


Academy Trust Handbook 2023: Short sharp focus

10 October 2023  Lydia Michaelson-Yeates

Academy leaders returning from the summer break in readiness for the new academic year will want to get themselves up to speed with the latest edition of the [Academy Trust Handbook](#), (the Handbook), effective from 1 September 2023.

The new Handbook seeks to bring greater transparency to governance by linking the Handbook's section on roles and responsibilities to the DfE's July 2023 publication on [Commissioning High-Quality Trusts](#) and the [Trust Quality Descriptors](#).

Are your governance arrangements 'fit for purpose'?

Those academy trusts looking to merge and grow their organisations will need to review, strengthen and improve their governance arrangements. Many academy trusts haven't reviewed their existing governance arrangements for some time, perhaps in some instances since the academy trust was first established and the governance frameworks in place don't mirror what happens in practice or are no longer 'fit for purpose'.

This emphasis on governance ties in with another of the main changes of the Handbook which sets out that the board of trustees should have sufficient financial knowledge to hold the executive to account (para 1.25). No further detail is provided on what constitutes 'sufficient financial knowledge' but boards are reminded of the DfE [Competency Framework for Governance](#).

Time to focus on governance

The attention to having an effective board means now is the time for academy trusts to focus on governance, particularly relevant for academy trusts who are minded develop and grow their organisation over the next few years.

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