



Mercia Learning Trust

Governance

A guide to school and trust governance



Mercia
Learning Trust

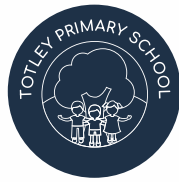
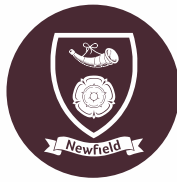
A professional headshot of Neil Miley, CEO of Mercia Learning Trust. He is a middle-aged man with short, dark hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a green patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred, warm-toned interior.

WELCOME

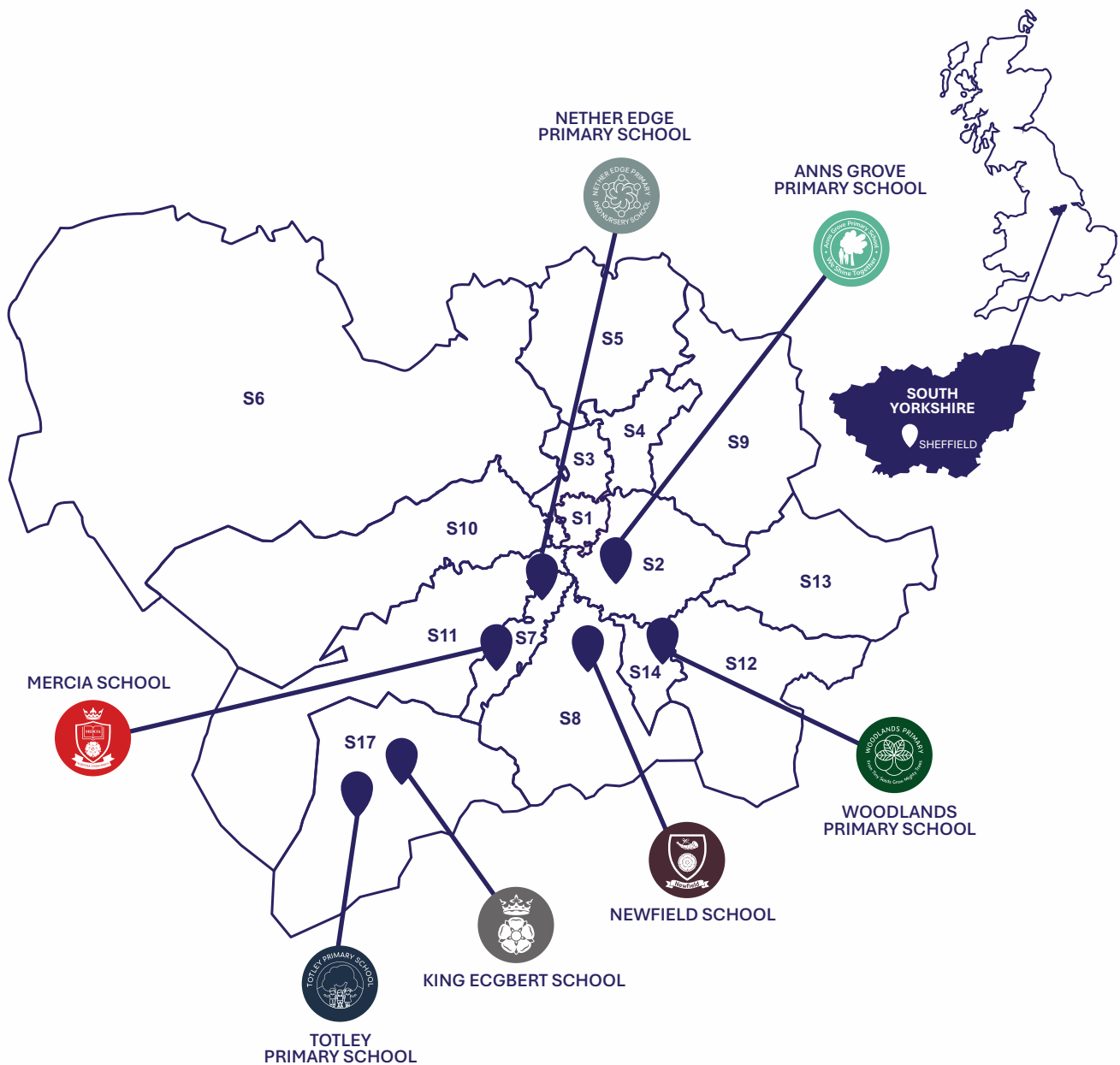
THANK YOU FOR EXPRESSING AN INTEREST IN GOVERNANCE WITHIN MERCIA LEARNING TRUST. WE HOPE THIS BOOKLET PROVIDES KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THE ROLE/S, AND INSPIRES YOU TO JOIN OUR GOVERNANCE TEAM TO HELP MAKE OUR SCHOOLS EVEN BETTER FOR THE CHILDREN WE SERVE. WE BELIEVE GOVERNANCE IS A VITAL ASPECT OF A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL AND TRUST.

NEIL MILEY, CEO

OUR SCHOOLS



LOCATION





WHAT IS TRUST GOVERNANCE?

Mercia Learning Trust is a charitable partnership (a multi-academy trust). Unlike maintained schools run by the council, our trust is directly accountable for school standards and financial management to the Secretary of State for Education. Over half of the schools across the country and in Sheffield are organised in this way.

Whilst our academy structure and organisation is important, we work together because we think partnership is a good thing. We believe a group of schools, leaders, staff and governors who work together can make their schools even better for every child, and the staff who work in them.

The primary task of school governors is to provide support and challenge, so that each school maintains and improves its effectiveness. This usually involves getting to know the school through visits, reading papers, attending meetings, discussing and agreeing school improvement priorities, scrutinising school performance (curriculum and teaching, behaviour, attendance, personal development and leadership), focusing on key aspects such as safeguarding and the performance of the most vulnerable children; monitoring feedback from children, parents and staff and ratifying policy.

Trustees primarily focus on school effectiveness, but are also responsible for overall trust vision and strategy, finance, human resources and resource management (for example estates, ICT etc.).

Together, governors and trustees help schools and our trust to keep on track and focus on what really matters.



Rhona Dodds
Chair of the Trust Board

**SCHOOLS NEED GOVERNING BOARDS THAT HAVE A BALANCE AND DIVERSITY
OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE TO ENABLE IT TO BE EFFECTIVE**

NATIONAL GOVERNANCE ASSOCIATION

I'm Rhona Dodds, and I am proud to serve as Chair of the Mercia Learning Trust Board. My journey with our trust began in 2015 when Nether Edge Primary School, where I was Chair of Governors, joined Mercia Learning Trust. Since then, I've been passionate about supporting our trust's mission to provide the best possible education for all students.

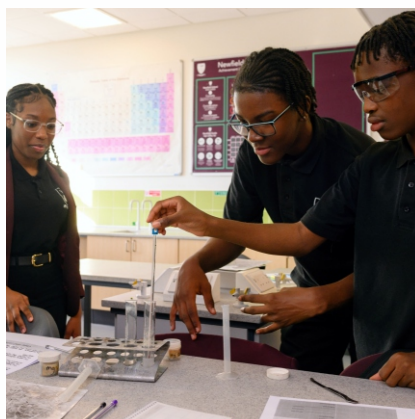


My background is in the NHS, where I worked for over 20 years, starting as a technician in hospital and research labs and later moving into Clinical Audit. This field focused on ensuring high standards of care, a concept closely aligned with the continuous improvement work I now help guide in education. My experience in encouraging professionals to use research, monitor their own practice, and lead



improvements has been particularly valuable in my role as a trustee.

In NHS management, I led a department of 200 staff across six sites, navigating major projects such as hospital relocations and the introduction of new IT systems. These leadership and strategic planning skills have proven essential in overseeing the operations of our trust.



On a personal note, I became a full-time carer for my youngest child, who is disabled, which allowed me to reassess my career and pursue long-held interests, including archaeology, in which I earned a degree in 2018.

As Chair, I am committed to ensuring every child in our trust receives the support and



opportunities they deserve to reach their full potential. It is a privilege to work with such a dedicated team. If you feel you have the time and want to support the future of education in Sheffield, you will be a great addition to our governance team at Mercia Learning Trust, and help shape the future of education in our community.

WHAT OUR GOVERNORS & TRUSTEES SAY:

“Being a school governor or trustee is a challenging but hugely rewarding role. It will give you the chance to make a real difference to young people, give something back to your local community and use and develop your skills in a board-level environment. You will also be joining the largest volunteer force in the country: there are over a quarter of a million volunteers governing state funded schools in England.”

National Governance Association



**Janet Collins - Co-Chair of Governors
Woodlands Primary**

“As governors, our role is to support and help the staff team do the very best they can to build on that commitment and deliver excellence for every child. It’s also vital that as governors, we make sure the staff and leadership have the resources they need to fulfil their roles without compromising their own wellbeing. I’ve learned that it doesn’t matter what knowledge or experience you have – every voice on the governing body is valuable and brings a new perspective to the team.”



**Ashfaq Khan - Governor
Mercia School**

“As a governor, you are a critical friend to the school, aiming to make every child matter, dream and achieve. Working with the Mercia Learning Trust is rewarding and exciting as everyone has their strengths in supporting the trust to be better for the children. If you feel you have the qualities to support the school you should get involved. Learn from the past; invest in the present; to improve the future.”



**Patrick O'Shea - Chair of Governors
Anns Grove Primary School**

“I became a chair of governors through a sense of obligation in order to maintain community representation and consistency for the school's local governing body. I feel building a team approach underpinned by functional and achievable systems and processes is key to ensuring an LGB can meet its purpose whilst fully utilising governors' time and input as volunteers.”



Bolawa Karim - Trustee

“I wanted to get into governance at Mercia Learning Trust to make a meaningful impact in education and support our local community. It's rewarding to work alongside dedicated leaders, guiding decisions that truly benefit our schools and children. Together, we're building a brighter future, fostering excellence and opportunity for all.”



**Richard Crossland - Governor
King Egbert School**

“After being heavily involved with fundraising when my children were at Totley Primary School, I was keen to carry on providing support in the community when they moved up to secondary. The intake of King Egbert School covers a wide and diverse area of the city. Having grown up in Sheffield and attended a large comprehensive school myself, I am passionate about ensuring each child has access to the best support and opportunities, regardless of their background.”



THE THREE TIERS OF GOVERNANCE

MEMBERS

These are the most senior tier of governance. They are the guardians of our constitution, have the power to appoint and remove directors, and meet annually to receive the audit/trust annual report.

TRUST BOARD

Trustees/Directors are the tier of governance that holds the most responsibility. They oversee trust strategy, performance, policy, finance, risk and audit, and all aspects of business management. There is a board and committee structure that meets four times a year.

LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES (LGB)

Each school has an LGB that meets four times a year. They are responsible for supporting and challenging the school senior leaders regarding standards (teaching, pupil progress/attainment, behaviour, attendance, and support for vulnerable students). Each LGB has a chair and vice chair, and up to 10 governors (some of whom will be parents/carers).

FAQs

Q: Will I have to complete any formal application?

A: During the process of appointment you will be asked to complete an application form. This will confidentially collect key personal information, your experience, skills and competencies and declarations in order for the trust to complete necessary statutory safeguarding checks.

Q: How long is the term of office?

A: The usual term of office for a school governor and trustee is four years.

Q: Is this a paid role?

A: Governance is an entirely voluntary role. Our Governance Handbook describes this commitment as follows; 'At the heart of governance in a charity like Mercia Learning trust is the governance team, made up entirely of volunteers. These individuals bring their experience and judgement, and accept accountability, not for material benefit, but for the greater public good. In particular, to improve the life chances of the pupils/young people in our schools'. Taking part will develop your experience and skills, as well as giving something back to your local community.

Q: What training will be given?

A: You will be guided through an effective induction, attend school or trust led training, and have access to comprehensive training packages.

Q: What time commitment is required?

A: Governors and trustees are required to attend between four and six meetings per year. Outside of meetings, additional time will be required to read papers and/or attend training or school events as required. Those who hold positions as Chairs can expect to give even more time.

Q: What do I do if I am interested in being a governor or Trustee?

A: Contact Claire Hogg, Governance Officer, chogg@merciatrust.co.uk or call 0114 3494230. She will put you in contact either with the CEO or headteacher for an informal conversation. They will explain the role more fully and the process by which you should apply. Depending on the role, a governor can be appointed by the local governing body or may have to engage in an election. The appointment of trustees can only be made by members. We look forward to hearing from you.



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