



**MERCHANT TAYLORS'  
OXFORDSHIRE  
ACADEMY TRUST**

**Trustee Recruitment Information  
November 2023**



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The Members of Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust (MTOAT) are seeking to recruit new Trustees to the Trust Board. The Board has been stable in its personnel for several years but a few departures in recent months have meant that new people are required to add to the existing highly experienced Trustees.

This presents an exciting opportunity to make a real difference to the education and lives of the young people at the schools within our Trust and we very much welcome interest from people of all backgrounds, experiences and aptitudes. The Members are keen to see a Trust Board with a broad and balanced skills set and range of experiences but are also looking for the "right fit" for the values and ethos of our Trust.

# Recruitment Process

Our Members will interview suitable candidates and make appointments as and when is practical over the coming months. This document provides more information about us, an overview of what it means to be a Trustee and a descriptor for the role of a Trustee.

If you would like to apply, please send your CV and a short expression of interest (no more than 500 words) to the Clerk to the Board, Bee Hibbin, [briony@mtoat.co.uk](mailto:briony@mtoat.co.uk)

If you would like an informal discussion about the role, please contact our CEO, John Marston, [marstonj@mtoat.co.uk](mailto:marstonj@mtoat.co.uk)



# About Us

MTOAT is a small Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) based in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, which has grown out of the success of Wallingford School over the past decade since academisation. The size of MTOAT is its strength - each school has its own identity, ethos and values and is also part of something larger in which collaboration and support are driven by strong relationships and highly effective leadership and management.

MTOAT currently consists of three schools - Wallingford School, Brightwell cum Sotwell CofE Primary School and Aylesbury UTC.

Wallingford School is a well-established, very successful secondary school which has a tangible commitment to providing an excellent education for the young people of the town and the surrounding villages. Results are excellent year-on-year and the school is oversubscribed. A new 19 classroom teaching block opened in 2022 and it is expected that the school will grow to around 1500 students over time. Wallingford School was again judged by Ofsted to be Good in a section 8 inspection in November 2022 and its unvalidated Progress 8 score for 2023 placed the school within the top 15% of secondary schools nationally.

Brightwell cum Sotwell CofE Primary School joined MTOAT in 2017 following a period of turbulence characterised by unstable leadership and a lack of strategic direction. At the time, student numbers were below 90, teaching and learning were poor and the future of the school was in question. After a five-year journey of school improvement, Brightwell cum Sotwell CofE Primary School was judged to be Good by Ofsted in a section 8 inspection in March 2022. Student numbers on roll passed 160 in September 2022.

Aylesbury UTC joined MTOAT in November 2021. It is fair to say that if it had not joined the Trust then the UTC would have closed at that time. It was a school which had lost direction and this was recognised by Ofsted in a section 5 inspection in March 2022 in which the school was judged to be Requires Improvement in all areas in line with the Trust's self-evaluation. Significant school improvement work is ongoing at the UTC and the expectation is that the majority of the areas within the current Ofsted framework will self-evaluate as Good by the end of December 2023. Student numbers were 95 in November 2021 and in September 2023 were already at 155; the growth of the UTC is expected to continue over the coming years.

Ultimate responsibility for the schools within MTOAT sits with the Trust Board. However, each school has considerable autonomy within its own context and local governing bodies and their committees are active, make decisions and communicate back regularly to the Trust Board. Chairs of local governing body finance committees sit on the Trust Finance and Audit Committee and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the local governing bodies attend the Chairs' Forum which meets three times each year.

The Trust has separated Members and Trustees over the past couple of years and the



Chairs of local governing bodies are no longer Trustees in line with ESFA requirements. The Oxford Diocese and the Merchant Taylors' Company are corporate Members of the Trust; the former became a Member when Brightwell cum Sotwell CofE Primary School joined the Trust while the latter reflects the connection between the Company and the foundation of a school in Wallingford by a member of the Company, Walter Bigg, in 1659, now Wallingford School.

To find out more about us, please visit our website at [www.mtoat.co.uk](http://www.mtoat.co.uk)

# MAT Governance Structure

MATs are set up as charitable companies and so must have Members. Members have a similar role to shareholders of a company limited by shares. They hold the Trust Board to account for the effective governance of the Trust but have minimal involvement in running the Trust. Therefore, there should be significant separation between the individuals who are Members and those who are Trustees.

Members are essential to the integrity of an academy trust governance structure. There are some critical decisions that sit with the Members, especially if the trust is failing. They must remain informed of Trust performance and be clear on how to interact with the Trust Board.

## The Role of Trustees

Trustees have overall responsibility, ultimate accountability and decision-making authority for the work of our Trust and our schools. They are accountable to the students, staff, parents and communities served by our schools and they establish the vision, mission and values of the Trust. In the corporate world they could be considered as non-executive directors and Trustees are Directors of the MAT which is a company limited by guarantee and registered as such at Companies House.

Trustees are expected to follow the seven Principles of Public Life (widely known as the 'Nolan Principles') in everything they do. These principles are:

- selflessness
- integrity
- objectivity
- accountability
- openness
- honesty
- leadership

Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, broad policy framework and oversight of the Trust and all its schools. They take decisions that are in the best interests of the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) as a whole and are not representative of any one of the constituent academies. They must act in the Trust's interests only, without regard to their own private interests and strictly in accordance with the Trust's Articles of Association.

## The Commitment

The Trust currently meets as a Board four times each year. Meetings are hybrid with the option of dialling in and are held in person at Wallingford School, almost always with a 6pm start. There is of course a time commitment in preparing for meetings with the reasonable assumption by the Chair that all those in attendance have read the papers in advance. The expectation is that papers for meetings are circulated five working days in advance of the meetings and exceptions to this are rare.

# Role Descriptor

The main duties and responsibilities for a Trustee are as detailed below:

- To ensure that the activities of the Trust fulfil the objectives as described in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- To ensure compliance with the Trust's duties under company and charity law.
- To ensure the Trust and its academies are compliant with all statutory obligations.
- To safeguard the assets of the Trust.
- To ensure the solvency of the trust and to abide by the agreements made with the Department for Education, and Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
- To review the Trust Board's terms of reference on a regular basis and to recommend any changes to the Board of Members.
- To approve the terms of reference of the Board's committees.
- To approve the terms of reference for devolved governance arrangements.
- To approve the Trust's annual budget and monitor progress through the receipt of regular reports and to commission auditors.
- To approve the annual budget for each academy and monitor expenditure against the budgets.
- To approve the annual and other statutory reports to Members and the ESFA.
- To agree and review the scheme of delegation to the academies.
- To determine the overall strategic direction and development of the Trust through good governance and clear strategic planning.
- To approve the Trust's strategic plan.
- To challenge and support the Trust's CEO and Executive team.
- To oversee the performance of the Trust and its schools and direct change where performance falls short of expectation.
- To agree policies across the academies within the Trust.
- To ensure that risks are mitigated where possible and otherwise effectively managed.
- To review the effectiveness and skill set of the Board and recommend appropriate changes to the Board of Members.
- To appoint and, if deemed necessary, to remove the CEO and other Trust Central team roles including the Director of Finance and the Director of Operations.



Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust is an exempt charity and a company limited by guarantee.

Registered in England & Wales. Company No. 7727786  
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