



**Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose**

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System  
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8 October 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As a member of an academy trust, you know the importance of effective trust governance and strong leadership in achieving the best educational outcomes for pupils. I want to recognise the significant role that members like yourself play in academy trusts and to thank you for your contribution.

The role you play is integral to the successful governance of each and every academy trust. You provide oversight to make sure trustees are acting in accordance with the charitable object, as detailed in the articles of association, and you can take direct action in case of a failure of governance.

As we start a new school year, I am working with the sector to make sure that all the volunteers who so generously give their time to trust governance feel supported to undertake their responsibilities.

To this end, we have recently published the [Academy Trust Governance Structures and Role Descriptors](#). This document has been designed in consultation with the sector to provide a high-level, easily accessible introduction to the different academy trust governance structures, and the roles and responsibilities of each person within those structures.

The descriptors are a quick and accessible reference point for all those involved in academy trust governance. They complement the [Governance Handbook](#), which provides detailed guidance about all facets of school governance, the [Academies Financial Handbook](#), and the Department's [model articles of association](#).

As well as illustrating how the roles within academy trust governance structures function, the role descriptors emphasise the limited but crucial role members play in safeguarding academy trust governance, and highlight the importance of this role to all those working in academy trust governance.

In particular, the members descriptor provides **clarity and guidance** on the:

- **function of the member role** and the key documents members should refer to when undertaking it
- **range of powers members possess** such as their power to direct

trustees, examples of scenarios in which members might exercise their powers and what members should consider before using them

- **governance structure of academy trusts** including the distinction between the department's requirements and preferences
- **structural relationship between members and trustees** including how the roles differ and what members should expect from trustees to help them carry out their role.

I hope that you find the **descriptors** useful and would welcome any feedback from you or your trust to be sent to

[capacityandpractice.governance@education.gov.uk](mailto:capacityandpractice.governance@education.gov.uk)

I would like to take this opportunity once again to thank you for all you do to support and safeguard the governance of academy trusts across the country.

Yours,

**ELIZABETH BERRIDGE**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "ER Berridge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE**