



## MAT Trustee & Local Governing Committee Induction Pack

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## About the Big Life group

### Mission:

**Big Life is in the business of changing lives. We fight inequality by working with people and places to create opportunities and inspire change.**

In a time of stretched public services and deep societal division, we need to rethink the way we work. In every community we need to maximise our impact and bring about change. We will develop partnerships with communities, decision-makers, and services to widen opportunities, grow local assets and build resilience.

There might be all sorts of things stopping people from getting where they want to be. People juggle their health, work, relationships and much more. People with multiple issues often face the biggest challenge, as the number and severity of issues directly affects their ability to make and sustain positive changes. When one thing goes wrong it can feel overwhelming and impact on everything.

Public services are often focused on single issues, so people facing multiple challenges are referred to lots of different places, have to repeat their stories and sit on waiting lists. The staff they see are only trained to deal with one issue, and services focus on their offer, not what someone wants. This is especially difficult to navigate for someone with little social support or financial means.

That's why all our services work with people on all areas of their life and help them with the things that matter most to them first, working with them to remove all the obstacles to changing their life for the better. We help people see the skills and support they already have so that they can build on it. To make sure we do this, we work in the Big Life Way.

To work in the **Big Life Way** our services use these principles:

- **People not problems.** We work with people on all areas of their lives. We see the skills and potential in everyone and value their life experience.
- **First class.** We believe all people deserve a first class service which develops their resilience, is led by them and responds to their priorities.
- **Never give up.** Everyone has the capacity to change, but we know it's not always easy. That's why we celebrate every achievement and we never give up.
- **Tread new ground.** We are not afraid to tread new ground. We learn from feedback and innovate to respond to new challenges.
- **Work in partnership.** We work in partnership with people and places to achieve more together than we can alone.

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The Big Life group has **five legal entities** - Big Life Company which is a CLG; Big Issue North Trust, Self Help and Big Life Centres which are CLGs registered as charities; and Big Life Schools which is a CLG with exempt charitable status. The Governing Documents (including the Memorandum and Articles) and Audited Accounts for each entity are available in the **Document Library on Convene**.

## About Big Life Schools

### Our Multi Academy Trust

Big Life Schools are part of the Big Life group.

Big Life Schools Trust was established to meet the needs of the communities we were serving who found themselves with a deficit of local school places and siblings not being able to attend the same schools. We worked with local communities to solve this problem by creating excellent, welcoming schools for children who may otherwise not have had a local school place.

All of our schools are underpinned by our 6 values:

- Honest
- Thoughtful
- Creative
- Courageous
- Inspiring
- Value difference

The MAT is run by a Board of Trustees and is accountable to the Department for Education (DfE). Each School has its own Local Governing Committee (LGC). The Chair of Governors for LGCs are appointed by the MAT Board. The LGCs then, in turn appoint all other governors, except the Parent Governors, who are elected by parents.

The MAT currently serves the free schools it has opened; however, it is also intending to welcome schools converting to academy status and existing academies wanting to move sponsors.

### The way it works

The MAT Board has overall legal responsibility for the operation of the MAT and the schools within it. However, the MAT Board works in partnership with its schools in keeping with our ethos of valuing the contribution individual schools offer. We are also part of the wider Big Life group, and this brings a further layer of expertise to support our schools. The group operates under four divisions: Children and Families; Health and Well-being; Skills and Employment; and Group Services. The corporate services are provided to the MAT by the

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Group Services division under a Service Level Agreement which is approved annually by the MAT Board.

The Scheme of Delegation provides for certain functions to be carried out by one or more of the following:

- the MAT Board
- the Executive Director (CEO for Schools) including appropriate staff of the sponsor organisation providing corporate services
- the Head teachers
- the Local Governing Committees
- Finance, Risk and Audit Committee
- BLG Quality Committee

## Definitions

Big Life Group – is a single VAT registered group of social enterprises and charities comprising – Big Life Schools, Big Life Centres, Self Help Services, Big Issue North Trust, and the Big Life Company. It has a Board with Executive, Non-Executive Directors, and Trustees.

Big Life Schools Multi Academy Trust – is the Educational Trust working in the Big Life Group. It has its own Board of Trustees. The Trustees are the legal Directors of Big Life Schools and are legally accountable for it. For the purpose of this document Directors are referred to simply as Trustees.

Local Governing Committees – are committees of Big Life Schools MAT. They are attended by Governors who are not legally accountable for the schools but are essential for the effective operation of the schools. For the purpose of this document committee members are referred to as Governors.

Big Life Schools Members – are the people who established Big Life Schools and who hold the Trustees to account. They do this through an Annual General Meeting.

## The Big Life Group Board

The Big Life Group Board is an overlap board, overseeing the work of all the entities in the group. It has Executive Directors, Non-Executive Directors and Trustees who all attend quarterly meetings. A separate Board oversees the Big Life Schools Multi Academy Trust. The Big Life Schools MAT Chair and CEO attends the Group Board.

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There are two Board Committees:

- Finance, Risk and Audit Committee
- Quality Committee

The Terms of Reference for each committee can be found in the **Document Library on Convene**.

The operation of the group is overseen by the Executive Team, which is made up of the Group Chief Executive, Finance Director, and Executive Directors.

A Business Plan is adopted every five years outlining the key objectives for the group. This is reviewed annually and Key Performance Indicators agreed and monitored by the Board. A copy of the Business Plan can be found in the **Document Library on Convene**.

## The MAT Board

The MAT Board oversees the work of the schools. The Big Life Schools MAT Chair and CEO attends the Big Life Group Board.

The MAT has three committees – the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee, and two Local Governing Committees. The Chairs of the Local Governing Committees are also Trustees of the MAT Board.

The CEO and a nominated Trustee attend the Big Life Group Quality Committee which provides additional scrutiny and overview of: Health and Safety, Safeguarding, Incidents, Accidents, Complaints, Staff Training, Information Governance.

## About your role

Your term of office will be for an initial tenure of four years and will be reviewed annually as part of your appraisal with the Chair of the MAT board or Local Governing Committee. Your appointment and position are contingent on satisfactory performance and any relevant statutory provisions relating to the removal of a MAT Trustee of Local Governing Committee member.

You will serve in a personal capacity.

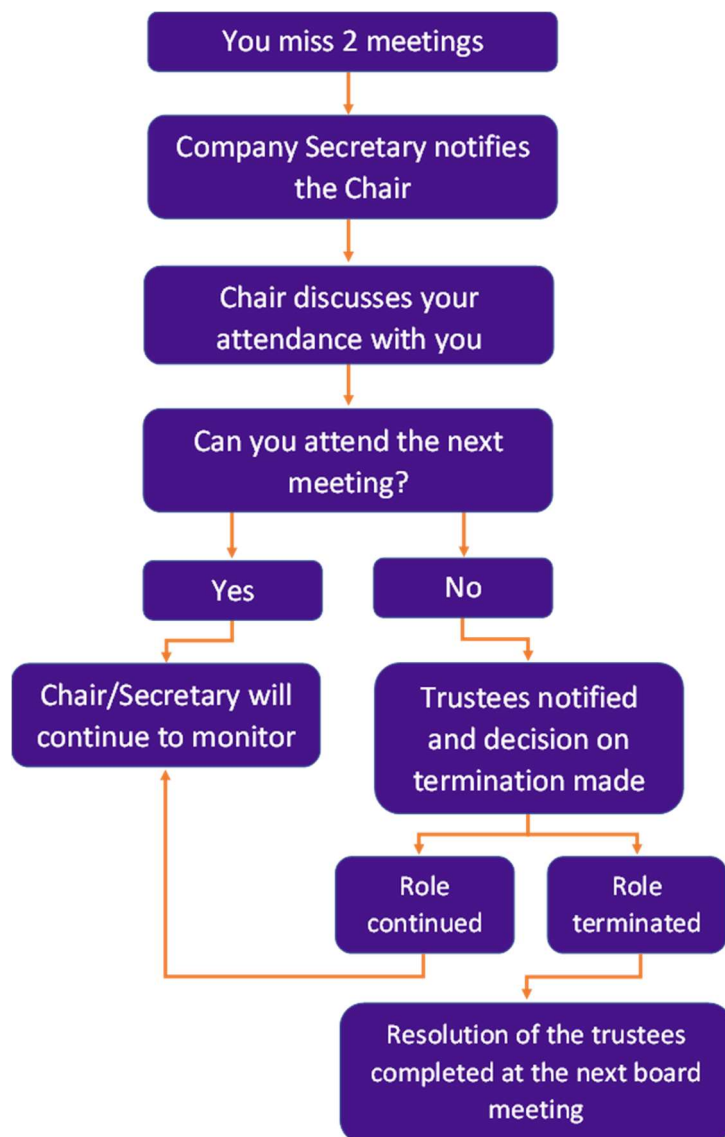
The Big Life Group will ensure adequate liability insurance is in place to cover you in respect of your appointment and indemnify you in respect of any claims, losses or other liabilities arising from the role, so long as you act lawfully and exercise good business sense. The group directors and officer's liability insurance indemnity limit is £5,000,000.

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## Termination

Your appointment may be terminated with immediate effect:

- if you breach the Code of Conduct
- you become disqualified from acting as a Trustee or
- you fail to meet the criteria to be a Trustee as set out in the governing document of Big Life Schools
- you breach your duties to the group, including missing meetings outlined in the flowchart below



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## Induction

In addition to this information pack, we will expect you to become familiar with the work of the MAT by participating in visits, training, and presentations. We encourage you to make contact with the CEO and other MAT or Local Governing Committee Members to understand their roles and the operation of the group. The School Clerk can support in facilitating meetings if you contact [Governance@thebiglifegroup.com](mailto:Governance@thebiglifegroup.com).

## Role

The MAT board is collectively responsible for the success of the schools. The board is responsible for ensuring that the MAT works to its objectives and adheres to its governing documents.

Trustee roles and responsibilities are outlined below. You will be expected to perform your duties and responsibilities honestly, efficiently, and diligently to a standard commensurate with both the function of your role and your knowledge, experience and skills.

If there are matters which arise which cause you concern about your role you should discuss them with the Chair.

## Time commitment

The Big Life MAT anticipates a time commitment of at least 15 hours per quarter, this will include attendance at least four MAT meetings; and dependent on your role, attending committees (Finance, Risk and Audit, Quality, Local Governing Committees). Unless urgent and unavoidable circumstances prevent you from doing so, it is expected that you will attend all meetings.

Additional involvement may include representing The Big Life Schools at other events, attending strategy discussions and staff awards. MAT or Local Governing Committee Members may also serve on one or more of the board's committees or take on an oversight role relating to a key strategic area. You will be expected to devote appropriate preparation time ahead of each meeting.

## Contact details and diversity monitoring form

All MAT Trustees, and Local Governing Committee members will be asked to complete and keep up to date, a contact and diversity monitoring form. This will ensure that the School Clerk is able to provide monitoring reports and ensure we are reflecting the communities we work within.

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## Communication

The School Clerk will add new MAT or Local Governing Committee Members to internal group email address groups to ensure they receive regular information about the group.

## Board Papers

All meeting papers are published through Convene. MAT or Local Governing Committee Members may be issued with tablets to facilitate access if required if relevant equipment is not already available. Training videos on using the app are available here: [Training videos | Azeus Convene](#). Convene gives MAT or Local Governing Committee Members the opportunity to review previous meetings and key group documents, as well as prepare for the meetings. Personal notes can be made on documents or published for sharing with other MAT or Local Governing Committee Members.

## Declaration of Interests

MAT or Local Governing Committee Members must declare any conflicts that are apparent during meetings they attend. They must also complete an annual declaration of interests form which will be sent by the School Clerk. If a MAT or Local Governing Committee Member becomes aware of any potential conflicts of interests between meetings, these should be disclosed to the Chair immediately they become apparent.

All Trustees must abide by the Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy, and confirm they will work in accordance with Charity Commission guidance CC3.

## Confidentiality

All information acquired during your term of office is confidential to Big Life Schools and should not be released, communicated, nor disclosed either during the term of appointment or following termination (by whatever means), to third parties, without prior clearance from the Chair or School Clerk. This restriction shall cease to apply to any confidential information which may become available to the public generally. Trustees and Governors are required to hold and retain information (in whatever format it is received) under appropriately secure conditions.

Upon retirement members will be required to delete any documents or other material held electronically and, on request, to certify that this has been done.

## Independent professional advice

Where appropriate Trustees may seek advice from independent advisers at the group's expense. Any decision to purchase independent advice is to be agreed by the Senior Independent Director or whole board before commissioning.

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## Training and ongoing professional development

On an ongoing basis, and further to the annual board evaluation process, the group will make arrangements to develop and refresh MAT or Local Governing Committee Members skills and knowledge in areas which are mutually identified to ensure they can carry out their duties effectively. Attendance at training or briefings will be considered as part of annual appraisal.

## Appraisal's

The Chair will undertake an annual appraisal with each MAT or Local Governing Committee member offering them an opportunity to talk about their performance at the board or committee and any additional training, information or support they required. The Big Life Group Chair will undertake an appraisal of the MAT Chair. The Board Appraisal can be found on **Document Library on Convene**.

The Board will annually evaluate its own performance and identify improvements for the year ahead. The Board Self-Assessment and Development Plan can be found on **Document Library on Convene**.

## Fees and expenses

MAT or Local Governing Committee Members will be required to exercise relevant powers as in accordance with the group's policies and procedures. The group will reimburse all reasonable and properly documented expenses incurred in performing board duties such as travel expenses including petrol and public transport. The expenses allowances are as follows:

- Travel – You should take the cheapest convenient method of transport. Receipts for taxis, buses, trams and trains should be retained. Trains should be booked in advance. Car mileage can be claimed at HMRC allowable rates. Parking tickets can be claimed with a receipt.
- Hotels – can be booked by the Governance Lead. A maximum of £120 per night.
- Subsistence – up to £30 per day can be claimed for refreshment and other related expenses. Receipts should be kept and used to claim.

Expenses are to be claimed through the BLG app **Certify**. MAT and Local Governing Committee Members will be set up when they join on Certify and any issues with using the system can be raised with [finance@thebiglifegroup.com](mailto:finance@thebiglifegroup.com).

## Board Policies

### Code of Conduct

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The code of conduct provides guidelines to MAT or Local Governing Committee Members on expected standard of behaviour, responsibilities, and best practice in fulfilling their obligations to the Big Life group.

- Trustee's/Governors must have a good understanding of the aims and objects of Big Life Schools and act in accordance with the governing document of the legal entity at all times
- Trustee's/Governors must act and make decisions in the best interests of the legal entity for which they are supporting
- Where professional assistance is required for the Trustee's/Governors to be able to make the most appropriate decision affecting the company, that assistance should be sought and considered carefully
- Trustee's/Governors must not receive any financial or non-financial benefit that is not explicitly authorised by the governing document. Trustee's/Governors should not exert any influence to garner any preferential treatment for themselves or their family (refer to Conflict of Interest policy)
- Trustee's/Governors are accountable to stakeholders for their actions and as such decision-making and governance issues should be as transparent as possible, except for when confidentiality is required
- Trustee's/Governors should be prepared to spend an appropriate amount of time reading papers and preparing for meetings.
- Should a Trustee's/Governor feel that they require further guidance or training in their role, they have a duty to inform the School Clerk and actively develop aspects for new training on an individual or group basis
- Any information of a confidential nature must remain so outside the confines of the Board meeting

Trustee's/Governors must act in accordance with the Policies and Procedures of the Big Life Schools at all times.

### Conflict of Interest

Trustee's/Governors have a legal obligation to act in the best interests of the Big Life Schools and in accordance with the governing documents. Trustees must abide by the 'Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy' which can be found in full on Convene Policies.

Conflicts of interest may arise where an individual's personal or family interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of the schools. Such conflicts create problems as they can:

- Inhibit free discussion
- Result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the schools and
- Risk the impression that the schools have acted improperly.

The aim of this policy is to protect both the organisation and the individuals involved from any appearance of impropriety.

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If a matter appears on the agenda of a meeting and you have a conflict of interest, you should declare your interest at the earliest opportunity and withdraw from any subsequent discussion.

You may, however, participate in discussions from which you may indirectly benefit, for example where the benefits are universal to all users, or whether your benefit is minimal.

If you fail to declare an interest that is known to the School Clerk or the Chair, they can declare that interest on your behalf.

In the event of the Board having to decide upon a question in which a Trustee or Governor has an interest, all decisions will be made by vote. A quorum must be present for the discussion and decision; interested parties will not be counted when deciding on whether the meeting is quorate. Interested Trustee's/Governors may not vote on matters affecting their own interests.

All decisions about issues where a conflict of interest is identified, will be recorded, and reported in the minutes of the meeting. The report will record:

- The nature and extent of the conflict
- An outline of the discussion
- The actions taken to manage the conflict

If a Trustee's/Governor has a conflict of interest, they must not be involved in managing or monitoring a contract in which they have an interest. Monitoring arrangements for such contracts will include provisions for an independent challenge of bills and invoices and termination of the contract if the relationship is unsatisfactory.

An annual Register of Interests will be compiled and held by the School Clerk. MAT or Local Governing Committee Members are required to complete the declaration of interests annually to the best of their knowledge. If new interests which may cause conflicts arise during the year, these should be notified to the School Clerk.

The Declaration of interest Form is available in the **Document Library on Convene**.

## Role Descriptions

### MAT Trustee

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## Overall Purpose

The MAT Trustees share collective responsibility for the overall decisions, governance and strategic direction of the schools and the MAT. They help develop the organisations aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the governing document, legal and regulatory guidelines. The DfE describe the three core functions of the MAT trustees as:

- Setting the direction of the Trust
- Holding the Head Teacher/CEO to account
- Ensuring financial probity

## Main Responsibilities

- The trustees are responsible for the same three core governance functions performed by the governing body in a maintained school: setting the direction, holding the headteacher to account and ensuring financial probity.
- To ensure that the organisation and its representative's function within the legal and regulatory framework of the sector and in line with the governing document, continually striving for best practice in governance.
- To uphold the fiduciary duty invested in the position, undertaking such duties in a way that adds to public confidence and trust in the organisation
- To take appropriate professional advice in all matters where there may be material risk to the organisation, or where the Trustees may be in breach of their duties. This course of action will ensure the obligation to exercise their duty of care
- To work with the Chair and Chief Executive to determine the overall direction and development of the organisation through good governance and clear strategic planning
- To avoid any personal conflict of interest

## Main Duties

- Ensuring the organisation complies with legislative and regulatory requirements and acts within the confines of its governing document and in furtherance to organisational activities contained therein
- Acting in the best interest of the organisation, beneficiaries, and future beneficiaries at all times
- Promoting and developing the organisation for it to grow and maintain its relevance to society
- Maintain sound financial management of the organisations resources, ensuring expenditure is in line with the organisations objects and investment activities meet accepted standards and policies
- Ensuring the effective and efficient administration of the organisation and its resources, striving for best practice in good governance
- Acting as counter-signatory on applications for funds if required
- To maintain absolutely confidentiality about all sensitive/confidential information received in the course of Trustees responsibilities to the organisation
- To attend and participate in all Board meetings

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- To participate in Committees and specialist areas of work as agreed
- MAT Trustees who chair Local Governing Committees also participate in the annual appraisal of the Head Teacher.
- To ensure that the organisation complies with statutory duties and regulatory requirements including: filing accounts, annual returns, change of directors and change of registered office notices with Companies House, the ESFA and the Charity Commission, by the stipulated dates
- To utilise all opportunities to 'know' our schools and performance – data, visits, evaluations, case studies.

### General

- To undertake training and personal development programmes as appropriate
- To undertake regular visits to the schools
- Attend annual appraisal meetings with the Chair
- Act in accordance with all company policies and guidelines.

### Accountable to:

- Trustees are accountable to the Chair of the MAT Board for their performance. Local Governing Committee members are accountable to the Committee Chair.
- MAT trustees are accountable to a variety of stakeholders including service users, members, funders, the ESFA, the Charity Commission and Companies House.

### Liability

- MAT Trustees are individually and jointly liable for any consequences arising out of a breach of trust. MAT Trustees must make decisions collectively but are both jointly and severally liable. MAT Trustees must act in line with the governing document, the legal and regulatory framework and seek professional guidance on those situations that are beyond the reasonable knowledge of the Board.

## Local Governing Committee Member

The Local Governing Committee Members are responsible for providing operational oversight and local parent, children and staff perspectives to the operation of the school. They are chaired by a MAT Trustee who is responsible for ensuring their views are presented at the MAT meeting.

### Main Responsibilities

- To ensure that the schools continually strive for best practice in teaching and learning.
- To ensure the schools are responsive to the children and community they serve.
- To avoid any personal conflict of interest

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## Main Duties

- To understand the operation of the school and provide oversight of its delivery of teaching and learning.
- Acting in the best interest of the organisation, beneficiaries, and future beneficiaries at all times
- To maintain absolutely confidentiality about all sensitive/confidential information
- To attend all Local Governing Committee meetings
- To participate in specialist areas of work as agreed
- To prepare and carry out the annual appraisals of the Headteachers

## General

- To undertake training and personal development programmes as appropriate
- Attend annual appraisal meetings with the Chair
- Act in accordance with all company policies and guidelines.

## Accountable to:

- Local Governing Committee members are accountable to the Chair of the Committee for their performance.
- MAT or Local Governing Committee Members are accountable to a variety of stakeholders including service users, members, funders, the Charity Commission and Companies House.

## Chair of the Board

### Overall Purpose

To provide leadership to the Board and the organisation. The Chair will promote the aims and objectives of Big Life Schools and promote its interests in line with the powers invested in the Board in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. As a Trustee they are responsible for ensuring that the company complies with all statutory and legal responsibilities. The Chair is responsible for the operation of the Board and ensuring Trustees maximise their effectiveness.

### Duties

- To ensure that the MAT operates according to their Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- To hold the CEO accountable for effective management and delivery of the MAT aims and objectives
- To provide leadership and support to the CEO
- To help set agendas ensuring the board is able to fulfil its responsibilities.

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- To chair all Board meetings and facilitate effective meetings, encouraging trustees to contribute their knowledge and strong working relationships. Challenge and Scrutiny are welcome
- To instigate and facilitate discussions about the strategic development of the MAT
- To contribute to the Board meetings bringing your expertise and experience in the promotion of the companies aims and objectives
- To participate in Committees, Recruitment, and specialist areas of work.
- To investigate and nonattendance or poor behaviour following the guidance of the handbook and manage and termination of Trustees, Governors and Members
- To build and maintain relationships between LGCs, Heads, School Director, LA, RSC etc.
- To carry out annual appraisal of MAT or Local Governing Committee Members
- To participate in Headteacher's annual appraisals, and make recommendations about pay progression
- Maintain trustee's commitment to board diversity, renewal and succession planning
- To participate and support any investigation or disciplinary action against Headteachers and MAT Trustees
- To undergo annual appraisal with the Chair of the Big Life Group Board
- To ensure the board undertake an annual review of its own performance and identify improvement actions.
- To ensure that you are reasonably assured that Big Life Schools is acting according to its Memorandum and Articles of Association and complying with all legal requirements including: the Academies Financial handbook, ESFA Funding agreement, ensuring company is not wrongfully trading, complies with Health and Safety legislation, and any other legal requirements.
- To ensure that the company complies with statutory duties including: filing accounts, annual returns, change of directors and change of registered office notices with Companies House, the ESFA and the Charity Commission, by the stipulated dates
- To represent the Trust externally as the public face of BLS, and promote the work of the Trust

#### General

- To undertake training and personal development programmes as appropriate
- Attend annual appraisal meetings
- Act in accordance with all company policies, guidelines and terms and conditions of employment

#### Governance Lead/Clerk

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## Overall Purpose

Responsible for the smooth and efficient running of Board meetings and Committees, providing assistance and support to the Chair of the Board. The Governance Lead will liaise with the Executive Director/Chief Executive to undertake the following responsibilities and duties and monitor their compliance.

## Main Responsibilities

- To liaise with the Chair, Chief Executive to plan, arrange and produce agendas for Board Meetings and approve draft minutes
- To ensure that company law, ESFA requirements, charity law and regulatory requirements are complied with
- To ensure that all meetings comply with the requirements of the governing document

## Main Duties

- Arranging and administering Board meetings and any Committees in line with legal, regulatory requirements and in accordance with the governing document.
- Advise and guide the Trustees on any legal and regulatory implications of the charity's strategic plan
- Act as the custodian of the governing document, reviewing its appropriateness and monitoring that the organisations activities reflect the objectives set out in the governing document
- Support the Trustees in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities, ensuring induction and ongoing training is available
- Be the external point of contact for stakeholders and interested parties
- To attend all Board meetings (held quarterly)
- To ensure that Big Life Schools complies with statutory duties including filing accounts, annual returns, change of directors and change of registered office notices with Companies House, ESFA and Charity Commission, by the stipulated dates

## General

- To undertake training and personal development programmes as appropriate
- To undertake annual appraisal meetings
- Act in accordance with all company policies and guidelines.

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