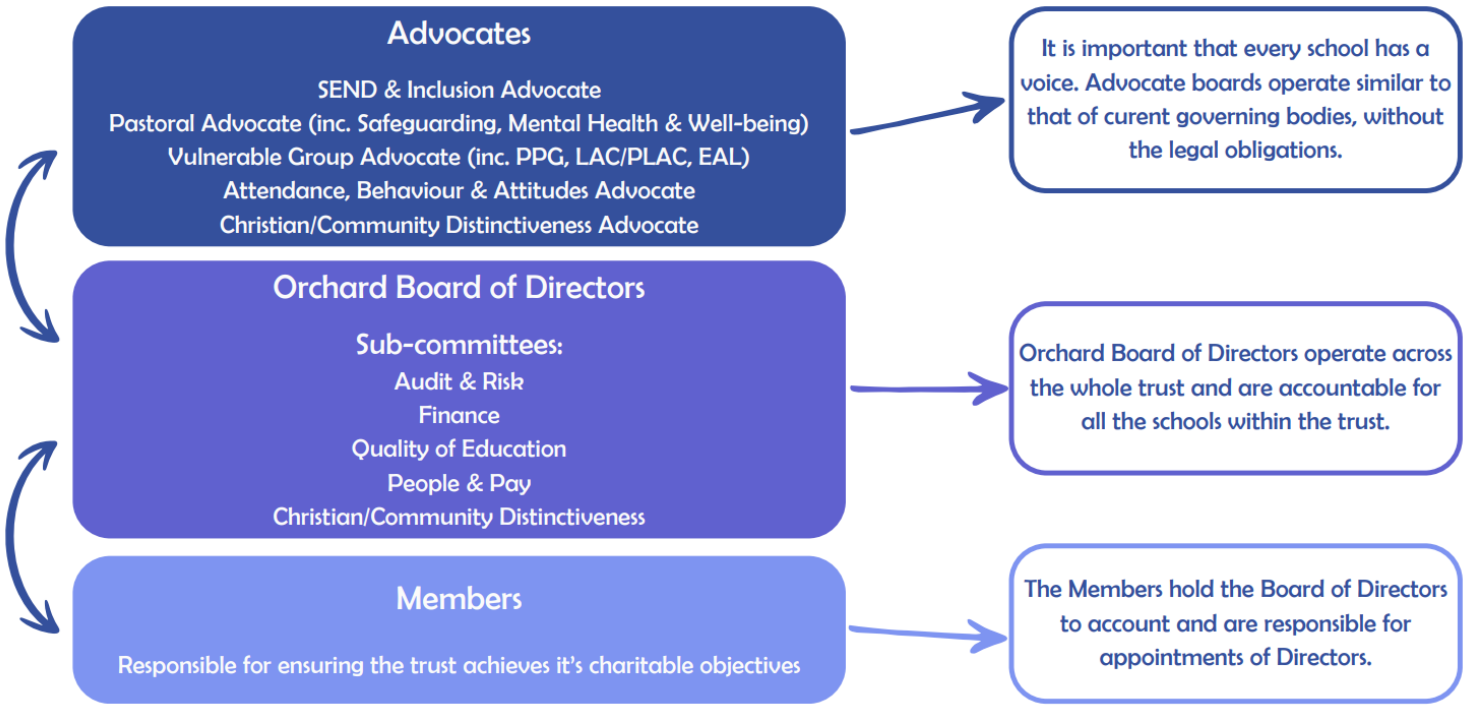
Orchard
Multi – Academy Trust

Governance at Orchard

Governance at Orchard MAT

Orchard Multi-Academy Trust has - Articles of Association that are set out on Companies House. Orchard is legally bound to ensure there is complete representation at all levels of governance across the trust. Orchard's governance structure exists to support the effective delivery of the Trust's strategic priorities while ensuring strong accountability, compliance and local voice.
Roles, responsibilities and structures described in this document operate within the Scheme of Delegated Authority and are guided by the Trust's shared values and long-term vision.
The trust's ethos always holds the children at the heart of all decisions that are made. Advocates (also known as Local Governing Bodies) are the direct link to each academy and remain important to ensure each that academy has a voice at trust level.



Within this model, each academy will either operate with a board of Advocates (also known as Local Governing Body) or a Strategic Group, depending on the needs of each academy. Where an academy is classed as good/outstanding and already has a strong governing body with high participation, it will operate the Advocacy model. An academy judged to be less than good or with recruitment issues at an Advocacy level will operate using a Strategic Group model. More information regarding this can be found in the Trust's Scheme of Delegated Authority.

Depending on need, external, trust, and internal reviews will be commissioned across each academy (regardless of whether they have an Advocate Board or Strategic Group) within the MAT to focus on:

- Teaching and Learning review
- Health and Safety review
- Safeguarding & Attendance reviews
- Financial audit

Advocates

The headteacher will sit on this board as the staff representative and as ex-officio role. If there is a case where the school is run by an Executive Lead, then the Head of School/Deputy Head would also be on the Advocate Board. Along with the following roles, you will also scrutinise whole school data, discuss admissions, focus on the quality of education and much more. You may also be asked to be a link for a specific subject, but this is at the discretion of the Headteacher.

SEND & Inclusion Advocate -

Purpose: To champion the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) and promote inclusive practises within the school.

Key Responsibilities:

- Ensure that the school complies with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the SEND provision and report findings to the governing body, working with the School's SENDCo.
- Support the development of policies and practises that promote inclusion and diversity.
- Engage with parents of pupils with SEND to understand their perspectives and needs.
- Collaborate with SEND coordinators and external agencies to ensure appropriate support is provided.

Pastoral Advocate -

Purpose: To oversee the safeguarding pastoral care of pupils and staff ensuring secure mental health and well-being.

Key Responsibilities:

- Ensure that the school has effective safeguarding policies and practises in place.
- Monitor the effectiveness of pastoral care systems and interventions.
- Promote a culture of well-being and mental health awareness within the school community.
- Engage with staff, pupils, and parents to gather feedback on pastoral care and safeguarding.
- Ensure that staff receive appropriate training on safeguarding and child protection.
- Working with the Trusts Safeguarding lead, ensure all checks are in place, ensuring safety for all.

Vulnerable Group Advocate –

Purpose: To advocate for the needs of vulnerable groups, including those eligible for Pupil Premium (PPG), Looked After Children (LAC), Previously Looked After Children (PLAC), those with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and any other groups identified by the school.
Key Responsibilities:

- Monitor the academic progress and well-being of vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that the school effectively uses Pupil Premium funding to support eligible pupils.
- Collaborate with staff to develop targeted strategies for improving outcomes for vulnerable groups.
- Engage with external agencies and community services to support the needs of these pupils.
- Report on the impact of interventions and support for vulnerable groups to the governing body.

Attendance, Behaviour & Attitudes Advocate –

Purpose: To promote high standards of attendance, behaviour, and positive attitudes among pupils.

Key Responsibilities:

- Monitor attendance data and trends, identifying areas for improvement.
- Support the development of behaviour policies and strategies that promote positive behaviour and engagement.
- Engage with staff, pupils, and parents to promote a culture of respect and responsibility.
- Collaborate with local authorities and community services to address attendance issues.
- Report findings and recommendations to the governing body regarding attendance and behaviour – working with the Trust's Attendance lead.

Community or Christian Distinctiveness Advocate –

Purpose: To promote the school's Community identity and/or Christian distinctiveness (for C of E schools).

Christian Distinctiveness Key Responsibilities:

- Ensure that the School's Christian Values are Reflected in its Policies and Practises
- Lead Initiatives that Promote Christian Values and Distinctiveness
- Support Staff in Incorporating Christian Distinctiveness into Teaching
- Report on the Impact of Christian Distinctiveness to the Governing Body

Community Distinctiveness Key Responsibilities:

- Foster relationships with local community organisations and stakeholders.
- Support Initiatives that Promote Community Involvement and Service
- Engage with Parents and the Wider Community to Gather Feedback and Support for School Initiatives
- Report on Community Engagement and Impact to the Governing Body

Who appoints the Advocates?

- The aim is to have 5-6 members on the Advocate Board, this is to ensure each of the lead roles can be undertaken (as above).
- Each Advocate Board should appoint up to 2 parents. These are co-opted and will need to be approved by the Directors.
- The Headteacher (or alternative) will also sit on the board as Ex-officio.
- The remainder of the Advocates appointments are determined by the previous designation.

Voluntary Controlled – if the school was previously VC, the Advocate Board will need to ensure that 25% of the total board (including parents) are appointed by the Diocese of Hereford Education Trust (DHET) and in agreement of the Board of Directors. All other appointments are either parent or co-opted.

Voluntary Aided – if the school was previously VA, then all of the Advocate Board (excluding parent nominated Advocates) will need to be appointed by the DHET. Appointment is also with the agreement of the Board of Directors.

Community Schools – if the school was previously a Community or Local Authority school, then all Advocates (that are not parents) are Co-opted and agreed upon by the Board of Directors.

Endowed Schools – if the school is endowed, supported by a sponsoring trust, then the Advocates will continue to be appointed by the previous constitutions. This will need to be determined per endowed school.

When determining the composition of a new board within the trust, the proportional representation of each governor type should be considered. This approach should support the continued aim of maintaining 5–6 Advocates within the overall board structure.

Why should I become an Advocate?

Being a school advocate is a rewarding experience for individuals and the local community. Advocates will join a family of people who share the same vision: to provide children with the best possible learning environment and ensure they grow and flourish as global citizens in an ever-changing world. An advocate's influence in school governance will help drive school improvement and ensure a high-quality education for children in our community.

Who can become a school advocate?

Advocates need to be aged 18 and over and must not be a member of Orchard staff. Our schools are diverse and rich in culture, and we aim for our advocates to reflect this diversity.

There is no experience or formal training required to become an advocate, and they do not need in-depth knowledge of education. Induction and safeguarding training will be provided. Volunteers who accept an advocate role will need to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

What does being an advocate involve?

Advocates work in partnership with school leaders and directors to ensure schools are offering the best education and supporting pupils and staff. Advocates are expected to visit the school and meet with pupils, staff, and the school community to review information, evidence progress, and listen to views. Findings are then discussed with school leaders and the Board of Directors for the Trust.

There is a minimum expectation regarding time commitment, but the responsibility of making a difference is extremely rewarding.

Advocates are required to attend three meetings a year (one per term, either virtually or in person). Meetings will generally be scheduled towards the end of the term, allowing leaders and advocates to analyse and reflect on the term's attendance, safeguarding, and pupil-led activity data.

Advocates will also be expected to visit the school (ideally once a term) to focus on curriculum, standards, pupil experiences, and well-being.

There will be termly Teams meetings for advocates to meet with directors. These meetings will have particular focus areas (e.g. safeguarding, buildings, staffing) to allow Advocate Boards to share experiences or questions at the director level.

Finally, annually, Orchard Directors will host a Governance Day. This will be an in-person event and will allow all advocates, directors, and leaders to meet and discuss the strategy of the MAT, future vision, enrichment, and annual safeguarding training.

Directors

- Set and champion the vision, ethos, and strategy across the trust.
- Ensure robust leadership of our schools, driving educational standards and holding executive leaders to account for the performance of the organisation, its pupils, and staff.
- Oversee the financial performance of the trust, ensuring money is well spent and any risks are managed robustly.
- Ensure the voices of stakeholders are heard.
- Each director also has a specific area of focus, and they consult regularly with strategic leads across the trust to gather information, develop understanding, and generate recommendations to the Board of Directors.
- Similarly to the Advocate board, we have linked Directors for SEND, Safeguarding and Pupil Premium.

Who appoints the Directors?

As stated in the Articles of Association, the Members may appoint up to eight Directors, authorised by the Diocesan Corporate Member. They must also be in a majority of at least two of any co-opted members appointed by the Board of Directors directly. The CEO also sits on the board, appointed by the Members.

Who is currently a Director of Orchard MAT?

1. Richard Griffiths (Chair)
2. Rev Anne Price
3. Rev Penelope Littlewood
4. Sara Hicks
5. David Durrant
6. Rev Dr Phil Brown
7. Rev Andy Morgan
8. Lyndzey Smissen
9. Chris Kent
10. Clive Stewart
11. Alex Davies (CEO)

More information regarding the directors can be found on www.orchardacademies.com.

What committee groups are there?

To ensure challenge and scrutiny, the board of directors' delegates some of its functions to committees. These are as follows:

Finance	Sara Hicks (chair), Chris Kent, Rev Penny Littlewood
Audit & Risk	Clive Stewart (chair), Lyndzey Smissen, Richard Griffiths
People & Pay	Lyndzey Smissen (chair), Alex Davies, Rev Dr Phil Brown
Quality of Education	David Durrant (chair), Rev Anne Price, Rev Andy Morgan
Christian/Community Distinctiveness	Rev Penny Littlewood (chair), Rev Anne Price, Sara Hicks

How do Advocates communicate with the Board of Directors?

To ensure each local Advocate board is represented and maintains a direct connection with the Board of Directors, a Link Director is appointed to guide and support Advocates at each school.

Burghill Community Academy	Canon Pyon C of E Academy	St James C of E Primary School	St Paul's C of E Primary School	Stretton Sugwas C of E Academy
Chris Kent	Sara Hicks	Rev Penny Littlewood	Rev Dr Phill Brown	Rev Andy Morgan

In addition, Link Directors provide focused support to Advocates within their respective areas of expertise. Throughout the academic year, leaders and Advocates have opportunities to engage virtually with their Link Director. A face-to-face conference is held towards the end of the academic year, enabling Advocates, Directors, and leaders to come together to review progress and discuss strategic opportunities for the year ahead.

SEND & Inclusion	Pastoral	Vulnerable Group	Attendance, Behaviour & Attitudes	Christian/Community Distinctiveness
Lyndzey Smissen	Rev Anne Price	Richard Griffiths	Rev Andy Morgan	Rev Penny Littlewood

Members

Trust members meet at least once a year and are responsible for ensuring the Trust operates within its Articles of Association. A typical AGM will include:

- Reviewing the membership of Members and Directors
- Approval of financial accounts
- Quality Assurance of the work undertaken by the Board of Directors

Who is currently a Member of Orchard MAT?

Members are appointed to the Trust according to their role. This is to ensure fairness and consistency across all Multi-Academy Trusts within the Diocese. Currently, the board is made up as follows:

1. Diocesan Corporate Member
2. Bishop of Hereford
3. Diocesan Director of Education
4. Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education
5. Chair of the Directors

Strategic Group Details

A Strategic Group is only set up if the school is deemed to be failing. This determination will be verified by internal and external reviews. It may also be established due to a lack of recruitment at the Advocate level.

Each Strategic Group will consist of:

- A Chair of the group (voted for by the group and verified by the MAT Executive Board).
- A staff representative of the school
- Two parental representatives.
- An external headteacher to provide challenge and rigour to the process.
- The serving headteacher of the school will attend all meetings.

The role of the Strategic Group is to focus on teaching and learning, along with community links. All financial scrutiny and responsibility will be held at the Executive Board level, along with standards. The Strategic Group will have an overview of such items, but they will not be accountable for these areas.