



**Astrea Academy Trust**

**Local Committee Member  
Handbook**

**September 2023**



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# Welcome letter

Dear committee member,

Thank you for volunteering to undertake this important role within Astrea Academy Trust.

The years since the pandemic have presented a significant challenge to everyone in the education sector, but they have also shown us the brilliance of the professions within education, and the true meaning of service to our children and our communities.

Astrea was founded in 2015 and we took on our first few schools in May 2016. In just three years, the Trust grew to 26 schools across two regions of the country and encompassing four local authority areas. The pace of this growth comes with inevitable challenges, and with over seven years under our belts, the next phase of our journey will see us meet these challenges so that the children in our care will learn, thrive, and lead successful lives. We are clear-sighted about the challenges ahead of us in achieving the academic standards that all our pupils deserve, and we are tenacious in our resolve to overcome the barriers that stand in the way.

As a trust, legal accountability for the educational outcomes and financial diligence of our academies rests with the Board of Trustees and the CEO (as Accounting Officer). However, that accountability is supported by the vital work that we ask local committees to do on our behalf. We hope this handbook provides clarity on the governance structure within the Trust, the way in which the different elements work together and the key accountabilities held by each. Since the Trust was formed, we have developed our governance model in response to our experiences, successes and lessons learned. We will continue to monitor and review the way in which we work to ensure we are operating in the most effective way possible.

I hope you will find your time as a committee member interesting, purposeful and rewarding and we would like to thank you, once again, for making this commitment to support Astrea.

Best wishes,

Ben Brown

*Chair of Trustees*

# Astrea Academy Trust Values and Ethos

Astrea's future success is underpinned by a strong set of shared values. These values are important because they support the vision, shape the culture, and make a statement about what Astrea hold dear.

## Scholarship

Astrea will be informed by the best of academic and organisational thinking and research, using this where they can and expanding it where possible.

## Curiosity

Astrea will ask searching questions, not take things on face value, seek out the best of what is known and engage in appreciative enquiry.

## Tenacity

Astrea will deliver on their promises and see things through to completion, embodying pace, urgency, and determination in their focus on improving outcomes for children and on their own performance.

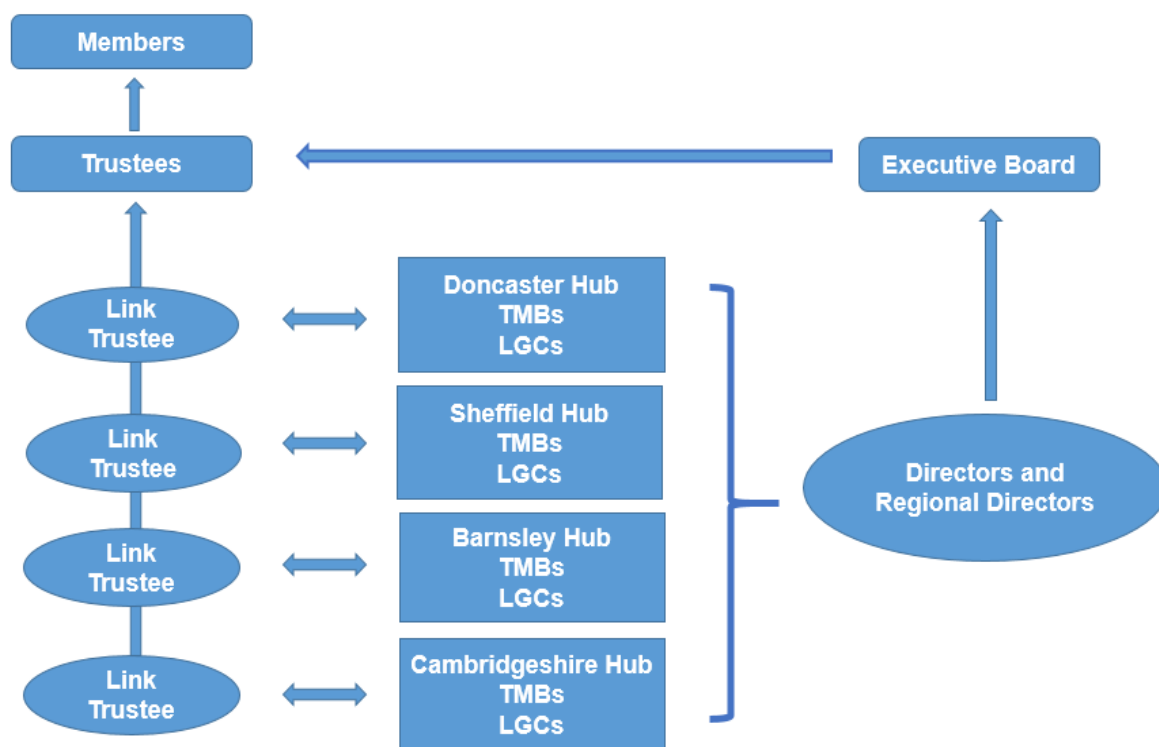
Our '[Theory of Change](#)' document shows our vision for how all Astrea children will learn, thrive and lead successful lives.

Find out more: <https://astreaacademytrust.org/about-us/astrea-value-partners/>

# Governance at Astrea

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, such as school improvement.

These layers are explained in more detail below.



## Members

The **Members** are the guardians of Astrea's constitution, as set out in the Articles of Association. Although they constitute the top governance tier, they have limited powers.

Members of the Trust meet twice a year and have a responsibility to receive the annual report and accounts, which they will be invited to accept. Members must also ensure that they are satisfied that governance arrangements for the Trust are sound and that these are being discharged properly by the Trustees.

## Trustees

The Board of **Trustees** has overall accountability and legal responsibility for the Trust. The role of Trustee can be broken down into four key component parts: charity trustee, director, governor and non-executive director.

As charity trustees, the Board are responsible for delivering on Astrea's mission and charitable objects while, as directors, they are responsible for ensuring that Astrea meets its obligations as a

company. As governors, the Trustees 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. Lastly, as non-executive directors of a public body, they are responsible for Astrea's public sector duties.

In addition, our model allows for Trustees to take on a 'link' responsibility for liaising with the chairs in a certain hub of schools or for a Trust-wide priority such as safeguarding.

The Board has four committees:

- Education and Standards
- People and Remuneration
- Finance and Budget
- Audit and Risk Assurance

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 member of 'exec board' 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. The Directors of Primary and Secondary are supported by Regional Directors, associated with the relevant stage of education in each hub. Regional Directors are usually the line managers of Principals.

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 committee members are drawn from the local community and will usually include parents and staff members, their input serves an essential part in informing Trustees' understanding of the local context and individual school performance. The committee is also a supportive forum in which the Principal can have access to the insights of people with professional and voluntary 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:

- **Trust Management Boards (TMBs)** – these boards are established for schools who need a higher level of support, guidance and direction from Astrea’s central team. 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 Governance Committee (LGC).
- **Local Governance Committee (LGC)** – these committees have a much lower level of Trust representation and are 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 Trust Board, both TMBs and LGCs have Terms of Reference, which can be found here: <https://astreaacademytrust.org/about-us/governance/>

## The work of the committees

Local committees act on behalf of the Board of Trustees within each school. **They have five main accountabilities:**

1. To ensure that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of Astrea is maintained within each school.
2. To hold school leaders to account for educational performance of the schools, the inclusion of all pupils and the offer of a knowledge-rich and broadly-based curriculum.
3. To work with the school’s leadership and central team to ensure that high standards of safeguarding are maintained.
4. To promote positive parent, community and stakeholder engagement and to drive school-to-school partnerships for improvement within the Trust.
5. To identify, understand and report to Trustees any strategic risks facing the school.

To achieve these purposes, committees will work to strike the right balance of **support, challenge and accountability**.

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, 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.
- Representing the school at Ofsted inspections, community events or with important national or local stakeholders.

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.

Local committees also play a key role in **holding school leaders to account** for performance. To be accountable (which is one of the Nolan Principles to which all holders of public office subscribe) is to be available and ready to justify one's decisions. The local committee renders accountability through its questioning and through the very fact of meeting to consider the Principal's and other reports (i.e. their accounts). It is important, therefore, that the committee's agenda and its work focus on performance. Otherwise, accountability is diminished.

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.



## Local Committee Accountabilities

Accountability	Expectation	Format/ source of evidence	Notes
To ensure that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of Astrea is maintained within each school.	Chairs will be able to explain the vision, ethos and strategic direction to stakeholders and will be able to demonstrate to Trustees how the local committee is securing these at a school level.	Chair's report Minutes Principal feedback	This accountability is intended to underline the fact that local committees are delegates of the Board, not 'external' representatives of the school to the Trust.
To hold school leaders to account for the educational performance of the schools, the inclusion of all pupils and the offer of a knowledge-rich and broadly-based curriculum.	Chairs will be clear on what is expected of the school and its Principal and will be able to demonstrate to Trustees how accountability is rendered. Chairs will be able to tell Trustees how well the school is doing against these expectations and what factors account for this.	Chair's report Minutes Principal feedback	This accountability is intended to ensure that school performance is at the centre of chairs' thinking and that it can be clearly articulated.
To work with the school's leadership and central team to ensure that high standards of safeguarding are maintained.	Chairs are able to confirm that each committee has a named safeguarding link who develops his or her skills, promotes rigorous discussion of safeguarding during and between meetings and who liaises with the central team lead for safeguarding. The committee should know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effective safeguarding is at the school;</li> <li>• What are the main areas of strength;</li> <li>• What are the main areas of concern.</li> </ul>	Chair's report Minutes Principal feedback Safeguarding audit report	This is supported by the safeguarding link member role description.
To promote positive parent, community and stakeholder engagement and to drive school-to-school partnerships for improvement within the Trust.	Chairs ensure that the work of the school takes account of the views of parents and the wider community, including third parties such as the Local Authority. The committee sets a culture in which the school actively encourages this engagement, particularly from under-represented groups.	Minutes Parent/community surveys	
To identify, understand and report to Trustees any strategic risks facing the school.	Chairs ensure that there is discussion of strategic risks facing the school (i.e. those risks that threaten the achievement of strategic objectives) and that a clear minute of this is taken and reported to Trustees via the central governance lead.	Minutes	This is the 'canary in the coalmine' function, allowing the executive and Trustees to be alerted to critical risks at school-level or to aggregated risks across a number of schools.

## 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, while LGCs are asked to meet at least five times a year.

See p.17 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 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 governance 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. 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.
- **Knowledge** – while committee members might have no specific knowledge of education when they begin the role, there is an expectation that they will actively seek to develop this knowledge over time by accessing training and reading on the subject to understand better what it is they govern and why.

## Pre-appointment checks

Once your appointment is confirmed, you will be asked to complete the Local Committee Appointment Pack, which includes privacy information, a register of interests and a skills audit.

You will also receive:

- Confirmation of the dates of your term of office
- Dates of all scheduled future meetings
- Links to relevant governance resources

In addition to holding this information, the school will also undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to ensure that you do not pose a risk to children and you will be expected to undertake statutory safeguarding training on an annual basis.

## 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)
- Grants (PP/Sports)

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.

Link role descriptions can be found here: [Local Committee Resources - Astrea Academy Trust](#)

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:

- Behaviour and attendance
- Parental, community and stakeholder engagement
- Curriculum, or a key subject area such as literacy or numeracy

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

Where responsibilities are largely held centrally, the committee will not appoint a link member. For example, finances are closely monitored by the central team and the Board's Finance and Budget 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 Grants link may want to meet the school's Pupil Premium Co-ordinator.

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 can be found here:  
<https://astreaacademytrust.org/about-us/governance/local-committee-resources/>.

*Please note that all visits should be arranged in advance with the Principal.*

## 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 pt.335 of the [School inspection handbook for September 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-for-september-2023).

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
- provide an understanding of the school's curriculum aims and the rationale behind the school curriculum
- demonstrate the ability to articulate the effectiveness of governance on the school's journey of improvement. How do governors monitor their own effectiveness?

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.

Guidance to support committee members during an Ofsted inspection can be found here: [Governance-at-Astrea-Briefing-for-LGC-TMB-members-May-2023.pdf \(astreaacademytrust.org\)](https://www.astreaacademytrust.org/governance-at-astrea-briefing-for-lgc-tmb-members-may-2023.pdf)

## Questioning

Guidance to support you in considering scrutiny during meetings can be found here:

<https://astreaacademytrust.org/about-us/governance/local-committee-resources/>

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 in the appendices, which covers some of the most common terms and it is usually possible to find the meanings on the internet. Support is also available from the clerk or the central governance team.

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.

## Local Committee Model Agenda Cycle (primary)

AUTUMN 1	AUTUMN 2	SPRING 1	SPRING 2	SUMMER 1	SUMMER 2
<i>LGC only:</i> Appointment of Chair / Vice-Chair					
Minutes, actions, matters arising	Minutes, actions, matters arising	Minutes, actions, matters arising	Minutes, actions, matters arising	Minutes, actions, matters arising	Minutes, actions, matters arising
Declaration of interests	Declaration of interests	Declaration of interests	Declaration of interests	Declaration of interests	Declaration of interests
Annual safeguarding training (delivered by DSL)	Staff presentation	Staff presentation	Staff presentation	Staff presentation	Staff presentation
Principal's Report	Principal's Report	Principal's Report	Principal's Report	Principal's Report	Principal's Report
Self-Evaluation Framework and School Improvement Plan annual overview	SIP/SEF updates	SIP/SEF updates	SIP/SEF updates	SIP/SEF updates	SIP/SEF updates
Annual Item: Outcomes discussion & target setting	Annual item: Behaviour and Attitudes Update (including Attendance) And Personal Development Update	Annual Item: Pupil Premium Strategy	Annual Item: PE and Sport Premium Strategy	Annual Item: SEND Annual Report 2023-2024	Annual item: Annual Safeguarding Report
Member visits	Member visits	Member visits	Member visits	Member visits	Member visits
Chair's Update	Chair's Update	Chair's Update	Chair's Update	Chair's Update	Chair's Update
Future agenda items & date of next meeting	Future agenda items & date of next meeting	Future agenda items & date of next meeting	Future agenda items & date of next meeting	Future agenda items & date of next meeting	Future agenda items & date of next meeting



# 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.

## Recurring Items

- **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.

- **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](mailto: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.

- **Principal's Report**

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 will cover the following areas:

- Highlights since the last meeting (including Community Engagement)
- Leadership and Management
- Behaviour, Safety and Wellbeing (including **Safeguarding**)
- Attendance
- Quality of Teaching
- Curriculum Development and Implementation
- Achievement: Attainment & Progress Summary
- Financial Context
- Risk Register

The report will be *taken as read* at the meeting, with questions invited by the Principal, so committee members should recognise the importance of reading it thoroughly beforehand.

### Financial context

The school's budget will be drawn up between the Principal and the Trust's finance team. It will be approved by the Board's Finance and Budget Committee.

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).

Local committees should have an understanding of the context in which resourcing decisions are made, though they are not asked to take responsibility for making those decisions.

#### School risk register

Guided by an oral or written update from the Principal, the committee should identify and discuss any strategic risks facing the school and agree how it/they might influence future agendas. *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.*

Discussion should focus on the nature of the risk, possible mitigation, probability and impact. A clear minute of any identified risk(s) should be taken in the following format and reported to Trustees via the central governance lead.

Risk	Owner	Mitigation	Probability	Impact

- **Chair’s update**

The Chair should use this opportunity in the meeting to provide feedback from Chairs’ briefing calls and any meetings with the Link Trustee or Astrea’s Central Team. This can include governance updates and training opportunities.

- **Member visit reports and feedback**

Committee members should arrange purposeful visits to the school at least once a term – this includes, but should not be limited to, school events such as the Christmas Play or Sports Day. Parent committee members in particular should be sure to spend dedicated time visiting the school and not rely on observations at drop-off/pick-up times. It can be helpful to plan visits around link roles in order to make them purposeful.

Further advice on school visits can be found on p.13 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. Some committee find it helpful to agree forthcoming visits for the year at an early stage in the Autumn Term and an **annual visits planner** is available on request.

- **Staff presentation**

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.

- **Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF) / School Improvement Plan (SIP) / school 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.

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.

It is useful for the committee to regularly review these documents and have a good understanding of the school's priorities, notable successes and any barriers to achievement. 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. This is rolling agenda item.

## Autumn Term Items

- **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 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.

- **Agreement of link responsibilities**

As a minimum, committees are asked to appoint members with link responsibility for:

- [Safeguarding](#)
- [Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities](#) (SEND)
- [Grants](#) (including Pupil Premium and Primary PE and Sports Premium)

In addition, the committee may agree that individual members will take on link responsibilities in relation to a specific priority for the school. Advice on this can be sought from the clerk or Governance team – [governance@astreaacademytrust.org](mailto:governance@astreaacademytrust.org).

- **Safeguarding training and KCSIE**

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 Keeping Children Safe in Education and will be required to read the relevant parts on an annual basis.

Safeguarding training will also be delivered to committee members at the first meeting of each academic year and, if unable to attend, committee members will be asked to complete online training. This will include contextual safeguarding issues, an understanding of the Prevent duty and FGM.

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

[Equality Act Advice Final.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) - p.30-37

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 update 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.

- **Outcomes discussion and target setting** (primary)

Results from KS2 SATs, Y2 SATs and Phonics screening should be discussed, with comparison to targets and interrogation of the results. Areas of strength and weakness should be considered and what actions are in place to address any areas of concern. Targets for the new academic year should be discussed.

- **Behaviour & Attitudes (including Attendance)** (primary)

Behaviour and attitudes is one of the four areas of key judgement under the Ofsted framework. As such, committees need to be well informed about the behaviour policy, whole school culture, vision and values in the school. The committee should consider how the behaviour policy is implemented and the impact on pupils, including measures to monitor that the behaviour policy is applied consistently across the school.

The committee needs to be well informed on behaviour data across the school, in each year group and cohorts of pupils such as SEND, PP and EAL and as such, behaviour data for the year should be presented and discussed, including identification of any trends in behaviour types including suspensions / exclusions over time.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance on behaviour in schools sets out a whole school approach to behaviour where high standards and expectations run through all aspects of school life.

For a pupil to reach their full educational achievement a high level of attendance is essential. The committee should consider how the ethos of the school, the curriculum, standards of teaching and learning and leadership and management all contribute to promoting the highest levels of attendance. The committee should consider how the attendance policy is implemented and the impact on pupils. The committee needs to be well informed on how attendance across the school, in each year group and cohorts of pupils such as SEND, PP and EAL compare with national averages, and what are the trends over time? Committee members should regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

- **Personal Development (primary)**

Personal Development is one of the four areas of key judgement under the Ofsted framework. As such, committees should have a good understanding of what the school's PD curriculum looks like, why it structured as it is, and how it is taught in school.

In considering the work of the school in this area, governors should understand that schools are held responsible for their efforts and intentions to provide for effective personal development and the quality of their implementation of this, but not the ways in which children and young people will independently choose to apply their learning in the outside world.

Core areas which governors should seek to understand include the school's application of the statutory guidance on RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education), pupils' age-appropriate awareness of the protected characteristics, pupils knowledge of how to stay safe (including online), pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, citizenship education, modern British values, the development of character and wider development and, in secondary schools, CIEAG (Careers Information, Education, Advice and Guidance).

For more information see pt. 313 in the [School inspection handbook](#).

## Spring Term Items

- **Grants Report and Strategy (Pupil Premium/Primary PE and Sports Grant)**

[Pupil premium: overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

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. The amount of funding changes each academic year and differs for primary and secondary pupils. Annual funding can be found via the link above.

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. 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.

**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. [PE and sport premium for primary schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

A fuller briefing on these grants and the reporting requirements is available and can be found here: <https://astreaacademytrust.org/about-us/governance/local-committee-resources/>

## Summer Items

- **Outcomes Predictions**

By late in 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.

- **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 our [questioning guidance document](#) give more detail about what should be reported.

- **Annual Safeguarding 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 [questioning guidance document](#) give more detail about what should be reported and scrutinised.

- **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.

- **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.

## Useful information for committee members

### **Astrea's Governance Team**

[governance@astreaacademytrust.org](mailto:governance@astreaacademytrust.org)

The Governance Team 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.

### **Local Committee Resources**

<https://astreaacademytrust.org/about-us/governance/local-committee-resources/>

Including the Code of Conduct, which you will be asked to confirm acceptance of as part of the appointment process.

### **Training**

In addition to statutory safeguarding training, further training opportunities are available through the National College which you are welcome to access. Please ask your clerk for more information.



## APPENDIX A - 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](mailto: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 / School Improvement Plan	AIP / SIP	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
Academy Development Plan	ADP	
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 <a href="#">Part 1</a> of the guidance and to confirm that they understand their duties
Key Stage	KS	After EYFS (see above), the five stages of education through which pupils will progress:  Key Stage 1, where the majority of pupils are aged 5 to 7  Key Stage 2, where the majority of pupils are aged 7 to 11  Key Stage 3, where the majority of children are aged 11 to 14  Key Stage 4, where the majority of pupils are aged 14 to 16  Key Stage 5, where the majority of pupils are aged 16 to 19 (i.e. Astrea's sixth forms)
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 Governance Committee	LGC	A voluntary oversight committee assigned to a school in the Astrea Academy Trust. Please see p.7 of the Handbook for more information.

Name	Acronym / Initialism	Definition
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 6<sup>th</sup> form.</p> <p>Grade 1 - outstanding</p> <p>Grade 2 - good</p> <p>Grade 3 - requires improvement</p> <p>Grade 4 - inadequate</p>
Pre-Exclusion Assessment Process	PEAP	A key part of the Trust's proactive approach to early intervention undertaken by an Inclusion specialist. The PEAP is a structured conversation held with the Principal or other Senior Leader, in order to discuss the behaviours exhibited and to understand potential triggers to these.
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'.
Read Write Inc	RWI	Phonics programme used across Astrea at primary level
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

Name	Acronym / Initialism	Definition
<p>Special Educational Needs &amp; Disabilities</p> <p>sometimes Special Educational Needs</p>	<p>SEND</p> <p>sometimes SEN</p>	<p>Needs that affect a child's ability to learn can include their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• behaviour or ability to socialise, e.g. not being able to make friends</li> <li>• reading and writing, e.g. they have dyslexia</li> <li>• ability to understand things</li> <li>• concentration levels, e.g. they have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder</li> <li>• physical needs or impairments</li> </ul>
<p>Trust Management Board</p>	<p>TMB</p>	<p>A voluntary oversight committee assigned to a school in the Astrea Academy Trust. Please see p.7 of the Handbook for more information.</p>