



Astrea Academy Trust

**Local Committee Member
Handbook**

2018-19

Contents

Welcome letter	3
Astrea Academy Trust Ethos	5
Governance at Astrea.....	6
The Local Committee	8
The work of the committees.....	8
Key Features of the Committee	9
Your Role	10
Pre-appointment Checks.....	11
Link roles	11
Visits	12
Code of Conduct.....	13
Ofsted.....	15
Questioning	16
Glossary.....	17
Local Committee Model Agenda Cycle	21
Agenda Item Briefings.....	22
New Committee Member Checklist.....	30



Welcome letter

Dear committee member

Thank you for taking up this important role within the Astrea Academy Trust.

This is a hugely exciting time for our family of academies. The Trust has been recognised by the Department for Education as being well-placed to raise standards and achieve excellence for pupils in a growing number of academies. We are presented with a rare opportunity to make a real difference to the lives and life chances of so many children – many of whom haven't previously received the educational opportunities they deserve.

The Trust currently has academies based across South Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire, which includes academies at various stages of their school improvement trajectory. As a Trust, we are clear about the importance of achieving long-term sustainability for our academies. Our vision is to enable individual academies to flourish with real autonomy, whilst also ensuring a strong ethos of support and collaboration across our academies, together with high expectations for staff and pupils alike.

The law places accountability for the educational outcomes and financial diligence of the Trust firmly with the Trustees and the CEO as Accounting Officer. However, a fundamental principle for us is that effective governance is best delivered as close as possible to the point of impact of decisions. For this reason, we have developed a governance structure that values the educational overview and scrutiny of local committees.

The purpose of this document is to provide clarity on the structure by which the different elements of governance work together for the benefit of the whole Trust. We have based our model on our experience and the successes and lessons learned by our first year in educational practice. I have no doubt we will have further lessons to learn over the years as we use this model in practice. We will review the details of these governance arrangements annually as a family.

I hope that you will find your time on the committee interesting, purposeful and rewarding.

With very best wishes,

Libby Nicholas



Libby Nicholas

Chief Executive, Astrea Academy Trust

Our Educational Vision

We value all-round development of the individual, through arts, sports, leadership opportunities, enrichment and community. This is encapsulated in the skills, qualities and personalities we foster in our pupils.

The Astrea Academy Trust logo communicates the values of collaboration, development and aspiration. The three figures are coming together in the shape of a tree, which represents growth, whilst the tallest figure reaches upwards, towards a star, which is above and beyond the highest branch of the tree.

Academies, staff and children within the Trust benefit from a strong ethos of support and collaboration across the Astrea family. Teachers within Astrea belong to a national community of professionals, and benefit from a wide range of networks and development opportunities across the Trust.

Our approach is to ensure sustainable school improvement – including the successful improvements that have been achieved so far in many of our academies that have joined the Trust since January 2016.



Astrea Academy Trust Ethos

The work of Astrea Academy Trust is underpinned by five core Value Partners, which are equally applicable to pupils, staff, volunteers and the work of the Trust itself.

Each pair of Value Partners is accompanied by a call for action in the form of a hashtag, which is used in verbal, digital and hard copy communications.

The Value Partners can be used as a measure of individual, school and Trust progress and as a guide to inform the direction of change.

Responsibility and Leadership

Individuals in the Astrea community are accountable for their own decisions and actions and are supported by strong leaders, while trailblazers are encouraged to develop skills and talents in others. The Trust has a strong commitment to developing and nurturing our own leaders. **#4equity**

Enjoyment and Innovation

We know that everyone learns best when they enjoy what they do and can follow their innate desire to achieve. Astrea pushes boundaries so that pioneering ideas are tried and tested so that our academies remain leaders in the advancement of teaching and learning methods. **#go4it**

Aspiration and Development

Every member of the Astrea community, from the youngest pupil to the oldest member of staff, is encouraged to cultivate opportunities to grow. We achieve excellence by being inspired to become the best we can be. The progress and well-being of pupils is our top priority, at the centre of every decision. **#Reach4thestars**

Collaboration and Inclusion

Astrea honours and applauds the differences that make us unique whilst actively seeking and celebrating the common ground that binds us together as a strong community. We work together in a productive environment where dynamic ideas are shared in partnership, so that every member of the community may thrive **#all4one**

Honesty and Integrity

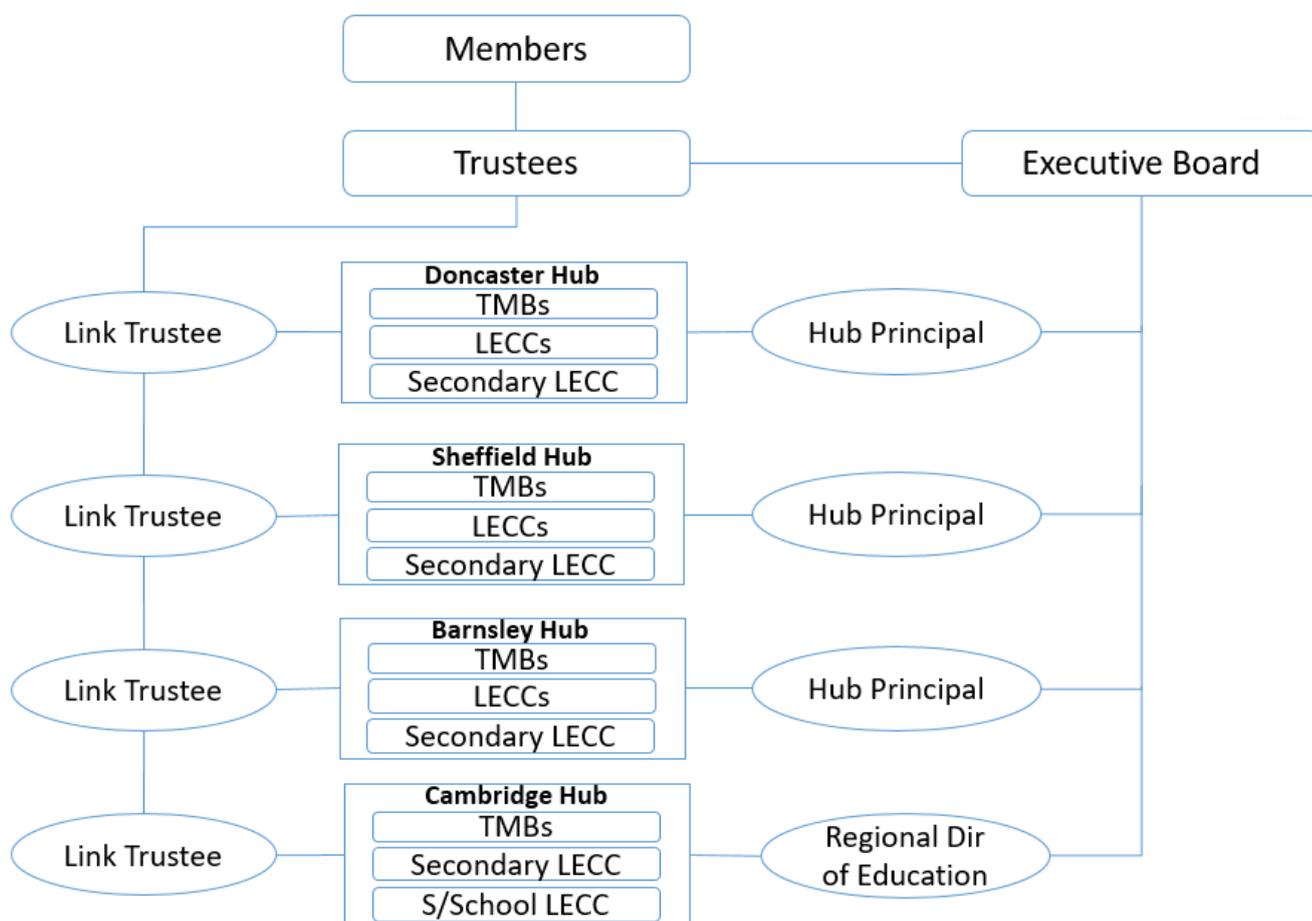
We are honest and open. Astrea decisions and responses are grounded in time-honoured moral principles that remain constant in the face of challenges and change **#4good**

You can learn more about the Values, and hear from staff and pupils across Astrea Academies, at our website: <https://astreaacademytrust.org>

Governance at Astrea

As a multi-academy trust (MAT), Astrea has a number of layers of governance as shown in the diagram below. Each plays an important part in the oversight of the Trust’s work and, whilst communication between the layers is essential, this work must be complementary and non-duplicative. This means that local committees can focus on clearly-defined areas.

An explanation of each of these layers can be found on page 7.



Members

The **Members** are the guardians of Astrea's constitution, as set out in the Articles of Association. It is their responsibility to ensure that the Trustees are pursuing the Trust's charitable objectives and to hold the Board to account for its conduct and performance.

Trustees

The Board of **Trustees** has overall accountability and legal responsibility for the Trust. As non-executive directors, they are responsible for ensuring that Astrea meets its obligations as a company. As governors, they are responsible for the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the Trust as a whole; for holding the CEO and wider executive team to account for the Trust's performance and for overseeing the financial performance and probity of the Trust. In addition, a number of Trustees take on a 'link' responsibility for liaising with the chairs in each hub of schools or for a Trust-wide priority such as safeguarding. The Board has three main committees (Education; HR and Finance, Risk & Audit) in addition to a Remuneration Committee. You can find out more about the Trustees here: <https://astreaacademytrust.org/astrea-trustees/>

Executive Board

The **Executive Board** is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Trust. Each executive director leads a team of professionals who support the schools in important areas such as inclusion and safeguarding. The wider central team's support includes significant oversight of schools' finances and HR as well as the line-management of Principals and estates staff. Each hub (i.e. a town or region) has a Hub Principal, the Principal of one of the schools who liaises between fellow Principals and the Director of Education and Executive Board.

You can find out more about the executive directors here: <https://astreaacademytrust.org/meet-the-team/>

Local Committees

Local Committee Members are volunteers, chosen for their skills, experience and insights, to whom certain responsibilities are delegated for oversight of individual schools. Local committees are not legally responsible for the schools, so committee members are able to focus on school improvement by supporting and challenging the Principal and the wider school leadership team.

Since local committees are drawn from the school community and will usually include parents and staff members, their input serves an essential part in informing the academy's local strategic direction. The committee is also a supportive forum in which the Principal can have access to the insights of people with professional, voluntary and life experience outside the education sector.

The rest of this handbook focuses on the local committees and the role that you will play as a committee member.

The Local Committee

Individual academies in the Trust are overseen by a local committee and, in some cases, a committee might oversee more than one school. There are two types of committee:

- **Transition Management Boards (TMBs)** – these boards are established for schools who have recently joined the Trust and need a high level of support and direction from Astrea’s central team. TMBs will also very often include National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) who will use their expertise to guide the development of the committee. In the early stages, most members of the TMB will be representatives of the Trust, but additional members will join in order to ensure the committee’s graduation to a Local Education Consultative Committee (LECC).
- **Local Education Consultative Committees (LECCs)** – these committees have a much lower level of Trust representation and, therefore, enjoy greater autonomy over how they manage their business. LECCs are those committees deemed to be more sustainable and, in time, to be in the best position to contribute strategically to the wider governance network within the Trust.

In practice, the responsibilities of each type of committee do not differ greatly and, whichever type of committee you join, the principles for your work are the same.

As committees of the Board, both TMBs and LECCs have Terms of Reference, which you can find here: <https://astreaacademytrust.org/about-us/governance/>

The work of the committees

Local committees have three key functions in their relationship with the school: Support, Challenge and Champion.

Local committees **support** the school in a number of different ways, for example by:

- Creating a positive forum for open and reflective discussion between committee members, the Principal and the school’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Discussing the school’s key priorities, its improvement plan and self-evaluation so that the Principal gains reassurance from having an external perspective on his or her work
- Celebrating the school’s successes whether by congratulating leaders or attending school celebration events
- Monitoring the school’s performance so that concerns can be addressed at an early stage
- Using members’ own expertise and connections to create opportunities for the school
- Ensuring the involvement and development of their own members so that the committee remains an effective part of the school’s leadership and management
- Representing the school at Ofsted inspections

The committees **challenge** the school by:

- Holding the Principal to account for the school's performance against its targets and budget
- Asking probing questions to ensure a robust understanding of the work of the school
- Promoting a culture of high expectations so that leaders continue to have ambitious expectations of their pupils and colleagues
- Asking the Principal to review policies or decisions

Committees also play an important role in **championing** the school and its pupils through:

- Representing it at community events or with important local and national stakeholders
- The chair meeting with the Link Trustee so that the work of the school and the committee is understood at Board level
- Advocating for the school's particular needs within the Trust

Securing the right balance between support and challenge is key. Committee members cannot simply praise the school in all things and accept everything that they are told, nor can they be effective if they only ever concentrate on the problems and demand more of the school. Without first building relationships, a supportive environment and showing positive commitment to the school, challenge will never truly be as effective as it should be.

Key features of the committee

The Terms of Reference set out the broad structure of the committee, but there are some key elements:

- **Meetings** are the main opportunities for committees to come together to share their work and for the Principal to update members on the school's performance. They are also an opportunity for other members of staff to report on their own work. Over the course of the year, these meetings will cover a wide range of aspects of school life and the minutes will be important evidence of the support and challenge given to the leadership. TMBs will meet a minimum of six times a year and LECCs will meet a minimum of three times a year, though in practice tend to meet more often.

See p22 onwards for a briefing on individual agenda items.

- **The Chair** convenes and leads the committee and chairs meetings. He or she is the main link between the committee and the Principal, with whom the chair will work to build a strong partnership. He or she will decide the final agenda for meetings and is responsible for liaising with the clerk on the management of papers and records for the committee.

The chair is also responsible for promoting the development of the committee as a whole and will play a decisive part in determining the appointment and re-appointment of members as well as ensuring that the committee is effective. The chair also represents the committee in meetings with the Link Trustee and Astrea central team colleagues.

- **The Clerk** should be a professional engaged by the school or the Trust to assist the committee in managing its business. This includes ensuring that records of membership are kept up-to-date, that meeting papers and other important documents are shared in an accessible and timely manner and that an accurate and useful record of meetings is kept.

Your Role

Each member plays an essential part in making sure that the committee as a whole works effectively. You will need to be proactive about engaging with the school and developing your own knowledge and expertise as a committee member.

This handbook sets out the expectations for all volunteers on the committee. Depending on which type of member you are (e.g. parent, staff, co-opted) and whether you hold a link role, a separate role description will be provided to you.

You will be appointed to a committee because you can offer qualities that it needs:

- **Skills** – these are an important contribution to the work of the committee. These can be technical skills, such as data analysis, or inter-personal skills that allow the group to function effectively, engage with parents or persuade potential donors to contribute to the school.
- **Experience** – Astrea’s network of local committee members bring together a wide range of professional, academic, voluntary and life experiences. New volunteers are often concerned that they do not know enough about education, but schools hugely value what people from outside the sector can offer right from the start.
- **Perspectives** – school governance works best when there is diversity of opinion around the table. Parent and staff members, in particular, lend a unique perspective to the committee’s discussions because, apart from pupils, they are the groups most affected by the school’s work. Representatives from the local community, religious establishments, business and the Council also play an important part in helping the school serve its local context.
- **Commitment** – committee members will be expected to attend meetings; to visit the school at least once a term and to make time to read papers and to prepare questions in advance of meetings. You should also make time to undertake research or attend training in order to improve your own knowledge and skills. Exceptionally, committee members might be asked to sit on review panels for exclusions, complaints or disciplinary matters.

Pre-appointment checks

With your appointment letter, you will receive a number of important documents:

- Contact details and privacy information
- Code of Conduct (see p13)
- Register of interests
- Skills audit

In addition to holding this information, the Trust will also undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to ensure that you do not pose a risk to children.

Link roles

The Trust asks that each local committee appoint a named link member in each of the following areas:

- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Pupil Premium (including other Premium grants)

Individual role descriptions are made available by the Trust. More than one link role can be held by the same person, but it is better to share the workload and to encourage other members to get more involved in the committee's work. Chairs in particular are advised to pass on any link responsibilities that they hold.

In addition to these, the committee may agree that individual members will take on link responsibilities in relation to a specific priority for the school. Examples of these could be:

- Income generation (e.g. marketing for pupil recruitment; fundraising and lettings)
- Parental and community engagement
- A subject area such as literacy or numeracy
- A phase of the school, such as Early Years
- Behaviour and attendance

Where these link roles are created at committee-level, it is important to agree a clear set of expectations.

The Trust advises that, where responsibilities are largely held centrally, the committee does not appoint a link member. For example, finances are closely monitored by the central team and the Board's Finance, Risk and Audit committee, so a link role in this area is unlikely to be a local committee member's best use of time and expertise.

Link roles are a good way of structuring your induction into governance, so you need not wait until you have been on the committee for a period of time before volunteering. You should discuss link role opportunities with your chair.

Visits

Knowing your school and being visible to the school community are essential to being able to support, challenge and champion it as part of your role. Meetings and reports from the school's leadership are an important part of this, but must be complemented by visits so that the committee shares a deep understanding of school life. Committee members are expected to visit the school at least once every full term, but ideally every half term.

You will get to meet the children and be shown the work that they are doing; you will have conversations with passionate and hard-working members of staff and will feel part of the school environment and community.

The main principle of effective school visits is that they should be purposeful. As part of your introduction to the school, you should be invited to undertake a learning walk so that you know the layout and condition of the school and so that you can start to get to grips with the terminology.

After this, your visits should have a specific focus – for **link members**, this focus will be informed by the relevant role description; for others, you should ask the Principal or the committee what area of school life it would be useful for you to report back on. A visit might also include a meeting with someone other than the Principal; for example, the Pupil Premium link will want to meet the school's Pupil Premium Co-ordinator and, if there is a literacy link, that member should meet the literacy lead for the academy.

Committees – and **chairs** in particular – are strongly encouraged to support newer members by joining them on their first few visits. A newer member could, for example, shadow another member's existing visit. Having more than one member come in at the same time can also reduce the work of the school in arranging and supporting visits.

Parent members should make time to visit the school *as members of the committee*. This means visiting other than by being at the school to drop off and pick up your children or at parents' evenings.

It can be difficult for **staff members** on the committee to find time during the working week to 'visit' their own school. This is not always possible, but can be a useful way to broaden their understanding of different aspects of the school and to maintain the visibility of the committee. Principals are encouraged, where possible, to allow time for such 'visits'.

Specific guidance on arranging and recording visits and a template annual visits planner are available separately.

Code of Conduct

(You will be asked to confirm acceptance of this as part of your appointment pack.)

Each Transition Management Board (TMB) or Local Education Consultative Committee (LECC) is a committee of the Astrea Trust Board.

As individuals on the Committee we agree to the following:

Approach

- We understand that safeguarding children is everybody's responsibility and we will report any concerns that we have in line with the safeguarding policy.
- We are committed to Astrea's mission, values and its inclusive ethos.
- We recognise that the Committee works with the Principal, Astrea Board and the Executive Directors within Astrea Central Team.
- We accept that we have no authority to act individually, except when the Committee has delegated to us authority given to it by the Board.
- We accept collective responsibility for all decisions made by the Committee or its delegated agents. This means that we will not speak against majority decisions outside the Committee meeting and will only speak on behalf of the Committee when we have been specifically authorised to do so.
- We have a duty to act fairly and without prejudice, and in so far as we have responsibility for staff, we will fulfil all that is expected of a good employer.
- We are aware of and accept the Seven Principles of Public Life (set out in the Appendix).
- We will consider carefully how our decisions might affect the community and other schools.
- We will always be mindful of our responsibility to maintain and develop the ethos and reputation of our school(s). Our actions within the school and the local community will reflect this.
- In making or responding to criticism or complaints affecting the school, we will follow the procedures established by the Astrea Board and Central Team that have been shared with us.
- We will actively support and challenge the Principal.

Commitment

- We acknowledge that accepting office as a committee member involves the commitment of significant amounts of time and energy.
- We will each involve ourselves actively in the work of the Committee, and accept our fair share of responsibilities, including service on panels, working groups and as link committee members.
- We will make full efforts to attend all meetings and, where we cannot attend, explain in advance why we are unable to.
- We will get to know the school well and respond to opportunities to involve ourselves in its activities.
- We will visit the school, with all visits arranged in advance with the staff and undertaken within the framework established by the Astrea Central Team and agreed with the Committee and Principal.
- We will seriously consider our individual and collective needs for training and development, and will undertake relevant training. We accept that in the interests of open government and to comply with the Academies Financial Handbook, our names, terms and dates of office, roles on the governing body, category of committee member, the body responsible for appointing us and any declarations of interest will be published on the school's website. These will remain published for at least twelve months after our departure from the Committee. Trustees of Astrea who sit on TMBs or LECCs will have further details published about them on the network's central website.

Relationships

- We will strive to work as a team in which constructive working relationships are actively promoted.
- We will express views openly, courteously and respectfully in all our communications with other committee members.
- We will support the chair in their role of ensuring appropriate conduct in meetings and at all times.
- We are prepared to answer queries from other committee members in relation to delegated functions and take into account any concerns expressed, and we will acknowledge the time, effort and skills that have been committed to the delegated function by those involved.
- We will seek to develop effective working relationships with all stakeholders in the school community, including the Principal, parents, school and wider Astrea staff, the local authority and other relevant agencies.

Confidentiality

- We will observe confidentiality regarding proceedings of the Committee in meetings and from our visits to the school as committee members.
- We will observe complete confidentiality when matters are deemed confidential or where they concern specific members of staff, parents/ carers or pupils, both inside or outside the school.
- We will exercise the greatest prudence at all times when discussions regarding school business arise outside a Committee meeting.
- We will not reveal the details of any Committee vote.

Conflicts of interest

- We will record any pecuniary or other business interest that we have in connection with the Committee's business (including those of people with whom we have a close connection where they could be seen to have a bearing on our decisions within the Committee) in the Register of Business Interests, and if any such conflicted matter arises in a meeting we will offer to leave the meeting for the appropriate length of time.
- We will also declare any conflict of loyalty at the start of any meeting should the situation arise.
- We will act in the best interests of the school as a whole and not as a representative of any group, even if elected to the Committee.

Breach of this Code of Conduct

- If we believe this code has been breached, we will raise this issue with the chair and the chair will investigate; should suspension or removal from the committee be deemed necessary, the chair will make this recommendation to Astrea's Central Team.
- Should it be the chair that we believe has breached this code, we will report our concerns to the Astrea Central Team and either a senior member of the team or another committee member, such as the vice chair, will investigate.

Undertaking:

As a member of an Astrea Committee, I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.

Committee members also undertake to accept the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) ("The Nolan Principles"): Selflessness; Integrity; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Honesty and Leadership

Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is the education sector's inspector and regulator. Through its published reports, it gives parents and the public information about the quality of provision in England's schools, giving overall ratings of either Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate.

Governance is considered under the category of 'Leadership and Management', which is discussed from p42 of the [Inspection Handbook](#).

Astrea's governance arrangements divide responsibilities between local committees, the executive team and the Board. The school will, therefore, arrange for the committee's chair and a representative of the Trust to meet the lead inspector together. A Trustee will also be asked to speak to the inspection team, usually by phone.

In addition to these conversations, the inspection team will look at the school's website, local committee minutes, visit reports and papers in order to reach a view of the effectiveness of governance at the school. It is important, therefore, that meetings and visits evidence this effectiveness.

Inspectors will consider whether committee members:

- work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition
- provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school
- provide support for an effective Principal or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school
- understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school
- ensure that assessment information from leaders provides committee members with sufficient and accurate information to ask probing questions about outcomes for pupils
- can evaluate how the school is using the pupil premium, Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium, primary PE and sport premium, and special educational needs funding
- are transparent and accountable, including in governance structures, attendance at meetings and contact with parents

The inspection team will be particularly keen to see that committee members know the school well. This and the expectations above are not just what Ofsted would wish to see, but what the Trust agrees are a sound basis for good governance.

The **Ofsted Briefing for Local Committee Members** provides further information.

Questioning

Individual link member role descriptions and briefings contain suggested questions. The list below sets out some guidelines for questioning.

Questioning the Principal and others is the main way in which you will learn about the school, hold leaders to account and support them to reflect on their decisions. The minutes will also record the range and level of challenge in questions and this is important evidence that governance is being effective.

Those new to education or new to the Trust will understandably want to ask questions about the meaning of certain terms. In turn, leaders' reports should be clear and accessible to committee members. It is important, however, that such questions do not feature too heavily in meetings. A glossary is provided below on p17, which covers some of the most common terms and it is usually possible to find the meanings on the internet.

When posing questions at meetings or on visits, you should consider the following:

- **Does this question focus on impact?** Committee members will receive a lot of information about the work of the school, but their concern should be for outcomes, rather than process. Wherever possible, Principals should provide objective evidence of impact (for example by referring to the data in the Principal's Report).
- **Is this relevant to the agenda item?** In order to keep meetings to time and focused on the main priorities, questions need to be relevant. You are encouraged to leave other questions until 'Any other business', after the meeting or your next visit.
- **Does this question help to focus the Principal or leader on an important aspect of what is being discussed?** Committee members should use their questions to guide the school's thinking and attention towards key priorities.
- **Is this question strategic?** For example, "does the school use its lunch menus to support health and wellbeing or even the curriculum?" is a better question than "what is usually on the lunch menu?"
- **Does this help the committee to understand what is being discussed?**
- **Has my question been answered? Do further questions arise from the answer?** Where useful, committee members should ask follow-up questions either to clarify a response or to probe any new information.

Glossary

This appendix contains some information on the key acronyms and initialisms used in education. If you have suggestions for additions to this list, please email governance@astreaacademytrust.org

Name	Acronym / Initialism	Definition
Academy		A school funded directly by the Secretary of State, and independent of the Local Authority within which it is located; contrasted with mainstream schools that remain under Local Authority control
Academy Improvement Plan/ Academy Development Plan	AIP ADP	These documents set out the main targets for your academy's year encompassing quality of teaching, student development, academy leadership, and community links. Along with the Self-Evaluation Form, they are a regular feature of committee meetings
Age Related Expectations	ARE	Used as a measure in the system of primary assessments, with pupils being assessed as 'above', 'at' or 'below' age-related expectations
Continuing Professional Development	CPD	Good teaching is essential – students cannot excel without it. Astrea therefore places considerable emphasis on the personal development and training of its staff.
Disclosure Barring Scheme	DBS	Schools conduct DBS checks of relevant staff (these checks were formerly known as CRBs, conducted by the Criminal Records Bureau)
Department for Education	DfE	The Department for Education is responsible for education and children's services in England.

Name	Acronym / Initialism	Definition
Early Learning Goals	ELGs	The standards that a child is expected to achieve in seven key areas by the end of their Reception year.
Early Years Foundation Stage	EYFS	This sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. In Astrea's schools, this means any day-care provision, nursery and the Reception class in the academy.
General Certificate of Secondary Education	GCSE	Qualification taken at the end of secondary school, before sixth form.
Good Level of Development	GLD	A performance measure showing the proportion of children who have achieved the expected standard in their Early Learning Goals (see above).
Keeping Children Safe in Education	KCSIE	This is the DfE's official safeguarding advice to schools. At the start of each year, committee members will be asked to read Part 1 of the guidance and to confirm that they understand their duties
Key Stage	KS	<p>After EYFS (see above), the five stages of education through which pupils will progress:</p> <p>Key Stage 1, where the majority of pupils are aged 5 to 7</p> <p>Key Stage 2, where the majority of pupils are aged 7 to 11</p> <p>Key Stage 3, where the majority of children are aged 11 to 14</p> <p>Key Stage 4, where the majority of pupils are aged 14 to 16</p> <p>Key Stage 5, where the majority of pupils are aged 16 to 19 (i.e. Astrea's sixth forms)</p>

Name	Acronym / Initialism	Definition
Looked After Child	LAC	'Looked after children' (LAC) formerly known as 'children in public care' are placed with foster carers, in residential homes or with parents or other relatives (under certain circumstances).
Local Authority	LA	This is the legal term for what might more commonly be known as the local council.
Local Education Consultative Committee	LECC	A voluntary oversight committee assigned to a school in the Astrea Academy Trust. Please see p7 of the Handbook for more information.
Multi-Academy Trust	MAT	A group of schools sitting within one single legal entity. Astrea is a multi-academy trust
Office for Standards in Education	Ofsted	<p>The body which arranges and sets standards for school inspections. Inspectors use the following scale when judging the overall effectiveness of the school and making the key judgements about the quality of leadership and management, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, personal development, behaviour and welfare, and outcomes for pupils. Where applicable, they also judge the effectiveness of the early years provision and 6th form.</p> <p>Grade 1 - outstanding</p> <p>Grade 2 - good</p> <p>Grade 3 - requires improvement</p> <p>Grade 4 - inadequate</p>
Published Admission Number	PAN	The PAN is the maximum number of pupils that the admission authority will admit to each year group. Each school has a published number to admit (PAN) for the whole school.
Reading, Writing and Maths	RWM	A performance measure for primary schools at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, which shows the percentage of children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. Also known as 'the combined score'.

Name	Acronym / Initialism	Definition
Scheme of Delegation	SoD	The document, published on Astrea’s website, which sets out the responsibilities of the different governance and executive layers in important aspects of the Trust’s and academies’ work.
Self-Evaluation Framework	SEF	This is a tool designed as a crucial part of schools’ ongoing cycles of review and planning. It is a diagnostic document designed to indicate key strengths and weaknesses, and the actions that need to be taken to effect school improvement. It is also one of the key documents considered by Ofsted during their visits
Special Educational Needs & Disabilities sometimes Special Educational Needs	SEND sometimes SEN	Needs that affect a child’s ability to learn can include their: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • behaviour or ability to socialise, e.g. not being able to make friends • reading and writing, e.g. they have dyslexia • ability to understand things • concentration levels, e.g. they have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder • physical needs or impairments
Transition Management Board	TMB	A voluntary oversight committee assigned to a school in the Astrea Academy Trust. Please see p7 of the Handbook for more information.

Local Committee Model Agenda Cycle

Autumn Meeting(s)	Spring Meeting(s)	Summer Meeting(s)
Minutes, actions and matters arising	Minutes, actions and matters arising	Minutes, actions and matters arising
Declarations of interest (annual declaration)	Declarations of interest	Declarations of interest
Principal's Report (including previous year's results, if not discussed at Su2) <i>Full report termly, oral or short written updates can be given at any second meeting in a term</i>	Principal's Report <i>Full report termly, oral or short written updates can be given at any second meeting in a term</i>	Principal's Report (including offer data) <i>Full report termly, oral or short written updates can be given at any second meeting in a term</i>
Budget monitoring	Budget monitoring	Budget monitoring and setting for following financial year
School risk register	School risk register	School risk register
Chair's update (including link trustee feedback)	Chair's update (including link trustee feedback)	Chair's update (including link trustee feedback)
Member visit reports and feedback and annual visits plan	Member visit reports and feedback	Member visit reports and feedback
Appointment of chair (and vice chair if applicable); agreement of link responsibilities	Outcomes predictions	Skills audit, committee membership and annual impact statement
KCSIE and Prevent (confirmation of understanding)		
Performance management and pay		
Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) and Improvement Plan		
Pupil Premium, Sports Grant and Yr7 Catch-up Grant Report and Strategy		
SEND annual report		
Safeguarding annual report		
Progress against equality objectives (can be part of the Principal's Report)		
Staff presentations		
Monitoring reports from Astrea Central		
Survey responses from parents, pupils and staff (<i>optional</i>)		
Committee strategy session and training (<i>optional</i>)		

Agenda Item Briefings

This document gives a brief overview of each of the standard agenda items shown in the **annual agenda template**. It is intended to assist committee members in preparing for meetings and is not an exhaustive source of the information under each heading.

Terms shown in bold refer to a separate document, which is available either on the [Trust website](#) or on request from governance@astreaacademytrust.org.

Recurring Items

1. Minutes, actions and matters arising

The minutes are an important record of the committee's work. They should be a true and fair reflection of the committee's discussions, but are not a verbatim record of every discussion. They should be useful and informative to non-attendees. Clerks are mindful that minutes can be seen by external agencies so may use some licence in recording difficult conversations. Committee members should ensure that they read these well in advance of the meeting and are able to report back on any actions assigned to them.

2. Declarations of interest

Committee members must declare any potential conflicts of interest, particularly pecuniary interests, which might arise from the meeting or from the committee's work as a whole. If you are unsure about a potential conflict, it is best to declare it and to seek the direction of the Chair and clerk. Further advice can be obtained by contacting governance@astreaacademytrust.org and you can read the Conflict of Interest policy on the Trust's website.

In the Autumn Term, an annual declaration will be made by all committee members. This information will be published on the school's website.

Committee members are reminded of the **Code of Conduct**, which sets out in detail their commitment to the Nolan Principles.

3. Principal's Report (including previous year's results, if not discussed at Su2)

The report is an important and comprehensive statement of the school's performance and is one of the most important documents that committee members will receive. It covers the following areas:

- Leadership and Management
- Behaviour, Safety and Wellbeing
- Attendance
- Safeguarding
- Quality of Teaching
- Achievement: Attainment & Progress Summary

The Principal will also include a summary to indicate the main items of note about the school.

Committee members should recognise that these reports take a lot of time and must ensure that they read them in advance of meetings. Generally, the Principal is asked to provide a full report to the committee three times a year and to provide an oral or short written update at any second meeting in a term. Where the Trust deems there to be a benefit to more than three full reports in a year, this will be asked of the Principal.

A non-exhaustive **list of suggested questions** is available to support committee members.

4. Budget monitoring

Principals receive a monthly budget monitoring report from the Trust's central finance team. This shows the budget allocations, spend to date and any real and forecast variance, together with a narrative that has been discussed with the Principal and/or School Business Manager (SBM). Principals should share this with the local committee, either in full or with a more summary narrative.

Since local committees are not asked to approve spending decisions, their role in monitoring the budget is to identify any critical problems and to use the report to inform their discussions of wider strategic matters. For example, a high level of spending on supply staff might raise concerns about the consistency of the teaching staff – committee members will want to know whether and how this will impact on performance. An under-spend in staff development might raise questions about the quality of support given to employees and the consequent effect on provision.

The school's budget will be drawn up between the Principal, the Trust's finance team and the SBM. It will be approved by the Board's Finance, Risk and Audit Committee. The committee might wish to discuss budget priorities with the Principal before his or her meeting to set the budget and should definitely ask for the outcomes of this meeting to be reported back.

5. School risk register

Guided by an oral or written update from the Principal, the committee should consider what the main risks to the school are and agree how this will influence their discussions and agenda items. For example, falling pupil numbers present a financial and reputational risk to the school – the committee might wish to consider further discussion on marketing as an extraordinary agenda item.

6. Chair's update (including link trustee feedback)

The Chair should use this opportunity in the meeting to provide feedback from any meetings with the Link Trustee or with Astrea's Central Team. He or she should also solicit input from other committee members for the next Link Trustee meeting.

7. Member visit reports and feedback

Committee members should visit the school regularly and purposefully – this includes, but cannot be limited to, school events such as the Christmas Play or Sports Day. Parent governors in particular should be sure to spend dedicated time visiting the school and not rely on

observations at drop-off/pick-up times. Further advice on school visits can be found on p12 of the handbook.

Committee members may use the **visit report template** and must agree their written reports with the Principal before submitting them to the committee.

An **annual visits planner** is available for committees to use to agree their forthcoming visits at an early stage in the Autumn Term.

Autumn Term Items

8. Appointment of chair (and vice chair if applicable)

The chair and vice chair should give as much notice as possible if they intend not to seek a further term; they should also discuss succession with other committee members to solicit interest. The chair will be expected to play a leading role in ensuring succession planning on the committee.

Any committee member other than a member of staff at the school may put him or herself forward to be chair or vice chair. Candidates must read the **Astrea Chair Role Description** in advance in order to ensure that they understand the commitment – they will be asked to confirm that they have read and understood this before the election.

The election of the chair should be overseen by the clerk, who should chair that meeting item. Candidates will be asked to explain their motivations and intentions to fellow members before leaving the room whilst a vote is held. This vote should be by a secret ballot of voting members (i.e. not associate members and observers). The ballot should be counted by the clerk, who will record the outcome and notify candidates.

The election of the vice chair will be conducted along similar lines, save that the chair will preside over the item, rather than the clerk.

9. Agreement of link responsibilities

Committees are asked to appoint members with link responsibility for:

- **Safeguarding**
- **Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)**
- **Pupil Premium** (including other Premium grants, such as Year 7 Catch-Up Funding and Primary PE and Sports Premium)

In addition to these, the committee may agree that individual members will take on link responsibilities in relation to a specific priority for the school.

10. KCSIE and Prevent (confirmation of understanding)

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and, for committee members, this starts with knowing the legal expectations of the school. In particular, committee members should know and understand their obligations under [Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

Committee members should also be aware of the school's responsibility under the [Prevent Duty](#). It is also advisable for the safeguarding link member and/or chair to attend the school's Prevent training.

At the first meeting of the year, each committee member will be asked to sign to say that he or she has read and understood these safeguarding requirements.

Autumn/Spring Term Items

At the start of the academic year, the Chair and Principal will agree the meetings at which these items will be considered.

11. Performance management and pay (PMP)

Each Autumn, the Principal will make recommendations to the Executive Board on pay progression for teaching staff at the school.

Pay decisions are an important mechanism for holding teachers to account for meeting individual targets that align with the school's ambitions. Principals may, therefore, invite a small number of members – which should not include staff members – to discuss his or her recommendations. The committee as a whole should ensure that the Principal is making these recommendations in line with the Trust's **pay policy** and in a way that supports school improvement.

A fuller **performance management and pay briefing** is available.

12. Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) and Delivery Plan

The school's SEF is its statement of how it considers the school to be performing – this will follow a standard Astrea format, which reflects the Ofsted framework and will be shown to an inspector in advance of any visit. The school's ability to demonstrate a clear and honest view of its own performance is an important part of the quality of leadership and management, so it is important that the committee ensures that this document is reliable. It is useful for the committee to discuss this as early in the year as possible in order to inform its own priorities and activities. The SEF is a 'living' document, which the school will update on an ongoing basis – the Principal should inform the committee of any significant changes, especially where his or her evaluation in any category or for the school's overall effectiveness is changed.

The school's delivery plan sets out its headline targets and actions for its improvement. Depending on the phase of the school's improvement, this plan will be underpinned either by a School Improvement Plan or a Rapid Improvement Plan. These are very detailed documents, which should reflect the priorities identified in the SEF. The committee must be careful not to

go too far into operational detail. Instead, committee members should ask the Principal to report back on progress towards the objectives and performance measures included in the plan and to identify any notable successes, barriers to achieving these and key risks. Committee members should be ambitious, but realistic, in contributing to discussion of this document.

13. Pupil Premium, Sports Grant and Yr7 Catch-up Grant Report and Strategy

The Pupil Premium Grant is paid to schools for each child who has been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in any of the last six years. Since it is connected to families' eligibility for a range of benefits, FSM is a widely-used indicator of deprivation, which is correlated with educational underperformance. The purpose of the grant is to enable schools to "close the gap" between Premium-eligible children and others and the school is held to account for this, including through the requirement to publish its plans and an impact statement. In Primary schools this payment is £1320 per pupil and for Secondary schools £935, with effect from 1 September 2018.

In addition, the Pupil Premium is paid to schools for each child who has been 'Looked After' for a day or more at any point in the last six years; this includes those who have been subject to Guardianship or Residency Orders. From 1 September 2018, the amount payable is £2,300 per pupil.

For children of service personnel, the Service Premium is also paid out of the Pupil Premium and is paid to schools for each child whose parent(s) have been in active service at any point in the last six years. From 1 September 2018, the amount payable is £300 per pupil.

Primary schools receive a PE and Sports Grant to promote physical activity as part of the Government's childhood obesity strategy. The school has similar reporting requirements for this money as for the Pupil Premium.

Secondary schools receive a Year 7 catch-up grant for pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading and maths at the end of Key Stage 2. The purpose of this additional funding is to support the school to accelerate the achievement of these lower-attainers so that they do not fall behind at secondary. The school has similar reporting requirements for this money as for the Pupil Premium.

A fuller briefing on these grants and the reporting requirements is available: **Premium Reporting – Guidance to Committee Members**.

Spring Term Items

14. Outcomes Predictions

By the Spring Term, schools will have collected assessment data on the achievement and progress of pupils and will have a good idea about the quality of teaching. From this point,

schools will start to make predictions about the end-of-year outcomes, which allow it to target interventions and make changes to support children's performance.

The committee should compare these predictions against the targets set in the school's improvement plan and should work with the Principal to identify areas where action can be taken to address any areas of weakness, whilst recognising and remaining ambitious for areas of strength.

Where weaknesses are identified, the Principal should be able to explain these and to identify any reasons that targets will not be achieved.

Summer Items

15. Skills audit, committee membership and annual impact statement

Committee members have a responsibility for their own performance and should use the opportunity of this item to reflect on their needs, composition and achievements.

The **skills audit** asks members to rate their experience and confidence in a number of areas. Not everybody can be strong in all of these areas, so the results should be aggregated to reveal any overall skills gaps. The committee should reach a view on whether or not these relate to priorities for the school and how they should be addressed, for example through training or skills-based recruitment.

The committee should also reach a view on its composition: does it have the right mix of people sitting around the table? Does the number of members give it the capacity to fulfil its role?

The **annual impact statement** is an opportunity for the committee to report back to parents and others on its contribution to the school over the last year. The format should highlight successes and reflect the level of involvement that members have had in school life as well as identifying priorities for the following year. It is important that this document reflects the committee, rather than the school as a whole.

Annual Items

At the start of the academic year, the Chair and Principal will agree the meetings at which these items will be considered.

16. SEND annual report

The committee should appoint a SEND link member to monitor and report to colleagues on the school's provision for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities; to ensure compliance with obligations and to champion these children at committee level.

The committee should consider:

- How the school is meeting its obligations in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and specifically Chapter 6;
- The impact of the SEND notional budget and additional measures taken to support pupils with SEND, including requests for top-up funding and how this is being utilised with evidence of impact of targeted interventions;
- The school's involvement of parents and children in its decision-making and co-production of plans for support in accordance with the assess>plan>do>review model; and
- The school's co-operation with the Local Authority and other agencies in securing appropriate support for pupils with additional needs.

The **SEND link member role description** and **template annual SEND report** give more detail about what should be reported.

17. Safeguarding annual report

The committee should appoint a safeguarding link member to monitor and report back to colleagues on how the school meets its safeguarding obligations; to highlight key strengths and weaknesses of the school's work in this area and to ensure that steps are taken to improve and support safeguarding efforts.

The **safeguarding link member role description** and **template annual safeguarding report** give more detail about what should be reported.

18. Progress against equality objectives (*this can be part of a Principal's Report*)

The 2010 Equality Act consolidated discrimination law and existing equality legislation. It requires all public sector organisations to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and to demonstrate how they are eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relationships between people who share the 'protected characteristics'.

Specifically, public sector organisations must prepare and publish Equality Objectives every four years and updating progress made against these objectives annually.

Schools have existing duties to ensure the academic success of all groups of pupils, so are advised to transfer equality objectives from the improvement plan. For example, this might be to improve reading outcomes for boys or to increase girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects.

19. Staff presentations

The committee may invite presentations from subject or phase leaders; these can be a relatively informal discussion about the staff member's area of work. The committee should not ordinarily ask for new work to be done – for example, the Principal's Report will include updates on performance in the subjects and phases, so these data can serve as the basis for the discussion.

Committee members will recognise that this is an additional time commitment for the members of staff concerned, so it is important that these presentations are purposeful and relate to its priorities for the school. For non-priority areas, it might be more useful for an individual member to make this the subject of a visit to the school.

The committee may also invite presentations from other stakeholders. For example, the parents' association or the school council might be asked to talk to governors about their work.

20. Monitoring reports from Astrea Central

From September 2018, the Trust will work with Challenge Partners to arrange visits to the school by practitioners from partnership schools, often led by a serving Ofsted inspector. The review team produces a report that assesses the school's performance according to its own self-evaluation and wider Ofsted Framework criteria. They are intended as a support tool both to reassure schools in areas of strength and to identify areas where the Trust will work with the school to address weaknesses.

Committees should see these reports and, where possible, the chair should be involved in the oral feedback given at the end of the review visit. MTRs will usually inform some changes to a school's SEF and improvement plan, so the committee will want to know what these are and to monitor them as part of its usual oversight of school performance and improvement.

A good question of such reports is "were there any surprises?" – this allows the Principal to reflect on his or her own judgement of the school.

21. Survey responses from parents, pupils and staff (optional)

Where the school has conducted stakeholder surveys, the headline figures should be reporting to the local committee. The committee should consider whether these pose any significant risks (for example, low staff morale presents a school with a retention and productivity challenge) and ask the Principal what steps might be necessary to address them. The committee should return to any significant findings and actions at a later point in order to monitor the impact of any response.

22. Committee strategy session and training (optional)

The committee should dedicate time during its meeting cycle to focus on strategic priorities for the school and to address any training needs within the committee. The Chair and Principal will agree the focus for this session and committees are encouraged to be creative in how it is used. It is often a good idea to combine these sessions with whole-committee school visits, learning walks or meetings with parents, staff and the school council. It is not necessary for these sessions to be clerked.

Strategy sessions case studies are available to give committees some ideas.

New Committee Member Checklist

<i>Before induction</i>	<i>Source?</i>	✓
Received dates of meetings for the year	Clerk	
Received links to School Prospectus/ Ofsted reports/ key information on website	School	
Completed Declaration of Interest and Code of Conduct	Clerk	
Completed DBS check including supporting documents	School	
Introduction to chair and principal	Chair/Principal	
Tour of the school (this may take place after the induction)	Principal	
Received SEF, AIP, Monitoring Visit Report, Principal's Report, committee biographies and school agenda planner	Clerk	
Received New Committee Member Handbook	Clerk/ Astrea Governance Team	
Received committee minutes for past full academic year	Clerk	
Any additional useful school information including staff structure, pre-opening report, or Funding Agreement	Chair/Principal	
Available link roles	Chair	
Raise any questions or request for any additional information following initial meeting	Raise with Clerk/ Astrea Governance Team	

Useful information for committee members

Astrea's Governance and Policy Adviser

governance@astreaacademytrust.org

The Trust employs a dedicated member of staff, who will work to co-ordinate and to improve the effectiveness of local governance within the Trust. Please feel free to get in touch with any queries, comments or suggestions.

A Guide to the Law for School Governors

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>

This guide sets out sound principles for local committee members; the relevance of individual sections will depend on Astrea's Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference for local committees.

National Governance Association (NGA)

www.nga.org.uk/

The representative body for those involved in the governance of state-funded schools in England.

Training

Online training is available through Astrea's membership of the NGA. A Trust training offer will be published each September (starting from 2018) and committee members are also encouraged to discuss with their schools whether any staff training would be useful/appropriate for them.