Four Hills Education Trust

Where Every Step is Shaped with **CARE**

TRUST BOARD

TERMS OF REFERENCE

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Owner/Author:	**Kirsty Osman (CEO)**	**Committee Ratified:**	**1st September 2025**
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1. Purpose

The Board of Trustees ("the Board") is the governing body of Four Hills Education Trust (FHET). It holds collective responsibility for the strategic leadership, financial integrity, legal compliance, risk management, and educational outcomes across all academies within the Trust. The Board ensures the Trust's mission, values and strategic plan are delivered, and that public funds are managed with regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility.

2. Authority & Legal Framework

The Board operates under and is bound by:

- FHET Articles of Association and Funding Agreements
- FHET Scheme of Governance & Delegation (SOG&D) and approved Trust policies
- The Academy Trust Handbook 2025 (ATH) and Managing Public Money principles referenced therein
- Relevant education, charity, company, safeguarding, equality, health & safety and data protection legislation.

3. Core Functions

In line with DfE expectations, the Board will:

1. **Set clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction** (approve Trust strategy, priorities, KPIs)
2. **Hold executive leaders to account** (CEO appraisal and oversight of school performance)
3. **Oversee financial performance** (approve budgets, monitor reserves and risk, ensure compliance).

4. Reserved Matters (summary)

The following decisions are **retained by the Board** and cannot be delegated:

- Amending Articles; appointing/removing Trustees; establishing/dissolving Board committees
- Approving the Scheme of Delegation and changes to governance model/LGB configurations
- Approving Trust vision, strategy, consolidated budget, reserves policy and annual report & accounts
- Appointing/dismissing the CEO; approving Headteacher appointments/dismissals

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- Approving safeguarding & health and safety policies; serious incident escalations to regulators
- Suspending/removing delegation from any LGB; appointing an Interim Executive Board (IEB).
  (For the full list, see **SOG&D Section 16: Reserved Matters**.)

5. Delegation and Committees

The Board may delegate specific scrutiny and recommendation functions to its committees, but retains legal accountability:

- Finance & Resources Committee – finance, procurement, capital and estates oversight
- Quality of Education Committee – standards, curriculum, inclusion, SEND, attendance
- Audit & Risk Committee – risk management, internal scrutiny, compliance, fraud & whistleblowing
- Education Advisory Forum (advisory) – LGB Chairs' forum for insight and feedback
  (See SOG&D Section 6 for committee remits and delegated matrices.)

6. Membership, Chair & Governance Professional

- **Composition:** As set by the Articles of Association; diverse skills across education, finance/audit, legal/compliance, estates/H&S, HR and community engagement. The CEO is an ex-officio Trustee (Accounting Officer).
- **Chair & Vice-Chair:** Elected by Trustees in line with Articles; the Chair leads the Board and line-manages the CEO.
- **Governance Professional (Clerk):** Ensures agendas, papers, accurate minutes, policy tracking, records retention and website compliance.

7. Quorum, Voting and Conduct

- **Quorum:** As defined by FHET Articles of Association.
- **Voting:** By majority of Trustees present; conflicts of interest declared and affected Trustees withdraw from related items.
- **Conduct:** Trustees uphold FHET values and the **Nolan Principles** of public life.

8. Meeting Cycle, Papers and Publication

- The Board will meet at least five times per year (plus AGM and strategic events). Papers are circulated in advance; minutes are recorded and actions tracked.

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- **Publication:** Statutory governance information, selected policies and reports are published on the Trust website in line with ATH transparency requirements (e.g., website publication of certain pay and governance information)

9. Responsibilities – Detailed Scope

9.1 Strategy & Performance

- Approve Trust vision, values, strategy and annual priorities; monitor KPIs; commission external reviews where appropriate.

9.2 Educational Outcomes & Inclusion

- Scrutinise Trust-wide performance data; monitor Ofsted readiness and post-inspection action; oversee curriculum principles, SEND, Pupil Premium and attendance.

9.3 Finance, Procurement & Value for Money

- Approve consolidated and school budgets; reserves strategy; major contracts above delegated limits; ensure procurement controls, competitive tendering and compliance with the ATH (including updates linked to the Procurement Act guidance and internal control expectations).

9.4 Risk, Internal Scrutiny & Audit

- Own the Trust Risk Register and risk strategy; commission and receive **internal scrutiny**; respond to external audit; ensure regularity testing evidence is maintained (e.g., monthly management accounts shared with the Chair, internal audit follow-up actions).

9.5 Accounting Officer & Managing Public Money

- Ensure the CEO (Accounting Officer) fulfils duties around **regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility**, including the duty to raise concerns to the Board/DfE if proposed actions conflict with ATH or articles.

9.6 Estates & Health & Safety

- Oversee estates strategy, statutory compliance (fire, asbestos, legionella), and termly assurance; benchmark against DfE **School Estate Management Standards** and Good Estate Management guidance; ensure buildings are **safe and well-maintained**.

9.7 Cyber, Digital & Information Governance

- Oversee cyber security, **do not pay ransomware demands**; ensure progress towards the **six core digital & technology standards** by 2030 (broadband, switching, wireless, cybersecurity, filtering/monitoring, digital leadership & governance).

9.8 Safeguarding, Equality & Wellbeing

- Approve Trust safeguarding policy; monitor termly safeguarding assurance (SCR, training compliance, safer recruitment); uphold Equality Act 2010 duties and inclusive practice.

9.9 Executive Pay & People

- Approve executive pay framework and pay policy; ensure **evidence-based, defensible decisions** and compliance with tax obligations; conduct CEO appraisal; oversee leadership succession planning.

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9.10 Whistleblowing, Fraud & Serious Incident Reporting

- Approve and monitor whistleblowing and anti-fraud policies; ensure immediate escalation and reporting of serious irregularities to the DfE, Charity Commission, ICO, etc., as required

10. LGS: Local Governance & Intervention

- Establish LGBs, approve their ToRs, and receive upward reporting; vary or withdraw delegation where risks are significant; appoint an **IEB** where governance is ineffective. (See SOG&D Sections 7, 15.)

11. Information & Records Management

- Ensure accurate governance records, registers of interests, policy trackers and compliance logs are maintained; uphold retention schedules and audit access.

12. Publication & Accessibility

- Publish Board ToR, SOG&D, key policies, annual report & accounts and required governance/pay information on the Trust website; ensure school websites meet statutory publication requirements.
- This ToR is published on the Trust website and available to all stakeholders.

13. Review, Evaluation & Version Control

- **Annual ToR review** each Autumn Term (and on material change), aligned to ATH updates and governance effectiveness reviews; log version control and reissue to Members, Trustees, LGBs and senior leaders.
- All Trustees will confirm annually that they have read and understood these Terms of Reference as part of the Board's annual compliance cycle."

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