

THE THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ACADEMY GOVERNING BODY Approved October 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. As a charity and company limited by guarantee, The Thinking Schools Academy Trust (the "Trust") is governed by a Board of Directors who have overall responsibility and ultimate decision-making authority for all the work of the Trust, including the establishing and running of the academies run by the Trust.
- 1.2. In order to assist with the discharge their responsibilities, the Directors have established Academy Governing Bodies (AGB) that are linked to each of the Academies. The AGB shall be a committee established pursuant to Articles 100 to 104 (inclusive) of the [Articles of Association of the Trust \(the Articles\)](#).
- 1.3. The Board of Directors may review these terms of reference at any time but shall be review them at least annually.
- 1.4. These terms of reference may only be amended by the Board of Directors or via delegated responsibility to the [Governance & Compliance Committee](#).

2. CONSTITUTION OF THE AGB

Governors of the AGB

- 2.1. AGB governors are appointed by the Regional Review & Assurance Board (RAB), in line with these terms of references and the trust articles of association.
- 2.2. In respect of any Academy which either (a) is adjudged by Ofsted to be inadequate or require improvement; or (b) the Directors determine that there is a reasonable risk that an Academy may be adjudged to be inadequate or require improvement; or (c) the Directors determine there is sufficient risk to any aspect of the school and or its governance performance; the Directors shall have complete discretion in determining the composition make up of and appointments to any AGB or [Interim Management Board \(IMB\)](#) in place at any time. This authority can be delegated to the Review & Assurance Board (RAB)
- 2.3. The AGB shall be comprised of a mix of the following parents, staff and community Governors. There shall be a minimum of 8 governors in addition to the Academy Principal/Headteacher and a maximum of 11, with numbers dependant on the needs and circumstances of the schools:
 - a) No less than two elected parents
 - b) Trust link members (e.g. central school improvement leaders, other TSAT Principal/Headteacher or senior leader)
 - c) Two staff members (ideally one teaching and one support staff)
 - d) No less than three skills based Community Governors
 - e) The Academy Principal/Headteacher (ex officio)

RAB members, including the Regional Director may attend AGB meetings on an adhoc basis or can be appointed to the AGB by the RAB.

2.4. The AGB must have link governors for the following roles

- a) Safeguarding & Mental Health
- b) Pupil Premium (Primary only to include sports premium and grants)
- c) SEND & Equality
- d) Curriculum & Enrichment
- e) Recruitment, diversity, workload and wellbeing
- f) Risk and Compliance
- g) Pupil & Parental engagement, marketing and comms

The following link roles are suggested but may vary depending on the needs of the school

- a) STEM Careers & digital

Appointment of Governors

2.5. Parent governors of the AGB shall be elected by the Parents and appointed by the RAB. They must be:

- a) where possible be a parent of, or have parental responsibility for, a registered pupil at one of the Academies at the time of their appointment, failing this they must be a parent of school age children attending any school; and
- b) a person who, in the opinion of the RAB is committed to the governance and success of the Academies.

2.6. Community governors of the AGB shall be appointed by the RAB. They must be:

- a) a person who, in the opinion of the RAB, is committed to the governance and success of the Academies.

2.7. Staff Governors of the AGB shall be appointed by the RAB. They must be:

- a) where possible be employed at the school or failing this they must be employed at another TSAT school;
- b) a person who, in the opinion of the RAB, is committed to the governance and success of the Academies; and
- c) a staff governor role is subject to employment with TSAT and therefore if a staff governor ends employment with TSAT they will effectively resign from the AGB.

2.8. Trust link Governors of the AGB shall be appointed by RAB. They must be:

- a) employed by TSAT;
- b) a person who, in the opinion of the RAB, is committed to the governance and success of the Academies; and
- c) a Trust link governor role is subject to employment with TSAT and therefore if a Trust link governor resigns from employment with TSAT they will effectively resign from the AGB.

3. TERM OF OFFICE

3.1. The term of office for any governor shall be 4 years, except the

Principal/Headteacher who will remain a governor until they cease to be employed in

that role within the Academy.

3.2. Subject to remaining eligible to be a particular type of governor, any person may be re-appointed or re-elected to the AGB.

3.3. A person serving on the AGB shall cease to hold office if:

- a) They resign their office by giving notice in writing to the clerk of the AGB;
- b) Principal/Headteacher, staff governor or Trust link governor ceases to be employed in that role within the Academy; and
- c) the RAB terminate the appointment of a governor whose presence or conduct is deemed by the RAB, at their sole discretion, not to be in the best interests of the Trust or the Academies.

3.4. For the avoidance of doubt, a parent governor shall not automatically cease to hold office solely by reason of their child ceasing to be a pupil at the Academies.

Appointments and removal of Chair & Vice Chair

3.5. The AGB should nominate a Chair (ideally a community member) to be approved by the RAB.

3.6. The AGB can appoint and remove their own Vice Chair

3.7. The term of office for Chair & Vice Chair shall be two years. Subject to remaining eligible to be a governor.

3.8. The Chair may not be removed without the approval of the RAB. The Chair of the AGB shall be appointed by the RAB and may be removed from office by the RAB at any time. The RAB will have regard to the views of the members of the AGB in making this decision.

3.9. Where the Chair is absent from any meeting or there is at the time a vacancy in the office of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall act as the chair for the purposes of the meeting. Where the Vice Chair is also absent from the meeting or there is at the time a vacancy in the office of Vice Chair, the governors of the AGB shall elect one.

3.10. Where a Chair has not been appointed, the Regional Director, Chair of the RAB or Chair of the Board of Directors may act as Chair, though this should not be a regular or long-term arrangement.

4. PROCEEDINGS OF THE AGB

Meetings

4.1. The AGB shall meet at least six times a year and shall hold such other meetings as may be necessary.

4.2. The AGB must have a regular skills audit and annual self-review meeting each year.

4.3. Meetings of the AGB shall be convened by the clerk to the AGB, who shall send the governors written notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda at least seven

clear days in advance of the meeting. Where there are matters demanding urgent consideration, the Chair or, in their absence, the Vice-Chair, may waive the need for seven days' notice of the meeting and substitute such notice as they think fit.

Quorum

- 4.4. The quorum for a meeting of the AGB, and any vote on any matter at such a meeting, shall be any three of the governors of the AGB, or, where greater, any one third (rounded up to a whole number) of the total number of governors of the AGB at the date of the meeting

Voting

- 4.5. Every matter to be decided at a meeting of the AGB shall be determined by a majority of the votes of the governors present and entitled to vote on the matter. Every governor shall have one vote. Where there is an equal division of votes, the Chair of the meeting shall have the casting vote. A governor may not vote by proxy.
- 4.6. Any governor who is also an employee of the Trust shall withdraw from that part of any meeting of the AGB at which their remuneration, conditions of service, promotion, conduct, suspension, dismissal or retirement are to be considered.
- 4.7. Any governor who has or may have any direct or indirect duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any Personal Financial Interest as defined below) which conflicts or may conflict with their duties as a governor of the AGB shall disclose that fact to the AGB as soon as they become aware of it. A person must absent themselves from any discussions of the AGB in which it is possible that a conflict will arise between their duty to act solely in the interests of the Academies and any duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any Personal Financial Interest).

5. DELEGATED POWERS

General principles

- 5.1. In the exercise of its delegated powers and functions, the governors of the AGB shall:

- a) be the Trust Board's local point of consultation and review on matters such as school policy, vision & strategy;
- b) represent the view of the school and its stakeholders to the Trust;
- c) ensure the Academy's culture, ethos and values are in line with the Trust vision and strategic objectives;
- d) ensure the Academy's improvement plan is in line with the Trust's strategic objectives;
- e) ensure the Academy delivers a broad and balanced curriculum in line with the trust wide vision and meets the local needs of pupils;
- f) monitor curriculum implementation and the impact on pupil outcomes;
- g) scrutinise management information to ensure educational outcomes are meeting expectations set;
- h) ensure Pupil Premium funding is spent effectively and improves attainment for eligible pupils;
- i) ensure high quality outcomes for pupils with special education needs and disability (SEND);

- j) ensure the Academy creates a safe environment for pupils through robust safeguarding practices and mental health support through the AGB appointed safeguarding link governor;
- k) ensure the Academy's adherence with support for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children;
- l) scrutinise pupil attendance data and exclusion policies and procedures;
- m) ensure there is a sufficient CPD and staff training in place for Academy staff;
- n) ensure there is a suitable level of support and appropriate workload for all staff within the Academy;
- o) review and approve the Academy owned policies (not TSAT policies or TSAT framework policies) and practices on a regular basis and ensure they are implemented within the Academy;
- p) ensure the Academy has statutory policies in place, reviewed and published;
- q) ensure the Academy staff and AGB governors are compliant with fulfilling statutory training including, Fire Awareness, Health & Safety, Safeguarding and Data Protection;
- r) work closely with the Board of Directors and act with integrity, objectivity and honesty in the best interests of the Trust and the Academies;
- s) be open about decisions and be prepared to justify and provide the rationale for those decisions; and
- t) keep confidential all information of a confidential nature obtained by governors relating to the Academy and the Trust;
- u) if the school does not have a full Partnership Agreement with Thinking Facilities, the AGB must ensure the school complies with all Health & Safety regulations and TSAT Health & Safety policies
- v) if the school does not have a full Partnership Agreement with Thinking Technology, the AGB must ensure the school has suitable cyber security, system security ensure compliance with requirements of the RPA and ensure the school complies with all TSAT IT policies
- w) if the school does not have a full Partnership Agreement with Thinking Personnel, the AGB must ensure the school complies and all TSAT employment policies including but not limited to safer recruitment, right to work, equal pay and gender & EDI

5.2. Each governor shall be required to take part in regular self-review and is accountable for meeting their own training and development needs. It is a governor's responsibility to consider if, and raise any concerns where, they feel that appropriate training and development is not being provided.

5.3. Governors shall be expected to report to the Trust against KPIs which have been set for the Academy and provide such data and information regarding the business of the Academies and the pupils attending the Academies as the Directors may require from time to time.

Levels of delegation

5.4. The powers retained by the Trust and delegated from the Directors to the AGBs are outlined in the schedule: <https://www.tsatrust.org.uk/about/governance/>

5.5. For the avoidance of doubt, where a power is not expressly delegated to any AGB, it will be deemed to have been retained by the Trust. The scheme of delegation may be reviewed by the Directors at any time but shall be reviewed at least bi annually. Directors reserve the right to remove or alter any delegation at any time, whilst having due regard to, but not being bound by, the views of the AGB.