

GOVERNANCE AT BDAT

This Q&A has been developed to provide a succinct summary of how Governance works across Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT). It has been written to help governors and senior leaders understand how accountability works in a MAT and it signposts where you can find further information.

Q. What is BDAT?

A. BDAT is a multi-academy Trust and approved academy sponsor. We are also a limited company by guarantee and charity, meaning we have to follow both company and charity law and have multiple regulatory bodies who monitor our performance including the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA), part of the Department for Education. We are also accountable to the Anglican Diocese of Leeds who appoint the members of the company.

Q. So how does accountability work?

A. BDAT has an agreed set of articles which set out how we operate and a master funding agreement (MFA) directly with the Secretary of State for Education which allows us to set up a Trust for both sponsored and converter academies. These are based on the model documents provided by the National Society for the Church of England for all church associated MATs. Our articles specifically allow us to sponsor both church and non-church academies.

BDAT then has a supplementary funding agreement (SFA) with each of our academies which sets out how we work with each school and expectations and commitments from both sides. In the case of Church Schools we also have a Church Supplemental Agreement (CSA) with the Diocese of Leeds.

Q. So who is accountable?

A. The BDAT board is the accountable body for all the academies in the Trust.

It has three key functions:

1. It sets the strategic priorities for the company and determines the rate and speed of growth.
2. It is accountable for the education and standards for every academy.
3. It is responsible for the financial management and spend of every academy.

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BDAT does retain cluster level Governance (Board committees) and local school levels of Governance (Local Governing Bodies) but ultimately overall accountability rests with the Board. This means it is really important that we have clear Governance structures and parameters in place so everyone is clear on their remit and the boundaries of their role, who we need to talk to when making decision and how we will work towards achieving the Trusts strategic priorities.

It is therefore essential we have the right checks and balances in the system without duplicating effort at different Governance levels or unnecessarily slowing Governance decisions. We do this through a written Scheme of Delegation which is reviewed annually by the Trust Board.

Q. How does a Scheme of Delegation Work?

A. The Trust Board of every MAT needs to decide which functions it will reserve for itself and which functions it will delegate to Board sub-committees, local governing bodies and to the CEO and his/her staff. It is really important to understand that while the Trust can delegate (and de-delegate) functions, it cannot delegate accountability: A decision which is made by an individual or committee, with proper delegated authority, is a decision of the Board.

Q. So what does that mean for local governing bodies?

A. Essentially the Trust Board is the accountable Governance body for each academy and local governing bodies are sub-committees or advisory groups to the MAT Board. BDAT has on a number of occasions considered re-titling LGBs to ensure their titles more accurately reflect their remit, however we have decided against this as we feel that LGBs are a crucial part of our accountability structures and it is more important to define their role than just rename their functions.

Q. And how do Trustees fit with employees?

A. Like with any academy there is a balance between the strategic role of Governors and Trustees and the operational role of the CEO, Academy leaders and other Trust staff. Trustees have a very important role in setting the vision of the organisation and have strategic oversight for the delivery of the vision. It is the role of the CEO, senior executive team and Academy leaders to draw up the plan and implement the vision, reporting back to the Board of Trustees who hold the CEO to account. It is therefore very important that Trustees (like school Governors) remain strategic and do not get involved in day-to-day operational matters.

Q. So how is BDAT structured?

BDAT has five Trust members who are appointed by the Diocese and act like shareholders to the company, meeting at least annually at the Trust Annual General Meeting to sign off the annual report and accounts. The members appoint the Trustees.

The Trust Board is made up of 12-15 Trustees appointed for the range of skills they bring to the accountable body. The CEO is an ex-officio Trustee.

The Board currently operates four Board committees:

1. Primary Education Committee responsible for all primary educational and pupil related issues.
2. Secondary Education Committee responsible for all secondary educational and pupil related.
3. Resources Committee covering finance, staffing and premises.
4. Audit Committee which provides scrutiny and quality assurance for all areas of Trust Business. This is a legal requirement and additional check and balance set by our regulator for all MATs with an income of over £50 million.

BDAT then also retains local governing bodies for each school with a set remit and decision making authority determined by the Board. Where academies are working well the Board has traditionally opted to delegate a high level of authority to this level of Governance. On occasions where Governance has not worked well the Board can withdraw delegated authority or change the membership and structure. We have in the past operated an Academy Transformation Board model where we have one smaller LGB equivalent acting across two academies.

Where to find out more?

To find out more about the BDAT scheme of delegation, funding agreement and articles visit <http://www.bdat-academies.org/bdat-business/our-articles/>

To find out who the BDAT Trustees are please visit <https://www.bdat-academies.org/about-us/our-board/>

For a useful summary of Governance and accountability in Trusts the **NGA Guide “Welcome to a Multi-Academy Trust** – a guide for newly appointed Trustees” and in particular chapter 2 is an excellent read. Copies of chapter 2 can be provided by contacting the BDAT Governance team – 01274 909120 or emailing governance@bdat-academies.org