



Confederation
of School Trusts

Consultation

The Core Responsibilities of the School Trust Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Introduction

The aim of this work is to produce a definitive set of core responsibilities for School Trust Chief Executive Officers (CEOs).

As the sector body for School Trusts, we are doing this because systemic change has created the relatively new leadership position of Chief Executive Officer within the education sector, with trusts held accountable as charitable organisations by the Department for Education, regulators and stakeholder communities. There is currently little agreement across the sector on what this new title means in job descriptions, operational standards, accountability measures or salary.

CST's work to produce a core definition of the CEO role is aimed at CEOs, those aspiring to the role, and the Trustees of School Trusts in order to:

- inform professional development and support programmes for current and prospective Trust CEOs;
- support succession and growth planning within School Trusts; and,
- assist in the performance management review process of School Trust CEOs.

The core responsibilities proposed build upon existing standard-setting work, for example the new [Headteachers' Standards](#). The core responsibilities for Trust CEOs include the statutory and regulatory functions of the Accounting Officer (see appendix A) and define the core elements of professional conduct.

In developing the draft core responsibilities, we have researched international standards for comparable roles, for example the Ontario Leadership Framework's System Level Leadership and the National Professional Qualification (NPQ) Executive Leadership Framework. These frameworks have informed our thinking, but neither captures the legal and regulatory Accounting Officer responsibilities of the CEO. The NPQ Executive Leadership Framework is geared primarily towards school leaders who are, or are aspiring to be, an executive headteacher or have responsibility for leading several schools.



How to respond

We invite leaders in executive and non-executive positions in School Trusts and stakeholder organisations to comment on this work, identifying how it reflects your experience and expectations of the CEO role in School Trusts.

There are three ways in which you can share your response:

- 1) Send a comment letter
- 2) Download and complete a [template](#) and email it to admin@cstuk.org.uk
- 3) Complete an [online questionnaire](#)

Whichever option you choose, we value your input and appreciate your participation.

Time frame

The consultation is open from 30 September 2021 to 01 November 2021.

Questions

If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).



Who is being defined as a School Trust Chief Executive Officer?

Before determining the core responsibilities of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a School Trust it is helpful to make clear exactly what role these core responsibilities are identified with, that is, when is it appropriate for a role to be designated as being a School Trust CEO. It is however not straightforward to define who should be classified as a School Trust CEO. The CEO of a large multiple School Trust is the Accounting Officer for the Trust, but so is the Headteacher of a single School Trust; as is the Executive Headteacher of a small School Trust. These core responsibilities are appropriate to the most senior paid employee who is the designated Trust Accounting Officer.

The designated responsibilities of a Trust Accounting Officer as specified in the Academies Trust Handbook are given in Appendix A.

Some leaders of large trusts retain the title Executive Head rather than CEO, to ensure continued engagement with the Teachers' Pension Scheme, but others use the title Executive Head when overseeing two small schools. The job title situation is further complicated in that some Executive Headteachers, whilst overseeing several schools in a large Trust, work under a Trust CEO and are therefore not the Accounting Officer for the Trust. Further information about job titles and sizes of Trusts is given in Appendix B.

Recognising that Trusts are organised in different ways and use different job titles, **the core responsibilities set out in this document have been determined for the person who is the Accounting Officer for the Trust and has an overarching, strategic role, without being the substantive head of any of the schools in the Trust.** However, it is recognised that the trust leader of smaller and single academy trusts will have the same Accounting Officer responsibilities as those leading larger trusts. It is therefore acknowledged that these **core responsibilities can be used for leaders of smaller trusts recognising that the major difference will not be in the responsibilities themselves, but in the way they are enacted in practice.** For example, in small Trusts the CEO may be implementing many actions themselves, whereas in medium sized and larger Trusts much of the CEO role will be enacted by leading and managing through an executive team.



The core responsibilities of a School Trust Chief Executive Officer

Summary

The following description sets out:

- what the School Trust CEO role exists to do; that is to specify the job purpose;
- the expected behaviours and professional conduct of those leading School Trusts; and,
- the core responsibilities of a School Trust CEO.

1. Job purpose

A School Trust CEO is responsible for leading the Executive Team of the Trust, enabling the Trust and all its schools to be sustainably successful over time. They will provide high level strategic leadership and management across all aspects of the Trust's activities. They will ensure that the Trust provides high quality education for all its pupils through the effective and efficient use of resources and people. As a system leader, the CEO will represent the Trust with a wide range of stakeholders and partners and enable the Trust to fulfil its civic responsibilities. They are the Accounting Officer for the Trust, responsible for ensuring the Trust meets its statutory and legal requirements.

2. Ethics and Professional Conduct

As leaders of educational charities CEOs of School Trusts are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of principled and professional conduct. School Trust CEOs should always uphold and demonstrate The Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles).

School Trust CEOs are responsible for upholding public trust in Trust leadership, civic leadership and system leadership roles, and should maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour. As leaders of School Trusts, their academy communities and the profession, School Trust CEOs should serve in the best interests of the Trust's pupils, conducting themselves in a manner compatible with their influential position in society. The first line of accountability is to the Trust Board and CEOs draw their authority, legitimacy and decision-making powers from the Trust Board.



3. CEO Core Responsibilities

Academy Trusts are education charities that run schools to give children a better future. Every Trust has a single legal and moral purpose: to advance education for the public benefit, although some have wider charitable objects and/or specific objects associated with religious ethos. School Trust CEOs have specific responsibilities as executive leaders of the Trust.

There are six interlinked areas of a School Trust CEO's core responsibilities. These are:

- Strategic leadership - Trust ethos, culture and strategy
- Finance, sustainability and compliance
- Quality of Education
- People strategy
- Governance and accountability
- System leadership and civic responsibility

Strategic leadership – Trust ethos, culture and strategy

- Establish and sustain the Trust's mission, culture, values and strategic direction in partnership with the Trust Board
- Provide vision, direction and leadership that enables the Trust to achieve its strategic objectives and secure its future sustainability
- Create a positive and supportive culture across the Trust and its schools
- Develop operational objectives that are appropriate, deliverable and aligned to securing a sustainable future through the Trust's strategic direction
- Provide strategic leadership to enable the Trust's organisational design and operational systems meet its current and future requirements and manage change effectively
- Establish and regularly re-evaluate a comprehensive educational design model for the Trust that supports innovation and technological development

Finance, sustainability and compliance

- Ensure that sound financial and risk management systems are in place
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Trust and its schools through effective financial and estates management
- Direct the Trust's activities to achieve the most efficient, effective and sustainable provision of education to the highest quality, making the most effective use of the resources available.



- Ensure the organisation complies with all statutory and legal requirements including safeguarding and health and safety

Quality of Education

- Uphold and secure ambitious educational and behavioural standards for all pupils, promoting further support for the most disadvantaged and those with additional and special educational needs and disabilities
- Enable the Trust to establish and sustain a broad, structured and coherent curriculum, supported by effective curricular leadership and delivered through high quality teaching in all its schools
- Ensure the Trust has effective and proportional evaluation processes to make a timely diagnosis of the complex and persistent problems and barriers that limit the effectiveness of the Trust's schools
- Ensure that priority areas for improvement are identified and appropriate actions implemented
- Enable the Trust to have access to appropriate evidence-based strategies for improvement and ensure their effective implementation

People strategy

- Lead and effectively manage the activities and performance of the Trust's executive group
- Enable a people strategy that identifies talent, supports and develops all staff and sustains a culture of high staff professionalism
- Ensure the Trust has high quality employment practices that promote diversity and equality
- Enable systems that ensure staff have access to high quality professional development, aligned to balance organisational and individual needs
- Ensure the organisation's staffing capability and capacity is analysed to meet current and future needs and actions are taken to appropriately staff the Trust with people with the right skills, experience and qualities to meet future demands
- Ensure the Trust has a strong talent management and succession planning programmes across all areas of the organisation's work
- Promote and ensure ethical practices of recruitment and retention of staff

Governance and accountability

- Understand and welcome the role of effective Trust governance, upholding their obligation to give account and accept responsibility



- Promote a culture of accountability that is recognised and accepted as an essential element of improvement at all levels and across all aspects of the Trust's work
- Develop and maintain effective relationships with the Trust Board recognising their key role in holding the CEO and executive team to account
- Ensure the Trust Board receives quality information in the level of detail needed to make informed decisions and fulfil its functions and legal obligations
- Enable and support rigorous approaches to identifying, managing and mitigating risk
- Ensure positive communications that promote the Trust and its work, and present the Trust effectively when dealing with the media
- Promote and enable ways in which the Trust's schools and their local boards actively connect with their communities
- Understand the role of relevant regulatory bodies and ensure the Trust and its schools respond to their requirements

System leadership and civic responsibility

- Promote and enable a collaborative culture and spirit of professional generosity within the Trust
- Build and sustain strong, positive and effective relationships with key stakeholders and partners to ensure there are strong collaborations outside the Trust
- Understand and positively engage in their role as a civic leader recognising that they have a duty to engage with each other and other civic actors for the wider good



Appendix A: Accounting Officer Responsibilities

The Accounting Officer responsibilities are given the Academies Trust Handbook sections 1.37 - 1.44. The designated responsibilities are:

- Give assurance (to Parliament and the public) of high standards of probity in the management of public funds, particularly regularity, propriety and value for money
- Adhering to the Seven Principles of Public Life
- Having oversight of financial transactions (under trustees' control, measures to prevent losses or misuse, multi-person operation of accounts and records, accurate accounting records)
- Completing annual statement on regularity, propriety and compliance
- Taking personal responsibility for assuring compliance to the Board
- Advising on Board intent or action is incompatible with the articles, funding agreement or handbook
- Notify the ESFA if they consider the Board is in breach of the articles, funding agreement or handbook



Appendix B: Information about job titles and size of Trusts

In their guidance on 'Setting Pay for Executive Heads/Principals and Chief Executive Officers', ASCL reference different leadership structures.

They indicate three models:

- 1) The executive head/principal basic model where the executive head/principal is the substantive headteacher of all the schools in the group.
- 2) The executive head/principal mixed model where the executive head/principal is the substantive headteacher of one school in the group and has an overarching, strategic role for the group.
- 3) The CEO model where each of the schools in the group has its own headteacher. The CEO has an overarching, strategic role, without being the substantive head of any of the schools in the group.

There are also no fixed points that define when a Trust transitions from small to medium to large. When National Schools Commissioner, Sir David Carter used the number of pupils:

<1200 pupils:	Starter
1200 - 5000 pupils:	Established
5000 - 12000 pupils:	National
>12000 pupils:	System

Ofsted, in their Summary Evaluations of Multi-Academy Trusts, use the number of schools rather than the number of pupils, with a small Trust having 3 or fewer schools, a medium sized Trust having 4 to 13 schools and a large Trust being 14 or more schools. Ofsted also recognises what they term specialist MATs.

The transition points will also differ depending on the phase, sector and size of the schools in the Trust.



The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) is the national organisation and sector body for School Trusts in England advocating for, connecting and supporting executive and governance leaders. We are a membership organisation of organisations. This means that the organisation – the Trust – is the member. Our mission is to build an excellent education system in England – every school part of a strong and sustainable group in which every child is a powerful learner and adults learn and develop together as teachers and leaders.

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The Voice of School Trusts

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