the future direction of the trust and able to identify the steps needed to achieve goals.
- Ability to provide effective leadership of organisational change even when this is difficult.
- Ability to lead board meetings in a way which embodies the culture, values and ethos of the trust.
- Ensures the board seeks guidance from executive leaders and from the trust's governance professional before the board commits to significant or controversial courses of action.
- Knowledge of risk management and how to achieve the appropriate level of risk appetite / tolerance for the organisation.
- Ability to work closely with trustees, the governance professional and chief executive / accounting officer to plan an efficient and effective programme of work leading to well-informed and well-considered decisions.

Educational standards, financial performance and performance management

- Ability to understand and promote the importance of data interrogation to hold executive leaders to account.
- Ability to ensure the board holds executive leaders to account for financial and business management, in order to deliver educational outcomes.
- Confident in providing strategic leadership to the board during periods of scrutiny.

The Role

People

- Enables the board to work as an effective team by developing strong working relationships between trustees and creating a culture where differences are aired and resolved.
- Sets high expectations for conduct and behaviour for all those in governance and is an exemplary role model in demonstrating these.
- Creates an atmosphere of open, honest discussion where it is safe to constructively challenge conventional wisdom and creates a sense of inclusiveness where each trustee understands their individual contribution to the collective work of the board.

Structures and compliance

- Understands the importance of non-executive leadership roles and is able to lead discussions and decisions about what functions to delegate.
- Ability to set sufficiently high expectations of the trust's governance professional, ensuring the board is compliant with the regulatory frameworks for governance and charity and company law.
- Ability to challenge senior leaders in the Trust to meet the objectives set by the Board.

Self-evaluation and performance management

- Ability to lead on effective, purposeful and developmental management of the chief executive / accounting officer, setting clear objectives and ensuring high performance.
- Ability and willingness to actively invite feedback on their own performance as chair.
- Ability to set challenging development goals and work effectively with the board to meet these goals.
- Ability to have open and honest conversations with board members about their performance and development needs, and if appropriate, about their commitment or tenure.

The Academy Trust Governance Code can be found here www.DofN.org/atgc and sets out the principles, desired outcomes, and recommended practice for effective governance.

Person Specification

	Essential	Desirable
Experienced Chair of a board or committee	✓	
Eligible to act as a charity trustee	✓	
Senior experience in the world of education or relevant discipline / sector.		✓
Significant experience of working in senior positions	✓	
Excellent communication skills	✓	
A collaborative and collegial style of working	✓	
A practising Christian	✓	
A high level of integrity and discretion, handle confidential information with diplomacy and sensitivity	✓	
Strong analytical skills, with good attention to detail	✓	
Understanding of the Church of England, its organisation, and the role it plays in education		✓

Appointment Process

This is a non-executive, voluntary and unpaid role.
Expenses will be reimbursed.

If you would like an informal conversation to find out more with our Director of Education, Paul Dunning or the outgoing Chair please contact: paul.dunning@dioceseofnorwich.org

Applications, including a brief CV and covering letter setting out how you meet the requirements of the role, should be sent to Paul Dunning.

Deadline for applications is:

Saturday 31 August 2024



