



Trust Governance Professional Application Pack.

THE MERCIAN TRUST

ALDRIDGE SCHOOL
QUEEN MARY'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL
QUEEN MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL
SHIRE OAK ACADEMY
THE LADDER SCHOOL
WALSALL STUDIO SCHOOL



The Mercian Trust

The Mercian Trust in Walsall is a six school multi academy trust that is currently seeking a Trust Governance Professional to support the Executive Team and Trust Board to design, implement and support the highest quality governance across the Trust.

About The Mercian Trust

The Mercian Trust was incorporated in January 2018 and governs six secondary schools, including selective grammar schools, large comprehensives, an alternative provision free school and a studio school. Four of the trust's schools are located in central Walsall: Queen Mary's High School, Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall Studio School and The Ladder School. The remaining two schools: Aldridge School, and Shire Oak Academy are in the Aldridge Central and Aldridge North districts respectively. [We are in advanced discussions concerning possible expansion by merger with another trust in a neighbouring local authority].

The members of The Mercian Trust include The Vine Trust and the Queen Mary's Foundation. Both are charitable organisations focussed on improving prospects for young people in Walsall and the surrounding areas.

The current Ofsted ratings of our schools are:

Queen Mary's Grammar School - Outstanding	Queen Mary's High School – Outstanding
Aldridge School - Good	Walsall Studio School – Good
Shire Oak Academy – Requires Improvement*	The Ladder School – Not yet inspected

*The trust is currently actively supporting the improvement of Shire Oak Academy

The Trust's schools serve their local communities and the wider conurbation, with their pupil cohort reflecting this. 16% of pupils are eligible for FSM (ranging from less than 10% in one school and more than 50% in another). 39% of pupils are from Black, Asian or other minority groups with students from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities forming the majority of students in two schools. Around 10% of pupils have special educational needs or disabilities.

The Mercian Trust employs 616 staff across its schools, to serve a pupil count of approx. 5,400. The budgeted income of the trust is currently c£35m.

Plans for the future

We have a clear strategic plan focussed in the following 5 areas:

- 1. Leading students on a transformational journey** empowering social mobility and delivering social justice.
 - a. Develop and deliver an ambitious, relevant and responsive curriculum inside and outside the classroom (academic, vocational, enrichment and cultural)
 - b. Enhance aspirational, inspirational, evidence based teaching and experiential learning
 - c. Support Students' physical safety, mental well-being and character development including student leadership in the community
- 2. Establishing systems and structures** to enable successful schools
 - a. Develop effective MAT central teams and systems (finance/HR/Estates and more) to support schools with clear SLAs that demonstrate commitment and drive improvement
 - b. Recruit, develop and maintain effective leadership and governance at all levels while succession planning for the future
 - c. Strengthen leaders' commitment to the students and staff in more than one school through collaboration and system leadership
- 3. Driving the digital transformation**
 - a. Upskill teachers to become experts in remote/hybrid education (personalising high-quality content and interaction with students)
 - b. Reduce staff workload and discover new efficiencies through collaboration, automated operations (AI/IoT), innovation and influence beyond one school
 - c. Optimise evidence-based decision making through data analytics

4. **Becoming an employer of choice**

- a. Further develop a well-trained, professionally skilled and motivated workforce (through opportunities and CPD beyond one school)
- b. Deliver consistent, harmonised pay and conditions of service as one employer committed to fairness across uniquely diverse schools
- c. Introduce staff rewards and recognition and increase retention and internal progression (promotion within the trust) for staff in all schools

5. **Growing the Trust in size and influence**

- a. Demonstrate Trust capacity through improvements in existing schools (performance tables) and through securing good and better Ofsted judgements that are recognised by parents, external stakeholders, future partners and the DfE
- b. Increase student numbers from c5k to c10k through increasing PAN, recruitment/retention in posy 16 and through additional schools joining the Trust
- c. Realise expansion projects and building programmes

characteristics that may mean they are more likely to face discrimination and prejudice.

- b. **Staff** – Developing and nurturing opportunities for staff (including leadership development) particularly for those who are more likely to face discrimination and prejudice.
- c. **Governance** - Increasing numbers of non-executive leaders and governors from underrepresented groups.

4. **Digital Transformation** - Delivering the digital transformation of how we teach, learn, lead and operate. The trust is working to establish a single consolidated digital ecosystem / infrastructure that facilitates 'economies of scale' and 'network effect' of being part of one charitable trust.

Particular areas of focus for the Trust board at the moment include:

1. **Managing the impact of the Covid crisis**
2. **Growth** – The Trust plans to manage a period of successful growth whilst continuing to support existing schools. The Trust is managing programmes totalling more than £15m at a number of our schools to increase PAN and are also in advanced conversations re a possible Trust merger.
3. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** - The trust is passionate about its commitment to social mobility, social justice and inclusion in three significant areas.
 - a. **Students** - Closing the gaps in opportunity, attainment and progress for disadvantaged students, students with SEND, vulnerable students and others with protected

Trust ethos & values

Our name is rooted in history and expresses a geographical identity and ambition. The ancient kingdom of Mercia encompassed much of what we now recognise as the West Midlands – and crucially for us it included what we now call the Black Country. It was in Mercia that St Chad established an association of small monasteries which fostered unity through bonds of kinship.

Now, a thousand years later, we look to demonstrate the same spirit in our approach. We are a family of schools committed to each other – diverse in nature, proud custodians of our history and success, but together, one charitable trust with a common purpose.

Our trust exists to equip our students to **live life to the full**.

Our mission is **increasing opportunities** and **improving outcomes** to enable our students to:

- Realise their potential
- Thrive in the world of work
- Make a positive contribution to the local, national and international community.

Our values are:

- Excellence and Rigour
- Challenge and Support
- Safety and Wellbeing
- Acceptance and Applause

Mission Statement:

https://www.themerciantrust.org/#our_mission



Job Description

Post	Trust Governance Professional – Governance and Compliance Manager
Post type:	FT or Substantive Fraction
Salary:	c.£40k
Reporting to:	Chief Executive Officer (Accounting Officer) as part of the trust's Executive Team.
Liaises with:	Chair and Vice Chair of Trust Board, Chairs of Trust Committees, Chairs of Local Governing Bodies.
Other:	Post holder must have the ability to reach our various and other sites using their own vehicle and be available for evening working. The role is open to some home working and may need to adjust to meet greater demands at key points in the year (e.g. meeting times).

Core Purpose

The Trust Governance Professional (Governance and Compliance Manager) is a new role for our trust to provide specific capacity in the design, implementation and support the highest quality governance across the Trust.

This is a strategic leadership position responsible for maintaining and developing the culture and ethos of Mercian Trust through monitoring compliance with regulatory requirements, whilst consolidating local arrangements that provide robust challenge and support for our schools.

The postholder will lead the Trust in developing standards of governance including advising the Chair of the Board and CEO on governance process and practice.

They will oversee compliance with regulatory and legislative requirements and ensure the Board's decisions are in accordance with our governance documents and are acted upon.

At subcommittee level (including LGBs) the postholder will be proactive and creative in identifying where governance is working well, where things could be improved and where intervention may be required.

They will build strong relationships with LGB and committee chairs as well as the Chair of the board and the executive team.

As the Trust's governance expert, the postholder will develop and/or deliver appropriate governor training. They will also support the work of the Trust's nominations and appointments panel with the recruitment and retention of high calibre volunteers and particularly those from underrepresented groups.

This is a role with several competing priorities:

- The need to provide strategic leadership as well as operational management.
- To be innovative and creative in developing system-leading governance for Mercian Trust, whilst also ensuring statutory and regulatory requirements continue to be met.
- To be an expert on the theory and approach to governance with the ability to implement and safeguard high standards of challenge and support.
- To be equally comfortable operating at central as well as local level whilst ensuring all elements of governance combine to support driving improvements in standards across The Mercian Trust.

Main duties and responsibilities

1. Support the efficient and effective operation of the Mercian Trust Board and its Committees, ensuring that Board business continues to drive the successful delivery of The Mercian Trust's strategic objectives.
 - a. Lead clerking of the trustee board and its substantive committees.
 - b. Advise the Chair and other Trustees as well as being the first point of contact on Board business.
 - c. Develop a Trust governance strategy and monitor progress.
2. Lead on maintaining robust corporate governance across Mercian Trust, including ensuring that the Trust continues to meet its regulatory and statutory reporting obligations.
 - a. Advise the Chair, CEO, Members, other Trustees and the Executive Team on key matters of regulatory and statutory importance.
 - b. Act as company secretary ensuring statutory compliance including filings with Companies House, the Charity

- Commission, the Department for Education, and the Education and Skills Funding Agency.
- c. Ensure Board decisions are made and implemented in accordance with our Articles of Association and relevant agreements and protocols.
 - d. Work closely with the Executive Team to maintain currency of format, content and drafting of all statutory reports and annual reviews.
 - e. Support trustees in developing diversity of thought and characteristics at all levels including increasing representation of underrepresented groups.
 - f. Manage and maintain our Trust Strategic Risk Register in conjunction with the Executive Team.
 - g. Liaise with the Trust's legal advisers as appropriate.
3. Ensure that our governance systems and structures drive the Culture, values and ethos of the Mercian Trust.
 - a. Work with the Trust and LGBs to determine and elevate our organisational values and culture.
 - b. Ensure the conduct and operation of the Board and wider organisation embodies and reflects the Trust culture, values and ethos.
 - c. Ensure that policy and practice align with the organisation's culture, values and ethos.
 4. Drive Mercian Trust's development of sector leading governance arrangements through ensuring high standards of local challenge and support, and enabling all layers of governance to function as an effective and coherent whole.
 - a. Ensure a high standard of local academy challenge and support in Mercian Trust schools through knowing how all local arrangements are working, aligning good practice and identifying where local interventions are necessary.
 - b. Oversee effective communication between members, trustee and LGBs – and Executive Leaders and School Leadership Teams.
 5. Build proactive and productive working relationships with LGB Chairs, Clerks and Heads, and act as a troubleshooter for governance issues across all our schools.
 - a. Lead recruitment and retention of local governors (through appropriate channels / panels)
 - b. Lead the development and understanding of our Trust governance handbook, code of conduct and appropriate Terms of Reference across the whole Trust.
 6. Support and Challenge the board and subcommittees including the LGBs – ensuring decision-making processes are effective in delivering the Trust's stated objectives in a clear and transparent manner.
 - a. Ensure decisions are taken in an open and transparent manner and in the public interest
 - b. Ensure decisions are taken impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias
 - c. Advise when it could be appropriate to seek external advice and support.
 - d. Ensure our actions, decision and reporting demonstrate the highest standards of public life.
 7. To work collaboratively with other leaders, functions and services within the Trust.
 - a. Support due diligence activity of new academies potentially joining Mercian Trust by preparing the schools' current governing body for conversion/transfer
 - b. Lead on co-ordination of key policies across Mercian Trust, including defining which sit at school and Trust-level, and driving the production and updating of central Trust policies
 - c. Ensure local governance complements school improvement activity by working alongside the Executive Director of Education and Head / School SLT to ensure local arrangements are providing robust support and challenge for the school's SEF judgements and SIP priorities.

8. Work with the Chair and committee chairs to support and challenge our effectiveness and efficiency as part of ongoing self-review.
 - a. Ensure the board maintains an outward-facing and focused on learning from others to improve practice.
 - b. Support the annual self-review including individual evaluation to ensure each trustee continues to contribute effectively.
 - c. Support the Chair and committee Chairs in the evaluation of the impact of non-executive decisions on student opportunities and outcomes.
 - d. Ensure the board utilises feedback from external scrutiny to inform decisions about its development.
 - e. Undertake an annual evaluation taking into consideration composition, diversity and how effectively members work together corporately to achieve objectives.

Person Specification

Area	Essential	Desirable
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of supporting academy or school governance demonstrating knowledge and understanding of the education sector/academies, charity and company law and regulatory compliance. • Experience supporting and advising Boards and subcommittees with direct corporate governance experience. • Experience of identifying and maintaining best practice whilst troubleshooting areas in need of improvement. • Strong track record of building relationships with internal and external stakeholders at all levels in order to ensure highest standards of governance practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working in a multi-site organisation and promoting positive working. • Strong track record of making strategy a reality by delivering improvements in processes and practice. • Evidence of leading governance in a dynamic organisation, collaborating successfully to deliver strategic objectives.
Education Qualifications Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of working as a school governor or with school governors in training and professional development. • Evidence of further professional development and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree or equivalent higher-level qualification. • Company secretary training
Special knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to date understanding of good practice in corporate governance including the relationship between executive and non-executive leaders within the education sector • Understanding of the ESFA Academy Handbook and the regulatory framework for Multi Academy Trusts. • Understand whistleblowing and how to raise concerns outside the organisation if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDPR latest regulations. • Excellent knowledge of the contents and spirit of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and the latest safeguarding regulations/ requirements. • Knowledge and understanding of school funding and financial planning.
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The confidence to advise the CEO, Chair and Trust board, even in difficult, contentious or challenging circumstances. • The ability to quickly gain credibility and confidence of senior staff throughout the Trust • The ability to convey complex information with clarity, including writing concise and effective briefing notes required. • Strong interpersonal skills with high levels of emotional intelligence with the ability to act diplomatically and with tact. • Ability to rise to the challenge of a demanding workload alongside colleagues working in very different schools across different geographical locations. 	

Location of board meetings and trust website

Board meetings are usually held at Mercian House, Queen Mary's Grammar School, Sutton Road, Walsall, WS1 2PG or at one of our constituent schools. Currently, as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, meetings are held remotely using Microsoft Teams.

Trust Website: <https://www.themerciantrust.org/>

Governance structure

<https://www.themerciantrust.org/about/governance>

Applications

Those interested in serving our schools and communities in this way should complete the accompanying application form and return it to Lin Koo, Executive PA to the CEO Koo.L@the.merciantrust.org

Key dates

We strongly recommend applying as early as you can to have the best possible chance of being considered as we may change the closing date if we have received sufficient applications.

The closing date for applications is: **Friday 6th August 2021, 12.00pm**





