



LEARNING TRUST

**Local Academy Board Handbook**

# 1. Welcome

We are delighted that you have joined the GEMS Learning Trust (GLT) as a Local Academy Board Member. It is an exciting opportunity to be part of the life of your local Academy and all that it offers. This GLT Local Academy Board Handbook sets out the GLT vision, explaining why we exist and provides information for you about your role as a Local Academy Board member and the way Local Academy Boards work.

## 1.1 Our ambitions

The GEMS Learning Trust is driven to ensure that all children in our fledgling receive a first-class education. High expectations, high challenge and a high level of feedback and support will be offered to both staff and pupils to create a high-achieving culture. On a daily basis, our academies will firmly focus on the core basics of phonics, reading, talk for writing, writing, and mathematics.

In addition, creative approaches to learning, independent thinking and collaborative problem-solving skills and the arts will be used to engage and motivate the children to love learning and understand how they learn. A blend of basic skills, rigour and attention to detail underpin the cross-curricular planning. There will be an energy and buzz amongst the staff and the children, and no child is allowed to slip through the net.

The GEMS Learning Trust leads the way in developing meaningful parent partnerships models. Our Academies fully involve parents in their children's school life, and that working in partnership, we ensure children are happy and achieving their full, academic potential.

## 1.2 Our values

Our distinctive values differentiate the GEMS Learning Trust; they are based on the four core values of GEMS Education.

### Leading through innovation

- Fearlessly trying new ways of teaching and learning, and adopt the best
- The courage to change in the best interests of young people
- Innovative provision using inspired teaching to explore the world
- Exploring exciting advances in science and technology, and how they impact on us

### Pursing excellence

- An uncompromising belief that anyone and everyone can succeed
- An ambition to exceed expectations
- Rigorous leadership of education, financial systems and safety
- Cherishing individuals to promote the well-being of everyone
- A curriculum that is rich and enriched, varied, responsive to local needs
- We focus on enriching children's lives

### Growing by learning

- An appetite to learn, an appetite to be a global citizen
- Building confidence for modern life
- Growing happy, confident, rounded, balanced children

- Ensure every child regards themselves as a success
- Improving by learning from the things that we try
- Support, share and coach each other so that we can be even better
- Expect openness and receptiveness, honesty, self-awareness
- Make magic enjoyable moments to make the most of precious but fleeting years

## **Global Citizenship**

- Instilling compassion, respect, awareness and tolerance and respect for other people
- Challenging stereotypes, preconceptions and prejudice
- Bringing the ever shrinking world into the classroom
- Seeing ourselves and our culture in a global context
- Holding global conversations and local dialogues
- Preparing our children for a global world

### **1.3 What is different about our schools?**

- We welcome teachers, parents and pupils as members of the GEMS family of schools; benefiting from high expectations and aspirations, real experiences with different cultures and broadened horizons
- We strongly involve parents in day to day school life; forming part of the educational team with teachers and children
- We want our children to be happy at school; they develop positive attitudes, strong personal and social skills and a lifelong love of learning
- We expect all our children achieve high levels in reading, writing, mathematics and science all throughout primary school and make exceptional levels of progress from their starting points
- We offer children an enjoyable, creative and enriched curriculum profiling art, music and drama which underpin their academic successes
- We prepare our parents and children to understand the relevance of their learning to future careers in a globalised, competitive and multi-lingual world
- We offer children and their families an extended school day with programmes for both enrichment and additional teaching, as well as quality wraparound care from 8am to 6pm
- We nurture positive and inclusive relationships with local, national and international communities; inspiring a strong sense of social responsibility in our staff and families.

### **1.4 What we provide to our schools as a Trust**

The GEMS Learning Trust is developing the services we provide to our academies. As we grow, the service provision will expand and the mechanism of delivery will develop. Currently we offer:

1. Quality assurance of provision - rigorous performance management and extensive support for each Principal
2. Peer-to-peer support for Principals and exchange of best practices, collaborative data analysis and target setting
3. A framework for schools, each with its own Principal who has the autonomy to develop their school and a role in the strategic growth of the Trust
4. Corporate infrastructure: Financial systems, HR advice, payroll, legal, admissions, branding, H&S oversight, buildings development
5. An influential role for Leadership and Teaching in a progressive, growing organisation; forming hubs, collaborative relationships and local partnerships

## 1.5 Our Portfolio of schools

Name of School	Date of opening	Type of School	Address	Premises	Local Authority	Principal	Capacity
GEMS Twickenham Primary Academy	Sept 2015	Free School, Primary	57 Colne Road, Twickenham, TW2 6QF	Converted office building, planning permission to be secured. Owned by DfE	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames	Pippa Hogg Andrews	420 4-11 year olds
GEMS Didcot Primary Academy	Sept 2016	Academy, Nursery and Primary	Chestnut Drive, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 0DL	Purpose built primary school. Owned by OCC	Oxfordshire County Council	Alison Ashcroft	52 PTE 3 & 4 year olds 420 4-11 year olds
GEMS Kingston Primary Academy	Sept 2018	Free School, Primary	Swan House, Kingston	Purpose built primary school, planning permission to be secured. Owned by DfE.	London Borough of Kingston upon Thames	TBA	420 4-11 year olds

### Thank you from the Chair of the GLT Board

We are very grateful to you for joining us. We hope you enjoy your time as a Local Academy Board Member and have the satisfaction of knowing that you are playing a part in transforming the life chances of all the children and young people in our Academies.

You can access more information about GLT from our website or from your Academy's website.

Yours sincerely

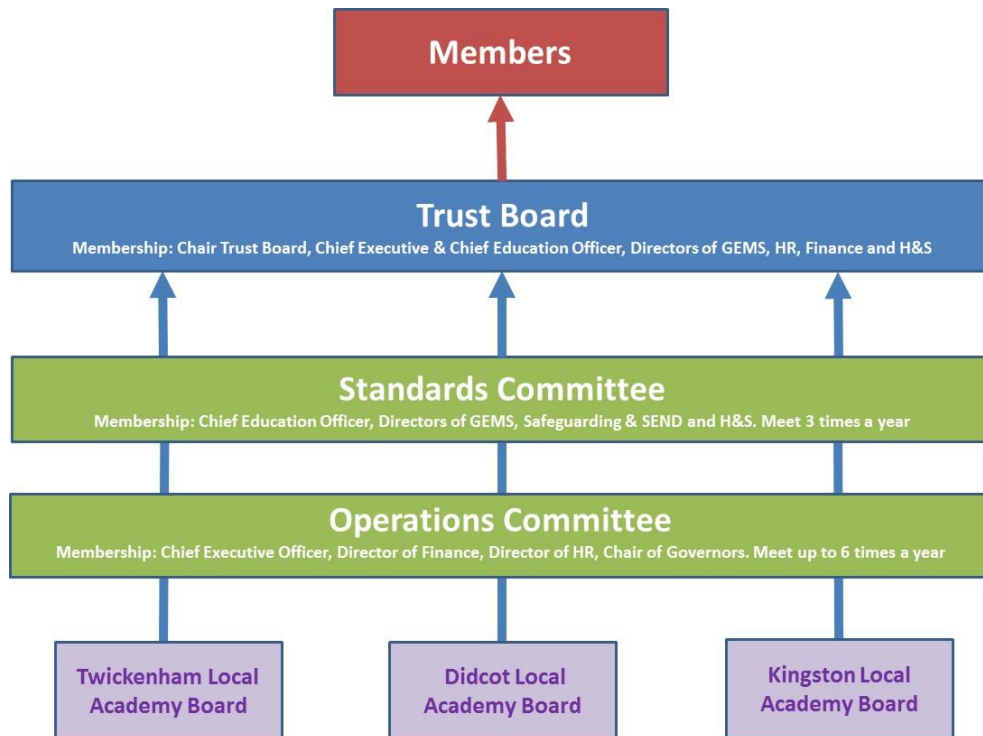
**Dr. Harry Ziman**

Chair of GEMS Learning Trust Board

## 2. Overview of the GEMS Learning Trust

The GEMS Learning Trust is a Multi Academy Trust. It is a charitable company limited by guarantee and ultimately controlled by its Members who delegate responsibilities to the Trust Board.

### 2.1 Structure



### 2.2 Roles

#### Members

The Members of the Trust are at the top of the governance pyramid, however they have little strategic or operational responsibility. The members have the following functions:

- Appoint the majority of Directors to the GLT Trust Board;
- Act as national ambassadors for the Trust;
- Act as a last line of resort in holding the Board to account.

#### Trust Board

The Trust Board has the following core strategic governance functions:

Establishing the strategic direction, by:

- Setting the vision, values, and objectives for the school
- Agreeing the school improvement strategy with priorities and targets
- Meeting statutory duties

Ensuring accountability, by:

- Appointing the Principals
- Monitoring progress towards targets
- Performance managing the Principals

- Engaging with stakeholders
- Contributing to school self-evaluation

Ensuring financial probity, by:

- Setting the budget
- Monitoring spending against the budget
- Ensuring value for money is obtained
- Ensuring risks to the organisation are managed

On behalf of the GEMS Learning Trust, the board delegates some (but not all) of its decision making powers to two sub-committees of the main board; Standards and Operations

### **Operations and Standards Committees**

The Trust Board delegate key governance functions to the Operations and Standards committees who assist them in ensuring safety, wellbeing and high quality educational provision.

### **Local Academy Boards**

Each academy has its own Local Academy Board to act as a critical friend to each Principal. Trustees approve the co-option of non-Directors onto Local Academy Boards (LABs) to provide additional support and areas of expertise where appropriate with voting or none voting powers depending on the situation.

The Local Academy Boards have the following functions:

#### Governance

- To receive constitutional matters from the Trustees.
- To recruit new members as vacancies arise.
- To hold at least one Local Academy Board meeting a term, however, further meetings can be called at the discretion of the Local Academy Board.
- To appoint or remove the Chair and Vice Chair to the Local Academy Board.
- To appoint or remove a Clerk to the Local Academy Board.
- To review and approve policies in accordance with the policy review cycle as delegated by the Trustees.

#### Stakeholder engagement

- To engage with stakeholders; pupils, staff, parents/carers and the community
- To monitor the effectiveness of the complaints policy and procedures; provide one or more representative the Trust on a complaints panel
- To ensure that each Academy meets legal requirements to publish information online

#### Educational experience and standards

- To scrutinise data and information regarding the attainment and welfare of all children
- To determine timing and arrangements for parents' evenings
- To be consulted on a wide range of issues such as Academy uniform, term dates, the school day, provision of after-school clubs etc.
- To support activities including trips, reading etc.

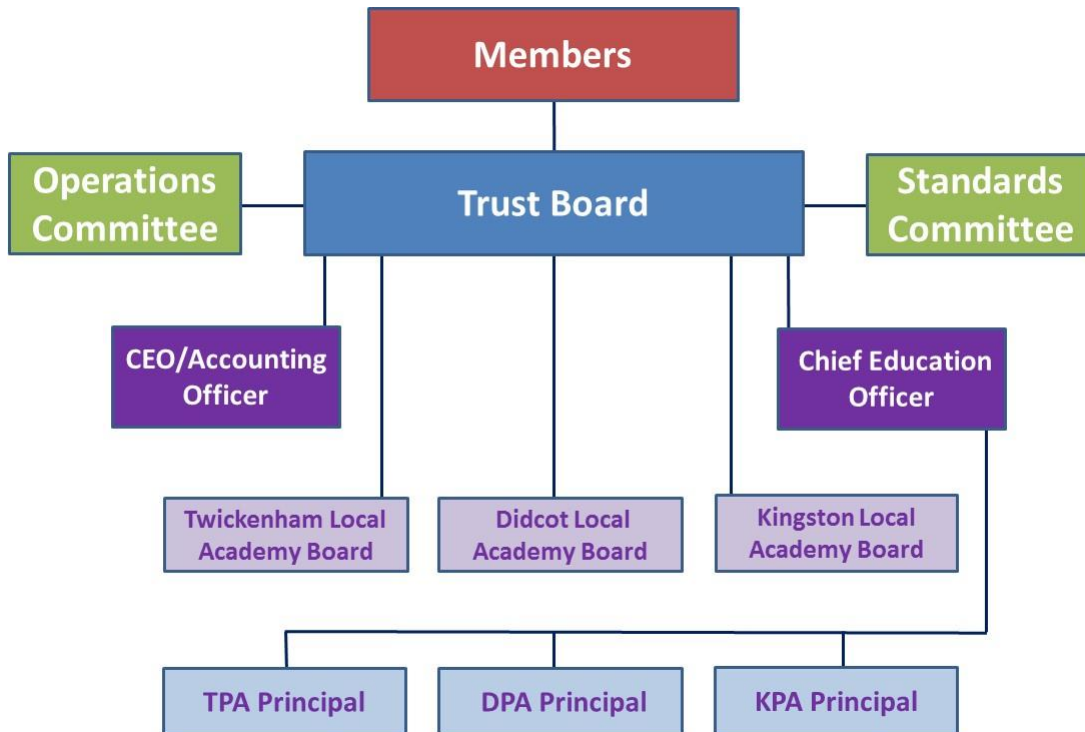
### **Chief Executive Officer**

The CEO is responsible for the strategic development and growth of the GEMS Learning Trust; with particular oversight of finance and operations. He/she also acts as the Accounting Officer.

## Chief Education Officer

The Chief Education Officer holds the Principals to account and quality assures every aspect of educational provision in the academies.

### 2.3 Accountability Structure



### 2.4 The difference between GLT Governance and a traditional Governing Body

By comparison to a traditional school Governing Body, the LAB's role is not to "manage" the Academy as such. This is done through the Board Committees and the Trust Board. Therefore, the LAB is not required to take decisions on staff or financial matters affecting the Academy. As an LAB Member you should have an understanding of strategic issues that impact on the Academy, and be updated on them regularly by the Principal, but you are not required to have direct responsibility for them. Instead the LAB should be in a position to assess the impact of the Academy locally; how it is contributing to the local community, how it is relating to local families and how it understands local issues. This in turn, will enable the LAB to contribute effectively to decisions which may require LAB involvement.

As the Trust Board and its committees take responsibility for educational standards, legal compliance and financial viability, the LAB then has the time to investigate the standards on the ground, to see how they are working, and explore how the GLT ethos is being understood and expressed in the way the Academy operates. As an LAB Member, your view as a parent or as part of the community is vital in this discussion.

### **3. How Local Advisory Boards work**

The GLT understands that the role of an Academy Advisory Board member is voluntary, however, in order for the Local Academy Board to function efficiently and effectively, there are certain expectations of LAB members in order to achieve this.

#### **3.1 Liability**

LABs are not legal entities in their own right and members of LABs are not Governors in law. Legal liability remains with the Academy Trust and the Board of Directors, who are ultimately responsible for the running of the Academy.

#### **3.2 Constitution**

- (a) The Principal
- (b) A minimum of 2 elected parent Governors up to a maximum of 4
- (c) 1 staff governor
- (d) Up to 3 community Governors

#### **3.3 Appointment of LAB Members**

##### **Staff**

The Principal shall invite nominations from all staff employed under a contract of employment and, where there are any contested posts, shall hold an election by a secret ballot, amongst members of staff.

All arrangements for the calling and the conduct of the election and resolution of questions as to whether any person is an eligible candidate shall be determined by the Directors. The Directors may delegate the running of the election to the Principal. Terms of office will be for a period of three years.

##### **Parents**

Parent members of the LAB shall be elected by parents of registered pupils at the Academy. He or she must be a parent of, or have parental responsibility for, a pupil at the Academy at the time when he or she is elected.

The Directors shall make all necessary arrangements for, and determine all other matters relating to, an election of the parent members. The Directors may delegate the running of the election to the Principal.

Where a vacancy for a parent member is required to be filled by election, the Principal shall take such steps as are reasonably practical to secure that every person who is known to them to be a parent of a registered pupil at the Academy is informed of the vacancy and that it is required to be filled by election, informed that he or she is entitled to stand as a candidate, and vote at the election, and given an opportunity to do so.

Any election of persons who are to be the parent members which is contested shall be held by secret ballot. The arrangements made for the election of the parent members shall provide for every person who is entitled to vote in the election to have an opportunity to do so by post or, if he or she prefers, by having his/her ballot paper returned to the Academy by a registered pupil at the Academy.

Where the number of parents standing for election is less than the number of vacancies, the Principal may appoint a person who is the parent of a registered pupil at the Academy or, where



it is not reasonably practical to do so, a person who is the parent of a registered pupil of another Academy run by the Trust.

## **Community**

Community members of the LAB shall be appointed by the Principal. He or she must be:

- a person who lives or works in the community served by the Academy; or
- a person who, in the opinion of the Principal, has the necessary skills set and is committed to the success of the Academy.

The Principal may not appoint an employee of the Academy as a community member.

In addition, the Trust Board shall have the power to appoint additional members of the LAB as they see fit.

### **3.4 Meetings**

The LAB shall meet at least once every term.

Meetings of the LAB shall be convened and chaired by an elected Chairperson who shall send the members written notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda at least seven clear days in advance of the meeting.

Any member shall be able to participate in meetings of the LAB by telephone or video conference provided that he has given reasonable notice to the Principal and that the members have access to the appropriate equipment.

Any Director and the CEO or person appointed by them shall be entitled to attend and observe LAB meetings.

### **3.5 Reports**

The Principal will produce a report for the Trust Board in time for full Trust Board meetings.

### **3.6 Minutes of meetings**

Minutes of each meeting will be sent to the Board of Directors on a termly basis.

At every meeting of the LAB the minutes of the last meeting shall be taken as the first agenda item after any apologies and, if agreed to be accurate, shall be signed as a true record.

### **3.7 Term of office**

The term of office for any LAB member shall be 3 years, save the Principal for the Trust who shall remain a LAB member until he or she ceases to work at the Academy.

Subject to remaining eligible, any person may be re-appointed or re-elected to the LAB.

### **3.8 Principles of Delegation**

Members of Local Academy Boards will not be directors or trustees of the MAT although they will represent the views of stakeholders from the academies. They are a consultative body and may have duties delegated by the Trust Board as the academies become more established. For the avoidance of doubt, where a power is not expressly delegated to any LAB, it will be deemed to have been retained by the Trust regardless of whether it is specified in the scheme of delegation. The Appendices may be reviewed by the Directors at any time but shall be reviewed at least annually. Directors reserve the right to remove or alter any delegation at any time, whilst having due regard to, but not being bound by, the views of the LAB.

### **3.9 Business Interests**

Local Academy Board members are required to declare any business or other interests in any item being discussed at the LAB meeting. The LAB secretary will have the appropriate form for LAB members to sign.

### **3.10 Academy Visits**

LAB members should make every effort to visit the Academy during the Academy day; all visits must be planned and focused on areas as agreed by the full Local Academy Board. Visits inform the work of the LAB and provide valuable information for support and challenge to the Academy. LAB members are asked to report on their visit at the LAB meetings. All visits must be scheduled with consent from the Principal.

### **3.11 Safeguarding**

All Local Academy Board members are required to have an up-to-date DBS check, as well as undertake annual safeguarding training as required.

### **3.12 Removal and Resignation of members**

A person serving on the LAB shall cease to hold office if:

- a) He or she resigns his or her office by giving notice in writing to the clerk of the Principal;
- b) The Principal or a staff LAB member ceases to work at the Academy;
- c) The Directors terminate the appointment of a LAB member whose presence or conduct is deemed by the Directors, at their sole discretion, not to be in the best interests of the Trust or the Academy
- d) A child of a parent LAB member ceases to be a pupil at the Academy.

### **Procedure for Removal from Office**

In line with GLT's existing practice, reasons for removing an LAB Member include: persistent nonattendance at Local Academy Board meetings (i.e. three consecutive meetings with no apologies), failure to fulfil the commitments (as set out above), undermining the mission, bringing the Academy into disrepute, behaving in serious breach of GLT ethos and values.

The procedure for removal from the LAB is as follows:

1. The Chair of the LAB discusses the matter with the Principal. If the removal of the Chair is under consideration, the Principal will discuss the matter with the Trust Board.
2. The Chair initiates an informal conversation with the member in question about areas of concern and improving standards.
3. If the problem continues the Chair will: raise the issue with the Trust Board
4. Have a formal conversation with the member in question around improving standards and setting out timescales and consequences if difficulties continue.
5. If the problem is not resolved, the Chair will write to the member in question informing him/her that he/she is removed from the LAB.

### **Right to reply**

In the interest of natural justice the LAB Member will have the right to submit a statement outlining reason(s) for his/her action(s) which will be considered, both by the Chair/LAB Members in the first instance, then a further discussion with the Trust Board.

## 4. Standing Agenda Items of Local Academy Board Meetings

The table below sets out the key activities and functions that are undertaken throughout the year by the LAB. Good questions to ask in relation to these can be found at the end of this handbook.

Autumn	Spring	Summer
Review of assessment data – National tests etc Raise on line/ Inspection dashboard	Review of mid-year assessment and progress data	Review of assessment and progress data
School development plan foci	School development plan update	School development planning /school evaluation
Curriculum – SMSC/FBV broad and balanced	Curriculum – SMSC/FBV broad and balanced	LAB – self evaluation exercise
Stakeholder input	Stakeholder input Parent questionnaire Website and communication	Stakeholder input Pupil questionnaire
Safeguarding update/ attendance/behaviour	Safeguarding, health and safety update	Safeguarding, health and safety update
Policy review	Policy review	Policy review

## 5. Suggested questions to ask at Local Academy Board Meetings

### **Ethos and Values**

- How well is the ethos lived in the academy?
- How well does the LAB connect with the ethos statement?
- Are staff and children aware of the ethos statement?
- How is the SMSC (Spiritual, moral, social and cultural) development of children promoted?

### **Educational Provision and Standards**

- Attainment and progress targets, are we in line to achieve our expected targets?
- Attainment and progress gaps between groups, e.g. boys/girls, ethnicity, FSM (Free School Meals), LAC (Looked After Children) SEN, and other vulnerable groups etc.
- Are exclusions in line with or above national average?
- How many children have an SEN statement?
- What are the particular needs of children with SEN? How are we meeting their needs?
- All curriculum areas– key strengths/areas for improvement

### **Behaviour and attendance**

- What strategies are in place to prevent exclusions?
- What is the behaviour strategy? Who is responsible?
- What are the success criteria for attainment and progress? What are our key strengths in this area? What could we do better?
- Are there strategies in place to improve attendance, e.g. are parents clear about the expectations of them?

### **Safety and wellbeing**

- Are there strategies in place to support children's emotional welfare?
- How does the Academy work with the LA/other agencies, e.g. Police, Social Services and use of CAFs etc.
- Internet safety — how does the e-safety policy link with general safeguarding and child protection?
- How are equality and inclusion promoted across the academy?

### **Stakeholder engagement**

- What feedback do we get from the teaching staff?
- What is the pupil voice structure within the Academy? How well do children feel they are heard?
- Are there effective feedback mechanisms in place?
- What is the parent voice structure within the Academy? How well do parents feel they are heard?
- How well does the website communicate with our stakeholders?
- Is our website statutorily compliant?

